

Women in Business
Set SMART Goals to Keep You Motivated

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Welcoming in a new year is a perfect time to do some work “on” your business. Most entrepreneurs spend almost all of their time working “in” their business; providing service and products, managing employees and handling the tasks that seem urgent each day. The resulting problem is that your business becomes a product of whatever seems most urgent each day, not necessarily what is important in the long run.

Begin by making a comprehensive list of your business and personal accomplishments over the past year. It should consist not only of large achievements, but also smaller successes in your business and life. Celebrate these accomplishments and think about what you’d like to achieve a year from now. In the new year I encourage you to make a list of accomplishments each week because it will help to keep you motivated.

After reviewing your accomplishments, it’s time to set some goals for the new year. Because many of us have experienced frustration with goal setting and resolutions in the past, it’s important to set **SMART** goals. This refers to goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic and Time-specific**.

When setting goals it’s important to be **Specific** about what the goal is. Too often we set goals that are very broad and general. An example would be “I want to make more money.” The first step is to make it stronger by using an affirmative voice. “I will make more money next year.” To make that more specific you could change it to, “I will earn 20% higher profit than 2007”. To make it even stronger, calculate it into actual dollars, “I will earn \$5,000 higher profit next year”.

Next in the SMART goal-setting process is making the goal **Measurable**. It is helpful to establish milestones along the way so that you can measure progress. If you want to make \$5000 greater profit for the year, this can be measured in your monthly bookkeeping. Determine what monthly profit you will need to reach in order to make your 2008 goal, write this down and make a commitment to review the corresponding information at regular intervals.

Make sure that your goals are **Actionable**. The best goals have a number of different actions that will lead to the desired results. It often works best to identify small steps that can be accomplished within the scope of your work week. Perhaps you have to sell four extra items each week or phone a potential customer. You want to insure the action steps are small enough that you will not feel overwhelmed. Remember that it is strategic actions and persistence that lead to attaining goals.

Another attribute of SMART goals is to make them **Realistic**. The best goals challenge us to stretch what is possible, yet are within the realm of possibility. If your business is doing well you might start by determining what a realistic goal would be if what your business continues to grow at the current rate. Now, can you increase that by 10-20% to add the challenge factor? Using the above example, perhaps you'll realize that \$5000 more profit is very realistic and that \$6,000 is still realistic, but gives you more of a challenge. If so, go with the higher number.

Last in the SMART guidelines is to make your goals **Time-specific**. Research has shown that you are much more likely to achieve your goals if a very specific timeframe has been set. Therefore, "I will make \$6,000 increased profit by December 31, 2008" is a well-stated goal.

The new year is a perfect time to begin making more time to work "on" your business. "Even if it's only 30 minutes a week, you will find many benefits in doing so. My challenge to you for 2008 is to work smarter not harder on your business. Visit <toclimbhigher.com> for actionable ideas towards working smarter, more goal-setting information, a worksheet and my top 10 tips for reaching your goals.