

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Word Travels Fast

Last month, I discussed the findings of an independent national music lesson survey that my store, Alta Loma Music, participated in. The survey asked, “How did students first hear about your lessons program?” I’d mentioned our top area of discovery was through word-of-mouth at 36.2 percent, followed by existing customers for another product or service at 21.93 percent.

In that article, we looked at converting current customers into lesson students. Now, let’s look at word-of-mouth and what it encompasses.

THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

Students, parents and others in the community, such as band directors, your staff and teachers, are all part of getting the word out about your store. (Don’t forget last month’s discussion about promoting your music lessons to everyone who comes through your door.)

What prompts talk about your music lessons program? You and your staff being excited about it! Having great teachers, student performance events and student retention, along with students that are visible performing in school bands, equals great word-of-mouth.

Another sub-question in the survey asked, “What prompted students to go to Alta Loma Music for music lessons?” The top response was recommendations from other parents. And parents see progress in students through student performance events. Sixty-four percent of our respondents had participated in these events, but the national average for this category was only 29.3 percent. Why did we get those numbers? Because our approach is getting students to play, period.

We hold eight student showcases each year, a drum contest, a guitar contest, a summer rock band, summer jazz bands, two summer concert bands and a summer “Glee”-type vocal program. It’s hard work, but we get lots of people talking about what we do. You can see it in these survey numbers.

When students get to perform, retention rises. The more they play, the more you retain. You also create excitement with the

students and parents, and they share their excitement with others. Let’s face it: Taking lessons is OK, but becoming a musician is exciting and something people talk about.

WIRED TALK

What do you post on your store’s Facebook page? Do you post student performance photos and videos? Students and parents will repost performance videos, especially if they are in them. The same goes for YouTube.

Make sure to add band directors to your company’s Facebook page. This keeps them in touch with what’s going on in your store. Remember: On Facebook, you’re creating your own word-of-mouth advertising, and you want others to spread it for you.

Ask parents and students to write Google, Yahoo and Yelp reviews. The more reviews, the more buzz. Start talking this up with your teachers, and get them involved with the project.

Also, post comments and recommendations from students and parents on your website. A website is a good place for such comments. And, of course, make sure it’s connected to your store’s Facebook page and YouTube channel. **MI**

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