

STREETWISE SELLING | BY KENNY SMITH

# What's in Your Demo?

Simply put, the demo is a critical part of selling musical products. Yes, customers can purchase instruments online and at warehouse stores, but don't be fooled. This is not a commodity-based market — it's an inspiration- and fantasy-based market. And the power of an awesome demonstration can overcome scads of challenges for salespeople. Here are guidelines to improve your demos.

**Keep it clean and working.** From dusty pianos to stacks of boxes to filthy restrooms, customers constantly judge us and secretly keep score from the get-go. They don't have time to wait for us to get our acts together. We can easily miss a sale if they want to check something out and we're not ready. When busy displays get messed up or floor models get sold, keeping everything functional and replenished is priority. I recommend walking through and inspecting the entire store each day before opening the doors.

**Prepping is essential.** Tuning up your knowledge pays off and gives you more to discuss with customers than just price. Chris Bristol, president and CEO of Roland U.S., recently shared this wisdom: "If you don't know the product, how is the customer going to? When I worked in music retail, I saw my job as one where I was supposed to take my customers from Kansas to Oz. For me to be able to do this, I had to read manuals, understand what the product was for, learn how to use it and study the history of its manufacturer. I even took things apart to see how they were made."

**Entertain and educate.** Many of us play, which is great, but be careful not to overplay. It scares off customers, especially beginners. They think they'll never be as good as you. Pick a short lick, and make it look easy. Find out what kind of music they like before you dive in. Customers love to talk about music that inspires them. Also, remember that it's easy to overeducate and

confuse customers. Finding a happy medium where they can comprehend you will make them much more apt to ask questions and communicate.

**Break it down.** When showing complicated products, deliver your message in bite-size pieces. Have a few key bullet points ready for each product. Focusing on a particular area, section or feature lets the customer absorb the item's overall concept and helps you uncover his or her "hot buttons."

**Stop and confirm.** "Even though we may have already qualified them, early in a demo we need to ask the customer, 'Is this cool? Are we on the right

path?'" Bristol said. "If we are, keep going. If we're not, finding out early will help us find the right product without wasting their time. Too many salespeople are afraid to interject this question because they don't know their craft. However, for those who do, it creates an opportunity to engage the customer and find out what other expectations they have."

**Do multiple demos at once.** Music stores are like emergency rooms — they can go from mellow to insane in minutes. Be sure to acknowledge everyone who comes in. Be aware of your surroundings, especially when giving a demo. Momentarily excuse yourself, and see what the other customers need. Great salespeople can give up to five demos at once and get every deal.

**Accessorize.** I've seen too many customers who couldn't enjoy what they bought because salespeople never mentioned the necessary accessories. Know what accessories to include in your demo, including batteries.

**Don't get too lost in the product.** This is the biggest mistake. Shut up, and ask questions. Be quiet and listen. Find out what customers' dreams are, and use this information to connect them with features that fulfill their fantasies. **MI**

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**Eight guidelines for demos that sell the fantasy, overcome major sales challenges**