

5 steps to hit your target in the New Year



Alyssa Wise

Alyssa is a marketing consultant with Pivot Group, a full-service marketing agency in the Portland area. She can be reached at alysa@askpivot.com.

IT'S THE BEGINNING of a new year — the perfect time to set goals for the next 12 months.

I love starting out the New Year with a clean slate and making resolutions for positive changes both in my personal and professional life. I feel recharged. I feel motivated. The possibilities are endless, and I'm ready to tackle my list of goals as soon as the clock strikes midnight.

However, as the days turn to weeks and my calendar begins to take on a monstrous life of its own, the struggle to stick to these goals becomes a harsh reality. By St. Patrick's Day, I've likely thrown them out completely, so they don't haunt me. I'd rather not have a list of goals than feel like a failure.

This year, I'm trying a five-step approach that creates a better opportunity for achieving my goals. While we'll focus on professional goals, you'll see this new approach works equally well with personal targets.

1. Revisit the big picture. Start by focusing your company's vision. Write a statement that defines your long-term aspirations. This statement should reflect the "bigger picture" of what you want to achieve.

Revisit your vision statement at the beginning of each year. Ask yourself, do you still define success as reaching this ultimate goal?

Maybe your vision has evolved through the growth of your business or personal development. Maybe you see the opportunity to move your business in a new direction, so your vision statement no longer feels relevant. Maybe you need to focus on smaller bites rather than eating the whole pie in one big swallow. Or, maybe you don't yet have a set vision statement that defines where you want your work to lead you.

Put a vision statement down on paper and refer to it throughout the year. Use this as the goal that all of your marketing initiatives will support.

Start by determining where you want to end up, and then work backwards on the steps to get there. Knowing your target at the beginning of the year will focus you on hitting it!

2. Set measurable goals. Now that you've established where you want to go, determine the various interim, concrete goals that will get you there. Setting measurable goals for the year is incredibly important, but it can be challenging.

If you start to feel overwhelmed by this task, remember the acronym "SMART," which stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based.

This acronym breaks down the process of setting goals into a simplified checklist. Each word gives precise direction as you determine marketing initiatives for the year.



Ask yourself, do my initiatives support the specific goal I have set? Can I measure my progress and adjust my path throughout the year? It's important to keep your destination in your sight along the way!

3. Keep communicating your brand story. Your vision statement is a part of your company's brand story. Now is the time for you to bring that story to life!

Each new marketing initiative is a chance to communicate what makes your brand unique. Look for new and improved ways to communicate your story, whether it's through specific marketing materials, online through your website and social media, or face-to-face interactions with customers.

Be genuine and show, rather than tell, your customers why they should care about you. If you communicate your story consis-

tently, you will attract customers who appreciate your values and authenticity. They will see you for who you are today, as well as for where you are going!

4. Expand your marketing horizons. What better time to explore new marketing opportunities than the beginning of the year? Choose one or two new areas of marketing that interest you, or that you see helping you achieve your goals.

Explore new media outlets, especially those that don't require a large budget, and devote time to learning about them. Social media, for example, can be a great opportunity to reach a new audience at no or low cost investment.

5. Remember the importance of teamwork. Get your team on board! Make sure your team understands how each person can actively contribute. This creates an opportunity for all team members to commit to their role and value within the organization. With the engagement of your team, you can all work toward the same destination and the individual goals along the way, celebrating progress and achievements throughout the year.

Taking these five steps can put you on the right path for 2016. I encourage you to hit the ground running with a refreshed motivation to accomplish your vision, achieve your goals and explore new ways to market your business and communicate your brand story. Challenge yourself and your team to start the year off with a shared excitement to accomplish all of these things. This is just the beginning! ☺