

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

You're Always Open

Last month, I discussed the merits of starting your day early. This month, we'll look at ways to keep selling long after you lock your front door.

Like so many lessons that I've learned along the way, this one sort of found its way to me. During my formidable years, I played out in clubs and studios when I wasn't working in the store. Invariably, people would ask about products, prices and availability. And I generated a heck of a lot of business. Lesson learned: There's a lot of business that can be generated outside the physical confines of your store. Waiting for customers to show up in the store became only a part of my quest for sales.



Incidentally, there's a corollary lesson learned. When approached about products or services outside of the store, *do not* hand out a business card. I learned this by realizing how few people actually call after taking a card. Appear slightly inept and tell the other party that you don't have a card with you. Get their names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. That way, you're in control of the relationship and can be sure the discussion continues.

HIT THE CLUBS

Because of my success outside the store, I encouraged my staff to use their own out-of-store time to promote business. They were incentivized to visit bands playing in clubs and used their own outside playing engagements as a promotional opportunity.

Giving someone the latest cool piece of gear to try out at a gig was always an effective tool, especially when you took the gear back after a set or two.

HIT THE WEB

Current technology lets you sell around the clock. I'm shocked by how few dealers use available technologies. Most incredible to me is the dealer with no Web presence whatsoever. If you think customers are looking for you in the phone book, you're sorely misguided.

Next comes the website that is, in essence, an online *Yellow Pages* ad. Having a Web presence without e-commerce capabilities

drives people to your store only during business hours. But seeing as people are used to shopping at their own convenience, you are missing opportunities. They will find someone else who's open for business when they're ready to shop.

I get it: A full e-commerce website is not a trivial undertaking. But setting up an eBay shop is inexpensive and easy. You can use it as part of your online presence by linking your website to your eBay store.

I recently corresponded with Jim DeStafney of Blues Angel Music in Pensacola, Fla., about various ways to drive business.

"There are many ways to create positive results for store owners today," he said. "As a matter of fact, one of the guitars I posted last night sold this morning. It was a super-profitable deal. That guitar might have sat on my wall for a year or more and sold for less money.

"My wife monitors eBay on her iPhone, and when an item sells, a cash register *ka-ching* sound goes off. It's always cool to be at home in bed hearing the sound of sales being made while the store is dark and empty."

Sounds like sage advice to me. **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is managing director of Wechter Guitars. He's former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. E-mail him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.

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