

# The More Things Change...

The advent of microprocessor technology has focused attention on the rapid pace of change. In an eight month time frame products regularly descend from the status of "hot seller," to blow-out. Upheavels in technology tend to obscure the fact that the fundamentals of successful music retailing have remained virtually unchanged. This is worth noting only because, in an effort to be "on the cutting edge," many retailers lose sight of the basics of business.

80 years ago, Music Trade's founding editor outlined a vital aspect of the music retailer's role when he wrote:

*"The dealer, large or small, must give financial and moral support to anything and everything musical that takes place in his locality. If there are music clubs, he must become an active member. He must see to it and create agitation in conjunction with other dealers in his city for the development of music for all children in the public schools. He should see that his locality has a reasonable amount of public appearances of orchestras and famous artists. In other words, he should support everything musical."*

Aside from the fact that music clubs are passe and orchestras don't tour as much as they once did, Freund's comments are as applicable today as they were in 1910. It is still incumbent on retailers to promote music in the schools and "support everything musical," in the community. Lending support to local musicians or groups builds a store's goodwill in a way that no amount of paid advertising can. It

doesn't even have to be costly: it can take the form of offering the use of a recital hall, providing sound equipment, or simply bringing musicians together.

School music programs are important for all music retailers, even those that don't sell acoustic wind instruments. By imparting a basic musical literacy in young children, school music programs have made an immeasurable contribution to all segments of the industry. The child who gains a fundamental understanding of the basics of music by playing trumpet in a school band may very well apply to another instrument. Whether you sell guitars or pianos, a strong school music program represents a definite plus.

Talk of supporting the local music community is particularly timely, given the fact that the majority of retailers have suffered deteriorating gross margins and profits over the past five years. (A period when industry sales advanced overall.) In other words, cutting prices may not be the only way to make the sale.

Too many music retailers cut prices on the belief that "Even if I lose money on the sale, I'll make up for it on the volume." If you were a staunch supporter of everything musical in your community, how many customers would shop your store out of principle, without checking out the competition? Not everyone certainly, but surley enough to make a difference on the bottom line.

Brian T. Majeski  
Editor

## A Customer Magnet

As a magnet for drawing customers into a store, there is nothing quite like printed music. People always need it, there is always something new and exciting, its unaffected by recessions, and, if displayed properly, it sells itself. If that's not enough, music is one of the few remaining products that doesn't have to be discounted. What could be easier?

Unfortunately, music departments have long been treated as poor stepchildren in most music stores. Yet, those who ignore music, referring to it as "a small ticket nuisance," or "an inventory nightmare," are

missing a major profit opportunity. Aside from generating steady, profitable sales, print music also builds store traffic.

For more on how to profitably sell print music, turn to page 52 of this issue. Music is one item no store should be without.

Paul A. Majeski  
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