

# Business Idea Zone



## Sales got you down?

*No worries - Invest in your business this year – all it takes is some time.*

Don't be fooled by the title of the below Kizer and Bender article. These are concepts that every business will benefit from. Success and growth are within your reach, your time investment will reward you over and over this year.

### Are you a retail tweaker?

So, here's the big question: Are you an official **Retail Tweaker**? Just how good are you at tweaking your store? Do you constantly review what's going on while looking for new ideas, or are you content to make subtle changes and hope shoppers will notice? Guess what? They won't. Here are some things you need to make a part of your operational activities:

**Visit your competition every six weeks.** More often if they are known for making changes. Cruise their parking lots and stop in their stores. Watch how customers shop, and what they say to store associates and other shoppers. Visit their websites. Google their names to see what's being said about them, and sign-up for every single thing they offer to customers. Have the snail mail delivered to a post office box. Yahoo and Google will give you a free e-mail address – choose one the competition will not recognize as yours. This stealthy move will give you a heads up on their plans before the ads hit the street. And don't worry about what competitors will think about you visiting their stores! If they're smart, they've been in yours.

**Look at your store through your customers' eyes.** Because you come to work each day with a list of things to do as long as your forearm, it's easy to get tunnel vision. When you have tunnel vision you walk through the store with blinders on – it's time to take them off!

**After a day out of the store, grab a pen and paper, and stand just inside your front door.** Write down everything that would bug you if you were a customer. Be very objective. Nitpick. Then ask a customer – yes, a customer! – to do the same exercise. You will likely fill a page or two, but the customer will fill three or four. Prioritize the things on the list and get busy fixing what needs fixing. Trust us, customers will notice!

**View your merchandise with an objective eye.** You may love a certain line or department but the product just isn't selling. No matter how much you love it, if it doesn't sell, it's got to go. You have to make room for product that will pull its weight.

If your sales floor has looked pretty much the same for more than 30 days you have work to do. Move product around, set new speed bumps, refresh your displays, do demos and makit & takits, and build foot traffic with an in-store event. If that product still doesn't move, then hold an "End of Season Clearance" and price those goods to sell. Then you'll be able to reinvest those dollars on merchandise that does.

**So, what can you do in 2009 to make things go your way?**

Here are a few goals we'd like you to consider:

**Reinvent.** It's been said that every year 10 percent of your business will just go away. Items stop selling, trends fizzle and fade, new product and applications replace those once sacred cows. Your job is to reinvent your business to the tune of at least 10 percent each and every year. If you did nothing to reinvent your store for five years, you could be close to being 50 percent obsolete. It might sound crazy, until you stop and think about how your store compares to what it was like waaaaay back in 2004.

**Attend trade shows.** If you are considering skipping trade shows this year, we'd like you to rethink your decision. Your store needs fresh merchandise, and after this holiday season your retail psyche and spirit need to be replenished. So go! Connect with old friends and make new ones. Meet with your current vendors and brainstorm ideas for your store. Seek out new vendors with new ideas. Attend the workshops and business classes – immerse yourself in what you CAN do, not in what's holding you back.

**Seek guidance.** Develop relationships with other non-competing retailers. The best place to begin is at those trade shows we urge you to attend. If your store is in California, make a friend in Florida. Agree to talk monthly to exchange ideas. You could even develop a network of retailers and hold a monthly conference call to talk shop and share ideas. It's always good to talk with someone who has walked a mile in your retail shoes.

Your store is a constantly changing and evolving entity that needs your care and attention to thrive. **Starting now, vow to work ON your store, not just IN it. Take a risk!** Sure, it's safer to buy commodity brands and top selling lines – you need them but you also need to be unique. If you're not uniquely different then you become just another store selling "stuff". Starting now choose to be different! Take another route. And if it doesn't work, get rid of it and start again. Change, after all, is the lifeblood of your store.

Go to ([www.Kizerandbender.com](http://www.Kizerandbender.com)) for inspirational stories on how other stores have put these guidelines into action. Need ideas? Call me! We can put in our time together.

*Maria*