

Gift Basket Network

INSIDER

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2018

**Where Will You Be
In your journey
On December 31st?**

Our Mission Statement is simple: To empower the gift basket community to achieve more while making a life, not just a living. Nothing more. Nothing less. Old-fashioned perhaps. But that's who we are.

From the Inside

By Joyce Reid



*"I hope in this year to come, you make mistakes.
Because if you're making mistakes, you're trying new things,
pushing yourself, changing yourself and your world.
You're doing things you've never done before." Neil Gaiman*

I love each new year when it arrives. I consider it to be a gift, an opportunity for a fresh start. It's an opportunity to pick myself up, dust myself off after a hectic holiday season, and start all over again.

I know some of us scoff at making resolutions. We've made them - and not kept them for so many years - we've finally given up.

That's like giving up on life. "The clock is ticking, not in a morbid way, but in a motivating way." Who knows if I will be here to celebrate the next new year so I plan to make the best possible year of this one.

So often we wait for the perfect circumstances to do what we really want. We wait until we "retire," until we have more money or time.

Do you know anyone who has more time than they used to? Plus, some people retire only to find they don't have the health or the financial wherewithal to do what they want. I've been lucky. I'm way past retirement age and am doing what I love. I consider that each day that I open my eyes and wake up is a wonderful day to celebrate.

Steve Jobs said it well:

"For the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: 'If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?' And whenever the answer has been 'No' for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something."

One of our sponsors, Dave De Costa, better known as “Bibs The Passion Oil Man,” is doing what he loves in retirement. When you talk to him on the phone, you can hear the passion in his voice as he tells you about his infused oils. You can read more about him at <https://www.giftbasketnetwork.com/bibspassionoil> Check out his story and visit his website. His oils are unique and very special because he’s doing what he loves.

But, how about you? What do you really want to do? What are you waiting for? Someday, when you're sitting in a rocking chair, what will you *wish* you had done?

What do you do when you're already successful, when you already have a meaningful and fulfilling life, but you're ready to do something different?

How do you figure out what that is? How do you move forward with confidence and courage and EVOLVE your life instead of sticking with what's known and familiar?

I hope that sometime this week you'll sequester yourself somewhere for awhile to think about the year ahead. I walk into the forest behind my house and sit under a huge old alligator juniper tree for my thinking time.

- What do you want more of?
- What do you want less of?
- What do you want to stop, start, or change?

- What is something NEW you want to try you've never done before?
- What would make this a stellar year, one you look back on fondly because you met someone you wanted to meet, went somewhere you wanted to go, tried something you wanted to try that turned the lights on in your eyes?

The good news is that doing something new doesn't require a lot of time. You don't have to quit your responsibilities cold turkey and embark upon world travels. You don't even have to leave home.

NEW can be done a few minutes here, a few minutes there. As Marcel Proust said, "Real discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in developing new eyes."

Ask yourself, "*What would I be glad I did - even if it failed?*" Then do whatever will make this a happy NEW year - in the best sense of the word.

"Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Michaelangelo, Mother Teresea, Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein." –Life's Little Instruction Book



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New Year Resolutions have become more of a joke than a reality. We make them, break them, and quickly forget about them.

Even though Baby New Year has just waved good-bye to Father Time, I suspect you've probably already broken any resolutions you made to lose weight, get more exercise, or whatever promises you made to yourself while still high on the holiday bubbles.

But what about resolutions for your business?

While we are in the midst of this first quarter of a brand new year, we have a unique opportunity to learn from our past mistakes, as well as our successes, and create a dynamic plan for the remainder of the year.

Now that the busiest season in the gift basket industry is in the immediate past, we're ready for a rest and a chance to catch our breath before Valentine's Day hits us.

But while catching our breath, we need to make those plans and commitments that are essential to insure that the Valentine holiday, as well as the whole rest of the year, will be as rewarding as December was. And if December wasn't as rewarding as you had hoped, it's time to consider why and what you can do about it.

A New Beginning

Of course resolutions can be made any time of the year but most of us think of January as a time for change and a new beginning. Since it is one of the slower months of the year in our industry as well as being the beginning of the tax year, it is the perfect time for reflection.

Regardless of whether your holiday season was a great one or a disaster, now is the time to take advantage of the knowledge while it is still fresh in your mind. When you turn the page of the calendar to October later this year, much of what you learned will no longer be remembered. And it'll be all too easy to make the same mistakes all over again.

If you have a business and marketing plan already in place, now is a good time to dig it out, review it, and determine if you want to make any changes. But, even if you're one of those procrastinators who haven't developed a plan, you can still take advantage of the fresh memories of late nights, disappearing inventory, or whatever other challenges you faced during the holiday season.

It has been said that experience is the greatest teacher.

And this is particularly true in the gift basket business. Others can tell us what worked for them and what didn't. But until we actually try ideas within our own unique communities using our individual skills and personality differences, we never know how they will work for us.

There are those rare individuals, who are born marketers, and are an immediate success. Many of us, however, got into this business because we're creative, not because we love marketing. Most of us create a successful business with a combination of knowledge gained from previous experience, along with research into the uniqueness of the gift basket industry, and a lot of trial and error.

It's that trial and error that we can use as a foundation while growing a business. If we never stretch ourselves beyond our limits and try new things, the result will be more of the same. But we also need to take advantage of what we've learned as a result of each new endeavor.

Memories fade unless they are written down.

So, after each holiday season, I choose a day when I can grab a cup of coffee, close the door, remember and write. I record which marketing strategies worked and which ones didn't. I remember what caused sweaty palms and what made me smile with pleasure.

I review the goals that I set last January and see how close I came to achieving them. And I begin the process of setting goals for the coming year. But goals, like New Year's Resolutions, are merely wishful thinking unless you have a plan and are committed to putting that plan into action.

I check my inventory and see which products were quickly depleted and which ones are still staring at me from the shelves. I note which designs were instant hits and which ones received little interest. And I write all these memories down. Personally I use my laptop and then print them out. But you can use a pen and yellow legal pad or whatever other method you are comfortable with.

And while you're at it, make sure you celebrate your past successes. If you don't recog-

nize what you did right last year, what motivation would you have for setting goals next year? You need to give yourself a pat on the back. You deserve it!

While you have that laptop or yellow legal pad in front of you, write down as many things as you can think of that you accomplished. They don't have to be big events but can be tiny things. Once you do this, you'll see how far you have come. Hang the list up over your desk and let yourself feel good about what you've accomplished.

I take the time to think about what I would have done differently and what I want to change in the coming year. To be effective as a business owner, you need to look at more than just the work portion of your life. It's time to reflect on why you went into business for yourself in the first place and where you are today in both your business and personal life.

Balance is essential

It's all too easy to get so consumed with building a business that other areas of life are neglected. The first of the year is an excellent time to take a step back and look at your life as a whole. Is it balanced? Or are you spending too much time with business while ignoring family, health, or other areas that you consider important? Perhaps you have another full-time job and are operating a gift basket business on the side. Think about how you can work smarter instead of harder to create the time to be a well-rounded individual with a successful business.

Then I create my strategy for the coming year.

Once I've spent time looking backward, it is time to look forward to a new year and a new beginning. You can call them goals, plans, or strategies, but regardless of what you call them, put them in writing. If you don't write them down, the chances of your actually accomplishing them are pretty unlikely. In fact, it's pretty close to zero. According to a famous study of Harvard graduates, less than five percent of those who

didn't write down their goals actually accomplished them.

After twenty-five years in the business, I know that, unless I start building and nurturing those relationships early in the year, they won't be there at the end of the year. My most important customers are my current ones and I make sure they know it. But even with the best of care, customers move or fade away and need to be replaced. So planning includes what I plan to do to attract new ones to maintain and continually grow my business.

And don't rush this either. Take some time and actually think about what you want to accomplish next year. And make them specific -- don't just say "make more money." Put a number in there -- how much money do you want to make? Even better, write down how you plan to make more money -- launch a new marketing tactic? Join a networking group. Optimize your website, etc.

Then break down each goal into steps that are actually doable for you and indicate when you will be taking each step. Get your 2018 calendar out and put these dates on that calendar. This is probably the most important thing you can do to make sure you achieve those goals. It's like taking a class. When you have assignments and a due date, you tend to get them done.

Don't make this a big, difficult task. Have fun with it. You're planning your year and you can turn it into anything you want it to be! This is exciting! Take time to enjoy the process. This is your life and your



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*Love is in
the air*

business -- you should be able to transform it into exactly what you want it to be.

As for me, this year when I grab that cup of coffee and create my strategy for the year, I plan to look more closely at what I really enjoy about the business and what I do “just because.”

One of my goals will be to evaluate every aspect of the business and decide what I want to continue and what parts I want to discontinue.

I am an idea person and have a tendency to try to put too many of those ideas into operation at one time. Some of them work and some don't. I'm learning not to be afraid to let go of that great idea that just isn't as successful as I had hoped.

I usually have a pretty good idea how profitable the year was but good financial records are necessary to confirm it. If your accounting system is a disaster or non-existent, now is the time to get it in order. The tax season is much easier if your records are kept up to date throughout the year.

If your accounting system consists of a shoebox full of receipts, you have no way of knowing if you are making a profit or digging yourself into a deep hole until it is too late to make needed changes.



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The advertisement features a collection of gift baskets and wrapped gifts. One large basket is decorated with tropical palm leaves and a pink ribbon. Another basket has a gold and teal scale pattern. A small teal box is open, showing jewelry. The background is a light blue water texture.

Plans aren't chiseled in stone. They can and will change.

Life has a funny way of throwing unexpected things at us and flexibility is essential. Sometimes even the goals themselves may change. Reaching a goal requires many little steps and isn't accomplished on the day you finally attain it. Rather it's accomplished with each increment along the way.

All too often, we reach the end of the year and think "I should have done a lot more marketing. Why didn't I?" If this thought is spiraling through your head, be honest and answer that question. Why didn't you do more marketing?

If the answer is that you didn't have time or couldn't think of enough ideas, now is the time to plan out your marketing strategy for the whole year and then implement it one tiny step at a time. Don't plan to do too much all at once. You will only be overwhelmed and quit.

Decide what you want to do first.

It may be expanding to a new niche market, doing more cold calling or sending more direct mail.

Perhaps you've always wanted to write a newsletter but didn't know where to begin. Now is the time to do the research, create the mailing list, and develop that first one. Decide if you want to send it via snail mail or email. Then start writing. It probably won't be perfect, but just getting the first one out will give you the confidence to continue. As I said before, experience is the best teacher. Develop your own style, your own brand, and forget about what others are doing.

What about your inventory? Now that it is almost depleted (or it should be unless your holiday season was horrible), it is time to take a good long look at your buying practices.

Inventory is the largest investment in the asset column of your balance sheet. Therefore it is crucial to include inventory management in your plans for the coming year. Whether you are a retail store or an online one or both, you need to know how many items you are keeping on your shelves.

Think of inventory as dollars sitting idly in your stockroom. This should motivate you to make some decisions about what you are going to do about excess inventory. The longer products sit, the more it eats into profits and the less money you have to buy new products.

It helps to organize your inventory lists into different groups starting with your top-sellers all the way down to rarely sold items. And then keep the best sellers fully stocked but think of ways to decrease the number of rarely sold products.

Accounting. Marketing. Organizing. Regardless of which area, or areas, that your planning process indicates you are weak in, the first quarter of the year is the time to resolve to do something about it.

But resolve itself isn't enough. Resolutions tend to be broken. Creating a plan that you know you can follow throughout the year will help you keep all those ducks in a row in 2018.

If you need help, contact me.

Joyce



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Valentine's Day is Almost Here.

Are You Ready?

By Joyce Reid

You've bought your chocolates, red and white ribbons, and all those cute plush animals that everyone is going to love.

You've created your gift designs, filled the shelves of your store or photographed them, and put them on your website. You're all set and ready to go.

You stand by the front door of your store, smiling as you wait for the customers to arrive. Or you wait by the phone, first patiently and then not so patiently, willing it to ring.

But the dang thing doesn't ring. And the people barely give your store a glance as they pass by on their way to the cafe down the street.

What went wrong?

You forgot one thing -- how to make your store or your website stand out in the crowd. Did you really think your gifts were so special that everyone would flock to buy them?



flowers can be combined with chocolates, snack mix, or any other treat for an easily assembled but elegant gift. Hint: If you don't have access to fresh flowers, use silk ones. You can also get a similar effect with a potted plant. Don't have a plant wholesaler near you? Check out your local grocery store.

The above design was created by Jimi Taylor

Where else could they buy a gift that has the same message as your cute little devil perched on a box of chocolates?

Yeah, you guessed right. All the flower stores, candy stores, lovey-dovey stores, and even the restaurants and hotels are trying to grab the same customer that you are.

So, what did you do to make them choose you?

Did you buy all those cutesy devils, frogs and teddy bears because you liked them?



Valentine Inch Worm
Created by Julie Taylor
A Sweet Adventure
Orange County, CA

Were the boxes of chocolates on your "need to have" list because other people in the business said that is what everyone wants?

Did you take the time to really get to know your customers and find out what THEY really want? And, did you even consider who your customers are or may be and how you were going to reach them?

We tend to build our businesses based on guesses. We guess that our customers are going to want a cute gift basket. We guess that our customer remembers who we are, knows what we sell, and is anxious to give us their business. We even guess who these customers are going to be.

But guesses aren't what build successful businesses at Valentine's Day or any other time of the year. Guesses are just that — guesses.

What we need is facts. And the only way to get those facts is by going to those people that we want to spend money with us and finding out what they really want or need.

What problems do they have that we can help them solve with our products?

Any business can increase its profits, not only during the holidays but throughout the year, by simply finding out exactly who its customers are and what those customers want.

And then delivering it!

And do it better than anyone else!

And don't do it quietly either. If you don't blow your own horn, someone else will just use it for a spittoon!

Make some noise. Let the world know what you offer that is different from the trendy chocolates and toy animals. If you did it right, you know exactly what your customers want that only you can provide and you let them know that you listened and you have it.

So where do you find these customers and how do you ask them?

You probably have them already. There are those who bought from you during the holidays. They are your most valuable asset. They liked what you offered then enough to buy from you and, if your customer service was as good as you claim, they had a good experience with your company.

Are you letting these nuggets of gold slide through your fingers as they search for Valentine gifts? Not if you're smart!

Don't wait until the page of the calendar turns from January to February before taking action. Hogtie them while they still remember you and that exceptional service and product you provided for them during the holiday season.



And the easiest way to lead them to you and your store or website is two magical little words -- Thank you!

Send them a post card, a letter, or even an email as soon as the holidays are behind you. If you're reading this article in early January, now is the time! Tell them how much you appreciate their business. Perhaps even offer them a discount or gift for a limited amount of time if they will be so kind as to answer a brief survey for you.

Not just any survey. But a carefully planned one. A survey that tells you who they buy Valentine gifts for and what kind of gifts they want.

And, you may be surprised. Of course, there will be the traditional sweetheart type gifts for a spouse or lover. But even these may be different than you would think. How about the diabetic wife who needs to control her carbs but also needs to be told how much she is loved and appreciated? What kind of gift can you provide for her?

Or there is the daughter who wants to tell Mom and Dad how much she loves them and Valentine's Day is the ideal time to do it. Would they prefer a beautifully-designed gourmet gift or perhaps a gourmet dinner that can be drop shipped to them? Theatre or movie tickets can be artfully incorporated into a creative package.

The female professional who has a secret sister or the grandmother who wants to remember the grandkids are potential customers.

Another thing to consider while planning for this holiday is to create a niche where none exists. Valentines Day is not traditionally a corporate or business giving holiday, but it could





**Valentine's Day
A Time for Fun**

**Created by Pam Monroe
San Diego, California**

be. Plant a suggestion in your corporate customer's mind that this could be an ideal time to let their customers know how much they are appreciated.

Many of our customers think "cutesy", "lovers", "romantic", "flowers" and "chocolates" when the day is mentioned. Suggest to them that "elegant" and "beautiful" can apply as well.

There are a large number of single people, both young and old, who don't have sweethearts or lovers to remember them. Your financial planning or bank professional customer could increase his standing with his widowed clients by sending them an "Appreciating You" gift on Valentines Day.

Property managers may be interested in "We Love our Residents" small gifts that could be hung on each apartment door. Or the commercial property manager could be convinced to use this holiday to say thank you to his tenants.

And even though there are many other possible niche markets, we all know that the girlfriend or wife is usually the one that is the typical recipient. So I'm not suggesting that you neglect this market. The husband or boyfriend will probably spend more money on these gifts than the grandma giving to her grandkids.

Men are not known as early shoppers so these are usually last-minute purchases. That is why they tend to head to the florist or candy store where they know they can pick up a "safe" gift quickly.

But once again, find out what types of gifts men are more likely to buy. You may think that the “naughty but nice” gifts would be the #1 choice for men, but I've never sold one of these to a man. The ones I have sold have all been purchased by women.

Because men usually wait until the last minute to buy that Valentine gift for his sweetheart, you can reach them before they head to that florist or candy store. If you are wise, you will act now and let them know that you can save them the stress of last minute shopping. The power of suggestion works wonders.

Look for places where men tend to congregate and find ways to market there. How about your local fire stations or the bars that men stop by for a drink after work. Ask if you can leave flyers with an easy to use order form and, if possible, a sample basket.

According to Hallmark, Valentine's Day is the second biggest day of the year after Christmas for the sale of cards.

If you play your cards right, you can make it your second biggest day of the year for gift baskets!



A Sparkling New Year!

What Will You Do With The Next 12 Months

Sharon Day, Owner of Express Yourself Gifts & Baskets

I always love opening a new book with fresh untouched pages and no expectations of what lies within. Similarly, I love January 1st each year, but I do have expectations for what I want the next twelve months to be. The trick is navigating each month, avoiding pitfalls and unknown challenges that arise with each new chapter of the year. There are many ways to write your 12 chapter book of 2018 and I hope the following tips will be useful:

GET A BOOK: It can be a Journal, or a calendar with note pages, or a spiral bound notebook or even a digital note app. Find a way to record significant events of each month in 2018. This will provide you some history for planning in 2019.

GOALS AND MECHANISMS: It is IMPERATIVE to have a 2018 goals list, but I recommend breaking it down into 12 pieces so your goals will be easier to achieve. Take what you want to do in 2018 and add “How am I going to do that” or the mechanisms needed to achieve your goals. Let’s say you want more visibility in your community or on your website. How will you do that? Advertising, word of mouth, social media, etc? These are the monthly mechanics needed to make your goal a reality.



ARE YOU READY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT? Take a deep dive inside yourself and listen only to yourself on this one and not to outside influencers (family, friends, customers, etc.). Goals are terrific as long as you are prepared for the result. Let's say you achieve the goal of more visibility on your website and the orders start pouring in. How will you handle the volume since you may work from home, or still have a job etc. Probe what your life would be like if you reach that goal. Being prepared for the result and knowing what would be necessary to handle that result is key to making sure that the goal, if achieved, is doable in the long term.

MAKE SURE YOUR GOALS ARE SMART: If your goal doesn't live up to this test, try again. It must be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**imely. Use words like see, hear and feel when writing your SMART Goals.



MONTHLY REVIEW: If you followed Step 2 and assigned a month to a portion of your goal achievement, then you have something to review. Did you get there? Do you need more time? Did you abandon this idea? It is ok to make changes based on things that change in your business or life. Sometimes new opportunities arise, or life happens. Be flexible and revise the plan.

BE ACCOUNTABLE TO YOUR BUSINESS! If you find it hard to hold yourself accountable for achieving and working on your goals, find someone else to be accountable to. Someone who will ask you every month questions such as where you are and how's it going? If you can afford a coach, hire one to help keep you on track and to ensure you are moving your business forward.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR NPS SCORE? NPS stands for Net Promotor Score. Ask your clients, through a one question survey the question: How likely are you to refer my business to someone else? It will tell you who your **DETRACTORS** are, those who are **NEUTRAL** about your business and those who are your **PROMOTORS**. It will let you know who your loyal customers are and who is out there spreading unkind things about your business!!



BELIEVE IN YOURSELF: Unless you really believe that your goal is possible you are unlikely to achieve it. Everything you say to yourself and others must line up with your conviction. Don't be your own DETRACTOR! Don't be NEUTRAL! PROMOTE your own ability to make your goals happen and as NIKE always says...

JUST DO IT.

Today is the day to start your journey towards a profitable and happy year for you, your business, and your family. So begin now.

Our plan is to help you do exactly that!

Joyce Reid and GiftBasketNetwork