



A Strong Start to the New Year

Doesn't Have to Be Expensive or Exhausting

By Debbie Manning



Hopefully you are in your current occupation because you really believe in your business or product. Most likely, you began your business because of a passion for your field of work and you had great plans of how to spread the opportunity you offer to others.

The beginning of the new year is always a good time to revisit these plans to ensure that they continue to effectively communicate what you do so that others can find just as much value in your service or business as you do.

Many businesses and individuals are overwhelmed by the thought of a marketing plan. It seems to come with a stigma that makes it seem too official and concrete. Think of your plan, instead, as your "to do" list for the New Year.

To begin, list each month (or season depending on your type of business). Brainstorm who your potential customers might be by evaluating your current regular customers. After creating a list of potential clients (your target audience), think about how you are going to communicate with them during each particular month or season. Make a goal to focus on for that period that you think will grow your business.

This is also a good time to evaluate your existing marketing support materials. Did any of them work particularly well in the past? Are there any you'd like to repeat in the future?

A good graphic designer specializes in creating support materials for large and small businesses alike. Essentially he or she will create a partnership with you so that he or she becomes your marketing department. The role of your graphic designer is to take your ideas and transform them graphically to create web and print layouts that effectively present their ideas to their target audience.

Decide what is working for your business and what is not. Enlist the help of co-workers and friends to revisit your image and market penetra-

tion in your business niche. In keeping with the "New Year's Resolution" idea, January is a good time to update logos and marketing materials, and to freshen your website.

Determine what your personal strengths are. Technology and networking events provide so many opportunities for you to enlist the help of others. Mutually beneficial power partnerships will make a better use of both your time and money. You will be most successful if you remember that you don't have to do *everything* and focus the majority of your time on your central talents. Local support companies can partner with you and share some of the burdens and opportunities of either a small or large company.

Remember to update your tools. Many web pages need updating at the start of a new year. Calendar pages, special events and promotions often pertain to the past year. Nothing turns clients off more than old news. Potential business might not be able to tell if you are still in business or if your products are current. Often web pages seem like a time-consuming beast to conquer. Make it easy and effective by dedicating just an hour during the week to sit down and look at your own web page. Start a list for each page of your site indicating what needs to be updated and new products and promotions that should be included. Turn this over to your web page designer and feel confident that you are starting your year off ahead of the game.

Promote your updates. If you find, as you go through your website, that a lot of services or products have improved or expanded since last year, make sure your clients know! It is often surprising how much changes in one year so revisit collected mailing lists or potential clients.



New products and services might appeal to those who might not have even been interested in your previous options. Again, make it easy for yourself so you don't get bogged down or overwhelmed early in the year. Jot a couple ideas of new themes, products or ideas that you feel you need to get out to the public. Turn that over to your graphic designer to put together a professional, inexpensive

and effective post card to mail to the lists you found. Your graphic designer can work with you to create a piece that is both effective and general so you can use it all year long. Consider printing extras to hand out at networking events or share with potential clients that you meet so you can give them something to hang on to and remember your business. Use this like an enlarged business card that not only includes logo and contact information but also services and specials. Consider a promotion or call to action that will encourage them to revisit your business.

DebManning Design offers a full range of marketing resources and materials to partner with you for your company's success. To explore the opportunities we present, visit our web page at www.debmanning.com. Whether your company is large or small, we can provide the resources you need to make you stand out in your field. DebManning Design is also responsible for the layout of the DuPage Woman Newspaper™.

Call us for a free web page consultation or to plan how to ensure your image represents your business accurately and professionally.

Think of your marketing plan as your month-by-month "to do" list for the upcoming year.

DebManning Design

www.debmanning.com

(630)668-0603

Partnering with you for your business success!