

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

In Support of Summer

Every year, I get excited about Summer NAMM, but my excitement usually turns to frustration when I get to the show and realize that everyone's *not* trying to improve the music products industry. Maybe the voices of dissent are correct. They suggest that suppliers don't care about supporting retailers, and this became evident as I walked the show this year and saw absenteeism by many big suppliers. The concept that actions speak louder than words came to mind.

What happened to Summer NAMM? When I attended my first summer show in 1985, NAMM was mainly about acquiring new lines and products. MTV was crankin' (with music), and the terms inventory control and cash flow management weren't discussed much, if at all.

THE INDUSTRY'S BIGGEST LESSON ROOM

NAMM is no longer a buy-now show. It has become the ultimate lesson room, and I've learned more there than I could ever teach.

I have learned from industry veterans, such as George Hines, Chip Averwater, Kenny Smith, Kevin Cranley and Danny Rocks — to name a few. I heard about the ukulele craze from Ted Eschliman before it happened, and my fears about *Yellow Pages* advertising were confirmed by Greg Billings. I have also learned from NAMM newbies, such as Aaron Soriero and Myrna Sislen, who've brought new excitement to this industry.

SUPPLIERS, STEP IT UP

As music retail began to change, NAMM and its board members realized that communication and education were the future of a healthy music products industry. Suppliers, you need to support that future, not give lip service.

Real growth isn't going to come from the Internet or Best Buy. It's going to come from local retailers who have educated themselves on finance, marketing, purchasing, and yes, my favorite subject, creating and developing musicians. No new musicians means no new instrument purchases. And a decline in music retail storefronts in communities will lead to a suffering industry.

Suppliers, NAMM has two shows you need participate in until the format changes. Summer NAMM provides sales for your company by maintaining relationships with existing dealers and developing new ones.

Summer NAMM is where and when music retailers look at fourth-quarter purchasing and new products to stock.

Understand that by supporting both NAMM shows you are supporting the education of this industry and will benefit by having a healthy dealer network now and in the future. And to those suppliers who traveled to Summer NAMM and supported it, I want to personally thank you.

RETAILERS, RECOMMIT

Retailers, you need to attend Summer NAMM, too. Otherwise, you're supporting suppliers who want to see this show go away. If you went to Summer NAMM and your vendors didn't, e-mail the national sales manager or president of each non-attending company, and ask, "What's the deal?" I'm going to.

You need to vote with your pocketbooks the same way consumers do. Support the suppliers that were at this year's convention by including them in your fall purchase orders. Cite Summer NAMM in your purchase-order comments, so they know their time and resources were well-spent. Summer NAMM is where it happens. Be part of the solution. **MI**

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Absenteeism is not an option when the future of the music retail industry is on the line