

3 new year's resolutions for small business owners and leaders to consider

By [Gerhard Hartman](#)

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As we move into 2023, many small and medium business (SMB) owners and leaders anticipate another difficult year. Yet they are comfortable knowing they've endured a lot since the start of the pandemic. SMBs have survived, and some have even thrived, despite Covid-19, unrest, extreme weather, the global energy crisis, and the return of high inflation and rising interest rates.



Source: [Unspash](#)

Whatever 2023 may bring, the beginning of a new calendar year is an opportunity to introspect on the previous year, learn from the past, build on what works, and fix what doesn't. We can't predict with any certainty whether inflation will subside, whether supply chains will return to normal, what the rand will do or if there will be a recession.

However, every SMB can take some action to embrace the opportunities and face the coming year's challenges, whatever these may be.

Here are three possible new year's resolutions for SMB owners and leaders to consider:

Resolution 1: Commit to a sustainable future

Sustainability is a top-of-mind concern for governments, consumers, and businesses worldwide. It's a conversation that affects South African SMBs too. According to [Sage's SME Climate report](#), SMEs' climate footprint totalled 29% of non-household emissions in South Africa when greenhouse gases generated in their supply chains are considered.

Taking a proactive stance on sustainability is an opportunity for SMBs to drive efficiencies in their business. It's also a way to show customers that your business is doing the right things. [Our Small Business, Big Opportunity study](#) shows how South African SMBs are making changes, such as developing more sustainable products to sell (35%) and recycling and

reducing waste (34%).

But there's even more that SMBs can do. One example is harnessing alternative energy to improve business resilience, sustainability, and efficiency – especially in the South African energy crisis. There's a strong business case for going solar if you can afford the capital investment. Solar can help reduce the usage of dirty, coal-fired power, and cut costs simultaneously. If you install batteries, you can also cushion the impact of load shedding on your business.

Resolution 2: Embrace smart automation

As a business owner, you probably want to spend time growing your business, developing your team, and speaking to customers. But a heavy accounting, HR and payroll admin burden goes with running a business. Sage research shows most businesses (83%) spend a significant portion of their time on repetitive tasks, administration, compliance, and maintaining employee records.

If you have not done so, consider moving from paper and Excel spreadsheets to modern, cloud-based finance and people systems in 2023. Automating repetitive, low-value activities frees your time to focus on more strategic parts of people management. Leave the paperwork to an automated system so you can focus on the customer, employee experience and data to improve the strategic direction of your business instead.

Resolution 3: Prioritise employee and customer experience

Many employees and customers are struggling. Not only did the pandemic take its toll, but we've emerged from a year of low economic growth and rising inflation. Customers and employees expect SMBs to help them navigate the challenges. The SMBs that thrive in 2023 are those that turn engagement and empathy into their business superpowers.

A great customer experience starts with the employee experience. Forward-thinking SMBs will continue to focus on supporting mental and physical wellness in the workplace, offering flexible/hybrid working arrangements, and creating a shared purpose. By empowering employees and helping them reach their potential, your business gives them what they need to offer superior customer experiences.

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