

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

# New Year's Resolutions

I always start my new year's resolutions with what I want or don't want from my business. At the top of my list every year is to leave work (sometimes early) and not worry about every little detail. Throughout the year, I'll make sure I'm accomplishing these goals, but I also keep in mind this is a to-do list that can be referenced perennially. With some planning, you can make 2012 your most successful resolution year ever. Here's my list for 2012. Happy new year everyone.



**There's no better time than the start of the new year to reinvent yourself and your business**

**1. Clean out the clutter.** Straighten the sales counter, and wipe dust off your work areas. Throw out old paperwork and vendor catalogs from three years ago, and clean out your files. Make your work areas more clutter-free. Having everything in its right place saves you and your customers time.

**2. Liquidate old and dead stock.** Get rid of it, even if you have to give it away. And if you don't want to give something away, see if the item will work in your music lessons department. Maybe you can depreciate the item's value by using it in your studios. Or, host a contest where you give it to a student.

**3. Go on a business diet.** Got an employee who's been dragging productivity and other employees down? Cut 'em loose. You're doing the person a favor. Now that employee can make a resolution to better him or herself for another job. Streamline your business, and keep it that way. One resolution I had in 2009 and keep today was to stop the glut of expenses we'd built up from 2002 through 2008. I'm better prepared for future downturns now more than ever.

**4. Paint the shop.** Fresh paint not only livens up a showroom but makes the work atmosphere feel new. Go for colors that make your inventory stand out. If you're not good at picking colors, hire a decorator for a few hours. It's worth the money.

**5. Rearrange the store and your stock.** The top of a new year is a good time to shake up your store. Move displays, or take fixtures out of the mix altogether. I'll paint a fixture, move it to another department or take it off the floor and store it.

**6. Refresh your website.** Freshen up your website's keywords to optimize search results. I spend about 15 minutes a

day working on our Google AdWords and Places accounts, as well as all other Internet and social media outlets. And at the beginning of every year, I take a few days to work with a search engine optimization specialist. I have this person comb through our AdWords and keywords to find anything he thinks we can improve upon or delete.

**7. Update equipment in teaching studios.** Nothing says "tired lesson department" like teaching on equipment from 2002. Update it. Put new drumheads on drum sets and new amps in the guitar rooms.

**8. Update your POS software, and back up data.** Each time you skip a software update, you may be missing out on a great feature that will save you time and money. Only skip it if it's not a huge improvement. Also, make this the year you start backing up your computer data daily.

**9. Start preparing for next year's taxes.** It's never too early to start saving money. Organize your receipts, and talk with an accountant.

**10. Take a business course at a community college.** You don't know everything. Try to take at least one course online or in person. It's worth it even if you pick up a small piece of information that you can use. **MI**

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