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17 strategies to hit your goals in 2017

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If you ask most local economists, they'll tell you 2016 was a good year, but there's always room for improvement.

That's exactly how many business leaders may feel at the start of 2017 — wanting to make up for any missteps and unmet goals from the previous year.

Sometimes it's the simple things, like waiting longer than you should have to hire someone in a key role.

And sometimes it's more complex, like when that business strategy to net more clients didn't exactly work out as planned, or you didn't engage your audience on social media as much as you could have.

If any of the aforementioned scenarios describe your 2016, the good news is that you can take the new year as a reason to dust yourself off and try again.

And if you're among the few where everything went perfectly for your business in 2016, congrats. But it still would be helpful to know what problems other executives faced and how they solved — or didn't solve — them, just in case you later find yourselves in a similar predicament.

That's why *Orlando Business Journal* asked 17 Central Florida business leaders to share their strategies for hitting goals in 2017. Here's what they had to say:

"We were a bit late in hiring for a couple of key positions, primarily due to the self-imposed burden of demanding both technical fit and cultural fit. It is a frustrating process at times to find the right team chemistry because it requires discipline and patience, but ultimately we insist upon it."

— **Matt Certo**, founder and CEO of *Findsome & Winmore*

"In 2017, we plan to focus on working more with our partners. Currently about 95 percent of our revenue is driven by digital traffic and our efforts via growing through paid adwords, social spend and a specific vertical strategy. We are working to hire a dedicated business development team to nurture and work with our partners and offer enhanced value-added services for their clients and ours."



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— **Sal Rehmetullah**, *co-founder and COO of Fattmerchant*

“The missed opportunity that stands out the most was our inability to build a high-performance sales team. We hired several talented people to fill the role and yet we were still unable to turn the corner in 2016. Solodev will kick off 2017 as the first website management platform selected to be sold and billed directly through the Amazon Marketplace. In addition, Solodev is the first U.S. enterprise CMS company to be included on the federal GSA contract, which will be a major catalyst to propel sales growth in 2017.”

— **Dasha Moore**, *COO of Solodev*

“We did not anticipate such tremendous growth and higher demand during the fourth quarter of 2016 to service peak-season holiday business. The double-digit growth caught us off-guard and required much scrambling to still meet the labor staffing demands of our clients. In 2017, we will anticipate higher-than-expected growth rates and will be prepared to fill more job openings than projected in case that demand spikes once again.”

— **Eduardo Dominguez**, *executive vice president of Resource Employment Solutions*

“We took too long to develop our millennial mentorship program to help perpetuate our company with future leaders. We are finally ready to roll it out in 2017.”

— **Heath Ritenour**, *CEO of Insurance Office of America Inc.*

“We aggressively pursued a niche digital platform that ended up taking us to an area of expertise where both my business partner and I had very little experience, so we didn’t know the right questions to ask, even of our own team members. In the short term, it sounded very profitable, but in the long term, it took us away from our core offering and distracted us from what we did best. Moving forward, we are going to leverage our experience and expertise in strategy and branding. We are planning on 20 percent growth with this renewed focus.”

— **John Ludwig**, *CEO of Push*

“We lost a really large potential client because one of our newer staff members managed the lead by himself. As a lesson learned, all new qualified leads will now be funneled by senior staff and managed by the whole strategy team.”

— **Shalyn Dever**, *founder and CEO of Chatter Buzz Media*

“One of the things we’ve learned to do is to work efficiently. One of the apps that we use is WunderList. It enables us to assign each other tasks, and it helps us to keep on deadline with projects so nothing falls through the cracks.”

— **Kaitlyn Cook**, *owner and creative director of South Street & Co.*

“We had a great opportunity in 2016 with a project in Deltona that consisted of a 25,000-square-foot free-standing emergency center along with an 83,000-square-foot multi-story medical office building. We submitted what we thought was a great proposal but ended up finishing second in the final results. What we will do differently in 2017 is increase the number of opportunities that we look at in order to achieve our goal.”

— **Paul Graham**, *business development manager for J. Raymond Construction Inc.*

“We waited too long to make a decision to purchase a building in Atlanta that we knew was a good value. It was a great deal and a prominent real estate broker put a contract on it while we were mulling it over. Like the old saying goes, time is money, and we missed out.”

— **Chris Sharp**, *vice president of administration for Kelly's Foods Inc.*

“We underestimated our rate of growth in 2016 and almost didn't hire fast enough to keep up. My goal in 2017 is to keep our internal hiring in front of our revenue so fulfillment can keep up with sales.”

— **Charlie Lewis**, *managing director of BlueWave Resource Partners*

“In 2016, our firm underestimated the demand for social media and digital marketing services, such as search engine optimization. To address this demand, we have increased our employee count and recruited two new digital marketing specialists.”

— **Michelle Griffith**, *vice president of BoardroomPR*

“Looking back, we probably could have done a better job at retaining some of our past clients that went elsewhere to refinance. We were laser-focused on providing excellent customer service to clients who were buying homes and didn't spend much time soliciting past clients to refinance with us.”

— **Rob Nunziat a**, *co-CEO of FBC Mortgage LLC*

“We need to have a better appreciation for the difference we make in the medical simulation domain. We are learning to translate the value we bring to this space by bringing higher fidelity training that improves medical outcomes. In 2016, we were not yet ready to commercialize some of our products, and in 2017, we intend to increase revenue through the same of these products once they are commercialized.”

— **Angela Alban**, *president and CEO of Simetri Inc.*

“We saw a tremendous amount of deal-flow in 2016. [It was] far too much demand than we actually had supply for and most of this was of very high quality. I’ve spent considerable time this past year developing solutions to this ‘good problem to have’ situation for 2017. We’re starting 2017 with much more capacity to make more commercial loans, and will launch some innovative initiatives later this spring to address growing demand for commercial loans.”

— **Chris Hurn**, *founder and CEO of Fountainhead Commercial Capital*

“With the robust economy, our industry is once again experiencing a shortage in the workforce to keep pace with growth. Historically, and in 2016, we had a process by which we hired talent only when we needed to and had the work to support it. We’ve shifted our focus and are now always looking for and recruiting great talent.”

— **Tim Baker**, *founder of Baker Barrios Architects*

“We allowed a year for us to move from our old location to our new location. The buildout and permitting took longer than we ever could have imagined and we wound up moving into our new facility in 13 months. We had new equipment standing idle waiting for the permitting and buildout to take place. We had a big surge in business and we spent the first quarter of the past year just trying to catch up. I would allow more than 12 months for a relocation if buildout is involved.”

— **Jim Young**, *president and CEO of SawStreet LLC*

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