

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Selling Music Lessons

How much does your staff know about your lesson program? Maybe less than you think, and that's a big problem.

You probably have some type of product training at your store. After all, you wouldn't want Joe Staff to blow it on a big guitar sale. But while it's important to train staff on gear, it seems we spend much time, energy and resources schooling them in even low-percentage instrument departments. As a result, staff often receive little-to-no training in their store's lesson program, a high profit center.

NOT ENOUGH INFO

It's hard to train staff on product, yet at least they have something tangible to show the customer at the end of their training, be it an instrument, an accessory, a recording unit, etc. With lessons, for most stores it's "vapor ware."

Staff at many dealers just tell customers, "Yeah, we've got lessons," and that's all. That, of course, is no different than leaning on the counter, pointing and telling a customer, "Yeah, we've got guitars," and leaving them to browse on their own. Those generalities lose sales.

As with products, it's easy to lose potential students if staff can't speak informatively about your program.

Consider the following questions: If I called or went to your store, could I find the best teacher for myself, my mother or my kid; find out why I should choose your store as my source for music lessons; find specifics on teachers; or find specifics on your entire lesson program?

STUMP THE STAFF

So how can you find out if your staff measures up? I have a training game called Stump the Staff. Customers are stumping your staff every day, and if customers aren't receiving the right attention at your store, you have a problem.

On multiple sheets of paper, write down as many different questions as you can think of about your lesson program from a customer's point of view. Fold each one in half, and put them in a box.

The following topics could be the basis of different questions:

- The price of lessons.
- The times lessons are available.
- The different instruments and styles taught at your store.

- Which teachers teach which style and instrument.

- Which teacher would be best for certain ages and styles of music.

- Each teacher's qualifications, including education and years of experience.

- Each teacher's specialty.

- Any performance opportunities provided by your lesson program.

At your next meeting, have staff members pull out a piece of paper and see how they do with their particular question. You're not singling anybody out; each person gets a random question.

WHEN IN DOUBT, SPY

You can also eavesdrop on staff and see how they answer customer's questions. (This technique also works great for evaluating product demonstrations.)

Some staff will get an easy question from customers, and others can learn from their answers. Still, many staff members might get stumped, and these can be the best learning opportunities.

By listening to these conversations, you'll get a great vibe on what kind of training your staff needs. Don't let them blow off good customers anymore. **MI**

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