

A Guide for Business Owners Who Want to Succeed in 2017



The new year brings with it new opportunities for change and success, and business owners often welcome the new year full of new goals and objectives. While each business has its own set of challenges and goals, there are some steps that most business owners can take to prepare themselves and their business for a great year.

1. Take a Good Look at Positions and People

Your business is only as strong as your weakest link. Now is the time to put extra time into year-end reviews and make some tough decisions. If people aren't pulling their weight, put them on improvement plans, assign a mentor to them, or let them go. It's also a good time to award promotions and raises to people who have proven themselves to be assets to the company.

For large businesses, the new year also provides owners with an opportunity to diversify your workforce, executives, and boards. Organizations that have become stagnant or that are looking for new opportunities for growth often find that [diversifying their board](#) is one of the best ways to improve decision-making. Introducing various perspectives and points of view influences decisions and is a strategic move that business owners can make by adding qualified women and minorities to their boards.

2. Look at Trends

[Trends](#) often change the course of business quickly, so it's a good idea to look at the trends that are occurring and identify ways that they can help you grow not only this year but also in the future. While some trends may be nothing more than a passing phase, other [trends](#) take hold and leave businesses that don't jump on board in the dust. If your competitors are adopting to a trend, you had better do the same. Your customer data and other Big Data is a good place to start when identifying trends. You may want to consider buying habits,

customer affinities, and social media traffic when looking for trends that can benefit your business in 2017.

3. Update Your Website and Social Media

Engaging with customers is one of the best ways to prepare your business for a great new year. You can do so by [updating your website](#), refreshing your content, and providing customers with information and convenient links. Another way to get ready for the new year is to energize your social media and marketing campaigns. Make sure that your offers, images, and links are current and that your brand message is consistent across platforms.

If you have not optimized your site for [mobile](#), now is the time to do so. Customers are searching online using smartphones and tablets more than desktops and laptops for the first time, and they expect your site to deliver the same information no matter which device they use. Customers also are making purchases using mobile devices and looking for customer support using mobile as well. This is one trend that is not going to go away, and you need to be meeting customer expectations with your site on every platform if you are going to head off customer attrition.

4. Reflect and Plan Ahead

The new year also is a good time to reflect on the previous year. Consider your successes and failures, set your goals and objectives, and make your business plan for 2017. One business planning strategy is to describe your business from the [future perspective](#); imagine what you want your business to look like at the end of 2017 and then work backward to plan the steps to make it happen. Working from the future back will help you clearly set your objectives and focus your plan on getting there.

5. Streamline Your Business Processes

Once you have your 2017 business plan in place, make sure that you are prepared to follow the plan efficiently and successfully. One of the ways to do this is to [streamline business processes](#). Of course, you want to operate as efficiently as possible in order to keep your costs low and improve your bottom line. Small business owners should look for a software program or technology tool that can help you automate some of your processes and handle your workflow more efficiently. For example, if you aren't using an integrated tax preparation and payroll software, consider investing in one. Keep in mind that software and technology purchases will count as business expenses at tax time, too.

Business owners have a great deal to consider as a new year begins. By taking steps early in the year, you can prepare your business for a great 2017.

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