

**P.03**

# Is Your Business Really Ready for Q1 2021?

**P.06** The Secret to a Stress-Free Winter Road Trip

**P.07** Your List Is Your Greatest Weapon



## President's Letter

Let's all take a break!

I've spent the majority of my professional career being self-employed. There was no time clock, no "lunch hour," there was limited vacation time, and weekends were just another day. Many of you entrepreneurs know exactly what I mean. Just the thought of taking time off away from the office or "that project" or skipping a deadline never entered my mind. It was always push-push-push. Every motivational seminar I attended kept feeding me high caffeine one-liners without delay. Even today, I read motivational captions from various social media outlets, and I can feel my heart start to race.

But WAIT!

Can we continue to be efficient in our activities without allowing ourselves an opportunity to rest? Our mind, just like our body, needs rest on occasion to allow a "reset" of our emotions, our stress levels, and creativity. Many years ago, I attempted to adopt the theme that stress is a man-made product of our environment. And since I tend to be the one in control, I felt I could control stress. I was wrong! Stress tended to control me with the occasional migraine.

Our health is probably one of the most important aspects of our lives. We can build a company and sell it for millions of dollars but what good is it if we have poor health and therefore are unable to enjoy the remainder of our lives?

This year has proven to be probably one of the most stressful environments I've seen in my lifetime. The Pandemic, a multitude of riots, the financial whipsaws of the stock market,

a very controversial election and families unable to enjoy holiday meals together or celebrate milestones of their lives. And while a multitude of motivational seminars and keynote speakers are all telling you to "keep your eye on the prize", "don't set down your pencil" and "look for the next opportunity," I'm going to suggest you close your eyes, put away the pencil and realize your opportunity for living is right here, right now.

One thing I've learned is that there needs to be balance in your life. I recall being asked the question, "What does a man gain if he inherits the entire world, but suffers the loss of his own soul?" As I find myself attending more funerals than weddings, I begin to ponder how to balance the remaining portion of my life to better align with my family and lifetime goals.

Regardless of your age, I urge you to take a break from the hamster wheel, watch a sunset, hold the hand of someone you love, and take a breath, a very deep breath. Allowing your mind to rest will provide you with a boost in creativity, in alertness, in responsiveness and will help you focus on all that is meaningful in your life.

The Association for Entrepreneurship USA continues to provide the Resources, Education and Networking opportunities for the gig economy entrepreneur. With AFEUSA, its Success by Association.

**Charles Jackson**  
President

## Who We Are

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Charles Jackson**  
President  
President@afeusa.org

**Lee Clark**  
Secretary/Treasurer

**Richard Lyons**  
Vice President

### STAFF MEMBERS

**Joel Weldon**  
Inspirational Writer of  
Wisdom

**Emily Brady**  
Content Writer

**Lex Nelson**  
Content Writer

**Sydney Kremin**  
Project Manager

**Linda Lawliss**  
Content Editor



**Corporate Address**  
666 Dundee Road, #1603  
Northbrook, IL 60062

**Administrative/Mailing  
Office**  
16427 N Scottsdale Rd.  
Suite 410  
Scottsdale, AZ 85254

(844) 750-5927

AFEUSA.org



# A Fresh Perspective

## It's Time to Set Goals for Q1 2021

This year was a mess. Many businesses were not prepared for the roller coaster ride that started in early 2020. By March, most businesses were told to close their doors or restrict access to the general public. As a result, many businesses struggled, and some never reopened. There was a lot of bad news.

But we're not here to talk about bad news. We're here to talk about good news: your goals to kick off the first quarter of 2021! There's a good chance many of your growth goals for 2020 fell to the wayside. After all, you had more important things to focus on, like keeping your business up and running.

Now, it's time to look at your goals with a fresh perspective and use the lessons learned from the past year. One of the benefits of steering a business through a pandemic is that you can better identify its pain points. What sort of worked? What didn't work? What flat-out failed?

### Turn Pain Points on Their Head

Start by evaluating your pain points, if you haven't done so already. Shaping your first-quarter goals around these pain points means you can start the year off by addressing them. For instance, are there parts of your business that you can trim? Are there areas that need a complete overhaul? Maybe in 2020, you were carrying too much baggage.

For instance, a lot of businesses were operating under the assumption that employees needed to be on-site to be productive. Because of this, most avoided the work-from-home model. Business owners just didn't see the benefits or assumed it

wouldn't work for them. But in spring of 2020, many businesses were forced to adapt, and several lessons were learned along the way. One major lesson: Work-from-home is feasible and cost-effective.

### A Lesson in Productivity

Nicholas Bloom, a professor at Stanford University, researches productivity and has contributed to the body of research that suggests remote employees are, on average, more productive than on-site employees. In 2013, Bloom ran a study on remote workers; it looked at their productivity when they shifted to a four-day workweek while working from home. On average, productivity rose by 13%.

Current data follows similar trends. In July 2020, Lenovo published a study on 20,000 workers who had shifted to a remote model in the wake of COVID-19. The study reconfirmed that productivity increased among those workers, with 63% reporting an increase in productivity (this includes completing more tasks on any given day, completing more tasks ahead of schedule, and being less distracted throughout the day).

At the same time, many businesses reported that they saved money by shifting part, or all, of their workforce to a remote model. While upfront, short-term costs of this new setup can be substantial, the long-term costs (and savings) may be worth it. Fewer employees on-site may mean a business can consolidate space and save on rent, utilities, and taxes.

What's the final lesson in this example? Many businesses are deciding to go fully remote. Shifting to a remote business model

might be one of your first goals for the first quarter of 2021. If you've shifted employees to work remotely on a part-time basis, you're already halfway there. The next step is to look closely at the numbers (costs, employee metrics, customer metrics, etc.) and work with your team to make it a long-term reality.

### Your Next Step

What other goals should you be focused on for the first quarter of 2021? Consider how well or how poorly you weathered the last nine months. This is a great time to address any issues that may have come up. I'll leave you with a few more questions and ideas to help you with first-quarter goals:

- Was your cash flow decimated? How did a reduced cash flow impact your business? How can you mitigate this in the future? (Potential goals: increase business savings, find alternative sources of revenue, etc.)
- Did you have to suspend products or services? What led to this suspension? Were these products/services useful at bringing in new or recurring business? Did they help your bottom line? (Potential goals: streamline or phase out products/services that no longer serve the same purpose that they once did.)

Before you start setting goals, answer the above questions or other questions that the past year has left you with. Home in on your pain points from 2020 and focus on addressing those in the upcoming quarter. Turn those weaknesses into strengths and start 2021 with a fresh perspective and a fresh set of goals.

# Spreading Joy and Opportunity, One Yard Sign at a Time



## How Alisha Arcaria Started Heart Yard Signs

This year has been a challenge for businesses, employees, and families. The COVID-19 pandemic and its related lockdowns have turned our “normal” lifestyles upside down in many ways. While some people have withdrawn from their routines, other entrepreneurs have turned these challenges into opportunities to fill distinct needs in their communities. One of them is Alisha Arcaria of Gilbert, Arizona.

Alisha worked in corporate sales, recruiting, and training. Later, she decided to step back from her work and raise her family of three energetic boys in the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona. During that time, Alisha also found herself competing in a local women’s body building competition with the full support of her husband, family, and friends.

Because of that experience, Alisha knows firsthand the devotion and dedication it takes to embark on a new venture, and she did just that when COVID-19 hit. When she saw that families were separated, communication was broken, and social media wasn’t filling the

void of contact with neighbors and friends, she drew on her past work experience to find a way to bring people together.

In the past, Alisha had helped people communicate by sending greeting cards and decorating front yards with banners. Using streamers, balloons, and handmade signs, she helped others share the news of birthdays, graduations, new babies, family members returning home from military service, and more. Using that knowledge and experience, Alisha created Heart Yard Signs.

Alisha knew right away that she didn’t want her business to be a traditional franchise. She had experience working with those business models and felt the only person who really made money was the franchisor. In her view, too much of the profit from the franchisee’s business (usually a percentage of total sales) was taken off the top, leaving small margins and large risks. Instead of going that route, Heart Yard Signs offers an affordable “Business in a Box” concept for as little as \$2,500. This includes:

Continued on pg. 5 ...

# We Want to Hear From You!

You are unique — so is your story.

AFEUSA is home to a community of successful entrepreneurs. We know that you likely listen to and read success stories from fellow business owners all the time, but have you ever thought that you might be a voice for others to listen to and learn from?

**Would you like to be featured in our monthly newsletter?**

For more information, contact Charles Jackson, President of AFEUSA, at [President@afeusa.org](mailto:President@afeusa.org).





- Three Happy Birthday Signs
- More than 20 graphics, including hats, presents, balloons, etc.
- Two full sets of the alphabet
- Four business signs that allow the franchisee to advertise during the yard display
- "It's a Boy"/"It's a Girl" signs
- Additional signage at substantial savings from any other sign supplier

On top of providing the signs, Alisha created a web-based training and business development tutorial for Heart Yard Signs. She provides web design assistance, name and logo branding for social media platforms, as well as design and manufacturing assistance for additional signs and graphics. Instead of paying

a traditional franchise fee, people who want a "Business in a Box" only have to invest with a flat \$150 per month! This pricing structure discourages anyone from attempting to "steal" the idea and trying to develop it on their own. There is no possible way to duplicate the infrastructure, development, and various support teams for that price.

Heart Yard Signs can be operated out of any kitchen or garage and can be a full or part-time job. Alisha and her team are so convinced of the power of their business model that they say franchisees can earn their investment back within 90 days of receiving their "Business in a Box"!

Here at AFEUSA, we believe that true entrepreneurs seek opportunities within their lives and communities. These people are not afraid of establishing a small business regardless of the economic or political climate. Alisha is one such entrepreneur, and she's opening a door for you to follow in her footsteps as part of Heart Yard Signs!

To learn more, visit [HeartYardSigns.com](http://HeartYardSigns.com).

## The 2 Biggest Mistakes You Can Make When Setting Sales Goals for 2021

### Avoid These 2 Mistakes for 2021 Sales Success



Regardless of how 2020 treated your business, 2021 is fast approaching, and this past year is about to become a closed chapter. It's time to examine both the bad and the good that happened in 2020 and set tangible sales goals for 2021. Just be sure you don't fall into these two traps.

#### **Mistake No. 1: Making Your Goals Unrealistic**

Setting an unrealistic goal for each quarter is sure to lead to failure. The trick is to push the limits of what has been done without settling on a number that is completely unachievable. Remember, if your team begins to exceed expectations, you can adjust and increase your goal! It's far better to overachieve than to underperform.

Finding that perfect goal number means that sales leaders will have to sort through a lot of data. Rely on both external and internal data to develop an understanding of the sales outlook for 2021. What do the 2020 numbers forecast for your business? What kinds of services or products are the most popular? What's the forecast of the economy or your industry? These questions can guide you as you set your goals.

#### **Mistake No. 2: Failing to Plan Properly**

You will not accomplish the goals you've set for yourself and your team if you don't provide the steps to get there. Pull information from industry leaders as well as your sales team, workers on the floor, and marketing managers. Your employees have valuable viewpoints on your business, while outside forces shift your view from internal to external. With this combined information, hash out a plan with your sales team. Don't leave the Zoom meeting until you have tangible steps in place.

A plan is only as good as its execution, and when there's no opportunity to prepare, it will undoubtedly fail. Your quarterly and yearly sales goals for 2021 should be set now so that your team has ample time to prepare. This will allow for additional training or discussions about proper tactics and strategies for marketing and selling your business to targeted customers.

Before you know it, 2020 will be in the past. Don't forget to make tangible sales goals and a plan for 2021 before it's too late.

# AFEUSA Member's Forum

Questions ...

Answers ...

Challenges ...

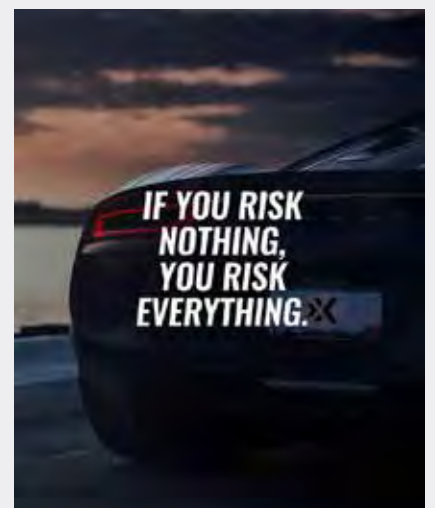


Open only to AFEUSA members, this platform allows AFEUSA members to post various issues related to their business or idea and allows other members to comment or give advice/ suggestions on how best to resolve those challenges.

To get started, log in to AFEUSA, select Membership Benefits, and click on the link to the Member's Open Forum. Be sure to read the code of conduct prior to posting any question or answer.

**Let's start posting!**

**Take a Break**



## Put Your Winter Road Trip Worries to Bed

### With a Discounted CARCHEX Protection Plan

There are few things more stressful than driving through a minefield of ice and snow for hours, but for many people, that's the only way to connect with their loved ones for the holidays this year. The COVID-19 pandemic took flights off the table for high-risk people and their families, and that has made our cars — and car safety — more important than ever.

If you're stressing out about an upcoming winter road trip, we can help! Here at AFEUSA, we're very aware of how important car travel is for entrepreneurs, so even before the pandemic, we partnered with CARCHEX to make your business and personal life easier.

CARCHEX has been around since 1999, and it offers direct-to-consumer automotive products and services, including vehicle protection plans, pre-purchase vehicle inspections, and roadside assistance. The latter is perfect for keeping you safe on a holiday road trip because it includes 24-hour emergency towing, flat tire service, fluid delivery, and trip mapping. In short, CARCHEX can handle everything you need to hit the road without having to worry.

When we seek out companies to partner with for our membership benefits, we won't settle for anything less than the best. CARCHEX is no exception. The company has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau, and it's the trusted Vehicle Protection Partner of KBB, CARFAX, Edmunds, and more. When CARCHEX agreed to offer AFEUSA members a whopping **\$200 discount on each purchase** (and extra savings on additional services), we knew they were the one.

At the end of the day, CARCHEX specializes in peace of mind, and they can help you get it whether you're in the process of buying a new car, getting ready for a winter road trip, or just planning meetings and deliveries in your home town. 2020 has already been stressful enough, so don't leave these important details to chance!

Visit your AFEUSA Portal today to take advantage of these benefits available only to AFEUSA members.

# Optimize Your List



## To Target the Right Leads the First Time!

Your business is nothing without its list. The files upon files of customer data that you have stashed away can give you more insight and direction than most metrics, yet many business leaders know very little about their list — much less how to utilize it.

A great list has a few components. It's usually more than just an Excel spreadsheet with names, addresses, email addresses, preferences, and phone numbers. But if you *don't* even have that, then you need to do some serious updating before you go any further!

**Start** by scrubbing your list. Remove any names that are no longer prudent. Then, call the remaining people on the list and verify contact information or ask for additional details. Make this an impossible offer to turn down by providing a reward or something of value to those who opt to share more details with you. As more people offer their information, you have multiple tools to market directly to them. (This will come in handy later.)

Now that you have a brand new, scrubbed, beautiful list, it's time to break

it down. Your list has to be segmented into multiple components to provide a scope of your business's well-being and to pinpoint target areas. Start with three "buckets":

- Prospects
- Customers
- Bad Leads

From there, you can break the list down even further to include:

- Canceled customers
- Hot leads
- Customers with high spending
- New sales

As you categorize your list into various buckets, a plan will emerge. Your team can develop campaigns to upsell clients who may need more of the services you can offer while pinpointing those who could be resold on your company. This segmented data is then a powerful tool

to help you specifically target your lists rather than casting a wide net and only catching a few leads.

One of the easiest ways to target each group is through relationship marketing. Increase your content production and **keep hitting your customers with your message**, using the information from your list to guide you. Start with an email blast, then pepper in a few postcards. Next, host a Facebook Live event with that very same information and invite a specialty group of people from your list (i.e., your hot leads or loyal customers). Each time you curate a message specifically for a segmented population, you are creating a message that will land right where they need it the most. But don't let off the gas. Most readers only remember about 10% of what they consume, so keep communicating!

With a targeted list, you should have no problem finding a new tactic, a new device, or a new platform to get your message out to the people who need to hear it most. It all starts with perfecting — and updating! — your list.

## Charlie Plumb's Laugh: You Can't Survive With Humor

People often ask, "Joel, isn't a sense of humor a special gift that only some people have?" I don't think so. You can cultivate a great sense of humor if you want to. It's really a matter of deciding.

The dictionary defines humor as "the ability to see the funny or amusing side of things." But I like to stretch that a bit farther and say that humor is the ability to laugh at things you can't change. That definition of the word humor was given to me by a man named Charlie Plumb. A number of years ago Charlie and I had lunch together, and he told me about some of his experiences as a United States Air Force pilot during the Vietnam War. He learned the meaning and value of humor after he was shot down over enemy territory, parachuted to the ground and was soon captured by the Viet Cong.

After six months of severe torture, he felt he couldn't take it any longer. Life seemed utterly unbearable, and Charlie prayed to die. Then, after another beating, he was trucked to a different prison and thrown into a tiger cage, where he slowly regained consciousness. As he told me, it took hours just to open his

swollen eyes and focus his vision. But finally, when he could see, he noticed a circle carved in the stone wall just outside of his cage. Beneath the circle were some words. He strained to make out their meaning, and what he finally read changed his life.

There, carved into the wall of what must have seemed like the pit of hell, were these words: Smile, you're on Candid Camera!

Charlie said he laughed. He laughed for hours. His despair was lifted, because where there is laughter, there is hope. Charlie realized that another American in that same tiger cage had retained his sense of humor and had laughed at a situation he couldn't change.

That one hearty laugh helped Charlie survive 2,103 days ... nearly six years of captivity. He survived, just as you can survive almost any ordeal that you might have to face — with the help of humor!

**Here's what you can do:** Actually begin to take notice of how many times a day you DO laugh, and how many times a day

you're able to make someone else laugh. By simply becoming more aware of it, you'll automatically begin finding more things to laugh about.

Before you come to the breakfast table in the morning, pause and ask yourself, "What funny thing could I do or say this morning to make someone laugh?" Your sense of humor is a lot like a muscle — it must be exercised in order to develop. The more you USE it, the more powerful it becomes.

Before long, you'll notice that your coworkers and customers are actually conditioned to your positive humor, and will probably light up and smile as soon as they see you, before you've even said or done anything funny. They'll look forward to seeing you, because they'll know they can count on you to brighten their day!

**Joel Weldon,**  
*Inspirational Writer  
of Wisdom*



## Decisions, Decisions

### Tactics for Making the Best Business Choices



As a business leader, you're likely well-versed in making decisions, but in the midst of a global health crisis, a political minefield, and environmental disasters, planning for the upcoming year is different territory for even the most seasoned business professionals. So, how do you make the right decisions for your 2021 plans? Start with these three steps.

**No. 1: Look at the data.**

Data has never steered you wrong before, so don't stop using it now. However, you

have to use the right data and contextualize it with today's lenses. For example, when choosing a new marketing campaign or direction, continue looking at the cost, revenue, potential errors, and risk factors. Use those to make an informed decision about which step to take. For example, is the campaign empathetic to the needs of your clients, or will it come off as tone-deaf? (**Hint:** Try split testing in 2020 before fully deploying a new campaign in 2021!)

**No. 2: Don't go with the status quo.**

"This is how we've always done it" will kill your business. Nothing is the same as it was just one year ago. The entire world has transformed, and attempting to continue with what's "normal" will only cause you to miss what could be. As you plan for 2021, consider the abnormal. Look at options you would have never considered doing and test their efficacy. If one fails, move on. But

there's a big chance that you may stumble into something that is totally unique and completely worth your time.

**No. 3: Embrace change.**

You've set your course. You have your team in place. You're excited to begin. Now, get ready to change everything. Sounds exhausting, right? But it can happen. Rather than being resistant to what isn't working, admit defeat and move on. If there's one benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that we were all given a crash course on how to adapt quickly. Take those lessons and apply them to your 2021 plan. Be prepared to admit when your original plan isn't working because staying on an ineffective course can do more harm than good.

Don't avoid it. Planning for 2021 is necessary — even if you need to change course quickly.