

Compliments of Abhi Singh

ISSUE 16

BUSINESS

IN ACTION



Honoring
AMERICA'S
VETERANS



Abhi Singh
(202) 604-3270



ISSUE 16
COVER PRICE \$6.99



Front of Tear Out Card 1



A SMALL-BUSINESS END-OF-YEAR CHECKLIST

With the advent of a new year, now's the time to reflect on the past twelve months to determine how well your company fared and where adjustments may be needed. This simple guide can help you grade your success and establish challenging goals for the new year.



LEAD. MOTIVATE. SCALE.



Abhi Singh

(202) 604-3270
abhi@lmsstrategies.com
www.lmsstrategies.com

Back of Tear Out Card 1

- RUN A FINANCIAL REPORT**
Print major accounting statements, and evaluate trends from throughout the past year.
- PROBE YOUR COSTS**
Review major expenses, then determine how to be thriffter with them to maximize your profits. For example, you can take steps to save energy.
- UNDERSTAND YOUR REVENUE**
To review the factors that led to your overall earnings, run customer surveys and check online reviews. Can you identify common pluses or pain points?
- COMPARE AND COMPETE**
Assess rival organizations' pricing and tactics to identify what you could learn from them.
- EVALUATE YOUR PERSONNEL**
Review employee performance, reward top staff, and consider methods for supporting lower performers, such as by leading skills courses.
- EXAMINE MARKETING KPIS**
Calculate your overall ROI by deducting your total marketing expenses from your net income. Then review analytics like your website bounce rate and campaign impressions to learn where you may need to make changes.
- BOOST YOUR STRATEGIES**
Plan avenues to improve your marketing ROI. For instance, run omnichannel campaigns or post more compelling social media content.
- ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
Give yourself some well-deserved credit for your achievements from the past year, and share success stories with your team.
- BRAINSTORM AND STRATEGIZE**
Write up resolutions, then determine what incremental steps you can take to achieve these goals. How can you leverage new technology to boost productivity or adopt new services to please your target audience?



As we start November, we would like to take a moment to thank all the heroic Veterans that have served our Country.

We live in freedom because of the bravery of all our Veterans ... thank you all for your service.

Looking forward, we are deep in the planning phases for 2025. It is hard to believe how fast this year has gone, and how fast a new year is approaching. While this year has been opportunistic due to the inflationary/deflationary turbulence, market start/stops, uncertainty and labor challenges ... just to name a few things ... one thing is certain: the basics of leadership, market awareness, effective relationship selling versus order-taking, and culture have never been more important.

In this issue we touch on all those items.

Specifically we encourage you to look at page 35 where we highlight strategies on "How to Hire Veterans" and page 41 where we provide an "End-of-Year Checklist."

Both articles are critical to driving your business, and we are confident that you'll be able to quickly integrate these strategies into your organization.

As this is the last edition of 2024, all of us at LMS want to take a moment to thank you for your business, your friendship, and your time. Our organization is nothing without you ... and we truly cherish our relationship.

Have a great Holiday season, and we'll talk soon.

All the best!

-Abhi



Abhi Singh

(202) 604-3270

abhi@lmsstrategies.com

www.lmsstrategies.com

Contents

ISSUE 16



03

LEADERSHIP

Supercharge Your Leadership

Three leadership programs that foster leadership development in a competitive world.



021

LEADERSHIP

Cultivating a Culture of Gratitude

Build a positive and productive team by giving them the proper recognition for their efforts.



08

LEADERSHIP

The Future of the Workforce

Training expert Dr. Keith Keating discusses talent development and AI.




MARKETING
121 | An Experiential Twist on Marketing

How one marketing agency gets creative with promotional events.


EMPLOYMENT
20 | Why You Should Hire Veterans

Here's why veterans could become your most valuable team members.


EMPLOYMENT
31 | How to Hire Veterans

Discover how easy it can be to put the talents and skills of veterans to work for your company.


PRODUCTIVITY
40 | A Small-Business End-of-Year Checklist

How to run a year-end review of your small business.


SALES
46 | An Empathic Approach to Sales

Discover how empathizing with your clients can lead to mutual success.

BUSINESS

IN ACTION

PUBLISHER

Chief Executive Officer Steven Acree
 publisher@remindermedia.com

EXECUTIVE

President Luke Acree
Chief Marketing Officer Joshua Stike
Chief Operating Officer Michael Graziola

MARKETING

Director of Marketing Dan Acree
Director of Creative Services Kristin Sweeney
Director of Content Jessica Fitzpatrick
 marketing@remindermedia.com

EDITORIAL

Editorial Manager Alexa Bricker
Senior Layout Designer Elisa Giordano
Senior Writer and Editor Matthew Brady
Editor Dakota Damschroder
Content Writers Allison Gomes, Bonnie Joffe,
 Lauren Kim, Andre Rios
 editorial@remindermedia.com

SALES AND CLIENT SUCCESS

Vice President of Client Success Ethan Acree
Vice President of Operations Nicholas Bianco
Vice President of Sales Michael Campanile
Director of Client Success Matthew Frizalone
 hello@remindermedia.com

OPERATIONS

Vice President of IT Thomas Setliff
Director of Projects Kelsie Schmall
Director of Business Intelligence Daniel Gallaway
Director of Manufacturing Shannon Mosser
Vice President of Finance Shana Lebofsky
Director of HR John Keogh
 hr@remindermedia.com



Business in Action is published by ReminderMedia. For more information about Business in Action, please visit us at www.remindermedia.com, email us at info@remindermedia.com, or call us at 866-458-4226. All rights reserved.

NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE EXPRESSED WRITTEN CONSENT OF THE PUBLISHER.

This magazine is for information and entertainment purposes only; it is not an attempt to solicit business.

The contents of Business in Action are for editorial purposes only.

All photos and/or artwork in Business in Action are provided by Getty Images, and icons by Noun Project, unless noted.

Supercharge Your Leadership

Navigating today's competitive business landscape demands continuous learning and development for both you and your leadership team. BY **BONNIE JOFFE**

THOUGH PERHAPS OFTEN overlooked, targeted leadership development is essential to growing your business. In fact, research has shown that it can lead to a 25 percent increase in learning capacity and a 20 percent boost in performance, in turn improving productivity to boost your bottom line. Whether you're investing in experienced managers, future leaders, or even yourself, here are three highly rated programs geared toward honing leadership skills to consider.

Coaching the Personal Journey to Leadership (Wronski Associates)

This program focuses on helping leaders assess their own emotional intelligence skills and leadership styles and translate them into actionable strategies that align with the values of their company. By developing these competencies, leaders can build strong team relationships and better foster a positive and productive work environment.

→ For more info, visit wronskitraining.com

Leadership Skills iCademy (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

For leaders seeking to enhance their skills across multiple areas, the Leadership Skills iCademy offers a framework to help anyone become a more successful and ethical manager. The program guides participants through training in three themes—self, interpersonal, and teams—each of which builds on the next for a comprehensive practice.

→ For more info, visit online.illinois.edu

Managing Talent (University of Michigan)

CEOs consistently rank managing and developing talent among their top priorities for achieving success. This online program empowers company leaders with best practices to recruit and acquire talent, gain insight into effective communication techniques, resolve conflict, build trust, and motivate their team to become a collaborative and high-

performing unit. Even more, these skills are acquired by working through practical assignments and participating in real-time leadership challenges, making it easy to translate them into the real world.

→ For more info, visit online.umich.edu

In selecting the optimal leadership training program, carefully assess the strengths and challenges of your current and aspiring leaders to ensure that it directly addresses your company's needs. Investing in leadership development isn't just about setting the stage—it's about building a productive team that drives business success. ■



Evaluate the leadership needs of your company, and find a program that matches best with its goals.



Cultivating a Culture of Gratitude

Retaining your top performers goes beyond providing fair compensation—it also requires acknowledging their contributions and fostering a sense of belonging.

BY LUKE ACREE

IN EVERY INDUSTRY, the key to building a truly engaged and productive team is recognizing their efforts. However, just 30 percent of employees in a 2024 Gallup poll reported receiving praise for their positive contributions to their company. But while some leaders believe that their employees value physical gifts highly, in reality, they're often perceived as more transactional than heartfelt. Instead, you need to find more personal ways to connect with your team and acknowledge their efforts. Implement the following creative strategies, and you may just help your employees unlock their full potential.



→ Acknowledge and celebrate achievements

It may seem simple, but a genuine “thank you” for a job well done holds unmatched value. Frequently acknowledge individual and team accomplishments through channels like a company newsletter, social media postings, or team meetings. You can also implement a peer-to-peer appreciation system, where employees can thank and praise each other publicly.

Additionally, make sure to give one-on-one acknowledgments to your employees, such as by offering meaningful feedback that validates their contributions and celebrating milestones like birthdays, work anniversaries, and personal triumphs.

→ Invest in employee development

Employees who believe that their professional and personal growth is supported are more likely to feel

Take Action

Assess what motivates your employees beyond conventional gift giving, and then integrate more effective recognition strategies into your workplace.

Make sure to give one-on-one acknowledgments to your employees, such as by offering meaningful feedback that validates their contributions and celebrating milestones like birthdays, work anniversaries, and personal triumphs.

appreciated by their company. To facilitate this, consider implementing a mentoring program or pairing new hires with experienced colleagues for guidance and encouragement. You can also provide more deliberate professional-development opportunities, whether in-house or external, such as workshops, conferences, webinars, and skill-building activities. These initiatives will help your team see that you’re committed to growing them within your company, ultimately promoting their job satisfaction.

→ Foster a positive work environment

When employees are burned out, their morale and productivity plummet, so focus on enhancing their work-life balance to give them chances to reset and refresh. Consider adaptable

work arrangements, such as remote work, compressed workweeks, or flexible hours, and encourage the use of paid time off. You could even explore additional perks like providing PTO for birthdays or half-day Fridays on holiday weekends—small gestures such as these can have a significant impact. In the workplace, model an attitude of gratitude and empathy, finding ways to relate to your employees and assist them where needed. Whether by writing personal messages, offering verbal compliments for a job well done, or simply listening, you can make the difference between happy, long-term employees and a high turnover rate.

→ Empower and trust your employees

Nobody enjoys working under a micromanager. Instead, demonstrate

trust in your employees by delegating meaningful tasks, allowing autonomy in their decision-making, and granting them ownership of their duties. In addition, foster an environment where experimentation and risk-taking are valued, enabling your employees to feel in control of how they accomplish their tasks.

Though gifts may seem to be the only way to acknowledge your employees, consider the power of public praise and recognition. Acknowledge their initiatives and contributions to your company, and you can build a strong team that very well may last for years to come. ■



About the author: Luke Acree is an authority on leadership, a lead-generation specialist, and a referral expert who has helped more than 100,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses grow their companies. He hosts *Stay Paid*, a sales and marketing podcast, and has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, and *Foundr.com*.

The Future of the Workforce

Dr. Keith Keating, chief learning and development (L&D) officer at BDO Canada, discusses the importance of learning and development and how AI is changing the work landscape.

INTERVIEW WITH **DR. KEITH KEATING**
 WRITTEN BY **MATTHEW BRADY**
 PHOTOS COURTESY OF **DR. KEITH KEATING**

NOT EVERY COMPANY HAS A LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT. WOULD YOU TALK ABOUT ITS ROLE?

In 2022, McKinsey identified that an estimated 40 percent of those who left their jobs the previous year did so because they didn't have career-development opportunities. People want to be developed, engaged, and challenged and know they have a future—L&D, also sometimes known as talent development, focuses on ways to do this. Across the globe, L&D is a multitrillion-dollar issue.

Employees are the most important resource in any organization. As more leaders begin to acknowledge this, L&D continues to grow in relevance as the key support system to developing those resources. I view us as the changemakers in a company:

When change happens, it's rapid and employees are impacted, and we help them lean into the new culture or products and develop new skill sets. This, in turn, drives value for the company via retention and employee engagement.

IS SUCH AWARENESS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR BOOK, THE TRUSTED LEARNING ADVISOR?

Yes. L&D practitioners are largely treated as order takers in organizations—somebody else determines the problem and the solution and tells us what to do, such as creating a thirty-minute web-based training session to talk about culture changes. But there's a science behind what we do, so we can explain things like why certain engagement tactics work and others don't. My book aims to help those in the L&D industry evolve into strategic



business partners who are embedded in their businesses and involved with everything from generating ideas to executing its mission.

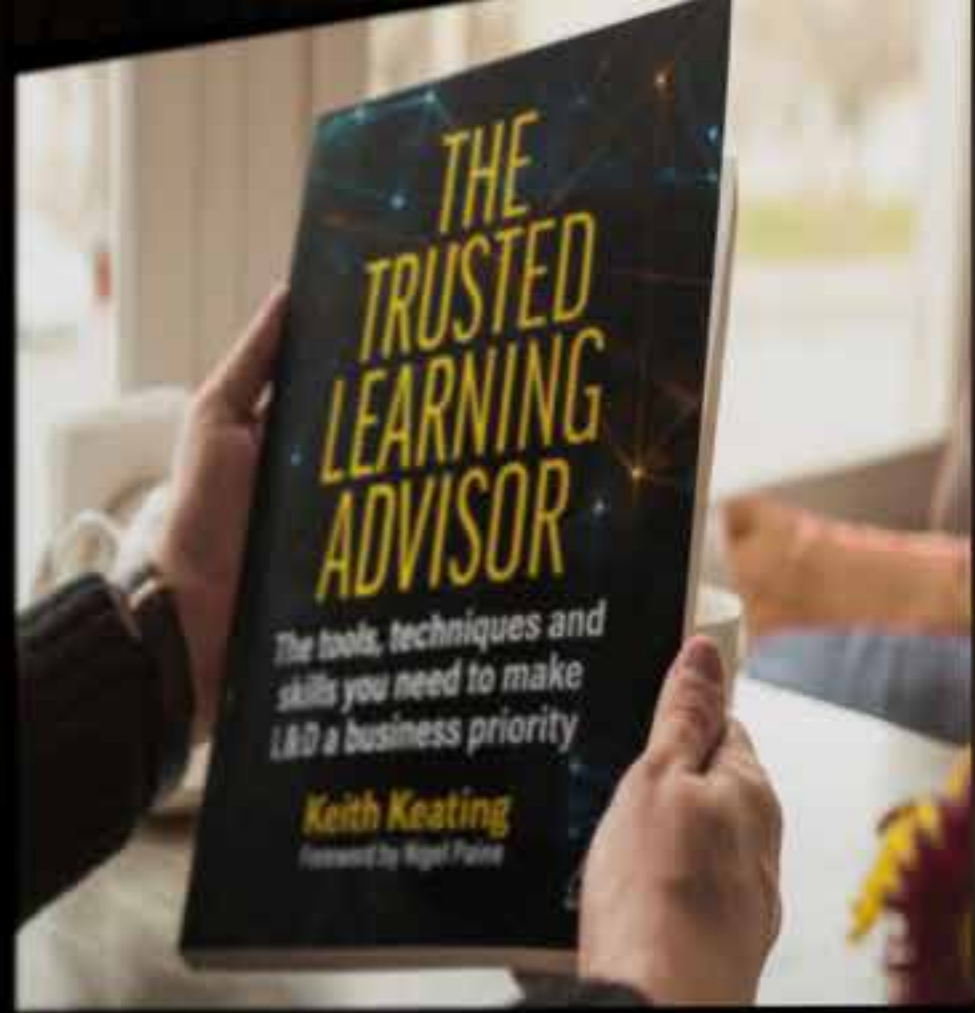
DO COMPANIES FOSTER L&D ENOUGH?

Companies may say they believe in lifelong learning, but it's largely lip service. For example, for my doctorate dissertation, I interviewed Fortune 500 chief financial officers. Everyone I spoke to said they found value in L&D in their organizations, but when I asked

how they attached value to it, they largely couldn't answer—many couldn't even tell me anything about their L&D departments. A CFO's responsibility is to understand the value of every business unit in their organization, so I encourage L&D practitioners to find out what language and measurements are important to their CFOs to help quantify what L&D is doing to help the company thrive.

One of the processes I'm trying to put in place at BDO is setting a minimum-

“
 When change happens, it's rapid and employees are impacted, and we help employees lean into the new culture or products and develop new skill sets.”



KEITH
KEATING



AI replacing the workforce is a myth the media plays into because it loves to focus on fear and clickbait—for example, truck drivers were supposed to be out of jobs by now because of self-driving cars, but they're more in demand than ever. In addition, anytime something new is introduced, there's a fear of the unknown.



annual-hours requirement for growth. I don't care if they're the CEO or executive assistant—I want them to consistently spend sixty to eighty hours throughout the year discovering something new, whether that's playing the guitar, trying a different recipe, or learning AI.

SPEAKING OF AI, IT OFFERS CLEAR BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES, SUCH AS INCREASED EFFICIENCY AND LOWER COSTS. BUT IS IT A REAL CONCERN FOR EMPLOYEES?

I want to say it's complicated, but I don't think it actually is. AI replacing the workforce is a myth the media plays into because it loves to focus on fear and clickbait—for example, truck drivers were supposed to be out of jobs by now because of self-driving cars, but they're more in demand than ever. In addition, anytime something new is introduced, there's a fear of the unknown. That happened with the advent of the weaving loom, books, cars, ATMs, smartphones, and even the teddy bear. We're in the same place now with AI. We just need to understand what it is: primarily a way

to find and eliminate inefficiency gaps that exist in organizations.

To reach this understanding, companies need to educate their employees about it, but employees also need to educate themselves. AI such as ChatGPT is available to anyone with a computer or smartphone, so play with it, learn about it, and embrace it. Does it do some things better than us? Absolutely. But in the context of your job, focus on how it can free you up to do things you are better at, such as empathy, compassion, and relationships. After all, there is no version of the future that exists without AI; it's not going anywhere. At the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, where I had the privilege to speak, the most interesting thing I heard was "It's not *if* AI wakes up. It's *when* AI wakes up."

HOW GAME-CHANGING CAN AI BE TO THE WORLD AT LARGE?

I believe that AI, with its immense potential, will play a vital role in making the world better, democratize

educational experiences, and, ultimately, be a great equalizer. In ten years, we're all going to have access to this problem solver that knows us, works with us, and coaches us to help us grow. The larger issue is that half the world currently doesn't have the internet. So for this great tool to truly revolutionize the future, we need to address some inequalities—and soon.

IS SHIFTING TO THIS AI REALITY ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HOW L&D HELPS BUSINESSES?

Yes. We encourage and enable talent to take control over their destinies through the power of lifelong learning, including about AI. For example, I'm not a know-it-all; I'm a learn-it-all. I've learned how to access the tools that can help me learn, which is an asset wherever life takes me. My mission is to help people in the workforce understand this truth because it unlocks their full potential and makes them unstoppable, whether they're an employer or an employee. At the end of the day, paving your future is all about learning. ■



For more info, visit keithkeating.com

AN EXPERIENTIAL TWIST ON MARKETING

Sophia D'Angelo, founder and CEO of Boston Experiential Group, offers a glimpse into her organization's revolutionary events, which flip traditional marketing on its head.

INTERVIEW WITH **SOPHIA D'ANGELO**

WRITTEN BY **ANDRE RIOS**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF **BOSTON EXPERIENTIAL GROUP, GREG FRY MEDIA**



Would you give us an overview of Boston Experiential Group?

BEG is a marketing agency based in Boston and Austin. We specialize in designing immersive, authentic brand experiences that captivate a target audience, helping to ensure that a brand stands out in a competitive marketplace. In addition to event planning, we also think far beyond an on-site experience; we are laser focused on amplification, meaning we provide comprehensive support across all media channels, leveraging social and digital media and other outlets for maximum impact.



What inspired you to start this business?

I began my career in trade marketing, dabbled in brand management, and somehow landed a gig managing major events and national sponsorships for a big-shot CPG beverage brand. After a stint in a senior project management role back in the agency world, I realized something was missing: that creative spark.

Growing up, my dad was the entrepreneur I always looked up to. He instilled a solid work ethic in my sister and me from a young age. So when the itch for a new challenge hit and I found myself veering away from project management, there was only one path on my mind—starting my own agency. It's been six years since I

began marrying my skills and embracing my creativity, and here we are!



What is your definition of “experiential marketing”?

To me, experiential marketing is the art of forging vibrant, living connections between brands and their audiences, allowing people to genuinely connect with them in the real world. It's not just about conveying a message; it's about immersing consumers in an unforgettable live experience that resonates on a deeply personal level.

Experiential marketing is, at its core, about human connection. It's the only time a consumer has a face-to-face interaction with a brand, and it's during these moments that lifelong purchasing decisions are made. Heart-pounding events, soul-stirring activations, and tear-jerking campaigns can all spur an emotional resonance that creates memories. These events also build a loyal community that feels like family around a brand.

For example, in May 2023, we planned and executed a launch party for a beverage brand in Massachusetts. The fully immersive experience transported guests to a tropical paradise. Picture sand sculptures mirroring the company's



packaging, rhythmic tunes of the Elovaters (a renowned reggae band), vibrant tropical flowers, exclusive cabana seating, tantalizing product sampling, delectable

cuisine, and much more. The event led to a surge in retail orders and more positive brand sentiment across various digital platforms for the company.

“Experiential marketing is, at its core, about human connection. It's the only time a consumer has a face-to-face interaction with a brand, and it's during these moments that lifelong purchasing decisions are made.”



What's another event that you're particularly proud of?

One that stands out is a concert for over 10,000 attendees we held with LA-based DJs Two Friends, not only because our team did incredible work but also because it's such a niche section of this industry. In June 2023, we took charge of curating an entire front-of-house guest experience, ensuring a seamless blend of entertainment, engagement, and brand immersion. From managing sponsors and setting up activations to overseeing decor, branding, and food-and-

beverage arrangements, we orchestrated every detail to create an unforgettable and cohesive atmosphere.

We observed substantial increases in Two Friends' social media followings after the event, with engagement metrics surpassing our expectations. This then led the group to raise their ticket prices and outsell their previous show.



How do your events help brands achieve more exposure?

These experiences are designed to catapult brands into the spotlight.



Through meticulous planning and creativity, we ensure that each event garners attention and, most importantly, sparks conversation. We also strategically integrate social media, digital channels, and traditional media outlets to amplify the reach of every event. This comprehensive approach not only maximizes exposure during the occasion but also creates a lasting impact that extends far beyond it.



What do you think BEG does that other marketing services don't?

What truly sets Boston Experiential Group apart is our commitment to creativity, flexibility, and nimbleness in the ever-evolving landscape of marketing. In terms of creativity, our diverse team brings together a range of perspectives, talents, and expertise, allowing us to generate insanely cool ideas that stand out in the market. Our ability to think outside the box ensures that a brand doesn't just blend in.

As for flexibility, we understand that every organization is unique, so one-size-fits-all solutions rarely cut it. That's why we offer completely tailored services. This approach allows us to adapt to the specific needs and goals of each client, crafting a customized and cost-effective strategy.

Finally, nimbleness is our secret weapon in the fast-paced world of marketing. We stay ahead of trends, embrace innovation, and pivot quickly when needed, which allows us to navigate the dynamic marketing landscape and guarantee that a brand remains at the forefront of its market.



What can business owners do to make their marketing more engaging and impactful?

What's most important is to know your target consumers and make sure you're reaching them where they're already seeking support in your category. For example, we primarily engage with organizations' brand managers. So we tailor our marketing strategies to reach them. If brand managers are seeking help, where will they search for it? Are they on Facebook? Probably not. Are they on Instagram? Personally, yes, but professionally, no. Are they utilizing search engines? Yes. LinkedIn



Brainstorm innovative and engaging alternatives to your organization's traditional marketing tactics. How can you leave a lasting impression on your target audience?



“ In terms of creativity, our diverse team brings together a range of perspectives, talents, and expertise, allowing us to generate insanely cool ideas that stand out in the market.

and referrals? Definitely. Therefore, we market to these channels and focus on creating compelling storytelling, case studies, and messaging.



How can BEG help other organizations gain a competitive edge during the holidays?

With the holidays around the corner and being such an important time of the year, our team is ready to bring festive magic to brands with themed events, interactive experiences, and more. We aim to create unique, memorable moments that will stand out amid other holiday buzz. We're always

ready to infuse creativity and impactful elements into any organization's holiday campaign.



What's next for BEG?

Exciting times lie ahead for this team! We're continuing to grow our amazing group of experiential producers as we gear up for more groundbreaking experiences, innovative campaigns, and strategic partnerships. The future holds expansion into new markets, pushing the boundaries of creativity, and staying at the forefront of emerging trends in the world of experiential marketing. ■



For more info, visit bostonexperientialgroup.com

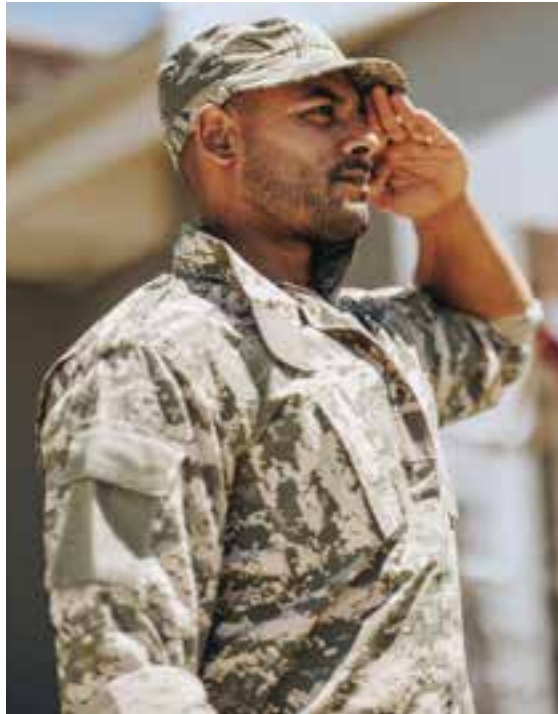


Why You Should Hire Veterans

Veterans of the US Armed Forces represent some of the best-equipped individuals for the business world, poised to offer various workplaces a unique range of skills.

BY ANDRE RIOS





VETERANS HAVE sacrificed their time, safety, and freedom to join the collective effort of protecting the United States and its allies. But once members of the US Armed Forces reintegrate into the civilian world, you should make a concerted effort to bring them into your organization—no matter your industry. After all, they have developed special skill sets in some of

the world's most rigorous positions and very well may prove themselves to be your greatest workplace assets.

Committed to the cause

Uniforms aren't all that unite service members; teamwork is a core tenet of what makes for a capable military. Take the seven core Army Values, for example, a list of principles featuring loyalty as one of its most vital aspects. "A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. By wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army you are expressing your loyalty. And by doing your share, you show your loyalty to your unit." In fact, the term "wingman," to mean a reliable friend and confidante, originates

from legions of fighter pilots traveling in formation.

This sense of commitment, drilled into servicepeople from their first days of basic training, can benefit an entire organization. Like trainees conducting the common pole-bearer exercise, in which several individuals must collaborate to carry a heavy object to a designated goal point, veterans will prioritize teamwork, extending a helping hand to coworkers who are swamped with tasks or offering to help a colleague improve a project that faced criticism. If a team runs dangerously close to missing a deadline or your organization is falling short of its revenue aims, expect a veteran to step up to the plate.

“A loyal Soldier is one who supports the leadership and stands up for fellow Soldiers. By wearing the uniform of the U.S. Army you are expressing your loyalty. And by doing your share, you show your loyalty to your unit.”



Their efforts will help ensure that everyone achieves their goals.

Regimented

Long after they leave behind the world of exercise drills and precisely donned uniforms—spaces where even a messy collar can earn you demerits—veterans retain their commitment to following rules and

maintaining order. "Veterans will be the most punctual employees you'll ever meet," says Easterseals, a nonprofit that assists veterans in achieving job placement, among other services. "Exceptional organizational skills are ingrained in them from their service." If you're looking to hire disciplined individuals who are timely with

their promptness, dedicated to completing their vital tasks, and neat and orderly where it counts, look no further than a veteran.

You can also trust these employees with helping to execute strategies from upper management, investors, or other positions of authority exceptionally well. After all, the



military is one of the few workplaces where people literally wear their rank on their sleeve, so a veteran will understand and accept their role within a system of leaders and perform their tasks accordingly.

Lead like no one else

However, don't expect these individuals to blend into the background. As they rise from rank-and-file recruits to leaders during their service terms, they develop some of the strongest management skills you could ever hope to encounter. "You learn how to lead a team to accomplish the mission,"

writes Paul A. Dillon, a former US Army reserve officer and Vietnam War veteran who now leads his own management consulting firm. "If you can't do this—if you can't forge your troops into an effective fighting force—you're mustered out of the service quickly."

Servicepeople are trained to lead the charge in the most high-stakes situations, and they can apply these unifying and strategizing skills to virtually any workplace. That doesn't mean, though, they fit the stereotype of a drill sergeant barking orders. "Service in the military

makes you understand the concept of 'servant leadership' perfectly," Dillon continues. "An officer doesn't eat until all his or her troops have eaten. An officer is the last to sleep and walks the perimeter of the camp to ensure that their troops are safe and sound." In other words, they lead by shouldering responsibilities, not passing them on.

Quick on their feet

In the US military, workplace complications or hazards have potentially devastating effects, not only for individuals but also for their companions—and potentially even the nation. For these reasons, members of any service branch are taught to assess their situation, think quickly, then take immediate action to solve any crisis.

Naturally, your workplace will present a lower-stakes environment than a battlefield, but a veteran employee will still treat a client complaint or loss in revenue like an obstacle that must be addressed with haste. Did a vendor threaten to raise your fees? Trust the veteran on your payroll to either negotiate a better rate with them or find a more affordable alternative. Did a marketing campaign underperform? A veteran



Consider staffing an armed forces veteran on your team to satisfy existing job vacancies or fulfill your personnel-expansion objectives.

on your team may step up to review metrics and explore alternative tactics with the potential for greater ROI. Rather than being overwhelmed or stumped by a crisis, they will seek solutions to tackle these barriers with impressive resolve.

Hiring a veteran

If you're interested in leveraging the diverse skills and experiences these selfless individuals have developed, start by conducting some outreach measures. For example, participate in veteran job fairs, collaborate with placement services such as Easterseals, and actively seek out applicants with prior military service on job boards or at recruiting events. (You can learn more about onboarding veterans starting on page 34.) If you embrace a veteran-inclusive hiring strategy, you can not only support those who have served and sacrificed but also access a pool of uniquely skilled individuals who can contribute considerably toward your organization's success. ■



For more info, visit easterseals.com or veteranstaffingnetwork.org

Building Hope

Caroline Pinal, cofounder of the social-impact company Giveback Homes, discusses the organization's work with real estate professionals to build homes for families around the globe.

INTERVIEW WITH **CAROLINE PINAL**
WRITTEN BY **ALLISON GOMES**
PHOTOS COURTESY OF **GIVEBACK HOMES**



GIVEBACKHOMES
REAL ESTATE #FORSOCIALGOOD





CAROLINE PINAL

Q How did you get started working in social impact?

Earlier in my career, I worked in the corporate world, but I quickly learned that it wasn't the space for me. I started looking for a new job, and I ended up accepting a position at TOMS with their sales and retail marketing team. TOMS is the big shoe company that pioneered the one-for-one giving model, so it was a really rewarding and fulfilling role. When I was there, I met my current business partner and cofounder of Giveback Homes, Blake Andrews. After a few years, we decided to try and start something on our own, which led us to found Giveback Homes in 2013.

Q It's a big shift from shoes to homes. What inspired it?

At the time, TOMS would send all employees on giving trips, where they go to different countries to distribute shoes, so each person can experience giving firsthand. Blake and I had the opportunity to travel to Nicaragua, and it ended up being a life-changing experience for numerous reasons.

While there, we witnessed the living conditions that many families were facing. There was a lot of extreme poverty, with many people living in structures that were made of scrap wood and scrap metal. Some families of six shared one mattress on a dirt floor, and every time it would rain, everything got soaked. Such conditions are just unimaginable for most of us.

At that time, Blake was in the process of buying a home for his family, so after we got back from that trip, he had the idea of trying to apply a similar giving concept to the real estate world. He wondered what we could do to make it super easy for real estate agents to give back and help build homes for people in need.

Since we knew nothing about the real estate sphere, we started by collaborating with Blake's agent. He told us that agents are often bombarded with charities and other organizations looking for donations, but they never really get to see where the money goes or the impact it has. We created Giveback Homes with his help, and our first project sent us to



We created Giveback Homes to make it easy for anyone in the real estate industry—whether they're an agent, broker, builder, etc.—to give back.

Nicaragua to build a home for a family there. Blake's agent was able to come with us to help and meet the family, so he saw exactly what his support went toward.

We came back and shared that story with many other people in the real estate industry, and the business just grew from there. A couple of years later, we started partnering with organizations in the United States as well to support affordable housing, so now we get to help both locally and internationally.

Q Describe the process of partnering with real estate professionals:

We created Giveback Homes to make it easy for anyone in the real estate industry—whether they're an agent, broker, builder, etc.—to give back. A lot of times, people are hesitant or think it's too hard or time-consuming, so it just ends up being the last thing on their to-do list. But for our organization, all they have to do to begin making a difference is become a member through our website.

Once enrolled, members get a digital tool kit as well as



information on how to incorporate it into their branding, marketing, and business operations. We also reach out and assist each member in identifying what projects they want to support. Do they want to donate locally, internationally, or both? By getting an idea of what each person wants to achieve and what kind of impact they want to make with their donations, we can better work with them to help them meet those goals.

Q How many agents are you currently working with?

We work with thousands of individual agents as well as with entire companies and brokerages across the United States—they've helped us build over five hundred homes at this point. The Agency was one of the first real estate brokerages we partnered with;

more recently, we've joined forces with Aaron Kirman and Cindy Ambuehl at Christie's International Real Estate.

We also collaborate with companies like Concierge Auctions, which is a luxury real estate auction company. Every time they sell a home at auction, they build a home for a family in need in Central America. I've taken groups of their employees down to El Salvador and Nicaragua to engage in the process. It's really inspiring to see a company invest so much in its impact and its people by providing these build trip opportunities to them.

Q What advice do you have for other entrepreneurs who are interested in giving back?

It's important to support a cause you're passionate about. You should take the



It's really inspiring to see a company invest so much in its impact and its people by providing these build trip opportunities to them.





time to figure out what your values are and what's important to you so you can be strategic about donating your time and money. Look for a nonprofit or social-impact company that's doing work within an area you're interested in supporting, and start small by donating or volunteering yourself. It's a good way to see how you feel and if you want to continue giving.

If you then decide you want to make philanthropy a part of your business, go to your team and talk to them about it. You can make more donations and assess how it feels and works with your budget. If it ends up being something you want to do more regularly, consider getting in contact with the organization's leadership team for more information on partnering with them on a larger scale.



“
The agents we work with meet the families who they're helping build homes for; they get to see the living conditions before, and then they're there to hand over the keys after.”



Q How do you continue to feed the passion for what you're doing at Giveback Homes?

It goes back to being able to bring people to places like El Salvador and Nicaragua. The agents we work with meet the families who they're helping build homes for; they get to see the living conditions before, and then they're there to hand over the keys

after. It's truly incredible getting to see the huge impact having a secure roof and hardwood floors has on families. The agents also get to stay in touch with the families, so they are forever changed because of it. Even on tough and challenging days, I just think about those moments, and that keeps me going. It's hard to *not* be passionate about that sort of thing. ■



Identify a cause that's important to you and your team, and determine how you can support a nonprofit or social-impact company working in that area.



For more info, visit givebackhomes.com



How to Hire Veterans

Bringing military personnel into your business can reap benefits, but first you need to learn where to find those looking for work and how you can make the employment process seamless.

BY MATTHEW BRADY

WHEN IT COMES TO BUILDING A TEAM, you want employees who are reliable, hardworking, and mission focused. If you're struggling to find the right personnel for your needs, consider one highly skilled group of workers that's renowned for its dependability and dedication: veterans.

Every year, approximately 180,000 military personnel transition from serving their country to living civilian life, which includes joining the workforce. When you add one or more of these veterans to your team, the upside can be massive—for both your business and the economy—so here are some of the top considerations for going about it.



The US Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) agency is a good place to start; it has regional offices that not only help businesses find the right military talent but also work with them on how to best understand veterans as they enter the workforce.

> Get started

Much like there's often a learning curve for military personnel joining the corporate world, business leaders need to educate themselves about hiring our veterans. Where can you find such workers, and how can you prepare your company to

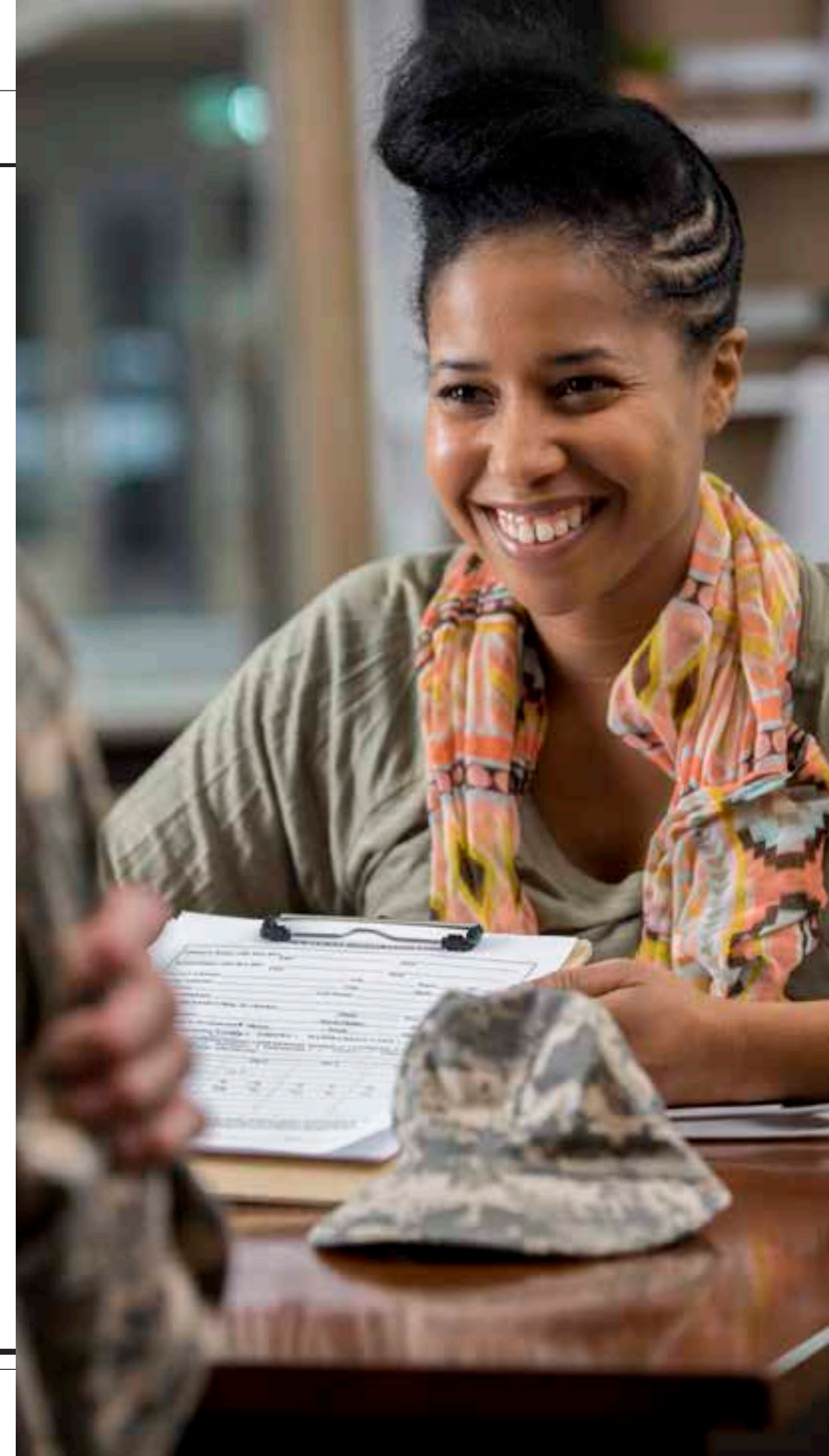
best welcome them? Fortunately, many organizations offer solutions for these very dilemmas. The US Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) agency is a good place to start; it has regional offices that not only help businesses find the right military

talent but also work with them on how to best understand veterans as they enter the workforce. Similarly, Hiring Our Heroes, a US Chamber of Commerce-based foundation, is an excellent resource thanks to its hiring events and fellowship programs.

> Plan

Before you turn your eye to the candidate pool, you should devise a strategy for finding veterans with skills and experience that suit the needs of your organization. First, discuss your intentions with your executive team and employees so that everybody is on the same page. Then craft or adjust the relevant job description, making sure that it's geared more toward veterans. For instance, home in on the skills required for the position since focusing on experience may feel disqualifying to someone with a military career.

Once the description is ready, where should you post it? You can use common job sites such as Indeed, of course, but





also take advantage of a military-focused one such as RallyPoint or the National Labor Exchange, which has a section dedicated to veteran-friendly employers. And be well prepared for the interview process—familiarize yourself with common military terms so you can both understand how the skills on the résumé translate to your company and discuss them with the interviewee. (And, yes, it's OK to ask for clarification; they'll appreciate your interest.)

To learn more, access the USAA's Employer Roadmap, which provides a plethora of resources for preparing your business to hire veterans, from understanding the dos and don'ts of recruitment to learning how to empower them once they're part of your team.

> Accommodate and support

When hiring a veteran, you may need to take each one's unique circumstances into consideration, such as chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, or mental health issues. It's vital—both legally and ethically—that you account for and make reasonable accommodations for them if requested. This can mean anything from granting



When hiring a veteran, you may need to take each one's unique circumstances into consideration, such as chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, or mental health issues.

them a preferred shift or adjusting their work schedule for treatment to providing noise-canceling headphones for PTSD. Camaraderie is key as well: make sure that you and your team get to know them as individuals and help them feel welcomed as they adjust to civilian life and the work environment.

> Teach

Even if the time isn't right for hiring, you can still make a difference to those who served by sharing your business acumen with them. Many organizations, such as American Corporate Partners, provide mentorship opportunities that allow you to work one-on-one with a veteran to help them achieve their dream of becoming a small-business owner. Another option is to work with your state

or the US Department of Labor on an apprenticeship program, which can help veterans obtain skills they need for jobs.

Bringing veterans onto your team can provide a wealth of benefits to your company. Just as important, the hiring process can be easier than you think when you take advantage of the many resources available, making the endeavor a win-win for everyone involved. ■



Assess your current hiring process to identify how you can adjust it to be more veteran friendly, then lay out a game plan for bringing veterans into your organization.



PRODUCTIVITY

A Small-Business End-of-Year Checklist

With 2024 in its final quarter, it will soon be time to review the year and evaluate the progress your business made.

BY ANDRE RIOS




THE END OF THE YEAR is a natural time for leaders—especially small-business owners—to start looking at the big picture: determining how their companies fared over the past twelve months and planning for the ones ahead. While there are many strategies for doing so, you can use this comprehensive guide as a foundation for grading your success and establishing challenging goals for 2025.

 **Run an end-of-year financial report**

Nothing provides a better picture of your organization's health than fiscal data. To begin your review, print accounting reports that quantify core figures, including income sheets and balance and cash-flow statements. Be sure to employ tools like QuickBooks or FreshBooks to help you analyze income, profit, expense, and sales volume trends throughout the year, or request these insights from any outsourced accounting services you utilize. Naturally, such info will largely determine how successful your company was in 2024.

Now it's time to qualify the data by identifying and understanding the factors that led to your overall revenue this year. Check consumer reviews across multiple platforms or conduct customer surveys, either of which will reveal public perception of your business. Highlight areas that may need improvement, such as your delivery times or customer service. Additionally, compare your and your competitors' pricing to gauge how appealing and lucrative your strategies have been. Assessing these areas can help you not only understand how successful you were this year but also plan for improvements that will make your organization more competitive.



 **Probe your costs**

Review your principal expenses, starting with sourcing and utilities. Determine what portion of your assets is attributed to these costs and how you can be thriftier with them. For example, you could negotiate lower

delivery prices from a wholesaler, referencing your consistent loyalty. Such efforts to slash burdensome expenses can ensure that you maximize profits in the coming year.


Afterward, assess your personnel, who collectively represent another

tremendous expense. Evaluate your staff to decide which members, particularly commission-based employees, are the greatest assets to your organization and which may be less productive. Don't be rash with cutting these individuals—with a little time investment

or instruction, you could guide low performers toward increased profitability. However, you can also develop a game plan for recruiting new talent who will move the needle forward. Just as importantly, determine how you might reward high performers to



boost retention. When you conduct reviews of your staff, you can determine how well these investments are paying off.


 **Examine marketing KPIs**

Marketing is among the most necessary categories on your expense report, so dedicate a review session to determining exactly how successful your efforts have been. Calculate your overall ROI by deducting your total marketing expenses from your net

income. Then review key performance indicators that quantify consumer interaction with your marketing, such as your website page views, social media engagement, and campaign impressions. You can find this data in your marketing software; Google and individual social media platforms also offer analytics tools that can help you compile crucial data points.

Once you examine these crucial figures in detail,

consider routes to boost your ROI, such as running omnichannel campaigns or posting more compelling social media content. If necessary, seek assistance from an ad agency or marketing expert to augment your strategies and boost engagement.

 **Acknowledge your accomplishments**

While it's essential to cast a critical eye toward the prior quantitative data, you should also give yourself some well-deserved credit




Dedicate time for grading your business in all the preceding areas, then brainstorm compelling goals for the new year to make greater progress.



Hold strategic sessions with your leadership team—particularly with those in your financing and marketing departments—along with representatives from any relevant partnered services.

for your accomplishments from 2024. Perhaps you expanded your service areas, shattered your revenue goals, or onboarded some impressive new talent. Even risks that didn't pay off offer dividends in lessons learned. So before you look ahead, take time

to reflect on every major development of the year, both positive and negative.

 **Brainstorm for 2025**

Now that you've compiled fundamental data about your business and noted your accomplishments, it's time for the final,

arguably most exciting step: planning for the new year. Start by writing a dream sheet, on which you'll record your top motivating factors, goals for your organization, and new horizons you want to explore. Could you leverage new technology to boost productivity,

adopt new services to please your target audience, or boost your marketing to contend with competing organizations?

Afterward, hold strategic sessions with your leadership team—particularly with those in your financing and marketing departments—along with representatives from any relevant partnered services. Discuss your goals, request feedback, and brainstorm collectively to draft visions for a successful new year. Consider your risk tolerance as you select which efforts to invest in. From there, determine how you can realistically helm these efforts, drawing up a game plan with actionable first steps. Finally, set periodic markers, such as monthly or quarterly, to track your progress toward these goals so you can observe as your business flourishes in 2025. ■

An Empathic Approach to Sales

Pump your passion for your company's mission into your sales, and you and your clients can reap the benefits. BY LAUREN KIM

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a way to reignite your dedication as an entrepreneur, motivate your team, or boost your revenue, you might want to consider heart-centered selling. This effective sales method prioritizes creating meaningful connections with consumers and discerning their unique wants and needs. Discover the basics of using empathy in sales with this guide, including strategies for doing so and what benefits you may reap as a result.

→] Selling with heart

The traditional hard sell, which involves using aggressive, high-pressure techniques to get customers to buy a product or service quickly, is a time-honored method. But heart-centered sales support the opposite approach: targeting customers who could truly benefit from your products or services and putting their needs



first. In effect, it's the practice of selling by the golden rule—treating others how you want to be treated—and making your values an integral part of the sales process.

As an entrepreneur or business professional who is passionate about what you do, this empathetic approach can be a good choice since it requires thoroughly knowing your product and understanding who can benefit from it.

→] How to practice it

The goal of heart-centered selling is to connect with potential customers on a human level, which requires engaging in real conversation. Avoid being overly salesy—your main motivation should be to put yourself in your customers' shoes while relating authentically with them and fulfilling their needs. If you discover you can't fully help them, you may be able to refer them for their benefit to another company that could; in return, that business may reciprocate by sending prospects your way. It may seem counterintuitive, but prioritizing doing right by your customer can create goodwill and encourage them to return when their needs do match your offerings. In the meantime, they may even send referrals your way.

→] Benefits for you

In addition to being a plus for your customers, employing this compassionate method of selling can provide you with personal pluses that can help lean into your strengths, bolster



your dedication to your business, and allow you to fully be yourself.

Sustain your passion

Implementing a heart-centered sales philosophy can be an excellent motivator for you and your team since it can allow you to reconnect with your company’s mission and the “why” behind what you sell. As a bonus, you might gain greater confidence in your sales process by knowing you’re providing a valuable service for your customers, which, in turn, will make you feel good about your work and your ability to better the lives of others.

Foster authenticity

As an entrepreneur, selling from the heart can be especially beneficial if you don’t have a natural knack for selling because it focuses on creating genuine relationships and sharing your knowledge instead of relying on sales gimmicks. Its approach may also allow you to be your authentic self and talk about what feels natural to you, allowing you to connect with clients while concurrently promoting the product.

→] **Benefits for your company**

There are many ways your company can win by selling from

the heart, including experiencing greater efficiency, customer loyalty, and longevity.

Save time

By only focusing on customers who can truly benefit from what you have to sell, you may be able to stop wasting time on clients who don’t want or need your services, allowing you to better allocate your efforts.

Sell more

While heart-centered selling may seem like a soft approach, it can be quite effective for garnering sales. Individuals choose to interact and connect with people they know, like, and trust. By being true in your approach and making it your mission to create relationships and improve lives, you can help improve your brand and entice more people to pick you over your competitors.

Retain more customers

Selling with empathy can have the opposite effect of pushy sales tactics, which can alienate prospects even if you manage to make a sale. Buyers who purchase because they truly feel a need for a product or service will be less likely than those pressured into buying to experience buyer’s remorse. Because your customers

know you have their best interest at heart, they will be more motivated to do business with you and may even become ambassadors who spread the word about your company to other potential buyers.

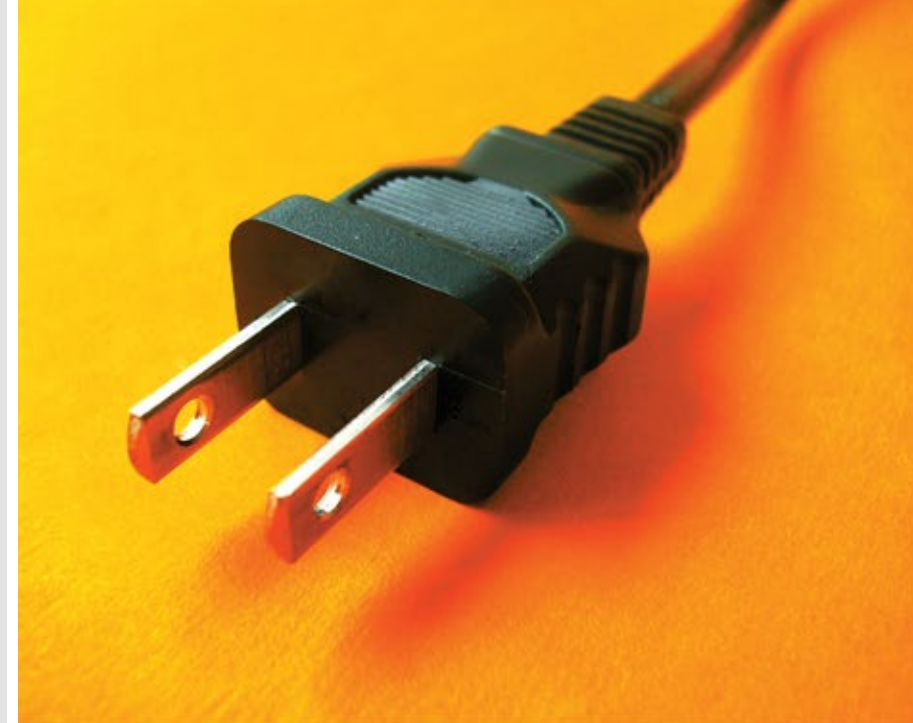
Promote long-term success

By valuing your clients’ needs, you may also help to ensure the future of your business, as your customers may realize you have their interests at heart and aren’t merely trying to get them to buy your products and services. This, in turn, may strengthen your reputation, putting you ahead of your competition.

You have a passion for your business —so share that genuineness with your customers. Adopting a heart-centered selling approach can be your avenue for imparting your knowledge and love for what you do for everyone’s benefit. ■



Take a close look at your service or products to identify what needs they can help fill so you can better know how to serve your customers.



plug.

‘word of mouth’ has potential to be electrifyingly effective.


Thank you for your continued business and support.

Your assistance in **generating** new clients for my business is always appreciated.



Abhi Singh
202.604.3270
abhi@lmsstrategies.com
www.lmsstrategies.com



Front of Tear Out Card 2



A QUICK LOOK AT TYPES OF BUSINESS LOANS

As a small-business owner, the right loan can serve as a valuable asset, providing a lifeline in a time of need and better enabling you to tackle your growth endeavors.

Use this card to help determine which type may align best with your needs.



Abhi Singh

(202) 604-3270
abhi@lmsstrategies.com
www.lmsstrategies.com

Back of Tear Out Card 2

A Quick Look at Types of Business Loans

<h3>Business line of credit</h3> <p>If you need a cash-flow injection to cover unexpected expenses, purchase goods, or help bridge temporary income gaps, this option allows you to withdraw up to an approved limit. You'll only pay interest on the money used.</p>	<h3>Microloan</h3> <p>Start-ups and businesses that only need a small amount of financing can benefit from microloans, which usually range from \$500 to \$50,000. Just note they may have a higher interest rate than other financing plans.</p>	<h3>Personal loan</h3> <p>Many banks may be hesitant to lend money to start-ups or newer businesses. In these cases, a personal loan may offer more flexibility and a lower interest rate. You can typically borrow up to \$50,000 with a payback term of two to seven years.</p>	<h3>Small Business Administration (SBA) loan</h3> <p>With funding for up to \$5.5 million, lower interest rates, and longer repayment terms, SBA loans are an attractive option. The lending standards may be strict, though, and these loans can take a long time to fund.</p>	<h3>Term loan</h3> <p>One of the least expensive ways to borrow money, these loans range drastically in term length and sum and can be used for a variety of business expenses. However, they often have strict borrowing terms and qualification standards.</p>
---	---	---	---	--

Abhi Singh
LMS Strategies
5121 W 164th St
Stilwell, KS 66085



A LOYAL CUSTOMER BASE

IS THE FOUNDATION FOR BUILDING NEW BUSINESS

• THE CORNERSTONE FOR SUCCESS •

As a valued client, your referrals and recommendations to family and friends are highly regarded and always appreciated. Thank you for your continued business and support.

I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU SOON!



LMS Strategies

Abhi Singh
www.lmsstrategies.com
Email: abhi@lmsstrategies.com

(202) 604-3270