

# Get in gear for the end of the year!

As 2009 comes to a close, it is important to get organized for 2010. The holiday season can take a lot out of any type of business, and for a lot of our service members the start of a new calendar year is the beginning of a hectic schedule. I know you are busy, but try to set aside a little time for planning and education of your game plan for 2010. I think you'll find that a little forethought now can save you a lot of time, frustration and money down the road. I think you'll also find that some goal setting done now (during a natural break) will benefit you organizationally. Below is a check list of planning and goal setting efforts for years end.



**1. Check the rear view-** Make a list of things that worked and things that didn't in 2009. Why do you think some of your successes occurred? Why do you think some of your activities didn't go exactly as planned? I once heard successful business planning referred to as "accentuating your strengths while minimizing your weaknesses". It's hard to do that sort of planning without an honest look at your past.

**2. Gear up for inventory-** An effective inventory count plan and inventory control mechanisms can make a huge difference for many different types of businesses. At its heart, inventory control points to the effective use of cash to obtain resources by priority level in the pursuit of profit (or to prevent loss). For retailers or restaurants, inventory turnover ratios (ITR) are an important measurement of your business health. For service industries, inventory can help determine efficiency. [For a detailed perspective on inventory control, click HERE.](#) Remember, your assets extend beyond paper, pencils and products, so the inventory period is a good time to identify the intellectual assets within your company. By realizing the strengths and weaknesses of your staff and infrastructure, you can plan a utilization strategy to generate the highest and best use of individuals within your organization.

**3. Set your marketing calendar-** You are busy. You need to market your business properly, but your hectic schedule means that some things get thrown together at the last minute. Sound familiar? A marketing calendar which identifies specific marketing activities throughout the year, budgets, production time frames and run times can aid you in keeping ahead of the game. If you want a great example of a marketing calendar, Barbara Wold's "The Yearbook" is available to check out of the Emporia Main Street business library. Yes, we have books and resources that are free for members to check out and utilize for business improvement. Stop by and hone your 2010 calendar ASAP.

**4. How's your budget?** 2009 was an extremely volatile year. Some businesses boomed while others struggled. The make-up of the market has changed, and will continue to change. So, how's your budget? If you don't know the answer to that question, this might be the year to sit down with your accountant and talk about budgeting and control mechanisms. If you haven't invested in accounting software like Quickbooks, Peach Tree, Microsoft Accounting or other programs, you may consider upgrading this year. Knowledge is power, and if you can't track inflows and outflows quickly you risk putting yourself at a competitive disadvantage.

**5. Where would you like your business to be this time next year?** Realistic goal setting is an important part of any successful business. If you don't have bench marks, how can you determine your level of success? One year, five year and ten year plans are important for businesses and organizations (even if those plans call for business transition). Take a moment to ask yourself the business equivalent of "what do I want to be when I grow up?", and then start laying the road map to chart a path from where you are now to where you want to be. Get creative. [For tips on the creative process in business, click HERE.](#)

**6. Formulate a strategy beyond your four walls-** I still talk to businesses that are shocked when people don't know their business, who they are or what they do. "But I've been in Emporia for (insert number) years! How could they not know?!?" It's not that people have never heard of you, its that they have a hard time contextualizing information. How do you add context to those advertisements people see and hear? You get involved. Join a committee within Main Street or another organization. Sign up to help a charity or simply show up to a fun event. Listen for opportunities that will inevitably present themselves. When you hear about people "drumming up business" remember that if you bang a drum inside your four walls your staff and present customers hear it. If you bang a drum outside your four walls a significant amount of the community can hear it. Make involvement part of YOUR strategy for 2010, and include involvement on your handy marketing calendar. It's cheap, easy and it simply takes a little of your time.

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