

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Evolve Your Lessons

Every new year, I evaluate the evolution of our music lessons program. January and February tend to be a good time to look at what's working and not working well and infuse new ideas for the coming months. Mind you, evolving a program is a bold challenge, but it's necessary.

A critical part of this process is getting your teachers involved. They are in your lesson rooms every day, so they're important to the success of your evolution.



EVOLVE WHAT WE TEACH

This is the time to work new elements into our music lesson programs. Can we include more work from famous musicians? Can we add more styles of music into our teaching? Can we incorporate some new, up-and-coming artists?

Lessons can also include more instruction on instrument maintenance. Drum lessons could focus on tuning a drum kit and changing heads. Likewise, guitar instructors could teach changing strings, and vocalists could focus on microphone technique.

Then there's teaching guitarists alternate tunings, drummers brush technique and trumpeters how to play in tune with a mute. Are your teachers doing this?

Other options include adding a tech track, a songwriting course or a recording class. The point is to come up with topics that enhance lessons and charge your program with new excitement. Make sure to call on your teachers to help develop these ideas and implement them.

EVOLVE HOW WE TEACH

Now's the time to evaluate new print music methods and songbooks that can be incorporated in the teaching process. These materials should correspond with the new ideas discussed earlier.

How about recording lessons and giving students MP3s that they can reference while practicing the following week?

Also, consider starting a monthly group lesson, so different private-lessons students can perform together. Maybe you need

to be more recreational in your teaching approach.

EVOLVE STUDENT EVENTS

Evaluate whether you need more student showcases. Are you hosting a piano festival? A songwriting contest? A blues jam? How about an adults-only showcase? Once again, this is where your music lessons staff becomes invaluable.

Plan cool stuff for the summer months especially. What do you need to improve upon? Again, ask yourself what will enhance the students' music lessons experience when they have a little more time on their hands.

EVOLVE OUR MARKETING

How you evolve your student events will directly affect what you promote. This area of your business sets you apart from the competition, which is likely doing the same old stuff.

Posting events on YouTube, your website and your Facebook page really bolsters your music lesson marketing. You need to be Google-able! If someone does a Web search for "cello lessons" or "rock guitar lessons," you need to be found. In fact, you need to be found in a search for everything you teach. 2012 is the year to make this happen. **MI**

Pete Gamber is the owner of Alta Loma Music in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. He welcomes questions and comments at pete@altalomamusic.com.

The new year is a great time to evaluate your lessons program and make sure it's evolving