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*John Care, Managing Director*

## 2010 New Year's Resolutions

### Self-Improvement for the Pre-Sales Engineer

Had I followed even half the New Year Resolutions I have made over the past ten years, I would be under 100 pounds in weight; much loved by every single child and animal within ten miles; responsible for a major dip in Starbuck's profits and be enrolled in the Princeton Theological Seminary. Needless to say, very little of that actually happened and my success rate was fairly dismal.

However, as a pre-sales engineer there are a number of professional and personal resolutions you can make in 2010 to increase your 3P's of Performance, Promotability and income Potential. These resolutions have been collected from colleagues over the years and are presented for your benefit. The call to action is to implement just a few of them!

### **This Year I Will ..**

These are some of the positive actions you can take during 2010 which can impact the 3P's and also contribute towards your employment stability:

1. **Book calendar time for strategy.** Every week you should book 15 or 30 minutes in your calendar for some serious thinking about the future. Look ahead and game-plan the next 24 months around your career, your company, your skills and the industry in general. Plan for possibilities, so you will be better prepared to grab onto opportunities before anyone else realizes they are there.
2. **Discuss expectations with my boss in January.** Sit down with your boss sometime in the next 30 days and discuss specific expectations for the year. Don't make it a formal review session but do leverage any feedback you received in your last official performance appraisal.

3. **Solicit feedback and take it to heart.** Ask for specific feedback after every sales call or customer facing interaction. Follow-up by acting on that feedback to improve your performance and encourage further feedback from your peers and even your customers.
4. **Become a Business Subject Matter Expert (SME).** Seek out an opportunity to learn more about a specific business or business problem your solution can solve. Become the expert in that solution area - and then teach others that skill.
5. **Share my toys.** Your kindergarten teacher was absolutely right! How many times have you worked on a demo or presentation and discovered that someone else in the company had already built most of the material you needed? Whenever you or your team build something reusable - publicize it and the favor will be returned.
6. **Send fewer emails.** Every single one of my clients believes they receive too much email during the day. Do your part by sending fewer emails and reducing corporate email pollution. If you are a manager - put email rules in place for 2010 to speed up communication and lessen the load on your inbox.
7. **Smile more often.** Smiling during a presentation will put your audience at ease. Even during a webcast it will relax your voice and remove some of the stress you may be feeling. This resolution will work wonders for your home life as well, unless you turn into the smiling fool.
8. **Tell more customer stories.** Add in some personal touches and let your customers know how other customers are using your solutions. Make the stories a simple 30-40 seconds outlining a business problem and the eventual (happy) conclusion.
9. **Play more and work less.** Look for just one extra chance every week to spend more time with friends and family. If that is too hard, then look for one chance every week to indulge yourself - read the paper, take an online class, listen to some podcasts ; relax.
10. **Network Constantly.** You never know when you will need someone to help you in a business deal, or to help you get a new job. You never know when someone will need you to help them out. The more people you actively network with, the better off you will be when you really need an assist from your friends.

## This Year I Will Not ...

There are some things we do and say which we shouldn't. Here are some suggestions for a few habits to either remove from your repertoire or commit to turn a negative into a positive.

1. **Accept customer procrastination.** Instead of responding to "I'll have to think about it" with a "but" statement, keep the dialogue open. Try "why do you feel that way" or "what can we change about this solution to make you more comfortable?" Asking just one more question often yields positive results.
2. **Be a slave to email.** Give it a rest. Set your email to sync up only once an hour, organize your inbox and don't feel you have to respond instantly to any message.
3. **Catch Blackberry-itis.** Turn the Blackberry off or put it on silent mode. Take some rubber balls into your next meeting and suggest that people can throw them at anyone who goes heads-down and thumbs-up under the table.
4. **Allow a salesperson to give a 20 slide corporate overview.** Enough said.
5. **Accept boring slides from Product Marketing.** Throw away all those slides with screenshots, bullet-points and 12-point fonts. Do something different.
6. **Present to an audience when I do not know their criteria for judging me.** That's a long one. This really translates into more discovery and learning more about the customer before you present, demo, run a Proof Of Concept etc. How can you Solution Sell and uniquely solve a customer's business problem if you don't know what it is, how much it costs them, what happens if they do nothing and who has a vested interest in fixing the problem? Never mind knowing about budget, timing, competition and all those traditional sales questions?
7. **Let the negatives outweigh the positives.** Always look for the positive. Turn "*no-one has ever heard of my company*" into "*they can't have a negative image of us*" and switch "*our product is new and untested*" into "*today, innovation and the competitive edge is priceless*". Then convert "*an angry bear is chasing me*" into "*I really needed the exercise*".

## **Summary**

The first step towards making something happen is to write it down and then personally commit to action. Pick as many of the positives as you can handle and just a few of the negatives - write them down, display them with pride, and then put together a plan to make it happen. Perhaps you should call your boss and invite him for lunch, and then the last rep you worked with and ask for feedback on your performance during the sales call.

**Mastering Technical Sales wishes you a happy, healthy and profitable 2010.**

"A New Year's Resolution is something that goes in one Year and out the other"

*Anonymous*

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at [www.masteringtechnicalsales.com](http://www.masteringtechnicalsales.com).

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