

6 steps to make 2015 the best year yet (part 1)

By Kimberly Alford Rice

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The new year is just around the corner and it is an optimum time to reflect on 2014 and plan for a strong 2015.

One of the top habits of very successful lawyers is that they understand the value of planning for the future. An old axiom says that if we fail to plan we are certainly planning to fail. With life's distractions and overloaded calendars, to build a prosperous practice it is essential to plan for your growing practice:

- 7-10 touch points with prospects in a calendar year. What will they be?
- Monthly contact with active clients (even when there is not much activity in the case)
- Quarterly meetings with referral sources to maintain 'top-of-mind' awareness for future referrals.
- Reputation-enhancing activities such as publishing, public speaking, charitable sponsorships, and the like
- Other relationship-building activities such as targeted networking events, client lunch n' learns, face-to-face meetings.

While I was coaching one of my clients recently, she questioned the value of planning when so many things outside her control arise that knock her off course. Spot-on concern to which I respond, "just think what would happen if you didn't have goals set that may be modified slightly." Life happens and we must be flexible enough in our goal setting yet persistent in our pursuit of accomplishing them.

What we know for sure is that goal-setting is the easy part. Most of us know what we must do. It's the 'doing it' and the follow through which separates the successful lawyers from the ones who have good intentions but do not get off the ground.

To help you off to a strong start for the new year, we've outlined 6 steps you can take to get and stay focused for achieving your goals in 2015.

1. **Set yourself up for success.** Seek out an accountability partner to help stay focused on implementing your goals. Accountability is essential for keeping commitments. This may be a colleague in your firm, at a different firm, or a KLA Marketing Associates coach. Our clients repeatedly tell us “I know I must do what I commit to doing because I will be asked about it during my next coaching session”.
2. **Develop a SMART plan** – That is to say, a well-crafted marketing plan is *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely*. An example of a SMART goal would be to schedule coffee dates with six non-active clients in the first quarter of 2015 to check in on their business and whether there are any issues with which you may help them. Moreover, during this meeting, you will proactively ask for two referrals from each of the six clients. To break this goal down, you would need to have a face-to-face every two weeks over the next three months to meet this goal. Is this attainable and realistic for you?

In our next installment, we will continue to examine the six steps to make 2015 the best year yet.