How many times have you said, “I’ve got this great idea for a product!”, only to find yourself a few months later walking the aisles of Walmart and see your idea in pretty packaging hanging on the shelf? Or maybe your idea is to expand the services your company is currently offering, open a new market, or diversify your client base, and you find yourself 18 months later still believing it’s a great idea, but you haven’t taken any action yet.

In a time when the economy is booming and businesses can turn the lights on and grow, business owners don’t need to be deliberate about growth. Words like “luck” or “blessings” take the credit for growth. But when the economy is slower and growth is harder to come by, luck and blessings seem to be fewer and further between. Companies who are able to grow during slower times are able to grow because they are effective at execution of ideas.

If you start refining your practice of deliberate growth through effective execution during times like these when the economy is booming, you will be primed and ready when, at some inevitable point in the future the economy slows again.

Failing to conduct this sort of strategic preparation is the same idea as telling yourself that if a burglar ever breaks into my house and threatens to hurt my family, I’m going to go train, get real strong and proficient at self defense so I can throw the bad guy out. You can obviously see the fault in the logic as the story unfolds. You would hear a noise in the middle of the night, get up to check it out, see the bad guy loading your laptop into his bag along with other valuables and your children tied up on the floor. You then tell the bad guy, “Hold it right there - Don’t move a muscle! I’ll be back in about 45 days to deal with you. First I’m going to go train really hard and learn how to deal with you, and then you’ll be sorry mister.”

While that sounds absolutely ludicrous, that’s exactly how too many business owners treat learning to execute on their strategies. They have great ideas, but they lack the ability to execute properly. This certainly isn’t rocket science, but for some reason is much easier said than done.
Here are some simple guidelines for successful execution:

**Stay focussed on the right goal.** Taking your eye off the goal, even for a moment can lead to distractions while great ideas might look good in the way of your current strategy. The hardest part about this is that they truly may be great ideas. Ones that will make you lots of money. But, with the time and energy you’ve already invested in your current idea, is it worth starting over from scratch with a new idea? Or, are you better to invest a little more time and energy into this idea and put that other idea on the shelf for a while longer? If you find yourself continually answering that question by pursuing the new idea, over and over again, you might consider talking to your doctor about starting with low doses of Ritalin. Or at least backing off the coffee for a few weeks.

**Develop steps with progress goals along the way.** One of the most common problems with staying on task for long periods of time is it becomes easy to lose sight of the reason why you’re working so hard to accomplish something. As humans, we like being rewarded. Some rewards are internal like a sense of pride for a job well done. Other rewards are external like industry recognition, money, and respect from others. As you journey toward success, set up landmarks along the way where you’ll stop, reflect on progress and celebrate it by rewarding yourself for what you’ve accomplished. This certainly isn’t a new idea. Everyone from Weight Watchers to Dr. Phil have given similar advice. But, it is the right idea.

**Make sure you’re accountable to something or someone.** One of the most powerful things I have ever done is to give someone else the authority in my life to hold me accountable to getting things done. When no one is watching, and no one is asking, and no one is caring about my progress, even the smallest of discouragements can be enough to cause me to slip and eventually quit. But, if I know I have someone else depending on me, or something that will show my lack of progress if I don’t push just a little longer and a little harder, I quit too easy.

If you don’t remember anything else, remember this, “Ideas are dime a dozen, but execution is worth a million dollars”.

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