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Media Business  
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## Resolve to Grow Smarter This Year

Establish Fundamental Steps Early to Meet New Goals and Don't Be Afraid to Embrace Change by Learning

By Mark Dominiak

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Given that it is the first week of the year, let's resolve as media people to raise the bar on our media efforts in 2006.

And as part of that resolution, let's not pigeon-hole our thinking into only the quantitative aspects of media plans. The simpler things we can do to fulfill our new resolution are those that shave a few pennies off of a cost per thousand or that tweak a daypart mix to increase frequency by a significant margin.

Yet simple things aren't necessarily the things that will reap the biggest rewards in the marketplace, with clients or on the planning team. Perhaps we can try to add substance to our training efforts for younger team members or to build stronger

relationships with colleagues. Or maybe we can take a long, hard look in the mirror and make a concerted effort to make ourselves smarter.

## **Harness Energy**

Most resolutions fail because they're much easier said than done. Despite best intentions, it's hard to harness the positive energy present when the resolution is made and actually follow through with it. That's a shame, because by establishing resolutions, people are attempting positive change.

A wealth of fundamental principles that apply nicely to the notion of effecting positive change can be summed up in one word: growth. Growth has been a hot topic in the business world for years, but on the surface it's not one that seems to have many implications for media planning. Further consideration suggests otherwise.

## **Growth Fundamentals**

In the Wall Street world in which we live, growth is too often viewed by its numbers-oriented definition: an increase in amount, size, power or intensity. The spirit of resolutions, however, reflects a different, stronger definition of growth: the process of becoming larger and more mature through natural development.

A portion of our consulting work with clients has gone beyond standard media and has dipped into the broader business question of stimulating growth. The powerful thing about growth fundamentals is that they apply to so many things. They are equally relevant to expanding a business proposition, community decision-making and personal relationships. And they are just as relevant to media planning.

Resources to learn about growth vary. Most people will dive into traditional business texts to gain understanding. But it is similarly valuable to explore other areas—from evolution to community development to human aging and cognitive process.

Immersion in the various sources will yield consistent themes relating to the subject of growth. We have found that there are six fundamentals that bear out growth's definition as a process of becoming larger and more mature through natural development: time, environmental change, critical decision-making, the need for others, learning and innovation.

## **Allow Time**

Americans in general and businesses specifically demonstrate a remarkable disregard for reality when it comes to their expectations of time. Time is viewed as a sequence of events happening at a quick, linear pace. Our society has become fixated on what occurs next on the calendar as opposed to achievement of long-term goals.

Unfortunately, that's not how growth works. Organisms, individuals, businesses and markets cannot bite off more than they can chew and assimilate it immediately. Growth takes time.

## **Embrace Change**

The old adage, "Only two things in life are certain: death and taxes," is false. There are actually three certainties in life: death, taxes and change. Change cannot be avoided in life or in the marketplace. Dismissing or ignoring change can be the equivalent of suicide. Change is a powerful force, and those who have the foresight to embrace it stand a better chance of surviving and thriving.

## **Critical Decision-Making**

When change occurs in life or in the marketplace, the most defining moment an individual or business faces is how to deal with the change. Individuals fall back on skill sets that have provided success for them and they use those skills to deal with the changed environment.

Common business practice is to look at what's happening in the marketplace, responding to the need for growth by turning up efficiency and pulling "fat" out of organizations or plans. Businesses are good at this. They have "their way" of turning over every stone to figure out how to make the operation hum a little better. Deciding to fall back on skill sets or to turn up efficiency reflects either fear of change or a lack of knowledge of how to change.

## **We Need Others**

When the environment has changed, circumstances under which individuals or businesses once flourished become different. The individual or business does not likely have the necessary internal acumen to address the new environment. The only way to understand the new environment and appropriately embrace change is to learn from others who have relevant knowledge and experience. For a self-confident individual or business, that's a hard thing to do.

## **Learning Is Vital**

Learning means to discover, realize or be taught. If an individual or business can find the intestinal fortitude to reach outside and embrace the knowledge of others, they are on the right path. Just as physical beings need food to grow, so do individuals and businesses. Information is one such food. It provides the raw material to learn something new that can help embrace environmental change. New information helps individual or business capabilities become larger and more mature-in other words, to grow.

## **Don't Forget to Innovate**

Innovation is the final growth fundamental. Growth will not occur simply as a by-product of having learned from others. Individuals or organizations must internalize new knowledge and adapt behavior to address the needs of the changed environment. When this occurs, a valuable thing happens: Individuals or organizations stop seeing the world in the way they took it for granted. They see the world as it could be, the possibilities that exist. They see the potential for growth, not the potential for status quo.

## **Achieve Your Goals**

To help you follow through on a resolution for raising the bar on your 2006 media efforts, let's operate under a couple of assumptions. First, if the spirit of resolutions indeed goes hand in hand with the concept of growth, it would be good to apply growth principles to bring media resolutions to fruition.

Second, achieving your resolution will be easier if you use a resource that provides useful information about growth and its applications for media. So over the next months we'll cover the six fundamental aspects of growth in depth and apply them to media planning in an effort to provide you with information, ideas and supportive energy as you endeavor to keep your resolution.

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