

How to Ensure Your Business Development New Year's Resolutions Become Reality

By [LawVision](#) on January 16, 2014

It's mid-January – already halfway through the first month of the year. By now, according to John Norcross, author of [Changeology: 5 Steps to Realizing your Goals and Resolutions](#), about half of us have already given up on at least one of our resolutions.

The [University of Scranton Journal of Clinical Psychology](#) reports that 45% of Americans usually make some kind of New Year's resolution but only 8% achieves success. The reason, says Baba Shiv, Stanford Neuroeconomist, is that most people use the wrong part of their brain when attempting to keep resolutions. We rely on willpower and resolve rather than forming new habits using cognitive thinking, planning and rewards.

At LawVision, our mantra throughout the year is that we teach habits rather than steps. Let's face it, business development principles are not nearly as complex as the rules of evidence or the tax code. Our clients, with some well-planned training, can eventually grasp the nuts and bolts of how to go about business development. The real challenge is finding the time to do it and that requires building habits.

Neuroscientists and Psychologists agree. In a recent [Wall Street Journal article](#) Shiv says that willpower springs from a part of the brain, in the prefrontal cortex that is easily overloaded and exhausted. When the cognitive parts of the brain responsible for prioritizing and making real choices becomes stressed, the resolve weakens.

Rather than simply making a resolution, a better approach is to tie that resolution to a plan for building a new habit.

[USA today](#) recently listed John Norcross's top six strategies for turning hollow resolutions into new habits that stick. They apply to anyone focused on building out a great book of business in 2014.

- 1) Make changes to your behavior.** Changing a routine can bring different results. Instead of trying the same thing over and over again, expecting a different outcome, modify behaviors.
- 2) Define SMART goals.** When setting targets, use the SMART acronym: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-specific.
- 3) Track your progress.** A calendar, a pipeline tool a contact list, a business plan, a smartphone app... whatever it is, find something to keep track of and measure your progress
- 4) Reward small achievements.** When you reach a portion of your goal, be kind to yourself and recognize the accomplishment. This will help keep you focused and excited to move forward.
- 5) Make it public.** Make yourself accountable to your family, your network and social circles.
- 6) You are human.** Chances are you may slip up once or twice during this process. It's OK. According to Norcross, seventy percent of successful goal-setters said that their first slip actually strengthened their resolutions. Adopt the

outlook, "I'm human. Let me learn from it, and let me keep going."

Craig Brown works with managing partners, practice group leaders, attorneys, and marketing executives, as a coach and consultant. He is a Principal in the business development practice at LawVision where his consulting and training practice focuses on helping law firms rethink how to build clientele by reconnecting people to their core strengths.