

Tips for small-business owners making New Year's resolutions

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Resolved: Attend a trade show

Two years after starting a business making healthy frozen meals for young children, San Franciscan Jill Litwin resolved that 2007 would be the year she introduced her products at a trade show.

Litwin - who works with a mentor to write goals for her Peas of Mind company each year - knew the show she wanted to attend. It was the Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, which draws supermarket buyers and distributors from around the country.

But simply renting a booth would cost \$4,000. Outfitting it with high-quality displays would be another \$10,000 to \$12,000, which was more than she could afford.

So Litwin came up with a creative do-it-yourself solution. A designer friend used PVC pipe and Velcro to create a beautiful booth for free. Litwin drove it down to Anaheim in her jeep. Her mother flew out from Milwaukee to help staff the booth.

"The booth turned out beautifully, and we had so many compliments from people who had been exhibiting for years," Litwin said. "Had these experts had a chance to see behind our facade, they would have been shocked."

The upshot? Litwin landed a national distributor, which had been her second goal for the year.