

Back to Basics for 2009

Written by Terry Melkus, ADDIE Solutions, LLC

The beginning of a new year is always the appropriate time to take an inventory of the current state of your business and to implement your strategic business plan for 2009. Your strategic plan determines where your business is going over the next year or more and how it's going to get there.

You have probably heard the saying "There are three types of people in the world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what's happening!" My challenge to you in 2009 - Be the person who makes things happen! Make your plan, work your plan, and as Jeffrey Gitomer would say "Antennas Up" - constantly observe what is going on around you. Your observations will generate ideas to apply to your services or products. Your ability to observe must be as good as your ability to sell and listen.

Are you observant of what is going on in your own business? What about your customers business? Take the time to stop, look, and listen. You will be amazed how much you will learn and the thoughts and ideas you will generate as a simple step of observation. It will create insight and help you "make things happen" in your business.

I like to look at it as "Back to the Basics" and narrow it down to two areas – People and Processes. They work hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. They both have to be in equal balance in order to make the business work and create the solid foundation to build upon. Three tips to help you get back to the basics:

Make sure the right people are on the bus. Not only do you need to make sure that the right people are on the bus, you need to also make sure they are on the right seat of the bus and headed in the right direction. Is everyone on board with the vision, mission, values, and goals of the business? How important is this to your organization? Zappos.com is so serious about having the right employees on the team that at the end of the new hire training program for their call center, the new employee is offered \$1,000 to quit. Zappos would rather spend the money up front to eliminate a poor match than to pay the price that the wrong employee could cost them in the long run. They are serious about customer loyalty and if you do business with them, their commitment to awesome customer service is crystal clear. How committed are you?

Make sure what you are doing is efficient and effective. There is no better time than now in today's economy to sharpen the saw and fine tune what you are doing. If you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get the same results. Have you heard the story of the ham? A young newly married couple baked their first ham. The new bride cut a couple inches off the end of the ham, threw it away and baked the rest. The new groom, confused, ask her why she did it that way. She replied that she did it that way because her Mom did it that way. He proceeded to ask his mother-in-law the reason she cut the end off the ham before baking. She replied that it was the way her mother did it. He went to the Grandmother and asked her why she cut the end off the ham. She nicely explained that she never had a pan big enough for her ham. Don't assume because you have "always done it that way" that it is the most efficient and effective way. It is a good time to look at the processes of your business and make sure they are efficient and effective. What changes can you make?

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Make sure you are open and willing to seek outside professional advice. Sometimes it takes an outside perspective to obtain fresh and creative ideas and identify improvement opportunities. What happens is you pigeon hole your success because you have not expanded your paradigm. You will have a tendency to do what is comfortable. When you get an outside perspective, it almost always opens up new channels of thinking and leads to initiatives for meeting your business goals. It is very rewarding to help clients identify areas of opportunity to improve their business and watch them grow and prosper. Are you willing to seek outside professional advice? Could you benefit knowing the key drivers to employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction?

I wish you and your business a prosperous, happy & healthy 2009. Have fun and enjoy your newfound valuable information through your observations. “Make it happen” in 2009! You can do it!