

Compliments of LMS Strategies

ISSUE II

BUSINESS

IN ACTION

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LMS Strategies

ISSUE 11
COVER PRICE \$6.99

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Front of Tear Out Card 1

Embrace Challenges to Unlock Your Potential

Difficult days are inevitable on your business journey, but adopting a *growth mindset* can help you see professional setbacks as building blocks for your business.

Save this card to discover the power of changing your mindset along with daily tips for doing so.



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LMS Strategies

Back of Tear Out Card 1



WHAT IS A GROWTH MINDSET?

Noted by Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck, PhD, a growth mindset is one that believes you can improve through deliberate effort and challenging experiences. People with this mindset are open to curiosity, learning, and progress.

WHY SHOULD YOU CHANGE YOUR THINKING?

Many people have a fixed mindset, believing that their abilities are set in stone. Naturally, this can prevent growth; if you allow your mind to tell you that you're not good enough, talented enough, or smart enough, chances are high you won't improve. Knowing that growth is possible is the first step toward a successful future.

HOW CAN YOU ADOPT THIS MINDSET?

- Be open to feedback, and choose to take it constructively.
- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable, trying new or challenging ventures often.
- Don't let your failures define you; instead, learn from them.
- Practice diligence and take daily steps toward your goals so gradual change can occur.



Happy New Year!

I am thrilled to announce that we just launched LMS Strategies - www.lmsstrategies.com - a consultancy focused on helping Construction Supply businesses drive performance through executive coaching, sales team improvement, enhancing operational performance and winning the M&A game!

Currently we are working with a select group of clients, and we are humbled with the trust they put in our team. Some of our recent engagements include successfully navigating an asset sale to a friendly competitor, executive 1:1 coaching, speaking at a client's annual meeting, providing financing, sales training, and strategic planning.

Our core mission is simple - use our real-life experience to help leaders like you achieve your goals and grow your bottom line, sustainably. Additionally, if we don't add value to your organization, we don't charge you. It's that simple.

Hence, you're receiving this magazine - Business in Action. Our goal is for this unique publication, focused on thought leadership, to help you navigate today's crazy business climate. Every issue includes executive spotlights, sales and marketing tips, leadership-building tools, and entrepreneurial insights to help you look at your organization from a different lens, understand your markets better and, ultimately, drive additional success. Each article in this magazine includes an actionable tip, so you can spend less time wondering "How do I do that?" and more time doing it.

I hope that you find these articles engaging, informative and value-adding. If for some reason you don't, please give me a call and let me know where we can improve.

In closing ... if you would like to setup a confidential call to see how we can help your business thrive, give me a call. I'd love the opportunity to have a conversation, catch up, learn more about your business and see if we can help. Rest assured - if you need a hand and we're not right for you ... we will gladly help you find someone that is.

That's it for now ... have a great first quarter and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

**Thanks for your time,
Abhi**



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LMS Strategies

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Better Brainstorming

Tricks for getting your creative juices flowing. BY LAUREN KIM

WHEN YOU'RE FEELING stuck, brainstorming is a simple technique that enables you to come up with many different ideas, no matter the situation. Whether you're doing it solo or working with your team, follow these suggestions to help you get started.

Set your environment
 Choose a space that will encourage creative thinking, such as at your desk; for a group session, you might want to provide a variety of seating options. If you're planning a virtual collaboration, you can use an online tool like Mural.

Focus on quantity
 Brainstorming works best when ideas can be expressed freely, so try to withhold judgment to avoid limiting creativity. Aim to gather as many ideas as possible, but set a time limit to ensure you stay on track.

Get thoughts down
 The next step is choosing a way to document the ideas produced, whether it's by jotting them on paper or a whiteboard or documenting your session via a video or voice memo. If you are brainstorming as a group, nominate someone to take charge of this task.



Choose your techniques

There are many ways to brainstorm, including:

Brainwriting
 This group brainstorming method requires everyone participating to write an idea down and pass it along. The next person then reflects on it and tries to come up with additional related thoughts.

Mind mapping
 Place a central topic in the center of your page or whiteboard. Then come up with a few related main ideas, connecting them to your central one with tree-like branches. As you brainstorm, branch off into additional subtopics.

Storyboarding
 Use this technique to create or chart a path to a desired goal. First note your ideas on sticky notes or postcards. Then put them in a sequential pattern to visualize the beginning, middle, and end of a process, such as the execution of a marketing campaign. ■

Take Action
 Gather your team together to try one of these brainstorming techniques.

The Benefits of Personal Branding

Personal branding gives consumers insight into your values, expertise, and unique perspectives, which can in turn create more growth opportunities for your organization.

BY ALLISON GOMES



In today's competitive business landscape, personal branding has become a powerful tool for entrepreneurs and business owners alike. Gone are the days when a company's success relied solely on its products or services. Now customers are more interested in pulling back the curtain to learn about the individuals behind the brand. This shift in consumer behavior highlights the significance of personal branding and its potential impact on the growth of your business.

→ **What it is and why it's important**

Personal branding is the art of crafting a unique brand identity for an individual separate from their business. Just as organizations promote themselves through various online, social media, and print marketing, it's essential for individuals to market themselves to their intended audience. There are many ways to approach this, but it typically involves showcasing your skills, your experiences, and, above all, your authentic personality. By harnessing the power of personal branding, you proactively shape and control your public image and establish a clear and distinctive identity.

In turn, consumers gain valuable insights into the person behind the service or product they are considering, empowering them to make informed purchasing decisions. In fact, according to the consulting agency Gartner, consumers are three times more likely to support brands that highlight personal value over business value. Here are the three biggest reasons why personal branding has such a big impact.

Builds trust and credibility

Your personal brand is like an extension of your professional identity in that it allows you to further demonstrate your expertise, values, and unique perspective. By letting others see who you are as an individual, you become better able to establish yourself as an authority within your industry that potential consumers can both relate to and rely upon. And when they trust you, they'll be more likely to support your organization.

Differentiates you from competitors

In a world where countless businesses offer similar products or services, a personal brand goes a long way toward setting you apart from others in your field. By staying true to your authentic self rather than putting on a front (as discussed later), you can develop a distinct identity that will resonate with more potential consumers. This can then lead to increased visibility for you and your brand, creating more demand for your products or services.

Grows your business

Your personal brand can serve as a solid foundation for scaling your business. When



Personal branding is the art of crafting a unique brand identity for an individual separate from their business.

develop a brand that not only allows you to stand out from the pack but also creates more growth opportunities for your organization.

Define your core values

Above all, your brand should give insight into what drives you, which means you'll need to define your core values, passions, and unique attributes. Consider your expertise and what makes you someone who should be taken seriously within your field. This self-reflection will form the foundation of what you use in your personal branding.

it's synonymous with the values, quality, and customer experience associated with your business, delegating tasks, hiring employees, and expanding your operations all become easier. Your personal brand will provide a guiding light for your team, ensuring consistency and helping you maintain the trust you have built with them and your

consumers. Your business can then grow and thrive on those values and the expertise you've established.

→ **How to brand yourself**

Building a strong personal brand will take time since it's something that requires careful planning and consistent effort. However, by taking a few key steps, you can begin to



Communicate your story

Once you've established your core values, work to develop a compelling brand story that aligns with them. Communicate who you are, what you do, and why it should matter to your target audience. Your story should resonate with these potential consumers and evoke an emotional connection that makes them want to work with you.

Provide valuable content

Consistently develop beneficial content that fits your brand and addresses the needs of your target audience. This can include blog posts, videos, or other social media content. Share your expertise, insights, and advice, and further engage with your audience by responding to comments and fostering discussions. This will open a path for potential consumers to connect with you on a deeper level.

Establish yourself as an industry leader

Position yourself as a thought leader in your industry by seeking opportunities to demonstrate your expertise through public speaking engagements, webinars, and guest blogging. For instance, you could write articles for industry publications or join well-known podcasts as a guest. By consistently sharing valuable knowledge and opinions both on your own platforms and through other avenues, you can enhance your credibility and visibility to potential consumers.



Be authentic and consistent

Authenticity is crucial to personal branding because of how it resonates with an audience, so always stay true to yourself and the values you've established. Consistency is also key for building trust and recognition, making it important to communicate your brand across all platforms and interactions while ensuring that your messaging, tone, and visual elements align with your brand story.

Adapt accordingly

Your personal brand shouldn't stay stagnant but rather evolve with you and the ever-changing marketplace. Stay relevant by adapting to changes in your industry, audience, and platforms. You should also modify your brand as you grow as a person. After all, you won't be the same even a year from now as you are today, and your brand should reflect that growth accordingly.

Building a personal brand takes time and effort, so be patient and intentional in your approach. When you do, you will build greater trust and credibility and open the doors for more opportunities for yourself and your organization. ■

Take Action

Examine your current personal brand, and consider how you can improve it. Then take steps to be more authentic and consistent with your online content.



Broaden Your Network with Microfame

Discover how you can be a small-business star in your own sphere of influence.

BY ANDRE RIOS



IN BUSINESS, exposure may seem to be as valuable as currency. What business owner wouldn't want to gain the sort of multinational fame held by certain clothing labels and fast-food restaurants, whose logos and slogans are not only instantly recognizable but also drilled into the public's cognizance? In the digital marketplace, who would scoff at the opportunity to become a branded influencer with a verified account and an inbox stuffed with sponsorship requests?

Such a degree of fame may be alluring, but service professionals and small-business owners may be better off cultivating a smaller yet more dedicated audience of followers. Matt Johnson, podcast host and author of the book *MicroFamous: Become Famously Influential to the Right People*, has established a career helping professionals build enriching networks. His specialty is producing business-oriented podcasts to help connect his clients with their ideal audiences. With deliberate planning, he says, professionals can become local celebrities within their circles and reap the rewards of microfame.

So you want to be famous?

Earning hundreds of thousands of followers across social media and amassing a degree of

worldwide fame isn't inherently negative, even if such a goal is lofty. Johnson's microfame principle doesn't necessarily rally professionals to avoid becoming household names; after all, one of the chief aims of marketing is to earn brand awareness. Rather, he encourages small-business owners and service professionals to turn their focus toward the relationships that are directly relevant to their respective industries. As Johnson notes, the company with the most Instagram followers isn't always the one with the most sales. So rather than wasting effort and marketing funds attempting

to draw as many eyes as possible to your business, aim to attract the most *relevant* eyes—and motivate them to keep coming back.

Fortunately, microfame is attainable. Professionals can easily achieve small yet profitable influence by following Johnson's key recommendations.

1 Identify your ideal customer

The famous may be far removed from their fan bases, but the MicroFamous know exactly who knows them. To enrich your network, you must first recognize which contacts offer you maximum value. Sit down and build a profile of your ideal client according

With deliberate planning professionals can become local celebrities within their circles and reap the rewards of microfame.





to basic data like their age, income level, and city. Then clarify more specific data points, such as:

- Education level
- Favorite hobbies and interests
- Social media platforms they actively utilize
- Accounts they follow
- Competing businesses they are likely to patronize

Essentially, you won't just be marketing to a forty-year-old accountant named Rose in Milwaukee. Assembling this data can highlight specific types of individuals who are not only relevant to your industry but also qualified to engage with your products or services. In other words, you can pinpoint who wants to hear what you have to say.

Once you identify your niche, it's time to start



In time, you will develop influence among a small yet engaged audience that consumes your content, interacts with your social media posts, and refers clients to you.

conversations. Naturally, there are potential profits in marketing yourself to your target consumer. But to achieve microfame, you need to also connect with other professionals who

are communicating with this same audience.

2 Develop relationships

The ideal professional network is not a list of

acquaintances. Your network should instead consist of genuine relationships. What's the difference? Acquaintances run into each other by circumstance; people you form relationships with will *choose* to engage with you, share relevant information, and even introduce you to other people you should know.

Forming these relationships may seem challenging—perhaps even more so than finding clients. After all, you want more from professional relationships than their patronage; you ultimately want to establish a referral network with them. The key to forming these bonds is to offer significant value to influential individuals so you can make a positive impression on them. Develop yourself as a valuable person to know, and they will return for more conversations.

Attend conferences, cold-call potential

business partners, arrange meetings with professionals you respect, and create content marketing that speaks to your particular slice of the industry. Over time, you will develop a rewarding community of people who feel they can gain value from you—and the feeling will be mutual.

3 Become a podcast host

This particular marketing strategy deserves a deep dive. Podcasting is Johnson's specialty, and he has seen it generate decent profits for those who deftly execute their shows. Creating your own business podcast, or what he calls "the

new networking," can position you in front of your ideal audience: like-minded professionals who would enjoy listening to you talk shop.

Professionals may be wary about entering an airspace crowded with famous influencers atop every industry, but don't fret;

just recall that microfame is your goal, so you don't need to hustle to reach the top of the Apple Podcasts charts. Rather, you should aim to achieve influence among the key individuals you have identified as relevant to your professional goals. Select podcast theme that's broad enough to attract your target audiences yet specific enough to start enriching conversations.

Think of every episode as a discussion that addresses an issue to find a solution. For example, ReminderMedia's *Stay Paid* podcast interviews service professionals and entrepreneurs about the sales and marketing strategies that led them to success. How did these people reach their level of business acumen? Which key takeaways can other professionals gain from these conversations? Apply a similar strategy to your own show. Ultimately, your goal is to deliver value to your network by discussing industry topics.



Luke Acree and Joshua Stike, hosts of the *Stay Paid* podcast.



Now to the most pressing matter. Your dedicated Instagram page, earworm intro music, and snappy conversations are all dressing for the true opportunity behind podcasting: meeting influential people. Reach out to other professionals in your industry, paying particular attention to those in segments relevant to your target audience, and invite them on your show to discuss their work and volley with you about your podcast's subject. If they are also interested in your target audience, they may gladly participate—especially if you can pitch the value of introducing themselves to your listeners and sharing valuable information.

Once the interview is over, ask your guest, “Who is the most important person I can introduce you to?” This is a twofold question: it endears you to them by offering value, and it welcomes them to grant you the same favor in return. Participating in such mutually beneficial exchanges will eventually generate microfame.

In time, you will develop influence among a small yet engaged audience that consumes your content, interacts with your social media posts, and refers clients to you. Johnson even suggests that you can monetize a podcast by inviting your audience to coaching and networking events.



For more info, visit getmicrofamous.com



Find your microfame

Podcasting is just one of many potential avenues for connecting deeply with a targeted network. Whether or not this medium is for you—perhaps you mumble your words a little—there are virtually endless alternatives to consider as well. Arrange happy-hour gatherings at a local hotel for industry professionals, or participate in trade shows alongside colleagues. There is lucrative potential in just about any activity that positions you in front of relevant professionals. Once you become an individual who *knows* valuable individuals, you will achieve status as a central member of a professional network—a connector with a contact sheet of influential people at your fingertips. Continue to mine value from your microfame, offering value in return, and you can generate profits from these lasting relationships. ■

Take Action

Write down a list of influential names within your network. Think of five pairs you could introduce to one another, then request a return referral for each introduction.



SPOTLIGHT



the power of perception

Interview with **KOSTYA KIMLAT**
Written by **MATTHEW BRADY**
Photography **AS NOTED**

Kostya Kimlat, the Business Magician, discusses how thinking like an illusionist can improve your company's perception and performance.



You moved to America at age nine. Tell us about that experience:

I was born in Kyiv, Ukraine, when it was part of the Soviet Union. I lived there long enough to experience the harsh realities of Soviet rule, such as standing in line to get bread and milk rations and seeing my parents barter to procure basic necessities. Coming to the United States, I was immediately struck by all the abundance and freedom. I've always felt that it's an amazing country and that the American dream is alive and well.



Was it always your goal to own a business?

No, I just knew I wanted to do magic for the rest of my life because it brought me and everyone around me so much joy. I figured I would be a "starving artist" forever, and I embraced following my passion. Remarkably, a thriving business emerged and grew naturally from that decision.



What was your first big break?

When I was eighteen, RaceTrac hired me to perform at their conference with seven hundred franchisees. That was so much larger than any of my previous audiences. I arrived five hours early to soak in the crowd. And I learned a ton that helped me connect with the audience once I got on stage. From then on, I made it a habit to arrive early for every event, immersing myself in the client's business. This also deepened my fascination with the world of business. The success of that initial gig led to further opportunities, highlighting the value of repeat clientele. Through repeat bookings, I made long-term connections with my clients and expanded my offerings to include speaking and training.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CW



What inspired you to start your own business?

Being in the back of the room at these conferences allowed me to observe the inner workings of successful businesses and see the importance of culture and leadership. It also made me realize that there is an art to doing business, prompting me to embrace being a business owner.

Performing magic is a form of customer service. Treating people with respect and understanding their perspectives are paramount skills. Transferring the ability to captivate an audience into wowing customers came naturally. Instead of asking about my tricks, clients began to inquire, “How did you engage the entire audience?”

This led to the birth of a separate venture, where I started training sales and service teams on effective communication. Despite my young age, my enthusiasm and passion for people were authentic and were the key to my success.

During my travels across the US, I saw the demand for clean and thought-provoking entertainment at business events. So I founded See Magic Live, a platform that trains, certifies, and books magicians and speakers nationwide. Now I get to work with amazing businesses and wonderful artists. That, to me, is the essence of the American dream—creating abundance and elevating everyone.



How did COVID-19 impact your business?

When COVID hit, everything stopped overnight. My wife was expecting our second child, and we were all set to live off our savings for a while. I was fully prepared to spend quality time with my family. But then I read a *New York Times* article by General Stanley McChrystal that stressed the importance of shifting your work culture online and promoting team spirit. Serendipitously, a client popped up in my inbox asking for a magic show during their virtual happy hour in two weeks. In preparation for my first paid virtual event, I invited my past in-person clients to get a sneak peek, which garnered great feedback and instant bookings. That saved my business.

I was faced with a decision as a self-employed person: Do I apply for government COVID aid, or do I figure out how to adapt my business for the virtual world? I chose the latter—the more exciting and demanding path. The next months were a whirlwind of constant and never-ending change and improvement. By December, I was performing globally, up to seven times a day, all from my home.

What I had found was a way to use technology to enhance human connections, something many folks and businesses still struggle with. As a result, I had my best business year ever during the pandemic, got to stay home with my kids, and didn’t miss a single bedtime. Now I have two distinct ways of helping my clients: virtually and in person. I never expected this wild part of the ride!



PHOTO COURTESY OF CW



Would you elaborate on how you help businesses?

As a magician, I know that the way people see the world is different from the way the world actually is. Your company may have the best product in the world, but if your customers' perception doesn't match that reality, then you've lost the game. On the flip side, your competition's product may be inferior, but it can be perceived better because of their marketing, advertising, or customer service. It's not fair, but perception is reality.

So when I meet a CEO who asks me what I talk about, I always reply with a simple question: "Does perception play a role in your business?" Their answer is always a resounding "Yes! Perception is everything." So then my follow-up question is: "What are you doing about it?"

It's very easy to be skeptical about how a magician can help someone's business. People make jokes about making money appear or their boss disappear. And then there's the more negative assumption: "Are you going to teach us how to lie,

cheat, and steal?" So I always tell my audiences that for me, magic isn't about deception; it's about *perception*.

I want everyone to understand that our perception is always being manipulated and influenced, for better or worse. And we all do this to each other, whether our audience is our family, spouses, clients, or coworkers.

As a magician, I have a distinct understanding and mastery of what I call "perception management"—my ability to influence what you see, how you think, how you act, and what you're going to remember. In one of my keynote speeches, "Think Like a Magician," my ultimate goal is to help people be more effective and responsible communicators. Being more perceptive can help us be better at everything we do with each other. It can help teams communicate better. It can help salespeople sell. And it can help executives lead their teams with authenticity.



Your company may have the best product in the world, but if your customers' perception doesn't match that reality, then you've lost the game.



What are some concepts you share when you speak?

One thing I do is ask my audience whether they are perceived by their coworkers as jugglers or magicians. The difference is that a juggler will spend decades showing off their skill, but a magician will spend decades hiding their skill. The mindset of many employees is of the juggler: "Hey, everybody! Look at me and how much I've got on my plate." But people don't care that their doctor has ten other patients that day or that their server has seven other tables. They only care about how *they* are taken care of. That distinction is important. People want their customer experience to feel magical, and they want to feel special. So I talk about fostering those perceptions.

I also take my audience through a process for identifying their methods and effects—the former are real but invisible, while the latter are imaginary but perceived and drive



Take an objective look at how your business is being perceived by analyzing customer service feedback and social media reviews.

people to make decisions. So I show them how to rethink what they do from the point of view of their audience, whether it's a client or coworker or even their children, spouse, or community.

My newest keynote speech, "Don't Be Fooled," is dedicated to avoiding misperception and miscommunication. It's particularly important today considering how our understanding of events can be impacted by deepfakes and AI.

After I finish a keynote speech, people will often come up afterward and say how helpful these concepts are for rethinking their personal or work relationships. To me, that's even more fulfilling than being told they love my magic.



Which other business topics do you focus on?

"Personality Magic" is one of my favorite presentations because I get to turn personality assessments upside down. Every business has done the DISC and Myers-Briggs versions, but most people take them to learn about themselves. That doesn't easily translate to a sales and customer service environment, where you have less than a minute to engage someone and create a positive interaction. So I use the four card suits—diamonds, clubs, hearts, and spades—as a simplified identification and mnemonic system. Within thirty seconds of meeting someone, I can match their demeanor to their card suit and adjust my language and approach immediately to meet their style. I teach this as a more in-depth workshop and follow up with virtual training to reinforce the content.

I'm also helping businesses embrace virtual communication. Many seasoned CEOs just want things to go back to the way they used to be, but digital leadership—enhancing the experience and engagement for virtual audiences and finding new ways of using this medium to create better connections and business culture in a hybrid world—is the future.



What advice would you give business owners?

Realize and embrace that it's not only about what you're doing but also about how it's perceived. Reinforce this to your team regularly. It's easy to get wrapped up in the hustle and bustle, to be the juggler flaunting your business. But don't lose sight of the fact that your real methods have a perceived effect that exists only in someone else's mind. Therein lies the real "magic" of your business. ■



For more info, visit kostyakimlat.com



Embrace Challenges to Unlock Your Potential

Adopting a growth mindset can help you see professional setbacks as building blocks for your business.

BY LUKE ACREE



W HETHER YOU'RE a new business owner or have been working as one for many years, difficult days are inevitable on your journey. But while they might not always be fun, real growth comes from making mistakes. As motivational speaker and author Tony Robbins once said, "Every problem is a gift—without problems we would not grow."

Of course, when you're in the thick of a difficult decision or a potentially make-or-break moment for your business, you're much more likely to let yourself get bogged down and turn toward the negative. So as a leader, how can you shift your mindset to one that is focused on embracing failure instead of fearing it? And what are the long-term benefits of thinking this way?

Defining the growth mindset

Carol Dweck, PhD, is a psychology professor at Stanford University and an expert in self-perception and its impact on motivation. In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, she explains the powerful way mindset affects us all: "For twenty years, my research has shown that the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. It can determine whether you become the person you want to be and whether you accomplish the things you value." While this book is nearly two decades

old, Dweck's founding principle still stands: mindset is *everything*—and this is especially true in business.

Typically, people fall into one of two camps: those with a fixed mindset and those with a growth mindset. A fixed mindset, which is the belief that a person's talents and capabilities are set in stone, prevents growth because it encourages the idea that change is only possible to a certain point. On the contrary, people with a growth mindset believe they can always improve through deliberate effort and learned experiences, making them more open to and inspired by forward motion and more curious and eager to learn.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to help determine which mindset you naturally gravitate toward:

- When trying something for the first time, are you afraid you'll be laughed at if you fail, or do you look at failure as part of the learning process?
- Do you avoid feedback and take it personally, or do you seek out constructive criticism?
- Are you inspired by other people's successes, or do you feel threatened by them?





If your answers to these questions varied, that's OK. You may find that you have a fixed mindset in certain situations but a growth mindset in others. What's important is that you don't allow a fixed mindset to hinder your success and prevent you from going after your goals.

A science-backed approach

One thing to note is that adopting a fixed mindset is not inherently right or wrong. The idea of failure can be scary, so having a fixed mindset can feel like a shield that protects you from potential failure. However, none of the world's great leaders became so by being careful or sitting still. They are curious, excited to learn, and, yes,

excited to fail because it means they are on the path toward growth.

In her research, Dweck notes that when you understand the differences between these two mindsets, you can more easily see how a fixed mindset could lead to decisions that keep you stagnant and prevent success. Let your failures define you, and you'll be trapped in a cycle of failure forever. Allow yourself to learn from them, and you'll never make the same mistake twice.

Embracing a growth mindset

The brain's ability to learn new skills and take on information doesn't just stop when we finish school; education is a lifelong



Think about what type of mindset you have, and incorporate at least one of the four ideas for embracing a growth mindset into your business practices.

process that is essential for all great leaders. So, contrary to popular belief, you can teach an old dog new tricks. Below are a few ways you can start implementing a growth mindset in your daily life.

Be open to feedback

With a fixed mindset, you may be hesitant to ask for feedback for fear it will all be negative. However, asking other people for sincere and radical candor about your performance—both good and bad—can be extremely beneficial. As a leader, you should seek feedback not only from the people who report to you but also from your peers and other successful professionals in your field. Be sure to ask for it frequently and specifically, too, such as after sharing company goals with your team or promoting your business at an event.

Fail quickly

There's no time to dwell on the negative when you're a leader, so if something isn't working, don't waste a lot of time and resources trying to force it to. Instead, identify what went wrong and what you could have done differently so you can avoid making similar mistakes the next time—then move on as quickly as possible. When you fail quickly, you learn quickly, and

The brain's ability to learn new skills and take on information doesn't just stop when we finish school; education is a lifelong process that is essential for all great leaders.

that is the key to being a good leader and entrepreneur.

Reward the process

Forming positive habits is a crucial component of growth, but if you only focus on the end result and not the journey it takes to get there, you'll find it difficult to grow. Big results require small daily actions, after all. For example, if you want to lose weight, telling yourself you need to work out might not be enough to motivate you. The positive habit comes not from the weight loss itself but from waking up every day, getting yourself to the gym, and prioritizing your health.

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable

Greatness is hardly ever achieved by those who live in their comfort zones. Don't just embrace challenges—seek them out. Knowing that failure will happen and being OK with it can have a dramatic impact on your

perspective and your ability to adapt when the unexpected arises.

Your brain is the most important tool you have, and it's surprisingly good at adapting. If you allow your mind to tell you you're not good enough, talented enough, or smart enough, chances are you'll never become better, more skillful, or more intelligent. Knowing that growth is possible is the first step toward a successful future. ■



About the author: Luke Acree is an authority on leadership, a lead-generation specialist, and a referral expert who has helped more than 100,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses grow their companies. He hosts *Stay Paid*, a sales and marketing podcast, and has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, and *Foundr.com*.

What I Wish I Knew

Seasoned business owners reflect on the wisdom and lessons they've learned since starting their companies.

BY **SHELLEY GOLDSTEIN**

Starting a business requires a leap of faith, and oftentimes you must jump in before you feel ready. Either way, sometimes no amount of preparation can give you the insight that experience brings. The following are reflections from four business owners on what they learned only after starting their companies.



01

Jammy Cruz

*Baker at Mrs. Macarons
Columbia, Maryland*

I didn't realize that I would never be fully prepared. But that's OK! You have to start somewhere. Just trust the process, be open to learning, and ask for help when needed. Some days might be challenging and intimidating, but don't ever give up. If you believe in yourself and your product, things will fall into place eventually. And always remember to be humble, genuine, kind, and grateful.



Colleen Simonds

*Interior designer at
Colleen Simonds Design
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

I wish I would have known how complex this industry is. It's not just picking pretty things—it's so many jobs all wrapped up in one. To do it right, you really need a lot of support running the business. Money, clients, marketing, business development, public relations, sourcing, procurement, logistics—all of these are critically important and have nothing to do with the actual design work.

Another major struggle for me is having to put a price tag on my ideas and creativity. As a designer, you have to not only determine what you're worth but also sell your clients on it.

02



03

Rachel Orleck Lozano

*Psychologist and couples
counselor at Meaningful
Journey Counseling
Seattle, Washington*

I wish I knew to have support and systems in place early, even though I felt strapped for cash. For example, I'd recommend using accounting software and getting an accountant because they can provide important insights and guidance over time. Also, write procedures and email templates down (even if you're a company of one) to streamline the work. It's much more time-consuming to get those systems set up later.



Christian Amonson

*Recording engineer at
Arts Laureate, Tonsehen,
and Seeing Sound
Los Angeles, California*

I wish I knew that investing in the business is not the same as investing in myself. I have spent a lot of time and energy behind the scenes of the business in a way that wasn't giving back as much as I was putting in. When I pursue my personal and professional goals, relationships and opportunities organically overflow to the business and my team.

04



What advice can you pass on to budding entrepreneurs from your own experience?

Strategies for Attending a Business Event

Preparing for a business gathering can be easier than you think when you follow these tips. BY **MATTHEW BRADY**

YOU'VE RSVPed, and the date is set on your calendar. The opportunity ahead of you: attending a business conference, show, or lecture where hundreds, if not thousands, of like-minded businesspeople will be gathering. Before you go, make sure you're as prepared as possible by implementing the following suggestions.

🕒 Remember your "why"

You're forgoing your daily duties and loosening your grip on business operations to attend this event, so there's obviously a specific endgame in play. Whether that's collecting a certain number of business cards, handing out all your marketing materials, or learning new strategies for your business (or all the above), make sure your purpose is



burned into your brain before you leave to ensure you follow through on it regardless of any distractions.

📱 Research the event

Many events will have an app you can download or will provide access to information via social media, so take advantage of it. For instance, you may be able to find a list of people and companies attending; perusing it in advance will allow you to identify who you want to connect with at the event. If you make your own company info readily available, there may even be an opportunity to chat with them ahead of time. That way, you can make your presence known before ever leaving home.

🕒 Manage your time wisely

Punctuality is important, of course, but the opportunity it gives you to

mingle is even more so. By arriving early before there are throngs of people, you'll be able to get comfortable with the venue and have a better chance to engage other attendees and vendors, talk about your business, and establish relationships. Similarly, make sure to leave ample time after each presentation for question-and-answer sessions.

📝 Know your note-taking strategy

While expanding your sphere is important, you are also attending this event to learn. Each seminar will likely provide materials to supplement the presentation, but these often aren't comprehensive, necessitating that you find other ways to retain the vital nuggets of knowledge. Are you old-school with pen and paper? Would you prefer to



record it, if allowable? Plan ahead so you have the tools you need to jot down the most important takeaways of your venture.

⌚ **Bring all your marketing materials**

Business cards are a must, of course, but you should also be ready to distribute media kits or sheets and other marketing materials, whether that means printing hard copies or making them available

online. Additionally, consider if your resources should be customized to the event topic beforehand for maximum impact.

⌚ **Dress appropriately**

Most dress codes for these events are business formal or business casual, but some may be black-tie affairs. If possible, find out the expected attire ahead of

time—black-tie will almost always be noted—and select your wardrobe accordingly. If you can't determine if it's casual or formal, plan for both while prioritizing both style and comfort (since these can be *long* days, especially with the potential for postevent gatherings).

⌚ **Prevent distractions**

This may be the toughest task of all, especially if you're accustomed to taking calls or being included in every vital email thread. To help ensure you're laser-focused on your goals for the event, arrange for someone on your team to be responsible for your calls and email, and include that person's information in your voice mail and auto-response. You should also inform your family members of the event's start and end times, being clear that you're only available in case of emergency.

⌚ **Master your answers**

Any time someone at the event greets you and shakes your hand, what will be the first question out of their

If you want to establish business relationships with other attendees, they need to know it's *you* they're talking to, not a propped-up facade.

mouth? That's right: "What do you do?" Knowing it's coming, there's no excuse for being unprepared for such a question—in other words, brush up on that elevator speech.

In a similar vein, be prepared for the other end of the communication spectrum: seal the deal with the organizer and any connections you make by following up with them soon after the event is over.

⌚ **Expect the unexpected**

Even with all your preparation, things can still go wrong. Flights can get delayed or canceled. Things can go awry at the hotel. Your marketing materials may not arrive on time. Your booth may not be prime real estate for

foot traffic. When you go in knowing that everything may not be perfect, and possibly game plan for such mini-emergencies, you'll be better prepared to handle them when they arise.

⌚ **Be yourself**

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is to be authentic. If you want to establish business relationships with other attendees, they need to know it's *you* they're talking to, not a propped-up facade. That's the only way you can get them to know, like, and trust you and, in turn, create a lasting partnership. So have your elevator speech handy for any initial greetings, but otherwise let your personality shine through.

Attending a business event can be a boon for any business leader. Take advantage of this treasure trove of knowledge and relationship building by ensuring that you are well-prepared—if you are, big wins are bound to follow. ■



Brainstorm a list of conferences you want to attend this year, and create a plan to prepare for each of them.

How to Build Success by Finding Business for Others

Financial superstar Eszylfie Taylor explains how helping others grow their businesses can be a great way to grow your own.

BY **SHELLEY GOLDSTEIN**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GETTY IMAGES, UNLESS NOTED**





NOT EVERYONE is lucky enough to find their calling, but Eszylfie Taylor always knew he wanted to do something on a grand scale. After graduating college, he joined New York Life Insurance Company as a financial advisor and immediately took to the industry. In the decades since, he's become a member of the Million Dollar Round Table, which recognizes the top professionals of the industry, earned the organization's elite "Top of the Table" status for his production, and founded Taylor Insurance and Financial Services, where he currently serves as president. Says Taylor, "The disheartening thing about other industries is there is no easy way to get to the top—progression is often about seniority. But with these industries, it's about work ethic and aptitude. I liked that I could write my own script to success."

🕒 **A new script for success**

Taylor's outgoing personality and everyday interactions are inextricably woven into his work. In fact, this skill of building relationships is an integral part of the strategy he created, called the Taylor Method, which hinges on the idea that finding business not only for yourself but also for other business owners is the key to creating opportunities and growth.

"I don't sell products—I solve problems," Taylor says. "If I have an hour-long meeting, fifty minutes of it is me asking

questions and ten minutes is problem-solving at the end." He is realistic about the fallibility of sales, admitting that there will never be a perfect product. But he doesn't need the product to be perfect—he just needs it to be better than what *you* have. As he explains, if you are drowning in the middle of the ocean and someone offers you a life preserver, you aren't going to care if it's yellow, orange, or polka-dot. And that's the script Taylor follows. He tells those learning the Taylor Method to focus less on the product and more on the client's problems. He analogizes, "Rather than sell a hammer, I'm going to sell the fact that you have a hole in your wall."

🕒 **His legacy**

Taylor loves kids (he has daughters of his own) and takes great pride in his nonprofit Future Stars Basketball Camp. He is also

Taylor estimates that he reaches out to seventy-five to one hundred people a day and hears a "no" or "not now" from sixty to seventy of them. But he continues to persevere because he knows it's a numbers game and not personal.





PHOTO BY MONICA LINDA

involved with March of Dimes and the Ronald McDonald House. He meets people in the community through organizations and causes that he truly believes in.

Taylor's motivation comes from true engagement, not money. The way he sees it, you have a duty when you are given money. He says, "It's your responsibility to be a blessing to other people. I am here to help and serve; I think every day about the impact I can have, the jobs I can create, and the education and love I can spread. I want to equip others with the tips and tools that I wish someone had given me and to illuminate the path for others."

© The four pillars

The Taylor Method is the culmination of Taylor's career triumphs and failures. With over 20,000 client meetings under his belt, he's taken all the skills that were innate and all the things he did wrong and created an objection-free sales process anyone can use.

The approach

The best clients are the ones who stay. And that doesn't happen overnight; you must cultivate trust and rapport. Become a pro at this by authentically engaging with



The disheartening thing about other industries is there is no easy way to get to the top—progression is often about seniority. But with these industries, it's about work ethic and aptitude. I liked that I could write my own script to success."

- ESZYLFIE TAYLOR

people through networking, personal interactions, referrals, and centers of influence. If someone says no to what you are selling, it doesn't mean you have a bad product. Instead, take it as a cue that the relationship is not strong enough yet. Think about what you can do to create a better bond with that person. Maybe it's inviting them over for dinner, showing up at an event they have planned, or taking an interest in a cause that is meaningful to them.

Taylor encourages a concept he calls "tactful persistence." If you want to land clients, you must be willing to keep engaging and connecting. There is a certain amount of hustle that differentiates the top sellers from everyone else.

The fact find

The first step in building any relationship is learning who someone is. What are their interests? What does their life look like? What keeps them up at night? Friendships are a two-way street, so be willing to share and be vulnerable as well. As you create trust, you can begin asking deeper questions that will reveal the problems they need solved.

The opportunity

What you do with the fact-finding is the key to conquering this next pillar. As you are going through the fact-finding session and hearing what issues potential clients need help with, you will discover opportunities to connect them with other people and businesses in your



network. If you are too focused on your own business, you will miss out on these openings to make referrals and create goodwill for the community. But if you understand that people are multifaceted, with problems outside your expertise, this is your chance to shine. Now your clients see you as someone who wants to help them rather than someone who only wants their business. And the people getting referrals may be motivated to tell their own circle about you to create a reciprocal relationship.

The close

If the other three pillars are there and a relationship has been forged, the deal should be more of a foregone conclusion than a hard sell. The trust has been developed and the issues revealed, making the close the logical solution. This is often referred to as an assumptive or presumptive close, where you use affirming language rather than asking if they are ready to buy. Examples of this would be inquiring about payment details and what delivery date they would like.

Ⓞ **Setting the table**

In order to use the pillars of the Taylor Method, you need to set up a meeting with the potential client. And to do that well, Taylor says you must set the table. Be up front about why you want a meeting rather than tiptoe around it because you are afraid of rejection. You should also be mindful of others' time and show you can honor it. Ask how much time they have, and then condense your pitch into that time frame.

Ⓞ **Detaching from the outcome**

Taylor estimates that he reaches out to seventy-five to one hundred people a day and hears a "no" or "not now" from sixty to seventy of them. But he continues to persevere because he knows it's a numbers game and not personal. The important thing is to prioritize process over outcome.

Taylor recounts the story of a new advisor who joined the firm seven years ago. While he was doing all the right things—following the process, setting



Take stock of any opportunities you may be missing to build relationships and trust within your community.

The Taylor Method is the culmination of Taylor's career triumphs and failures. With over 20,000 client meetings under his belt, he's taken all the skills that were innate and all the things he did wrong and created an objection-free sales process anyone can use.



appointments, making the calls, and doing the fact-finding—he had made very little money in his first few months. He apologized to Taylor for what he perceived as a failure to perform, but Taylor encouraged him to continue doing what he had been doing. By the end of his first year, he had made \$150,000 and continued to make more year over year. Says Taylor, "He was looking at the outcome, and I was looking at the process. So many times, we want instant results. It's not what you do today; it's what you do day in

and day out, week in and week out. Successful people are stubborn with a purpose."

Ⓞ **Work smarter, not harder**

Though it takes the same amount of time to fill out paperwork and go through the process regardless of the client, you are only ever going to make as much money as your clients make. So if you are working in more modest markets, people likely have a lot less discretionary income, and when money gets tight, the new plan they bought from you will be the first

thing to go. Working with people in a higher income bracket will often be less challenging and more profitable. "I always ask other salespeople to think of the five most nerve-wracking and difficult deals they've worked on in the past year and then the most enjoyable," he reveals. "The five hardest will inevitably be among the smallest. It's easier to make a million dollars than it is to make \$50,000." Additionally, he finds that some of the most successful people have the worst planning because they are so busy focusing on what they are great at. Everything else gets pushed to the back burner.

Ⓞ **Be yourself**

Authenticity serves as the cornerstone for meaningful interactions. Expressing genuine interest in someone else, showing vulnerability, and maintaining transparency in communication are all ways to build strong and sustainable relationships. The more bonds you make, the bigger your circle of influence becomes. And if they are authentic connections, it means more people advocating on your behalf and referring business to you. ■



For more info, visit taylorinsfin.com

Why Your Employees Need Soft Skills

Boosting a staff's soft skills—which allow them to think critically, work together, and assume leadership roles—is important for the success of any business.

BY LAUREN KIM

As a business leader, you likely put a lot of effort into building your team and fostering industry-related technical skills, or hard skills, such as coding, data analysis, or SEO marketing. But you should also dedicate time to improving their soft skills, the more intangible abilities that can help make them more efficient team players and valuable assets to your organization overall.

But what exactly are soft skills? Essentially, they are the people skills and personality traits that enable employees to communicate well, get along with others, work out solutions to complicated problems, manage their work, and lead effectively.

→ Valuable soft skills

While they are called “soft” skills, these attributes’ contributions to the workplace can be powerful, making them especially sought-after. In fact, highly successful companies like Google and Amazon consider these traits to be just as important as or even more valuable than hard skills, especially as rapidly changing technologies make expertise in

some technical or specialized areas obsolete. That’s because individuals with soft skills can more easily adapt and stay relevant in changing work conditions. With the right training and support, you can help your employees build their competencies so they can help you take your company to the next level.

While many soft skills can be useful in the workplace, these are some of the most essential.

Communication skills

This group of skills includes the ability to communicate clearly with colleagues, clients, and vendors. Employees who excel

at communicating can do so regardless of whether it’s face-to-face or via phone or email.

Critical thinking

In any business, the ability to think clearly and rationally and interpret data without bias is highly important; critical thinkers are more apt to evaluate situations logically and use resources efficiently.

Emotional intelligence (EI)

High-EI individuals can recognize and manage their emotions and empathize and relate with others. They are also likely to be calm under pressure and have the perseverance to overcome obstacles.

Creativity

This soft skill is useful for brainstorming new ideas and solutions, finding better ways to complete tasks, and propelling a business forward.

Flexibility

People who have this skill can think on their feet and adapt to changing roles and circumstances, making them more likely to succeed even when conditions aren’t ideal.

Leadership

Those with leadership skills can guide, inspire, influence, and mentor others; they can also positively and effectively take the lead in collaborative projects.

Organization skills

Well-organized employees are likely to be punctual and dependable, manage their time and resources well, and meet deadlines.

Problem-solving

Team members who think outside the box are an asset to any business—they may be talented at resolving conflicts, stretching resources, and formulating new ideas and processes.

Collaboration

Those who can collaborate effectively with fellow employees are likely to be valuable team members who enhance company culture and help create a better working environment for everyone.

→ Boosting your employees’ soft skills

Since these skills can have a significant impact on your team’s productivity and your company’s success, it’s to your advantage to actively work on bolstering them. You can do so in a variety of ways. For instance, creating an environment where your employees have



Soft skills are the people skills and personality traits that enable employees to communicate well, get along with others, work out solutions to complicated problems, manage their work, and lead effectively.



the freedom to try new things will allow them to grow and develop their soft skills naturally. Just make sure to let them make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes to avoid hampering their growth.

Alternatively, you could provide your staff with specific soft-skills training. Try to offer a variety of teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles, such as coaching or mentoring sessions, group learning activities, book groups with a business/soft-skills focus, and self-guided learning opportunities like on-demand videos and podcasts. You could also try tapping into the abilities of your staff so they can help train your other employees. Some ways you can do this include having supervisors model appropriate behavior and providing job-shadowing opportunities so your staff can learn from each other's examples. If you don't have the resources to present this training on your own, consider hiring an outside agency or partnering with a university or nonprofit organization.

Before deciding on the method and content you'll use, monitor your employees to determine what training they may need. Managers and team leaders can help you collect data on your staff's skill sets



through observation and one-on-one meetings; you can also ask employees to provide feedback on the skills they possess and which ones they'd like to improve. Continue this evaluation once you establish your training program to see how your team is progressing and what adjustments you should make.

For a fun take on soft-skills training, try a variety of team-building activities—they can be excellent for teaching concepts like communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership. Some activities to consider are brainstorming sessions, community service, online games, company picnics, and team sports.

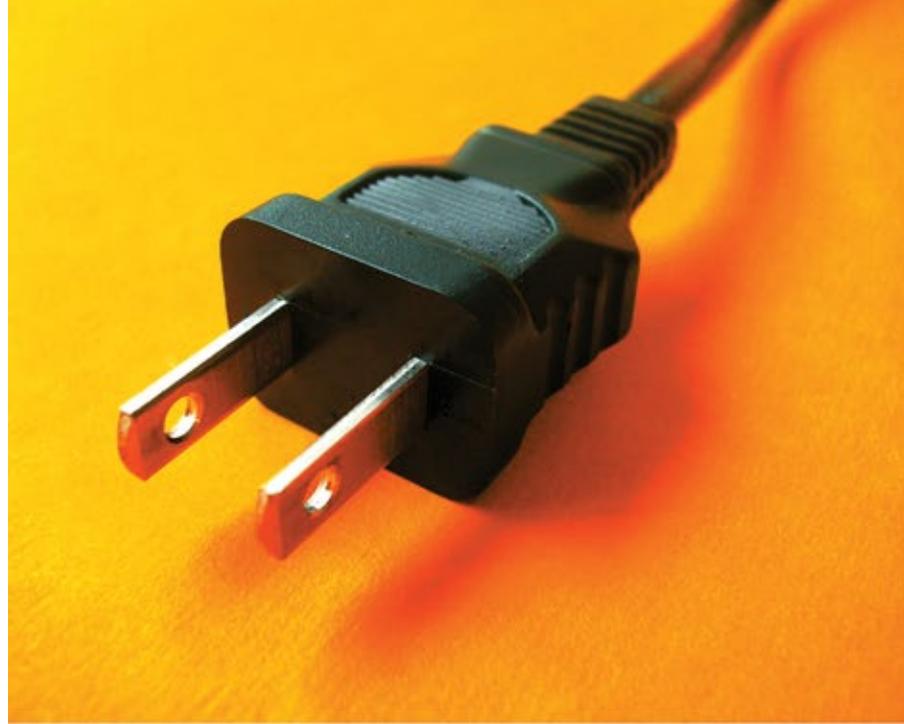
Make it a point to recognize your employees' improvements. Ask managers to reward their team

members for their soft-skills successes, and encourage your employees to nominate each other for recognition. Some ways you could highlight employees' achievements are in a company email, blog, or video or with individual or team gifts, such as a dinner out.

Once you start a soft-skills training program, don't forget to reinforce what your employees have learned by giving them the time and opportunity to continue improving—that way, your team and your business can keep the benefits coming. ■



Evaluate your team, and identify soft skills that could bring them success.



plug.

'word of mouth' has potential to be electrifyingly effective.

Thank you for your continued business and support.

Your assistance in **generating** new clients for my business is always appreciated.



LMS Strategies

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Set New Year's Goals for Your Business

As the new year approaches, use these **four key strategies** to establish clear, achievable objectives for your organization.



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Back of Tear Out Card 2



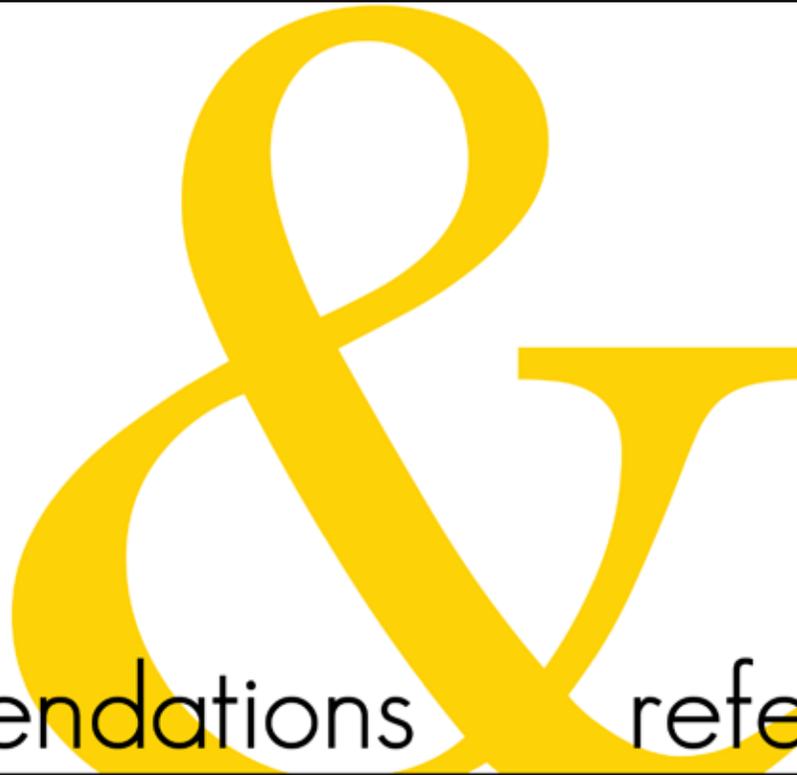
01 / BE PRECISE
Set specific goals, such as a certain percentage increase in sales or a revenue target. From there, determine the action items that can help you meet them.

02 / SET MICRO GOALS
Once you have defined your main goals, establish small weekly or monthly milestones like sales quotas or certain tasks to complete. This will give you a clear path toward your larger objectives.

03 / DELEGATE TASKS
Find ways to use your employees' skills to their fullest potential. Bring your team members into your plans for the year, and assign objectives based on their individual strengths or roles.

04 / ASSESS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
Schedule monthly meetings to track your progress and assess what is and isn't working. This is your chance to review your progress toward meeting your goals by the end of the year.

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