

Business Tips

- Dean Petrich -

The economy is picking up significantly, and 2018 is looking to be a strong year for business. More people have more spending money, which means more piano repairs and tunings for us. Piano sales are up in the stores, and there also seems to be an increase in the number of new piano students. Here are some tips to boost your business this year.

- Now is the time to be getting your name out and asking for **referrals**. Each tuning has the potential of future business:
 - Schedule the next tuning at the completion of each tuning.
 - Comment on potential improvements that the piano could use, and possibly schedule follow-up work.
 - Ask if any neighbors have pianos, and, if so, offer a discount for referrals so that future work can be coordinated in the same area.
- There are not many piano technicians with our skill levels, so put out feelers about raising your **prices** by asking indirect questions about what customers might be willing to spend.
- **Traffic** is becoming an increasingly serious impediment to our business, so plan your days and routes carefully.
- Seek **needs** and fulfill them.
 - I have turned into an asset and an income source the fact that more and more people are getting rid of their old uprights.
 - Rather than condemning old pianos at first glance, determine what you can do to keep the piano alive and enjoyed a bit longer. Maybe the customer can't afford to restore the entire piano, but what can you do to make it sound and function decently? This means extended long-term work for you.
 - If a piano is at its end, arrange with dealers to pay you referral fees for helping the customer upgrade with the purchase of a new or used piano. Call me and I will pay you a referral fee for me to haul away their old piano.
 - Know how to do more than just tuning. Be able to fix anything. If there is something you can't or don't want to do, refer someone you know will do a good job. Often it is well worth your while to do what you do well and to subcontract parts of the job to specialists.
 - Go beyond the piano: how else can you help the customer?
 - Carry a list of piano teachers whom you like to recommend.
 - Offer a routine reminder or service call, since most people's schedules are so busy that piano servicing is easy to forget.
- **Enjoy** your job
 - Look forward to doing your best with every detail so that future technicians will admire your work.
 - Customers are glad to see you because they know you are positive, happy, encouraging, supportive, humorous, honest, constructive, skilled, knowledgeable, resourceful, and helpful.

- The most satisfying thing about piano work is that the results are tangible: you can see, hear and feel the difference when you are finished.
- Pass on your knowledge. Take on an **apprentice**.
 - The average age of piano technicians in our chapter is 65. Eventually we will be retiring, and each of us should train a replacement technician. To continue the high quality and standards that we currently hold, we must do our due diligence to assure that the next generation of technicians achieves the level of knowledge, skills, tools and adeptness that we have.
 - There is a dearth of young people interested in our industry. Those who pursue our trade are rare and valuable and must be inspired to continue.
 - “We teach best what we most need to learn.” The act of teaching hones our own skills all the more. The collective knowledge of all piano technicians is enhanced with each bit of shared information.
- **Invest**
 - When we began, we invested our earnings to purchase more tools.
 - As we improved, we invested in advertising to expand our customer base.
 - When we became proficient, hopefully we invested our money for retirement. Plan a financial base and an exit strategy.
 - As we approach retirement, we must invest our knowledge in our future replacements so we do not leave a void.
 - Write and share your stories. After all is said and done, all we have left are the stories we created. Make sure your stories are worth re-telling.