

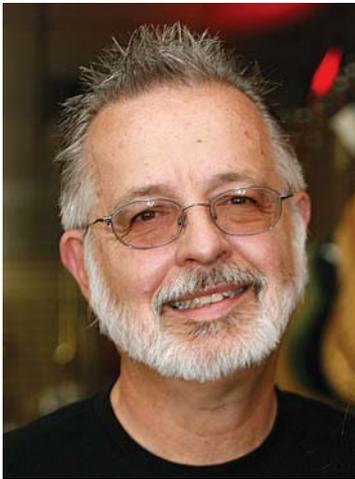
THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Curing the Blues

What makes summer a drag? No customers coming in your store and no cash going in your cash register. Summer music programs can be a quick fix to increase your traffic flow and make your register ring all summer long.

Design programs that are fun for your customers and also inspire them to spend money.

These programs bring in revenue from not only student tuition but also from instructional book and sheet music sales. Accessory sales will spike since students are going to need reeds and strings, and charging admission to the final performances can bring in some cash. If you're hosting band camps, you might even keep some rental income if customers don't return their instruments at the end of the program.



**Music programs are the prescription for curing the summertime sales blues**

## SUMMER CASH

Find a no-cost or low-cost venue for the program's final show. Try pizza joints or shopping centers with performance stages — the shop owners will want foot traffic, too. Hold rehearsals in a group lesson room. If you need space, use your salesfloor after 8 p.m. or on Sundays if you're usually closed.

For maximum results, these programs should be four to six weeks in length. During this time, your store's foot traffic will increase, creating a music community. Long-term bonds are made this way. Parents will talk about what's going on at the store. You'll have anticipation leading up to the final gig. If you only run the program for a week, it'll be over and done before you know it and won't have a lasting impact on your lesson program. One-week programs can be more trouble than they're worth — they disrupt

your music lessons and retail business.

At my former store, Alta Loma Music in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., we hosted our own "Glee" program for voice students. We placed them into different age groups and used such books as Hal Leonard's Let's All Sing series. Participants each had their own copy of the book.

We also hosted separate beginner and intermediate summer band camps. We recruited students from our rental program and local elementary school bands. This kept kids interested in continuing to play. Hal Leonard's Essential Elements band folios are ideal for this kind of program and feature popular songs from movies and Broadway. Summer jazz bands and rock bands are obvious options, too.

## THE PAYOFF

Imagine if you get 10 voice students, 20 beginner band students, 15 jazz students and 30 young rockers. You'll get 75 tuition payments, 75 book sales and 75 musicians coming into your store each week, plus their parents. Do the math. If you charged at minimum \$150 for tuition, that equals \$11,250. Books at \$15 each will yield \$1,125. Just those two items produce \$12,375. Charging admission to the concert will yield even more.

These programs are also great marketing tools for attracting new students to your store and your music lessons program. You can get extra traction by posting videos from the events on your YouTube channel.

Turns out there is a cure for the summertime blues. **MI**

Pete Gamber is the former owner of Alta Loma Music, which was recently bought by Music & Arts. He welcomes questions and comments at [pete@altalomamusic.com](mailto:pete@altalomamusic.com).