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Hi there,

It's always a good idea to set goals at the beginning of each new year but, after almost two years of navigating a global pandemic and with a semblance of normality now returning, it's especially important to take a close look at existing strategies and goals and streamline them for a more promising year ahead.

However, we all know how hard it can be to stick to new year's intentions and goals and the way in which one approaches the task can make a difference between success and failure.

Below, Yael Geffen, CEO of Lew Geffen Sotheby's International Realty, delves into which factors companies should prioritise for the year ahead and offers a wealth of advice for setting achievable goals for 2022.

Caption: ACHIEVABLE GOALS: With a semblance of normality now returning, it's essential for businesses to assess and adjust their goals and strategies accordingly and the difference between success and failure is how one approaches the task.

New year, new promise, new business goals

It's always a good idea to set out goals at the beginning of each year, but now that a semblance of normality has returned after almost two years of pandemic adjustment, it's especially important to take a close look at existing strategies and goals and streamline them for the year ahead.

"Most businesses were significantly impacted by the pandemic," says Yael Geffen, CEO of Lew Geffen Sotheby's International Realty, "and as a result had to completely rethink their business strategies and short-term goals as a matter of survival.

"And although many of the lessons have been tough to learn, often they've also involved a process of reflection and analysis and, in many instances, those insights have come to be accepted and appreciated, especially for the revised priorities and perspective they've brought into our lives.

"So, whilst some of those valuable lessons can and should certainly be carried forward into 2022, it's time for another major readjustment in order to capitalise on a new year that promises greater flexibility, more opportunities and certainly more promise."

However, we all know how hard it can be to stick to new year's intentions and goals and the way in which one approaches the task can make a difference between success and failure.

Geffen says that one proven way to assess and set your goals and to improve your ability to reach them is the SMART method:

- **Specific** – be clear about what you are really wanting to accomplish and how you plan to do that.
- **Measurable** - Establish concrete data that you can track in order to assess your progress and closely monitor your key performance indicators to also track things like total membership sales, conversion rates, costs per lead, and ROI.
- **Attainable** – Ensure that the goal is more than a pipe dream and can be implemented without too much difficulty. Time is, after all, money and wasting resources and man hours on achieving an overly complex goal is counterintuitive.
- **Realistic** - Yes, it may be theoretically possible to achieve 200% growth in a year, but it's highly unlikely and failure to do so is likely to lose the motivation and lower the morale of your team.
- **Time-sensitive** - By focusing on a set time frame, you are giving yourself and your team a date to reach said goal and it enables better planning.

“Because we think of a new year as a fresh start, we try to look ahead with high hopes as we set our new goals but it's important to look back to see what we have learned and to try to avoid the same mistakes and pitfalls,” cautions Geffen.

“Oftentimes, we learn more in retrospect, so think back to what scuppered progress in the previous year or two, identify and assess the core causes and consider what you could have done differently.”

Geffen adds that longer term goals are more easily achieved if one uses three to six-month horizon lines.

“It's very easy to become disheartened if we slog at the same thing with no end in sight so breaking these goals up into bite-sized chunks will keep you and your team motivated.”

Of course, there are a multitude of goals one can set, but some are more important – and effective -than others and Geffen suggests beginning with these:

Declutter:

This housekeeping task is as essential in the workplace as it is in the home. In the business sense, it means drop what isn't working and move on. Not every service or product can be a best-seller and not all contractor or suppliers are suited to your business.

Don't invest even more energy and money into trying to make the unworkable workable. Move on - something better will turn up.

Revamp your marketing strategy:

It's very likely that your company experienced a few hiccups in response to the pandemic's impact on the economy and that your marketing and customer communication approach would have had to be adapted accordingly.

Take the time to re-evaluate your marketing efforts prior to COVID-19 and during the pandemic and assess what is required going forward. Look at what worked and what

didn't. Revamp what did work, brainstorm new ideas and integrate them into the new year's business strategies.

Make business planning a regular event

Planning is vital to successfully nurture a healthy, growing business as it allows you to take stock of what's working and make necessary adjustments. Not only will it help to avoid costly mistakes, it will also keep team morale up and everyone feeling more focused and motivated.

It doesn't have to be as often as weekly but it should be regular so set aside dedicated time with your team to assess, review and adjust.

Prioritise health and wellness

The focus on employee wellness has traditionally been on their physical well-being and the prevention of absenteeism, but if the pandemic has taught us anything it's that physical health is only one component when talking about healthy and well-functioning employees.

Over and above physical illness and disease, according to statistics recently released by the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), as many as one in six South Africans suffer from anxiety, depression, or substance-use problems

We are now more aware than ever that employee health affects more than just medical costs; that there is a direct correlation between a holistically healthy workforce and a productive workforce and that a healthy and supportive workplace culture is vitally important.

Improving community outreach

Companies don't exist in a vacuum; their existence is inextricably linked to the communities in which they operate and the true measure of a company's success is should therefore not be limited to sales and profit margins, but also its contribution to the environment in which it exists.

Community involvement not only builds strong communities but strong businesses because when a community flourishes, a business has a strong base of clients and customers to draw upon. The best way to make an impact with your business is to first make an impact in the community you serve.

Geffen adds that there is one more goal that every leader should strive for – achieving a healthy life-work balance.

“This may sound selfish, but it's actually quite the opposite. A leader is no good to their team or their business if they are over-worked, stressed and exhausted and, at the end of the day, the company will suffer the consequences.

“None of us is bullet-proof and we are no good to ourselves, our teams and our companies if we allow ourselves to burn out.”

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