

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Maximizing Your Lesson Program

I'm not a "bean counter." It's just not in my nature. At the same time, I always ask fellow retailers if they've ever sat down and figured out the potential number of students they could take on for lessons at their stores. You might be amazed at the potential of your lesson program.

There's a simple formula that even I, a trumpet player in a blues band, can use:

Multiply your number of lesson rooms by your number of lesson slots, and then multiply that by the number of days lessons are taught at your store.

If you perform this calculation, you quickly realize how easily you can increase your number of students with simple measures. For example, let's say you have four lesson rooms, 10 lesson slots and offer lessons five days a week. You then have 200 students.

Now, watch what happens if you start teaching lessons six days a week. You have 240 students.

Or, imagine if you let lessons run a little later—say, an extra hour. If your lesson slots are a half hour each, that's two extra slots, for a total of 12 slots a day. Even at five days a week, you now have 240 students. At six days a week, you have 288 students.

What if you got rid of your junky stockroom—the one that only houses old POP displays and stacks of cardboard—and add two more lesson rooms. Now you have six lesson rooms. If

you offer 12 slots a day, then even at five days a week, you have 360 students. Increase that to six days a week and you have a whopping 432 students.

How does your store measure up using this formula? If your lesson program is not where you want it, or if you simply want to expand, use the formula to set goals with your lesson program. For instance, you can say that by June, you'll increase your guitar

lessons on Saturdays by such and such a number.

Also, use the formula to evaluate your present conditions and how you can fix them. If you are closing at 7 p.m., talk to your teachers about staying until 9 p.m., assuming there is some demand from students. Or, see if your teachers could come in at 2 p.m. instead of 4 p.m. It increases your revenues and the teachers' revenues.

Make the most out of your space. Can you find teachers to teach from

noon to 4 p.m. in rooms where other teachers don't come in until 4 p.m.?

Even if you could start lessons in one room at noon versus, say, 2 p.m. at five days a week, you would have 20 more students. Try this in just two lesson rooms for an increase of 40 students, and so on.

Your goal is to have no down time during prime lesson hours. These are 2–9 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m.–4 p.m. on Saturday.

A common problem is teachers teaching Monday night may only want to teach until 7:30 p.m. This leaves three potential lesson times, and it will be very difficult to get another teacher to come in for just those three lessons. A good method to prevent this is a two-lesson-block system. Each room has a block from 2–5:30 p.m. and a second block from 6–9 p.m. Teachers can sign up to teach during both blocks or just one of the blocks. If they agree to teach both blocks, they agree they will be available until 9 p.m.

Once you start using this formula, you will begin seeing the untapped potential of your lesson program. You might not be able to achieve your full potential in a month, but each month you can get a little bit closer. **MI**

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