

Upgrade Your Earnings

Searching for alternative revenue streams?
Look no further than your repair shop.

Since the dawn of music stores, one of the most reliable truths has been that instruments will need to be repaired. Whether customers bought them at your store or anywhere else in the country, a retailer with a prepared repair program is always poised to earn extra revenue from musicians' aging products.

But even smarter dealers will find ways to step up those efforts, turning routine repairs into easy upgrades.

Gil Griffith, co-founder and vice president of GearUp Products, had an epiphany one day while waiting at a New Jersey neighborhood car wash. "Here was this whole line of people waiting around at the car wash, and right across the street is a guy with an auto body repair shop," says Griffith. "He set up right there on the sidewalk with a special on dents and dings for anyone getting their car washed," he said. "It wasn't the most involved work, but you know he raked it in that day."

He realized his own suite of guitar finish repair products (GluBoost, Fill n'Finish, and MasterGlu) could have a similar application in music instrument repair shops. Is a customer bringing in a guitar for a setup or new pickups, for example? Let them know you can take care of those scratches and blemishes too.

"This extra little repair is just a process of filling, finishing, sanding, and polishing that users can master with some practice that makes this product work," Griffith says he's even bravely volunteered his own guitar for demonstration dings.

The bottom line? Easy fixes like GluBoost and Fill n'Finish make for serious ROI. "You can get our accelerator and glue is \$30, which should get you around 100 repairs," says Griffith. "At around \$20 per repair, that's a really good return on investment."

Larry Fitzgerald is one for expanding repair operations. A veteran of the great Rudy's Music in Manhattan, where he worked with John Suhr, Fitzgerald has run the shop at the Sam Ash Music location in Huntington (Long Island) for 17 years.

"We do everything from simple guitar work to really high-end restoration stuff," he says. There's always room for a modest upsell, though. "It depends on your clientele – obviously, you've got to

know your clientele. I have a lot of guys, especially in times like these past winter months, who come in with a lot of cracks."

Fitzgerald says the product works well as a quick alternative to a lacquer finish. "GluBoost can do it in a much shorter time. GluBoost really comes in handy in a case where I've already closed a sealed the crack and now I can actually seal the top to match the finish, which is hard with, like, Taylor guitars or vintage guitars made with a UV or any kind of satin acrylic.

"I'm just now discovering a lot of the applications that it has – it has more than what they're talking about. You could probably finish someone's neck with this if you wanted to. I'm talking maybe an hour. If that was nitro, you'd start it and tell your customer they'd see it in three months."

Fitzgerald does warn that it's not an instant fix – anyone using the product should have a certain skill level. But once you're confident with the product, it's a significant path to quicker fixes.

Fitzgerald also points to improved electronics upgrades as a source of simple upgraded repairs. In particular, he mentions the Seymour Duncan Triple Shot mounting ring, which offers a simple install to upgrade guitars with a passive/active switch. The product circumvents the need for more invasive work that would typically have been needed, such as installing push-pull pots or switches onto the guitar.

"It can be done pretty quickly by an entry-level tech and you can make some money on it," he says.

Finally, Fitzgerald has found a consistent crowd pleaser in intonation-correcting nut replacements such as those from Earvana and Buzz Feiten. "That's one that's kind of an upsell but is also a genuine improvement on most instruments, especially Gibsons," he says with a good natured laugh. "I love Gibsons, but chances are these things are a major improvement on yours."

Whether it's simple intonation correction or a cosmetic fix-up, the strategy is often the same – put your service in front of customers in need. The trick is finding them when they need it. Griffith puts it simply: "One thing you need as an entrepreneur is imagination." **MMA**

