Planning Helps Make Next Year Better Than This Year

by CHAD RUEFFERT

Holiday season each year sees a downturn in real estate activity. It’s tempting for real estate professionals to use that as an excuse to limit their own activity.

But if you want next year to be better than this year, holiday season is the perfect time to accomplish all those things you put off during the busy season and begin planning your prospecting and marketing for next year.

In my experience, the leading cause of business failure is the lack of a strategic plan. When a business has no idea where it is headed, it tends to wander in circles, back track, or make limited progress. It doesn’t capitalize on its success or learn from its failures. Priorities are decided by necessity or emergency rather than by their importance to long-term success.

Brad DeVries, CEO of three HomeServices real estate brokerages, encourages all of his agents to set income goals, commit an activity plan to writing, and then commit their minds to implementing the plan in manageable chunks. “Business planning is critical to your success,” says DeVries. “You must begin with the end in mind. The end result of your real estate business, your earned income, is the result of many activities from prospecting to closing negotiations. When you determine the income level you desire, you also determine the activity level you will need to achieve your goal.” Here are a few common sense tips to consider as you sit down to write next year’s business plan.

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While I sincerely hope you have some great relaxation and family time this holiday season, I hope you’ll also hold yourself accountable for using this time to set your goals and create your plan for a successful new year!

Chad Rueff is the president of Braintree Marketing, Inc. and the creator of the From Your Friends Relationship Marketing program.

Goal setting is the first step towards goal achievement. If your goal is to generate 25% more income this year than last year, it sets a baseline for your plan and indicates you may need to increase your activity level by 25%. Setting a concrete goal also allows you to create benchmarks throughout the year. Was January 25% better this year than last year? If not, what can be done to improve February?

When you look at the calendar, a year seems a very long time. But subtract a day or more a week for family or personal time, a couple weeks for vacations and holidays, some necessary days for training and education, and suddenly you’re left with around 250 days of productive prospecting and selling time. Putting off your planning, marketing or prospecting by even a week will put you behind and make accomplishing your goals that much harder.

With limited time and resources, your activities need to be focused on the items most likely to help accomplish your goals. When activities do need to be postponed, knowing which items are most important allows you to lose the least amount of productivity. Identify the items that absolutely must be done each week and make them a priority. Beyond the deadlines of active transactions, those priorities likely should be based around building your business.

“Activity for real estate agents is primarily focused on prospecting,” says DeVries. “You should have a plan to procure customers through repeated contact activities. Those contact activities turn into customers, which turn into clients, which turn into contracts, which turn into closings, which can turn into referrals.”

Building an annual plan can be daunting, but it’s essentially just a series of daily activities. Once you’ve set your goal and determined your activity level, divide it down to the weekly and daily goals and set out to reach them each day and each week.

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