

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Lessons Resolutions 2.0

made nine New Year's resolutions for my lessons program last January. Looking back at goals and hopes can be discouraging after a tough business year, but it's necessary for navigating through the future. Let's take a look at my resolutions and see what happened with each one.

**1. Use YouTube to promote the lessons program.** I feel good about my progress with this goal. We posted a lot of video and used it to market to new students through our website and Facebook. We also ran the videos in-store to advertise the program. And we got sign-ups. This will stay for 2011.

**2. Increase communication with students via e-mail.** We did so-so with this one. We collected a higher percentage of e-mail addresses than we did in 2008, and we discovered that parents use e-mail more than students. Still, we got limited results, so we revamped this goal by rolling it into our Facebook efforts. That said, we're still sending targeted e-mails to parents.

**3. Improve outreach in the community to promote music lessons.** This year, we handed out lessons literature at school events and were active at local jazz festivals. We maintained results similar to 2009, which I feel was good when evaluated against the business climate of 2010. We're keeping this goal for 2011.

**4. Revamp piano lessons to better retain teens.** Getting piano teachers to change their old-school ways of thinking was a challenge, and music publishers, not having any new-school books for piano, made it almost impossible. I tried using guitar books with cool songs that were compatible with adult piano books to accomplish this. However, the title "guitar" discouraged piano teachers from buying into the format change. I'm not giving up on this for 2011, and I will keep you posted.

**5. Find new, exciting music books for lessons.** This goal is ongoing. We had some

great results with drum books that feature jam tracks. However, band instruments and vocal books proved to be a challenge.

**6. Recruit new music teachers who fit the store's vibe.** With high U.S. unemployment, we thought we would see an increase in new teacher prospects. That didn't happen, so we changed this goal to improving the vibe of our existing teachers. And we got some great results, especially in our reten-

tion goals. For 2011, we'll work on training younger musicians who are a product of our lessons program to become teachers here at the store.

**7. Decrease the dropout rate by 20 percent.** We saw great results in this area, too. We actually decreased our dropout rate by 30 percent. Our Student Showcase Program and summer music programs really helped. We are now aiming for 30-percent reduction of dropouts in 2011.

**8. Increase new lesson sign-ups by 20 percent.** This came up way short. In fact, we struggled to maintain 2009 sign-up levels. I hate to blame it on the economy, but I think the 20-percent goal was unrealistic considering 2010 business trends.

**9. Improve sales staff training on selling lessons to clients.** This past year, I still had too many "vending machines" in my store when it came to selling music lessons, as well as other products. We'll be working on that for 2011.

I hope you take a look at your goals for 2010 and find that you had some great things happening with your lessons program. Sit down, revamp these and add some more for the upcoming year. I wish you and your store the best of luck in 2011. **MI**

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**Re-evaluate last year's New Year's resolutions to see where you still need improvement**