

January 2015

NEW YEAR, NEW HABITS FOR PRODUCTIVITY

This past month *Fast Company* magazine [talked](#) with movers and shakers in every sector — including small business, music, telecom and even government — about what kind of things make them both productive and creative. Respondents mentioned everything from physical activity and meditation, to taking breaks, to starting the work day with cups of coffee as important parts of their success. No matter what your style and speed are, you can probably improve your work scenario by simplifying your life. Here are a few considerations for 2015.



Get a Routine

It's not just super-successful business people who benefit from doing certain things regularly. If you are a parent and remember your child's earliest days as an infant and toddler, you know that having set times for basic things like play, naps, meals, chores and bedtime not only keeps kiddos on track, but also helps keep parents sane. Put more simply, there's a reason most people (grownups, especially) follow routines. But what about finding the right rhythm for your business?

Establishing routines are important, but that doesn't mean that there is a one-size-fits-all daily routine or a right versus wrong. According to an [article](#) by **Buffer Social**, entrepreneurial leaders from Benjamin Franklin to Twitter founder Jack Dorsey have found success in simply mapping out their days. Whether you choose to establish a routine to do the same things every day, or just scribble down an hourly schedule to stick to, finding your rhythm is a key ingredient to a productive day.

Saying Yes (And Saying No)

As an entrepreneur, you're probably wired to look for every new opportunity, whether it is identifying a new sales prospect or finding

UPCOMING EVENTS

ASI Show!

February 4-5
Dallas, TX

PPAI Expo East / ISS

March 13-15

ASI Show!

March 25-26
Long Beach, CA

WHY IDEA CUSTOM SOLUTIONS?

I love the things you have done for us here at Cintas, Location 143—Richmond, Virginia. Keep up the great work!

Eva Gross

Certified Customer Care
Representative
National Accounts & MLRA
Coordinator
Cintas

NOTABLE QUOTES



"The entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an **opportunity**."

— Peter Drucker



"**Be kind** whenever possible. It is always possible."

— Dalai Lama

that certain product or service that meets the needs of your customers. But there is a fine line between taking on the right things to help your business and personal productivity, and taking on *too much*.

Often business people join chambers, business networks or social groups to make contacts. And giving back to your community through volunteering is a great way to connect with people and do good deeds. But don't feel like you can't say "no" to certain things.

Sure, as a go-getter, there may be a little voice inside that pushes you, telling you to do more. But after family and the effort you put into your business, it is important recognize that the number of hours in the day and week are limited.

So if you have a soft spot for rescue animals, then help out at the local pet shelter. Or if creativity is your thing, you can do a lot for your community by supporting the arts or local theater. But don't volunteer for everything out there.

Make certain that no matter what you do, that the tasks and adventures you take on help you grow as a professional and as a person, not just make you busy.

Stop Time-Wasting Activities—Even Fun Ones

This month, **The Onion** put out a farcical funny [story](#) about a 28-year-old man who bagged a whopping \$30 payout for claiming second place in his fantasy football league. It only took him 300 hours of his time to nearly reach top honors and bragging rights.

On a serious note, business research firm Challenger, Grey & Christmas published a study that concluded fantasy sports represent one of the biggest [drains](#) on productivity in business. Last year, their study suggested that the start of the NCAA men's basketball tourney and participation in office pools worldwide might cost employers upwards of \$1.2 billion. Ever consider what fiddling with your fantasy football might cost you personally?

In "14 Simple Productivity Resolutions for 2015", *Inc.* magazine suggests a number of great ideas for improving your productivity while improving your quality of life. Among their recommendations is the advice to eliminate time-wasting activities, even the fun ones like online sports and social activities, while going old-school by focusing on *one thing at a time*. Multitasking — believe it or not — might be costing you your productivity and not improving it.

Consider those little things — the ones that are "no big deal" — that crowd up your day with unnecessary tasks that take you away from the efforts that ultimately help you reach your goals. Chances are you're trying to do the little things and the important things at the same time without mastering either.

Opting out of fantasy football (or joining just one league and not three!) might award you a few hours a week you never knew had. Additionally, things like coffee breaks, reading online celebrity news, or constantly checking your phone for Facebook updates all chip away at your productive time.

There's no shame in cutting any of the above distractions out of your work day. And when you do, you'll not only gain back time, but also a little bit more peace of mind.

Idea Custom Solutions works to improve your productivity — saving you time and reducing multitasking — by handling graphic services including embroidery digitizing, vector artwork and image editing so



"Life would be tragic if it weren't funny."

— Stephen Hawking



"The secret of business is to know something that nobody else knows."

— Aristotle Onassis



"A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business."

— Henry Ford

IDEA CUSTOM SOLUTIONS EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

In the Employee Spotlight, Idea Custom Solutions features one of the people behind the scenes that makes our customer-oriented business work. This month, meet Kiran Dhanwate, Senior Team Leader in the artwork division of Idea Custom Solutions.

Kiran Dhanwate is one of our company's most seasoned professionals. He has been with Idea Custom Solutions since 1996 and helps lead the firm's creative efforts as senior team leader in the artwork division. In his role, Kiran says one of his main contributions has been in training new employees to get them up to speed quickly with the firm's creative solutions.

you can focus on selling and supporting your customers!

2015 = BETTER BUSINESS?

Experts predict 2015 will be a booming year for businesses . . . especially the small and medium size outfits that you directly serve. But what are some other things to be mindful of in conquering the New Year and the opportunity ahead? Below are a few ideas.

Be Optimistic about 2015 — But Not with Blinders on

Inc., the seminal magazine of small businesses is known not only for reveling in the experience and successes of American entrepreneurs, but also for gathering input on a regular basis about where the economy and their prospects are going. According to *Inc.*, entrepreneurs are optimistic but being pragmatic about the opportunity ahead.

In short, Paul Schoemaker, a contributor to the magazine and a researcher at Wharton's Mack Institute [advises](#) that (just as always) business owners should make sure to take proper inventory of their strengths and weakness, while surveying the landscape of sales opportunities ahead of committing money and resources to steamroll ahead.

Expectations and Willpower are Factors but be Adaptable

We're often told that we can accomplish anything we set our minds to. That is largely true. But it is important — in business as well as life in general — to be flexible and expect challenges.

An [article](#) in *Fast Company* discussed how to make your 2015 resolutions stick and the authors mentioned that it isn't all about willpower and expecting to get your way. Often, the most successful outcomes are born out of being prepared for the unexpected while still aiming for your goals.

Use Social Media not Just Because Everyone's Doing it, but to Boost your Brand

In identifying trends among entrepreneurs, *Inc.* recently [emphasized](#) the importance of social media for businesses wanting to deliver their message.

For example, business owners can use both Facebook paid posts and LinkedIn Pulse to distribute full articles that mention their businesses or support their marketing campaigns. In doing so, entrepreneurs are aiming not just to publish "cool" content or links to interesting stories. Rather, by putting out there material that users will share with others, businesses can push their brand well past their natural audiences.

One question to consider: are you using social media to push your brand too?

RESTAURANTS AND BARS: SATURATED MARKET OR GOLD MINE?

Last month's business news and blogs were rife with good news about consumer spending and the many sectors that have signaled hot growth in the U.S. economy.

Although we may tend to think of restaurants, bars and cafés as modern developments, the truth is that we have been eating out almost as long as we have been consuming food and drinking

With that in mind it is not surprising that, outside work, Kiran enjoying painting portraits and singing, while gathering some of his inspiration from his love of historical novels and outdoor endeavors.

On the side, Kiran also has a soft spot for athletics, as an avid player of cricket and kabbadi, a full-contact martial arts sport.

Kiran considers himself a kind and easygoing person. Yet, he is also enthusiastic about accepting new challenges both in his work and at play. As a team leader and motivator, Kiran's says his main aim is to be positive and encourage others, while continuing to help make Idea Custom Solutions the best company for graphic services.

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How to Overcome Adversity: Build Success from Setbacks.

<http://ow.ly/Hq6Q1>

[Tweet That!](#)

7 B-to-B Marketing Trends That Will Shape 2015 (AdAge.com).

<http://ow.ly/Hqace>

[Tweet That!](#)

Best Goal for 2015: This will make you happier, more powerful, and help others around you.

<http://ow.ly/Hq8y3>

[Tweet That!](#)

4 Kinds of Bad Advertising Millennials Have Killed Off (Wired.com).

<http://ow.ly/Hq9NI>

[Tweet That!](#)

Why You Should Get Ridiculously Good at Email In 2015.

<http://ow.ly/HgbIA>

[Tweet That!](#)

beverages! Legend has it that in 19th Century writers such as Voltaire and Balzac [drank](#) 40 to 50 cups of coffee a day at their local grinders while scribbling their masterpiece volumes (And that was nearly three centuries before Starbucks!).

Regardless of what is happening in the financial markets, world trade or even in the literary scene, one thing is pretty certain: restaurants of all types are here to stay.

Our friends at ASI took a deeper [look](#) at the restaurant sector, noting that these businesses typically allot anywhere from 3% to 6% of their budgets to marketing, in both good times and bad. Moreover, the National Restaurant Association says the sector's sales likely increased 3.6% to \$683.4 billion in 2014, making it roughly equal to 4% of the entire U.S. gross domestic product.

These findings about the service industry point out something obvious: restaurants, bars and cafés are a perfect arena for specialty advertising distributors to find sales. Swag is big. And the better your customers' wearable merch and leave-behind items (like pens, keychains and magnets) look, the more often their brands and logos will end up in willing customers' hands.

Whether it is your town's favorite brew pub or a bigger restaurant groups that manage multiple establishments, building relationships with restaurant owners will lead to good robust and repeat sales over time. With the economy booming, the ground is fertile for distributors or marketing services.

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