



DON'T FORGET THE FUN

When I tell social acquaintances that I edit a magazine for the music industry, the typical response is, "It must be fun working in the music industry." These words took on new significance the other day after I accidentally happened upon a fork-lift operators trade show. Watching buyers and sellers discuss the fine points of pallet configuration, lifting power, and energy efficiency, it struck me just how special our industry actually is. While most of the country's workforce is relegated to mundane jobs, people at every level of the music industry have the privilege of working in service of the greatest art form known to mankind, and they get to have fun at the same time. We don't supply boring widgets; we're in the business of satisfying passion, whether it's that of parents introducing their child to music or that of players making their own music. Unlike the average fork-lift operator, what we offer for sale generates intense excitement.

Profits have been down in just about every industry segment over the past 12 months. Retailers have to cope with expanding national chains and price pressure from the internet, while manufacturers are besieged by a flood of low-cost product manufactured in China. In facing these temporary challenges, it's worth remembering the unique satisfaction that comes from dealing with music. Doing so is not only therapeutic, it's also good business.

The experience of A.J. Altieri, as recounted on page 122 of this issue, is instructive on this

point. After leaving Thoroughbred Music three years ago, Altieri opened his own percussion shop. Despite being a stone's throw away from a MARS and a Sam Ash location, his upstart business has thrived. Altieri offers a good selection and competitive prices, but so do hundreds of other retailers. The key to his success is less tangible. "I live and breathe drums, and I live and breath taking care of my customers," he says. By sharing in his customer's enthusiasm for drumming, he's turned his location into a sales magnet.

Customers don't care about falling gross margins, MAP policies, low-ball internet price quotes, or the unfairness of mail-order retailers avoiding sales tax. They want to revel in the excitement that comes with making music. And, as Altieri's experience shows, they will patronize those retailers who express the same excitement.

If you think the fun has gone out of the music business, that its become too much of a grind, that manufacturers are pushing hard, and that there are better ways of making a buck, you're probably right—and you should quit as soon as possible and make room for all those others who would kill for the chance to make a decent living doing something that can be fun.

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MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND NAMM IN NASHVILLE

Speaking of fun, the Summer NAMM show in Nashville is around the corner, and you should be making plans to attend. Nashville isn't as big as the event in Anaheim, but what it lacks in scale it makes up for in atmosphere. It's probably the best place in the world to discuss your business needs with top management in a relaxed, comfortable setting. Retailers of every size and shape tell us that this unique setting makes Nashville the most productive event of the year.

There's still time to make hotel reservations and get some bargain airfares. For more information on registration, contact NAMM at 800-767-NAMM.