

New Year's resolutions: Here's what to say 'yes' or 'no' to in 2015

Are you still mulling over your New Year's resolutions for 2015? Or have you given up even making resolutions? In either case, allow me to share a few highlights of the thought-provoking discussion during ERA's November teleforum — "New Year's Resolutions ... and What to Say 'No' to in 2015."

As always, we are deeply grateful to our teleforum facilitator (and sales columnist in *The Representer*), Nicki Weiss of Saleswise, who moderates these "talk-radio" type conversations among several volunteer participants.

For this teleforum, thanks also go to those discussing resolutions with Nicki. They are: Ben Barden and David Barden of Westech Associates, Inc., Mountain View, Cal.; and Scott Lewis, regional sales manager of Leader Tech, Inc.

Nicki launched the discussion by asking Ben, David and Scott what they want to stop doing this year so they remain as focused and productive as possible. Here are their resolutions.

- "Stop mistaking activity for productivity" by checking emails 24-7, and devote time daily totally away from emails.
- "Stop starting my day without a plan;" instead, plan out what needs to get done before all the usual distractions begin.
- "Stop spending too much time on long-winded phone calls" that can be kept down to five minutes or less.
- "Stop doing everything myself" and become better at delegating.
- "Stop being unfit," by letting the "on-the-road" lifestyle take over.

Several additional suggestions from teleforum attendees included these.

- Stop being disorganized, especially when letting papers pile up that never get filed.
- Stop allowing a day to go by without praising a colleague.

The conversation then turned to how to filter out the countless opportunities that arise each day to zero in on the very few most important tasks. Here's how the participants replied when Nicki asked what they do to

make time and space to guide their choices.

- Review both short-term and long-term goals at the start of each week, and take 10 minutes each morning to assess progress.
- Set aside undistracted time to complete the must-do projects. And if you have too many windows open on your computer at one time, that's distracting!
- For rep-principal sales calls, do more specific and more detailed pre-call planning, including determining how the interaction with customers should proceed.

- For all sales calls, be sure to know the questions to ask at each account.

Once again, attendees chimed in with more ideas.

- "Invest time each week in working on my business rather than in my business."
- Follow author Tom Peters' recommendations on time management, i.e.: urgent and important matters warrant 40 percent of your time; important but not urgent deserve 50 percent; urgent but not important should get only 10 percent;

and unimportant, not urgent matters should get zero time.

- "Give people permission to give me constructive feedback."

The final teleforum segment centered on tools to boost efficiency and reduce busy-ness. Ben, David and Scott suggested using:

- Microsoft's Evernote application, which stores notes on the cloud and has a search feature, e.g., to find all prior notes on a specific customer; it also offers many to-do lists and ways to optimize one's workday, e.g., saving articles or information for later reference;
- the Outlook calendar to store emails that need follow-up on a certain day and the to-do list feature to organize emails into priority order; and
- the Auto Preview feature in email programs to easily prioritize or dismiss messages.

Keep in mind that these are only the highlights of this teleforum, but they certainly have me thinking about my "stop doing" and "start doing" lists. How about you?



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