

2014: A Year in Review & Lessons Learned

What goes into having a good year at ECHOtape?

Sometimes when we read the newspaper and hear about other companies' success stories, we get the idea that growth only comes from big changes and major initiatives. What 2014 has shown us is that more often than not when you examine success, the biggest impact is from ongoing daily and monthly changes that eventually add up to a major improvement and ultimate success.

We know this to be true because ECHOtape just had one if it's best years yet! How did we get to this level of success? Here are some of the lessons we learned.

Buckling Down is Hard...But It Will Pay Off!

Hard economic times over these past few years have forced us to get better because we had to. We buckled down, cleaned house, and made ourselves as efficient as possible, focusing our efforts, and never ceasing to ask ourselves what we do best and how to maximize our strengths every day.

It Is All About Taking Care of Customers

We focused on taking care of our customers as much as



possible. Our [Customer Service Team](#) is superb and their commitment to excellence ensures that every phone call or email gets answered and that customers get all the attention they need.

While everyone in our industry drastically cut their direct sales team, ECHOtape kept sales reps in the field so they could maintain strong relationships with our customers. This by far was and is one of our secret weapons.

Improve and Strengthen Internal & External Business Relationships

Business relationships are critical to our success. Our own Executive Team knows this better than anyone, and we internally improved our working relationships by becoming a more cohesive team whose goals were closer aligned. We also focused on our vendors and suppliers, all the way from trucking companies to tape coaters. These are the relationships that will help you during hard times and grow with you when the economy is better so we invested in making these connections stronger.

Leverage the Technology Now Available to Small Businesses

We added new technology to help us improve our productivity. Both hardware and software got upgraded, including a new CRM, and productivity software such as Dropbox and GoMeeting are now widely used and fit within the company's budgetary goals.

We leveraged the power of digital content technology and

ramped up our marketing by improving our website and adding in social media and blogging to our brand reach. This technology helps us to connect with customers, makes information readily available and is easy to access both via workstations as well as mobile devices.

Challenge Yourself!

We endeavored to implement lots of small changes. We did it without fear that sometimes those choices might result in failure, because we have learned that even failure can teach you a lot about success.

We challenged ourselves to grow a business that exists in a very competitive market and is not what you would naturally think of as sexy. We were not afraid to ask ourselves what new markets can we enter, what new products can we develop, how we can offer more to our customers, and how we can do better each and every day.

What is in store for 2015?

We continue to challenge ourselves by asking these questions: How can ECHOtape grow even more? What help do we need externally to get to the next level? How can we make our teams even better? What do we need to change? How can we work better as a team? How can we be better at product development? Marketing? Sales? Customer service? How do we keep making our customers happy? How do we see every situation that arises, good and bad, as an opportunity to build a stronger team and a stronger brand?



I am blessed to have our extended work family that I am privileged to work beside, day in and day out. To work with people who are somewhat obsessed with tape the way one might be obsessed with politics or sports (but that does not create tension!), we are lucky that we come to work every day with excitement about the next new customer we will win or the new tape product that we will launch. Nothing is ever perfect and mistakes will be made and sometimes screwups can seem like the end of the world, but we know from 2014 that even those mistakes can't stop us from striving and becoming better than we were before.

The best part about my job is that I am part of the fortunate few who get to love what they do every single day and I know many of you feel the same way about our company, and for that reason alone, I know that 2015 is already a success.