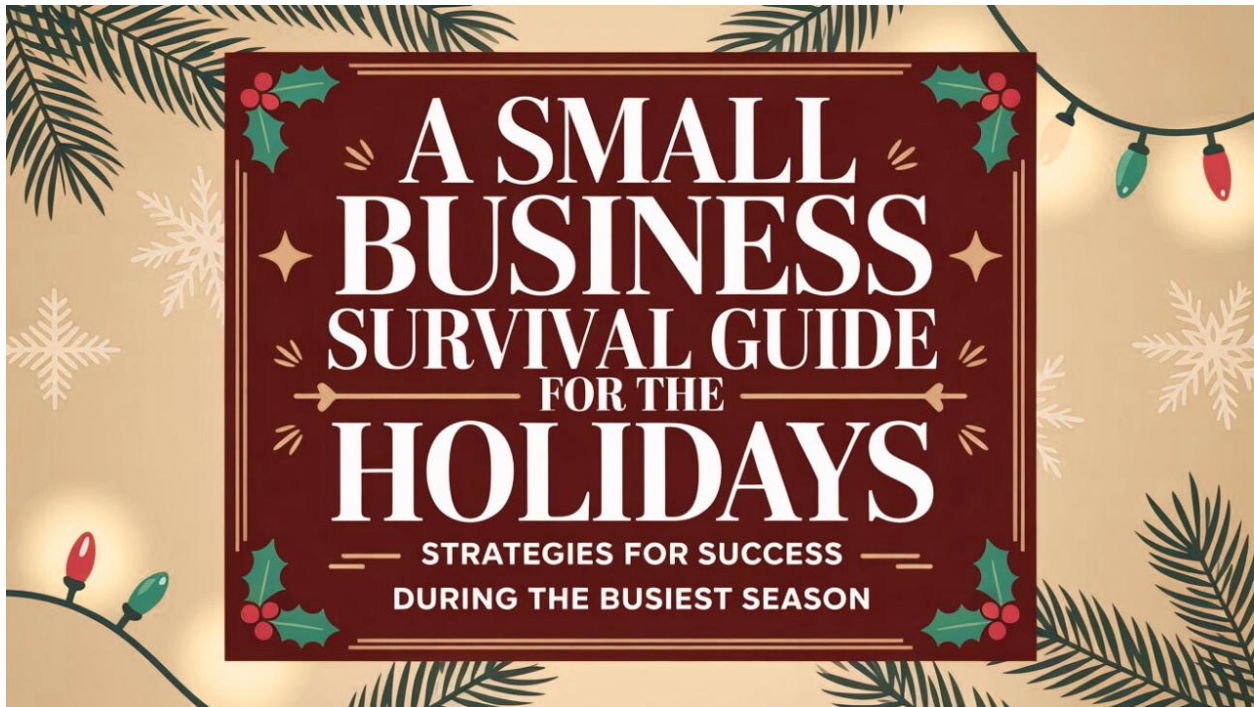


A Small Business Survival Guide for the Holidays



We're fast approaching the time of year where it can feel like you're running a marathon on a tightrope. Customers need attention. Promotions are queued up to be launched (or designed). Your inventory is giving you nightmares and you have huge goals for the end of the year.

And you're supposed to stay cheerful, strategic, and somehow well-rested through it all.

But the problem isn't your big aspirations for 2026, nor does the problem lie in trying to solve the things you can't control.

It's your habits.

James Clear's *Atomic Habits* reminds us that meaningful results come from the small, repeatable choices we make every day. During the holidays, those tiny decisions are the difference between burnout and breakthrough. When you build systems that work even when you're tired, distracted, or knee-deep in ribbon, the season gets lighter and your business gets stronger.

Here's how to apply some of Clear's most practical ideas to help you not just survive the holiday season, but launch into January with invincible momentum.

Start with a 1% Mindset

One percent doesn't sound like much until you stack it day after day. You don't have to reinvent your business. You don't need a perfect storefront, flawless offers, or an Instagram grid that looks like a lifestyle magazine.

Instead, choose one area to improve just slightly. Take that one small step toward your goal.

- Maybe it's tightening up your email promo schedule.
- Maybe it's creating a smoother checkout flow.
- Maybe it's something as simple as promising yourself (and following through on) a good night's rest for the next month.

Small refinements reduce stress and increase sales. They also remind you that progress is happening, even in chaos.

Re-design Your Environment

Clear says our surroundings often shape our behavior more than our motivation does. This is especially true during the holidays when the pace is high and attention is scattered.

Look around your space with strategic eyes.

If your workspace feels cluttered, simplify it. If your best seasonal products aren't visible at first glance, elevate them. If your team keeps losing pens, square readers, bags, or bows, create a "holiday command center" with everything in one place.

Tiny environmental shifts create smoother systems. And smoother systems prevent those frantic moments when you're internally screaming, "Where did we put the gift bags?!"

Build Habits That Support Your Busiest Days

The season is unpredictable, so anchor your day with predictable habits.

A few anchors to consider:

- A 5-minute morning reset, before opening or seeing clients
- A quick end-of-day review: what sold, what slowed down, what needs restocking, what got clicks, what impact on our customers did we see?
- A customer-touch habit: one message, one email, or one thank-you note daily
- A "two-minute tidy" before leaving (your future self will adore you)

Consistency creates stability. When everything else feels like holiday improv, these anchors act like rhythm lines on the page.

Use Systems, not Willpower

If you remember nothing else from this article...pay attention...

Willpower gets weaker when you get tired. Systems don't.

If you want to post consistently on social media, schedule a week's worth of content on one calmer afternoon.

If you want to upsell a holiday special, script one clear line for every team member.

If you want to stay on top of inventory, set an alarm that reminds you to check key items before the weekend rush.

During the holidays, systems carry you when energy can't.

Make Good Habits Easy and Bad Habits Harder

Clear's "make it obvious, make it attractive, make it easy, make it satisfying" formula is your season's secret weapon.

Want your team to use the upsell script? Keep it taped near the register or near each desk.

Want customers to sign up for your loyalty program? Put the QR code where people naturally pause and that can be more than one spot.

Want to stop scrolling between transactions? Keep your phone in a drawer.

Design beats discipline every time.

Don't Forget Identity: Who Are You Becoming This Season?

In *Atomic Habits*, Clear says outcomes come from identity. While you're navigating the busiest weeks of the year, take a breath and remember who you are as a leader.

- Are you the business that handles crowds with warmth?
- The business that makes people feel good?
- The business that takes care of its team so they can take care of customers?

When you anchor yourself in identity, your choices shift. You show up differently. You communicate more intentionally. You prioritize what matters instead of chasing every glitter-coated opportunity.

And your customers feel it.

Give Yourself Permission to Rest

This sounds counterintuitive in a season that thrives on hustle, but rest is productivity's partner. Clear reminds us that habits compound. That includes bad ones like exhaustion, resentment, and skipping meals.

Take care of yourself the way you take care of your customers. Breaks aren't indulgent; they're fuel.

Let the Season Shape You—Without Steamrolling You

You don't need massive change. You need micro-moves that create calm, clarity, and steady revenue.

If you build the right habits now, January stops being a "recovery month" and becomes a runway. Your systems will be tighter. Your team will be stronger. And you'll have proof that even small businesses can thrive in big seasons.

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