

48.5 Must do's in the New Year for entrepreneurs



As we enter the New Year with promise, energy and vision; let's us focus on being practical, tenacious and realistic in our efforts. I personally gave up making resolutions years ago. I found them distracting and unnecessary. Why do we wait until the beginning of the year to make commitments and discipline ourselves? Personal and professional improvement should be a daily practice. Yet, here we are.

The only thing I vow to do is to be better today, than I was yesterday. That covers me personally and professionally. If I have a bad day, God willing, I'll get a new one at midnight. So as you charge forward into the New Year, don't beat yourself up for missteps, failures and wrongs. If you awake to live another day, simply try again.

What are you going to do differently this year from what took place last year? Most of the time, our stumbles don't lie in the *plans*, they lie in the execution. Pick one objective at a time, get it done. And get it done right. Entrepreneurship is a marathon, not a sprint. The little victories count just as much as the big ones. Pick an objective that will provide you with some real growth and make it happen. I hope at least one of these "must do's" are on your radar.

Travel more, email less Over the last few years, we've spoken at Adobe MAXX, the Seattle Interactive Conference, and a TEDx event, among other speaking engagements. These experiences have proven essential to building our reputation and our business. We've made great connections to future clients and collaborators at these conferences, all the while building our visibility as a company. This has made us realize that we're much more effective as business owners when we're working on the big picture of where

our company is going, rather than bogged down in the day-to-day: project management, answering mountains of emails, putting out fires. Erin McCoy, www.killerinfographics.com

Give back Regardless of the stage of the venture, it's always to the entrepreneur's advantage to give back to the community by donating to charities, volunteering with local groups, contributing in-kind product, and mentoring other entrepreneurs. Brandon Bruce, www.cirrusinsight.com

Complete a contingency plan Let this be the year that you are prepared for the unexpected. A [small business](#) contingency plan outlines the steps you plan to take if an integral part of your business be should be suddenly disrupted. The main benefit to having a contingency plan in place is mitigating potential crisis and getting you back to business as soon as possible. Eileen Schlesier, www.SleeveShirtConsulting.com

Perfect your product by understanding what your customer appreciates and wants from you Madeline Johnson, [@marketcouncil](#)

Hire an amazing staff that values our core beliefs and health concepts. Stephanie Adams-Nicolai, www.StephanieAdams.com

Visit the Public Library What better place to find inspiration than amongst the greatest writers or our time. Emily Lyons, www.femmefatalemedia.com

Evaluate your company, fiscally I will evaluate my clients over 2013 vs. 2014 and see which companies had an overall decrease in business and how I can repair any relationships or increase the business at least by 25 percent or greater. Gwen Thomas, www.gwenthomaspr.com

Always grow, in all ways Many entrepreneurs lose their drive or hunger when they reach a high point (be it money or fame) and the push to grow more as a person and brand tend to fizzle out. Entrepreneurs always have to be growing, in all ways possible. This is not just a selfish I want to be a better person mindset, even though that is true, but it also is what you owe to people around you that are counting on you. Richie Frieman, www.RichieFrieman.com

Reevaluate and distribute resources (monetary investments, equipment/hardware and software) making sure all necessary tools are accounted for really in the year keeps expenses down by avoiding unnecessary impulse shopping. Heidi Nazarudin and Ponn Sabra, BloggerBabes.com

Go hard early Don't put off the hard stuff you have to deal with. Get into it as soon as you start your year, knock it on the head and clear the runway to take off for the year. Zan Jones, www.troyhazard.com

Build more connections This year has taught me that connections are king, talent and experience can only get you so far. I will be attending more networking, entrepreneur and startup events to meet new people and make those essential connections for the future. Jamil Velji, www.vantageanalytics.com

Find new companies with which to partner. Partnerships (when mutually beneficial) can propel your business to a new level of success and expose you to a new market segment. Rasheen Carbin, nsphere.com

Break down every goal into quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily bites then set up a tracking system to be sure things are getting done on time. Without concrete deadlines, supervision and follow-through, your goals will not get met. Marnie Swedberg, www.Marnie.com

Bring Something to Market Even if it's the smallest thing and just a portion of what your ultimate offering may be, bring it to the market. Providing any sort of value is preferred over sitting on your hands until your solution is fully baked. Jeff Stephens, www.crazydadlife.com

Delegate more so I can focus on business strategy Susan Payton, www.eggmarketingpr.com

Market to our best prospects We provide a high-value, high relationship experience and it costs a little more than our competitors so we are not a lowest-priced provider. We identified our VIP characteristics and will be marketing to that demographic, instead of 'everybody'. Louis Altman, www.globafone.com

Stay competitive with local establishments that challenge us in taking market share William Seavey, www.hercastle.com

Clear the clutter of what's not working Sometimes our business practices can get crowded with old habits and systems that are outdated and just not working anymore. Break the cycle by reviewing your current business systems and getting rid of what's not working. Keep what is bringing in the money and add in something new. Cari Nogas, www.mediamaison.com

Surround your work place with eye candy Update a drab workspace by designating a cleaning day. Clean and reorganize your entire office. Rearrange furniture or add a new piece, fix everything that is broken, clean the carpet or add a new welcome mat. Buy new file folders and color coordinated desk accessories to spruce things up. Your environment speaks to you. Refreshing the area seasonally can boost your creativity and productivity. Cari Nogas, www.mediamaison.com

Get control of your schedule Stop playing whack-a-mole with your time. For example, consider setting aside strategic, focus and buffer days each week and stick to it. Jen Diehl, www.gregoryfca.com

Constantly hone your daily routine A solid Daily routine for exercise, eating, marketing, prospecting,

and education is critical for you to grow into the entrepreneur and business owner you want to. Ray Higdon, www.RayHigdon.com

Extend a friendly hand to a tough competitor Share your knowledge, exchange ideas. This one helps me year after year in the most amazing ways. Suchit Bachalli, www.unilogcorp.com

Make sure our contact information is correct There's nothing more irritating than a storefront business's ads or website without hours and a local phone number. Linda Carlson, lindacarlson.com

Only work with people who you respect and who treat you respectfully That goes for customers, vendors, partners - everyone. Because we all deserve it and shouldn't put up with anything less. Brenda Do, www.livegracefully.com

Hiring a copywriter for come compelling persuasive copy With seconds to capture attention, getting to the point and holding attention is a great place to spend some marketing dollars. Kat Khatibi, www.thebusinessdarling.com

Write Thank You Cards There's a lot of people over the last years and previous years that have done many great things for me. I set aside a day and write personal, hand-written, thank you & appreciation cards, to my friends, colleagues, mentors, and anyone that has helped me in some way. Chris Brisson, www.CallLoop.com

Make a Decision and Stick To It The #1 most critical thing an entrepreneur needs in place in order to have a successful plan for their business is a DECISION. A decision is not a goal, a want, a desire or a wish - although they are often mistaken as these. Entrepreneurial success and growth is not achieved via goals, it is achieved based on decisions. Tina Forsyth, www.TinaForsyth.com

Increase your social media metrics by 50% Increase your presence by at least 50% - 50% more tweets, 50% more website or Facebook page updates, etc. Steve Faber, www.cruiseone.com/sfaber

Focus on Fundamentals There's nothing more important than making sure you're focused on business fundamentals. Elvis Lieban, www.artiscoffee.com

Go mobile Create a mobile optimized website. Create a mobile app. Create a mobile marketing plan that includes engaging customers via mobile devices with email marketing, social media and push notifications through a mobile app. Molly Sylestine, www.apptive.com

Reduce Digital Distraction By checking digital devices less frequently, I'll be able to focus more on what I am doing in real life. As a bonus, when I do check in throughout the day, many requests will already have been handle by others! Denise Blasevick, www.thes3agency.com

Worry less as this is just a futile emotion. Heddi Cundle, www.mytab.co

Go outside more to boost creativity and problem solving Too much screen time and not enough green time seems to tip the balance for not accessing fresh ideas or approaches. Perspective is everything, and not getting up from my desk to work through lunch has definitely not increased my productivity.

Amber Sims Hinterplattner, www.AllStagesMarketing.com

Teach everyone in my company to ID opportunities and sell My employees have an entire untapped network of people who would buy what we do. I am resolved to tap that network and build my business. I met a very wealthy entrepreneur this past month and his advice to me to ensure my business was always a success like his was is that Everybody Sells no exceptions from the accountant to the admins to the engineers. Elizabeth Frisch, www.thrivalcompany.com

Take more time off The term entrepreneur does not have to be synonymous to 'workaholic'. Taking regular time off to get clarity, re-evaluate business strategy and have a social life will save me from facing burnout in 2015. Blair Nastasi, MediaMogulsPR.com

Ask for help Some entrepreneurs are shy about asking for help—be it advice, money, connections. Ask—politely, clearly, and concisely—but ask. Entrepreneurs are often looking to pay it forward. Take advantage of your networks and tap into the expertise and influencers all around us. Mike Collins, www.bigideagroup.net

Look for inquisitive advisors You'll have an abundance of questions for a mentor or adviser, but he or she should have a slew of them for you as well. Look for someone who eagerly inquires, rather than sitting back and waiting to be asked for something. David Kiger, www.davidkiger.com

Don't let the legal stuff pile up An advisor can help an entrepreneur navigate the complex legal aspects of starting and owning a small business. Failing to address these issues early on could be a costly mistake. David Kiger, www.davidkiger.com

Try to explain what the company does to your Grandma The New Year is a good time to reflect on your messaging and to try things out on people who are pretty removed from your business. I always find things that are confusing in our messaging that can be easily improved with a little feedback from Grandma. Ashley Waters, www.pancommunications.com

Master a new social media platform I like to take social media platforms one at a time. There's so many of them nowadays and only certain platforms work well for us. I want to master a new platform and figure out how it can help us build our brand's voice. Eunice Cho, www.aella.co

Become a data driven company that uses analytics to understand and engage with

customers Richard Hollis, www.Holonis.com

Build a sales team and get out of the owner is the only salesperson business model So many business owners limit our potential by not hiring people to replace ourselves for critical tasks. Sales and business

development seems to be one of the hardest of all and I will do it this year. Eric Scott, www.DolphinMicro.com

Keep an eye on the regulatory issues facing your industry With so many hats to wear, it's easy to overlook the complicated legal stuff. But if you're not prepared for changes in regulations taking effect in 2015, you're setting yourself up for a painful lesson. For example, the Affordable Care Act has been gradually taking effect, with new regulations being put in place each year. Connie Certusi, <http://na.sage.com/us>

Continue to seek out additional streams of revenue for my company without diluting the brand. I am going to launch a webinar/workshop series in 2015 that will assist in the effort. Jennefer Witter, www.theborelandgroup.com

Attend Entrepreneur Week A weeklong event in NYC for entrepreneurs like me to network, meet and greet peers, rub shoulders with angel investors and VCs, listen to speakers, and much more. The purpose of the event is to offer new perspectives, insight, knowledge, advice and networking opportunities to entrepreneurs by bringing the best and brightest to present on stage to cover every topic relevant to starting, building, growing, financing and selling a business. Ian Aronovich, www.GovernmentAuctions.org

Attend Hatchery's Annual Hatch Match A conference that hosts a multitude of one-on-one meetings that bring together entrepreneurs, advisors, venture capitalists and angel investors. At this conference, we can sign up to pitch to multiple angels and VCs and to network with other entrepreneurs. Ian Aronovich, www.GovernmentAuctions.org

Set up automated ways to be aware when a customer comments about your company or asks questions and then be responsive. We spend so much time trying to acquire new customers that we can neglect existing or prior customers. Google Alerts, Twitter RSS feeds, LinkedIn comments and Facebook notifications can be set up to appear in your email so that you can respond via your mobile device. Deborah Chaddock Brown, www.thesocialmediaroadmap.com

Consider working with an accountability partner to further your commitment to progress and growth this year. Check out the **Accountability POWER Network**.

Simplicity expert and Micro Business Therapist™ A.Michelle Blakeley is one of Forbes 30 Women Entrepreneurs to Follow on Twitter. Blakeley masterfully delivers the right information with step-by-step guidance. As a result, her clients are living a purpose-filled lifestyle and experiencing energized realities. Connect with her on Twitter at [@simplicityinc](https://twitter.com/simplicityinc) or view her online magazine, **Micro Business Therapy™**