

Freshen up and put your best foot forward in the New Year Todd Shepard

The craziness of 2020 and 2021, though not forgotten, is beginning to settle into the past making room for a slightly different future (hopefully) full of promise and prosperity. Are you prepared to face the changes being thrust upon us as business owners? More specifically, do you have a *PLAN* in place to help you navigate the new normal?

If you've ever attended a sales training seminar you have undoubtedly heard the old saying, '*if you fail to plan you are planning to fail.*' This rings true in the coming year as much or more than ever.

If you have not done so in the past few months the time is *now* to dust off that business plan and bring it up to date. If it has been years since you looked at it or maybe you never actually got around to actually writing one you may want to consider it. Today's changing times are demanding you give this part of your business some serious attention. If your old plan had your advertising focus on the little Nickel papers or other print, and even local TV and radio you may be missing a huge group of potential buyers. Times have changed and they are changing daily. Having a great website is now being replaced by having a complete social media presence. Colorful wording is being replaced by targeted video. A live sales presentation and test drive is being replaced by an online touchless purchase experience. In fact a recent study indicated as high as 25% young car shoppers prefer to shop and purchase online. This number is likely to grow among all age brackets due to the higher exposure to daily online activities such as Zoom meetings for business and pleasure, grocery and dining delivery, and more.

Where to begin? The first step is to review the most current version of your business plan and make an honest evaluation as to what has worked and what has not. Decide if your business practices reflect your desires or if they are focused on creating revenue for the business. For instance, if you are huge fan of the Ford standard cab pickup and buy them whenever you can yet you haven't sold one in six months it's easy to identify you need to change this strategy. It is a little different determining what is working on your advertising. The best way is to begin asking every caller, every visitor this simple question, "what prompted you to contact us today, how did you hear about us?" In a short time, you will be able to identify which ads are working and which are a waste of money. The most important part of this process is to write everything down. As salespeople we often rely on our gut feelings so sometimes it takes seeing the data in black and white to realize a change is in order.

The next step is to adjust your plan, removing the obsolete or ineffective items and adding in the items and tasks proven to work. If you are wondering what to expect moving forward, what are the best ways to market, and what needs added to your plan to ensure success moving forward you are not alone. When you've reached this point pat yourself on the back for a job well done. It means you have assessed your strengths and weaknesses, cut the waste, and identified the specific areas where you can either seek professional assistance or choose to dive deeper in your research.

Your business plan is not a cost cutting budget analysis. It is a plan to help you optimize your resources to create revenue more efficiently for your business. It should be referred to on a regular basis and reviewed or updated every six months. If you are presented with an opportunity by an advertiser, the details should be compared against the business plan. If it doesn't fit, you pass on that opportunity, saving the information until your next six-month plan review. If it's a good idea now it will be a good idea in six months. If it is, you can choose to implement it then.

Need some guidance? WSIADA, NIADA, and those of us who are affiliate members provide limitless resources to help you navigate your business in the coming year.

Freshen up and put your best foot forward in the New Year Todd Shepard