THE RETAIL DOCTOR I BY BILLY CUTHRELL

More Tech, More Revenue

A few articles back, I discussed some of the technology tools that I employ in my shops to assist with daily tasks and making our general operations run smoothly while keeping it at the forefront of a tech-savvy consumer base. I received reader emails asking how to stay abreast of new products coming on the market, and there was some general concern over not being tech-savvy enough to figure out how to set some of the products up and use them effectively.

First, I find many new and existing products via crowdsourcing sites like Kickstarter where I've discovered both hardware and software products. I also receive notifications from various Web-based resources, such as Gear Patrol and tech blogs. It seems that every day my inbox is filled with alerts of new widgets coming on the market. In some cases I invest in products through Kickstarter, and in other cases, I wait and purchase once the products are released on the public market. I use and test these for ease of use, reliability and effectiveness before I write about them.

Secondly, I want to put the disclaimer out there that I'm not a "tech guy." I still have a, gasp, iPhone 4 and iPad 2. The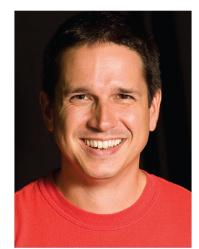y still work well for me and I have not seen the need to upgrade yet. The nice thing about most of the products I outline is that technology has become very user friendly, well-made and continues to evolve into intuitive products. Companies know that if their product is going to succeed and be useful to the end user it better be super easy to set up and start using right out of the box. Most of these technological marvels I investigate are really useful when it comes to boosting my bottom line, so I brainstorm on how to best use them in my shops and try to find new ways of incorporating products if I feel the initial investment will pay for itself and then help in providing further revenue. These hardware or software products are looked at as business expenses and that's it.

Of late, I've been using and testing a new batch of products that I have found a lot of uses for in my shops. Below are two of the most recent products that I have found to be easy to use, offer good options for the end user and are easy to set up and use right away (i.e. realize ROI in the short term). Outside of the ways I describe below, I encourage you to look at how these products can fit into your shops.

SWIVL (SWIVL.COM)

Touted as a "robotic platform for learning" I consider this more of a table top video tool than a "robot," but it does have some very cool features that can be employed for music lessons and retailers with multiple locations. Swivl is a table top unit that combines the Swivl app with cloud hosting and wireless audio that enables video from any location. Available for iOS and Android, Swivl lets you record your video and then upload them to the company's cloud-based storage for sharing with others.

The cool thing here is that the Swivl base unit has a built in motion sensor that follows the speaker/presenter. You simply place your phone or tablet in the base and it follows your every

These three tech tools will increase your bottom line — and you don't have to be a 'tech genius' to use them