

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Competing With YouTube

Not long ago, one of my younger employees was doing a great job promoting our music lesson program to a mother and her student-to-be when the potential student said, “Mom, I don’t need lessons. I can learn from YouTube.”

It was a stump-the-staff moment. My staffer started to sputter, and it got worse. He started talking about his favorite YouTube videos.

When presented with an alternative music lesson option, my employee wasn’t prepared to give the “why us” pitch. That was a serious problem.

SO, WHY SHOULD I TAKE LESSONS AT YOUR STORE?

This isn’t just about YouTube. It’s about the Craigslist teachers, the local parks and recreation department lessons, and the dude at church.

How does your staff handle customers who say they can get lessons elsewhere? Can your employees answer this basic customer question: Why should I take lessons at your store? If not, they need training.

Let’s start with some tips on what *not* to say.

- Don’t mention the year the business opened.
- Don’t say that all of your teachers have degrees.
- Don’t brag about the teacher who was in a non-famous, Jurassic-era rock band.
- Don’t say bad things about the competition.

Some of this might seem obvious, but it still goes on in many shops.

BE STUDENT-CENTRIC

In the egocentric world of iTunes, MySpace, iPhones and Twitter, retailers must cater to the student’s needs, not their own agenda. Talk about what’s in it for the student.

Ask the parent and student if they’re familiar with your music lesson program. I’d also ask what school the student attends because you might have other students from that school in your program. You might hear, “Nancy takes lessons here? I didn’t know that.” It creates an instant connection.

Mention the great events and performances you host for students. Explain how a teacher can help fix beginner mistakes while keeping the learning process fun. Not everyone is going to sign up for music lessons on the spot, but this dialogue can lead to future sign-ups.

YOUTUBE VS. YOU

These talking points are great, but you still need to know what distinguishes your lessons from the other resources out there.

Ask yourself: What’s the competition’s major flaw, and how do I compensate for that flaw?

With the YouTube example, if the student is holding the instrument incorrectly, no one is there to say, “Hang on a second. We need to fix the way you’re doing that.”

Online instruction can be over the student’s head, too. A beginner can quickly become confused and develop bad habits — or quit entirely. YouTube also can’t hook a student up with other musicians for performance events.

The YouTube teacher can’t analyze a student’s specific needs. For example, we have a student with Asperger syndrome, and for that student, lessons are about learning to interact with his teacher and playing with other musicians in a safe environment. Can YouTube do that?

Come up with a list of these benefits with your staff, and use this list in your marketing information. When new staffers come on-board, add this to their training. **MI**

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Music lessons are everywhere. How do you promote your program as the best choice?