

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Gear Up, Stand Out

For retailers with lesson programs, mass merchants and local indies aren't the only competition. We're up against the lady teaching piano at her house, or the dude at Lessons 'R Us.

Ironically, what separates us from the lesson competition is what pits us against other stores — gear! To truly separate our lesson programs, we must integrate our instruments into our lessons.

We all know that's how it works on the sales floor: New products and new technologies can be exciting. But is spillover from retail being harnessed by your lesson program? Sometimes I go into other music stores that are really cooking only to see that music lessons are almost like the "dungeon" of the store. It's like the lessons are black-and-white vs. the full color of the retail sales floor. I don't understand why.

Let's get some of that gear excitement in your lesson rooms by bringing some exciting gear into them. Here's some ideas on what product groups you can implement into your lesson program and how.



## BOOKS WITH CDS

An easy one. Don't stock many book-only SKUs. Implementing a method the student can play along with is a major improvement. Most teachers use the book-only version, even though students progress faster and have fun with the CD.

If you involve multimedia learning in your program, an immediate vibe change oozes out of every lesson room. Name the type of music, there's a book with CD to use. These also make great student showcase materials.

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## RECORDING GEAR

When's the last time your teachers recorded students? Do you stock recording gear? If you teach students a little about recording, you could make a CD with them and give it to parents. It could make them customers in an entirely different product segment.

Guess what? You could record them using the tracks from the book and CD

they use in their lessons. That's what we did this holiday season, and parents were amazed.

Hand-in-hand with recording is miking. Capturing instruments in the studio or live is a big part of anyone's playing.

Remember the first time you recorded? The first time you played in front of an amp stack or through a P.A.? Remember the gear you used? It could be your store's music lesson program that someone affiliates with those powerful memories.

## GUITAR EFFECTS/PROCESSORS

There's always something new coming out in this product segment. Show students how to use them all. If they're learning Green Day, show them how to get the sound on some hit song. Show them the differences between live and studio effects. Teach them about amp modeling.

One of our woodwind teachers used multi-effects pedals with his students in our "Holiday Student Showcase." The students had a hip-sounding "Angels We Have Heard on High," and they learned how to recreate it on their own. The students and parents were stoked!

## DRUM GEAR

Ask your drum teachers if their students know what splash, China and odd-sized and -shaped cymbals do. How about different snare drums or electronic sets? Here's an opportunity to put some interesting new products right next to the traditional ones.

There are endless possibilities — come up with your own. A student showcase is a great vehicle for introducing a new product segment.

Remember, don't give music lessons at your store. Teach people how to play! **MI**

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