



YOUR ONE-YEAR BATTLE PLAN FOR

EXPLOSIVE BUSINESS GROWTH



Kabbage

Fund Your Business. Today!

ARE YOU READY TO DRINK FROM THE FIRE HOSE?

What you're reading now is a 12- month course to turn strangers into customers, customers into clients, and clients into advocates for your brand. Your business is a machine: a complex engine with lots of moving parts like a car or a computer. A machine that provides a living for your family and the families of your employees. This plan will address the two major parts of your marketing engine for that machine:

By aggressively maintaining the machine, you make it run more smoothly and efficiently. The better the machine, the better it does its job. The better it does its job, the better life you and your employees can afford.

Make sense? Great.

HERE'S THE PLAN...

What follows is a list of suggestions and assignments that, if applied correctly, will net positive change in your company this year. Not all of them will work, but – if you stick to it diligently – enough will pay off that you will start next year in a better position than you're in right now. We recommend scanning this eBook once to get the lay of the land, then read it carefully to understand it, then refer back to it a couple times each month to keep track.

It's also likely that you'll make changes to the plan as you go. You'll decide that one suggestion doesn't work for the specifics of your business, or that another suggestion needs to be "turned up to 11." That's absolutely fine, great even. No business is the same, and you are the only one truly qualified to fine-tune any plan for your growth.

HAVE A THOUGHT OR QUESTION? FIND US HERE:



THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND...

What follows is a top-level business plan. In the interest of making this a quick eBook instead of a 100,000 word college text, we've kept things basic. So know up front:

- 1** The plan is general. We won't give you industry-specific advice because we want it to be useful to every small business owner who decides to download it.
- 2** The plan is not a step-by-step guide. We're suggesting what you should do, not exactly how you should do it. If there's anything here that you don't know how to do, Google it or ask an expert. And feel free to take liberties in adding your own spin!
- 3** The plan is progressive, which means that stuff you set up early will establish routines and systems you'll use later on. Because of this, the last half of the year will feel repetitive and simple. That's an intentional part of our design! We want to make things easier for you to run your business seamlessly and efficiently.
- 4** You are probably already doing some of it. If you are, we recommend replacing that part of the plan with another initiative you're excited about. That way you still get explosive growth by the end of the year.
- 5** You can navigate this book by selecting the month on the sidebar!

JANUARY

Because this is a guide for explosive business growth in a new year, we start the program in January. Keep in mind, though, that none of this is time-dependent. If you read this book in June, you don't have to wait six months to work the plan. Just do January in June, February in July. You'll have to make a few adjustments (for example, moving your holiday planning to the right month), but overall you'll be fine.

For January, then...

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Create a mailing list of everybody who's ever bought something from you or asked about buying something from you, plus everybody you've ever bought something from. Use your email records and invoices payable and receivable to farm these names. Compile them in an email list.

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Look at all of your social media profiles and make sure they are professional and engaging, and include photos of both your team and the benefits of your product/service.

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Review your entire website with a fine tooth comb and note which pages have spelling errors and what sections include other issues like bad formatting and broken links. Are you missing pages or information? Put yourself in your customer's shoes.

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Use your memory, your employees' memory, and the mailing list you created to triage existing customers into three categories:

- **C customers:** those you might lose
- **B customers:** those who are solid, but not excited
- **A customers:** the ones who love you more than your spouse loves you

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FEBRUARY

Starting this month, you'll be doing both new things that build additional planks for your marketing platform and tasks that leverage the work you've done before. Attacking the problem with "combination punches" is one key to creating surprisingly rapid growth.

Send an "opt in" email to everyone on your mailing list. The tone and specifics will vary according to the realities of your business and customer base, but it should include the following elements:

- A sincere thanks for being involved or interested in your company.
- An announcement that you'll be sending out news and special offers each month.
- Instructions that explain they only have to ask once to be removed from the list, but if they're still on the list in February they will receive an awesome special deal.

Repair all of the spelling and grammar errors on every page of your website.

Research the charities that are most active and respected in your community - for best results, use a locally based charity (the local food bank, not Habitat for Humanity). Choose one to three that you either like best or that are linked thematically with what your business does.

Spend the week before Valentine's Day posting one teaser daily about a special you're running on the day itself. (If this is Facebook, we recommend being a little lighter handed since that social media community is sensitive to over promotional posts). On Valentine's Day, offer a discount for any order placed by somebody who is a fan on your social media accounts (you can keep this to just Facebook, or just Twitter - whatever account is most important to you to grow).



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FEBRUARY CONTINUED...

Choose a day in March for an after-hours client appreciation event. If your customers are widespread, make it an online live event. If most are local, arrange a behind-the-scenes tour.

Call each of your C customers and invite them personally.

Announce the event to your B customers via social media and email.

Contact your A customers by email and ask what they would like to see at the event. Confirm that you can count on their presence at the pre-party one hour before the general event begins.

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MARCH

Create a social media content calendar through June using your Valentine's Day event as a model and national and local events as inspiration for themes. Think about the types of posts you want to get across each week or day, but leave room for topical and timely content too. Make sure only 20% of your posts feel 'salesy' about your business, and 80% provide value or drive community and engagement.

Contact the charities you researched last month and identify two with whom you want to work with for the rest of the year and find out whether they are willing to work with you.

Repair all broken links and other problems with your website so it's professional, simple, and functional.

Send your monthly newsletter with a discount offer or a small free item for anybody who posts on social media his or her favorite thing about your company (make sure you ask them to tag your social media accounts!). Also include one piece of industry or local news, and one insider-peek at how things operate in your business.

Design, if you haven't already, a formal client reward program for bringing in referral business.

Host your party! Have your A clients show up early to establish a good tone before the B and C listers arrive. Make the event about having fun and centered on showing a behind-the-scenes look at how your business works. Answer questions and deal with complaints honestly and openly. Don't mention the referral program.

Use your memory, your employees' memory, and the mailing list you created to triage existing customers into three categories:

- Sincere thanks for attending
- A request for one item they feel your company could do better on
- Details of your referral program

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Work your social media content calendar by making at least one post per day, per platform according to your plan. You can schedule these ahead of time, so it doesn't take up too much energy. Remember - it is better to have two social media accounts that are done really well and feel active with lots of content, than to be on all the social media sites out there, but not have enough time and content to maintain them and make them interesting. While you're at it, comment and share on posts of other company's that are associated to/with what you do for a living.

Make a plan with one of your partner charities to have a joint event in May. Mention it on your website and via social media. When you have the details figured out, send a press release to your local paper. Extra bonus: Create flyers or signs you can put up in your store, or put info and a banner about it on your website.

Send your monthly newsletter to your mailing list. As always, it should include a special offer for loyalty or social sharing, a bit of industry news, and an insider peek at your business like an op-ed piece, an employee profile, or a description of one of your processes.

Review the suggestions you received after your party. Meet with your team and decide which changes to make and how to make them. Send a quick email to those who came to the party, thanking them for their advice and including some bullet points about your plan.

Reach out to all C clients who attended your event and suss out what it would take to convert them to B or A clients.



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Work your social media content calendar- remember that each month you want to work ahead to plan out content, be timely and relevant, and schedule your posts. May is a great month to focus on spring content, or offer your fans and followers a spring promotion.

Make a plan with one of your partner charities to have a joint event in May. Mention it on your website and via social media. When you have the details figured out, send a press release to your local paper. Extra bonus: Create flyers or signs you can put up in your store, or put info and a banner about it on your website.

Send your monthly newsletter.

Run your joint charity drive. If possible and appropriate, your joint charity drive should raise funds and awareness for several weeks, then end with one of those events where you give the charity a giant pretend check. Alert the press. Invite your clients – especially those C listers who are starting to come around – and celebrate the partnership. The idea here is that people hear and like the message, “Hey! I care and here’s how I helped!” way more than the typical “Here’s why you should buy my stuff” message.

Invite a few select clients – mostly A and C listers – to your charity event. Connect with each meaningfully when they arrive.

Send a reminder out about your referral program. If necessary, up the ante with a special bonus for new clients brought in this month.



JUNE

Work your social media plan. And while you're at it, have you made Twitter lists yet? Twitter lists are a great way to publicly or privately keep track of important fans, customers and accounts you want to track such as your competitors or small business companies that have content that will help you grow your business – Psst [@KabbageInc](#). You can easily make shorter lists of a portion of your followers, making it easier to follow and converse with accounts you find important (like VIP Customers!)

Send your next newsletter. At the end of this newsletter, include a call for questions. Offer a small discount or goodie for anybody who sends in a question about your business or the industry.

Connect with the other charity you've selected. Set up an event for July. Promote it just as enthusiastically as you did the first.

Work your summer-themed marketing plan.

Send an appreciation gift – a small coupon, or something like a pen or magnet – to all of your B-listers. Generally, you get the least bang for your buck from this population, but that doesn't mean you should ignore them all year.

Choose one client from each of your A, B, and C lists and make it your life's mission to just wow each of them. Whatever it takes, make it happen. This is how you turn clients into enthusiastic advocates for your brand. For example, [we took our best customers at Kabbage and sent them 'surprise' Kabbage Elves Christmas gifts](#) by researching their business and interests online.

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Work your social media plan. Post questions and answers from those sent in response to your newsletter questions in June. Draw attention to your social media pages by tagging each person whose question you answer.

Send your next newsletter.

Hold your charity drive with all of the same trimmings and client invites as the first time around.

Work your summer-themed marketing plan.

Remember that thing where you wowed one customer from each list? Do it again with three more clients. Really knock their socks off!



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AUGUST

August is halftime, a month where things tend to lag a bit because everybody's on vacation or holding back because school's about to start. Don't do anything new this month, but take time to work your social media plan and send your newsletter. Also take a look at your metrics to see which initiatives have worked best so far. It might also be time to start thinking way ahead, while it's slow, and start planning for the upcoming holiday season. Digging into your analytics for last year to see traffic spikes and what worked is also a good plan for holiday pre-planning.

If you work in an industry where August is busy (for example, resort hospitality or a swim center), consider turning this calendar on its head and treating September as January. Your year really runs from September to August anyway.



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Work your social media plan. It's fall, and the holidays are coming, so your social media content should be rich. Post fall recipes or events, or write pre-planning holiday content for your company blog (to take advantage of SEO and keyword opportunities early).

Send your monthly newsletter. At the end of your newsletter, include a call for suggestions about how people like to spend their fall months.

Contact the charity that you had the most successful partnership with, and schedule a third charity drive for late October/early November.

Reach out to at least 10 local or related businesses and find out which ones would be willing to do some kind of shared, reciprocal holiday marketing.

Wow three people, one from each list.

Announce a VIP event for your "top clients" that corresponds with the charity drive. In the same email, ask for volunteers to help with the charity collaboration.



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Work your social media plan. It's the month of Halloween – what kind of discounts or fun can you think up for your social media accounts? Maybe host a costume contest for your customers and post pictures on your Facebook page.

Send your monthly newsletter. Include a small section of the most interesting answers from last month's question.

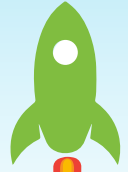
Begin your charity drive in mid-October so you can leverage the fact that Halloween is a great time to wander around talking to strangers. Plan the wrap-up and celebration for the second week of November.

Sit down with the local businesses you contacted and come up with a plan for cross-promotion in November and early December. Help each other out with referral business, packaged promotions, and shared advertising to place your group as a whole ahead of the rest of the pack. Promote each other on social media, your websites, your email newsletter, and anywhere else you can think of that is appropriate for cross promotion.

Wow another three people.

Coordinate with all of the people who offered to help with the charity collaboration. Give each a small but important task to help with, and thank them profusely. Invite each to attend the wrap-up event as a guest of honor. A great way to go the extra mile and make customers feel special too is to highlight them on your business social media accounts – post a picture of them on your Facebook page and publicly praise the help they gave your charity and business.

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Work your social media plan. This is one of the biggest shopping months – your customers should be thinking about holiday gifts by now, and Black Friday is near the end of the month. Set a promotional plan, but be sure to still keep it to 20% of your content, and make the other content fun and engaging for your customers, giving thanks to them during Thanksgiving!

Send out your monthly newsletter. If you like, repeat one of the calls to action from earlier this year or come up with one of your own.

Work the coordinated plan you set up with your friendly local businesses.

Wow three people.

Go through your client list again and reassess all your clients. Put them in the A, B, and C lists as appropriate. For the C-listers who haven't responded to your attention, seriously consider dumping them in December. They're probably 80/20 cases.

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End the year with heartfelt thanks in your newsletter and social media for the outstanding year your clients helped make possible. Spend the rest of your time handling the sales rush, seeing to family, and assessing what worked best out of the things you tried this year. Use that information to formulate your own plan for the up-coming New Year, using a combination of things that worked well, things that you've seen how to improve, and new ideas that came to you over the course of working this plan.

And don't forget to celebrate from time to time your successes over the past 12 months! We hope you saw a positive change in how your company is advocated for online, and how you've connected with your customers. Send us some of your wins to us on Twitter [@KabbageInc](https://twitter.com/KabbageInc), or send in a story of how your year progressed to story@kabbage.com, and we could feature you on our blog!

MOVING FORWARD...

As with any plan, you'll need to spend time with these general ideas, turn them into specific goals, then turn those goals into action plans with specific tasks assigned to specific people. Maybe all of them will be your job. Maybe the whole program will be the bailiwick of a single member of your staff.

Come December, you'll see some serious momentum from this program if you stick to it, change course where necessary, and measure results to see what works best for your business and what doesn't get any traction. Armed with that information and the extra funds to invest, you'll be ready to make your new year even more impressive.



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