

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Avoiding the Dead Zone

We all have them. Those times when we can't seem to get any students in the door — 8 p.m. Tuesday night, 11 a.m. Monday morning, Saturday afternoons. Lesson rooms sit empty that could be providing revenue for both your store and your teachers. And what's worse is you are probably turning possible lessons away that can only do certain times. Here's a few ways to remedy this situation:



Eliminating dead times in your lesson program is as easy as taking a second look at your schedule

1.) DEVELOP A LESSON SCHEDULE PLAN

Develop a plan for what the best times are for certain lesson demographics. For example, most 6 year olds don't do well at 8 p.m. and most teens can't do lessons at noon during the week. Make a plan that uses that approach.

Here's an example: Weekdays from 7—9 p.m. for older teens and adults; 5—7 p.m. for pre-teens; 2—5 p.m. for elementary school students; 12 —2 p.m. for adults, seniors and homeschooled students. Saturdays work for all ages. Train your staff to use this plan to route students into these times.

2.) STOP ASKING: "WHAT TIME WORKS BEST FOR YOU?"

Why? Because everyone wants your prime times, and if you're successful those times already aren't available. Here's your new approach to lesson times: "I have a fantastic teacher at 8 p.m.!" or "We've got some really awesome teachers on Saturdays!"

Many times your dead times are dead because you or your staff haven't made them sound "alive" and awesome. They are made to sound like leftovers.

3.) THE "BOOK SATURDAY FIRST" CAMPAIGN

When is the last time you and your staff offered your lessons on Saturdays? I teach at two retail locations. At "Store A" lessons on Saturdays are anemic and at "Store B," lessons on Saturdays are booming. It's not the teachers, because the teachers teach at

both locations on different days. What's the difference? The staff at "Store B" presents lessons on Saturdays first, not as a leftover choice. The end result: more Saturday lessons, and more prime-time availability during the week.

4.) DEVELOP PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

Promote this special time spot for seniors when the store is less crazy. Have teachers who have great results with this age group come in during these times. You will find that retired students can come in earlier than everyone else. These seniors will see other students their age. They will pass the word around with their friends, creating even more lessons at your store. Note that this time also works well for moms who want to take lessons.

5.) SPIFF THE DEAD SPOTS

That's right. What if you offer a "spiff" for every "dead" spot booked? As little as \$5 can buy a coffee at Starbucks. It sends the message to your staff that you want these times booked with lessons. If you charge a registration fee for your students, try a "No Registration Fee" policy for these those who choose these times. **MI**

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