

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Telephone Training

Promoting music lessons is low on our to-do list during the holidays. Unfortunately, many bad promotional habits start in December and continue into the new year, like failing to publicize lessons. New staff never get trained on how to sell your lesson program, and old staff start forgetting what they knew. Even worse, some music stores never do any training.

Now it's January, and the start of the new year's under way. Is your staff back on your music lesson program track? If not, it's time to remind everyone of some basic skills that will help your lesson program excel in 2008.

HOW TO GET HANG-UPS

Let's look at a very neglected tool: the telephone. You should reap lesson sign-ups in January due to increased beginner instrument sales. But how does your young, text-messaging, e-mail-savvy staff handle incoming phone inquiries? In most cases, not well.

You could increase lesson sign-ups 20–30 percent with proper phone training. Many calls come from people who have never been in your store. They might have bought a guitar at Target or on eBay. This phone call is their first time — and maybe their last time — dealing with you. How this call is handled could be a do-or-die scenario since the customer on the phone sees your music lesson program through your employee's dialogue. It usually goes like this:

Caller: Do you offer music lessons?

Employee: Yep. (Then dead silence. This is the No. 1 music store response. The caller is now forced to ask questions.)

C: How much are they?

E: Twenty bucks. (Followed by more silence.)

C: OK. Thanks.

E: No problem. Later!
Click!

Your employee goes back to text-messaging his “bros.” Not

exactly a kick-butt music lesson pitch. The customer now calls the next store and starts price-shopping. Even if the customer asks, “What can you tell me about your lessons?” the No. 1 response will be, “20 bucks a lesson.”

Makes customers want to rush right to your store and sign up, right? Wrong. This type of conversation turns music lessons into a how-much product vs. an exciting, valuable service.

If the caller should ask about teachers, the popular response is usually, “They're OK.” Or, when asked if the teacher's fun, there's absolute panic

on the music store's end of the phone.

HOW TO GET SIGN-UPS

All of this is easily remedied through some simple training. Develop an approach that you want your staff to follow. Here are some ideas for what to say when a caller asks, “Do you give music lessons?”

Employee: We sure do! What instrument are you looking for?

E: Great! Who are the lessons for?

E: Fantastic. We've got some really awesome teachers. Are you familiar with our lesson program?

Then, I explain what we do and who we are. I also tell the caller I can get them scheduled right over the phone. That's called closing the sale.

If I get a customer who asks, “How much are your guitar lessons?” I answer, “We've got some really awesome teachers. Are you familiar with our lesson program?”

Even if you don't have a formulized training program, start training your staff on answering the phone. It's simple, and it works. It will increase your music lesson sign-ups and ends the stumpthe-chump-type of calls most stores are guilty of. **MI**

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