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How about doing a sales meeting at one of those Big Box stores? You know what they have in their fliers, but do you know what they have on their showfloor?

Get Your Head Out of the Sand

Sales meetings? Ugh! They're always after the store closes and no one wants to stay ("Oh dude, tonight?") or before the store opens and everyone oversleeps. What a pain.

We all know that with today's high turnover, training your staff in product knowledge, customer service and even just the basics of answering the telephone can be a never-ending circle of repeating the same stuff every month. You're burnt out, and any staff member that has heard this training routine is too.

Thinking 'Inside the Big-Box'

When was the last time you or your staff visited a competitor? It's time for some creative "out-of-the-store" meetings. That's right. Go somewhere else for a sales meeting. Learn from the other guys.

How about doing a sales meeting at one of those Big Box stores? You know what they have in their fliers, but do you know what they have on their showfloor? How's the product selection and the people? How's the store merchandised and, especially, how do they treat customers?

Retail Reconnaissance

Make up different sales scenarios for each member of your staff. For instance, one salesperson could look for an acoustic guitar for his or her hypothetical brother. Have them tell the competitor that their brother has played the guitar for four years, owns an Epiphone Les Paul and listens to Creed and the Dave Matthews Band. They have \$400 and want to spend \$200-\$300.

Print this information on a "check," and brief each staff member on the process. They are to go into the store, locate the department and act like a customer buying a gift for someone else.

They should not volunteer any information until Joe or Susie Salesperson asks a question. At that point, they can offer the information asked for and nothing more. If Joe Salesman asks, "Who's it for?," your staff person can just say, "my brother," and see if they ask any more questions.

Each of your salespeople is to observe any good and bad points of the shopping experience. How was the gear and how were they treated?

Prior to going in, meet in

the parking lot of the store that you are shopping. Hand out the "checks" to each staff member, and synchronize your watches for a half hour to meet back in the parking lot. Have fun.

No Lecture Necessary

A half hour later (or sooner) everyone comes back to the parking lot with a better sales meeting discussion than you could have ever hoped of stimulating in store.

You will hear everything from "I wasn't even acknowledged" to "Man, I need to help customers like that." Or, your salespeople might comment on the products with "That \$99 guitar wasn't even playable" to "They had every multi effect plugged in and ready to go." They might also say anything from "I asked about a saxophone, and they just pointed at the wall and walked away" to "I was a girl, so they thought I was here looking to meet guys."

This meeting can even carry over to the next meeting, when something comes up and someone says "That's exactly what happened to me at Joe Blow Music."

And don't hesitate to try this meeting at non-music stores, such as Circuit City, Bath & Body Works or Big 5 Sporting Goods. It will work just as well, if not better.

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