



Year End Checklist for Small Businesses

When you think of the end of the year, what do you think of? Most small business owners think of taxes. It's not only a good time to analyze, but also plan ahead for the next year.

Since I developed a business blueprint complete with identified metrics, it's easy to see how I've done throughout the year. A business blueprint acts like a map so you can see where you are and where you need to go consistently aligning all areas of your business, including your external marketing as well as your internal operational systems. The end of the year is a perfect trigger to analyze all areas of your business.

Consider adding these to your checklist this year and get a head start on next year:

- ✓ **Thank your customer/clients.** If you haven't yet thanked your customers this year, you may want to send them a simple thank you note for being a loyal customer or client. You might also want to thank them by providing an irresistible offer, especially since they may have holiday gifts they need to buy and your product or service may be the perfect gift for someone on their shopping list.
- ✓ **Get your financial books in order.** Get all of those receipts ready for your accountant or CPA. Did you donate gently used business attire to your favorite charity? If so, keep your receipts. You may be able to deduct your donation. Above all, get the financial help you need so you can make informed decisions and choices in planning for the new year. Examine your balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statements to see what you need to continue and what you need to change for next year.
- ✓ **Strategically plan your business goals.** Now that you know where your business is, it's time to look at how you got there. Pull out your business plan or blueprint. Did you accomplish what you set out to? Identify the reasons for the success or where you fell short. Make notes on your successes or identify the support you need to reach them next year. This assessment will come in handy when you conduct your business planning for the upcoming year. Remember to identify goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and have a timeframe. Now is the perfect time to assess where you are, where you want to go and plan out how you're going to get there.
- ✓ **Work Smart.** Identify the contacts you've made and review anything you need to follow up on – you might have left some business hanging. Reassess if your networking organizations are working for you. End of the year is a good time to determine if you're going to reinvest in the



same organizations. You might just find that it's time to let go of memberships that are no longer working and explore new ones that will help you expand your business.

- ✓ **Refine your Branding.** Keep things fresh by updating your website, Ezine or Enewsletter and other marketing and branding materials. You need to be exact to attract your ideal clients. Make sure that your clients/customers know exactly who you work with and that your messages match your market.
- ✓ **Set up your marketing systems.** Get a head start on any New Year's Resolutions. Find yourself saying, "I wish I had a sales person who could work 24/7?" You may need to implement automatic lead generation systems and set up your marketing systems so they work on autopilot. Examine other internal systems and processes you need to implement next year to help leverage your time, energy and resources.
- ✓ **Plan for your personal development for next year.** Whenever I invest in my own personal development, it pays off a hundred fold. Plan to grow your business by growing your own knowledge. Identify the training or resources you need to take your business to new levels next year whether it is a specific program, mastermind group, or mentor.

The old saying is true: businesses that fail to plan, plan to fail. With the distraction of daily events, it's easy to put off business planning. Use this simple checklist to determine how you did and to get a jump start on next year.