

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Summer NAMM Like a Pro

Howdy buckaroos. It's just about time to head out to the country music capital for this year's Summer NAMM. Now, before you go grabbin' yer next pair of fancy boots down yonder on Broadway and puttin' on yer 10 gallon Stetsons, let's look at how you can make the most out of yer time at Summer NAMM, so y'all don't go off gettin' all saddle sore.

HAVE A PLAN



Hard to believe, but I'm now a 20-plus year veteran of NAMM shows. I like to make sure my time is spent doing the most productive things possible, so I start by calling and emailing my sales reps weeks before the show to confirm they will be on site and set up meetings with them. I consistently look at the NAMM website for any updates and news so I can make sure those events are added to my list of "to-do's." However, I always make sure my sales rep meetings are scheduled first and everything else falls around those. Remember, this is the show where you set your priorities going into the holiday season. Make sure your sales reps meetings are the most productive.

Speaking of productive meetings, Summer NAMM has always allowed me the opportunity to actually have a conversation with sales

reps. The pace of this show is a little more relaxed and the volume allows for me to actually hear what is being said, so my meetings at Summer NAMM

tend to be both buying opportunities and good "getting to know you" bonding opportunities. I still talk to several folks in this industry that I met over 20 years ago at one of my first Summer NAMM Shows, and it was all because we had time to just chat. Take full advantage of the laid back atmosphere of Summer NAMM.

LEARN SOMETHING EVERYDAY

You want to be the go-to source in your community for all things music related. Of course the show is all about playing new gear and seeing the latest and greatest in music products, but it's also about going home with fresh ideas and being totally energized for the next six months ahead.

To accomplish this you should plan to start your day at the NAMM U Breakfast Sessions where NAMM serves up a hot breakfast along with even hotter ideas for your business.

The learning doesn't stop there. Make sure you decide what Idea Center sessions will make the most impact on your business and then attend them. You can sit back and take a load off while learning new strategies for your business just in time for the busy fall and holiday selling season. I pick at least two Idea Center sessions to attend each day of the show and ask my staff that attends NAMM with me to sit in on at least two sessions as well.

If you're more into recording and gear trends then check out NAMM's TEC Tracks sessions. It's three full days of free master classes, live interviews and panel discussions on the biggest topics for recording and live sound professionals. TEC Tracks is my staff's favorite, and I see the topics they listen to and sessions they attend find their ways into conversations with customers on my sales floor.

BUTT OUT

At the risk of sounding uppity, and those that really know me know I ain't uppity, I'll say it. I see etiquette errors all the time.

From making a plan to having your reps' cell numbers on hand — there's a few details all attendees should keep in mind

To start, keep in mind the appropriate times to stop and chat. While Summer NAMM is more laid back, people are still busy and deals are still being made. I repeat, deals are being made, so there is nothing more aggravating than trying to close a deal and having someone hovering around trying to get a rep's attention to just say "hello" or give them a fist bump. The worst offense besides stealin' a man's horse? Butting in on a conversation.

Stay out too late at The Wildhorse Saloon last night and miss your scheduled meeting with your rep? Use your best business acumen and do not assume your rep still has time to meet with you if you just "pop by" the booth.

Along those same lines if you are walking down the aisle and see your sales rep and they are talking to someone else outside of their booth, don't assume it's OK to just walk up and interject yourself. With that said, in 20-plus years I too am guilty of missing an appointment (or two). In those rare instances I am the offender, I always send a text message

to the offended apologizing for my erroneous ways. You did get your rep's cell phone number, right?

THERE'S A TIME & A PLACE

Surviving NAMM means many things and for my exhibitor brethren that means surviving the hours and hours standing on your feet. I can testify that NAMM ain't the place to break in a new pair of boots. I saw this scenario first hand years ago when a cymbal company I was associated with brought over their master craftsmen to attend the summer show. It was their first time in the U.S. and the guys got a little carried away with the Nashville scene. When I first met them at a company dinner the night before they were wearing their company shirts and slacks, but the next day when I saw them on the show floor they had transformed into Roy Rogers and the Lone Ranger sans the mask. The guys had topped off their looks with brand new cowboy boots and, to make it as real as

possible, they were using chewing tobacco. They smoked anyway, but I noticed they were swallowing the tobacco juice, something I'm not even sure the roughest and toughest cowboy can handle.

When I stopped in on the guys at the close of the day they were all sitting down but seemed to be doing OK. I didn't realize until later that they were sitting because their feet were blistered from the boots. The next day they were back in their cowboy shirts and pants, but they finished off the look this time with their normal shoes. It's a long show so dress accordingly. Buyers don't want to buy from those that look uncomfortable and unconfident.

Above all, make time to check out exhibitor booths you may not otherwise stop by. There are lots of new, up-and-comers at Summer NAMM with products that are mind blowing but maybe not a brand name, yet. Some of my best sellers and greatest hits were found off the beaten path. **MI**

Billy Cuthrell owns and operates Progressive Music Center. He's a customer service, management and lessons expert.



Stop Walking B&O Customers To Your Competition!

Band and orchestral sales and rentals build traffic and create new customers. Don't let financial barriers or lack of experience stop you from serving this important market.

Offer your customers a complete solution that includes a turn-key rental program, beginner and step-up instruments for sale, plus professional repair services.

We take most of the operational and administrative burdens off your hands, help you market your business and provide the expert advice and guidance you need to compete and win!

- EXPERT ADVICE FROM A TRUSTED PARTNER
- NO CAPITAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED
- NO-FEE TURNKEY PROGRAM
- TOP MONTHLY COMMISSIONS
- YOUR OWN RENTAL WEBSITE INCLUDED
- MARKETING, REPAIR & SERVICE SUPPORT
- PROVEN TO INCREASE PROFITS

BECOME AN NEMC LICENSED RENTAL AFFILIATE!

It's easy and simple.
Start today and APPLY NOW!
CALL LORNE GRAHAM at
1-800-526-4593 (ext) 241
or visit our website at
nemc-partners.com/affiliates/



**NATIONAL
EDUCATIONAL
MUSIC
COMPANY**