

Get the Gig

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A MUSICIAN'S GUIDE TO
BOOKING MORE LIVE SHOWS

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Fake Laughlin

P R O L O G U E

Origin



LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY name is Jake Laughlin. My career in the music business began when I was in college. My first desire was to go into ministry... Hold on, don't get nervous, this is not a religious book, not even slightly – this is simply where I started. I wanted a career where I could help people, and I felt that the best way to do that was in ministry. I decided to start my own college ministry group, with the goal of taking the apprehension out of college students exploring religion. Almost completely by accident, I, and the group of friends I had gathered to help me start the program, decided that the best way to remove apprehension was to have live music of all genres, something that people were familiar with. After the music, we would let everyone know that there was absolutely no obligation to stay, but if they would like to remain for the religious part, they were more than welcome. Thus began my journey of booking music.

I had absolutely no experience in local music prior to starting the college ministry. I had never even been to a local show. I am not really sure how everything came together, but somehow it did. Shortly after, I realized the local talent level was absolutely incredible. Yet, I had lived in the area almost my entire life and never once heard about it. I realized quickly that the small amount of attention on the local music scene wasn't for lack of talent; it was for lack of marketing and lack of exposure – someone simply needed to tell people about it.

I was meeting countless musicians, and all of them said the same things: “no one really comes to the shows,” “no one really plays our music,”

“no one really hears us.” I was looking for ways to promote the ministry and while I was attaining my communications degree, I became fascinated with publicly-created forms of online media. I started to think, “If no one else will play these musician’s music, I will!” and perhaps, I would be able to drop in some promotional material for the ministry. So, I created DentonRadio.com, an online radio station that exclusively played the music of Denton, Texas – which was where I was going to school and still live today.

I thought DentonRadio.com could be something that would give exposure to some of the musicians and eventually promote the ministry, but shortly after launching, something very interesting happened. I received a CD from a local musician that had an arrangement with a high-end record producer to record and produce her music free of charge. The producer hoped that her music would eventually gain enough attention that every song he produced for her would be another successful song in his resume. Unfortunately, her initial recordings did not “take off,” and the producer decided not to record any more of her songs. One day, I was speaking on DentonRadio.com and introduced one of her songs by saying, “This girl really has something special, she has such a unique voice, watch out for her!” A few days later, I received a letter from her telling me how her music wasn’t just notes and lyrics, her music was her life, her support system. She had been through an unbelievably tough last few years and put it all into her music. So, when the producer told her he no longer believed in her music, she didn’t hear “your music is a failure,” she heard “*you* are a failure.”

Well, that same producer happened to be listening to DentonRadio.com soon after telling her that he would no longer record her music. When he heard, “This girl really has something special, she has such a unique voice, watch out for her!” followed by the song he had produced, he immediately picked up the phone and called her, saying, “Maybe I was wrong. This guy says he thinks you’ve got something. Maybe he’s right. Let’s start working together again. I will pay all of the expenses.”

The rest of her letter explained that before that phone call she was ready to give up on her music, her passion, and herself. She said there was no way to tell me what it meant to her to receive that producer’s phone call. He had effectively told her, “I was wrong. *You* are not a failure. *You* are worth my time.”

After this letter, I received another from a different musician with a similar story. Then I received a few phone calls from several other musicians. This kept happening again and again. I started to realize that I was able to help more people through music than I was helping in ministry. Music is the life of an artist, and if I wanted to help someone, what better way than through music?

Then things really began to take off. Unexpectedly, I was able to help more musicians be heard by more people, and additionally the people listening to those songs were being affected as well- whether by the lyrics lifting them up, allowing them to cry, giving them a good laugh, or letting them know that someone else felt the same way they did and that they weren’t alone.

I decided that I would close my ministry group and dedicate myself completely to DentonRadio.com. Now, we had to raise money through offering advertising to local businesses. A few businesses agreed that they would buy advertising, but since we also had a library of hundreds of local artists, they wanted to know if we could also help them book music. Pretty soon after, DentonRadio.com had worked in some capacity at nearly every venue in town.

DentonRadio.com was still a small company and even though we were growing quickly, we still needed a shot in the arm. One day I was introduced to Kim Phillips, the head of the Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). A CVB is the tourism marketing arm of a city, tasked with attracting visitors. Denton, Texas is a small town but is home to one of the best music scenes in the world. Kim was exploring new ways promote the music scene and had the idea of an online radio station. I quickly learned that Kim was one of the brightest and most innovative people I would ever

meet, so when she asked if I wanted to move DentonRadio.com under the roof of the CVB and share resources I was ecstatic! This was the shot in the arm that we needed, giving DentonRadio.com fantastic resources and guidance, as well as instant credibility.

The station continued to grow and I was booking more shows than ever. From bars to banquets, from playing for tips to playing for thousands, looking back, I booked, managed, and promoted more than 1,000 shows in just a few short years.

It was an exhilarating feeling to create opportunities for artists that had never had those same opportunities before. I was doing exactly what I had always dreamed of doing, having a career that helped people. But one day I noticed a problem. I was creating countless opportunities for a lot of musicians, but unfortunately a lot of those musicians didn't know how to then take advantage of those opportunities. The musicians were extremely talented, smart, and driven. They were ready to run; they just didn't know which direction to run in.

That is why I decided to write this book. It broke my heart to see a door close on an opportunity and for that musician to not know why, for them to think something was wrong with their music when instead it was their business strategy.

Creating something new is the most challenging task in the world, both physically and emotionally. The constant "nos" begin to take their toll. If there is a way for me to help a deserving artist turn "nos" into "yeses", then that is what I've always tried to do. However, I learned that there were some "nos" that I couldn't change myself. There are some "nos" that only the artist can change.

After all of these years of booking music, I have learned what the venues and music bookers are looking for, and it goes way beyond talent. Most musicians seek advice from other musicians, which *is* very beneficial, but I would like to add to that conversation from the other side of the coin, from the booker's perspective. From networking to social media tips, my hope is to give you the tools necessary to make your musical dream come true.



A lot has happened since I first wrote this book. For nearly a year, I had to sit it down instead of publishing it. It seemed like every day, there was something new and exciting happening in the music scene and some new challenge to overcome. After this book's origins, I wanted to include what has happened since the text was originally drafted, and one additional lesson that these experiences have taught me.

I officially sold DentonRadio.com to the Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau. I took a job within their communications department about a year prior, working on their social media team and continuing to develop DentonRadio.com in what additional private time I had. Once the sale was made official, a job change came with it. I was asked to manage DentonRadio.com and co-manage our new Denton Welcome Center that plays host to our on-the-glass radio studio in the middle of our downtown square. DentonRadio.com now functions as an official music marketing program for Denton, Texas.

Since the CVB is an organization that promotes events rather than creates them, the CVB was not interested in the music-booking operation of DentonRadio.com. So, I formed a separate booking company that continues to book music for several venues, and I run that company in my spare time.

Today, I think I have the best job in the entire world. My career is what I hoped it always would be: helping people, and having a ton of fun along the way. But, I also have to say that the journey to get here was a painful one. There is nothing more difficult than to have a message inside that no one seems to want to hear. Constant rejection and pain on the left and fear of having to give up your passion for the monotonous life of normality on the right make for very little sleep. I may not be a professional musician, but I most certainly know that fear and that pain.

I am fully convinced that the information ahead in this book will help you take the next step in your musical career, but if you take nothing else away from this book, please take this: this pain will be very useful if you choose to learn from it.

This book will help you take the next step, but a career is not made in a step, it is made in a lifetime of steps, intentional steps. Each step will be more difficult than the last and each one will reveal a new challenge. At

times, you might think you made the wrong decision, a wrong turn, but let me tell you that you didn't, there is simply a new step to be taken and the pain you are feeling is the fuel you need to take it. Learn from the pain. Allow it to develop you. Allow it to flourish you, even in the areas that have nothing to do with your music. Trust me, everything will eventually come back to benefit your music. Don't focus on the pain, relish the step. Avoid the pain, and seek the step. The pain will follow, but don't focus on the pain or fear the pain, focus on the step and the growth that comes with it.

As I said, a musical career is not made in a step, it is made in a lifetime of steps. Most fail to succeed because they refuse to take small step, after small step, after small step. The pain or fear become too much for them, but if you can continue to make small progress after small progress, focused on the progress rather than pain, you have discovered the secret to winning over time.

Through this book, I hope I can show you some new steps to take.

CHAPTER 1

Setting the Stage



IT WAS A THURSDAY AND Hailey was next up at Open Mic. Hailey and I knew each other well and I was really impressed with her progress as a musician. I had been booking her for small shows for about a year and I felt like she was better every single time she played. Tonight, she was especially “on” and as she approached the mic, I knew she was going to turn heads. About 30 seconds into her first song, Travis, another musician friend of mine, looked at me and said with wide eyes and absolute certainty, “She’s going places.” My heart immediately dropped to the floor, because I knew that it wasn’t true.

Every eye in the room was now fixed on Hailey, and she knew it. She thought what they thought, “This is *it*, she’s going places.” I almost had to leave, because my heart was so broken. It was as if every dream in that room rested on the faith that Hailey’s dream of becoming a professional musician could be a reality. Hailey had all of the talent in the world, but for some reason she couldn’t wrap her mind around the fact that talent is only one part of the equation.

Hailey was a brilliant singer and writer, but every time I gave her an opportunity that would strategically benefit her career, she turned it down. I don’t mean that she refused to sell out. Quite the contrary, I would have been even sadder if she did. Hailey just didn’t want to think strategically about her musical career. She wanted to play music and was anything but lazy, but she was putting her faith in an old belief. Hailey believed that if

she played enough, practiced enough music, and continued to be random and diverse in her career, someday she would be “discovered.”

Hailey did not understand that the model of randomly “being discovered” does not exist anymore, if it ever truly did. The only person that was going to make Hailey’s career was Hailey. No one was out to hand her a career, she needed to build it from the ground up. Hailey had to treat her music like a business, the business of Hailey.

Years ago, I was having coffee with a neurologist friend of mine. We would seldom talk about his work but he always seemed fascinated with my work in music. One day I said to him, “I guess musicians just aren’t good at business. The side of the brain that makes them good at music must work against the side that is good at business.” My friend immediately snapped and began aggressively educating me about his frustration on this myth. He said the brain is far more complicated and intermingled than we want to believe it to be. Just because a person is creative doesn’t mean that they are bad at business. In fact, many of the skills that make a musician great will also make them great at business. The way a musician looks at patterns, assembles thoughts, is able to look inside of a problem instead of what is on the outside, all of these qualities and more are the exact qualities that make the artist and the CEO very, very similar. Our culture may label them differently, but musicians have all of the business qualities necessary to make great careers for themselves.

The question, then, of course is, “why don’t they?” I have to believe that it is the music culture. This music culture myth that says that you don’t need a strategy or a plan, you just need a lucky break. The way to create a lucky break is to do as many random things as possible in the hope that something might catch. But random chance never bears fruit, and any story that supports such a fact is grossly incorrect. We live in a cause and effect universe.

Unfortunately, saying no to something that doesn’t fit your strategy in order to say yes to something that does is a terrifying thought. Other musicians that are too afraid to take that risk are more than willing to

continue spreading the lie that someday, someone else will come and “discover you.” I am saying: discover yourself.

We have to get away from this musical myth. Nine times out of ten, when a musician hears “work on your music” they think “practice.” They don’t think “call some venues,” “work on your online presence,” or “take in some new education about the business of music.” They continue to play, and they continue to run in circles.

This is why my heart broke for Hailey. She was a musician that practiced hard and played hard. She gave it everything she had, but either through misunderstanding or fear, she never was able to think strategically about her business; her music. She just couldn’t seem to make the jump from “playing” to building a business.

Play should be work and work should be play, the entire process of building a business should be fun. It should refresh the soul of a musician to be able to look at their music and look at their career and know that they are going somewhere. But if the “Haileys” of this world are to make their dreams come true, then we have to break the back of this old notion of playing to get “discovered” and all of the fear that comes from deviating from it.

The number one reason I find that musicians don’t think strategically about their music is they feel it will cheapen the music, that their heart beats for the stage and anything done off stage is just a waste of time.

In Stephen Pressfield’s book “The War of Art” he gives an extremely enlightening look at what he calls “the muse.” His assertion is that all art comes from something higher, another dimension. You can call it God, the Universe, or you don’t have to name it. The illustration is that Beethoven’s Fifth was already written in another dimension, Beethoven simply was able to hear it, others might have heard it but for some reason Beethoven was the one who wrote it down. Have you ever written something, looked at it later and thought “Wow, whoever wrote this is *good*”?

This may sound a little far-fetched to some, but all of the mysticism aside, in every artist there is a spark of something that others can’t really explain. There is just something special in what they do, and I think we

can all agree to that. Really the only difference between the truly great and the yet-to-be-great is the level to which they channel and release this spark.

My assertion, building off of Pressfield's, is that the muse does not stop at the stage. If a higher dimension is channeling a message through you, then I believe that it will also guide you to how and where to deliver it.

I feel the muse in my business. I think the muse works through all of us, helping us know which steps to take, guiding us to greater and greater stages to deliver its messages. Let me ask you this: will the message of the muse impact more people in a small room or a large one?

I feel that the muse whispers to me ways that I can better book musicians and run my business. I spend time reading business books, going to seminars, and testing new theories as to how I could better serve the music community. I am not taking in this information to change me. I am taking in this information to match the wisdom of others against the muse inside. I am better tuning my ability to recognize the muse. I am not changing; I am becoming more of what is already there. I am becoming more of my true self, the artist.

An Artist can channel the musical messages from the muse their entire lives, but they may never listen to the muse off-stage, to the other areas where the muse can guide you. Ok, yes, this is getting to sound a bit mystic, simply replace every mention of the muse with the word passion. An artist can channel their musical passions their entire lives but they may never listen to their passions off-stage, to the other areas where your passion can guide you.

My passion drove me to write this book. I could not stand the heart-break of another Hailey. I wanted to create a guide, a map that would help a musician take that first step of not just playing to play but playing as part of an overall strategy that will benefit them emotionally and financially. I felt that the best place to begin would be helping musicians get gigs. After getting the gig, anything and everything else becomes possible.

Don't read the rest of this book and simply do what it says. There is no one way to eat a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup and there is no one way to do business. Take in these pages and then allow your Muse to decide which words you would like to follow and which ones you would not. The point is not for you to follow a set of steps in order to reach success. The point is to begin. The point is the muse is guiding you off-stage as well as on. It is time to follow it. You are not and should not begin a process of changing yourself, rather you should begin a process of better discovering more of what you already are inside.

Most musicians may not take that next step. They also may not pick up a book about taking that next step. I don't believe you are "most musicians." I think the muse is pointing you to a new level with your music.

The stage is set. Are you ready to begin?

CHAPTER 2

Now We're Getting Started



"I'M OK, I'M JUST DEPRESSED. I must have sent 15 emails this week and not one single venue even bothered to email me back."

"Well Hailey, that's nothing to be ashamed of, you *did* something. You started to take charge of your career. You should be proud of yourself."

"I guess, but I certainly don't *feel* proud.... Can I say something?"

"Of course, Hailey."

"Jake, I just don't think I'm good enough. I'm so tired. I'm beginning to wonder if I should just quit. Jake, please be honest with me, am I any good?"

"Hailey, you're incredible! You really are. You really have something special. It just hasn't happened for you yet, but you'll get there."

"Well, if I'm so 'good,' why can't I seem to get gigs?"

"Hailey, you *are* good. You're *very* good. You just need to work on the business side of your music, that's all."

"Jake, I just told you, I sent 15 emails this week, and I've sent countless emails before that. I have been working really hard at the 'business side.'"

"Hailey, you do work hard, but sending emails isn't going to make it happen. That's not how venues book musicians."

"Then what should I do?"

"Well, Hailey..."

The way most musicians go about getting gigs is all wrong. Unfortunately, because they do it "wrong," they think that businesses don't want them,

which couldn't be more incorrect. EVERY business wants live music. EVERY business.

I have a good friend who created a documentary about how unique the music scene of his city really was by booking one off-the-wall show a month in businesses that would never in a million years host music. He performed in laundromats, parking garages, and busses. During the documentary's filming, he had almost zero resistance from the business owners. Even though these businesses had nothing to do with music, they all were willing and enthusiastic to help. Why? Trust.

It has been my experience that all businesses fall into one of two categories: businesses comfortable hosting music and businesses uncomfortable hosting music. The businesses uncomfortable hosting music would probably like to have music, but they are afraid that live music is too expensive, they don't know where logistically to begin, and, most importantly, they don't know where to find you. The businesses comfortable hosting music are so bombarded with musician inquiries that they have no choice but to turn down the noise and ignore the acts they simply don't know.

I have booked in both of these situations, and in both there is an art to it, and, more importantly, neither one is impossible. The beauty is that the way I am going to show you how to book is exactly the same system in both situations. Throughout this entire book, the word I want repeating in your head is "trust."

The reason the uncomfortable businesses ("rookie venues") are reluctant to work with you is because they are worried as to what will happen if they begin booking music. Will music run off my current customers? Will music be too loud? Will the staff dislike the music? They hesitate to book you because they have not yet built trust with you.

The reason the comfortable businesses ("veteran venues") are so difficult to book is because they have done this a million times, been "burned" incessantly, and have built a circle of musicians that they already know and have proven themselves. They trust them. So, if they already have a circle of musicians that they trust, and when they deviate from this circle they get burned, they are even more reluctant to trust *you*.

Let's stop right here. This sounds like a depressing situation. "If venues fall under two categories, (*rookie* and *veteran*) and neither category trusts me, then what hope is there?" The "hope" is because you are *new*.

Every patron is looking for something they have never seen before, something they have never heard before, "The Next Big Thing," and the venues know it. Even if the house band of a venue was Aerosmith, there would be nights where the "regulars" would leave to find something new. Every venue wants to find something new and incredible in order to keep "wowing" their customers. *You* can be that next big thing. They are looking for you. In order to do that, you have to first convince the venue that you are the musician to *trust*.

You need to learn to speak the venue owner's language. There is a secret code, a playbook, a vernacular that is consistent with every single venue. This book is going to define that language and teach you how to speak it. I will show you the words and tools you need in order for a venue to extend you their trust and their stage.

NETWORKING: THE COLD CALL IS DEAD

Have you ever worked as a telemarketer? If so, I sympathize. I was a telemarketer for a short time in high school. Every day I would come into work, buy a Mountain Dew Code Red to caffeinate myself into excitement, put on a headset, and the computer would begin dialing. Hour after hour, people sitting comfortably at home would be bombarded with messages about a new product.

If you can imagine, almost every single call ended with a swift "click." Very little product was ever sold. Once in a while someone would find a lonely or bored individual that would listen just long enough to hear the end of the pitch, but usually all of the calls still ended the same: with a "click."

It wasn't so much that what was being sold wasn't any good. In fact, some of the products were fantastic! It was the fact that we tried to sell to people by bothering them. Interrupting them. Basically, being a pain.

Alright, time for an experiment. If a beloved friend, a number you recognize, calls your phone, we usually answer it, right? Now, be truthful, if a number you don't recognize calls you, do you answer it? Honestly, most of us don't. And, if you do, you are statistically a rare exception.

The unrecognized, unplanned call feels like a bother, an intrusion. It could be someone calling to tell us that we have won a million dollars, we don't really know, but we don't react that way. We react to all unknown calls the same: negatively.

An unwanted inquiry, even for something positive, is a negative. No matter how good the product, friend, offer, or invitation, there is nothing that can make an intrusion pleasant. This is what is known as a "cold call."

Ok, let's put a pin in that thought. We are going somewhere with this I promise. Now for a new illustration.

Business owners are the most overworked people on the planet. They put insane amounts of hours and emotional energy into their businesses. There are volumes of books solely written on all of the health problems business owners are likely to go through because they work far harder than any human was ever built to work. Their stress levels are high, and their attention must be laser focused in order to handle payroll, taxes, inventory, marketing, and customer service all before breakfast.

I have to ask, if the average person finds a cold call to be unpleasant, can you imagine how disruptive a cold call is to a business owner?



Cold calls used to work. Back when communication was not as instant, constant, and easy to do, the average person only received a few calls a week (if that). A call comes in and on the other line is a friendly person with an item that will make your life better! Great, right? Well, Gary Vaynerchuck says it best: "As sure as I am that the sun will come up in the morning, I know this: marketers ruin everything!"

Now cold calls happen every day. Cold calls are part of what made caller ID so essential. You can now differentiate between callers that you know and trust (there is that word again) and callers that you don't.

There is a saying floating around in the business world: "The cold call is dead." The age of marketing where you bombard people and interrupt them no longer works. We are so constantly over-communicated and oversold that we have no choice but to stop listening.

One of the top marketing books ever written is called "Positioning" by Jack Trout and Al Ries (I cannot recommend this book more highly). One of the statistics of the book is that the average grocery store has over 10,000 brands and products, while the average college graduate with a four-year degree has a vocabulary of about 8,000 words. So, 16 years of education and you are 2,000 words BEHIND the average grocery store. How in the world is someone supposed to take in that much information? You can't. We buy what we know, what we are familiar with, the brands and products we trust.

You can probably see where I am going with this. Most musician's strategy to book gigs is to cold call. Calling a venue not knowing anyone there or sending an email to: Booking@NoOneReadsThisEmail.com. It doesn't work. It's a cold call.

When the calls and emails don't work, aggressive musicians show up to venues trying to make a face-to-face meeting. Even worse. The greater degree of intrusion, the greater the annoyance. You might get lucky once in a while with this method, but it is rare and I would never recommend it.

Every single one of the businesses I have ever worked with has come to me saying, "Jake, the paint wasn't even dry on my walls and I already have an inbox that is bursting, a voicemail that's full, and I had 12 people knocking on the door BEFORE LUNCH asking for gigs!"

Understand this: someone who starts a business is carrying the weight of the world (this applies to their upper management as well). Every mistake they make in their business could mean that their family doesn't eat. They are not given an itinerary from a boss to execute

in exchange for a paycheck. They are doing or dying, scratching and clawing to earn what they can, and while they would like to please customers by having music, booking the wrong musician could mean an empty venue, an empty register, and a very serious pile of debt. Are you going to trust all of that to a stranger? Not if you want to stay in business.



"Ok, so the cold call is obviously not going to work. What now?" The answer is networking.

When I first started DentonRadio.com (my online radio station), I was just graduating college. Like a lot of people graduating at that time, I was having trouble finding work. I ended up making salads at a friend's catering business. I was grateful for the job, but it was certainly not what I wanted to do.

After a few months, I convinced the owners to make me the Marketing Director for the company. This sounds cool, but I basically made salads by day and earned a couple extra bucks every time I made an appearance at some Chamber of Commerce events at night.

At the time, I wasn't even sure what a Chamber of Commerce was. Basically, it is a collection of local businesses joining together to strengthen their community and each other.

One of the greatest advantages to attending Chamber of Commerce events is the networking it provides. You may be at a luncheon with four people that run warehouses and all of them are spending far too much money on light bulbs. Nine times out of ten, someone at that table knows someone else in the Chamber that sells light bulbs and can save them a fortune. They are recommended, credible, and instantly trusted. The warehouses are furnished with new light bulbs at a cheaper rate, the light bulb guy made some money, the warehouse guys saved some money, and it was all because the Chamber brought them together.

Anyway, one afternoon I was at a Chamber luncheon and ran into the web developer who was working on DentonRadio.com at the time. He introduced me to Keith Washburn, who was managing a local hotel. Within 20 minutes of meeting Keith, he introduced me to Kim Phillips, head of the Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). The CVB is an organization dedicated to promoting their city to visitors and tourists. She had been in search of ways to create an online radio station that could promote the Denton music scene, and Keith knew it. A few weeks later, DentonRadio.com began working with Denton CVB, and it was all because a caterer with a hobby was introduced to a hotel manager, who introduced him to the head of the Denton CVB. I owe my career to Keith, and Kim, of course.

There is no way I could have known that that was going to happen. I didn't even attend the luncheon as DentonRadio.com. I was just simply interested in meeting people, and look what came of it. This is the power of networking.

My favorite book of all time (and the first business book I ever read) was written by Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos.com, called "Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profits, Passion, and Purpose." Before reading that book I thought business was simply numbers, facts, figures, supply, demand, all of that. Tony's book is just the opposite. He states very plainly that Zappos.com grew as a "result of pure luck" (pg. 82), that they would meet new people socially, form friendships, and then 2-3 years down the road look back and realize that that particular friendship resulted in the tools and relationships they needed to grow.

Note that if you read "Delivering Happiness", you will notice Tony writing a lot about business networking like it is something you should avoid and that you should instead build up your social, rather than business, circles. Here is the major difference in what he is selling and what you are selling: he is selling shoes to people; you are selling yourself to businesses. Business networking is essential for you.

There are two worlds, the business world and the artist world. The business wants access to the artist world just as bad as the artist wants access to

the business world. The business is in search of creativity, life, inspiration, and attractiveness, which the artist has. The artist is in search of a stage and a means to financially support their dream, which the business has.

Businesses are trying harder and harder to find ways to network in your world. But just as you may be uncomfortable at a business event because you feel you don't speak the language, they are just as uncomfortable at an artist's event because they feel *they* don't speak the language. If you can be the bridge between the two worlds, you win.



So, how do you do this? How do you become the bridge between the worlds? You must connect with a business owner socially. No pressure, no commitments, just a social interaction. Always remember: they WANT to meet you. Every day they are thinking of ways to make their business "cooler," more attractive, and when they meet an artist, they immediately begin to think, "Maybe this is how I can do it?" But if you lead with "Can I play? Can I play? Can I play?" their instinct is to react to your "cold call" with shutting down. You always need to have gigs on your mind, and it is ok to even mention it, but the artist that decides to connect with a business socially *first* is the artist that will win.

The book "Positioning" illustrates that the mind puts one thing first in every category. For facial tissue, it's "Kleenex." In the South for soda pop, it's "Coke." The same is true in music booking. The artist who has a close relationship with someone is labeled as "first" in that person's mind. Talent is irrelevant. I cannot tell you how many people want me to book an event but they want their co-worker, cousin, or son-in-law (who is TERRIBLE by the way) to headline. Why? He or she is first in their mind. In other words, they trust them.

If you forge a friendship with someone, you have forged trust and you will be the first person they call when they need music.

Seth Godin once wrote on his blog that if you are truly great, you don't need a resume for a job. In other words, if you have proven your

worth, networked in the proper circles, and established trust with the right people, then they won't need to see credentials, they will simply call you. No more cold calls, they are now calling you.

This is not to say that you will never have to call, or that you won't need to put your name out there when the time is right. The point is that if you want to bombard your way onto stages, you will fail. The far more effective way to go about being booked is to build social relationships with the people that do the booking. These relationships build trust and make it an easy decision for a venue to book you.

This the greatest and most effective way of growing your personal music business. Dedicate at least a little time to networking each month and pretty soon the choice gigs will be yours. Change your thought process from "What's the most effective way to ask for this gig?" to "Who is the decision maker, or next level from the decision maker, and how can I befriend them?"



At this point, it may sound like I am encouraging you to be deceptive, that I am telling you to abandon who you are and your circle of friends in the search of a dollar. Let me assure you that that is the farthest thing from my mind.

In the book "How To Win Friends and Influence People," Dale Carnegie asserts that relationships can only be strong if they are authentic, and that all of us can sniff out anything less just about every time. If you think that being deceptive will get you ahead, you are wrong. I am not asking you to change you, or your circle of friends, I am asking you to become better at making more friends and friends outside your normal circle. This is an exercise that could benefit everyone on Earth, regardless of the business implications. In fact, growing your social circle always grows you as a person. You never know, this exercise could do a lot more for you than just gigs.



So, to recap, the best way to get a gig is not to bother your way into a venue, instead develop relationships within that venue. If you frequent an area often enough, chances are that you will meet someone who knows someone who knows the person you need to meet. It's not a coincidence that the regular drinking crowd often includes the people that play at that bar. Your golden egg could simply be to drink at the venues you want to play. I mean this somewhat metaphorically. The venue you want to play might not be a bar, so partake in the specific activity that venue provides.

Once you meet the right people, the goal is to establish a relationship with those people. The largest talent buying client I have, currently, was finally convinced that we were the company to work with after they received our Christmas card.

Just as there is an artist on the other end of your songs, and not numbers, facts, and figures, there is also an "artist" at the other end of the venue. The business owner is romantic about their venue and they want to show it off. They want to add all of the color they can to their canvas, the same as you. So, stop trying to woo them with facts about what you can do for them. That's irrelevant. Woo a venue by showing them what kind of *person* you are. They are entrusting you with their "baby." I don't want a well-qualified stranger to look after my baby. I want a person whose character I trust, someone that will behave the same way *without* supervision as *with* it. In truth, a venue can't really *prove* that you are trust-worthy, but they are far closer to believe someone they know than someone they don't.



The mind will only conjure so many images when a venue owner asks themselves, "Who should I book?" You must be one of those images. Bothering a venue will guarantee your seat in their mind be given to someone else, but befriending them puts you at the top of the list. It is only then that your credentials matter. The question "What can you do for me?" is second to "Who are you?"

The victory of this battle will not go to the most talented, or the artist with the biggest draw. No, the victory will go to the artist that hustles,

that makes a point to network. The artist that goes out of their way and makes time just to make friends is the artist that will win. Not a fake “what can I get out of you” kind of hustle (a venue can smell that from a mile away, remember?), but a genuine “I would like to meet you.” Don’t even ask for a gig right away. That will come later. Establish the relationship first, then let the seed you planted grow. Let meeting new people be fun, enjoy this part. This method won’t work overnight, but it will work. Don’t force this to happen and don’t let yourself become frustrated. Be patient. Desperation is a terrible cologne.

WHERE DO I GET STARTED

In just about every city there is a Chamber of Commerce, a Main Street Association, and probably a Kiwanis Club. Joining an organization is a great first step. It honestly doesn’t even need to be a “networking organization.” Often, a group that just meets for the sake of meeting is enough. What about a charity group that builds houses? Sometimes the people at the “networking events” tend to have their guards up (trying to avoid “cold calls”), while at a community activity, they don’t. Remember, the goal is to make friends outside of your normal circle. It doesn’t always matter who they are. You never know whom they might know.

For the purposes of getting you started I will focus on the more traditional networking groups. First, there is the Chamber of Commerce.

Depending on the size of your town and their Chamber, there will be some form of dues required to join. I used to hate this business model because I felt like dues were designed to deter me from joining. But it’s just the opposite. I am paying for a service that provides exponentially more than I paid for. Remember, every dime I have ever made from music came from my interactions within the Denton Chamber of Commerce. For a Chamber to charge a couple of hundred dollars for a service that should cost thousands is quite the philanthropic service indeed. And if you still think the amount might be too much, most Chambers will allow you to pay on a plan in small installments.

Unfortunately, many musicians tend not to spend a dime to benefit their career regardless of the amount, even if it means success or failure. This means that the competition is very low. If you walk into a Chamber of Commerce and you are the only musician, you might as well be freakin’ Fonzie! Understand, you are now a musician that treats their career like a business. What business owner doesn’t want to work with you? A business savvy musician is like a unicorn – there are sadly not many of them.

You have been immediately given just a little bit of trust because you have shown that you are willing to be the bridge between the two worlds, and a little trust is all you need to start the conversation.

Let’s take this a step further. Chambers (if they are a good one) like to use Member Services, meaning that if they need light bulbs, they go to the Chamber member that sells light bulbs. Chambers are constantly hosting member events, and what brand-new Chamber member provides entertainment for just such events? Ding, ding, ding!

Let’s take it a step further. You are now the Chamber’s go-to musician. Over time, all of the Chamber members see you perform. Now, who just “auditioned” for the better bulk of the most successful businesses in town? Ding, ding, ding!

This example will not work for everyone, and here’s why:

1. You have to get there first. Once the Chamber already has several trusted musicians, those musicians will be first in their mind when creating an event.
2. You might not be in the genre the Chamber is looking for.

I give you the above example knowing it might not work for all of you, but to try and get your mind turning in that direction (and, for the record, the Chamber might still be a good idea for you, regardless of the above reasons. The networking within your local Chamber is still invaluable either way).



Ok, let's look at another example. How about the Main Street Association? If your town has a downtown, then you probably have a Main Street Association. Side note: don't limit yourself to just one geographic location, feel free to join organizations outside of your own home town as well, there is no limit here, and I have never run into an organization that won't let you join because you don't live there (they *do* want your dues after all). Anyway, what is typically in a vibrant downtown? Music venues. Who is in the Main Street Association? Music venue owners. Who do you need to meet? Ding, ding, ding!

Many of the music venues in Denton have owners that participate in their local Main Street Association. So, at the time I wrote this book, I served as the Marketing Co-Chair, wrote the Main Street newsletter, emceed most Main Street events, and constantly booked events when needed, all for FREE. Why? It was the world's greatest audition for me and my company. I was able to book music and promote events alongside the venue owners and managers I wanted to work with. They got to see me in action!

I did not serve with the Main Street Association deceptively. I honestly did want to help out, affect change, and bring business downtown. I did want to meet and learn from these incredible venue owners that have come before me and helped shape what the music scene is in my town. It felt good to help shape the future of my community, and the cosmic karma of it all is that I received networking benefits because of it.



Are you beginning to see the benefit of networking? Five-hundred dollars in dues could comfortably establish you in several of the top networking organizations in your city for a year. In that year, you could potentially make connections that would easily pay that money back and more. One-hundred and twenty-five dollars each yearly quarter could change your music career for the rest of your life.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

The purpose of this chapter is not to convince you that you should join the Chamber of Commerce or Main Street Association (though you should). The purpose is to help you get away from cold calling and help you begin to see a much easier and more rewarding way of booking gigs. Cold calling is dead; networking is KING! Be more strategic in your booking: finding the right people to talk to, expanding your social circles, and doing so intentionally. So, when the question "who should we book?" is asked, the obvious answer is you.

CHAPTER 3

Tools



“JAKE, YOU’RE WRONG. I MADE it a point last week to meet with three different venue owners. They all *acted* like they liked me, but not one of them called me back.”

“Hailey, you went to Billy’s right?”

“Yes. You told me to.”

“Bill is a good friend, Hailey. I stopped in after you did and asked him what he thought. He loved you, he thought you were very charming. But after you left he went to your YouTube channel and watched some of your videos and he didn’t like them. I fought for you and told him that you made those with a phone three years ago and that you were far better than those videos made you seem, but he wouldn’t budge. You only get one chance at a first impression, Hailey.”

“Are you serious??? I made those forever ago!! If he looked at the date on the videos he could see that. He can’t possibly think I still sound the same.”

“Hailey, watch those videos again and *really* be critical, like someone who is watching them for the first time. What would you honestly think if you were in his position?”

“... I guess you’re right. I worked really hard on those videos, I don’t want to have to take them down.”

“You might have to, Hailey. You need to make sure that you have the proper tools in place so that venues see you as a true professional.”

“But where do I start?”

“Well, Hailey...”

Ok, we’ve laid the foundation. You now know that venues *want* to book you. The reason you didn’t receive gigs before is not for a lack of talent, it’s for a lack of networking. You are going to intentionally dedicate time each week or month (as frequently as possible) to expanding your social circles and forming new relationships. Finally, whether intentionally or unintentionally, those relationships are going to connect you with the people you need to know in order to book the gigs you are looking for.

“So, are we done?” Not even close. We have the concept, but if you are going to truly succeed at this, you need to make sure you have the right tools. There are subtle messages that you could be sending to venue owners, both rookie and veteran, which will tell them you are not ready to be given their stage. I’m going to show you the tools that every professional should have in place, tools that send a message that you are a true and experienced professional.

BUSINESS CARDS

At every networking event, every person you know will have them. When you meet someone new, they shake your hand, ask what you do, and then reach in their pocket to exchange business cards. Once each person gives their card, they both look at the new card, nod, and put the card in their pocket. At this point you don’t really read it, and it doesn’t really matter. You already know who they are, they just told you. The point is to have the card later should you ever need their business. I have an entire drawer full of other people’s business cards. I will never use them, but I will forever keep them. If you can get through this dance without stumbling, then you’ve passed the first test. Better yet if you have a card and they don’t, you have now proven you know the dance better than they do.

This sounds almost dirty or honestly pointless, but trust me, if you don't have business cards they won't take you as seriously as they would have if you had them.

Not every venue owner will have business cards, but they will still recognize it as the sign of a musician that is serious.

You can purchase business cards for very cheap. For example, VistaPrint.com can print a batch of 250 for \$10 to \$20 dollars.

One final thought: Don't charge money for one of your business cards at a show. Believe it or not, I see musicians try this all of the time. Business cards are not merchandise and you will just make yourself look cheap.

DRESS UP

Too few musicians give attention to how they dress, both on and off stage (we are focusing on the off-stage in this section). The truly successful know that your appearance sends a message. Is your message "I don't care?"

If you are excited for a date and the other person shows up in sweatpants, is that a good thing? They obviously don't care as much as you do. If your date is dressed *up*, now you've got something.

Let the venue know that you think they are worth your time, and better yet that you are worth *their* time.

Nine-tenths of the early success of DentonRadio.com was because I always wore a tie. The Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau even gave me a cake with a tie on it for my birthday one year because it had become an iconic "Jake thing." I bought every stitch of it from the thrift store, but that didn't matter. Subpar slacks and ties are far better than really nice sweatpants.

I did overshoot my goal in the beginning with tie clips and sport coats in summer, but better to dress too far *up* than too far down. This doesn't mean that you necessarily need to wear a suit; the *way* you dress is irrelevant. The point is simply to be intentional. Jeans can be just as intentional as dresses, but there is a big difference between someone that dressed with

intention versus someone that did not. Simply ask yourself the question: "What message am I sending?"

DEATH OF THE PRESS KIT

Sorry to disappoint, but I just don't have time to read a Press Kit. If I don't want to be bothered by a cold call, what makes you think I want to read a *three-page* cold call? Three pages doesn't seem like much when you're making it, but reading it seems like "War and Peace" when I've got other things to do.

You should have a Press Kit in case someone asks for it. It's a good thing to have. But if you think that I am reading it for fun...

A Press Kit itself will not cause a venue to dislike you, but it will keep them from reading your email.

"Well, then what kind of email should I send?"

PROPER EMAIL ETIQUETTE

A few years ago I received an email from a musician that stopped me in my tracks. It was PERFECT! They didn't fit the parameters that the venue was looking for, so unfortunately I couldn't book them, but the way they wrote the email told me everything I needed to know. Without even listening to their music, I instantly knew they were a pro and had been doing this for a while, successfully.

I'm going to show you the perfect email, but first I have to say this: Email is the way professional business owners communicate (at least the majority). There are a few exceptions that don't rely on email as their primary mode of communication, but they still *have* an email. If you don't have an email account, or you haven't dusted yours off in years, you'll need to create one.

Your email account should not be "drivesfast@hotmail.com" either. You need a professional email. Most website hosting services, like GoDaddy.com will sell you a customized email account for almost

nothing. You can probably get away with “YourName@Gmail.com,” that’s much better than “unprofessional@Gmail.com,” but an email from You@BandName.com says that you are taking this seriously.

I know I already said that email as a cold call method is useless, and it is, but that’s not what you are doing. Busy booking people don’t read or respond to all of their emails. They have too many. But the first thing most bookers and business owners will do when they meet you is say “email me your info so I have it.” It goes a long way for me to be able to go to my email, search your name, and find your information already there. My email account has become my digital address book. Everything is saved there. This is also why your email NEEDS to be on your business card. So, make sure you set up an email account and check it often. Daily, in fact.

Email everyone. The “cold call” probably won’t work, but it will save your information in their email account so that when the networking starts, they will already have your info when they need to go back and find it.

It’s not a bother if you email someone. It *is* a bother if you email someone the wrong way. So, what’s the right way? Now for the fun part:

PROPER EMAIL ETIQUETTE (PART 2)

There is one word you need to remember when writing your email: SHORT. A long email is an unread email. Three paragraphs doesn’t seem like that much when you are writing it, but it is when you are asked to read it. A long email will be ignored every time.

The “perfect email” artist I mentioned previously kept his email under a paragraph, and he used that paragraph to be very precise. He started by introducing himself, his style of music, and the venue he would like to play. “Hello Jake, my name is ... I have a band called ... we play country music and we are interested in playing”

Country is a pretty vague term. Country could be just about anything. But if he had said “we are a hard-hitting, but not too much, cowboy-hat wearing, Americana, bluesy, rock thing with some steam punk thrown in

for zest and just a touch of folk meets Pink Floyd meets Tim McGraw on steroids with rock elements and a steel guitar/banjo player”, would I have really known his music any better? You aren’t dealing with musicians that understand “slang musical terms,” you’ll need to pick a genre and stick to it. Even if you don’t feel that it encompasses all of your abilities, it is better for them to at least have a general understanding of what you do than to have an exact description but not understand you. It is ok to say, we are a “rock & country” or “high-energy country” band, just don’t get carried away.

Next, he listed his accolades. “We have played X prestigious venue,” “we’ve won these three awards,” and “we have been featured on these music programs.” If the booker is smart, he doesn’t book off of accolades alone, but (if you have them) they *do* matter. Don’t worry if you don’t already have some big accomplishments to show off, they are not essential, but I meet far too many artists who feel they are bragging if they bring up their accomplishments. This isn’t bragging at all. As the person looking for great acts, I need to know that you have been around the block before. Though let me repeat that accolades are not essential – I NEVER book a band off of accolades alone, because they are too easy to bend the truth about and I was burned every time, in the early days, that I booked a band solely because of accolades.

Now for the best part of the entire “perfect email,” the artist wrote: “Our band’s rate is between \$300-\$500 (negotiable).” Do you see the brilliance here? There are three very subtle messages here: he doesn’t want to play for free, I know if they are in the venue’s budget, and that they are not going to be prima donnas. Let’s break this down one at a time.

NEVER tell a venue you will play for free. This immediately tells them that you are an amateur and are probably not ready for their stage. Even if you want to play for free you shouldn’t lead with that. I am in favor of musicians playing for free when they are first starting out, I think it is the only way to harness the craft and begin to form a following, but, even if you want to play for free, I would not lead with that. Most bands in the early years, and a lot in the later years, play for free. I know that, you

know that, and the venue knows that. There is just something different in the way a venue perceives a musician that asks for money than one that doesn't. The venue may be a non paying venue, still ask for the money anyway, and if they say "no", it's fine that you still agree to play. Just trust me, you'll get treated better if you at least politely ask.

I hesitated to write how much the artist asked for because no matter what the amount is, it will be too expensive for some venues and far too little for others (if I'm being truthful, that wasn't the amount that he actually asked to be paid). For the purposes of this chapter, I made up a fictitious amount, so please don't consider that number to be a template. Ask for the amount you want and the amount you feel is a fair amount to ask the venue to pay.

I have a friend that owns a pretty large company, he hires so often that he constantly has listings on his website. When he posts a position, he always includes the starting salary, but most of his colleagues constantly tell him, "You know that's really going to narrow your search." His response is always the same: "If that number is too little for someone, then I don't want them." Some venues pay thousands for bands, some venues pay in beer. Don't beat around the bush. If there is a minimum amount you'll play for, then be upfront about it. Don't make money the last thing you talk about. This is a business after all. But if you feel uncomfortable with that, this last part will put your mind at ease.

The music business is very, VERY hard. Unfortunately, I meet musicians that have struggled so long that they have become bitter with the rest of the world, and as a result, working with them is EXTREMELY difficult. As we have already discussed, booking is rarely about talent – there is talent everywhere. Booking is about finding the *right* people. The more bitter an artist becomes, the more they want to prove that they are not a failure. So, they boss everyone around in order to feel important. They don't listen to the needs of a venue, they are often rude to the venue's staff, and good luck keeping a band together. I knew immediately that the "perfect email" artist wasn't a prima donna with one word: "negotiable." Negotiable definition: "I'll work with you. If I've out-priced myself, I'll work with you. I'll listen to your

venue's specific needs. I'm not a rigid, take-no-prisoners person. I play music because I love it." Whether a musician or an accountant, the best people to work with are the ones who do it for the love and not because they have some sort of self-esteem issue.

You'll have to be careful that venues don't take advantage of you. If you've been playing for 50 years and venues are still negotiating you to \$0, you'll need to start saying "no." You won't need to say "negotiable" forever, but by and large, you will make far more money than a rigid, never negotiate artist because the venues enjoy working with an artist like you.

PROPER EMAIL ETIQUETTE (PART 3)

Alright, we're almost done with email. Have you noticed that we haven't let them hear your music yet? The music itself isn't what's important in this email, the venue is looking for either **A**) someone that will be a joy to work with and can add to the experience and reputation of their venue, or **B**) a musician that can bring a big crowd. They are looking for either A and B, but recordings and CDs honestly don't tell me any of that. I don't know your reputation, your stage presence, your charisma, or even if the CD is a good reflection of your live music. A few rookie venues may book off of CDs, but they will learn quickly that a CD is only part of the picture.

This should be encouraging to any musician that doesn't yet have recordings, because you can still get a few gigs without them. Obviously, if you have music you should include it. A link to a ReverbNation page or a YouTube video is perfect, something short and simple that puts your best foot forward. Yes, the music matters, but my point is that it is only one factor. Music is not the only tool a venue observes. Important, yes. All that matters, no.

Ok, you've introduced yourself, given a brief description of your music, given your rates, added the word "negotiable" and posted a link to some of your music (if you have any). Now this is the kicker: social media. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (at the time that I am writing this) are the major social networks that venues look at. There is no way of knowing what may change in social media in the future, so stay up-to-date with all things social media as best as you can. Also, you can visit JakeLaughlin.

com, as social media progresses, I will continue posting updates to the information below.

I am going to go into greater detail about all of these social “channels” shortly, but for the purposes of this section, I’ll just say that if you have Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter pages, it is a great idea to include them. You probably shouldn’t add links to many more than those pages, because most venues won’t know the more specific musician-based social networks (and yes, MySpace is dead, no matter how much you don’t want to believe it).

Finally, you should have a professional and appreciative sign off: “Thank you for your consideration. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to play your venue. – Name.” Now let’s see what all of this looks like together with a fake band:

Hello,

My name is Tony Breakfast, and I am a member of “Two Eggs Over Easy.” We are a classic rock band, and we would like to inquire about playing at Laughing Lola’s.

*Our rate is \$300-\$400 (negotiable) for a 4- piece band.
If you would like to hear some of our music you can here:*

<http://YouTube.com/TwoEggsBand>

You can also find more information about our band here:

*<http://TwoEggsOverEasyMusic.com>
<http://Facebook.com/TwoEggsBand>
<http://Twitter.com/TwoEggsBand>*

Thank you for your consideration. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to play Laughing Lola’s.

*Tony Breakfast
(555) 555-5555*

No fluff, no extras, just everything the venue needs and nothing more. Again I want to stress the importance of keeping it short. These three email sections of the chapter are easily the longest. I have to ask, if you looked ahead, which section did you look forward to reading the least?

UPDATE YOUR WEB PRESENCE

As I said above, with the Internet evolving as fast as it does, I will be constantly updating this section. The material below was written in 2015, so if you are reading this book several years after, please visit my website for a free updated version.

The Internet is the greatest tool you have. The music industry was once exclusively in the hands of those who could reach the masses: record labels, FM stations, etc. Now, that power is at your fingertips. But if you’re going to use the Internet, you need to use it right. The *content* you put on the Internet is between you and the Muse. I don’t want to change that, but you **MUST** make sure that the content you put on the Internet is *quality* content. Now, I didn’t say expensive content, you don’t have to break the bank to do this, but you do need to give your web content some thought. I will break down some dos and don’ts for some of the major web outlets available to you.

FACEBOOK™

Some rookie venues book exclusively through Facebook. Their goal is selling the most product (and it should be), so they are going to book the band with the biggest following. Since they don’t really know who has the biggest following, their best guess is whoever has the most Facebook “Likes.” This will be the first place bookers go just about every time.

Facebook may not be all that it once was, but that being said, we are still living in the glory days of Facebook, especially with “Pay to Play” as an option for you now. This is a platform you **NEED** to be using. You can get away with not having much else, but Facebook is

imperative. Here are a couple of steps you'll need to take with your Facebook:

Create a Page not a Profile

If you don't have a Facebook account, you will need to set one up. This is pretty painless. Once that's done, you will need to create a "Page." When you sign up with Facebook, the thing you are automatically given is a "Profile," and it is very different from a "Page." A Profile is for people, a Page is for a business.

Why do this? Well, the biggest difference is that a Profile collects friends, a Page collects "Likes" and Likes are what businesses care about, not to mention that most of the venues I work with don't take a band seriously if they send them a Profile instead of a Page.

Get More "Likes"

You really start looking like a pro when you can break through the 1,000 "Like" mark. I know this may sound discouraging for some of you, but 1,000 Likes isn't a terribly difficult goal if you work at it.

Start by inviting your friends, and then Pay to Play. Every Facebook page has an "Invite your friends to Like" section. You can go through your entire friends list and invite all of them to Like the Page. If you've ever received a notification on Facebook that said, "Bob suggested that you Like this Page," this is why.

There is a limit to how many Likes this will bring (that limit being your number of Friends), but if you, your band mates, or just some friends invite people, then you are guaranteed some extra Likes.

Now for - Pay to Play. This one has everyone nervous. Facebook has lowered how many people a Page naturally reaches when you post, but they also put in place the ability to *pay* for your posts to reach more people. This is what's known as post boosting. Boosting is cheap and INSANELY effective.

When I have an event that I really want to make sure has attendance, I will put \$5 to \$20 on a post and set the post to boost to the users that have Liked my Page and their friends. Not only does the post reach thousands, but every time I Boost a post, my Page receives more Likes.

You will need to connect a Credit or Debit card to your Facebook account, but once you connect it the first time, you won't have to connect it again. For every future post, you will only have to click "Boost Post" and then set how much you want to spend.

This is the most powerful tool on the Internet (currently) for bands to use for promotion. I don't know if it will be around forever, so while it is here, and while it works *this* well, don't miss out on it.

Update Your Pictures

I am surprised by how many bands I see without good photos. Just about everyone has their Facebook filled with amateur pictures taken on a phone. As a booker, I want to see some professional live action shots of you at a show, give me something to indicate what your performance truly looks like. I would say that one of the best things you could do for your career is hire a professional photographer for a couple hundred dollars and bring them to your next show. Good, professional, live action pictures will serve you well for years, and they are well worth the investment.

You will also need these pictures to give to venues for promotion and printing. Special note: make sure you discuss with your photographer that you want to purchase the pictures outright so that they are not surprised when their picture ends up on a poster.

Always create a Facebook Event

A lot of venues will search your page just so they can see if you regularly create Facebook Events for your gigs. Most of them feel that if you didn't create a Facebook Event Page that you didn't put in enough effort to promote the show.

Facebook Events are sort of “temporary Pages” that are specific to a particular event. Event Pages are great for promotion and inviting your friends and fans to shows. If a venue sees that you create a Facebook Event for all or most of your shows, it will go a LOOOOONG way when they’re deciding whether or not to book you, because they will know you are a musician that promotes your shows.

TWITTER

For those of you who aren’t sure what Twitter is, it is essentially Facebook but with a character limit of 280. Facebook will let you type paragraphs, have lots of pictures, videos, lots of stuff. Twitter is more about simplicity.

I stay as active as I can on Twitter, but I do not consider it to be as effective as Facebook at spreading my company’s name. However, due to the nature of Twitter being so concise, it is a perfect medium for press. If the story cannot be told in 280 characters or less then it’s too complicated. I know several press organizations that find their stories exclusively on Twitter for this reason.

A lot of the promotion organizations I work with are insistent about Twitter because they are trying to reach press. Though I do not consider Twitter essential, and I have seen plenty of bands succeed without it, I would strongly suggest having one for the possible press opportunities.

If you are a little apprehensive about taking on a new social media platform, I would suggest creating a Twitter account and then “forwarding” your Facebook posts. This means that every time you post something on Facebook it will automatically post that same content to Twitter without you having to do a thing. Setting this up is actually very easy and completely free. I do not suggest post forwarding for everyone, but it is much better than nothing, and the Twitter account will still be active if you ever to dedicate to it in the future.

YOUTUBE

The last time I checked, YouTube was the No. 2 music website in the world. When looking for music, YouTube is at the top for most. With compression and different editing tools, it is possible to make poor quality audio sound good. Unfortunately, video is MUCH harder to fake.

We all form emotional attachments to our music. Our songs are like our children, and no one thinks they have an ugly child. We actually *want* to watch their recitals and show them off, but unfortunately our friends don’t want to see them as much as we do.

The odds are that you probably have some sort of videos with your music floating around the Internet. An extremely difficult task is removing yourself emotionally from your videos enough to truly critique them. Are they quality? Are they a true reflection of your talent? A poor video is a very hard impression to overcome, so you need to make sure that whatever you release online is a positive representation.

That is the negative end of YouTube, but it is imperative to talk about the positive. I have a rule – when I book a show, I never do so based off of an audio recording. I receive hundreds of recordings a day and, having been burned too many times, I stopped using them as references when I booked a show. There is so much more to a show than just the music, assuming you haven’t edited your music to impossible standards or brought in a lot more instruments than your live show actually has, I also need to know that you can interact with the crowd, have stage presence, and showmanship skills. An audio recording tells me none of these things, but a video can tell me quite a lot.

I was having lunch with the producer of a “musician spotlight” show a few years ago and he asked me to watch a video of one of his upcoming acts. I had already seen the musician that he was referring to perform before. He was good, but I was not overly impressed. To be polite, I agreed to watch the video. I was shocked. I saw professional lights, flattering camera angles, a sold-out crowd, and some really impressive production. The same musician I had seen previously in the corner of a smoky bar had been transformed

from “ok” to a star! The producer then asked me, “Jake, based on this video, would you book this musician?” I replied, “In a heartbeat.”

Audio recordings will work with rookie venues but veteran venues have been burned too many times. Honestly, the best credential is a recommendation from one music booker to another, but, since you can’t control that, the *next* best thing is a proper video.

Take note here that I do not mean a “music video.” I mean a live show video, something with a live crowd. Pick the song that best represents you, show about 10 to 15 seconds of you introducing the song or saying something to the crowd, and then play the song. Don’t let this go much longer than 3 to 4 minutes. I know it will be hard to pick just one song, but if your video is any longer than that, it’s too long to hold the attention of a venue owner.

When you shoot this video, the main word you have to repeat to yourself is “quality.” You will get what you pay for, and, 9,999 times out of 10,000, if you get a “deal” from a friend who wants to help you out, or wants to work on their skills with a camera, you will receive exactly what you paid for. Don’t cut corners on this, you may need to spend some money. I would be suspicious of anything less than \$500. I know this may seem like a lot, but if you dedicate everything you make in tips and low-paying coffee shop gigs, you will be shocked at how fast you can earn the money. A good video is not a magic lamp, so don’t go into debt to pay for one, but this is an important investment that will serve you well in the future and is worth saving up for.

REVERBNATION

Let me start by saying that of these four social media outlets, ReverbNation is the one I care least about. I think it is a wonderful platform, I just 1) don’t personally use it, and 2) feel that its users are mostly musicians, not fans. However, this is the platform that musicians ask me about the most, and of all of the *music* social networking sites, I believe that this is currently the best one.

Here are some of the major points I say you need to focus on with your ReverbNation:

Pictures

Like most other social media sites, good pictures will serve you better than you can ever imagine. For some reason, most musicians believe that *something* is better than nothing. You might get away with a few crummy pictures stored away amongst hundreds of others on Facebook, but pictures are not a staple in the ReverbNation platform. Since your listeners will only see a couple of pictures, if not just one, it is important to make sure that they are of good quality and paint an accurate telling of your musical story and style.

URL Forwarding

I see a lot of bands buy a website URL (YourBandName.com) and then they forward that URL to their ReverbNation page. This means that when someone types in YourBandName.com they will instantly be directed to your ReverbNation Page. This is clever, but I’m afraid it won’t serve you as well as you think.

For starters, most people will probably forgive you, but we all know that’s not a website. That honestly isn’t the real problem though. A primary function of a website these days is to serve as a hub for your social media channels. It’s a one-stop shop that will link a potential fan to your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and anything else you want them to become a part of. Currently, on every ReverbNation page, there is a set of social media links for the artist and then a separate set of links that directs the viewer to ReverbNation’s social media. This may not seem like a problem to most of you, but to a potential fan that has never visited ReverbNation before (remember I strongly believe that a huge percentage of the people familiar with ReverbNation are other

musicians, not fans or venue owners) it can be very frustrating when you click what appears to be the right link, but is actually the wrong one. This could potentially lead some to assume that you do not have your own social media.

I wouldn't ever recommend URL forwarding, but, if you are going to do it, I would suggest forwarding to your Facebook Page and then adding links to your other social media channels in your About section.

Have at least one song

I am amazed at how many people join ReverbNation but don't have any recordings. Are you kidding? It's a music site!

One the other hand, do not put bad recordings on ReverbNation just so you'll have something there. As I said before, if it's on the Internet, it needs to be something of quality. I would suggest, instead of recording several songs just so you can fill up space, record one song for starters that is FANTASTIC and only upload that one. Better to have one song that is good than 5 songs that are poor.

Ok, we've covered the basics of social media, but let me say a closing thought: if you don't like social media, don't do it. I think Facebook is a must – you really *do* need to have that presence, but other than that the rest will not make you or break you, though it will help.

Social media grows so rapidly now and changes so fast that it can cause some serious whiplash, and if you hate doing it you will burn out pretty fast. Every day, a new social media site is born, and each one has its own unique identity and benefits. I would hate for you to reluctantly investing time in social media that you hate and then when a platform comes along that you *would* actually enjoy, and would be of great benefit to you, you are already burnt out on the entire social media concept.

So, pick your favorites, pick what works best for *you*. How much social media can you update on a regular basis? How much social media is too much? I believe you must pick something, social media is very important

(again, especially Facebook), but enjoy what you pick. This music business is a journey – make sure you enjoy it along the way.

GET A WEBSITE

As I said above, websites these days serve more as a hub for your social media than anything else. It is far more valuable to communicate with a potential fan multiple times, which is what social media makes possible, than to only communicate with a potential fan once. I think everyone should have a website, but don't get too clever. Have a great picture of yourself or band and prominent, direct links to your social media. Other than that, you might consider posting a gig schedule and you could possibly drop some html code onto the page from Soundcloud or ReverbNation so that people can listen to a few tunes. It's not usually a negative for you to have more than this, but the last thing you want is something cluttered and confusing.

Simplicity is the goal here, elegant simplicity. Seth Godin, wrote a book called "Knock Knock" (this book is actually available as a free e-book at SethGodin.com). The concept of the book is to think of your website like a Knock-Knock joke. Everyone knows exactly how a Knock-Knock joke works. I say, "Knock-knock" and you say "Who's there?" There is only one prompt and one answer, nothing more.

Websites can become less effective when they try and encompass endless options on one page. Too many options may look impressive, but it can become very confusing very fast. To make matters worse, you could end up with something very expensive.

There are endless free options for websites, some of the more popular being: WordPress.com, Drupal.com, and Blogger.com. I have used all of these and have been very satisfied (special note: Blogger.com is probably the least professional-looking, though the easiest to learn and use yourself [it's what I started with], but I would have to say that WordPress.com is my favorite), but at some point you may have to approach a web developer to put something together for you. They will try to convince you that you

need more content, but unless there is a very good reason I would steer clear of the clutter, and the larger price tag.

Also, in closing on this website section, you can purchase a custom URL for your website at websites like GoDaddy.com for only about ten to fifteen dollars (at least at the time this book was written).

CHOOSE YOUR NAME CAREFULLY

I have seen far too many bands and individuals lose gigs because of their name. They might do everything else we've discussed thus far *right*, but in the end a name can be an enormous weight that pulls the scales in the opposite direction.

Your name creates a mental image. Try to always think about how your name or band name will be perceived by others, not what it means to you. The master communicator knows that it is not the words she *says* that matter, but how the listener *understands* those words.

Put yourself in the mind of the person booking you. I have had countless bands use names like "Gentle Spring" and the band is death metal, or a band called "Raging Fist" and they play ballads. If your band can play two different styles of show, it will be extremely beneficial for you to create two separate band names and images. This might seem like more work, but trust me, it will save you far more time than having to explain yourself will. This rule applies for solo acts as well. How will your name look on a marquee, and would a stage name be better? I am not telling you to change your name, but it might be something to think about.

While you are perfecting your name, is it important to always be conscious of your entire image. Don't expect to get booked for a black-tie banquet if your Facebook profile picture is you with a chainsaw and a mask. I had that exact thing happen to me the first time I ever booked a band for a charity banquet. Trust me, it is hard to explain.

SAMPLE RECORDING

I have already hinted at my dislike of CDs. I think they are an outdated form of selling music that most listeners don't seem to want anymore, yet most musicians seem to feel like they are a failure without one.

I truly do believe that your money will be astronomically better spent on a video versus a CD, but I am not against having some recordings. Just be wise in your spending.

Your goal should not be to release a CD so that your listeners will see you in a different status category. Trust me, they don't care about a CD and the ones that do simply rip the songs off of the CD first thing anyway. In the excitement of releasing a CD, musicians tend to cut corners and costs, and the result is a substandard combination of songs that do more harm to your image and career than good.

Instead of focusing on 10 to 12 songs at a time or 4 or 5, EPs count too, find your "hit." Of all of your songs, which one do people seem to like the best? Which song gets the most response out of your crowd? Find that song and make it *perfect*, or 99% perfect (no artist is ever 100% satisfied with their work). This will allow you to focus properly on every detail in production and you won't have to settle on something because you are short on time or budget.

You don't need to break the bank on this. Two or three hundred dollars for one recording can get a pretty good bang for your buck we you are starting, far more than you would get for the same amount of money for ten songs. Even if you were to decide to spend \$1,000, how far would \$1,000 get you for a truly professional CD? Not very far at all, hardly even out of the gate. I believe it would be better to spend the entire thing on one amazing track.

I don't want you to *never* have a CD – I would just like it to occur organically, over time. If you spend all of your available time, energy, and recording budget on one song that is perfect and afterward repeat this process on the next song, over a couple of years, you will not only have an extremely well-produced CD, you will have given your songs enough

time to have been tested, played for an audience, evaluated, and given the chance to evolve. You will have a true CD that will serve you well for years, and years, and years.

I already told you that a CD tells me nothing when I book someone, but it is still valuable to hear at least one recording. So, again let me stress that you don't need a *CD* but I do encourage you to have at least *one* perfect recording. If you have nothing at all I will assume that you aren't yet at the level that you need to be to play for me. So, do your best to create one recording that is as close to perfect as you can get and then leave it at that. Let the muse tell you when it is time to record the next song, not insecurity.

Finally, ask other people to listen to your track during the production process. There is infinite value in having someone critique your work that isn't emotionally attached to it. They hear it through different ears. Our music is our baby and our ears don't always hear what is truly there, our ears hear what we believe *should* be there. You will be amazed at what outside ears will be able to show you.

GOOGLE VOICE NUMBER

This one isn't necessary, but it's pretty cool. At the time of writing this book, Google has a completely *free* service called Google Voice. The concept is that you can own a separate phone number and voicemail and then forward calls to your phone. The greatest benefit is that when venues call you, if you don't answer, they will be directed to a professional musician's voicemail message, something like: "This is the office of Tom Smith. I'm unable to answer the phone right now. If you are calling about booking, please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as I can." This kind of voicemail message is extremely impressive and a far better alternative to: "Hey guys, it's Tommy. If you are the pizza guy, Chris, or a lady, then leave a message. If this is my boss, then I changed my number."

One special note here: When you create your Google Voice account, the program is automatically set to prompt the caller with a "Thank you

for calling a Google Voice number" message. This setting can be turned off with the simple unchecking of a box under the settings tab. This is the very first concern musicians bring to me when they first set up their account and start getting some calls, so I wanted you to know up front how easy it is to fix the prompt, then no one will be able to tell the difference between your Google Voice number and a landline.

FIRE YOUR MANAGER

I HATE working with Managers! I hope that statement wasn't unclear. There is this EXTREMELY false belief that if a band "hires" a manager, they are suddenly becoming more professional and finally making good business decisions. What you have really done is ruin your chances of a career. *That* statement probably *was* a little unclear, so let me explain what I mean.

One day, your career will be lucrative enough that you will not only make enough money to support yourself, but you will also be able to begin hiring. At this point, a manager would make perfect sense, but let me ask you: is that your current situation?

The business part of music can be intimidating: I understand that wholeheartedly. Between taxes, marketing, and booking it can begin to feel like you will never really get a handle on your career. In a genuine attempt to pursue a professional career, however, most musicians make a wrong turn that will get you into trouble every single time.

One day, an enthusiastic fan offers to help you with your music in whatever way they can. You've seen this fan at most of the shows, and they seem to really have a handle on their own career. Not only are they smart, they are dedicated. So dedicated that they basically join the band and work for nothing (or maybe just a small percentage of profits). You feel your prayers have been answered. Your band now has a singer, guitar player, drums, bass, and a business-person. You've made it!

Here's the problem. Ask yourself, "Why did they 'join the band?'" Was it to help? Sure. But what are *they* getting out of it? Is it for the

satisfaction of helping their friends, contributing to the music, and one day an eventual payout. I hate to tell you this, but that's not why they do it. They may even believe that themselves, but it's not the truth. The reason they want to "join the band" is the same reason your band mates will play for no money (in the beginning): they want to be a *part* of something.

This isn't wrong by nature, like I said, it's the reason your band *and* your fans are there. We all want to be a part of something. But in those cases, they know their role. The jobs are clearly defined: play guitar, sing the songs, pay the cover and enjoy myself. The problem is that your "manager" doesn't have a job, he has *all* of the jobs. More importantly, he has the jobs that no else sees, and it won't be long before that begins to bother him.

Your arena is the stage, his arena is with the booker at the venue, and just as you must "attack" and give it your all on stage or you don't feel right, he must attack too. He wants respect, he wants to prove his worth. Except, at the end of the day, your name is the one people will be chanting.

So what happens? I call you to see if you would like to play a show. I am met later by a bitter fan-gone-businessman who now wants to put me in my place because I called *you* and not him. I want to negotiate a gig and he wants to overprice you right out of the show. He knows you're not yet worth that much, but that's why he's there, right? To be a ruthless negotiator, to burn all of your bridges, to kill any chance you have of forming a good relationship with any venue. He wants to earn the big kill, take you from earning \$200 to earning \$2,000. Sounds nice, except, as I said, you aren't *there* yet. And even worse, he has no idea what he is doing.

Your "manager" has no experience. He hasn't done this for years with hundreds of bands and venues. The only thing he has on his side is enthusiasm, a flame to prove himself. The problem is that he will turn that flame *on* the bookers and the venues. He will turn that flame on the people you need.

Here is what it all boils down to. You got tired, you were exhausted. This is one of the hardest careers in the world to pursue and all of the constant "no's" begin to take their toll. There were days you could not bear

the thought of taking another step, and one day he just appeared. Because you are trained to play music and not to set up a business, you felt like this was the best decision you could make in order to move forward, not just stay stuck in the same place.

I felt all of these exact fears myself when I started my first business. I had no idea what I was doing and I made some very foolish "hiring" mistakes because certain people said they were there to help me. The curious truth is that you will have more trouble in your career keeping the wrong people *out* of your music than you will in finding the right people that want to join. Everyone wants to be a part of something. It is up to you, in love, to kindly tell the wrong ones "no" and the right ones "yes." You need to know that the right ones are hard to come by. You need to learn how to spot them, and I'll give you the secret...

Don't wait until you can pay salaries and health benefits before you begin growing your team. You will pull your hair out, plus it's just nowhere near as much fun. What you need are masters of specific areas, masters that you yourself are weak in. But to know which areas you need help, you must first do them *yourself* or at the very least gather information about them.

When I was first starting out, I watched every business video and listened to every business podcast I could get my hands on. Then I scaled up and started attending seminars and buying books. After that I began meeting with business leaders and business counselors, people who had been there, done that, and had the scars to prove it (most reasonably sized cities have some sort of free business counseling service offered somewhere. Ask your local Chamber of Commerce for a referral). I did not cease to work on my business, I just wanted as much guidance as I could get. The combination of being in the trenches along with consistently taking in new information was invaluable.

Now that I had some knowledge and a few scars of my own, I was able to think about my business strategically. I broke everything down into three basic categories: "taxes, bookkeeping, and admin paperwork," "advertising, social media, and general building of my following and customer base," and "booking." I, not being the most rigidly

organized of beings, felt the most fear with taxes and bookkeeping, so I found an accountant. She was affordable, HIGHLY recommended from people I trusted (that's very important), and above all else, walked with me through the process of taxes, licenses, and bookkeeping. For instance, did you know that in Texas (where I live) there is no such thing as a business license? There are actually no barriers at all to being an official business, you are already there. There will be extra things to add as you grow, but, to start, there is nothing standing in your way.

My accountant didn't do everything for me, but she did what I wasn't capable of and then she taught me how to do the rest. She has many clients, I'm just one of them, and we meet in person every couple of months and talk every week by email to go over things and check it all out. I have since then hired a couple of different bookkeepers to add up receipts, double-check the bills, and generally give me a hand with ever growing bookkeeping. This takes a huge load off my plate and then I take their finished work to Susan (the accountant) to send in forms and do the big stuff. It is a wonderful arrangement that frees up a TON of my time, but I could not have gotten there if I hadn't learned how to first do the task myself so that I could then teach others how I wanted it done.

That is the secret! You have to do this stuff for yourself *first*. Once you really know how it's done, and what types of people best fit that need, you will then be able gather the right people and give them the right instructions.

The problems come when you don't know what you want and you're not hiring a specific person to fit a specific need. You find someone who is smart and willing, and then you say, "Take us to the next level." The problem is they don't know how, and they could do a lot of damage along the way.

The truth is, I'm not really mad at managers – it's not their fault. They are given no guidance, no training, no parameters, and their only assignment is to "make things better." Of course they fail. They are setup to

fail. They have no direction to run in. That, I'm afraid, is the fault of the musician.

Some experienced managers are great to work with, but usually I prefer to work with the musician. You are the one with the passion after all. One day you will have an army of employees, or booking agents, or label representatives, but in the meantime, learn these skills yourself. They will serve you well for the rest of your life.

PLAY OPEN MICS

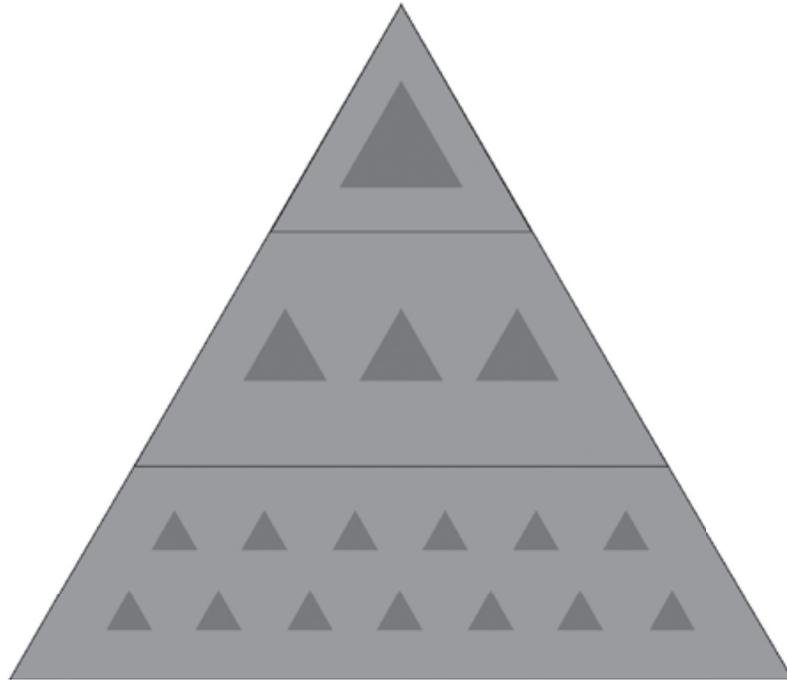
This is the final tool, and it is very simple. I mentioned earlier that the best way to get a gig is for you to be recommended by one venue owner to another. If you have the opportunity to play a couple of songs for a new venue, or create a little buzz in an area, then you have tipped the scales in your favor. Additionally, you may find new ideas from other artists, network with the local artist community, get a few extra practice sessions in, and polish your songs with live audiences. This tool is really not a tool, but it is easily one of the most powerful steps you can take in the early stages of your career.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I listed several different things I believe you need to purchase. Business cards, live action pictures, a website URL, one "perfect" recording, and a very quality video of a live performance. Altogether, you should be able to purchase all of this with a budget around \$1,000. I know this may seem like a lot of money, but if you begin saving all of the money you make on gigs, big and small, you will be amazed how fast you raise the money. Gather these tools and you will have everything you need to build your music career.

Alright, now all of the material in this chapter may have seemed a little random, like all of the pieces didn't actually fit together, so let me help put

a bow on everything and tie it all together. Imagine a triangle or pyramid broken down into three sections...



At the top of the pyramid you have a pretty small triangle...



This triangle represents your ability to have a one-on-one connection with a venue owner or booker. You can only do this so much and there are only so many of *you*, but it is piercingly effective. You won't win them all, but you will probably win at the very least 30 to 60 percent of them. And on that note, every person you make a deliberate effort to form a relationship with outside of your normal circle will somehow benefit and grow

you personally and in your career (directly or indirectly), so in reality your success rate will be 100 percent with every new encounter.

This small triangle is at the top because it is the most important. It doesn't matter what comes after it, you have to have this triangle to succeed, and no amount of marketing will ever come close to its effectiveness. This is the *Networking Triangle*.

Next, imagine the second layer of the pyramid underneath your original triangle...



This represents your emails. Now, if you have made them lean, mean, and full of the right content, music, and video samples, then you will be amazed at how many more responses you will receive from them. You will never receive as much success from emails as you will from in-person networking, and most of the time your emails will be best used as follow-ups to go alongside your networking, but they are still the preferred mode of travel for the businesses you want to connect with and will serve you far better than anything else.

This layer of the triangle goes second because it is the strongest tool in your "Not-In-Person Arsenal." Send as many emails as you can, because you never know, and your new email style will go over a lot better than your old one. But what you are really doing is making sure that the venue has your information. There is zero chance of them meeting you, wanting to book you, and then not knowing how to follow-up.

Next, imagine the third, bottom layer of the pyramid...



This layer represents your social media. This layer is bigger than the other two, but it comes last in level of importance. Don't get me wrong, it is still very important, but it certainly cannot do what the other layers can do. There is nothing about social media that is active. A Facebook page doesn't actively search for gigs for you to play, it doesn't walk into a venue and make an impression. In fact, there is absolutely no reason for anyone to see your social media unless you send someone to it.

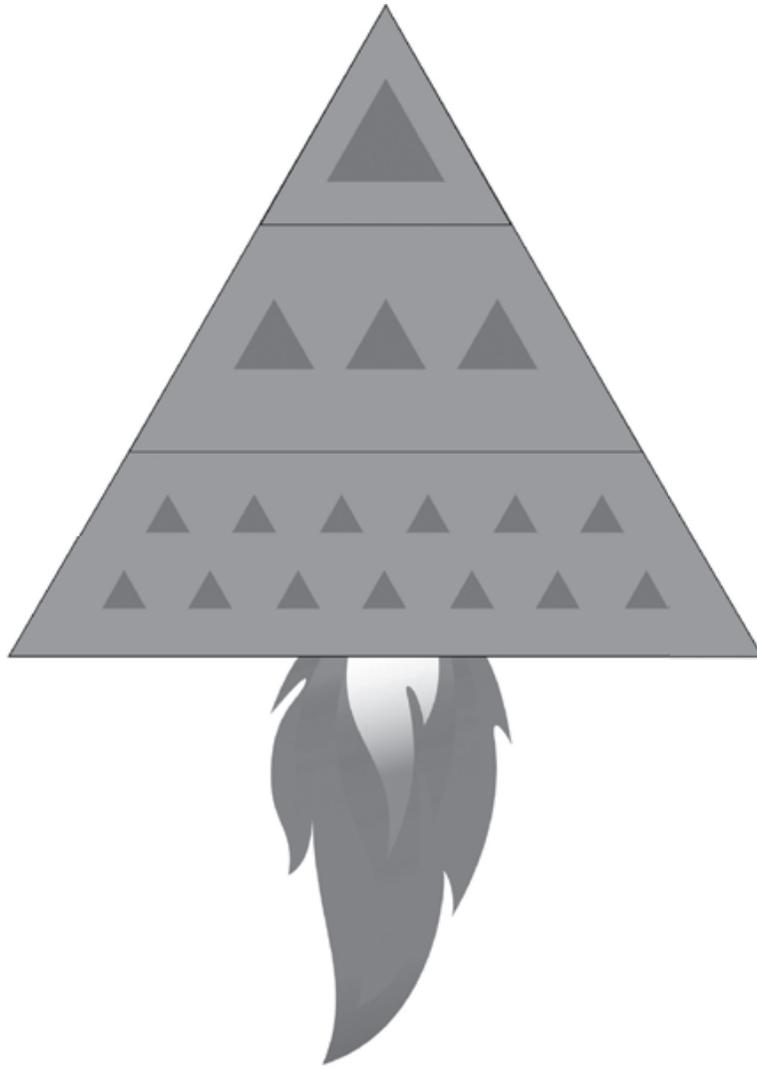
There is a HUGE misconception with the Internet today. For some reason, most people believe that if they post something online that it will be seen. This may have been the case 15-years ago when there were not a lot of options within the Internet. But now, with literally billions of options, how will I ever find your information? The paradox is that posting something online is not a guarantee of success, but *not* posting something online *is* a guarantee of failure.

We live in a technology world, an online world. If a venue wishes to see how big your online presence is, or hear your music, or see your performance and there is nothing there, then they are sure to pass just about every time. I have seen some musicians have minor success without social media, but that is very few and far between. However, don't use "I'm spending my time working on my social media" as an excuse to not network or send emails. No amount of social media will outweigh the power of meeting someone in person.

It is important here to note that even though social media and websites take some time to set up and maintain, they continue to work for you in your sleep. Even when you are away from your computer, your social media can still be viewed. The benefits far outweigh the workload. You now

have a digital "clone" of yourself beating the marketing drum 24/7. This is also why your social media needs to be superb. Social media can either be working continuously *for* you or continuously *against* you.

While social media will almost never get you a gig by itself, it is extremely beneficial to have something that works without you having to be there. As you travel up the triangle your level of involvement, energy, and effort goes up, but so does your effectiveness. Each layer has different levels of effort and different levels of reward. However, when those layers work together – you make a conscious effort to connect with someone, then send them a follow-up email (or perhaps send it ahead of time), and that email links them to websites, social media, pictures, and videos – you have turned your pyramid into a missile.



You are no longer shooting buckshot and hoping that if you just scatter enough information in different directions that it will hit something. No, you now have a strategy. You now have a missile – a very effective missile.

CHAPTER 4

Secure It



“HEY HAILEY! HOW HAVE THINGS BEEN?”

“Jake, they are awesome! I have been getting a TON of gigs! But I’m not sure what to do now. I haven’t been invited back. What should I be doing now?”

“Hailey, do you remember the gig of yours I came to at that burger place a few weeks back? Do you remember how you were dressed?”

“I don’t think so. I probably dressed the way I always do.”

“That might be your problem. They might have thought you didn’t take the gig seriously.”

“Does that really matter?”

“Hailey, there are certain things that venues are looking for. Little signs that make you different from the other musicians. If you can do just a couple of things different, I guarantee that you will get invited back.”

“What are they?”

“Well, Hailey...”

Now you’ve got the gig, this chapter is dedicated to keeping it. Let’s say you’ve done your homework. You know the venue, you fit their style, and there is a crowd anxious to see you (that last one will come in time if that’s not the case just yet). There are several expectations every venue will have, yet very few musicians think to do. If you are the musician that follows all of the steps I am about to lay out for you, even if you don’t have the biggest draw or the most experienced band, you will be set apart from almost all other musicians in your area. One gig is great, but two gigs are far better.

ARRIVE EARLY

I don't mean 10 minutes before your set early, I mean at least an hour early. Rookie venues will put up with showing up late, but veteran venues won't.

In my early days of booking we functioned on "musician's time." Musician's time meant that if we started the show 30-minutes after start time, it was considered starting early. I am not referring to the 30-minute buffer that a lot of venues are operating on these days where they tell everyone that the show is at 8:30 because they know most of the crowd won't show up until 9:00. If that works for the venue, then fine. For all other cases, and venues that pay well, starting on time is a must.

Equipment malfunction is not a possibility – it is a guarantee. Every time I organize a show that doesn't get started on time, someone on the crew always has the excuse that something wasn't working and caused them to be late. The problem is that equipment malfunction shouldn't have been a surprise. I've never had a show where at least one piece of equipment didn't malfunction, everything should be tested and checked long before the curtain is supposed to rise.

When you do arrive, unload, find your sound man, and prepare everything you need to prepare. This is not the time to grab a beer or a burger and relax, that should be saved for after everything has been plugged in and sound checked.

I know this makes me sound like a difficult person to work with, but if you want to make this your career then you have to begin thinking like a professional. There will be plenty of time for fun, but only *after* all of the boxes have been checked. Trust me, this will make for a night that is much more fun for you, the venue, and ultimately, your fans.

DRESS THE PART

Your band might not belong in three-piece suits, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't dress on purpose. I know old-school jug and washboard bands that arrive in stained T-shirts. It's not exactly fancy but it fits. Dress on purpose.

I once heard it said at a seminar that you can dress anyway you like, that's between you and the muse and I completely agree, but when people look at you, they need to know *you* are performing that night.

I already stressed the purpose of dressing the part off-stage. It means just as much to the venue that you dress on purpose on-stage as well. You communicate that you care when you dress the part.

A few years ago, there was a band whose sound I really enjoyed, but when I booked them they showed up to the show in their pajamas. I was shocked. Whether it was true or not, they clearly communicated to me that they really didn't care about playing that show. I immediately began writing them off in my head.

BRING EXTRA EQUIPMENT

Cables, DIs, and guitar stands have the tendency to "disappear" at shows. The more veteran venues I work with, the more I see that most of them have the sound system essentials, but most of them have very few cables. They expect professional bands to bring their own, and that way, they don't have to keep buying new ones when they "disappear."

Even if it turns out that the venue has cables, DIs, stands, and extra mics for the show, it is still a good idea to be safe rather than sorry and bring your own. But the reason to bring them isn't to be prepared. It is to prove your level of professionalism. A band that plans ahead and brings backup equipment, even a small PA just in case, always impresses me (special note: if the sound guy has the equipment, don't insist on using yours. That's a classic prima donna sign). Expect the unexpected. The venue may be exactly what you thought it was going to be, but if not you will be very, very glad you thought ahead and prepared.

ALWAYS CALL AHEAD

Very often a gig will go poorly simply because there was no clear communication. A few years ago a band asked me if I had any dates open at a

venue. I told them I had a night open the first week of June but that they should call me to work out details if they wanted it. Never receiving a call, I booked the show with someone else. Three months later, the first week of June, I receive a furious phone call from the second band I had booked telling me that there was already another band setting up. I drove to the venue to find that the first band had assumed that the gig was theirs and didn't bother to call me during the last three months to confirm. This is why double-booking happens so often. It is very easy to check in with a band that you *know* is playing, but it is very difficult to check in with a band that you *don't*.

Double-booking is only one of the reasons that you should call ahead. Ask as many questions as you can. Can you play covers, or is it only originals due to licensing? Is it okay to bring a tip jar? Are you allowed to take breaks? Do you get a bar tab? How will we be paid: cash, check, do you need to prepare an invoice, or do they require you to fill out a W-9 tax form?

Good professionals always call or email ahead and confirm the gig and details. Amateurs fly by the seat of their pants. I always appreciate a "checking in" phone call. A phone call elevates any nervousness I may have about the show and gets everyone on the same page.

Special note: when you make your confirmation / "check-list call," make it about a day or two before a gig, and keep it to one call. The last thing you will want to be is a bother whom the booker regrets giving his number. Two calls are fine. Five calls are pushing it.

BEFRIEND THE SOUND GUY

Imagine you lived in a world where everyone is a diva. Now imagine that you were put in charge of this world. Imagine you had to meet a different diva every day and have them treat you like a second-class citizen. Unfortunately, this is the world that most sound guys live in.

Very often, a venue owner puts their sound guy in charge because they don't know as much about music as the sound guy does. However, to the

musician, the sound guy appears to be the low man on the totem pole, the one that "works for you." Too often, I see bands treat the sound guy like dirt, yet when the question is asked, "Should we bring that band back?" the venue owner looks at the sound guy for the answer. What would the sound guy say about you?

I understand that you are in this to make music your career, or at the very least play as much as possible, and if the sound guy is bad, then you won't sound like the quality band you are. But, do you really think that the best way to prevent a bad sound experience is to be a jerk to the guy whose job it is to make you sound good? Even if the sound isn't good, will your being a jerk make it better? I surely doubt it.

On the other side of the fence, I've come to find that some of the best sound guys are often colossal jerks themselves. They have had to put up with so much "diva-ing" from other musicians over the years that they stopped worrying about how everyone feels and they get down to business; I personally love this in a sound guy! I know it doesn't make him fun to work with, but *this* sound guy knows that he or she's job is not to be liked by the band, but to make the sound *perfect*. The sound guy really wants the show to be perfect. It's just as much their job as it is yours. So, if both parties want the show to be perfect, then why isn't it?

The key here is communication. Coordinate with the sound guy in advance, talk through any special requirements that you have, let them know what equipment and instruments you are about to bring and how you would like it to sound. Provide them with a stage plot and an instrument list. Ask if you should bring anything yourself. The worst sound guy in the world could make you sound fantastic when provided with this information.

Most importantly, when asked "should we bring them back?" their answer will be "of course! I loved working with them!" Not to mention the whole sounding better thing...

DON'T BE A DIVA (PART I)
STOP IT!!!

DON'T BE A DIVA (PART 2)

If you are playing a restaurant or a bar, they have a day-to-day method of operations that you don't know about, just as you have needs that *they* don't know about. Expect that changes and the unexpected will happen – know that some imperfection is a guarantee. You will be much happier when you can roll with the punches, and so will they.

I had a band play a show for me many years ago. The venue was packed, but not because of the band. This was an outside venue, the weather was beautiful, and the drinks were very cheap. The fact that there was a band was just extra gravy on the biscuit. This is a home run for every musician looking for new fans. The venue was so busy that the manager asked the band if they could move their merchandise closer to the stage so that they could seat customers at the table the merch was currently on (again, this is a good problem to have: too many audience members). Now, you know as well as I do that people often don't like to approach stages, so moving the merch closer would usually be unfavorable, but there was something different about this venue. For some reason, and to this day I still don't know what it was, people in this venue preferred to approach the stage. We even experimented and would put tip jars all over the room and every single time the one dead center stage always made the most. Anyway, this band didn't know that they were going to sell more product at the new location than before, but even not knowing such a fact could not excuse what happened: they threw a fit right in the middle of the venue. In front of all of the customers, they started pitching an absolute fit. I was shocked! This was the most unprofessional thing I had ever seen. I loved this band, a lot. They really had something special, but I knew right then that I could never, ever book them again. Any band that throws that big of a fit over that small of a request, is a band I refuse to work with.

Please, be willing to work with the venue. Ask questions. Ask what *they* expect of you. And then, after all of your homework has been done and something unexpected still happens, just roll with it. You would be surprised at how rare a quality that is and, you will really set yourself apart.

PROMOTE YOUR GIG

Even if you don't bring a venue *one* new customer, every single venue books new acts with the belief that music will bring either new people or *attention*. A major incentive for venues to start booking music is to gain access to your social media followers. As I said before, very often a booker will check your Facebook page just to see if there is an Event Page created. No Event Page, no second gig.

Some people don't promote certain gigs because they don't feel that the gig is worth the extra time it takes to promote. If that's the case, then why play it?

THANK EVERYONE

My numbers are slightly off because different studies say different things, but rough ballpark, 90ish percent of people dislike their jobs much of the time, 70ish percent of people feel that they would like their job if someone thanked them for what they do. A simple “thank you” can change the entire course of almost everyone's day. Make it a point to thank the sound guy, bartenders, managers, servers, everyone, and your odds of an invite back will shift in your favor dramatically.

They may never hear those two words all week. When asked who they would like to see play again, who do you think they will recommend?

TIP

If you happen to play a restaurant or a bar and you are given free food and drinks, you are still using the time of the server or bartender. This is time they could spend with paying customers, but instead are forced to spend it with you. It's not that dramatic of a scene, but they would much rather spend time serving someone who pays them, that's just common sense. In fact, I have seen servers fight to cancel music and musicians at bars and restaurants just because they were so tired of working for less money than they normally would.

I know you don't mean it maliciously – you probably only have a credit card and no way to tip cash. But I would encourage everyone to bring a few dollars in cash just to say “thank you” to the server. Don't underestimate the power that the staff has. Would you prefer the reputation of the guy or girl that tips really well or the reputation of the person that stiffes everyone? Which do you think will lead people to want you back?

Not to mention, it's just a classy move.

SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD

This is the golden egg, the straw that breaks the camel's back. This is shockingly effective. Cards and letters can brighten anyone's day. This is the world's most effective way of associating yourself with an emotional response. Every year my organization sends Christmas cards we see results, and I am always saddened by the lack of results during the years that we are “too busy” to send them.

Make a list of the venues you care about and let them know how special they are to you. Let the venue know the experiences you've been able to have because they existed. Don't lie, don't butter them up, just tell the truth and spend a little extra time doing something nice for someone who invited you into their home.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Getting a gig is hard. It's extremely difficult. Every single time you get one you should celebrate it. But even better than one gig is two; far better than two gigs is three. I have seen far too many great musicians miss out on their opportunity for gig three, four, and five because they didn't follow these principles above. They weren't unintelligent or untalented musicians, they just saw themselves as musicians first. What this chapter has been leading to is that you are not a musician first. You are a partner first. Musicians play music, but partners seek ways to help the other partners succeed. Partners respect each other. They realize they have

different tasks but the same goal. The goal is to work together in harmony to create the best possible experience for the customer. Run every decision you make through the filter of that goal and you will be invited back every time.

CHAPTER 5

After the Curtain Closes



YOU'VE DONE IT: YOU'VE ARRIVED. You now know how to get the gig! My true hope for you is that while you were reading this book, you were given ideas. My hope is that the muse stirred something within you.

You have an amazing gift. You have been given the gift to create, and with courage and a little information you can unlock the strength inside of you to unleash your gift. One of the great tragedies on Earth is a gift inside that never sees light.

Music is a difficult business. We all need moments of inspiration to keep pushing each other forward.

If this book inspired you, even in the slightest bit, I want to ask you for a favor. At my website, you will find a free download of this book. I would like you to download a copy and give it to someone else. Find someone who is struggling and give them a little inspiration. You never know what it might do. You will also find some additional resources for yourself there as well.

I consider everyone who creates to be an artist. An artist might create a song, a poem, a business, or a book. From one artist to another, I hope that this will not be the last time we are able to connect. If you visit my website you can sign up for a list that will be notified when additional works are available. My sincere hope is that these works will benefit you and your career.

A recent exchange between Hailey and myself:

“Jake, thank you so much! You have helped me get so many gigs! Thank you for helping me.”

“Thank you, Hailey, but I didn’t do anything at all – *you* did. You are the one who made this career happen. You are the one who had the courage to channel that spark inside. You have taken a first step into a much greater world of music.”

“I love this so much! There is nothing better than the rise of the curtain. But, between you and me, Jake, I’m not really sure what to do now. What do I do after the curtain closes?”

“Well Hailey, I’m glad you asked...”

Find more resources at JakeLaughlin.com

J A K E ' S R E A D I N G L I S T



DON'T STOP HERE – BOOKS are the greatest advantage you have in reaching your goals. Here is a list of some other works that I think will help you in your music business.

- The War of Art by Stephen Pressfield
- Tribes by Seth Godin
- Platform by Michael Hyatt
- Unleashing the Idea Virus by Seth Godin
- Positioning by Jack Trout & Al Ries
- Good to Great by Jim Collins
- How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
- The Steve Jobs Biography by Walter Isaacson
- Six-Figure Musician by David Hooper
- The Dip by Seth Godin