

## START THE YEAR S.M.A.R.T - TIPS TO SETTING 2017 BUSINESS GOALS

January. The month full of promise, optimism and opportunity. Traditionally a time to take stock of the year that was and make plans for the one ahead, it's no wonder that entire industries - take health & wellness for instance - capitalise on this universal fresh start.

As a travelpreneur January presents the perfect time to take a step back, review what you did last year, lock down what you want to achieve this year and put in motion plans to make it happen.

But to get the most out of your infectious enthusiasm to kick 2017's butt, you need some structure. Otherwise there's a risk of your business's goals being forgotten by March along with your commitment to meet your other New Year's Resolutions.

### Get SMART

Washington Corporate Planner, George T. Doran, is credited with creating the world's most popular goal-setting technique, S.M.A.R.T in 1981. Whether applied to your personal life or in business, it provides an easy-to-use framework where goals are set so that they are:

- S: Specific - target a specific area for improvement
- M: Measurable - quantify, or at least suggest, an indicator of process
- A: Assignable - give the task to a specific person
- R: Realistic - be honest about whether the goal is achievable
- T: Timely - be clear on when the deadline is

Take a minute and apply this to your business. Your goals may look something like this:

In 2017 you aspire to double your sales, become more profitable, expand your team and find a new source of revenue.

All are worthy goals, yet are too vague. Now, apply a SMART lens to these goals:

In 2017, you want to increase sales/ turnover by 25%. As a team of just you, yourself and yours truly, doubling sales is unrealistic within 12 months as you don't have the capacity to do all the work. Yet, by aiming to increase sales by 25%, you can grow the business AND become more profitable as you won't need new staff and their salary to pick up on the extra work.

To generate a 25% increase in new sales, commit to taking all your regular business contacts out for a coffee - or at least make a phone call while the year is still young - to see what travel needs they may have. Perhaps a family wedding is on the cards or they received a big bonus in December and want to go on a tropical island holiday. By reducing your reliance on email, you'll be able to have a

real conversation and strengthen your relationships to boot. It's much easier to say no to an email - or not respond at all - than it is during a phone call or when face to face.

By downsizing your expectations from doubling sales to increasing turnover by 25%, you'll also likely see results faster too. This will boost your confidence and motivate you to aim for the next goal.

### **Set boundaries**

While being SMART will help you grow your business in 2017 - as long as you commit to the process and make your goals realistic - here are a few other quick tips to help you focus:

- Set boundaries: In an always-on world it is very easy to get sucked into working 24/7. Our smartphones and laptops are always with us, and, thanks to increased access to the internet, we are always available. It is up to you to decide when you are working and when you are not. Answering emails at 11pm at night sets a precedent and is not a healthy way to run a business. Stick to business hours as far as possible, and, when you do need to work overtime, make it the exception rather than the rule.
- Ditch the digital: As a society we're too dependent on our devices. Constantly checking your phone or answering emails at odd hours is a bad habit as you don't get any time to switch off. Your brain needs a time-out as much as your body does. Make an effort to shut down all the gadgets in the evening and give yourself a digital break.
- Wean yourself off email: What once was a quick way to communicate has become an unending avalanche of inbox messages. Managing email is a task all on its own and you can quickly get into a rut of sending and receiving without getting anything done. Rather set times in the day when you answer mails and for the rest pick up the phone instead - you'll get a much faster answer. Not only will it improve your business relationships, your and your client's inbox will be lighter for it.
- WhatsApp: Be careful not to replace email with WhatsApp. While it is perceived to be a quick way to reach someone, the more people who use it, the faster it will look like an overflowing email inbox. Be respectful of other peoples' WhatsApps and only send one if there is no alternative way to communicate.
- Eat well: Running a business isn't always smooth sailing. For most of the day you need your wits about you and have to think on your feet. What you put in your body will impact your ability and performance. Instead of fatty and surgery foods, choose more fruits, vegetables and lean protein. Limit your caffeine and alcohol intake and increase your water consumption. If your diet is in need of its own makeover too, apply the S.M.A.R.T principles

and make changes slowly and realistically. This mental and physical boost will be sure to have a positive impact on your business too.

Following these tips could make 2017 a very good business year. It just takes a bit of motivation in the beginning to set the plan in motion and commitment to follow it through. There is nothing stopping you from reaching those big goals, but start slowly and tackle it in S.M.A.R.T chunks. That way you'll enjoy the progress you make along the way, and build your confidence up too.

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