

IDEAS

Inside **IDEAS** > Lessons Learned Page 34 > The Marketing Minute Page 36 > Next Gen Retailing Page 38 > Smart Succession Page 40

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

PLANNING TO SELL

Ever heard of John J. Beckley? Despite his many achievements in the primordial arena of 18th century American politics, his name might not ring a bell. Yet, you're probably far more familiar with his ideas than you might realize. Though the true origin of this axiom is lost to history, Beckley is most famous for his variant that "Most people don't plan to fail — they fail to plan."

As the first American political campaign manager and the man that would later guide Thomas Jefferson into the White House, Beckley knew how important a structured plan was to success — especially at a time when nobody had a roadmap for winning an election. Arguably, winning a sale is much like winning an election. It requires likeability, trust, good communication and, above all, a solid plan for success. Since 2016 is almost over, it's time to begin building your 2017 marketing campaign. Here are a few suggestions:

PLAN YOUR ENTIRE YEAR IN ADVANCE. Of course, you will



'Having a direction is critical to building business momentum.'

refine your plan based on the successes or setbacks you face throughout the year, but having a direction is critical to building business momentum. Place your harvesting events on the calendar first and then plan to build prospects for those events with

marketing programs, institutional partnerships, centers of influence outreach and personal visits. Even if you're not in charge of your company, you should work with your supervisor to develop a set of goals and a personal plan to achieve those goals in 2017.

FOCUS ON PAST CLIENTS. It's easy to neglect folks who have already purchased from you, but these people are your best potential source for new business. Contact some of your "old" clients and ask them how they are doing. Make sure they are living their vision and invite them in for a free lesson as a small token of your appreciation. If they are happy with your service, ask them for a Google review or ask if they know anyone else who needs your help.

BUILD A SOLID INSTITUTIONAL PLAN. It's not enough to just show up and ask faculty members to buy something from you. The best relationships produce benefits for everyone involved. Write an article for their magazine, newspaper or blog. Give a speech to their class or host an

internship program. Follow them on social media and conduct a joint YouTube project. Don't neglect the churches in your area. Why not plan to do a praise band master class or a church music choral reading event in your store? Church members tend to be very loyal to the businesses that reach out to help them.

DO SOMETHING NEW. After a while, every business develops a menu of past events. It's OK to reuse the things that worked well before, but momentum requires constant innovation. Pepper in some new programs to keep your community interested in your business.

TAKE TIME TO TRAIN. Even the sharpest axe dulls with use. Take time to grind away the bad habits and revitalize your (and your staff's) interest in the products and programs you offer. Remember to include basic sales training — even for seasoned employees. **MI**

James Harding is a 15-year piano industry veteran, social media expert and swing pianist. Email him at jharding@gistpiano.com.