

## Five Quick Retail Fixes To Score A Perfect Ten



[Mike Lewis](#)

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*Editor's Note: Retail expert Laurel Tielis's latest book "Ka-Ching! How To Ring Up More Sales" offers concise, innovative insight for independent retailers on ways to make them stand out from the crowd. We asked Tielis for her insight on how retailers from across categories are doing to help broaden your perspective on little things that go a long way.*

*A former reporter for Fairchild Publications, the Miami Herald, and People Magazine, Laurel is currently an internationally-known public speaker, presenting seminars for small business owners at conventions, conferences, meetings, and trade shows.*

**By Laurel Tielis**

The stock market cycles up and down, but both bulls and bears still make money. Similarly, no matter how the economy is doing, there are always retailers who are building business and increasing income. Here are some cost-effective and efficient ways that you can be one of them.

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## Become A Destination

If what you're selling can more easily be bought online, and maybe even for less, you have to give buyers a reason to come to you. There are numerous ways to do this, including creating a weekly, monthly or quarterly group that meets at your store.

Lululemon Athletica, an international chain selling workout wear started by Chip Wilson, founder of Westbeach, creates excitement and traffic by providing free weekly fitness classes in each of its stores. The workouts are staffed by local teachers, who get to show their skills to a new population; as a thank-you, the stores give them product. The costs are minimal; the upside is enormous.

You can do the same. Bring in experts, on a regular basis, to help your customers excel at your sport. To up the ante, every now and then invite a local author who writes for your clientele; invite a local athlete to share tips on getting sponsored; or host a safety expert to talk about minimizing risk (mom and dad will support this in a heartbeat). Here's another tip: Work with your vendors to provide the product. Bringing more customers in benefits everyone.

## Sweeten Your Sales

When the economy was at its weakest, penny candy sales were still strong. That's because when life goes sour, people seek sweetness. So if your customer had a rough day, improve it by keeping munchies on hand. Connect to your community by giving it a sports emphasis: put out trail mix, nuts, seeds, or sports bars.

Also, when people come to your home you say, "What can I get you to drink?" Do the same in your business. Become closer to your customer by showing you value him/her. Serve coffee, hot chocolate, or energy drinks. Even people who crave challenges in sports, crave comfort in their daily lives. You can ask your suppliers to help with the cost, or partner with a local coffee shop. They provide the drinks; you promote their store through signage.

## Get Karma Credit

You've heard the expression, What goes around, comes around. It's true. When you take care of other people, you get taken care of. It even works in business.



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Get karma credit, and turn that into sales, by connecting with local non-profits. Sports make a big difference in peoples' lives, so take advantage of that. A recent article in the *New York Times* featured a man with late stage Parkinson's who wasn't able to walk, but was still able to ride a bike. Think of the implications! Work with a group that helps children with diabetes, or one that aids kids in trouble, or one that supports people dealing with physical, emotional, or mental challenges. Help them heal by teaching them.

When you do this, you create connections with the members of the charity. Stage an event, and you get your mailing list plus theirs. Not only that, as a former retail reporter, I can assure you that the chances of getting media coverage in local outlets increases exponentially.

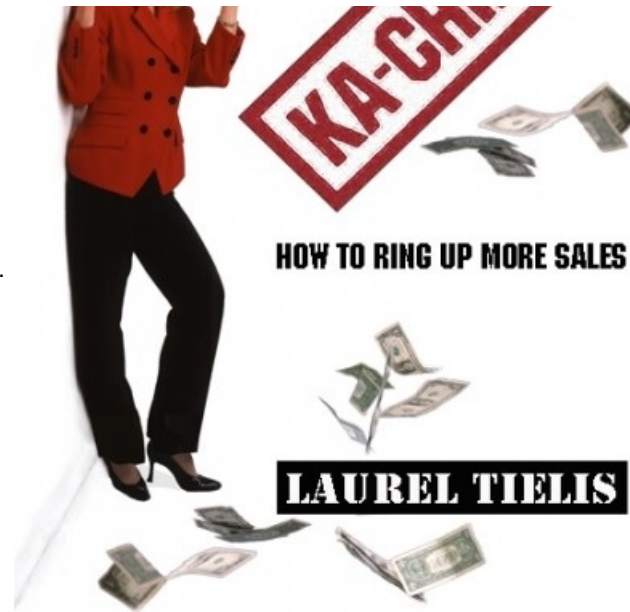
### **Change Your Hours**

Lululemon exemplifies this idea as well. One outlet in my area offers classes on Sunday mornings, before the store's opening hours. Another has them after the store closes. Then they serve wine or kombucha tea, so people hang around, shop, and get to meet one another. In essence, they've created a club with a constantly growing membership.

If you normally open at 11 am and close at 8 pm, try opening once a month at 6 or 7 am. Lots of people work an early shift, and by the time they get home, they're wiped out. Catch them before they go to work or school. Open your doors, perk some coffee, and pull in some buyers.

Conversely, you can keep your doors open once a month until 11 pm or midnight. That gives people the chance to go home, have dinner, relax, and then go out to shop. Make it a party. Bring in a DJ, or put together a play list. Serve wine, beer, and root beer. Consider giving it a theme, like Dads 'n' Lads Night.

### **Go Outside The "Box"**



No matter how large your store's square footage, there's a whole big world outside. Take your merchandise to a park, a beach, or wherever your equipment works best. Stage a demonstration or hold a contest. You'll get involvement from your usual clientele, as well as others whose interest may be piqued.

Providing a "show and tell" at a local school is a great way to start building a new audience. Likewise, a fun, and profitable thing to do could be partnering with a senior or assisted living center. Grandma and grandpa, who may actually write the checks for what you're selling, will get an opportunity to see it up close and personal. This is another good way to bring out the press. And publicity as you know, is free advertising.

Now get the word out about what you're doing. Move your message by combining traditional media with social media, because using one without the other, is like doing a one-armed push up. You can do it, but it takes a lot more effort. Buy cost-effective local ads, pursue publicity, tweet on Twitter, or work Facebook.

Make your blog the first page of your Web site, to keep the information fresh. Use your e-mail list to provide people with information that's useful to them, and ask them to pass it along. If several people sign up for your e-mail or newsletter because of them, offer them a discount or gift on their next purchase. As for your newsletter, fill it with photos. Show your clients enjoying the in-store workouts, the people you've reached out to through your charity work, and your after-hours gathering. It will turn readers into buyers.

Contact Laurel Tielis at [ringupmoresales@gmail.com](mailto:ringupmoresales@gmail.com). Tielis' book "Ka Ching!" is available on [Amazon](#).

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