

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Marketing to Rentals

How many new rentals did you do this past fall? Getting these kids into your music lesson programs will not only increase retention but also keep those rentals out longer. You can help these kids from getting bored with band by properly marketing your lessons. Communication starts right away with the first rental, not when parents are trying to return an instrument because their kid lost interest.

When do you contact your new rental customers for the first time? When they miss their first or second payment? Don't wait. These kids are excited about learning an instrument right now.

Parents might not even know you have a great music lesson program. Hand out music lesson literature with rental rate sheets. By promoting a strong lesson program with band rentals, it could improve the beginning bands in your area and bring more customers into your store. Don't assume — act! Getting kids hooked on playing pays big dividends.



Start communicating the value of music lessons to rental customers now, not after a kid has lost interest in band

sales staff to mention that school lessons are usually taken with 20 other kids. If the student is a quick learner, they'll get bored. If the student is a slow learner, they'll get frustrated.

If parents say, "They're only beginners," that's even more of a reason to get them on the right track. Some will suggest that the band director would not want them to take separate lessons. No band director in his right mind would discourage music lessons. Most starting band sheets in my area have a line at the bottom that says something like, "Many stores teach private les-

sons," or "Lessons are always a good idea." Another concern parents have is not knowing if their kids will quit. Taking lessons will improve the chances a student will stick with it.

WHAT TO DO

1. Hand out fliers to every walk-in rent payment. Place this flier at the cash register. Make it visible to customers and easy for staff to hand out.

2. Call your list. Ask each renter how band is going. Make this a warm and fuzzy call. Let the parents know you are a partner in their kid's musical success. Don't put a staff member on this that sounds like they're working at Micky Ds. Put someone on the phone that can get a dialogue going and make a connection with the parents. Don't leave voicemail messages. You'll sound like a sweat-tank solicitor.

3. Spiff the staff. How's a \$5 reward for every band instrument lesson sign-up during the next 30 days sound? If you're taking in registration fees, you won't lose money. The incentive makes the lesson sign-up promotion more fun and successful for your store.

Be relentless. You might not get 100 percent of them, but you won't even get 1 percent if you don't try. **MI**

HOW TO PREPARE

1. Make a band instrument lesson flier. Include photos and names of your band and orchestra teachers. Have a caption like, "Fun Band Instrument Lessons — All Levels and Abilities." You don't want anything too wordy, but it needs to be attention-getting.

2. Print out a list of all your newly added rental customers, by instrument if possible. This list should be readily available on your POS or rental accounting system. Even if you're an affiliate retailer, get this information.

3. Train your sales staff on the importance of music lessons. Your staff has to understand how music lessons enhance a student's success. Train them to promote the fun factor and handle any objections parents might have. If the student gets lessons at school, it's important for your

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