



PROSPER

PROFESSIONAL COACHING

Planning Your Success in 2010

10 Steps to Harness the Energy of the New Year...

Step 1. 'Completing' the Past Year...

As I've already said, the New Year is an imaginary line in the sand that separates one business year from the next. It's important that you perform the process of what I call "completing" the year that's just finished, and make way for the New Year that's about to begin. Otherwise every year rolls into the next and the distinctions and subtleties are lost.

This is a 3-part process in itself that we call an "**Ascent**". An Ascent begins by listing out all of your **ACHIEVEMENTS** (both business and personal) for the year 2009. When you look back on the past 12 months, what were the highlights, successes, milestones, the battles you fought and won? It's these **ACHIEVEMENTS** that provide the real foundation blocks for your future success and provide you with the forward momentum to build on. By not taking the time out to acknowledge your achievements you're missing out on a very powerful tool.

Next, look back on all the failures, disappointments and low points throughout the year, the times when things did not work out as you'd planned. From these events and experiences list what I call your **LEARNINGS**. A failure is really only ever a failure if you miss the great learning opportunity that always goes with it. If you don't take the time to reflect on these times, chances are you'll miss the gift of learning, and guess what? You'll more often than not get to repeat the low point some other time in the not too distant future. Learn from your mistakes; turn them in to the gift that they really are.

The third and final part of the "**Ascent**" process is to list out what I call your **INTENTIONS** for the coming year. What specifically are your "**Intentions**" for the 12 months ahead...the things, events and outcomes you'd like to become a reality? Intentions are really separate from goals; they define the framework within which you'll set your goals. This is a great process to complete as a family as well, so always make sure that you have a balance of personal and business intentions.

Step 2. What's it all about?

I'm a great believer that everything meaningful you take on should have a theme and purpose. This applies to both your business and personal life. I see too many people head into a project or event (or worse still a whole new year) without really stopping to consider what it's all about or why they are doing it.

So, at this time of the year I always choose a central theme for my year in business. What's this year going to be about for me, and the business...and what's the over-

riding purpose? Is this year about growth, expansion, consolidation, simplification, delegation, systemisation, diversification, reinvention...there are hundreds of possible themes for you to choose.

I'm suggesting that you just choose one and that you then carry this theme forward into EVERYTHING you do during the year...sales, marketing, product development, events, conferences, training.

When I sit down at New Year to choose a theme I always take 3 things into account. The first is what is going on in the marketplace. Everything in life and business moves in cycles (and sometimes circles!) Our weather patterns move in cycles, our seasons move in cycles. Everything in nature has an ebb and flow. The same is true of business. The share markets, property markets, exchange rates, inflation rates, interest rates all follow trends. So when choosing a theme the first thing to consider is that you want to be moving in rhythm or in cycle with the natural flow of your marketplace.

Secondly, it's important that the theme you choose is totally relevant and meaningful with the evolution of your business. Every business goes through stages of development, evolution and maturity. What stage is your business at right now, and what theme is best going to support your business to go to the next level? For example, there is little point choosing a theme of expansion when you haven't developed the internal systems and infrastructure to support that growth.

And finally, just as every business goes through a development cycle, so too does the owner and leader. Your business is there to serve you, and you are there to serve your business. It's your ongoing development and changing role within the business that will ensure the vitality, passion and leadership that is the life force of every great organisation. If this balance is ever lost then things begin to falter and become forced. When you choose the theme for this coming year, make sure that it supports you and your role in the business.

Step 3. Plan for Your Rejuvenation...

I'm certain of one thing. As the leader of your business or team you can only perform at your best when you are operating with peak energy levels. It's important that you build in some daily, weekly and monthly disciplines that maintain balance in your life and keep your energy levels up where they need to be.

One of the keys for me is to take regular holidays throughout the year. In fact I plan to take 1 weeks holiday every 90 days, and these dates are agreed on, and committed to my diary a full year ahead. The third step to planning for success in 2010 is to plan your full year's holidays in the month of January. This way the dates are locked in and everything else can be scheduled around them, and there's never any reason to compromise on your rejuvenation time.

By using public holidays such as Easter and Labour Weekend you can easily add on a few extra days and turn a long weekend into a full week of time out. You'll find that breaking the year into 90-day periods is very effective in terms of measuring progress and redefining goals. You'll operate with peak energy levels all year round, avoid the year turning into a long drawn out marathon from one financial year to another, and ensure that you stay passionate and focused.

Step 4. Your Personal Development Plan...

Charlie (Tremendous) Jones, one of the World's greatest motivational speakers ever, has a favourite saying of mine, **“the only difference between you now, and you in 10 years time, will be the people you meet, the CDs you listen to and the books you read”**. In other words, you are a product of your environment. The people you surround yourself with, the friends and colleagues you spend time with, the courses and seminars you attend, and the books you read will shape who you are, how you think and how you act. Ultimately they'll shape how successful you are.

I truly believe that people are at their happiest when they are learning. And that's the point here. Too many people give up on learning as they get older and as they move higher up the business ladder. New Year is a great time to design your Personal Development Plan for the year ahead. Create a recommended reading list. List the courses, seminars, and workshops you've always intended to do, but never got around to it. Identify the skills you know need improving and commit to improving them. Turn 2010 (and every year thereafter) into a year of growth, learning and development, and then share your new skills to build the capabilities of your team. It's the fastest way to get free from your business.

Every year I invest literally thousands of dollars on my own development. Some years I invest over \$10,000...and it always gets repaid many times over within 12 months!

Step 5. Building the Capabilities of Your People...

The biggest mistake I see most business owners make is they get stuck in their business. The business becomes so reliant on their skills, vision, experience, knowledge and energy, that if you remove the business owner, the business stops working. There's no freedom in that. I subscribe to Michael Gerber's philosophy, **“the purpose of your business should be to give you more life.”**

New Year is a time to plan for more freedom for you. The only long-term way I know to achieve this is to commit to the process of building the capabilities of your people so that they can become more and more effective in the business and contribute increasing value. They'll gradually take on more and more responsibility for the overall success of the business. Am I talking about training? Well, at the lowest level yes, but at the highest level I'm suggesting a much bigger picture. I'm suggesting that at the beginning of each year you sit down with every member of your team (Receptionist and General Manager, Storeman and Salesman, Accountant and Customer Service) and you take them through the process of designing a career development path for that year.

Establish their goals and aspirations, identify Key Performance Areas against which you can both measure their performance, agree on qualities and skills that need to be developed, set out a formal review and feedback process.

Huge gains can be made quickly in a small business (or a team) when everyone in the team has an absolute commitment to their own Personal Development Programme. And of course your role in this process is to become a great coach and mentor for

everyone in the team. To be there to celebrate their successes along the way, and support them through the times when things appear to be falling apart.

Step 6. Being Remarkable...

Each New Year you have the opportunity to choose one “personal quality” and focus on “**being remarkable**” at that quality for the whole year. I’m not talking about a skill here, I’m specifically referring to what I call a ‘quality’. For example you might choose the ‘quality’ of leadership, or communication, or listening, of teacher, coach, friendship, gratitude, or being relaxed, or having fun in everything you do, or giving great value.

Let’s say you were to choose leadership as your personal quality this year. What are the qualities that a truly remarkable leader would exhibit? And who are the leaders you admire, and can read more about or call up to spend an hour with? What would you need to do, how would you need to act to develop these qualities and bring them to life?

You can also apply **being remarkable** to your personal life by choosing a quality you’d like to bring into your home and family environment.

Step 7. Your Key Business Relationships...

In my early years as a business owner I learnt that the most effective way to move forward quickly was through creating leverage. I also got to see that being the leader of any business and a team of people could be a lonely path. Especially when it’s a new, entrepreneurial business!

But I also got to see that many others had walked the path before me and that there was great value in being able to tap into their experience and wisdom. From that day on I’ve attracted around me a small group of people who are very much my key business relationships. These are people from all walks of life who I admire, respect, value and look up to...and importantly they are external to my business so they can always be objective. Individually they each fulfil a unique purpose to me, (mentor, friend, professional adviser, confidant, referral source, teacher, and advocate) and collectively they ensure that my aspirations and vision unfold.

New Year is a great time for you to define (or redefine) your key business relationships. Remembering that you are indeed a product of your environment, look around you for the people who you admire most, who you aspire to be like, and who can create massive leverage for you, who can connect you quickly to where you need to be. Some you’ll already know well, and some will be people you’ve only ever read about. Some will be people you might only connect with 3 or 4 times a year (but when you do the learning opportunity will be huge), and others you’ll meet with frequently.

You’ll often hear me say that the 5 most powerful words are, “can you help me please?” Get on the phone and ask to meet these people for a coffee, or take them out to lunch. My experience is that most people are very willing to share their knowledge and wisdom with up and coming business people.

Step 8. 12 Month Event Planner...

Take control of your year in January. Take your year planner diary, fill in all your key dates and commitments for the entire year...holidays, tradeshows, promotions, events, product launches, seminars, 90 day review dates, financial reviews, birthdays, anniversaries, school term dates...everything that's important to you for the coming year. My planner goes everywhere with me, and at a glance I can see exactly what I have committed to. There are no disappointments, no compromises, no double ups and a highly effective way of coordinating my movements and travel plans to get best leverage of my time.

Step 9. Giving Something Back...

There is no more powerful vehicle for changing and improving our World than through business. An important part of our purpose is to build a community of passionate, inspired business people who can, and will make a difference in the World. One of the major trends this decade is going to be the move towards what people are calling business for social responsibility. Whether it's using business to improve the environment, the wellbeing of people or the community...this is already happening. Just look at The Warehouse, The Body Shop and Hubbards Foods!

As the owner of a small business, and the leader of a team you have an enormous responsibility to those people. But it doesn't just stop there. You have a responsibility to their families, your customers, suppliers, principles...and the list goes on. The environment you create for your staff and customers, the values you uphold, the opportunities you create impact directly on the quality of every individuals life and livelihood.

I'm going to suggest to you that you have the opportunity through your business to affect the livelihood of a great number of people. Including people, communities and organisations that are outside your business. You have the opportunity to give something back. As you sow, so shall you reap. Whatever you give out, you will get back.

Each year we support 3 local charities and regularly support and make donations to their causes. In dollar terms it's not huge to them, but it's the gesture that counts. And giving something back doesn't need to be about money. One of our clients runs a professional practice and she reserves 2 appointments each week for people who wouldn't normally be able to afford her services. They pay nothing to visit her at these times. Another client has established an award and scholarship programme for a local school to "put something back" into their local community and encourage up and coming students.

Step 10. Start the year off right...

Imagine this. You've just completed a very full on year in business, the team has headed off to all 4 corners for a few weeks holiday, everyone has switched off from thinking about business...and before you know it, here you are in January, back in the office ready to start another year in business.

What are you going to do to start the year off right, to reconnect everyone with what matters most to you and the business this year? How do you ensure that January

doesn't just get absorbed into the holiday season? And what are you going to do to reconnect with your customers and prospects?

For a start, you'll have just completed this 10-step process, so you'll now know the power that comes from operating from a place of clarity and certainty. There are a number of steps here you might want to share with your team with (either individually or collectively)...choosing a theme for the business for the year (Step 2), everyone choosing their own "**being remarkable**" quality (Step 6), agreeing as a team how you can give something back to the community (Step 9), having everyone complete their own **Ascent Process** (Step 1), and coaching everyone through their intentions for making this year a huge success, encouraging everyone to design their **Personal Development Plan** (Step 4) for the year, complete your 12 Month Event Planner (Step 8) for the company so that everyone's plans and activities are coordinated and support the bigger goal.

New Year is a time to plan some deliberate activity to reconnect all the key players in your business. The energy, enthusiasm and momentum you create in January will be the platform for the year's success. Start out in January, how you intend to continue throughout the whole of 2010.

Here's to a Prosperous 2010

All The Best

Karl