

Four perils of a 'December mindset'



By Catherine Milward-Bridges

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At the time of writing this article there were 34 days to go, before the end of 2013. This is a time during which we should start a paradigm shift, to seeing 2013 for what it is: The year that's gone by. Right? Wrong! Especially not if up to 40% of retail sales happen at the tail end of the year.



Sit tight until those '2013 eggs' have hatched.

Whether you're a business owner or freelancer, this is the perfect time to go against the grain, to get you off to a running start in the New Year.

Get into planning mode, while your competition slows down to a nod.

These are some perils to avoid in a 'December mindset':

1. Slowing down, too soon

If you view your year as a project - 'Project 2013' - then that would make December the 'reviewing stage'. In a project destined for success, this stage deserves the same degree of urgency as any other.

Every stage, from writing a sound business case, to concluding and reviewing a project is of critical importance to its overall success.

Therefore, prioritise December:

- like you would any other time of the year
- to gain invaluable insight, to inform 'Project 2014', and any other business decisions
- to guard your credibility as a 'project manager', by focusing on the successful completion of this 'project'.

2. The absence of a plan

Failing to see December in the context of your overall 2013 plan is a *big* mistake!

When you started 'Project 2013', (hopefully) December was a part of the overall 'project plan'. So, why exclude it now?

Now's the time to:

- reflect on 2013 and note what to stop doing, and what to keep doing
- connect with current and prospective clients, in a way that addresses their needs
- schedule those key 2014 appointments before your competitors get into those diaries



3. Premature celebration

Getting into the festive mood is one thing; allowing it to compromise your goals is quite another.

This last leg of your 'project' could either cement all the legwork you've put into the year, or it

could render it null and void! Don't allow yourself to lose sight of that.

We usually celebrate to:

- mark the successful completion of something significant
- highlight a landmark
- demonstrate special recognition for something

So for the moment, resist the temptation to be distracted by all the champagne corks popping around you, and the beckoning aroma of braai fires. 'Project 2013' hasn't quite ended.

4. Following the bleat

Going against the grain has borne abundant fruit for the likes of Richard Branson, Donald Trump and Oprah Winfrey, to name a few.

Refusal to adopt a sheep-like mentality will:

- set you apart from your competition
- highlight untapped business opportunities
- in this context, identify December as a month of review (and preparation)

Once the i's have been dotted and the t's crossed for 'Project 2013', you'll be able to:

- really relax, and bask in the shade of your toiling
- have peace of mind, as you enjoy quality time with your loved ones
- 'run before you hit the road' in 2014!

The modern day landscape is becoming increasingly competitive. It's those who dare to be different, who navigate it easier. Their path is just not as congested.

So, do you have a plan to strategically gear your website copy, social media messages and general communication in 2014?

Will your spend-weary fans/leads/customers be easy pickings for your competition, who will be approaching them with a sound strategy?

Sit tight until those '2013 eggs' have hatched. Here's to a December of going against the grain!

ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of simplyput.co.za. She's guided various clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great, and has 'basked with them' in the results.

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