

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Give Your Teachers a Head Start to Success

Let's say you just hired some new teachers. Your next step is to put them on the lesson schedule, shove them in rooms and book them students, right? Wrong.

The teachers have just started, and their success depends on you. Before new teachers are left on their own, you must orient them to your company policies, culture and lesson program. Following are some suggestions I find to be successful.

1. Hold an orientation meeting with the teacher. Discuss where to park; the office phone number; lesson schedule; lesson cancellation policy; how billing for studio rent works; where they can find books and materials from the store that they might need; teacher discounts on purchases; student discounts; as well as the store's calendar of events.

2. Assign a mentor to the teacher. It could be another instructor with more experience that teaches the same instrument they do.

Have the teacher sit in on some of the mentor's lessons to get the vibe of what your store tries to accomplish with its students. This mentor can also offer experienced advice so the new teacher doesn't have to "re-invent" how to teach.

3. Have new teachers attend the next student event as an observer. How can they be involved with Student Showcases, for instance, if they aren't familiar with the event? Have them participate with their mentor and the mentor's students.

4. Show the new teachers the materials they may not be familiar with that other teachers have used with success. The new teachers may have studied out of methods more than 30 years old, with no idea what's available for the technical or the fun side of learning how to play an instrument.

5. Have new teachers attend a sales meeting, so your staff gets to know who

they are, rather than a "name" on the schedule. You can explain why the teacher has been added to the staff.

6. Create a flier with a photo of the teacher to hand out to customers. This also helps your staff remember the new teacher when they come

across customers asking for lessons.

7. Explain to your staff the type of student who would benefit from lessons with the new teacher.

Train staff to try to book this teacher first (new teacher on the "totem pole"). If you don't find students for this teacher quickly, they might quit because it isn't worth their time.

8. Follow up on new students at the 30-day mark. You can call the parents or converse with them while they are waiting during their kid's lesson. If there are problems, you want to know. You can work with the teacher on these areas of weakness.

9. Make sure the teacher gets his or her students involved in the next student event.

This makes the teacher a more integral part of the lesson program. It will retain students, parents will start a "buzz" about the teachers, and he or she will now feel a part of the whole process.

Following these ideas will get new teachers on track with your program quickly, and also reduce many of the problems caused by lack of experience and knowledge of your company. **MI**

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