

Bad habits can delay or even sabotage your best-laid plans. So before you dive into your spanking new “to do” list for 2011, think hard about what you need to stop doing in order to clear the way for those new goals.

**Stop being a slave to email.** Hands down, email obsession was at the top of almost every CEO’s “stop doing” list. Check email first thing, but only as a form of triage. Respond only to those items that are urgent and important. Close email for the next two hours and immediately dig into most important project of the day.

**Stop compromising on pricing.** Last years economy saw clients allowed to cut fees and many businesses also accepted clients who were too small and inexperienced. Business did it to keep the lights on and we made it through the storm. Now we’re stronger, wiser and it’s time to start asking for the fees we deserve and walking away from anything less.

**Stop compromising on your client goals.** Take a good hard look at every customer to see if you have any of the kinds of customers that will suck the life out of your business: Tightwads, Bullies, Manipulators, Fraidy Cats, to name just a few. Then do the “grief to revenue ratio” test. Sometimes even customers who write big checks are more trouble than they’re worth.

**Stop trying to be all things to all customers.** To keep revenues coming in, some businesses abandoned a defined business model to take on any client from any industry that walked through the door. This is a huge mistake. It takes focus away from building a business within a defined and lucrative niche. If you did take on poorly defined clients, you many have scurried to learn new industries and spent countless hours getting past the dreaded learning curve. Go back to your original plan. By continuing to expand your expertise within your niche field, you accelerate your value to clients, meaning you can bill based on value, not hours.

**Stop being a control freak.** Deconstruct your current work into small tasks. Consider outsourcing elements of your work. If you can successfully let go of our some tasks, it may free up our time to do more to grow our business.

**Stop saying yes to everything.** Be more strategic about your time management. Focus your energies by saying no if it makes sense to do so and allows you to better service your clients and grow your business. Setting boundaries in your business will create more space and energy for you to move forward and reach your goals faster and easier.

**Stop getting distracted by the small stuff.** Avoid all of the little distractions that occur during the business day and squash productivity. Things like constantly checking my email with various electronic devices. Remember your most important task: spend at least four hours per day on sales-related activities. That's the only way your business can grow. And as the business owner, you need to focus on growth.