



Top 12 Tips to *Kickstart* Your Business This Year!

Rhiannon
Downie Hurst

www.rhiannondowniehurst.com

Having business goals and achieving them does not come easy to everyone, but there are small things you can do to aid in finally hitting those business milestones. I have put together a list of 10 small and achievable goals to focus on and help your business idea flourish into reality:

1. Know Your 'Why?'

Before you embark on starting any business, you need to pin down the 'WHY'; why are you starting the business in the first place? Why does it matter to you?

Here is a link to a great article that breaks down the importance of knowing your 'why' and what your primary drive is when starting your business.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/243737>

2. Conduct Market Research

You may think your idea is great, after all, it wouldn't still be whirring around in your mind otherwise, right? Hmm, not necessarily. Sometimes we can get so caught up in our own perspective without looking at the bigger picture. After all, your target market may think differently to you.

Conducting market research with your targeted demographic will give you a unique insight into how they think, what they need and if they will value the service and product you intend on bringing to market. It can also give you a good idea of what's already out there and how you could do it differently. Conduct polls, surveys, invite people to test, taste and experience your products/services. Their feedback will save you time and possible heartache of months of wasted work. Market Research will prove to be an invaluable exercise that could help tweak your offerings early on.

3. Enlist The Services of a Mentor or Business

I may be biased, but honestly, I wish I had done this earlier on in my own journey for my first business. Hiring experts who have been there and done that is a smart move! They can provide valuable insight that will help you develop short and long-term goals and strategies, as well as help improve your business in areas you may be overlooking.

4. Have a Lean and Robust Business Plan

One of the key reasons for my business longevity and success, is keeping my business outgoings as lean as possible with a clear and structured business plan that allows for flexibility and movement. It is vital to invest in key areas of your business, depending on the industry. For example, I had to ensure I had a bulletproof and reliable website and invested in the best developers with experience in the industry I was targeting. That said, I also chose to work mobile and hire freelancers, saving on brick and mortar office costs and employment visas etc. at the start. I also bartered my launch event and services such as brand photography, leveraging my offerings in doing so.

5. Invest in Your Branding

First impressions matter! If you make a bad first impression, for any reason, that's it, game over. The consumer moves on to something else and spends their money somewhere else. Your brand is how consumers perceive what it would be like to purchase from you or how they feel about your business. and professional branding can help you control that perception. Your brand is your vision, mission, core values, the message that you want to convey, and how you provide solutions for your customer's problems. Your visual branding, like your logo, colors and fonts, are the tools that will help you convey all of the above to your audience. Investing in branding that includes strategy and design will help you refine your business identity, understand who your ideal clients are and how to reach them. Every bad first impression that you make is lost potential income. Branding is the first and most important thing you should invest in, because it brings you a return on the investment.

6. Have a Strong Marketing Strategy

Marketing is essential to establishing a robust business. It helps you connect with your target demographic and is ultimately how you will grow and pivot your business in the long run. Too many people rely on one strategy or funnel which is proving especially true amongst digital media, like Instagram for example. It may work for your business in the short term, but for long term success you need a -360degree marketing strategy with over-arching touchpoints throughout social media, digital marketing, networking and collaborations, paid advertising, and PR, etc.

You do not own Instagram. What happens if your account is hacked or blocked but your audience only knows you through that platform? You cease to exist to the customer/client! Bulletproof your business.

7. Have the Right People Around You

There is absolutely no space for Negative Nancys when you are launching a business, people will either bring you down or lift you up. There is a difference between constructive critic, friendly advice and downright toxic negativity. So, ensure you surround yourself with people who encourage and support your dreams. Likewise, having a strong team around you is key! Hire people who are better than you in areas that aren't your strengths! You will have to wear many hats as an entrepreneur, but if you can afford to, invest in strong and capable human resources in key areas of your business.

8. Continuously Educate Yourself and Diversify your Skillset

I have a guilty secret - I don't read books as much as I should do. I am not here to push the 'successful people read 10 books a week' rhetoric down your neck. But what I will say is that you can't go wrong by seeking growth. Whether that be by watching TED talks, following global business mentors (Gary Vaynerchuck is one of my go-to's), investing in business-relevant courses, or enlisting the advice and services of experts in areas you lack in. I am always seeking to learn, grow and develop new skills that will help me in developing myself as an entrepreneur and my businesses and that's how I manage to keep my head above the water.

9. Have a Digital Declutter

I struggle with digital clutter. I have so many files, downloads, image galleries, documents and spreadsheets, and it can become incredibly overwhelming. I've started to develop the habit of routinely clearing my inbox, tidying up files and deleting old photos etc. Starting on the right foot with your digital paperwork will save you a lot of time and stress along the way and having systems and processes in place are equally as important. You can either tackle this daily, or schedule in weekly (digital) housekeeping.

10. Understand That Failure is Not Always 'Failure'

One of the biggest things that stop people from taking a risk or that first step into being a business owner, is fear of failure. The moment I started seeing failure as 'lessons learned' was the moment I started to fear the word less. Almost every successful business entrepreneur has suffered failures and setbacks! How else are you supposed to learn, adapt, and grow?

11. Be Persistent and Patient

Cliché, yes, but Rome was not built in a day (OK, that's the last one". Too many people want things fast and NOW without putting in the leg work and hard graft. I am here to tell you that nothing is achieved without some blood, sweat and tears!! Entrepreneurship is NOT for the faint-hearted. Be prepared to dedicate your time and energy to building your empire and allow time for it to grow and flourish. You will eventually reap the rewards with the right attitude and work ethic.

12. Network, Network and erm, Network

The more people you meet, the more people are exposed to who you are and what your business offers. You should use every professional and social opportunity to meet and connect with new people. COVID19- is not an excuse to hide away. Networking can be done online, on social media platforms and via virtual events in the interim or together with face-to-face events when it is safe to do so. There are so many benefits to smart networking; I'll leave that for another post.



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Visit my website at:

www.rhiannondowniehurst.com

Email me at:

rio@rhiannondowniehurst.com