Prep Your Business for 2020

Plan now for 2020! I will share some planning thoughts and ideas written by one of SCORE’s content writers, Jessica Thiefels, founder and CEO of Jessica Thiefels Consulting.

You can’t prepare for next year without look backward. What happened this year will direct your goals and strategy for next year, so as you look ahead, you should also look back. This is an opportunity to answer a few important questions:

- What were our goals? Did we meet, exceed or fall short?
- What was our greatest success?
- What was our greatest failure?
- What do we wish we had accomplished?

There are no quick answers to these questions, and you may need to look back to sales, marketing and data to remind yourself. Take your time, get it all on paper and then look ahead to next year.

Here are some suggestions to set yourself up for success:

1. **Dream Dump**: Write down all the things you want to accomplish. Make this list exhaustive.
2. **Action Steps**: What do you need to do to make that happen? Think high-level, i.e. Update website or hire new salespeople.
3. **The Resource List**: What connections and resources do you already have at your disposal that you can leverage? Think about current employees or connections with a certain company.
4. **Refine**: Now, break your high-level action steps down into smaller, specific steps that you need to take. Update website might become: Set goals for the new website and hire a web designer.
5. **Manifest**: Focus on what you want to accomplish and move intentionally toward that to manifest it into being in 2020.

**Review All Your Contractors and Their Contracts.** The gig economy is steadily growing. Estimates say that the freelance workforce is predicted to rise to **43 percent** of the U.S. workforce by 2020. If you’re reaping the benefits of working with contractors and freelancers, now is the time to make sure that you’re staying within the limits of the laws, which are still vague and difficult to understand as the government figures out how to regulate this area of the workforce.

**Put Organic SEO Front and Center.** In our social-centric world, it’s easy to focus all of your digital efforts on social media. If Facebook went down tomorrow, however, and never came back, would you still be able to connect with your audience and drive leads online? If you haven’t put any emphasis on your website, the answer to that question is likely no.

That’s why it’s important to prioritize building a strong organic web presence with organic search engine optimization (SEO). While this takes time to do, when done right, it will drive organic traffic for many years to come, unlike paid marketing, which only works when you have money to spend.

**Find Ways to Cut Costs.** Head into 2020 with a fresh slate by getting rid of any unnecessary costs. It’s easy to sign up for software or a subscription, and then forget about it long after you’ve stopped using it. Then, six months later, you realize you’ve still been paying for it. Don’t let those extra costs weigh you down in the new year. Make a list of all the programs you currently use and then cross-check that with your monthly business credit card statement to get rid of anything you don’t need.

You can also use this time to cancel any accounts or subscriptions you use occasionally, but not enough to warrant paying for it. You may even be able to find free or cheaper options that will provide the same value without the high cost.

Finally, assess all your contractors and the work they’re doing. Is that cost still necessary or can you move into 2020 without their help? Better yet, can you find someone who can do the same quality work for a lower price?
Set Personal Goals. As a business owner, it’s easy to forget about what you need. However, the business only runs well if you’re also at the top of your game. This means it’s important that you use this time to figure out what you want to achieve and how you want to improve in 2020 as well. If you’re not sure where to start, consider:

- Areas of weakness: Where do you consistently fall short?
- Personal passions: What do you love that you want to focus on more?
- Education: What conferences or learning opportunities can you take advantage of?
- Evolving business needs: How do you need to grow to continue servicing the needs of your business?

As you grow in your role as a business owner, your business will grow, too. Don’t forget to focus on you, just as much as your business, in 2020.

Prep for 2020 Now. Don’t wait until January 1st to set goals and prepare for the year. When January rolls around, there will be plenty on your plate already. Start now so you have time to think about what you want to achieve and bring intention to your plans as the new year gets closer.

Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904
www.seminnesota.score.org/

*Dean is a volunteer Certified SCORE Mentor and former SCORE Chapter Chair, District Director, and Regional Vice President for the North West Region