

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Plan, Finish Strong

Summer and the back-to-school rush are over. Now we're in the final quarter of 2006. What's your plan for your lesson program to finish out the year? If you're like me, this summer was a scramble and back to school was hectic. So, planning the fourth quarter might not have happened!

I created a quick plan to guide me through the next three months, and I thought you might be able to implement some of the ideas at your store. Just pull out your calendar to schedule these in.

OCTOBER 2006

Call new rental customers. They probably don't know you offer lessons, and some kids may be ready to bail out on band. Lessons could save them!

Schedule a Halloween recital. Use a costume theme for students and teachers. Put out plastic cauldrons of candy and some "ghoul punch," and your students will have a blast. This is a great event for those new rental customers, too!

Re-merchandise your store for the new gear. Put gear at the front of the store and in lesson rooms. Part of having lessons is selling to students! If you don't have guitars, etc., in the lesson rooms, how can you be sure they'll see it? On that note, how about a big sign: "Students – Ask About Your Student Discount!"

Create a myspace.com site for summer events. You can put up

photos, music and videos, and hype it to all of the students at the store. Kids involved will tell others to check out the page. Getting on to MySpace doesn't require special skills or much time. (Trust me!)

NOVEMBER 2006

Host a drum contest. November is International Drum Month. Have a weekly competition or one-day event. Design it so absolute beginners and advanced students can both participate. Have your drum teachers play. Use your imagination to get students and parents into the store. Get suppliers in on it.

Create a "beginners" area in your store. Put up signage: "Want to Learn Guitar?" and put all your student-type gear there. Target the big-box-store customers with your own entry-level buys, but include a trade-in or -up policy. Promote lessons along with the instruments. Have pictures of lesson-program events, lesson fliers and beginner books. Make it easy for people to get their first gear from you.

Start your "Dear Santa" wish list promo. Pass out lists to your students with "Dear Santa – this year from XYZ Music I want:" Ask them to fill it out, and then mail it to their "Santa" with a relevant stuffer and/or student-discount coupon.

Register for the winter NAMM show. I always forget to do this. Why pay for badges if you're a NAMM member?

Interview more teachers. Trust me, you'll need more for January. Some teachers will leave, and you'll also have new lesson calls. Don't be left short on availability!

DECEMBER 2006

Host a sale for students. During the first weekend in December, have a sale where you offer students your normal holiday pricing, plus additional discounts. Offer trade-in specials and layaways only on that day.

Throw a holiday student showcase. A holiday music showcase on the second weekend of December is a great way to end your lesson program's year. All ages and levels love to play holiday songs, and families love hearing them. Invite all your customers. Use it to promote new lessons and retain current students.

I hope this helps. Tweak it — come up with your own stuff! We can all have a fabu-



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