

3 Hours A Day, 3 Days A Week

One of the things I try to teach every new sales agent is to set goals and then follow up on those goals. Over the years I have seen many sales agents start off with great enthusiasm and energy. But it takes a bit of time to realize the benefits of your hard work. Many sales agents lose their motivation just when they are starting to really build up some steam while other agents keep plugging away. We have noticed that all of the agents that have the ability to stay focused for at least one year become very successful. A good general rule to follow is 3 hours a day 3 days a week. I have included an article written by Dan Heath that talks about goals vs. resolutions. Setting goals when prospecting for new businesses is a definite way to be successful as a merchant referral agent.

Make Goals Not Resolutions

By: Dan & Chip Heath

Your dismal New Year's resolution record--and what your business can learn from it.

Imagine you're a consultant to the New Year's Resolution industry. Your clients are a deeply dysfunctional bunch. Every January, they proudly announce their resolutions. Two weeks later, most have already veered off plan, and by mid-spring, they may not even remember having a resolution at all. To find another set of clients who blow their goals so consistently, you'd have to start serving defense contractors.

If these were goals, mind you, we'd all consider ourselves utter failures, but with our resolutions, we get a pass. So how do you make sure your business is setting goals rather than resolutions?

To sniff out whether your business is pursuing a goal or a resolution, follow the fun. What's fun about goals is the end point, the completion. If your goal is to "grow sales by 13% in the Southeast region," and you nail it, you're ecstatic. What's fun about resolutions, on the other hand, is the announcement. Think of a stereotypical offsite meeting where a team has the sudden epiphany: What we really need to do is "Amaze the Customer!" That's a resolution, and its unveiling probably feels as good to the team members as their new-year illusions of running triathlons or spending more time with their kids.

Resolutions feel good coming out of our mouths, but they lack enforcement. We all know that when congresspeople can't achieve a goal, like passing a decent health-care bill, they'll pass a resolution instead, which allows them to declare how irritated they are about the state of health care. (So next time you miss your quota, try sending around an Email Resolution: "Resolved: I deplore the people of the Southeast and their hateful unwillingness to buy 13% more product from me.")

Add publicity and accountability to a resolution, and you get a goal. At Microsoft, for instance, employees set ambitious goals for themselves each year, called "commitments," that are created in consultation with their peers and supervisors and later made public. Peer pressure, or even just peer awareness, is a powerful motivating factor. So, does your IT director know your marketing director's goals? Is there a public folder for goals on your intranet?

It's possible to turn a lofty resolution--to get in shape, to be a better dad, to "amaze the customer"--into an achievable goal. But to pull it off, your present self may have to outsmart your future self. For instance, if you go on a diet, you'll immediately banish all sugary and fatty snacks from the cupboard. Because you know that in a weak moment, your future self will not resist the Call of the Oreo. It's not easy to change your behavior; it's easier to change your environment, which in turn will change your behavior.

Strangely, it suffices to change your mental environment. The psychologists Peter Gollwitzer and Veronika Brandstätter studied college students who had to write a paper about how they spent Christmas Eve. The catch was that they were supposed to submit the paper by December 26. At this point, the paper is in resolution territory: It feels good to imagine yourself getting a good grade by writing the paper. But, as with January gym memberships, the outcome was not pretty. Only a third of the students got around to submitting a paper.

A second group of students were given the same assignment but were required to note exactly

when and where they intended to write the report (i.e., "in my Dad's office on Christmas morning before everyone gets up"). A whopping 75% of these students wrote the report. The act of visualizing yourself in Dad's office, writing your paper, changes the way you respond to that environment when you encounter it. Now when you see Dad's office chair, an association springs to mind: Get to work. You've managed to outsmart your future self.

Dozens of studies have shown similar results. When people took the time to visualize exactly when and where they would do what they needed to do, they met their goals. People took their vitamins more regularly, college students exercised more, and knee replacement patients did their physical therapy more diligently (and walked sooner as a result).

What works for exercise and eating right also works for marketing and operations. So if you're worried that one of your business goals may be a resolution, make it more concrete. Take the time to visualize when, where, and how it will be carried out.

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To keep goals from becoming resolutions, also keep an eye on your social environment. A recent New York Times article showcased research that suggests "obesity is contagious." (The stock price at Hardee's parent company probably skyrocketed.) The research showed that if you hang around fat people, you'll get fatter. Well, yes. Here's a spoiler for some future studies: Republicanism is also contagious. So is plastic surgery. Even spitting is contagious (for proof, just watch baseball). You decide what's normal behavior by looking around you.

And that's why your organization's culture will often determine what's a resolution and what's a goal. Some cultures are strong enough to make ambiguous, unenforceable behaviors possible. "Amaze the customer" could be a goal at Nordstrom or Disney, but it's a resolution at The Limited. Staying thin is a goal in the fashion industry and a resolution at Cracker Barrel.

So if you want your own New Year's resolution to become a viable goal, you need to surround yourself with resolution achievers. Good luck with that. It would probably be easier to soothe

yourself by hanging around FEMA employees. Indifference is contagious.