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The commercial classroom: The 2014 selling season is upon us. Are you ready?

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This column is offered to help educate agents new to commercial and investment brokerage and serve as a review of basics for existing practitioners.

Are you ready? What's your plan and strategy? The market is ready. Commercial real estate bottomed out in 2012. We have seen a lot of viewing activity in 2013; it seems everyone is ready to move, but still a bit cautious. It is like our clients and customers are in a temporary holding pattern. There is still uncertainty with the economy and politics, but that will settle down. There are positive signs too; financing is available, clients are pricing more realistically and the stock market is currently reaching new heights! The time has come for commercial real estate to explode again, and 2014 will be the year.

It is time to prepare for the next "boom;" time to set your business goals for 2014.

The easiest way to create a business plan for next year is to reflect on the past years activity? How did you do in 2013; did you exceed your goals? If not, why not? What activities did you participate in last year to build your business, what worked for you and what did not? Change anything that was not productive. Try something new!

Where will/did your business come from? How much of your income was from listings? From sales? From buyer broker or tenant representation? You have been keeping good records -right?

Everyone needs a good business plan. Start with your income goal for 2014, what will it take to accomplish that? If you have been in the business and have good records of last year's activity; you can see which months were most productive for you. What percentage of your listing sold? How many new customers did you find property for? What are you conversion percentages? If you had 87 new customers and you sold or leased property to 29; you converted 33% of your customers. If you want to double your income from sales/leases, you need to double your number of leads (new customers) to 174 or increase your conversion ratio. Analyze your listing production the same way.

If you are new to the business (or don't have last year's statistics), start tracking all your activities each week. How many appointments did I go on? How many resulted in a listing or a real customer? Track your monthly progress; how many sales or leases closed. What am I doing to generate new business? At the end of each quarter evaluate your progress.

Experienced or new in the business, setting goals for 2014 are important; you should set business and personal directions for yourself. Someone came up with an acronym for goal setting (I can't take credit, but I do not know the source), that really makes sense. Goal setting should be S. M. A. R. T: Specific: Clearly see what you want to achieve. Specifically indicate how you intend to accomplish it. Most importantly, write the goal down.

Measurable: Measure your progress. Establish targets. Feel the progress.

Attainable: Set realistic paths for achievement. Goals should be ambitious, and reachable.

Challenge yourself!

Rewarding: Have a clear picture of why you want to attain this goal. What is your reward for this accomplishment? Create a "storyboard" (visual pictures of your reward).

Timely: Specific time limits. Time is the price you pay for the reward of achieving your goal.

Develop a written plan of your goals, how you are going to accomplish them and what you need/will to do each month, each week and each day to get there. Track your progress and adjust your plan as needed.

Plan S.M.A.R.T. to take advantage of all the opportunities 2014 will provide.

Edward Smith, Jr. CREI, ITI, CIC, RECS, GREEN, MICP is the northeast regional director of Coldwell Banker Commercial NRT, Syosset, N.Y.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540