

THE SOLOPRENEUR'S ANNUAL PLANNING PLAYBOOK

A Short Guide to Turning Pain Into Progress

I created this annual planning guide in partnership with [Lettuce](#). We share the same mission of helping consultants, freelancers, fractionals, independents, and other “solos” reduce chaos and grow their businesses.

One thing to seriously consider in every annual planning session is the best financial foundation for the new year. Lettuce can help with that.

Lettuce acts like your business CFO. They help you manage your books, pay your taxes, and plan for growth.

One last thing before we begin: Your business-of-one is the foundation of your financial freedom. It's important and sophisticated enough to be worthy of a solid plan.

Let's make that plan.



Jason Feifer
Solo, Author, Editor-in-Chief
of *Entrepreneur Magazine*

About Lettuce

Being a business-of-one doesn't mean you have to do it all alone.

We're Lettuce, an automated tax and accounting system built by and for solopreneurs. We automate your taxes, handle all of your accounting, and manage your S Corp setup from start to finish. From paperwork and filings to taxes and ongoing compliance, Lettuce deals with all of it so you can unlock thousands in savings—without all the hassles.



Why Annual Planning Gives Solos a Clear Advantage

My friend Jon Taffer, who hosts *Bar Rescue*, once said to me, “Everyone is so busy working in their business that they don’t have time to work on their business.”

This is true for most solos. We don’t make time for reflection and meaningful corrections and end up repeating mistakes.

I wish more solos understood that gaining more experience doesn’t automatically mean you’ll get better results in the future. You must slow down long enough to notice what has happened, pick things to improve, and optimize for a different outcome.

Better performance comes after analysis.

To put it a different way, solos who slow down, reflect, and make a plan have a clear advantage over those who don’t.

With that in mind, I organized this guide into two sections:

- 1. Reflection (looking backward)
- 2. Planning (looking forward)

As you work through the questions and prompts below, strive for unflinching honesty. Give yourself some credit and celebrate. Dig into what’s wrong and use that pain to unlock fresh vision and problem-solving.

Let’s end 2025 well and launch into 2026 with fresh clarity and commitment.



Reflection

In my own annual planning process, I resist the urge to start planning and problem-solving right away. Instead, I zoom out and ask, “If I could give next year a theme, what would it be?”

For example, back in December of 2023, a couple of big contracts made up the bulk of my revenue. They were wrapping up, and that meant I was about to fall off a revenue cliff. If I didn’t want to make the same mistake again, I needed to create diversified revenue.

That realization helped me choose a theme: 2024 would be the year of **Opportunity Creation**.

Can you guess what happened in 2024?

I solved my “disappearing revenue problem” by making way too many commitments. As a result, I wasn’t able to show up the way I wanted for different teams, and when 6:00pm would roll around, stress kept me at my desk upstairs instead of spending time with my family.

So at the end of 2024, I came up with a different theme for 2025: It would be the year of **Opportunity Balance**. I needed to reclaim my time.

Staying true to that theme meant I had to say no more often. It wasn’t always easy, but I did free up attention and energy that I used to raise the quality of the work I cared about most. Now I’m thinking about my theme for 2026.

Your turn. Answer the questions below with total honesty.

Fun Side Quest:

James Clear published *Atomic Habits* on October 16, 2018. If you’re curious how his 2019 went, you can read his [2019 Annual Review here](#).

Questions to Ask

- What happened this year?
 - What did I start in my business this year?
 - What did I end this year?
 - What were my goals this year?
 - What were the results? What went well this year? What didn’t go well?
 - What specific problems is the business causing in my *life*? What problems is the business causing for my clients?
- Why do I not have the bandwidth to do my best work?
- What is the main theme I see?
- What trajectory am I on? Will I keep heading in that direction or go a different one?

Planning: Part 1 (Subtraction)

Before we can make space for the next big opportunity, we must subtract something from our schedule — and it won't be easy.

Remember how 2025 was supposed to be my year of Opportunity Balance?

In late November of 2024, I received word that a new project of mine got approved. A rush of excitement filled me — and right after it, I felt fear. How would I fit in the new thing? Where was the extra time and energy going to come from?

If I didn't want to repeat 2024, I needed to make some cuts.

Most solos don't need more ideas, projects, and revenue streams. We need to do "less, but better," as German industrial designer Dieter Rams would say.

What would happen if you put all your focus into just one or two high-potential opportunities?

The thought is both terrifying and exhilarating for many of us. I say, follow the fear. Good things come to solos who make room.

**“ Follow the fear.
Good things
come to solos
who make room. ”**

Questions to Ask

- What is *not* making a big difference for me? What purpose did it serve? What would happen if I shut that down?
- What am I holding onto that is taking up space? What will there be room for when I let that go?
- What am I committed to stopping now so that I am making room in 2026?
- What will I double down on?

Planning: Part 2 (Genius and Weakness)

“ My zone of genius is only my zone of genius if I stay inside of it. ”

Lots of noteworthy thinkers have called out the benefits and compound effects of strengthening strengths.

In *The Big Leap*, psychologist Gay Hendricks talks about a person’s “zone of genius.” David Perell encourages his readers to build a “personal monopoly.” Warren Buffett talks about knowing your “circle of competence” and staying inside of it.

This begs the question, why do so many solos drift outside the circle? Why do we put so much effort into improving our areas of weakness?

It’s because, unlike big companies, we often don’t have the luxury of hiring a specialist for every important role: from finance to marketing to hiring to operations. If we can’t or won’t hire someone else, we must do the job ourselves.

Robert Herjavec, a successful entrepreneur and Shark Tank shark, convinced me that trying to do everything myself puts me at a disadvantage. He said, “The world is so competitive, that you have to take the things you’re good at and become great at them. Because if you focus on the things you’re not good at, someone’s going to eat your lunch.”

I’ve got a weekly newsletter called [One Thing Better](#). The writing is easy (because I’m a writer by trade), but growing and marketing the newsletter? Not my thing. I don’t like thinking about it. I wish somebody else would do that for me.

Another thing I’m bad at is all the stuff that [Lettuce](#) does: business structure, tax planning, and S Corp administration. I’m just never going to be the person who figures that out.

Eventually, you and I must admit our weaknesses and ask, “Who can help me? Can I automate this? Can software do it?” We must start delegating before we feel ready, maybe before we feel like we can afford the support.

Now is the perfect time to pinpoint bottlenecks in our businesses and find the courage to ask for help.

Planning: Part 2 (Genius and Weakness)

Questions to Ask

- What are my biggest obstacles or constraints right now?
- Where am I the bottleneck in my business?
- Is there anything I've been putting off because [insert excuse here]?
- What am I excellent at? What do I want to keep?
- What am I weak at? What do I need to let go of so that someone or something else can execute?
- What does my business need from me? What do I need to execute?
- What's in my Murky Middle? What could I become decent at but still need to let go of? And what if I were to hire for or automate that and put that effort into what I'm already excellent at? What would happen?
- If I don't delegate now, where will I likely be a year from now?
- What budget can I allocate for delegation?
- Who can do that for me? What's the next step?

Zone of Genius

What am I excellent at?
What do I want to keep?

Murky Middle

What's in my Murky
Middle? What could I
become decent at but still
need to let go of?

↑ Offload more to grow faster ↑

Zone of Weakness

What am I weak at? What
do I need to let go of so that
someone or something else
can execute?

Planning: Part 3 (Action)

Here's the truth that I wish every solo would tattoo on their hearts:

Yes, you're a one-person business, but you can still think and act like a smart and highly effective CEO. You can create a strategic plan and execute it.

Yes, you carry a lot of responsibility, but you can still be honest about the pain in your business and life and do something about it. You can delegate before you feel ready and double down on your genius.

Yes, you've chosen a hard path, but you can still do hard things. Because that's true, you are the solution to your own problem.

Treat yourself and your business with the respect both deserve, and plan for growth.

“If you have more than three priorities, you don't have any.”

-Jim Collins,
Author of *Good to Great*

Questions to Ask

- What's important for 2026? What does holistic "success" look like for me? What do I want my business and life to look like? Qualitatively, what do I want my life to feel like? Summarize in a short paragraph.
- What's my next direction? Where do I want to take my business? If you were to try something new in my business, what would that be?
- What's my 2026 theme summarized in a word or phrase?
- Ultimately, what are my goals and desired outcomes? What do I want more and less of? What will I be measuring myself by?
- If I had to narrow that list down to three priorities going into 2026, what would they be?
- What are the next five steps for each of those priorities?

Closing Thoughts

What's the difference between December 30 and January 2? There's really nothing special about New Year's Eve unless you count the end of the fiscal year.

Even so, the end of the year offers a chance to make a new commitment.

Things don't have to be big to be important — and as I said at the very beginning, your solo business is the foundation of your financial freedom. You deserve the same things that big companies get, including both a solid growth plan and smart financial infrastructure.

Be sure to connect with [Lettuce](#).



The one thing to seriously consider in every annual planning session is the best financial foundation for the new year.

For many solos, that includes becoming an S Corp because an S Corp can help you avoid overpaying on taxes, often saving you \$10,000 or more.

Curious how much you could save? Plug your numbers into Lettuce's [tax calculator](#) to see what an S Corp election could mean for you.



You've seen these prompts throughout the guide—but here they are all in one place. Use this page as your annual planning companion. Print it, mark it up, and revisit it anytime you need clarity, direction, or a reminder of what really matters in your business.

Reflection

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- What is the main theme I see?
- What trajectory am I on? Will I keep heading in that direction or go a different one?

Subtraction

- What is not making a big difference for me? What purpose did it serve? What would happen if I shut that down?
- What am I holding onto that is taking up space? What will there be room for when I let that go?
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Genius and Weakness

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- If I don't delegate now, where will I likely be a year from now?
- What budget can I allocate for delegation?

Action

- What's important for 2026? What does holistic "success" look like for me? What do I want my business and life to look like? Qualitatively, what do I want my life to feel like? Summarize in a short paragraph.
- What's my next direction? Where do I want to take my business? If I were to try something new in my business, what would that be?
- What's my 2026 theme summarized in a word or phrase?
- Ultimately, what are my goals and desired outcomes? What do I want more and less of? What will I be measuring myself by?
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