

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Lessons Power Print

**D**o you have a strategy or procedure to ensure your store gets print music sales from new students? A print music department can yield amazing profits if co-ordinated with a music lessons program, and it starts with an open line of communication with teachers.

Does your staff have any idea what books your music teachers use? Do your teachers have a clue as to what books you stock — or can get? If not, it's time for them to find out.

Ask you teachers which books they use and stock them. If you don't, they will send students elsewhere and/or sell the books themselves.

Also, don't wait for teachers to discover what you've got. Give them copies of new print books on loan. By getting feedback on them, your staff can get a better sense of your print music selection. If teachers dig the new material, staff can sell on the fact that "our guitar teachers use this book," which opens dialogue about your lesson program.

## THE 'FIRST LESSON MATERIALS' PURCHASE

**H**ere's another strategy that's worked for us at Alta Loma Music: Have students come in early for their first lesson. Tell them beforehand that there are books and supplies they will need to get (and give them a dollar amount so there isn't the "I didn't know" problem).

Sell them a "book bundle," a set of method/educational/songbooks for them to begin learning. For each instrument, make a list of your teachers and the books they prefer.

Make sure to include fun books, too! Teachers that don't gravitate toward these types of books will start using them because the student brought them in (teachers might even suggest them to other students).

Pull the books each night for the students starting the next day, and call the student (parent) and remind them when the lesson starts and to check in 15–20 minutes early to purchase the supplies they need.

Also, have a cover sheet with the bundle that has facts about your lesson program. Cover topics such as recital dates, summer programs, student discounts, and services like repairs and rentals. Tell them you can get any print music they might need through your special-order system. You can get a lot of important information across during that first-lesson purchasing experience.

Don't ask permission from the teachers. Teachers don't want to sell! They use phrases like "It would be nice if you could get this," "You can pay for it next time" or "See if your mom will buy this." Fill them in on

what you're doing — they'll be cool. Trust me, teachers will use whatever book the student comes in with — even if it's a book they don't normally use.

To make this work, remember to stay ahead on your re-orders. It's hard to anticipate how many new students will start the next week.

## FOR NON-BEGINNERS

**T**he book bundles with the non-beginning students are a little more of a challenge. You may not be sure what books they'll need.

One idea is to have the student pay a \$25–\$30 "materials fee" when they come in to the first lesson. Then they have a credit on their account on your POS system. The teacher can pull the books that student needs and you can ring them up against the credit. It's a done deal.

Give all new students a "starter-pack discount" on the bundle. It's easier to sell everything at once versus one book this week, one book two weeks later.

This program will also reduce shrinkage from the teacher taking it into the room, the student taking it home and parents thinking it "came with the lesson." **MI**

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