

Making Music, Making Money: A Private Music Teacher's Guide to Teaching as a
Business

by

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Senior Honors Thesis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

University Honors Program
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

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Oshkosh, Wisconsin

January, 2017

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Abstract

Musicians as a group are not known for their business savvy nor comfort with numbers. However, most musicians in the modern age are, by nature, running their own businesses due to the fall in availability of salaried or tenured music careers. Despite this fact, there is a lack of plainly-written advice for musicians on the business aspects of running a studio. This paper is an attempt to create such a guide for teachers running their own private studio for the first time. Included are sections on writing a business plan, incorporating a business, filing taxes, marketing the studio, and networking effectively, as well as examples regarding all of these topics. The paper as a whole is aimed at those who do not have an education in business, nor experience in running a business. Information was gathered through interviews with professional musicians who have, or had in the past, ran their own private studio, as well as through secondary scholarship and my own experience with beginning a private voice studio. Overall, the paper is a guideline for those who may not know where to begin in regards to starting such a venture.

Introduction

There are few stereotypes about musicians so prevalent as that of their lack of business acumen. Many musicians seem to view math and associated topics as something foreign and a little alarming, and thus are intimidated by it. This attitude towards the practical aspects of business, however, is absolutely detrimental to any musician who would like to work for themselves. In order to really indulge in true artistic freedom, that aspect of self-employment is a necessity. Even for those who would like to teach as their primary career, it may be necessary to be self-employed and take on the work that comes with that endeavour.

Most private music teachers are independent contractors, even if they have an affiliation with another program. There are many benefits to this for such teachers, including certain tax benefits, flexibility in lesson planning or structure, and the ability to pick and choose their own students. The downside is that most musicians have almost no experience in running their own business before they start their first studio, and therefore have little idea about the more difficult parts of the venture.

Before anyone starts a business, regardless of what they are selling, they should have a basic understanding of several aspects of businesses as a whole. These include business plans and their purpose, business formation, tax basics, marketing, and networking with others in the field. Most music programs in general do not teach these things. Thus, the point of this guide is to help new music teachers understand the basics of business. While this guide is not definitive, it essentially aims to be a platform for new

teachers to learn the basics. From there, with the resources listed in the appendices, new teachers can further educate themselves on running a successful business.

Business Plan

Developing a business plan is the first step to creating any successful business. A business plan is essentially a roadmap, a viability test as to whether any given business venture is likely to succeed or fail. This plan is sometimes difficult to write, but in the long term it helps the business owner to understand the market into which they would like to enter. Furthermore, it allows them to be extremely specific in regards to exactly what their business will be doing.

There are four main parts to a business plan: the description of the product or service sold, the description of how the company is going to be run, the description of the competition and how it will be faced, and the explanation of how finances will work. Each of these sections is designed to explain to the reader precisely what the business intends to do, and what the market conditions will be for this business.¹

Executive Summary

This is the description of the business itself - how it is formed, where it is located, who runs it, and what it will be selling. More specific is always better - the goal is to have a clearly delineated explanation of the circumstances of the business at the outset. Include in the subsection regarding what the company will sell, the price at which it will sell, and a brief explanation of the reasoning behind it.²

¹ Erik Hyypia, *Crafting the Successful Business Plan* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), 4-6.

² Ibid.

Business Summary

This section describes the state of the overarching industry in which your business belongs, as well as the goals and objectives of the business. Describe the state of your industry, which is music education, as it exists in the moment. Specifically focus on what drives consumers to make purchases in this industry, and what might draw their attention away from products like yours.

Your second subsection will be a set of short-term and long-term objectives for your company. Short-term implies within a year, while long-term is typically thought of as five to ten years out. Three or four goals for each is a good idea, as it helps you describe to yourself where you want to be. Good subjects for your goals include how many students you would like to have by a certain point, what kind of space you would like to have access to, and what kinds of opportunities you would like to create for your students.³

Marketing Summary

The marketing summary is more complex. Included within this section is a subsection explaining precisely the target market you wish to engage, the explanation of your price points, and a SWOT analysis.

The target market explanation should be thorough. Imagine your complete, ideal student. The type of student you wish every single student of yours might be, including their background, age, level of passion, et cetera. Once you have that decided, write

³ Hyypia, *Crafting the Successful Business Plan*, 132-136.

down a detailed, professional description of this student. That's your target market.

Focus your marketing efforts on drawing in that precise student, and your overall studio will be much the better for it.⁴

Moving to the next subsection, you have at this point already written a description of the reasoning behind your price. This is the time to go more in-depth in regards to why you have chosen the prices that you have. If you have a range of prices, explain the thought behind each. This is here to support your decision for matching, undercutting, or exceeding local prices for other similar services. This may be accomplished by doing some research about the prices set by other music teachers in your area, both of your instrument and of others. In general, it is a good idea to have a strong explanation for not matching the prices of other, similar goods, as you risk either not gaining any business, or undervaluing your own service.⁵

Finally, the SWOT analysis is a description of the strengths and weaknesses of your business. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, with each section getting a list of the things that strike you as important. Threats and Weaknesses are two important areas upon which to focus, as these are the challenges you are going to have to overcome in order to maintain solvency. Keep the results of this section in mind as you go about starting your business, as they will shape much of what you do. ⁶

⁴ John Jantsch, *Duct Tape Marketing* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2006), 2-5.

⁵ Hyypia, *Crafting the Successful Business Plan*, 69-70.

⁶ Robert W. Price, *Roadmap to Entrepreneurial Success: Powerful Strategies for Building a High-Profit Business* (New York: Amacom, 2004), 81-82.

Financial Plan

This section includes various add-ons, such as budgets and cash-flow diagrams. A speculative operating budget, which lists all expenses, including a monthly tax budget, and all income for a year, is useful. It is a guideline for what you should be spending per month. Also useful is a break-even calculation, wherein you total up all necessary costs for your business per month, and compare that to your prices to find out the minimum number of lessons you must give in order to break even on the business. In both of these circumstances, it is useful to include a salary for yourself in that calculations that is the minimum upon which you are willing and able to survive. Otherwise, you ignore the ability to support yourself with this business, which should always be a potential goal.⁷

Once the business plan is written, the author has done a surprisingly large amount of the initial work of starting a studio. The hardest part of any given process is just starting. Once there is a plan, the author knows with accuracy what they will be facing going into the process itself, as well as potential avenues for facing these difficulties.

⁷ Hyypia, *Crafting the Successful Business Plan*, 107-108.

Forming a Business

The first step to implementing your business plan is to actually form a business. This does not necessarily require you to do anything, depending on what type of formation you choose. However, in the case of starting your own business, this lack of action should be a result of just as much thought and consideration as would choosing a different style of business.

There are four primary ways you can file during your business formation: sole proprietorship, limited-liability company, S-corp, and C-corp. Each has their own advantages and disadvantages depending on the size of your business and whether or not you have stock options, so keep in mind your future plans in regards to your business when you first legally form it.

Sole Proprietorship

A sole proprietorship is the simplest form of a business structure. The only thing required to become a sole proprietor is to start doing business. Essentially, this type of business structure covers any business that has not yet been filed with the state. There is no legal separation between this type of business and yourself - you are the business. While for the business itself you do not need to file anything, you are still required to get permits and licenses should it be required. Ask at the local city hall or ask a local lawyer

about regulations regarding home business, just to make sure you don't miss any important paperwork in this regard.⁸

Benefits of this form include the ease of formation and the easy tax-filing. As for a sole proprietorship, you are the business, when you file taxes the business's taxes are included with your own personal taxes. Furthermore, the tax rates for sole proprietorships are the lowest of any business, making it tempting to a new teacher.⁹ Finally, there is no inherent cost to changing your business structure from this to a new style of formation, beyond the cost of filing for that new formation itself.

The drawbacks to this form surround liability. Since you are your business, should someone decide to sue your studio for anything, or get hurt on your property or in the studio, or should your business go bankrupt, you are personally liable for all of those expenses. In the case of a lawsuit, all of your own personal assets are potentially at risk, depending on the amount for which you are being sued. While this is an unlikely event, it is still wise to keep it in mind and consider buying insurance for your studio to prevent unfortunate events.

Limited-liability company (LLC)

The LLC is the next step up in complexity. Limited liability, in this context, specifically refers to your own personal liability. Essentially, this type of company provides a measure of the flexibility found in the sole proprietorship combined with the

⁸ "Choose Your Business Structure," United States, Small Business Association, accessed Nov. 19, 2016, <https://www.sba.gov/starting-business/choose-your-business-structure>.

⁹ "Tax Guide for Small Business," United States, Internal Revenue Service, Government Printing Office, 2015.

liability protections of being a separate legal entity. Every state has a slightly different set of rules in regards to filing an LLC, so make sure to check those rules specifically.

However, there are some general rules to which all LLC applications adhere.¹⁰

- You will need to choose a business name, and it must indicate that your business is an LLC. For example, “Smith Voice Studio” would be unacceptable, but “Smith Voice Studio, LLC,” would be fine.
- You must also file the Articles of Organization, which include much of the information found under the Executive Summary in your business plan. Specifically in Wisconsin, you must include the business name, the registered agent (you), the type of management used, the organizers (once again you), the drafter (the person who wrote your Articles of Organization), your signature, contact information, payment, and other associated fees.¹¹

The benefits to this style of incorporation are the liability protections and the ease of tax filing. In an LLC, the only assets at risk are the those of the business itself - your own possessions and savings are safe from litigation. Furthermore, if you are the only member of your LLC, you can file your taxes the same way as you would for a sole proprietorship.

Downsides to the LLC are that the entire income of the business is subject to self-employment taxes, as all net income made by the business is considered net income of the members. Essentially, this means that each owner’s portion of the net income of

¹⁰ “Choose Your Business Structure.”

¹¹ Robert A. Cooke, *Incorporate Your Business* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2005), 93-97.

the business is considered to be directly their income, regardless of whether it was left in the business or not.

The LLC does require registration fees, depending on your state, but on average these are the same or lower than other forms of incorporation.¹²

S-corporation

An S-corporation is one step more complex. It is a specialized type of corporation that is considered a separate legal entity from the owners. However, it includes a specialized tax designation wherein all profits and losses are passed through to shareholders. The result is that while filing taxes becomes more complicated than with an LLC or sole proprietorship, double taxation as in a C-corp is not an issue.

S-corps are not recognized in every state, so be sure to check your state's rules regarding this formation. In order to form an S-corp, one must first register a corporation and then get additional licenses and permits as your state requires.

Benefits of an S-corp include ease of expansion, the lack of double taxation, and the limited liability for owners. If your business is likely to expand in the future, or to have actual employees or shareholders, then an S-corp is able to expand to meet an requirements. The drawbacks consist of complex formation processes involving a lot of necessary legal help, high formation costs in the form of registration fees and required permits, and a lot more paperwork than either an LLC or a sole proprietorship.¹³

¹² "Choose Your Business Structure."

¹³ Cooke, *Incorporate Your Business*, 31-38.

C-corporation

A C-corporation is the standard manner of incorporating large companies, such as Wal-Mart or Microsoft. C-corps have limited liability, as S-corps and LLCs, and are separate legal entities, like S-corps. The primary difference is that C-corporations deal with double taxation. This means that the corporation is taxed separately from the individual. Essentially, the profits from the C-corp are taxed, and then all salaries paid and dividends received are taxed as income on behalf of that person. At the level of business of a private studio, it results in a significant extra chunk of money being spent on taxes that could be avoided in any other business formation.

The benefits of C-corps are primarily related to stocks — C-corps are able to offer many varieties of stocks, and can entice employees with stock options. The downsides of C-corps, on the other hand, are a stark increase in tax through double taxation, a large increase in time, money, and effort required to start them, and a lot of paperwork required to maintain them.¹⁴

Overall, unless you plan on becoming a multi-state venture with employees and stock options, filing as a C-corp is likely to cost you money more than anything else. Most teachers interviewed had filed as one of the other three styles, depending on their own plans for their studio. For example, a teacher who had another source of income beyond music set up their studio as a sole proprietorship, because it was simplest. Another teacher, for whom music is their career, filed their studio as an LLC, for the tax

¹⁴ Cooke, *Incorporate Your Business*, 31-33.

benefits and liability protection that it offered. Finally, a teacher who planned for his studio to have multiple employees and expand in the future, filed as an S-corp.¹⁵

Filing

In order to file to form a business, check the IRS website. Each state has their own rules for formation, so make sure you find the rules for your state. If in doubt, contact your local city hall and ask about resources or guides for local laws, or consult a lawyer who specializes in small businesses. It is always better to get professional advice in regard to any legal matter.¹⁶

¹⁵ Youngs, Davin. Telephone interview by author. Sep. 2nd, 2016.

¹⁶ "Tax Guide for Small Business."

Taxes

There is little scarier to most artistic types than the thought of having to handle their taxes at the end of the year. Taxes involve meticulous record-keeping, math, and dealing with bureaucracy, none of which are fun to handle or necessarily easy to manage. However, if you are running your own business, understanding your taxes is a must. Taxes are something that can either be a non-issue, or could possibly put you in a lot of debt, depending on how you handle them.

Of course, the first step is to actually keep track of your business income and spending throughout the year. This may actually be the hardest step, as it requires sustained effort, all year long. The best way to ensure that you successfully keep good records is to have a system in place from the start.¹⁷ It's hard to go wrong with a spreadsheet system, with a column to list dates, a column for incoming money, a column for outgoing, and a column for explanation, i.e. what the money came from or was spent on. In addition, there are numerous services available to music teachers for a small subscription fee, such as Music Teacher's Helper or Privio¹⁸. These services act as essentially accounting systems for teachers to maintain all of their financial data in an orderly manner without having to maintain a spreadsheet system.

Invest in a filing system, as well. A small filing cabinet and a hundred manila folders will last you a long time, and will help you to keep hard-copy receipts, invoices, and other information that you do not keep in digital form. Similarly, a well-organized

¹⁷ "Tax Guide for Small Business."

¹⁸ Kruse Ruck, Tanya, DMA. Telephone interview by author. May 16, 2016.

storage drive will help you to maintain records of all of your digital receipts, as well as student information and other important documentation. All financial records are important to keep, because as a self-employed individual potentially operating out of their own home, you have an increased risk of being audited. Auditing as a rule goes back seven years, so keep your records at least that long. Having tidy records can help shorten audit times, as well as make filing taxes much easier, according to the IRS website.¹⁹

Write-offs

As a business owner, you have the prerogative to write off certain expenses on your personal taxes. This means, essentially, that certain things you have to spend money on will not be taxed. For example, if you use your home as an office, you are able to write off a certain percentage of your overall utilities and rent. Similarly, music books and instruments purchased with your own funds are write-offs.

There are many resources for business-owners to find these deductions, and explanations for how to file your taxes, but overall it is best to consult with a Certified Professional Accountant (CPA) who specializes in small businesses. While hiring a CPA or purchasing software like TurboTax may be expensive, it is better to do things correctly the first time than to bring the IRS down on your head.²⁰

¹⁹ "Tax Guide for Small Business."

²⁰ Brooks, Colleen, DMA. In-person interview by author. June 3rd, 2016.

Marketing

The primary goal of marketing is to gain new customers and therefore make more money, yes? If you have to beat off new students with a stick, you wouldn't need to market, right? Well, kind of. Marketing is not just the process of letting people know you exist - it is also the way you *maintain* a public image.

As a music teacher, your marketing methods are going to be different from those most often mentioned in marketing strategy guides. Billboards or commercials or banner ads are not going to get you what you want - dedicated students. Furthermore, each of these methods can get very costly very quickly, which is not ideal when running a single-person business. The ideal kind of marketing, especially for a business like a educational music studio, is very, very cheap to free. It is targeted to the area in which you teach, focused on the people who are likely to be good customers, and it makes you stick out in people's minds.

With that in mind, there are two kinds of marketing. First, there is marketing that does not work - marketing that misses your target market, that does not convey the message you want, or that simply doesn't catch anyone's attention. Second, there is marketing that does work. This marketing attracts positive attention, causes people to contact you, and results in new students. The difference between the two can be traced back to two questions:

1. Do you know who you are talking to?
2. Do you know what you want to say?

If you answer “No” to either question, you are not going to be able to effectively market your studio.

Market

This goes back to what we discussed about target markets in the business plan. Who, exactly, are you trying to target? A significant chunk of the music-lesson market tends to be the parents of students ages 8 to 18. Remember, the students are the ones learning, but the parents are the ones paying - they are important to market to.

Other possible markets exist, as well. Retirees often want to learn a new instrument - perhaps consider targeting that demographic. The materials used to convince a 67 year old grandmother to take lessons will be different than those used to persuade a 35 year old mother her children will enjoy lessons. The demographic you choose to target must shape your message and your services, not the other way around.

Try to get specific as you decide on your core market, as well. The more precise you can get with your model student, the finer you can hone your message - something specific is more likely to draw in the type of student you would like. For example, a broad market might be what I described above: “the parents of students ages 8 to 18.” Get narrower. Try “the mothers of children ages 12 to 16, whose children are both interested in musical theater and have very little experience in productions.” Then do some market research - what is the median income of the area? How educated is the community as a whole? What kind of music scene is present, if any? Going off of this description and knowledge, it is easy to think of the kind of marketing message this

target market would find convincing. Spend some time, come up with your imaginary perfect, ideal student, and from there your message should come easily.²¹

Message

Now that you know precisely who you are talking to, what are you saying? The first thing to remember is that you are filling a need. Your ideal student must have a reason to want to take lessons. This reason is a primary characteristic of your ideal student. In the description of the mother of the musical theater lovers, this reason may be “the child wants to improve and audition better at their school.” It may instead be “this child would like to one day perform on Broadway.” It may be simply that the mother believes music education is important. Your lessons should fulfill this need, and your marketing message should explain how.

Knowing the reason behind the desire for lessons tells you what your message is. If your ideal student wants to audition better, then your message might be “This studio helps students improve their musicianship.” If the student wants to be on Broadway, the message becomes “This studio prepares students for further musical study.” Finally, if the goal is simply musical growth, the message might be “This studio helps students grow through musical study.” While an ideal studio fulfills all of these messages, emphasizing one aspect of the process helps to bring in the kind of student you would like to teach.

²¹ Jantsch, *Duct Tape Marketing*, 2-5.

Methods

So now you know what you're trying to say, and to whom you are saying it! The question now is: how?

Traditional marketing channels are out. Your goal is not to gain a thousand customers who come in a few times a year - your goal is 30 to 50 students who come weekly. This means that your message needs to be targeted, and focused just as much on retaining students who fit your ideal as it is on recruiting new ones. In order to gain new students, you need to know where your potential customers are looking for you.

According to every teacher interviewed, they gain the majority of their students through referrals. When your new students are coming based on recommendations, and your goal is to maintain current students as long as possible, then your image becomes your paramount marketing tool.²²

Image, in this context, refers to the way your message is portrayed in the most basic aspects of your business, such as your physical teaching space, your personal appearance and behavior, your website, and all your other client-facing materials. You - your own personal self - are at the root of it all, the product which you are selling. This means that you need to have a consistent presentation whenever you are in the public eye. This does not mean that you need to have an official uniform with polo shirts and khakis, but it does mean knowing the level of professionalism and the atmosphere you want to project to the world.²³

²² Youngs, Davin. Telephone interview by author. Sep. 2nd, 2016.

²³ Jantsch, *Duct Tape Marketing*, 39-43.

Logo

Talk to an actual designer when it comes to developing your logo. Something simple but clear is to be preferred. It should include the name of your studio, be proportioned to look good as a website header or on a business card, and have one or two primary colors you intend to use in other promotional material. Unless you have significant graphic design experience, this is something with which it is better to work with a professional. This logo is going to be used on all of your promotional material, after all.²⁴

Website

Websites are easier to set up on your own, but if you are unfamiliar with the process it would be a wise idea to get assistance with this as well. Your website should include information about your studio, your biography, how to contact you, a list of other social media platforms you use professionally, and preferably a section dedicated to updates about performances, student successes, or regular content. Keep the interface simple. If your grandparents might have trouble figuring out how to find information on your site, you want to simplify it.

Your site as a whole should be themed to match your logo. Overall, it should have one or two main colors, easy-to-read fonts, and graphics if and *only* if they support the message of the site - a slideshow of your students at a recital, for example. The goal is

²⁴ David Cutler, *The Savvy Musician* (Pittsburgh: Helius Press, 2010), 56-61.

not to create a grand multi-media experience. It is to convey information clearly and easily, in a professional manner.²⁵

Business Card

Your business card is an extension of your website. It should have your name and logo, your phone number and email, your website's URL, your Facebook page if you have one, and potentially one other useful piece of information such as the hours you offer lessons. The goal is to create something that the person will hold onto and remember, without being tacky. Simpler is usually better.

Social Media

If you want to create social media accounts for your studio, a Facebook page is usually a good first thing to have. People go to Facebook for information. That is where many people will go first to ask a question, even before email. It also gives you a simple place to post updates and content about your studio where people will see it. Remember to use your logo and theme here, as well - this is, after all, one of your client-facing materials.²⁶

The next step would be a Twitter account. This would be primarily for cross-posted announcements about concerts and student achievements from your Facebook page.

²⁵ John Jantsch, *Duct Tape Marketing* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2006), 77-81.

²⁶ Jantsch, *Duct Tape Marketing*, 77-82.

Finally, an Instagram or Snapchat account is a good way to engage with students on social media. Posting appropriate, professional pictures of your teaching activities, your own practice time, or other music-related activities to these accounts, and engaging with students who follow you, may help to grow community around your studio and therefore maintain your current business.²⁷

Personal Appearance

This aspect of image is the simplest, but perhaps the most initially expensive. Make sure that you have a wardrobe for teaching and professional events that portrays your professional attitude. Simple, high-quality clothes are to be preferred. Do not be afraid to show your personality, but do keep in mind that you are a role model and authority figure, and your students will take your dress as an example for their own careers in music. Furthermore, other professionals tend to view people dressed in a professional manner as better at their jobs. Business attire is not required, especially if you teach lessons out of your home, but your clothing should portray your respect for your students. So overall, keep your personal appearance tidy, simple, and appropriate when in a professional context.

²⁷ Cutler, *The Savvy Musician*, 93-111.

Networking

The primary means of gaining students as a private voice teacher was overwhelmingly reported as being through referrals. Every single teacher interviewed named referrals as being at minimum one of the top two channels through which they gained students. Furthermore, each teacher stated that their professional network was a leading source of these referrals. With that in mind, it is easy to see that having a ‘network’ is extremely useful for the beginning teacher. However, the term ‘network’ is often confusing, and perhaps a little intimidating. It conjures up images of stuffy socials, where businesspeople in suits and uncomfortable shoes make small-talk with each other. Rest assured - that is not what networking is. *Bad* networking may look like that, but not the good kind.

Networking, at its core, is just the process of making professional friends. These are not friends of the type who go to parties together, or who name each other godparents of their children. Instead, these are friends of the type who occasionally meet the other person for coffee from time to time.. A step above acquaintance, these professional friends know who you are, and a bit about your life and ethos. They know you enough to trust that you are responsible and competent in your field, ideally. These are the type of people who will end up referring many students to you.²⁸

Networking Targets

²⁸ Cutler, *The Savvy Musician*, 58.

Anyone can end up being a useful connection in the right circumstances, but there are certain professions whose members will be more useful to know. People who work in fields related even tangentially to music or education will, in general, spend more time working with your potential customers. Furthermore, they are likely to have access to knowledge or resources you do not. Both of these factors make education and music professionals useful to know.

Specific professionals you would be wise to get in contact with include:

- High school band and choir directors
- Directors of musical ensembles in your area
- Private teachers of any instrument near you
- Private teachers of your instrument throughout the greater area
- People you meet at conferences
- Church ministers/choral leaders

Any and all of these people are likely to be asked for recommendations regarding private teachers. Should you be friendly with them, your name is more likely to come up in the ensuing conversation. And, if you have a few questions, a friend is far more likely to help you out than an acquaintance or stranger. For example, they can be a resource to answer quick questions regarding their area of expertise, they can help you to strategize for your studio, and they can help you to solve and difficult problems that may arise over the course of time.²⁹

²⁹ Dan Kimpel, *Networking in the Music Business* (New York: F&W Publications, 1993), 31-41.

With that in mind, how does one actually go about networking? It's easier to figure out how to "network" when you remember you're just trying to make friends. How do you make friends? Be a friend, that's how.

Be Pleasant

People like to hang out with others who are nice to be around. This means that you want to behave well, no matter the situation. Good manners are a must. This does not mean that you have to speak like a buttoned-up Victorian. What it does entail is listening without interrupt, holding doors, shaking hands, and dressing appropriately and professionally when interacting with your potential contacts.

Try to be interesting, as well. Ask questions that are open-ended, so that the other person can respond at length. Avoid cliches - the weather is and always has been boring, so don't use it for small talk. If you have heard about something the other person may find interesting, or about something of note the other person has recently accomplished, then mention it! You can also talk about yourself, in small doses relevant to the conversation. If the other person seems genuinely interested, then answer questions they ask or elaborate on certain points, but keep it from dragging on too long.

Be Useful

There are few people out there who are in charge of an event and would not appreciate a little help with its organization. Volunteer your time to help out during concerts or competitions. Offer to take up a leadership position in local music or arts

organizations - most of these are unpaid, but they are wonderful at introducing you to other important members of the local music scene. Offer advice only if it is solicited, and make your expertise known if someone mentions a problem that is related to your knowledge.

Be careful that you do not insert yourself where you are not wanted. While some people do protest against suggestions of help simply to be polite, it is generally a good idea to accede gracefully when someone says they do not need help. “Helping” in this circumstance is rude, as it implies that you either do not care about the other person’s wishes, or that you do not believe them to be capable of doing the task successfully.

Be Professional

Dress well when you will be seeing a professional contact in a professional setting. An idea of a typical business casual outfit might be black or khaki pants, or a skirt at least to the knee, paired with a top that is not a normal t-shirt. When in doubt, be more dressy as opposed to less. Looking a little over-dressed is preferable to looking scruffy.

Avoid slang when you talk, and use proper form and grammar if you are communicating via writing. Whether or not it’s valid, a lot of people judge others harshly on how they communicate. Slang and poor writing both cause people to assume that you are lazy, inexperienced, or apathetic. Take care with your words, however, and people will assume the opposite.

If you set a meeting time or agree to do something, do your absolute best to follow through with that agreement. A professional environment depends on timeliness and reliability. Having a reputation for these traits will strengthen others' trust in you.

Be Self-Aware

Know your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to your professional abilities. Discuss your real strengths, but also admit those things at which you are less adept. This will help your contacts to be more accurate when describing your services to potential clients. Furthermore, it will also help you acquire a reputation for honesty, as long as you are careful to avoid too much self-deprecation.

If something goes wrong - you show up late, fail to meet an obligation, or a recital goes poorly - take it in stride. You are not the sum of your mistakes. A few problems do not ruin a career. Take instances like these as learning opportunities. Should someone bring them up in conversation, ask that person for advice on how they would have handled the problem. People like to give advice, and you will show that you are trying to learn from your mistakes - an important trait.

Be Confident

Confidence is key to most interactions. Even if you do not feel confident in a certain aspect of something, portraying confidence is usually enough to convince others that you know what you are doing. When talking to others, act as though you are sure of yourself and your actions, and the majority of people will believe you. Sometimes,

confidence is all that is needed to change someone's opinion of you from neutral to positive.

On the other hand, however, avoid appearing haughty or cocky. Friendliness is just as important as confidence. If you portray confidence in a manner that suggests you believe yourself better than the person you're speaking to, then you may want to take a moment to reevaluate how you handle interactions with your clients. The goal is to project a feeling of casual confidence that puts people at ease, not to alienate them.

Be Interesting

People running music programs or their own studios are usually very busy. If you want to get their attention and assistance, you need to stand out from the other demands on their time. This does not mean that you should be obnoxious, constantly calling or emailing the person, or using gimmicks to get attention. You are trying to become friends, not convince the CEO of Capitol Music to sign you.

A good rule of thumb is that, unless you have something like a project or concert to discuss, any contact you initiate should take less than four minutes for the recipient to handle. Firing off a quick, two-line email to congratulate them on a successful recital is good! Sending a six paragraph soliloquy on how your week has gone is bad. If you would probably delete the email you're about to send without even reading it, so would the person you're sending it to.

An example of something quick, but unique is to send someone a postcard.

Postcards are easy to send, quick to write, and even quicker to read. Plus, they are so rare today that the recipient will remember you for having sent it. They may even keep it posted somewhere if the picture is interesting or clever.³⁰

The takeaway here is simple: be someone you'd want to be friends with. Reach out to those who have experience or insight into your field, and befriend them. That is all networking is - if you keep that in mind it will be much less alarming.

³⁰ Kimpel, *Networking in the Music Business*, 89-90.

Conclusion

Starting a business is not easy. Starting one based not on a product, but a service with intangible gains, is even harder. However, it is doable. You must keep in mind the concept of professionalism at all times, as that is what you now are: a professional. Regardless of your background coming into your studio, once you start one, you are a professional by nature - someone for whom teaching is a profession. This means that, should you have a question, you find the answer. That may mean asking an accountant for help when it comes time to pay taxes, or consulting with other music teachers when it comes to a scheduling problem.

Essentially, you are now entrusted with the faith of your students, your customers. Should something come up, you should be able to handle it, or at least project that capability. Obviously, no one expects you to be perfect. However, to attain and retain business, you need to be prompt, polite, and professional in all your dealings with potential or current students and contacts, as well as maintaining an organized setup behind the scenes. This means understanding how your business works on a legal level, including your business plan, how your business is incorporated, and basic tax knowledge, as well as understanding how to portray confidence and market to your audience, be it students or colleagues.

With this knowledge in hand, you can feel more confident in your business from the outset, which in turn will help you grow your business more quickly. Your business is an ongoing project, yes. However, by going in having done your research, you will

make at best fewer, and at worst less basic errors. Knowing the basics of your business gives you a firm foundation on which to build, and will let you grow roots with which to flourish for years to come.

Appendix A

Tax resources

National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB.com)

The website has hundreds of articles and resources for a small business owner, all of which you can use to help improve your own business.

Small Business Association (SBA.gov)

This is a government-associated program designed to help provide resources to small business owners, so it has a wealth of resources and information for small businesses.

Quickbooks Desktop

A program with which to do all your accounting. Very detailed. It can handle both your personal finances and those of your business. Costs roughly \$250 a year.

Waveapps.com

Waveapps is a program that allows you to send invoices to your students to be paid online.

Paypal.com

The most widely known means of making payments online. Paypal is a good way to handle payments and get receipts for your records.

Marketing resources

Vistaprint.com

An online printing business that regularly runs promotions that offer extremely cheap, good quality business cards, and regularly has good prices on other marketing materials as well.

Duct Tape Marketing

Both a book by John Jantsch, and an online resource that has a list of further resources for the small business owner.

MailChimp.com

An online newsletter service, ideal for sending out mass emails and updates. MailChimp creates very professional emails through a template system, and service is free at the basic level.

Help! My Business Sucks! Podcast

A free, entertaining podcast that offers advice on improving your business and your marketing.

Scheduling resources*MyMusicStaff.com*

One of the top two programs recommended by the private studio owners interviewed for this paper. It handles scheduling, invoices, receiving payments, repertoire lists, lending libraries, and more. Not limited by number of students. \$13 a month.

Music Teacher's Helper

The other program most recommended by teachers. It similarly handles scheduling, invoicing, receiving payments, lending libraries, and more. Has various levels, by number of students. The basic level accepts 20 students, and is \$140 a year.

YouCanBook.Me

A scheduling software that allows you to embed your booking page on your website, accept payments, and merge your bookings immediately into your iCalendar or Google calendar.

General Advice*TheFinancialDiet.com*

A blog that regularly features financial advice, stories from business owners, and ways to improve your business.

Lessons from a Street-Wise Professor: What You Won't Learn at Most Music Schools,
by Ramon Ricker

A book specifically written for a musician starting out their career. It includes sections on marketing, on deciding what you want to do with your music degree, and on how to gain students.

The Savvy Musician, by David Cutler

Similar to *Lessons from a Street-Wise Professor*, this book gives advice on how to run your career as a musician, regardless of specific field.

Appendix B

Hass Voice Studios BUSINESS PLAN

Prepared by:

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howtomusicmajor.com/lessons

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hass Voice Studios (referred to from hereon in as the "Company") is intended to be established as a C-corporation at 100 Music St., Port Washington, Wisconsin 53074 with the expectation of rapid expansion in the music education industry.

- Business Description

The Company shall be formed as an S-corporation under Wisconsin state laws and headed by Gabrielle Hass.

Gabrielle Hass, Mezzo-Soprano, has her Masters' degree in Vocal Performance, and has taught voice lessons for several years. Ms. Hass's operatic credits include the roles of the Fairy Queen (Iolanthe), Cherubino (Le Nozze di Figaro), and Omega (Le Cadi Dupe), among others. She has performed numerous solos and leading sections with the UW-Oshkosh Chamber choir, including the quartet of John Corigliano's Fern Hill and Erich Korngold's Four Shakespeare Songs. Ms. Hass's teaching experience includes two years of music tutoring, as well as Solo and Ensemble work with the Appleton, WI, school district. She is a member of the UW-Oshkosh Chamber Choir Council, as well as president of the Oshkosh chapter of the Student NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) organization.

- Management Team

The Company has assembled an experienced management team:

Director and Teacher - Gabrielle Hass, *3 years of experience teaching voice lessons, and a Masters' Degree in Vocal Performance.*

- Business Mission

I believe that all students can be enriched by a deeper understanding of music. This knowledge can help students to better understand themselves, as singing is a very personal subject. By using a personalized style of teaching for each student, I provide every student with a solid foundation upon which to build their own skills and accomplishments.

- New Service

The Company is prepared to introduce the following service to the market:

Voice Lessons: Hass Voice Studio will provide high-quality classical voice lessons to students over the age of twelve. These lessons will help prepare students for either further vocal instruction in college, or for however the student would like to pursue music in the future.

The primary source of voice lessons in the Port Washington area is the North Shore Academy of the Arts. This business is a general fine-arts academy that offers a wide range of services, including private voice lessons. However, prices are not listed for

these private lessons. As for individual teachers, there are no independent voice teachers in the surrounding area. There are several places that offer private piano and other instrument lessons, including Schaum Music School, Cedarburg Music, and Ozaukee Music. Prices on average appear to be about \$50 per hour for a private individual lesson.

II. BUSINESS SUMMARY

- Industry Overview

In the United States, the music education industry presently makes \$30,000,000 dollars in sales.

Research shows that consumers in this industry primarily focus on the following factors when making purchasing decisions: choosing between music and other extracurricular activities, deciding upon an instrument, and the cost of the lessons.

- Business Goals and Objectives

Short Term:

- Acquiring 14 students by the end of 2019
- Developing relationships with area music teachers
- Acquiring a permanent space in which to maintain an office and at which to teach

Long Term:

- Acquiring 40 students and developing a wait-list
- Being the primary voice studio in Port Washington, WI
- Acquiring a Steinway grand piano with which to teach
- Partnering with a pianist in order to have an in-house accompanist.

- Legal Issues

The Company affirms that its promoters have acquired all legally required trademarks and patents.

III. MARKETING SUMMARY

- Target Markets

The Company's major target markets are as follows:

Parents of children ages 12 to 18. While the children themselves will be the students, it is the parents who will be paying for lessons; thus, marketing efforts must be aimed at both the students and the parents, while lessons should be calibrated for the students.

The estimated number of potential clients within the Company's geographic scope is 10,000.

- Pricing Strategy

The Company has completed a thorough analysis of its competitors' pricing. Keeping in mind our competition's pricing and the costs of customer acquisition, we have decided on the following pricing strategy:

The average price in the area for music lessons is \$50 an hour, and half that for half hour lessons. As the market is not particularly large, neither undercutting nor over-pricing the services will be productive. Therefore, the price for lessons will be \$50 per hour.

- SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Ms. Hass's level of educational achievement
- Ability to change direction quickly
- Lack of debt

Weaknesses

- Lack of experience
- No name recognition

Opportunities

- The target market lacks voice teachers, meaning that there is a potential opening.

Threats

- Port Washington is not a wealthy town, meaning that there is more competition between extracurricular activities for business from residents.

- Services

First-rate service is intended to be the focus of the Company and a cornerstone of the brand's success. All clients will receive conscientious, one-on-one, timely service in all capacities, be they transactions, conflicts or complaints. This is expected to create a loyal brand following and return business.

IV. FINANCIAL PLAN

Attached we have provided the following financial information:

Operating Budget

Expenses		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Office/General Administrative	Monthly totals:	\$1,100	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750
	Office Expenses					
	Rent or Lease	\$700	\$700	\$700	\$700	\$700
	Supplies	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50
	Stationary & Printing	\$50				
	Repair & Maintenance	\$300				
	Other General & Admin Expenses					
	Utilities					
	Shipping, Freight & Delivery					
Cost of Goods/Cost of Services	Monthly totals:	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Cost of Labor	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Freight & Delivery - COS					
Insurance	Monthly totals:	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
	Insurance - Disability					
	Insurance - Liability					
	Insurance - Errors & Omissions					
	Insurance	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
Miscellaneous Cost of Service	Monthly totals:	\$200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Commissions & Fees					
	Bank Charges					
	Dues & Subscriptions	\$200				
	Disposal Fees					
	Miscellaneous					

Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$0	\$8,600
							\$0
\$700	\$700	\$700	\$700	\$700	\$700		\$7,700
\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50		\$550
							\$50
							\$300
							\$0
							\$0
							\$0
\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$12,000
\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$12,000
							\$0
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$2,400
							\$0
							\$0
							\$0
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$2,400
\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$200
							\$0
							\$0
							\$200
							\$0
							\$0

Summary

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Income	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$1,800
Expenses	\$2,500	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950
Net savings	\$0	\$550	\$550	\$550	\$550	-\$150
Ending balance	\$5,000	\$5,550	\$6,100	\$6,650	\$7,200	\$7,050

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Average
\$1,800	\$1,800	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$27,900	\$2,325
\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,950	\$1,200	\$23,200	\$1,933
-\$150	-\$150	\$550	\$550	\$550	\$1,300	\$4,700	\$644
\$6,900	\$6,750	\$7,300	\$7,850	\$8,400	\$9,700		\$7,038

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