

NEW-BUSINESS-YEAR PLAYBOOK — 30 / 60 / 90- DAY FOCUS



Opening thought:

“A plan that’s too big to explain is too big to execute.” Keep it small, clear, and measurable.

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1) Expanded Quick Checklist (First 30 days — with owners & outcomes)



Use this as a morning-of checklist for your leadership team. For each item, name an owner and the expected deliverable.

✓	Activity	Owner	Expected Deliverable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Year-end review	CFO/Owner	6–8 page dashboard + 1-page lessons & opportunities. (Revenue by customer, product, margin, CAC, churn.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cash reforecast	Finance	12-month cash flow with best/base/worst case + 60–90 day stress test.
<input type="checkbox"/>	One-page annual plan	CEO	1-page strategic plan (vision, 3 priorities, top KPIs).
<input type="checkbox"/>	90-day plan (Q1)	COO	3–5 initiatives, owners, deadlines, metrics.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget & P&L update	Finance	Revised P&L by month and spend reallocation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staffing review	HR or COO	Org chart with 3 hires prioritized and timeline.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vendor/contract audit	Ops/Procurement	Contracts summary, auto-renewals, terms to renegotiate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marketing & sales refresh	Head of Sales/Marketing	Q1 campaign calendar + 1 core message.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tech & automation audit	IT/Operations	Top 5 automation opportunities and plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compliance & risk check	Operations	Insurance, payroll, tax, cyber checklist.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leadership alignment meeting scheduled	CEO	Offsite or half-day alignment booked.

2) Deep Dive: What to do, step-by-step



A Year-End Review — how to run it

Goal: Learn fast and decide where to invest next year.

Steps:

- 01 **Pull metrics:** revenue by customer & product, gross margin, CAC by channel, churn/retention, utilization, average transaction size.
- 02 **Identify top 10 customers** that made 70–80% of profit and lowest 20% that cost you time.
- 03 **Run a short “pre-mortem”:** What would have to be true for this year to be a disaster? What would have to be true to be a smash hit?
- 04 **Facilitate a 90-minute leadership session:** 20 min data, 30 min discussion, 30 min pick 3 lessons + actions.
- 05 **Output:** 1-page “What we learned / What we will change.”

Example lesson → action:

“High churn in product X due to onboarding delays” → Action: fix onboarding, create 3 automation tasks, measure churn monthly.

B Cash & Stress Testing

Goal: Ensure survival + optional growth.

Steps:

- 01 **Build monthly cash model for 12 months with three scenarios:** best (growth), base (plan), worst (30–40% revenue drop).
- 02 **Model timing:** AR days, AP days, payroll schedules, loan payments.

- 03 **Identify breakpoints:** cash low points and month they hit.
- 04 **Create contingency actions:** freeze hires, reduce discretionary spend, short-term financing lines.
- 05 **Add early warning triggers** (e.g., AR > 60 days, pipeline below 70% of target).

Practical:

Keep a “60-day runway” number visible to leadership.

C One-Page Annual Plan (template)

- **Top section – Vision:** One sentence: “Where we want to be at year-end.”
- **Priorities (3):** Name, why it matters, one KPI each.
- **Numbers:** Revenue target, gross margin target, EBITDA target, cash target.
- **People:** 3 critical hires or development priorities.
- **Big bets / initiatives (Q1):** 3 items with owners.
- **Risk / contingency:** Top 3 risks and mitigation.

D Translate strategy → 90-day plan

- **Structure:** 3–5 initiatives for the quarter. For each initiative, define: owner, deliverables, milestones, metric, resources, and budget.
- **Weekly mechanics:** 15–30 minute leadership huddles with 3 numbers reviewed (see section on cadence).
- **Monthly review:** 60–90 minute financial & KPI review; adjust priorities as needed.

E Pricing & Margin Review – practical steps

- 01 List products/services with margin and utilization.
- 02 Flag low-margin items consuming high effort. Decide: raise price, simplify, or sunset.
- 03 Test modest price increases (2–7%) on a subset of customers with explanation (value/supply).
- 04 Evaluate bundling opportunities to push higher-margin services.

Example script for price change:

“We’re updating pricing as of [date] to reflect investments in [service improvement]. For existing clients we’ll apply a [small] increase or a fixed fee for new features. Happy to discuss options.”

F Customer & Market Actions

- **Top 20 customer health plan:** Score each top customer on revenue, margin, growth potential, risk, and advocacy (1–5).
- **Customer outreach script:** Short call/email to check business plans and ask for feedback; offers to pilot improvements.
- **Win/loss review:** For last year’s lost deals, map reasons and create action plan.

G People & Talent

Tactics:

- Identify “mission critical” roles.
- For each, define success measures and a 90-day hiring plan or development plan.
- Map successors for each key role.
- Schedule performance calibration discussions and development plans.

Practical hire checklist: Job spec, interview scorecard, salary band, ramp expectations, 90-day milestones.

H Systems & Automation – low-hanging fruit

Audit common areas: invoicing, collections, scheduling, time tracking, lead routing.

Examples:

- Automate invoicing and reminders (reduce DSO).
- Use simple scheduling tools to reduce admin time.
- Build a shared KPI dashboard (Google Sheets / BI tool).

Outcome: Reduce time on low-value work, improve margins.

I Risk, Vendor & Compliance Checklist

- ☐ **Quick audit:** insurance, payroll, taxes, cyber backup, supplier concentration, contract renewals.
- ☐ **Actions:** renegotiate key contracts, add auto-renew sightlines, ensure payroll tax filings are on track, confirm backups.
- ☐ **Cyber basics:** password manager, MFA, backups, offsite recovery plan.

J Financial Housekeeping & Tax

Tasks with accountant:

- Estimate taxable income and timing for tax planning.
- Decide on capital expenditures and timing to optimize tax.
- Identify credits (e.g., R&D if applicable) and document.
- Confirm banking relationships and credit lines are adequate.



3) Communication & Rhythm (who does what — meeting agendas & templates)



Weekly leadership huddle (15–30 min)

- **Format:** Standup, same time weekly.
- **Agenda:**
 - 1) 3 numbers that matter (sales pipeline, cash, service utilization)
 - 2) 3 quick updates from each owner (status, roadblock, ask)
 - 3) Any urgent decisions.
- **Output:** 3 action items, owner, due date.

Monthly financial & KPI review (60–90 min)

- **Agenda:** Top-line results vs plan, cash and runway, gross margin by product, key customer updates, hiring spend, top risks.
- **Deliverable:** Adjusted forecast and 3 tactical decisions for next 30 days.

Quarterly strategy review (half/full day)

- **Agenda:** Review one-page plan, measure progress against KPIs, decide Q2 priorities, leadership development work.
- **Deliverable:** Updated one-page plan + Q2 90-day plan.

Leadership offsite (half or full day sample agenda)

Time	Agenda Item
9:00 – 9:20	Welcome & objectives
9:20 – 10:00	Year-end review highlights
10:00 – 11:00	Market & customer intelligence session
11:00 – 12:00	Decide top 3 strategic priorities
12:00 – 1:00	Working lunch: 90-day initiative planning
1:00 – 2:30	Breakout: People & hiring plan / Ops & margin improvements
2:30 – 3:00	Risk, finance, contingency planning
3:00 – 3:30	Communication & cadence (how we'll keep score)
3:30 – 4:00	Commitments & close





4) 90-Day Sprint Template — fillable and practical

Sprint goal (one sentence & metric). _____

Initiative #1: _____

● Owner: _____

● Why: _____

● Deliverables & milestones (dates):

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date

● Metric: _____

● Budget: _____

● Resources required: _____

● **Weekly check: (what to report on each week)**

● Next step: _____

● Roadblocks: _____

● Support needed. _____

Initiative #2: _____

● Owner: _____

● Why: _____

● Deliverables & milestones (dates):

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date

● Metric: _____

● Budget: _____

● Resources required: _____

● **Weekly check: (what to report on each week)**

● Next step: _____

● Roadblocks: _____

● Support needed: _____

Initiative #3: _____

● Owner: _____

● Why: _____

● Deliverables & milestones (dates):

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____
- **Weekly check: (what to report on each week)**
- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed. _____

Initiative #4: _____

- Owner: _____
- Why: _____
- Deliverables & milestones (dates):

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____
- **Weekly check: (what to report on each week)**
- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed. _____

Initiative #5: _____

● Owner: _____

● Why: _____

● Deliverables & milestones (dates):

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date

● Metric: _____

● Budget: _____

● Resources required: _____

● **Weekly check: (what to report on each week)**

● Next step: _____

● Roadblocks: _____

● Support needed. _____

Weekly check example (for each initiative): Completed (Y/N), Next step, Roadblocks, Support needed.

Completed (Y/N)	Next step	Roadblocks	Support needed.



5) KPIs — recommended list by function

- **Top-level company KPIs:** Revenue, Gross Margin, EBITDA, Cash balance, Customer NPS/health, Headcount, Sales pipeline.
- **Sales:** Pipeline value, conversion rate, avg deal size, sales cycle length, CAC.
- **Operations/Service:** Utilization rate, on-time delivery, service defect rate, cost per job.
- **Finance:** DSO, DPO, burn rate, gross margin by product, operating cash flow.
- **Marketing:** Leads per channel, lead quality (SQL%), CAC by channel.
- **People:** Time to hire, attrition rate, engagement score.

Pick 3–5 company KPIs and assign an owner for each.



6) Practical Templates & Scripts

One-Page Annual Plan (copy/paste)

Vision: _____

Top 3 priorities:

01 Priority + why + KPI target

02 Priority + why + KPI target

03 Priority + why + KPI target

● **Numbers:** Revenue \$_____ | Gross Margin %_____ | **Cash** \$_____

● **People:** Critical hires & timeline

● **Top Q1 Initiatives:** 1) _____ (Owner) 2) _____ 3) _____

● **Risks / Contingency:** _____

Top-20 Customer Outreach script (phone or email)

"Hi [Name], this is [You] at [Company]. We're planning our year and I want to make sure we're supporting your priorities. Can we set 20 minutes to hear what's top of mind for you in the next 12 months and to share a quick update on ways we can reduce your risk and cost? If helpful, I'll bring a short list of ideas we're considering."

Goal: Learn about their plans, identify upsell/cross-sell, confirm retention risk.

Price increase communications (email)

"Hello [Customer], we're making a small pricing update effective [date] to support continued investments in [service quality/technology]. For existing partners, [describe grandfathering or notice]. If this raises questions, I'm happy to call to walk through options."



7) Hiring & People: Practical plan & scorecard

- **Job spec must include:** role purpose, 90-day outcomes, interview scorecard (skills, culture fit, references), training ramp.
- **90-day plan for new hire:** Week 1 orientation, Week 2–4 core training, Month 2 measurable tasks, Month 3 independent delivery + feedback checkpoint.
- **Interview scorecard example:** Technical ability (1–5), Problem solving (1–5), Cultural fit (1–5), Communication (1–5). Hire if total $\geq X$ and no 1s.

8) Vendor & Contract Checklist (do this now)

- ☐ Renewal dates & auto-renew terms.
- ☐ KPIs and SLAs you should enforce.
- ☐ Concentration risk (top 3 vendors > X% of spend).
- ☐ Payment terms—are they favorable?
- ☐ Cyber / insurance proof from vendors.
- ☐ Escalation & exit provisions.

9) Automation Opportunities (examples small businesses love)

- **Invoicing & collections:** Auto invoices, payment links, reminder cadence.
 - **Scheduling & dispatch:** Use off-the-shelf tools to reduce back-and-forth.
 - **Lead routing:** Auto assign leads to reps, auto follow-up emails.
 - **HR & payroll:** Automate onboarding checklist, timecards.
 - **Prioritize automation with 3 criteria:** time saved, margin impact, implementation cost.
-

10) Tax & Financial Optimization Checklist

- ☐ Meet accountant to forecast taxes & identify favorable timing for expenses.
 - ☐ Review depreciation and capital purchases timing.
 - ☐ Ensure all payroll taxes and filings are up to date.
 - ☐ Check eligibility for any credits (e.g., R&D or local incentives).
 - ☐ Confirm banking relationships & access to credit lines.
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11) What to STOP Doing (high-leverage tip)

List tasks, meetings, customers, or products that consume time but don't move the needle. Commit to sunsetting 1–3 of them this quarter to free capacity.

12) How to keep teams motivated

- Set small early wins for Q1 and celebrate them publicly.
- Keep the plan visible: 1-page plan in hub, weekly scoreboard, short shoutouts.
- Use short, consistent rituals – a 15-min recognition at the end of huddles works wonders.

13) Closing: 10 Reflection Questions – now expanded with prompts

- 01 **If only one thing changed, what would it be?** (Pick the leverage point that moves multiple KPIs.)

- 02 **Which customers should we double down on and which should we let go?** (Use margin + growth potential + risk.)

- 03 **Where is our biggest cash vulnerability?** (AR days, concentration, seasonal swings.)

04 What's our 90-day "proof" that we're on track? (Name one measurable.)

05 Which processes bleed the most time/margin? (List top 3 and owners.)

06 Which 1–2 hires would unlock the most? (Cost vs ROI.)

07 What's the single message that will attract our ideal customers? (Test it.)

08 How will we measure progress—who owns each KPI?

09 **What do we stop doing?** (Announce it.)

10 **How will we celebrate?** (Plan small, public rituals.)

Fillable Deliverables (ready to paste)

01 **One-Page Annual Plan** — Use the template above and share at offsite.

Company Name: _____

Year: _____

VISION (ONE SENTENCE — YEAR-END STATE)

TOP 3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority 1

Name: _____

Why it matters: _____

KPI & Target: _____

Priority 2

Name: _____

Why it matters: _____

KPI & Target: _____

Priority 3

Name: _____

Why it matters: _____

KPI & Target: _____

KEY NUMBERS (YEAR-END TARGETS)

● Revenue Target: \$ _____

● Gross Margin Target: _____ %

● EBITDA Target: \$ _____

● Cash Target: \$ _____

PEOPLE PRIORITIES (HIRING / DEVELOPMENT)

TOP Q1 INITIATIVES

1. _____ (Owner: _____)

2. _____ (Owner: _____)

3. _____ (Owner: _____)

TOP RISKS & CONTINGENCY

02 Q1 – 90-DAY SPRINT PLAN (EXECUTION FORMAT)

SPRINT GOAL (ONE SENTENCE):

SPRINT SUCCESS METRIC: _____

INITIATIVE #1

- Title: _____
- Owner: _____
- Why this matters: _____

Deliverables & milestones (with dates):

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____

WEEKLY STATUS CHECK

- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed: _____

INITIATIVE #2

- Title: _____
- Owner: _____
- Why this matters: _____

Deliverables & milestones (with dates):

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____

WEEKLY STATUS CHECK

- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed: _____

INITIATIVE #3

- Title: _____
- Owner: _____
- Why this matters: _____

Deliverables & milestones (with dates):

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____

WEEKLY STATUS CHECK

- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed: _____

INITIATIVE #4

- Title: _____
- Owner: _____
- Why this matters: _____

Deliverables & milestones (with dates):

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____

WEEKLY STATUS CHECK

- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed: _____

INITIATIVE #5

- Title: _____
- Owner: _____
- Why this matters: _____

Deliverables & milestones (with dates):

- Metric: _____
- Budget: _____
- Resources required: _____

WEEKLY STATUS CHECK

- Next step: _____
- Roadblocks: _____
- Support needed: _____

03 Weekly Huddle Agenda — 15 min, 3 numbers, 3 updates, 3 action items.

Week of: _____ Facilitator: _____

3 NUMBERS THAT MATTER

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

OWNER UPDATES (STATUS / ROADBLOCK / ASK)

- Owner 1: _____
- Owner 2: _____
- Owner 3: _____

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Owner	Due Date

- 04 **Top-20 Customer Health Spreadsheet – Columns:** Customer, Revenue, Margin, Growth, Risk, Advocate score, Next action.

Customer	Revenue	Margin %	Growth	Risk	Advocate Score	Next action.

05 Vendor/Contract Tracker – Vendor, service, renewal, spend, owner, notes.

Vendor	service	renewal	spend	owner	notes.

06 Hiring Tracker – Role, priority, status, scorecard, start date.

Role	priority	status	scorecard	start date.

07 Automation Backlog – Opportunity, time saved, margin impact, estimate, owner.

Opportunity	time saved	margin impact	estimate, owner.