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Consultant offers year-end resolutions for business

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Business owners working on New Year's resolutions for 2007 first need to attack a to-do list of issues they may have put on the back burner this year, says consultant Ty **Freyvogel**. "There's something psychologically satisfying about starting a new year unencumbered by old issues," said **Freyvogel**, a Pennsylvania author, entrepreneur and business consultant. "I advise business owners to set aside several days toward the end of 2006 to address those issues that usually get crowded out by day-to-day problems. "

Freyvogel outlined a checklist of issues businesses should look at now, so they can start 2007 on the right foot: Review systems top to bottom: What's working? What isn't? What problems can you fix yourself and which ones require outside help (new technology, financial concerns)? "Don't assume that just because you have had a certain system in place from day one, that it is adding value to your business or your customers," said **Freyvogel**. Review vendor contracts: Are you receiving optimum pricing? Is the relationship mutually beneficial? If not, says **Freyvogel**, do not be afraid to make a change. Determine who your best customers are: Examine customers through a "profitability lens" "Just because you always seem to be doing something for certain customers doesn't mean they're the most profitable," said **Freyvogel**. Touch base with your best customers: Tell them you appreciate their business and ask if there's anything on which you can improve. Hold annual performance reviews: Discuss with employees what they can do to help the company run more smoothly. Ask what they feel most passionate about in their work, and where they would like to play a larger role. Engage employees as partners: The best people to solve problems are those who experience them daily. Hold a forum to get employees to share ideas and suggestions. Do an early spring cleaning: Toss things you don't need or that don't work anymore. A cleaner, spruced-up environment (inside and out) can make you and your employees happier and more productive. Review your marketing campaign: Which efforts are driving business? Which ones are not paying off? Make changes before you commit to another year with the same ads and other marketing devices. Overhaul your Web site: Update information, post articles mentioning your business. Make changes that keep people coming back. Look over your business cards: Make sure contact and other information is current. Tie layout to that of your Web site and business stationery. Review professional publication

subscriptions: Cancel those that tend to pile up or get thrown away without being read. Consider upgrading company technology: The year's end is a good time to review computer and phone systems and make upgrades that will help employees spend less time addressing crashes and information losses. Review insurance policies: Determine whether coverage is adequate, particularly if you have made any changes during the year that could affect liability. Update minute books: If your company keeps corporate minute books, make sure they are up-to-date. Having them already updated will help your attorneys in any legal matters that might crop up. Meet with your accountant: Plan your taxes, discuss potential write-offs and what to do with excess cash. **Freyvogel** said December is a good time for business owners to start purging their back burner list. "Do it, and you will be surprised about how much more smoothly your company will run next year," he said.