

**RESOLUTION: I WILL MAKE MY COMPANY GREENER**



**ANTHONY DAY** Director of Cyber Associates

With thousands marching in London and 192 countries following President Obama to talk about climate change in Copenhagen, the green movement is hard to ignore. But why does it matter to us?

Because going green can save and make you money. We're talking sustainability – saving the planet, cutting carbon, recycling – something, deep down, every consumer wants to do. And if your business is green, shopping in your store will help ease their conscience.

Every store should have an environmental statement. One page is enough, but your colleagues need to know about it, understand it and have a copy of it. Because some customers will ask, and they are the ones who

will tell their friends if you have one, or complain if you don't. Helping to save the planet can help to save you money too. It mainly comes down to energy and although low energy light-bulbs can be hopeless for displays, the new LEDs give a strong, white light with low consumption and minimal heat.

A power door can save masses of energy if you normally leave it open – and get a smart meter so you can see how much energy you're using when the shop's closed. You'd be amazed at how much you can cut bills by making small changes, such as introducing low-flush loos and spray taps, and using a boiler instead of a kettle.

**RESOLUTION: I WILL IMPROVE MY CUSTOMER SERVICE**



**DUNCAN BAKER** Director of strategic marketing and communications Institute of Customer Service

The key to good customer service is understanding the expectations of your customers, measuring how you are meeting those expectations and getting an insight into how to improve your customers' shopping experience.

Monitoring feedback will help you to meet customer expectations. Ask customers what they think about your customer service, either face-to-face or online – or just make it known that you welcome customer comments. You need to do this on a regular basis, so you can evaluate the improvements and make changes over time.

Be imaginative in your approach. Mistakes will happen but, when they do, you'd be surprised how far a box of chocolates or a bunch of flowers will go in making loyal customers feel valued, or in placating customers who feel they have had a bad experience shopping with you.

Make sure your staff feel they have the freedom to use their initiative to help reach a solution. I'm sure you'll remember a time when you went into a shop and the assistant said, "There is nothing I can do for you," when you had a problem. How infuriating!

If it was frustrating for you, it will be frustrating for your customers, so don't just have a bog-standard complaints produce in place that staff aren't allowed to deviate from.

Getting your customer service right really isn't about doing more of what you are already doing, but about doing it better.

# New year's resolutions

Many resolutions are made at new year – and the majority broken by the second week in January. We've tracked down some key business players who reveal how to achieve some of the things you may have resolved to do in 2010

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**RESOLUTION: I WILL BOOST STAFF MORALE**



**HILARY JEANES** HR consultant & business coach, PurpleLine Consulting

Motivating your staff and keeping their morale high can seem an uphill struggle, particularly when the financial incentives you can offer are few and far between. Here are a few do's and don'ts to keep morale high:

Do get to know your people – find out what they enjoy doing and are good at inside and outside work. This helps to build rapport, trust and loyalty.

Do give positive feedback. And make it as specific as you can – "you handled that customer's complaints really well" is a lot more valuable than "you are doing fine".

Do remember to say thank you – a few words go a long way.

Don't assume that everyone is motivated by the same things. Find out what works for them – for example positive feedback, training, or a new project or experience.

Don't assume people will know what's going on in the team/business. Communicate frequently to keep people in the loop and make sure they know how to get more information if they want it.

Don't forget your employees are ambassadors for your organisation – if they are happy your customers will have a positive experience and enhance your reputation as a good employer.

Applying these principles will help you to build good relationships with the people who work for you and encourage them to stay with your business – and get 2010 off to a positive start.



## RESOLUTION: I WILL IMPROVE MY MARKETING STRATEGY

**ALLYSON STEWART-ALLEN**  
**Director, International Marketing Partners**

Asking your customers the right questions and collecting the right data is key if you want to keep them coming back, and if you want to recruit new customers.

Without setting the right strategy, you'll end up deploying the wrong tactics – such as sending out your newsletters to the wrong addresses, advertising in places where your target audience doesn't visit, and creating offers that don't resonate.

The best way to collect data from your customers is when they are physically in your store. Have your staff ask for contact details while they are waiting in the queue to make their purchases, at till points or even in the fitting room areas. These are all ideal since you are already interacting with your customers in these settings.

Once you are sure you have captured the right data, you can effectively market your business by creating special offers, promoting new ranges and brands, and in-store events, safe in the knowledge the information you have fuels these demand-driving tools.

When it comes to holding in-store events, choose them wisely. They are an opportunity for you to educate customers about your brands, your ethos and your interest in a relationship with them.

Events are the ideal chance to show you understand them and their tastes – some fashion brands organise talks from their most popular designers.

Good marketing is all about good targeting. Give your customer a reason to make your shop top of their list of places to spend money, and in turn this will boost your customer base and loyalty too.

*Don't forget that your employees are ambassadors for your organisation – if they are happy, your customers will have a positive experience*

## RESOLUTION: I WILL MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF MY WEBSITE



**DAVID MACKLEY** **Managing director, Intelligent Retail**

It is safe to say that in 2010, Google natural listings (those that appear in the main results page) will get more crowded and AdWords (Google's pay per click service) will get more expensive. So this should be the year you look to increase your conversion rate to make the cost worthwhile.

The average eCommerce conversion rate is about two per cent. Some online retailers are converting many times that and if an average retailer pushed up their conversion rate to three per cent, they'd get 300 orders instead of 200, with no additional spend. Now that's got to be worth having!

Increase your conversion rate by a mix of product, presentation and selective marketing. Focus all efforts on your best product ranges where you know you are competitive. Attention to detail is extremely important online. Display your products excellently by providing great images and create interesting and original supporting text.

To track your conversion rates, use Google Analytics. It is free and provides conversion rate tracking once you set up your eCommerce feature. Analytics also shows you where customers are dropping out of the purchasing process. This will allow you to work with your web designers to improve your website and maximise its potential.

## RESOLUTION: I WILL IMPROVE MY BUSINESS FINANCE



**NIGEL SCOREY**  
**Managing director, Procure4**

The big retailers have all the advantages. Huge volume means massive buying power and an ability to operate at far lower margins. However there is something else they do, which many smaller retailers don't find the time or inclination to pursue – they are all over their cost lines, particularly at this time of year.

The New Year is a great time to focus on costs, but you have to leave no stone unturned and you have to use that hard-edged approach that the big guys seem to take such pleasure in.

How much money would you save if you took an average of ten per cent out of every cost line in your profit and loss? When was the last time you looked at your telecoms provider or your electricity bills? Don't just ask two or three providers to quote and take the cheapest either! Make sure you press those wonderfully helpful sales teams for better terms – make them work for your contract.

Look at your packaging costs and consider running a reverse auction. These days there are plenty of providers; they are quite cheap to run and are also quite a lot of fun. Watching suppliers fight for your business on a computer screen can really brighten up those post-Christmas blues.

Don't stop there. Now you are in full swing, why not talk to your landlord about the lease? Or your suppliers' reference payment terms – you know that they have lengthy terms with their manufacturers.

Oh and then there's the cleaning contract and the point-of-sale printers and the merchant card bills and all those waste bills, and, and, and... you really can save a lot of money by just making your suppliers fight for your business!