



# The Enlightened Look Back



**Art Waskey**

Art Waskey is a speaker who truly delivers. In addition to a 45 year career in sales and marketing, Art is the author of multiple books on selling and a monthly column *The Art of Sales*. He shares these insights as an in demand event and conference speaker as well as leadership coach.

**Taking a look** in the rearview mirror is as important to your business as it is to being a safe driver. What's behind us is often a window on what lays ahead, so it is important to **recap** your transactions in 2020, **review** their effectiveness, and **realign** your goals accordingly.

## Plan for the New Year

**I recommend that all business executives take a serious look back at how they filled their work days and weeks at year's end.** As 2020 was characterized by the unexpected, this exercise requires an even deeper level of commitment than in the past.

In *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell ([gladwellbooks.com](http://gladwellbooks.com)) describes how paradigm shifts change our lives and how we view the world. With its impacts on our health, careers, the economy, and our interpersonal

relations, the coronavirus certainly qualifies as a paradigm shift. COVID19 has changed our lives and the way we conduct business. As executives, it is important to acknowledge this and to take the opportunity to **close out this year with intention and care so we are able to plan effectively for the year ahead.**

## Ask questions

Here are some questions for you to consider in your annual review:

- **What projects did you complete or put in motion this year?** Look at all areas of your life, not just your business. Perhaps you achieved a weight-loss goal that enabled you to have more energy and therefore, more success. Or maybe you took the risk of starting a new career during the pandemic even though your current job was secure.



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• **What has given you the greatest gratification and fulfillment?** Were you able to be creative in the face of new challenges? One of my clients researched social media and built a network on LinkedIn when the pandemic prevented her from having face-to-face contact with her customers.

• **What part of your job has created the most frustration, disappointment, and displeasure?** To try to get to the root of her anxiety, a client of mine completed a basic insights profile. It helped her realize that she needed to transfer from an engineering office position to outside sales. Spend time looking at what is causing your angst and start the new year by finding ways to make your life less stressful.

• **In what areas are you most vulnerable? Where is your Achilles heel?** We all have weaknesses that leave us vulnerable. What changes can you make to minimize those soft spots and help you focus on your strengths? Do you have responsibilities that you could delegate to someone else who might handle them equally well or better?

• **What unique qualities do you bring to those around you?** I know a CEO who realized he was most appreciated by his employees as a counselor. To enable him to spend more time listening and mentoring, he moved some of his strategic planning responsibilities to a

qualified vice president. The change in culture was appreciated by all.

• **What is your one greatest take-away?** When reviewing the year, list both the positive and negative results of your efforts. From that list, choose the one objective you feel had the biggest impact? Focus on how to maximize the positive results of that objective in 2021.

• **What would make a great 2021? What will you accomplish, where will you grow, who/how will you impact the others?** I recommend you make a strategic organizational mind map of your goals to bring clarity to your 2021 plan. Wikipedia defines a mind map as “a diagram used to visually organize information. A mind map is hierarchical and shows relationships among pieces of the whole. It is often created around a single concept, drawn as an image in the center of a blank page, to which associated representations of ideas such as images, words and parts of words are added.

Major ideas are connected directly to the central concept, and other ideas branch out from those major ideas.” I suggest that you create no more than 5 prioritized goals for the new year and then work on them one at a time.

**Put 2020 in the rearview mirror.** Identify the best of your past year and use those findings to develop an exciting and directed plan for the new year.

## BIG SALES TAKEAWAYS

1. Look in the rearview mirror. What's behind us is a window on what's ahead.
2. An analysis of the past year is crucial to making a plan for the future.
3. Ask what worked and what didn't. List your strengths and weaknesses.
4. Make a mind map of your goals to bring clarity to your 2021 plan.
5. Identify the best aspect of your past year and develop it further in 2021.