

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Marketing New Gear to Students

**Y**ou've just spent time and money at the NAMM Show hunting down and ordering the latest new gear. You're positive this will be a great year and the new gear will sell. But do you have a plan to sell it to your students?

Like it or not, you need to get the new product into your students' hands before they discover it online or at the big-box stores. You need to create a buzz about your store and the gear you stock.

## **P** THE OBSTACLE

Probably 60–70 percent of your students arrive just in time for their lessons and then leave in a hurry. Your store is a “lesson-only” destination to them, and they may not even notice all the cool gear you just got in from the NAMM Show.

Don't assume your students are checking out your gear, and don't assume your teachers are either. Your challenge is to get the product into the hands of both parties.

## **1.** THE SOLUTION

Put merchandise into the lesson rooms. Include gear that is of step-up caliber, or impulse products. Put that new amplifier with digital effects into the guitar lesson room, a set of pro cymbals in your drum room, a new digital keyboard in your piano room and so on.

2. Organize and maintain the gear. Keep the effects plugged into the amp so everyone tries them. Each night, as part of close-out, make sure everything is clean and in working condition for the next lesson day.

3. Have a sign saying “Play Me.”

4. Keep manufacturers' literature on hand for students to take home. Display a brochure holder in each room. Get your reps and suppliers involved. It benefits them when you turn their gear quickly, so

be persistent.

5. Create your own store coupon for the featured item. List the product's name, and use the manufacturer's logo whenever possible. Include the list price, street price (this could be the minimum advertised price or whatever it's going for on the Internet) and then your own price, which should be lower than the street price—if just by a little. Or, include a cable, stick bag or gig bag at street price to keep the sale up while still a better deal than it

would be at other retailers. Offer one of these coupons to each student.

6. Rotate gear every two weeks. For instance, move the guitar amp in lesson room 1 to room 2. Move the guitar in room 2 to room 1. Two weeks later, move more new gear into these rooms. If the gear stays in the room too long, you will lose the buzz.

7. Make sure teachers have been briefed. Explain that the store needs to sell product to stay open. Tell them that you want students to see new gear at your store first, and you are giving both the students and teachers the opportunity to try it out. Learning how to use gear can even be a new and exciting segment in the lesson plan. Get teacher input, and ask for their evaluation of the product.

8. Don't assume the teachers understand how to use the gear. If they don't know how it works, they will not encourage students to play it.

9. Be creative. Make a moveable laminated poster out of cut-up catalogs with your store logo listing the bands playing the gear. Hang it over the gear in the lesson rooms.

Of course, it doesn't hurt to talk the gear up to the students coming in and out of the lesson rooms, but it's more effective when coupled with lesson-room advertising. **MI**



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