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# — THE GREAT — RESTART

Strategies For Getting Back In Business And Going Forward.

## ***Sales Opportunities...***

### **PLAN TO COME BACK**

As we get close to finishing this particularly challenging year, it might be time to look at goal setting for 2021. We have more insight into our sales career, customer base and market segments. How can we use these data points to build a successful plan for next year?

What is a sales plan? And why should you care?

A **sales plan** is the "who, where, why, when and how" that will guide you to hitting your sales goals for the year.

Big picture aside, a sales plan is a month-to-month forecast of the level of sales you expect to achieve and how you're going to get there. It covers past sales, market concerns, your specific niches, who your customers are, and how you're going to find them, engage with them, and sell to them.

Armed with the information you'll compile within your sales plan, you can quickly identify any upcoming problems, sales droughts, or opportunities—and then do something about them. It may seem like a lot of work to develop a sales plan template at this point, but once you answer all these questions you'll be in a place to take your sales (and brand) to the next level.

### **1. Set realistic sales goals in your sales plan**

Your sales plan needs an end goal. You need a number—either sales or customers or whatever metric you choose—that will tell you whether or not what you've done has been a success. I've written about setting realistic sales goals before, but what it all comes down to is determining what realistically you can bring in based on the size of the market, your goals, and the experience and resources available to you. When setting your sales goals, avoid wishful thinking. You want your business to grow, so it's understandable that you might be over-optimistic in developing your sales plan. Start by looking at last year's forecast and results (give yourself some grace here as 2020 was very unusual). Were you being realistic? For new businesses, avoid working out the level of sales you need to be viable and putting this as your figure.

### **2. Define clear deadlines and milestones in your sales plan**

In order to know whether or not the assumptions you're making in your sales plan are close to the mark, you need to break that big number down into smaller expectations with strict deadlines. We call these milestones and they're incredibly handy in tracking whether or not your sales plan is on the right path. Again, start with last year's numbers (if you have them). Track how sales revenues increased or declined annually and compare your company to the industry standards. This will give you a real, frontline take of what milestones to set in your sales plan. Next, it's time to set your milestones. These need to be specific with clear goals and deadlines. For example, you might want to increase your customer base by 20% or increase sales 50% for a specific product. Or even increase the percentage of users on a paid plan by 15% by mid-year. Whatever the milestone is, be clear what your expectations are and set a hard deadline for your team to work towards.

### **3. Pick a niche to focus on and build traction in that vertical**

First, we need to know the market we're in and the niche we're going to occupy so we can properly position our business for growth (and to achieve the goals in your sales plan).

What's a business niche? Essentially, it's what your business specializes in, but it goes a bit deeper than that. A niche

is the space your business occupies, not just with your products, but with your content, your company culture, your branding, and your message. It's how people identify with you and search you out over the competition.

- How big is the market?
- Is there a built-in demand for what you're selling?
- What's your current market position: Including any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats?
- Who are your competitors? What are *their* strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats?

A vertical doesn't limit you. It focuses you.

#### **4. Understand your target customers**

It makes no sense spending time and money chasing after the wrong prospects, so don't allow them to make their way into your sales plan. Once you know your niche, it's time to dig into finding out as much as possible about your target customer in order to properly sell to them.

So, just what should you look to define about your audience within your sales plan? That depends on your company and your market, but start with basics like company size (in terms of employees or turnover), geographical information, industry, job title, etc.—any traits that are common across your best customers or the types of customers you'd love to have.

Also, don't forget to think about whether they're going to be a good 'fit'. If this is a long-term relationship, you're developing rather than a one-night stand, you want to make sure you're speaking the same language and share a similar culture and vision.

- *Leslie*

A stylized orange and yellow phoenix logo with its wings spread, set against a dark blue background.

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