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Media Business  
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## Include Your Job in Your Resolutions

**Tips to Help Media People Perform Their Key Roles More Productively**

By Mark Dominiak

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Special to TelevisionWeek

It is the time of year for resolutions again. But how many of we media people are considering any resolutions beyond the seldom-kept standards like losing weight or kicking the cigarette habit? Why not seriously consider making a resolution or two as a media person for 2007? Since we're spending 40 (on the low end) hours a week in the world of media, resolving to take action to make that time more productive makes great sense.

As inspiration for your resolution-making, here are some suggestions media people could attempt for the new year:

### Learn Something New

In many ways, this particular thought isn't so much an idea for a resolution as it is a habit media people should be consistently practicing. My own intent is to absorb as much new information as possible from a few readily available sources this coming year.

**Get acquainted with new reps.** Media people have an inclination not to schedule meetings with new reps that call. Besides the fact that everyone's time is as at a premium, no one really wants to invest precious minutes getting to know someone they've not met before.

Try to avoid that in 2007. Taking the time to acquaint one's self with a new rep can provide a planner with a couple of useful benefits. Very often, someone new has a high likelihood of bringing a fresh perspective to the table. New perspective helps make us smarter. Also, if the rep happens to bring a media type or property to the table that a planner has never directly worked with, learning can come from more than just perspective. It can come from first-time experience.

**Read.** A stack of material for 2007 is already sitting beside my bed. As a practice, I try to be as eclectic as I can about what I add to the hopper when I read new things. Quality books will always do two things. First, they'll open up your mind to new ways of thinking or seeing the world. Second, they will provide something interesting that can be applied to media or marketing in general.

I've already started "The Creative Habit" by noted choreographer Twyla Tharp. Also in the queue are the Nobel Peace Prize-winning novel by Elie Wiesel, "Night"; "Citizen Marketers," which covers the move from media as the message to individuals as the message; Sun Tzu's "Art of War"; "The Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell; and "Flow" by Mikhail Csikszentmihalyi.

If you happen to read any good articles or research pieces this year, make an effort to check the footnotes. You'll be surprised at how many worthwhile sources can be discovered in the fine print. If small type is not for you, visit the local book store on your lunch hour. Don't just head to the business section. Try other sections like psychology, biographies, history or social science. There's innovative energy to be found in many places.

**Incorporate new tactics into plans.** If you watched "It's a Wonderful Life" this past holiday season, you may remember one of Violet's lines from the movie. "Georgie, don't you ever get tired of just reading about things?" Reading is a wonderful activity, but there's more you can do to learn something new.

How many tactics have you read about in the trade press that you have not yet incorporated into your media plans? Are there new media opportunities out there you know would be great for your brand, but haven't yet attacked because of their unfamiliarity or what may be a tough sell to a client? Go after one in 2007.

New tactics likely will need to be assessed differently than comfortable standbys. New assessment techniques help provide perspective to see conventional wisdom differently. Further, in order to sell new ideas to clients, planners really must know them inside and out to be able to demonstrate their value and answer questions properly. Incremental knowledge increases capability.

Finally, on the execution front, new media may operate off of paradigms that become useful in unrelated execution discussions for more traditional media. In short, executing in a new media type might help make total execution more productive.

## **Play More Golf**

Go ahead and laugh. But there are two important benefits that flow from things like a round of golf. First, the simple re-orientation of the body's resources toward a physical action can help the mind to focus in a more complete way than possible when chained to a desk. Ever heard of a runner's high? Tongue out of cheek, physical activity increases the body's capacity to process oxygen. A better oxygenated brain and body will be more productive when it returns to planning activities.

Then there's the benefit of being in the company of others in quest of the green. Four hours or so on a golf course opens up significant possibilities to get to know people better, build relationships and exchange or brainstorm ideas.

Whether the round is played with media team members or vendors or clients, the opportunity to grow via constructive time with others materializes in a way that it would not when you're behind a desk. Better relationships will contribute to better plans over time, facilitated by stronger bonds created from the shared knowledge that result from time spent together.

## **Watch a Lot More TV**

There will be a lot to see in 2007. For sheer entertainment value, I can't wait to see how season two of "Lost" will play out. I'm also looking forward to the new episodes of "Heroes."

But for a future impact perspective, it will also be interesting to see how the premieres of "American Idol" and "24" shake up the competitive landscape among the networks in the second half of the season. Will "Ugly Betty" and "Grey's Anatomy" continue to break ground on Thursdays? Which of the new second-half offerings will become building blocks for next year?

I also want to make an effort to see what the networks will be doing to distribute content online as well as how brands are leveraging the space.

## **Embrace Your Role**

Media people on the whole tend to view themselves as second-class citizens among the communication team bringing the message to the market. That's a shame, because in reality what media people do is much more profound than realized, and they should derive confidence and strength from their efforts. A popular ABC show provides a good example.

In "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," Ty's team shows up at the home of a family in true need of help. After spending time with the family to understand the breadth of their needs, the team literally erases the family's domestic frame of reference and starts from scratch.

Think about what it is that they do. They start with nothing but an empty piece of property and basic information about the needs of the family. They quickly establish a vision for the new home to be built, from structure to amenities to the idiosyncrasies required to meet their project family's needs.

Then they get to work, coordinating not only among themselves, but with a team of local specialists who can physically bring their quickly devised vision to life—framers, dry-wallers and landscapers, among others. Ty and the team work directly with the local specialists and in one short week what started out as conversations and quick sketches on paper turns into a beautiful new home tailor-made to solve the unique problems of the family soon to live there.

What the "Extreme Makeover" team does is not dissimilar from what a media team does. A media team also starts with a blank page and creates something from nothing. They work with their clients and internal teams to understand the needs of a brand in the marketplace and then derive a plan of action for delivering messages in the marketplace.

But as Stephen Covey says, "There are always two creations." To bring vision to life, the physical creation follows the mental creation. Media teams must work with many others to ensure that messages find their way into the marketplace as designed. Media planners must work closely with internal teams of buyers and coordinators as well as external partners of vendors and reps. In the end, television spots air, magazine ads appear and Internet messages pop up on screens delivering the brand's message to consumers.

In short, media planners are responsible for a profoundly important act of creation. From vision to physical delivery in the marketplace, planners are responsible for triggering the voice of the brand. That's an important role in the communication process and one of which we as media planners should be more mindful in 2007.

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