

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Selling Adult Lessons

Over the years I've written about the lessons I've learned from attending many different events, such as the Warped Tours, the DCI World Championships, the National Association of School Boards. I learned a lot that really helped me not only as a business owner but also as a music teacher. By attending these events, I saw and experienced things I never would have seen by being in my office. My latest lessons were learned at the AARP Convention this past September.



Increase your lesson business by catering to the AARP crowd

Strangely these lessons were about people my own age. I guess at age 62 I more than qualify to be a member of AARP. NAMM was at this event promoting “Play Music” and providing lessons to me that could help both music retailers and music teachers alike.

AARP runs a TV ad that states, “You Don’t Know AARP.” For the MI industry, this rings true — we don’t know the AARP age group, and it turns out, this is a large age group with extra time looking to learn something new. And boy, do they want to have fun. (Been to a Stones concert lately?)

The NAMM Play Music Pavillion was swamped with people strumming ukes, guitars, banging on hand drums, checking out keyboards and watching other AARP-ers play music. This is the generation that changed the world of music — and music stores. They value the local retailer but are also savvy regarding the Internet. And they value the human approach to lessons versus YouTube.

1.) SELECT TEACHERS THAT WILL BE THE RIGHT FIT FOR THESE STUDENTS.

These teachers need to be patient and encouraging. They should be music junkies, liking every song under the sun. They need to be social and non-intimidating. These students don’t want to become rock stars. Having a shredder for a teacher

will be discouraging to them.

2.) CREATE A SPECIAL “ADULT TIME” OF THE DAY FOR THESE LESSONS.

These students can come in before school is out. Create an 11am–2pm time slot for adult students. Your lesson studios are

probably a ghost town during this time slot anyways. This is also a slow time for music retail. So, it will allow for a less crazy environment for the adult student to shop in, and give them more time to browse books, look at gear and get to know your store and staff.

3.) PROMOTE YOUR ADULT MUSIC LESSONS.

Most of your community thinks you only teach kids and teens. Even the grandparents that bring and pay for their grandkids’ lessons. You need to let customers know you offer adult lessons. Place a large poster in your window that reads: “We Teach Adult Music Lessons.” Feature it on your website and social media.

4.) HAVE ADULT-TARGETED MUSIC BOOKS.

It might sound silly, but you’re going to need to stock Beatles uke books or Elton John beginner piano books. Make sure you have titles that this generation would be interested in learning to play. Adults don’t want scraps of scribbled TAB to go home and learn from.

Don’t overlook this fantastic opportunity to increase your lesson program and create adult music makers in your community. **MI**

Pete Gamber is a 35-year veteran of music retailing and music lessons. He specializes in music lesson programs and music retail consulting. He can be reached at petegambermusic@gmail.com.