



NEXT EXIT: SUCCESS

6 Moves to Make in 2026



Unless you've been living under a rock it's difficult to avoid all the posts about school starting back up again and summer being over. Why do those events matter? It means we're quickly approaching Q4 and that is the perfect time to review what has gone well for you this year and what has been a mounting challenge.

While you may be laser-focused on holiday sales, year-end reports, and hitting those final quarterly goals, the savviest leaders know Q4 is also the time to zoom out. The decisions you make now don't just impact your December and year end. They shape your success well into 2026.

Business cycles move quickly. The economy, workforce, and technology will continue to shift in ways that reward businesses that plan ahead.

Ready, Set, Go!

Here's how to get future-ready while everyone else is just trying to cross the 2025 finish line.

Set Your Goals

If you haven't already done so, start by revisiting or creating a three-year strategy for your business. Businesses that thrive don't just chase sales. They pursue a bigger vision.

Use Q4 to review your long-term goals. Where do you want your company to be in 2026? Expanding into new markets? Adding product lines? Increasing automation? Achieving greater efficiency and cost savings? Write it down, get buy-in from the leadership team, and align next year's goals with that north star.

Break your vision into yearly milestones so it feels achievable, not overwhelming.

Invest in Movement

Next, consider technology investments. AI, automation, and digital tools are having huge impacts on efficiency and cost-savings. If you wait until 2026 to get around to auditioning these “game changers,” you’ll be behind. Look at how technology can support your growth, through things like customer relationship management, e-commerce, or workflow automation.

Starting small with a chatbot, productivity app, or scheduling tool today could free up enough resources to tackle bigger tech upgrades in 2026.

Invest in People

Your workforce also deserves attention. The talent pipeline is shifting, with Gen Z stepping into more roles and hybrid work remaining a hot topic. Businesses that build flexibility, invest in upskilling, and cultivate a strong culture now will have a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining the right people.

Additionally, add professional development to your 2026 budget. It’s one of the most powerful investments for long-term growth and employee satisfaction.

If you can't afford professional development for your team, consider affordable solutions like what the chamber of commerce offers. **Chamber member benefits cover all employees, which means they can attend the chamber events of their choosing and may be able to meet professional development goals through chamber trainings, webinars, and events.** By bringing these opportunities to your employees’ attention you look like the rock star who's assisting them in their career pathing and knowledge attainment.

Check the Finances

Financial resilience is another key to success. Interest rates, inflation, and shifting consumer habits make financial agility essential. Look at your cash flow, debt, and pricing strategies. What can you adjust now to weather uncertainty in the next two years? Diversifying revenue streams ensures your 2026 success isn't dependent on one source of income.

Build Relationships

Anticipating market shifts can also give you a competitive edge. Consumer values are evolving, especially around sustainability, health, and community. Businesses that align with these trends will have a competitive advantage. Pay attention to what your customers are asking for now. It’s often a preview of what will be standard in 2026.

Check-in with the Chamber

Finally, strengthen your community and partnerships. No business succeeds in a vacuum. Your local chamber of commerce offers resources, advocacy, and connections that can give you a leg up in uncertain times.

Don't just look to network—collaborate. Joint promotions, shared talent pipelines, or advocacy efforts can open doors you couldn't access alone.

Q4 is the perfect time to step back, not just step up. By thinking beyond the immediate hustle and honing your business strategy, you'll finish this year strong and ensure sustainable, future-ready growth in 2026 and beyond.

[Christina Metcalf](#) is a writer and women's speaker who believes in the power of story. She works with small businesses, chambers of commerce, and business professionals who want to make an impression and grow a loyal customer/member base. She is the author of [The Glinda Principle](#), rediscovering the magic within.

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