

10 Steps to Getting Your Business in Shape for the New Year

By Jonathan Goldhill

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Did you make a new years resolution that involves getting into shape? This is probably one of the most common areas in which people set their goals. Plans are often put together that will help them lose weight or stop smoking. As a business owner, you may also be thinking about getting your business in shape for the New Year?

Interestingly enough, to get your business into shape involves much of the same discipline as a strict exercise regimen to get the body fit. I've created a list of helpful suggestions to help you shape up your business for the New Year.

Remember, as we've discussed in prior articles, your business exists to give your life more freedom, not less. By following these ideas, we can get you well on your way to creating a life of fulfillment.

1) **Commit to "Letting go and Enjoying Life" more.** Tell yourself that you are going to "Let Go" a little more this year. You will no longer accept the "no pain, no gain" belief about your business. When you can change the way you see your business, you change the way you run your business. Choose to see your work as your passion that brings more pleasure to your life. Commit to falling in love with your business again! A vital business is not the end game, a vital life is! A vital business is not the end game, a vital life is! A business should give you greater life and freedom, not less.

2) **Create a business and life plan** involving goals and direction that you will stick to for the year. Take time out to focus on your business and personal goals for the year. Direction and clarity can help alleviate a lot of the pain.

3) **Spend more time in strategic planning and less in day to day operations.** As part of your business plan this year, remember part of the goal is to make your business "systems" dependent and not "owner" dependent. Don't buy into the belief that you are so irreplaceable that a solid system can't take care of things while you are away.

4) **Hire a business/life coach** to hold you accountable for implementing your business plan and personal goals throughout the year. It's amazing how many people have a plan that they develop and then don't follow. This is because no one is there to hold them accountable!

5) **Develop a good referral marketing system.** Asking for referrals is the most cost-effective way to grow your business and nurture valued relationships. Most small business owners have no marketing system in place for their business so they don't continuously ask for referrals. Remember your clients want to give you referrals. You simply have to show them how and why to refer you and offer some incentive for doing so. The best incentives oftentimes are not monetary. Find a way to help them where they really need it.

6) **Replace the word marketing in regard to your business with the word “educating.”** You educate clients and prospects about what you do. It’s through education that you end up marketing yourself. The word educate also carries more credibility. As an “educator”, first they must get to know you, like you and trust you. Then, they will refer you. That’s the ultimate marketer’s goal!

7) **Detoxify your business by getting rid of toxic employees** that have become liabilities to your organization. Emotionally disengaged employees with bad attitudes are like “cancer” in your company. You need to get rid of them before they destroy the culture of the entire organization.

8) **Listen deeply to upset employees or clients** to find out where your business could possibly use improvement. Paying close attention to where the pain is coming from inside and outside your organization will go a long way to building a positive workplace and vital company.

9) **Plan sufficient breaks from your business to recharge your passion and energy.** Working too many hours leads to “burnout” and poor productivity. A little contrast in your life is great for coming back and gaining some perspective on your business.

10) **Remember you are not your business.** Do not let your entire self-esteem get tied to the business – or have it fluctuate with your company’s success – you will never be able to downshift, get away, or sell. Real wealth is physical/mental health, emotional connections, loving relationships, spiritual well-being, and to know that you matter to others.

The greatest thing about the marking of a new year is that we give ourselves the chance to reinvent ourselves. We can wipe our imaginary slates clean and start again new *hoping* to be more effective and gain greater clarity about our lives and companies. Hope, however, is an illusory belief in action. Write your plan and be more accountable to it.

As a fellow business owner, I understand the desire to earn more, work less and enjoy life more. I also understand that for a business in to get in shape, the owner’s attitude has to shape up first. To do this, we have to take ongoing and consistent mental inventory for the New Year. Observe when negative self-talk makes its way into your business mindset. Rid yourself of the old beliefs that are no longer serving the best interest of you or your company. By getting our business in shape for 2008, we also give our attitudes a workout about what is possible, probable and achievable. Seek support and be patient, but diligent in your aspirations.



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