

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Lesson Resolutions

It's the beginning of a new year, which means it's time for self-improvement and resolutions. Sticking with a diet or committing to new travel destinations may be tough, but as music retailers, New Year's resolutions are essential for your lessons program. January is a great time to review the good, bad and ugly that went on in your store last year since it's still fresh in your mind. It's also the best time to look ahead. Remember that old adage: Fail to plan, plan to fail.



Make New Year's resolutions for your lesson program, and stick with them

WHAT WENT RIGHT

Start by making a list of what went right in your music lessons program in 2009. Acknowledge the successes. You're still in business, so you did many things that worked. Take a moment to feel good about your accomplishments. These successes will work for you again in 2010.

Next, pull out a new calendar and pencil in the new year's student showcases, summer programs and other annual events that have worked consistently. Make notes about any tweaks or improvements you made to these events. It's important to bring everyone into the planning process, even your teachers. They often have lots of ideas from working in the trenches.

Also, evaluate the music lesson events and promos that lost steam from 2008 to 2009. Was it the economy? Your implementation? Have trends changed?

List all the ideas you wanted to implement and didn't because of one reason or another. Why didn't they happen? Are they worth trying again this year? If they are, pencil them in to your 2010 plan. If you don't write them down, they won't happen — just like last year.

WHAT WENT WRONG

List problems with your music lessons program in 2009. Did you fix the issue, or is it still looming in the I-hope-it-fixes-itself closet? Don't beat yourself up over everything that went wrong. Instead, develop a plan to correct the issues. Some problems may take longer than others, so be patient. That said, you need an action plan to correct them.

SET ATTAINABLE GOALS

Time to write down your goals for 2010. I love this list. It comes from the optimism, passion and excitement of being in this business. This is the list for ideas on increasing your student enrollment and retention and

improving your sales via music lessons.

Set weekly and monthly goals. You'll make more progress if you take attainable action steps toward each goal. And smaller goals are easier to return to if you fall behind during a busy week at the store.

COMMON GOALS FOR 2010

Here's an example of New Year's resolutions I've made for my own music lessons program. Any business can try them.

1. Use YouTube to promote the lessons program.
2. Increase communication with students via e-mail.
3. Improve outreach in the community to promote music lessons.
4. Revamp piano lessons to better retain teens.
5. Find new, exciting music books for lessons.
6. Recruit new music teachers that fit the store's vibe.
7. Decrease the drop-out rate by 20 percent.
8. Increase new lesson sign-ups by 20 percent.
9. Improve sales staff training on selling lessons to clients.

The time to plan ahead is now. If you wait, it won't happen. Grab your notepad, calendar and pencil. Do it now! **MI**

Pete Gamber will discuss how to improve music lesson programs during The NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif. See him at the NAMM Idea Center at 4 p.m. on Jan. 15.