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Some business resolutions worth keeping - Part 1

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2013 promises to be an interesting year. Boston's real estate scene is active and thriving. Many companies have renewed confidence, but an environment of cautious optimism seems to be the best description as we head into the new year.

Many of us start off with renewed resolutions to do better, be healthier, and approach the clean slate with renewed vigor. In our business relationships, we try to put new habits in place to help our businesses grow and thrive. Here are some thoughts on some business resolutions worth keeping.

Resolve:

1. To organize and track leads, relationships, and prospects: Whatever method you choose, make your efforts systematic. Track results, and remember that there is often not a straight line between a relationship or lead and a project. Followup and consistency are essential. In today's busy environment, it's easy for customers and colleagues to forget you're out there if you're not at the forefront when opportunities arise. Assess your resources and plan your outreach accordingly. Better to be strategic with a few quality targets than to take the shotgun approach and fail consistently on follow through.
2. To be more visible in your market: It's easy to get buried in the day-to-day activity and ignore the events, publications, and educational opportunities that lead to quality networking. You need to be known to be trusted, and you need to be visible to be known. Don't neglect quality opportunities for visibility.
3. To improve your image: Take a hard look at collateral materials, website, proposals, anything durable that represents your company when you are not there to make the presentation. Make sure the message, visual and written, project and communicate what you intend. Get some objective input wherever possible. Don't be afraid to make modifications; your image should be a consistently improving work-in-progress.
4. To make sure your customers see you as the first choice: It's a mistake to assume that your customers are satisfied just because they are doing business with you. Enlist your line personnel in the continuous effort to communicate with customers about what they need and how you can help them meet those needs. Show you're interested in their opinions, and then act upon their suggestions. Close the loop and let them know what you're doing to improve. Use the word "you" more often than "I" or "we".
5. To create a niche where you can be the expert: Define your skills, your expertise, and the attributes that truly differentiate you. Don't confuse experience with differentiation; experience is a prerequisite, differentiation is what sets you apart from the competition. Be clear on this

differentiation and communicate it internally as well as externally. Be sure your entire organization is on the same page about what it is that makes you special.

6. To develop a marketing program: Nothing gets done without a roadmap. Commit your marketing plan to paper, share it, and make yourself and others accountable for the results. Don't let day-to-day distractions supplant your long-term efforts. Get help from colleagues or professionals if you need it.

Part two will appear in the February 1st edition of NEREJ in the front section

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