

Year-End Planning Part 2

Managing Your Personal Brand: What's Your 2016 Plan?



*By Neil Foote, President & Founder,
[Foote Communications](#)*

December is a time to reflect on the past year. It's also a critical time to lock in your plan for 2016. No, I'm not talking about spur-of-the-moment New Year's resolutions. I'm talking about taking the results of the brand assessment you should have done, and putting a strategy in place to which you can commit and achieve. Here's a three-step approach:

Step 1: Identify four goals for the year

Why four? Let's tie a major goal to each quarter of the year. In the spirit of S.M.A.R.T, keep them specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. For example, if you want to add, 10 new clients, push yourself to identify your targeted list of clients. Perhaps these clients are within a certain category of business or they are leads you're developing from that stack of business cards you have hiding in the top desk drawer in your office. Tie your goals to what you want to do better to grow your business in the New Year. Write these goals down on paper or if you prefer, type them into a digital document. Don't bury it under a stack of papers or in some folder you'll never check. Post it over your desk in your office or put it on your desktop.

Step 2: Define your strategies to achieve your goals.

If you want to achieve success, you need to create a path. Create a spreadsheet with the following columns: your strategies, your tactics and dates assigned to completing each item. Be specific. Be meticulous. Push yourself to focus on the best methods to be successful. If you want to add new clients, as suggested in Step 1, add the names of clients, key contacts, phone numbers, email addresses and websites to this spreadsheet. Remember, unless you have an amazing sales record of closing 100% of your sales, then you need to rank your percentage probability of closing each client. Steven S. West writes in his piece *The Skill Builder: The Probability Close*, that you should assess your clients based on three different scales: A 50 percent to 80 percent – some minor objections from clients who want time to “think about it”; 85 but not 100 percent – almost there and willing to commit with a short-term period to back out, e.g. a couple days; and less than 50 percent – not really worth the time to pursue any further. “The Probability Close permits prospects to focus in on their own objections,” West writes. This is a great approach. You empower the client to make the best decision to allow you to focus on your realistic business prospects.

Step 3: Define what success will look like for each goal.

If you’ve created a path, then you need to follow it – only making detours if your strategies are having a negative impact on your business. One of the tendencies is for you to set goals without any clear sense of what success looks like. You should set various levels of success to incent you to keep moving forward and to help you stay motivated. You want to avoid getting discouraged. You do not want to give up. Author and Columbia University Business School Professor Heidi Grant Halvorson, Ph.D. suggests that you set a series of primary goals, and a series of subgoals that consist of “who-when-where” and “if-then” scenarios. For example, if you’re wanting to improve client communication, then your “who-when” subgoals

might suggest that one of your account executives send out a monthly e-newsletter, and a second one is making sure you have at least four, in-person meetings with every client every quarter. The “if-then” goals would set the first of the month when the e-newsletter is distributed and the second would set specific days of the week when you’re doing your client meetings. Too complicated? Don’t worry. Create a system that holds you and your team accountable – and builds in a method for you to celebrate your successes – big and small.

[Click here to read Part 1.](#)

About the Author: Neil Foote, a veteran journalist and media executive, is a media and political junky, keeping abreast of the latest trends impacting the business of journalism, media, politics and public relations. He draws from his experience at the Miami Herald, Washington Post, Belo Corporation and Tom Joyner’s Reach Media. He also teaches media convergence, media management and public affairs at the University of North Texas’ Frank W. & Sue Mayborn School of Journalism and runs Foote Communications, a media consulting firm. The native of Brooklyn, NY also is a member of the board for the [National Black Public Relations Society](#) and founder of [PoliticsInColor.com](#).