



No More Broken Promises

By Jason Bader

So here we are at the start of the new year. While some of you might be optimistic about your potential, I suspect that a few of you are stuck in remorse over unrealized goals and aspirations. Remember all those lofty projections for 2018? This was going to be the year that you (fill in the blank). And when you achieved (blank), how much better your company was going to be, how much more money you were going to make, how many people would look up to you, etc. Yep, that would have been awesome...if you had done it. So, what will this January bring? Another lofty goal with similar results? Rather than dreaming of knocking it out of the park, perhaps we should shoot for a few base hits.

If that first paragraph didn't give it away, I am a Gen Xer. We are cynical to the core and not afraid to use sarcasm to overstate a point. Mission accomplished. I guess that I am ready to get off the hamster wheel of lofty goals, procrastination and remorse. We need to get a few wins under our belt. Success breeds more success. Regret over failed goals will only lead you further down the rabbit hole.

Let's set ourselves up for success this year. Rather than going after the macro goal, I want you to imagine a series of micro successes. When working with folks on setting goals for their branches, I often help them recognize the power of daily gross margin targets. These bite sized milestones, when communicated to the team, seem attainable. They create an instant feedback loop. Hit goal, smile. Miss goal, try harder tomorrow. At the end of the month, there are so many hit goals that team members develop a taste for success.

Keeping this in mind, what small goal would make your company better? Perhaps you want to improve your customer service. Rather than this somewhat subjective ethereal macro objective, let's find a way to break it down into small pieces. What is most people's favorite word in the English language? Their own first name. For the month of January, have your team focus on learning and greeting customers by their first name. Try to work the name into phone conversations. Bring the delivery drivers in on the exercise. Ask yourself this question, would you go out of your way to visit a coffee shop or watering hole where the staff all knew you by first name? Norm!

What if your goal was to clean up your item database? When entering the web selling arena, many companies realize that their item descriptions are nothing short of hieroglyphics. Over years of self-centered data input practices, what we refer to as a product is frankly unreadable. How could you break this down into a micro-goal? What if you set a goal to clean up one product category every week? Within a few months, you would start to see a way out of the mess that was created. In its macro state, the project appears to be insurmountable. By breaking it down into shorter time-based goals, the impossible becomes possible.

Last year, I had client make a conscious decision to double his net profit. This wasn't some sort of "I hope" or "it would be nice" thought process. He made a clear decision that the company would achieve a specific goal. Rather than wait until the end of 12 months to determine success, he broke down the goal into monthly pieces. Each month, he was laser focused on hitting the monthly goal. After a slight miss in September, he buckled down to make up ground in October. Mission accomplished. He was back on track. Now a 23-day billing month helped, but the real magic was in the quick recognition and course correction.

Wouldn't it be great if you shipped everything correctly? I am sure that your customers would agree with this notion. Again, the goal of error free shipping is too macro in size and is really setting the team up for failure. I would rather see a monthly goal of cutting the error rate in half. Each month, the team will identify small barriers to success and find ways to eliminate them. By setting smaller attainable goals, we inch toward the ultimate desired state of error free fulfillment.

This point of this article isn't to improve customer service or double net profit. Rather, the whole notion of setting these January proclamations must become part of your past. Banish the macro and embrace the micro. Don't keep setting yourself up for failure. By setting smaller, time-based goals, you have a much greater chance of making notable changes in 2019. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Good luck and I look forward to being of service in the coming year.

About the Author:

Jason Bader is the principal of The Distribution Team. He is a wholistic distribution advisor who is passionate about helping business owners solve challenges, generate wealth and achieve personal goals. He can be found speaking at several industry events throughout the year, providing executive coaching services to private clients and letting his thoughts be known in an industry publication or two. He can be reached at (503) 282-2333 or via email at jason@distributionteam.com. You can find additional resources on his website: www.thedistributionteam.com