

Are We Giving Away The Store?

For over a century, manufacturers have been giving products away to selected individuals and artists to receive improved "exposure" in hopes of increasing sales. In marketing guitars, pianos, drums, or saxophones, artist endorsements unquestionably facilitate retail sales, and thus a manufacturer can justify presenting an occasional product "gratis" to a noted performer. However, when giving products away is carried to the extreme, manufacturers do a serious disservice to their retailers and to the entire industry.

The piano business is currently being undermined by the most bizarre giveaway scheme in the industry's 150-year history. Ever since the late 18th century, when the piano became widely viewed as a symbol of culture, breeding, and civility, the instrument has been an important fixture at educational institutions around the world. Not surprisingly, public schools, colleges, universities, and conservatories have been large purchasers of pianos. However, if present trends continue, it is a good bet that educational institutions will no longer buy pianos; rather, they will receive them free from the manufacturer.

Manufacturers will no doubt argue that they are not giving pianos away but just lending them to the institutions for a specified period of time. After the time is up, the local dealer is supposed to purchase the used school pianos from the manufacturer for resale. Whether you call it a lending program or a giveaway, the fact is that schools are getting pianos for next to nothing, and retailers are getting a raw deal.

Having your piano installed in a well regarded school unquestionably burnishes your image and builds prestige. But is this image enhancement worth giving away a few truckloads of pianos to a reputable school? We think not, especially when all circumstances are taken into consideration.

First, giving pianos away deprives the local retailers of potentially profitable sales—and there isn't a piano dealer going who couldn't use a few more sales. Second, it sets a damaging precedent. The higher education community is like a small town; everyone knows what's going on at other institutions. Consequently, when a manufacturer gives pianos away to one college, other institutions soon find out and expect similar treatment.

PRACTICE AND STUDIO PIANOS SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The School of Music at the University of Arizona wishes to enter into an agreement with a piano dealership for the placement of new pianos in the practice rooms and teaching studios in the School of Music. This arrangement has been successfully implemented at other major universities and conservatories throughout the United States.

This type of practice and studio piano arrangement has been "beneficial to universities as well as music dealerships throughout the country." It provides adequate practice pianos for the music unit and also provides a successful marketing approach for the piano dealer. Proposals should be submitted directly to Gerald F. Evans, Director of Purchasing and Stores, University of Arizona, P.O. Drawer 40370, Tucson, Arizona 85717. These Proposals will be reviewed by the University of Arizona Purchasing Department and the University of Arizona Music Department.

Your Proposal should be for twenty-five to thirty (25 - 30) upright practice pianos with benches and five to ten (5 - 10) 5'10" grand pianos with benches to be provided for piano major practice rooms and piano major studios. These pianos should be of high-quality. The School of Music would fully maintain these pianos while they are in use in our program. The pianos should be replaced once a year by the dealership during the term of the agreement.

The School of Music would like to retain the right to move the pianos throughout the building or to other buildings on campus as programmatic needs dictate.

As stated, your Proposal should provide for the replacement of pianos each year and our agreement would be for two (2) years with an option to renew the agreement for three (3) additional one (1) year periods. The total agreement cannot exceed five years and we would solicit new Proposals at the end of the five (5) year maximum period or when the agreement is terminated.

Any publicity used by the dealership regarding the sale of the pianos with an endorsement by the University of Arizona School of Music would have to be approved by the Director of the School of Music and approved through normal University channels. Such an endorsement would, hopefully, be a positive marketing device for the dealership.

The Proposal for practice and studio pianos for the School of Music at the University of Arizona should include a clause regarding the dissolution of the agreement by either party.

Contingency plans must be developed to ensure that the School of Music would have pianos available for practice even if the dealership should go out of business at any time during the five year span. The dealership must propose an agreement of responsibility between dealer and manufacturer if the dealership should dissolve.

The existing pianos in the twenty-five (25) practice rooms and five (5) piano practice rooms in the School of Music will be designated for sale by the School of Music and the Purchasing Department of the University of Arizona. Your response should include a Proposal for the purchase of our existing inventory of pianos (see attached list) and that will be evaluated as part of your Proposal. Concurrently with this Proposal, the University of Arizona will offer the pianos for sale through our Surplus Property Department and whichever method yields the best financial return to the University will be accepted. Both this Proposal and our "Sale" will be due on the same day. You may want to consider an Optional Proposal, one with the purchase of pianos and one without offering to purchase the pianos. Pianos may be inspected and examined by calling 621-7023 for an appointment.

Proposals will be evaluated by the following criteria in priority order:

1. Availability of pianos of the quality of the pianos commensurate with the needs of the School of Music.
2. Adherence and agreement to the above guidelines proposed in these specifications.
3. Dealership incentives that may be offered.
4. Dealership service and qualifications.
5. Dealership recommendations and references.