If the Number One PC maker jumping out of the PC business didn't scare you, then maybe it was the Gartner report. The one that noted PC sales were down nearly 19% in Europe and not coming back. Or maybe you read all those news articles about the large retailers who are showing up in the RED for their 2011 earnings calls?



Let's stop kidding ourselves: PC sales are down and we don't know when or if they are coming back. If people buy less PCs, they will buy less PC components, accessories, peripherals and etc.

So what can we do? If you are a retailer, reseller, or distributor, here are some thoughts:

1) Expect the worst and **cut costs**. Now.

2) Ask ourselves...**what is the public buying instead of PCs**? Tablets? iPad accessories? eReaders? eWriters? Let's add those as quickly as we can. Did you notice how many retailers are finally adding either small appliances or the bigger white goods?

3) Do we keep a good customer list? If we can now **target and email to those customer who we know have PCs** , we can sell more accessories, software and tools to keep those PCs running well and to add more fun to the user experience.

4) My brother has a 5-year old PC and still hasn't changed it-- because no one has persuaded him. Let's offer **an upgrade programme**...**a trade-in programme**...and **incentivize those who have older PCs.**
Make them a deal they can't refuse and when they get in the shop, be sure to show them what's new in add ons.

5) Can we **sell more services**? Cloud perhaps? Make ourselves the local expert in setting up cloud for home and small office. The home cloud is just as important as the corporate cloud and faces similar educational issues. Anyone can adopt a single cloud, but harnessing a concert of clouds takes a real maestro.

6) Let's run **workshops on how to use technology**. Show users how to edit video and suggest our software and services. If Apple can make the Genius Bar work, it doesn't take another genius to know that the public still has issues with technology. Build it (a good workshop) and they will come. Selling in a non-sales environment...selling by expert recommendation... a recession-beating solution. If you are good at this, you can charge a moderate fee as well.

7) That also leads you into why you should be polishing **your social networking skills**. It's where you find new customers in a non-pushy environment (if you act accordingly, as an expert sharing knowledge).

8) Change those PC displays in the shop to **focus on other products**...don't flog what the public isn't buying. Look for new gadgets, especially for Xmas sales. BEST BUY is even trying to sell bicycles...so don't limit your ideas to PCs. Only limit yourself by your customer profile & your customer's interests. This has worked for Amazon and it will work for you.

9) **Look for problems your customers face and propose solutions.** That may lead you to home automation or security products or even internet troubleshooting. One of the most successful resellers in the world, Mark Cuban, said if he was not the multi-billionaire that he is...he would start off by knocking on doors and asking each household a simple question: "Are you happy with your internet reception?"
Read his story here
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10) **Redefine the new product categories.** For example, why not display an iPAD, next to a W7 tablet, next to an Android tablet? Help the customers to see the strengths and weaknesses of each type of tablet and let them do the buying. Ask yourself this question: “Will your customers turn to you first when technology changes?” Your industry is morphing, not dying, and you need to be the master of change (not the upholder of the status quo.)

Not one of these 10 courses of action by itself will cure the economic flu that now plagues PC retailing. And everything is always easier said than done. But if I have started you thinking about solutions, then **hang Bob's 10-point list on your refrigerator and leave room on the list for your own suggestions.** You will add to my list because you didn't get this far in PC retailing by being a quitter.

That is, unless (like HP) you have recently hired a top executive from SAP...