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STAFF PHOTO BY MARK GARFINKEL

TAKING CONCRETE STEPS: Newton's Right At Home executives, from left, Vladimir Zarkhin, Helen Valko and John-Paul Plouffe are focusing their 2009 efforts on marketing their business better.

Keep company's New Year's resolutions down-to-earth

Christmas is over and it's time for your New Year's resolutions.

What will it be this year? Spend more time on marketing? Buy new equipment? Find better ways to connect with customers? How about delegating more so you have more time to make resolutions?

Not all resolutions are equal. There are those pie-in-the-sky resolutions that are more wishes than promises you intend to keep.

And then there are those well-thought-out plans that have real potential to boost your business.

Think about quality over quantity, suggests Ann Marie Williams, head of Atmosphere Consulting. Your list of priorities should be empowering, challenging and aspiring but still realistic.

The obvious place to start is to examine your weaknesses. Where did you fall short over the last year? What seems to be holding you back? Beyond that, consider what's happening in the marketplace and how best to respond.

One of the best strategies is to bring employees into the process to get different insights, said Vladimir Zarkhin, owner of the local franchise of Right at Home. The



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Jennifer HELDT-POWELL

agency provides care to people in their homes.

"We think about how things might be different from the previous year," he said.

The focus at the agency in 2009 will be on marketing efforts. There is a need to educate people about the business, especially the so-called sandwich generation — those who are caring for both children and their own parents.

"Business has been strong, but we never know what the future will bring," Zarkhin said.

Making resolutions every year has helped the company grow from one person to more than a hundred in just a few years. The company doesn't keep all its resolutions, Zarkhin admits, but last year it managed about 70 percent.

As a manager, Zarkhin plans to delegate more and make operational changes so that the business

could continue to run without him.

You will find it easier to keep your resolutions if you are specific about the steps you plan to take, Williams said. She suggests going so far as to add timelines and action items to your list. And then put in milestones and keep track of them. Make sure to celebrate your accomplishments along the way.

When drafting her resolutions, Williams noted that in these tough economic times, companies are more interested in having efficient employees. Working off that concept, she is planning to offer more employee workshops on productivity and getting organized.

As an organizer, Williams said one of your top resolutions should be tossing out the old to usher in the new. Purge old files, organize your desk, improve your systems. Above all, get rid of the clutter that is distracting you and keeping you from finding what you need when you need it.

Making your resolutions public will help you adhere to them. Share them with employees and others so that they can help you and hold you accountable.

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