

Spring-Clean Your Business



Powerhouse

2019

Spring-cleaning is about cleaning out the cobwebs and letting in the fresh air, getting rid of what no longer works and creating space for new opportunities. This kind of refresh is as good for a business as it is for that house you vow to clean top to bottom. And conveniently occurring after most folks have already given up on those New Year's resolutions, spring is a great time to give your business a do-over.

Desk: Sure, your desk isn't your business, but it's your command center for your business. If the first thing you sit down to is chaos, it colors your whole workday. And that isn't good for your business.

- Clear the top of your desk of everything but essentials.
- Clean out your desk drawers.
- Sort any papers into "Act," "Delegate," or "Trash" (and then proceed accordingly per category).
- Find something that makes you smile or motivates you and put it on your desk/surrounding area (think photo of your family, your first dollar made at your business, fresh flowers, whatever works for you).
- Empty your pencil sharpener, refill your stapler, test your pens for ink (and make sure to start a new office supply order when you realize you're low on pencils, staples, and pens).

Business Space: Whether you have a brick-and-mortar location, a warehouse, an office, or a hidden workspace in your bedroom closet from which you operate your business, look at it from the perspective of a potential customer, vendor, co-worker, or business partner. Does it say, "We run a professional operation here"?

- Take down any out-of-season decorations or promotions.
- Ensure that any visible branding, logos, signage, etc. are consistent with your current brand and messaging.
- Check that all office machines (or equipment unique to your business) are operating correctly and have the necessary supplies, e.g., paper, toner, etc.
- Organize your inventory, supply closets, and file drawers. Knowing what you have prevents you from ordering things you don't need, lets you know what's selling versus what's not, and makes sure you're never out of anything necessary before you've already placed an order for it.
- Marie Kondo your business space(s). If it's not joyful (or necessary), find another home for it.



Paper Records and Computer Files: Whether on your computer or stuffed in your filing cabinets, the sheer volume of information that needs to find a home can easily become overwhelming when running a business.

- Discard antiquated marketing materials, letterhead, business cards, etc. that have been replaced with more current versions. (Feel free to toss one of each in a scrapbook for posterity if you're sentimental like that.)
- Toss that drawer full of menus for restaurants that no one orders from.
- Confirm that everyone on your team is using the most recent versions of any documents, forms, or templates that your business utilizes, including invoices, policies, personnel forms, timesheets, etc.
- Review any regulations specific to your business that inform what you must keep, for how long, and under what level of security.
- When possible, consider scanning and saving important documents that don't require the maintenance of paper copies.
- When in doubt, seek the guidance of a professional before discarding documents.

Email: Commit to using email as a tool for your business rather than letting it be an inconvenience that takes time from what's truly important to your company.

- Unsubscribe from any email subscriptions that don't add value to your business or your life in general. (No judgment here about cute cat memes that get you through a rough day).
- Revisit any rules/guidelines you have about who gets cc'd on what emails (less is more).
- Consider other communications options that minimize email bombardment (like using Slack for questions that require a quick response).
- If you're currently facing an inbox filled with an excessive number of emails you've not read or responded to and you'd find yourself lost in the abyss trying to catch up, try this: Create a "Just in Case" email folder. If you haven't touched an older email in months and there have been no disastrous consequences, archive it here. This way you can access it if it turns out it was more important than you realized. Vow to do better with your now emptier inbox.

Website: Whether you run a brick-and-mortar business or a virtual one, your website is critically important to making your business known. Does it reflect who you are and how you do business?

- Check on the status of your domain name.
- Assess your hosting plan and determine if it continues to meet your website traffic, speed, and website space needs.
- Review your analytics and make notes of any relevant trends/patterns that can inform your content strategy for the remainder of the year.
- Check the copyright date on your website and update if necessary.
- Update any staff roles, bios, or directories that appear on your site.
- Check that your contact information—including email, phone number(s), and physical location—is current.
- Confirm that you have the most recent versions of any relevant policies on your website.
- Test all links.
- Sign up for your own email list to verify the sign-up works (and do the same with any surveys, forms, leave a comment fields, etc.).
- Update any metrics you note on your website with the most up-to-date data.
- Check for spelling and grammar mistakes and for any inconsistencies with branding and voice.
- Keep content current and fresh!

Social Media: You have a myriad of social media tools at your disposal. Perhaps you use only one or two. Maybe you're actively engaged on them all. This is a great opportunity to make sure they're working their hardest for you.

- Check that the links to your social media properties on your website are correct (and conversely, that the links to your website on your social media sites are correct as well).
- Confirm that your branding on social media is consistent with what you're using on your website and marketing materials.
- Assess what your social media analytics look like. Whom are you reaching on Facebook? Twitter? LinkedIn? Instagram? Are you seeing growth in the number of followers? Is there any change, positive or negative, in the level of engagement from one site to the next? Revise your social media strategy based upon your findings.



Products and Services: What you offer your customers is the meat and potatoes of your business. Make sure that what you say you do and what you actually do are aligned.

- Review your products and services. Have you added things? Subtracted things? Are you on the fence about certain options? Fine-tune your offerings and make sure your marketing materials and website reflect any changes you make.
- Revisit your pricing. Is it time for rate increases? Decreases? Again, make sure your marketing materials and website reflect any changes you decide to make.

Now, let's be real for a moment. There's a lot to consider. You could easily become so busy reviewing what you've done in the past and strategizing what you'll do in the future that you run out of time to deal with the business at hand (pun intended). You don't need to religiously go through each and every one of these things at once. You can tackle things all at once or pick what resonates with you in the moment and commit to doing something else on the list next week/month. Nor do you need to do this on your own (even if you're a one-man/one-woman shop, you can recruit your village to help).

What's key here is that you're always mindful of the importance of assessing what works and what doesn't, using tools and strategies to your advantage, and staying current and relevant.