

Business Bullet ~
Make 2013 Your Best Year Ever

A new year and all its potential for profit and success is waiting for you in the wings. What will you do? Will you be ready for it? And how do you get organized so you will be ready? And where do you start?

Look Back and Learn Lessons

The first thing to do is to take a close look at this past year, because it really sets the baseline of what you can achieve in the coming year. Especially if you take the lessons you learn to heart.

What you want to do is acknowledge and appreciate what happened during the past year. You want to define any useful lessons, both good and bad, and make sure those lessons get applied going forward. How do you do that?

First, ask yourself, "What did I accomplish?" What were all of your achievements? What are all the things that you felt good about?

Listing your achievements is a great way to remind yourself that ultimately you're in charge of your destiny. And it doesn't only have to be about your business. You could be proud of the fact that you spent a lot more time with your family. Or that you finally got into the shape you want to be in. The idea is simply to list all your achievements from the past year.

Once you've done that, the next question to ask yourself is "What were my biggest disappointments over the past year?" the idea here is that you can't really grow the way you want to unless you become aware of the disappointments and failure from your past and take those lessons to heart.

This is important. Remember, you can't do anything about them because they're in the past—over and done. But, it's obviously not too late to do something about your future. And the goal is to learn your lessons from your failures, or your disappointments or your setbacks.

After you've spent some time with your accomplishments and your disappointments, the next question you ask is "What did I learn?" This one takes some time because when you look at your accomplishments and disappointments, you need to ask different questions in order to take away the major lessons. From the accomplishments, you ask why were you able to achieve those things? What caused your success? What helped you along the way?

What you'll often find is that you have a certain way of achieving results and by looking at all the things you've accomplished over the year, you might find similarities in your approach to the things that you achieved.

Now, when you look at your disappointments and try to uncover the take away lesson from there, you have to ask yourself some slightly different questions. What could you have done differently? What can you do to make sure you do differently going forward?

Changing just a few behaviors that caused disappointments in the past or solidifying certain behaviors that have led to your greatest achievements, can improve your chances of success in the coming year in a major way.

Now a Top Three List and One More Question

Now that you have a list of answers to your questions, pick three top lessons from the list. Do this as a commitment to yourself. Those three big lessons—from either your disappointments or your achievements—become and stay a focal point for you moving forward over the coming weeks, months and ultimately the year.

Then, ask yourself one more question, "How did I limit myself in the past?" And what do you need to change in order to stop doing that? The idea is that you want to look at your behavioral patterns like procrastination or wasting too much time in front of the computer, spending too much money, and getting a sense of what these self-imposed limits have cost you.

By getting clarity about (1) how you limit yourself and (2) the cost of those limits, you stand a much greater chance of being able to move forward in the upcoming year by making sure that you don't allow yourself to fall victim to those self-imposed limits in the future.

Now, once you have a review of your past year in front of you, you are ready to begin planning your new year. Correct what behavioral problems got in your way last year, build on those behaviors that worked. Make a list of activities that you want to follow this year to meet your new year's goals. And follow them!

Now, let's move on to how to get organized for the coming year...

Get Organized—Some Steps

The best way to start a new year, both personally and professionally, is to get organized, which means more than just cleaning up your desk. Here are some simple secrets to getting started.

GET MOTIVATED.

Attitude is everything. If you say, "I can't do this," then there's a good chance you won't. However, if you say "I can do this," there's an excellent chance you will.

Take a few moments to think about how wonderful it's going to be when you get that desk organized, or when you make more room in the file cabinets because you have just boxed up and stored those old files you haven't needed in several years. Think of the extra time you will now have because you will be able to find what you need in seconds rather than long minutes, or even an hour or two.

SET GOALS.

Make a list of all the things you want to organize, whether those items are your storage space, your office or your time. When you're done with your list choose ONE item on it. That is going to be your major goal. Now, take that major goal, and break it down into smaller, bite-sized pieces. Those will be your mini-goals. One by one, you're now going to achieve each of your mini-goals, until each one is completed. Once the final one is completed, you will have accomplished your major goal.

Here's an example:

Major Goal: Organize the 3-drawer file cabinet for current business

Mini-Goal 1: Remove non-current files/folders and place in a box

Mini-Goal 2: Make 3 file drawer labels: Short-Term/Project Clients, Long-Term Clients, Potential Clients

Mini-Goal 3: Arrange folders for clients into alphabetical order and place into proper drawer

ESTABLISH DEADLINES.

"I'll get to it, when I have time," never works. You're not going to find the time unless you schedule time. You should set a specific deadline for each of your mini-goals.

Here's an example:

Major Goal: Reorganize Business Storage Room

Mini-Goal 1: Remove everything from the room (March 4)

Mini-Goal 2: Sweep out storage room & make up a room layout design (March 5)

Mini-Goal 3: Move in labeled boxes for far wall and stack; move in all file cabinets (March 6)

Mini-Goal 4: Place shelf unit with paper supplies on wall near door to storage room (March 7)

Mini-Goal 5: Place 2 labeled large plastic bins on opposite wall for temporary storage of items (March 7)

GET GOOD DESK SPACE.

Sometimes when we have clutter around our desk, it is because we don't have enough desk surface space. If you need to add on an additional hutch or shelving for your desk, do it. Then, determine what makes sense for that new space, that will help you stay organized. And if you need to add stackable or individual organizational pieces, do that too, such as in-box or out-box or to-do box, etc. Make sure your space will work for what you need to get your work done in a timely and organized fashion.

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TIME MANAGEMENT.

Speaking of timely, what about your time management? One of the simplest ways to make better use of your time is to re-think how long tasks will actually take, and schedule accordingly. Visualize yourself completing a task from start to finish and what actions you must take. Until you get more accurate at estimating, add 25% to the time you think you'll need to complete a certain task. Another way to realize actual time is to time yourself while you do different things, such as writing proposals, letters, filing projects, working on parts of projects, client meetings, etc. You might be surprised to find out how long things actually take or how quickly they can be done. When running errands between business appointments, always allow for unexpected circumstances such as traffic or long lines.

PURGE PAPER.

Many people accumulate paper clutter due to a fear of throwing away something important, or a concern that it may be needed later. The result is that they end up keeping everything and not being able to discern which things have present or future value and which can be safely discarded. The reality is that 80% of the paper saved "just in case" is never needed again, and if it is, the chances are very good that it can be recreated or obtained from another source. From mail to fax to advertisements and memos, paper is the largest contributor to clutter in an office environment. In order to avoid a rapid build-up of paper, a regular paper maintenance system is a necessity in every office. Remember, your trash can and shredder are your friends.

REAP THE REWARDS.

Sometimes it helps to establish rewards for yourself or others when you take on a reorganization project, no matter what the size. This will add to your motivation, but would need to be something really enticing, not just being able to stand there and look at your uncluttered desk and say "Whew!" When you reach mini-goals, take a break and enjoy something, such as a 15-minute power nap in the backyard hammock, or giving yourself a "chore free" day, take yourself out to lunch, or listen to some music and enjoy a cup of tea. Post your goals, deadlines and pending rewards in a prominent place, where you're sure to see them every day.

Keep in mind that getting organized is a process rather than an event, so don't expect miracles overnight. You can speed the process along by hiring help, such as a professional organizer, who would work side by side with you and keep you focused. If you do plan on tackling the reorganizing project yourself, it's possible to make a good amount of headway in a relatively short time if you have a game plan and some goals in mind before you start. Just start in one place and keep at it, and before long you'll be amazed at the results you see.

So, there you are. Some good activities to help you prepare for growth in 2013. And, depending on how committed you are to it, you could experience HUGE growth in this coming year. I have already started this process (some of these steps I do every January), and have added a couple more steps to the process for this year. And this year will be My Best Year Ever...so far!

I would like to thank some of those business and coaching mentors who send me information every week or every month, such as Rich Schefren from StrategicProfits.com, Janet Attard and others from Business Know-How. We can always learn from others, in fact, I have been doing that all my life and career, and I shall continue to seek out the wisdom and experience of others, and am grateful that there are so many that are willing to share and support us who are business owners, entrepreneurs.

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