

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

What Causes Quits

If your music lesson program isn't growing, what you are doing on a day-to-day basis may be killing it. Many times, short-term growth is happening in spite of practices that are slowly eroding the health of your music lesson program. But finding what is lethal for your program is the first step in turning it into a healthy and prosperous part of your business.

Before I go on, I need to confess I am a fan of the TV series "The Profit" with Marcus Lemonis. The show is a great lesson on business. His focus is always on people, products and processes. These are the areas we often ignore that can undermine your music lesson program's growth.



Identify what may doom your lesson program

PEOPLE

Your staff's enthusiasm should carry over in how they handle lesson inquiries. Rather than redirecting potential students to a website or instructor, your staff should help by providing more information themselves. Staff should also be proactive in promoting lessons to every customer they talk to instead of "waiting" for signups.

As for the teachers in your program, they should use their passion to keep students motivated to learn their instruments. If they are losing students, that should be a warning sign. Teaching with boring fundamentals instead of by playing music for too long can also hurt your program. Your music lesson program's teachers should also participate in student performance events instead of blowing them off.

PRODUCTS

Identify the unique features of your music lessons as if they are a product and justify why someone should take lessons from you instead of the internet. Working to develop an awesome music lessons product can lead to growth, and offering students performance opportunities is one way to do that.

PROCESSES

Having a training process for staff can improve how they inform potential students about your program, promote the program and related student performances, and sign up students. Speaking of signups, the process shouldn't be too difficult for

either customers or staff to get a person enrolled. A process for first lessons to ensure students and teachers have a great start can also boost retention rates.

Lastly, keeping a record of those who tried to sign up for lessons but couldn't find what they needed in your program is an asset.

DATA

You need to track your music lessons like you would track your inventory's performance. To know how your program is doing, set regular sign-up goals for your staff to reach and record their progress.

Recording teacher and student participation in performance events can reveal a lot about the state of your lesson program, too. Through tracking these numbers, I discovered two things: 1) Teachers that don't participate have terrible retention rates. 2) 80 percent of the students that participated had a three-year retention.

I know I've given a lot of things to think about and put into action. Invest the effort and you will see positive changes with your music lessons. Your lesson program will thrive — not die! **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.