THIS IS HOW WE DO IT

A 7-Step Guide To LAUNCHING And GROWING Your Career as a Professional Musician

BY BRANDON SHAW
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRO:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE RIGHT MENTALITY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CHOOSE THE FEW THINGS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>THE RIGHT GEAR</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A WEBSITE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>STOP NETWORKING</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>GET SOCIAL</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>KNOW THE 2/3 RULE</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Being a professional musician is an interesting thing. I wouldn’t trade it for any other job, but it definitely has it’s challenges. When I finished music school and earned my degree, I didn’t know what to do next. Do I apply for gigs? (as it turns out, no, that’s not a thing) Do I tell everyone I know, “Hey, hire me!” (not quite)

You love music. You’ve been playing music for a while and can’t imagine doing anything else for a career. Maybe you went to music school. While you were there you practiced more than you ever will the rest of your life, took theory classes, musicianship classes, played in about 9 different ensembles, and just generally geeked out with your music major friends.

But You know what they didn’t teach you? Anything about business.

I know, business people are the worst. “Oh, we gotta get this Q3 profit margins up! Debra, don’t forget to maximize our synergy through team building retreats and value-added marketing proposals!”

It’s like they’re speaking a different language. But the music industry doesn’t work like it used to. Gone are the days of getting signed, becoming a star and living off of royalties for the rest of your life. In reality, those days were never really here. You’ve got to make it happen for yourself.

Being a professional musician has always been and will always be one thing: hard work. There’s no way around it. As a freelance musician, you are in charge of your career. You are your own business, your own startup. There’s no corporations to join with regular hours and health insurance. Yet there are millions of musicians around the world that are making a living doing what they love to do. Musicians are stereotyped as being lazy, but the successful ones are some of the hardest workers you’ll ever meet.
HOW THIS BOOK IS LAYED OUT

In this book, you’ll find 7 different steps to help you launch or grow your career as an independent musician. They’re all things that are crucially important, but you probably didn’t take a class on them in school. After each chapter, there will be an assignment so you can apply the concept to your own career.

I would encourage you to take this a chapter at a time. Read the chapter, then complete the assignment. I know it will be tempting to keep plowing through, but if you complete each assignment at the end of each chapter, you’ll be in a much stronger place with your career.

When you’re done with the book, head over to StartupMusician.co. I post regularly on the blog there and there’s also a podcast where I get to sit down with some incredible musicians and hear about their journey as professionals.

If you enjoy this book, please let me know, I’d love to hear from you.

You can email me at brandon@startupmusician.co
Jumping into being a full time musician is a scary thing. If you’re still in school, just about to finish, or are just ready to make the jump into making music your only source of income, how do you make that transition? How do you know when you’re ready?

Well, with some analysis and a little math, we can figure this out together. There’s a few questions you’ll need to ask yourself first:

**HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU ACTUALLY NEED?**

This might seem like a no-brainer, but you need to figure out how much money you actually need. If you just go quit your day job and hope that it all works out, you’ll likely end up on your parents’ sofa in a few months.

Rent is due on the 1st, your phone bill on the 6th, your car insurance on the 21st, and you’re constantly having to fill your car with gas throughout the month. If you’re only paying for stuff as it comes to you, you may not know how much money you actually need in order to survive.

Total up all of your monthly expenses (see the end of this chapter for a free worksheet that’ll do all the work for you). By the way, we’re talking bare minimum here. Cut out your excessive visits to Chipotle and your Netflix subscription (I’ve been using my brother’s login for years). Just include the bare minimum you need in order to pay your bills, put gas in your car, and eat food at home.

Total all of that up in one column, and write down that total number. This will be your monthly minimum.
HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU ACTUALLY MAKE DOING MUSIC RIGHT NOW?

Since freelance musicians get paid sporadically throughout the month and not in 2 monthly lump sums like most people with regular jobs, you might not know how much money you’re actually making right now. The true number may surprise you.

It doesn’t matter if you are gigging, teaching, recording, composing, or a combination of all of these and more, total up everything that you’ve made in the past 3–4 months from your various music jobs. Make this the second column. Calculate the average of these months (or let the worksheet at the end of this post do it for you).

THE MATH

The math here is simple. If the number in column 2 is higher than the number in column 1, things are looking good, but you still may not be quite ready to make the jump. There’s a few things you should be aware of first.

THE MENTALITY

It’s going to be difficult for a while, but that’s not a bad thing.

You’re probably going to have to eat a lot of top ramen (but at .15 cents each, how can you not?) You’ll have to buy less stuff on Amazon. Worst of all, you’ll have to start saying no to things that cost money. Let me present you with a difficult scenario.

Your friends are all going to Disneyland, that sounds fun! Oh, but that’s right, your Verizon bill is coming up next week. But it’s DISNEYLAND! Ehh.... Yeah, you can probably make it work!

WRONG. You cannot make it work. Disneyland will be fun, but you know what won’t be? Your account overdrafting next week because you foolishly setup autopay.

In this scenario, you have to make the difficult choice of declining to go. Please don’t say, “I can’t afford such luxuries on my pitiful income as a modern day jester...” That’s weird for a lot of reasons. Just say, “Sorry guys, I won’t be able to make it.”
GIVE YOURSELF A RUNWAY

The worst thing you can do is jump into full time musician-ing cold. Whether you’re at a day job, or you’re in school, you have something else that’s filling up your time other than getting paid for your music. Keep doing those things while still pursuing your music career with everything you’ve got.

Building up your music career takes time. Take as much music work as you can whenever it comes your way, while still managing to stay in school or at your job at Best Buy. You want to get to the point where you can barely make your schedule work because you’re so busy being a musician.

When you reach this critical mass point, as long as your numbers add up, you’re probably ready to make the jump. When you do finally quit your job, graduate, or (heaven forbid!) drop out of school, you’ll have a running start with your music career as opposed to going, “okay, how do I get work?”

Don’t fall in the trap of thinking you’re going to quit Best Buy and just write songs all day and play awesome gigs every night. If you’re not already doing it consistently, you’re going to have a much more difficult and frustrating time starting from nothing.
YOUR INCOME WILL CHANGE LIKE THE WIND

Since you’re a freelancer, your income doesn’t come from one single source consistently. Some months you’ll just barely scrape by. Others you’ll think to yourself, “If every month was like this I’d be rich!” And some months you’ll probably consider calling Terry from Best Buy and asking for your old job back. This financial roller coaster comes with the territory.

You should know this: As a general rule, there are some dry months as a musician:

1. Live gigs are much scarcer in January and February
2. Private lessons drop down during the summer months.
3. December is the best month to be a musician.
YOU NEED TO LIVE COMPLETELY BROKE FOR A WHILE

If reading this is making you doubt that you have what it takes to be a full time musician, don’t worry, it gets better. For now though, you need to be broke.

I know that seems dumb, but let me explain.

If you’re not great with money, the solution to your problem is not to just have more money. If you’re going to Chipotle three times a week, buying dumb crap on Amazon, and going to Disneyland whenever you want, even though you know you can’t afford it, you’ll be stuck playing that game for the rest of your life. Your frivolous spending will increase with your income and you’ll always feel 2 steps behind.

But if instead you trim the fat and cut your expenses down to the bare minimum and live as cheaply as possible for a while, save some money, and really think about what you spend your money on, you’ll have a much better handle on your financial life. As your income increases (and it will) you’ll be smarter about how you spend your money because in the beginning you had to be.

So enjoy this difficult, frustrating, brand new, scary, awesome time. It’ll be gone before you know it.

ARE YOU READY TO BE A FULL TIME MUSICIAN?

I’ve put together a foolproof flowchart that will tell you if you’re ready to be a full time musician. (Disclaimer: this is definitely not foolproof)
ARE YOU READY TO BE A FULL TIME MUSICIAN?

START

Are you making at least some money being a musician?

YES

Do you have enough money to cover your monthly expenses?

YES

Hey, wanna go to DISNEYLAND?!

NO

Can you actually afford it?

I mean, yeah probably

NO

False, you can’t afford it.

2 or 3...

CHIPOTLE!

NONE

Holy crap dude.

NO

Are you okay with being broke for a while?

SMART

HMM...

But like... a while.

I KNOW

YES

Do you really though? Cuz I mean, like you’re gonna be preeeeeety broke for a while.

YES

LOOK MAN, I GET IT

NO

Are you prepared to work hard and take this really seriously? Being self employed means it’s all on you.

YES

You’re almost there! Keep working at your day job, if you keep at it, you’ll be full time in music in a couple of months.

NO

You’re not quite ready

YES

Do you pay for Netflix?

I USE MY FRIEND’S LOGIN

NO

YOU’RE READY!
So, are you ready to make the jump to being a full time musician? If your numbers add up, your runway is setup, and you know what you’re getting into, then yes, you’re ready! If not, that’s okay, you’ll get there. Keep doing what you’re doing, and do the other steps in this book! You’ll get there before too long. In the meantime, message me for my brother’s Netflix password.

Math is hard. Go plug your numbers into the worksheet.

Click here for the Numbers Version (Mac)

Click here for the Excel Version (PC)

ASSIGNMENT:
Download the Excel or Numbers Worksheet, fill in your numbers, and see if you’re ready to make the jump, or if you need a little runway. Even if you’re already doing music full-time, it’s helpful to see the numbers laid out like this.
As a professional musician, you want to be the first person that people call when they need (fill in the blank). With that in mind, you’ve probably been told that you need to do everything. If you can play rock, punk, jazz, soul, fusion, classical, latin, and Riverdance, then you will get called for all of that.

FALSE

I’m here to tell you that that thinking is exactly backwards. If you want to be a successful musician, you actually need to focus on doing less. (Besides, the golden age of Riverdance is long gone.)

"Like a phoenix from the ashes, I shall step dance my way out of obscurity."

THE RENAISSANCE MAN MYTH

For a long time, our society has praised “Renaissance” people, those that can do seemingly everything, and do it incredibly well. In reality the only thing that the Ren-
aissance man truly excels at is mediocrity. While there are people that can do every-
thing, they don’t do it all very well.

Just because you can’t do everything doesn’t mean you shouldn’t still do multiple things.

**DO MULTIPLE THINGS**

In order to increase your chances of success as a musician, you need to do multi-
ple things. Maybe you play live gigs, but you also teach. Or you do lots of studio work, and also have great chart making abilities.

Whatever your skills are, you need a combination in order to survive. Inconsistency is built into being a professional musician. Sometimes you have a packed month full of work (December), other times you’re barely scraping by (January). In order to make your income as even as possible, you need to do multiple things.

**DON’T DO EVERYTHING**

Do multiple things, yes, but don’t fall into the trap of thinking that you can do everything. There just aren’t enough hours in the day. No one can do everything with complete mastery. No one.

Well, no one except James Franco.
THE DOWNSIDE OF DOING EVERYTHING

I once received a business card from a musician that listed his name, number, email and the following description of what he does:

“Guitar, bass, vocals, drums, keys, producing, songwriting, lessons, violin, arranging, film scores... yeah, I do it all!”

What do you think I did with that card? If you guessed, “ever called him” you’re wrong. If you guessed, “framed it and put it on my wall” you are correct!

The downside of the “doing everything” approach is that there’s nothing unique about you. There’s no defining thing that you’re truly great at. If you try to do everything you’ll get called for nothing.

WHO WOULD YOU CALL?

Let’s say you need a service. You need... a drummer to play on your acoustic singer-songwriter album. You think through drummers that you know and here are your options:

1. A drummer who boasts that he can play “any style, any tempo, any time signature, Bro.” He has youtube videos of him playing complicated latin-infused-neo-speed-trip-hobbit-core. It has over 100,000 views.

2. A drummer who plays lots of acoustic gigs, has recorded with multiple singer-songwriter artists that you know, and has a unique custom dual-cajon setup with a tambourine kick pedal.

Who are you going to call?

Ghostbusters. (Secret 3rd option)
WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE UNTAPPED GIGS?!

This may fly in the face of what you’ve been taught. “You need to be able to do everything! Play any style authentically! Be able to perfectly execute every style of music!”

Yes, you should absolutely study as many genres of music as you can (even Riverdance, if you’re into that). Yes, you should practice this stuff. Yes, you need to do multiple things. But you don’t need to (and shouldn’t) try to do everything.

For example, I am never going to get called for a true, honest-to-God Latin gig. Ever. I never have and I never will. You know why? Because I’m just not very good at it. Sure, I’ve played latin stuff many times, but the small subtleties that really make the style authentic and feel good just aren’t there for me. That’s not a bad thing though. I’m still playing gigs, just not those gigs.

PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Alright, it’s time to do some soul searching. I want you to write down the 2 or 3 main categories of pro musician work that you want to pursue. No more than that. Do you want to play and teach? Studio recording and composing? Audio Engineering and copy work? Pick your big categories and write them down.

Now, within those categories, I want you to write 3 or 4 (no more) sub-categories. Within “live gigs” maybe you’ll put “Singer-Songwriter, Soul/R&B, Worship.” Maybe under copy work you’ll write, “Basic rhythm charts and lead sheets,” as opposed to “full orchestral movie scores”. You get the idea, right?

Now, you have a maximum of 3 categories, and potentially 12 sub-categories. These are the things you need to focus on. Nothing else. Get really good at doing just those things. Like, exceptional. World-class. You want to be the guy that when someone says, “Who should I call to play guitar on my daughter's bubble gum pop record?” They immediately think of you.
“She's young but dayum this chick can SANG!”

NICHÉ PLEASE!

This idea of niche-ing down may seem counterintuitive. “You want me to say no to gigs? What are you, crazy?!” I know the idea of saying no to a gig is scary and might seem foolish. But if you focus on honing your skills to just a few, you will become the guy to call for that skill. This is something Peter Dyer talked about in his Startup Musician podcast interview. I’ve always known him as the “Crazy synth guy” who has a room full of 18 vintage synths. The niche skill has gotten him tons of work and he’s toured all over the world with artists like Mariah Carey and Aloe Blacc because of it.

For me, one of my niche skills is upright bass. Electric bass players are a dime a dozen (guitar players right now are thinking, “yeah, I could do that, easy”) but someone who can play the upright bass really well is much less common. I’ve gotten lots of work because of this skill, not only from classical and jazz gigs, but acoustic singer-songwriters who want a unique sound. I’ve become one of the first names that some people mention when they say, “I need an upright bass player...”

For me, "We're going for a Mumford and Sons kind of vibe” are the 10 greatest words in the English language.
If you want to become the go-to freelance musician, develop your 2–3 niche skills and sub-skills. Become so good that hiring you a is a no-brainer.

**WARNING**

You should have your niche skills, but you don’t want to niche down too far. Becoming “THE Late–13th century north-eastern Irish bagpipe player in the greater Tuscon area” will ensure that you get the call, but that call will come in, maaaaybe once, ever.

"14th Century bagpipe music is waaaay too mainstream for me."

You can’t do everything. So stop trying. But you need more than one thing to make it as a professional musician. Decide what those 2–3 big things are, and get incredible at them. Become the guy to call for that thing. And who knows, Riverdance could make a comeback, right?

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Write out the 2 or 3 main things you want to focus on as a professional musician. Then write the 3-4 sub categories within those. Yes, actually write them out somewhere, it helps, I promise.
If you’re anything like me, when you read the title of this chapter, your heart sank. Musicians don’t have money as it is! Why is it that we have to go spend thousands of dollars on equipment just to get gigs that help us barely make rent?

Okay, okay. First things first, you don’t need to go spend thousands of dollars. You do need the right gear though.

One of my favorite things is when a musician feels like they have to have all of the bells and whistles available. They buy the pick holder for the mic stand. They have the weird X shaped guitar strap. They have everything that Planet Waves makes. That stuff is fine, but in reality you probably don’t need all of that.

“For the record, I’m not saying you should be gigging around with your buddy’s old Adam Levine guitar he got at Target. Get good gear that works and doesn’t get in the way of you doing your thing. Here’s my general rule of thumb: don’t buy it until you
really need it. I can’t tell you how many purchases I’ve made, excitedly thinking, “I’m totally going to get into this now!” only to have it sit on the bottom shelf, unused for months.

There’s a middle ground between these two extremes. No, you probably don’t need to go buy a boutique limited edition amp, but you do need to have a *working* amp. No, you don’t need a Fender Custom Shop American Deluxe 8 String Guitar with Stevie Ray Vaughn’s sweat mixed into the finish. But you do need to have a guitar that sounds decent. Your Squier probably isn’t cutting it.

Having halfway decent gear not only makes you sound better, but it makes you look like you know what you’re doing, like you’re a professional. It says to the other musicians on stage, “I’m serious about my career, this isn’t just a hobby.” So if you’re serious about being a professional musician, go get some halfway decent gear, some gear that is “good enough,” something that will get the job done, without completely breaking the bank.
Gear is cool, but you know what’s cooler? Music. Focus on being a great musician, and be happy with your rig until you have the extra money to spend on new stuff. Having a Monocase isn’t going to get you more gigs. Sounding great on your instrument is.

ASSIGNMENT:

Make a list of the bare minimum gear that you need, based on the few things that you’re focusing on (from the last chapter’s assignment). Don’t go crazy, but figure out what you need in order to get the job done. Will the stuff you already have work? If not, start making a list of things you’ll need to buy. Next to that, write the date by which you’ll need it.

Then start saving.
Look, It's 2015. You need a website. But web design is this big, complicated, scary thing that you don't know how to do, right? Don't worry, you don't need to pay tons of money to put your website up.

**WHY YOU NEED A WEBSITE**

Your website is like your storefront. I know we're not supposed to judge books by their covers, but if you don't have a cover at all, then there's SO MUCH JUDGEMENT. If you have a killer website that features great photos and audio of you, people are more likely to hire you because they know what you sound and look like.

Having a website puts all your information in one spot, and directs people searching for you to the stuff you want them to see. This way, when someone says, "Can I hear a recording of you?" you can direct them to your site without having to send them files directly. And they won't stumble on that video of you auditioning for a Kraft Mac n Cheese commercial when you were 12. At least not right away. Thanks again to my brother for posting that on YouTube.

**WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU START**

Before we start messing around with themes and fonts and even domain names, we need to get all your content together. There's no point in having a website if there's nothing on it. Here's where to start.

**PHOTOS**

People will want to see what you look like (remember: JUDGEMENT). Scour Facebook for all the best photos of you. Look for photos that are action shots of you playing, or just represent you well. If you don't have any good photos of yourself, don't worry. I'll bet you have a friend who just started a photography business with their
first and middle names (John Philip Photography). Talk to them about doing a photoshoot. Maybe you could trade services, or you can shell out a little money. It'll be worth it, I promise.

**AUDIO**

You are a musician after all. This is the most important part. Gather any recordings you've done in the past few years. If you don't have anything workable, you could try taking a free recording session, just to get the finished recording. Remember, this is the most important part, these recordings need to sound great.

**VIDEO**

This is optional, but a nice touch since it combines audio with being able to see you live. If you've got some videos on YouTube already, grab those links, or maybe you could upload the videos from your recital. If you don't have a video that you feel 100% about putting up, skip it. It's better to have no video than to have video of your high school marching band practice shot on a Motorola Razr.

**BIO**

These always feel weird to write, don't they? You have to talk in the third person, and you have to really make yourself sound good. Don't get shy. The person reading this needs to know that you can handle the gig, whatever that may be. Be honest, be bold. Talk about cool gigs that you've done, your education, or any other relevant details.

**BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WEB DESIGN!!?!?!**

That's okay! Fortunately for you, there are plenty of great services out there to help you build a website by dragging and dropping the things that you want onto the page, no coding required!

My personal recommendation is [Squarespace](http://squarespace.com). For $8 a month, you get a website that looks great, holds all your stuff, is mobile responsive (looks good on phones), and is incredibly easy to setup. I used to recommend build a wordpress website, and while that can be a little cheaper, the convenience of not having to learn a new system is well worth $8 a month. Plus, Squarespace’s templates are pretty awesome.
If you’re planning on doing more web-based stuff as one of your main things (as layed out in chapter 2), then wordpress is the way to go. The possibilities are endless, it just takes a little more work. But if you just want a website that’s easy and won’t change much, Squarespace is your best bet.

**BUT _____ DOESN´T HAVE A WEBSITE AND THEY´RE DOING JUST FINE!!?!**

True, not all musicians have websites, and there are some big name players that don’t. But you’re not them. You’re you. You need to get your name out there and give people the best representation of who you are and what you do! So go sign up for Squarespace and get to work!

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Go to Squarespace.com and sign up. You can make a website in minutes, and the free trial doesn’t even require your credit card. This couldn’t be easier. For advanced users, click here for my wordpress tutorial.

Why are you still here? Go! Right now!
I hate that word. I hate it. It conjures up images of douchebags and stacks of business cards from people you barely know. Instagram feeds of self-gloating “Today’s Office” selfies. Half-assed declarations of “we should play together” when you really just want them to call you for gigs.

I’m speaking, of course, about my least favorite word: Networking.

**WHAT DOES NETWORKING EVEN MEAN?**

Is it like when you comment on someone’s Facebook post and say, “Killin’ bro!”

Is it when you approach another musician specifically to force your phone number on them, veiled in 2 minutes of complimentary banter?

Is it when you “connect” on LinkedIn?” (whatever that means)
Networking is this big vague thing that we all know we should really get better at, but we’re not sure how to do that. Let’s take a quick look at the 3 types of networkers.

**NO. 1: THE TEVIN**

Tevin is a textbook douche. He has his own self interests at heart and loves networking. Tevin is the guy that comes up to you after a gig, starts to compliment you, and then quickly turns the conversation toward himself and what he’s been doing lately.

“Yeah man, ever since the Kimmel Show the gigs have been pouring in. Do I have your number? I’m always looking for subs!”

He may have even “tried to get you on this gig,” only for it to fall through. This shady networking technique happens too frequently, leaving you questioning Tevin’s honesty. Was there really a gig? Or was he just trying to look like he’s throwing me a bone?

Every move Tevin makes, everyone he talks to, every Instagram he posts, all of it is for one main goal: “get them gigs bruh” (his words, not mine).

Sure, Tevin can play, and sure he gigs a lot, but have you ever had to hang out with him? He’s the worst! Alas, this is Tevin’s Achilles’ heel: his personality.

**NO. 2: THE FRIEND**

You know this guy. Everyone knows this guy. It might be different for everyone, but this type is universal. The musician that you love to be around. He’s a great player too, but man is he fun to hang out with! When you find out that you’ll be playing together soon, you look forward to it all month. Not just for the music, but for the hang.

Maybe The Friend gets you gigs, maybe he doesn’t. You don’t even care about that. Just hanging out with The Friend is it’s own reward. You two don’t brag to each other, don’t falsely compliment each other, and don’t try to “network” the other person. You’re friends first and foremost, musicians second.
The Friend is a great musician, gigs frequently, and is a blast to hang out with. He may not be attacking the networking scene like Tevin, but in 10 years he’ll still have a career.

**WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEVIN AND THE FRIEND?**

Tevin wants you to call him for gigs. The Friend wants you to call him to hang out.

Tevin wants ALL OF THE GIGS, RIGHT NOW. The Friend wants to play great music with great people who love music.

Tevin is focused on “networking” while The Friend is focused on cultivating relationships.

Now to be fair, Tevin’s strategy technically works. He *does* play a lot of gigs (did you hear he played on Kimmel?), however his aggressive networking techniques and tendency to use people to climb to the top will eventually catch up to him. In 10 years he’ll be the jaded musician who talks to you after your gig, complaining about how he used to tour the world, but the music industry has changed and he got screwed.

The Friend, on the other hand, may not have as many gigs right now, but he has plenty of people who genuinely care about him and his success. The friendships that he is building will help him not only through the next 10 years, but for the rest of his life. Rather than using other people to climb to the top, he’s slowly climbing the ladder of his career with other people.

**STOP NETWORKING**

"Networking" is a selfish pursuit. Getting to know other people specifically so that you can advance your own career as a musician is foolish, and other people see right through it.

If you want to build a successful career as a professional musician, stop networking. Instead, focus on building friendships. Not fake friendships with secret selfish motives. Not friendships so you check a box that says, “we’re friends.” I’m talking about genuine, honest, real friendships that are an end unto themselves.
Musicians want to work with their friends, so the career aspect of it will take care of itself. If you want more work, go make more friends. Before long you’ll have lifelong friends, a solid career foundation, and “get them gigs bruh” in the process.

No. 3: ME AND YOU

Oh, you thought I forgot about the third type of networker?

The third and final type of networker is me and you. You’re probably not quite The Friend yet, and I sincerely hope you’re not like Tevin. If you’re like me, you’re right in the middle, trying to figure it all out.

Let’s up our networking friendship game. Here’s a homework assignment for you: Text 2 people that you haven’t seen in a while. Set up some time next week to get together. Lunch, coffee, drinks, or just hanging out. Go into it with no end goal in mind other than hanging out with a friend. Ask the other person good questions about what they’re up to. Don’t talk about yourself unless they ask. Just go be a good friend to someone.

THE OTHER TYPE OF “NETWORKING”

There’s one type of networking that you probably aren’t thinking about.

Networking with musicians that you play with is great. They get to know your playing, get to know you, and hopefully call you for work. Let’s call this “external” networking.

But what about “internal” networking? I’m not talking about looking deep within yourself. What about the people that you know but don’t play with? What about the people who are your “competition?”
OTHER PEOPLE WHO PLAY YOUR INSTRUMENT AREN’T YOUR ENEMY

Look, this isn’t *The Hunger Games*. It’s not you verses everyone else out there who plays your instrument. If you start viewing it that way, you’ll start to alienate yourself and other people won’t want to work with you. Instead, think of your fellow musician as a friend who is trying to make a living just like you. By being supportive and sticking together, you can both win, without having to kill each other in the process. So in this way, I guess it’s exactly like *The Hunger Games* (Sorry if I just ruined that movie for you).

But, in fairness, I just spared you from having to watch THIS

OKAY, BUT WHY?

Why is “internal” networking important? Why should you befriend the people who you are technically competing with for gigs? Why should you "volunteer as tribute?" (Sorry I'm maybe stretching this *Hunger Games* analogy) Because counterintuitively, by getting to know the people who might “steal” your gigs, and by actually giving them work, you’ll get more work in the process.

If you’re a drummer, chances are you aren’t going to be doing a lot of gigs with other drummers, unless you’re doing the soundtrack for Man of Steel. A drummer isn’t going to call another drummer to play together at a gig, but they will call the other drummer to sub for them when they can’t make it.
Who are they going to call? No, still not the Ghostbusters. They’re going to call someone who they know is a good player, but also a good person. They might not be playing the gig, but it’s still their reputation on the line. If you’re friends with the other people playing your instrument (internal networking), taking sub gigs is a great way to expand your network and get more work.

BE THE BEST SUB ANYONE COULD ASK FOR

There’s a few reasons why this is a good idea:

1. In the short term: You’ll make money. You’ll walk away at the end of the night with $100 in your pocket. A gig’s a gig’s a gig.

2. In the slightly longer term: The person you subbed for will call you for more sub gigs. At some point, they’re not going to be able to make it to another gig. If you’ve killed it as a sub in the past, then you’ll be right at the top of their call list.

3. In the long term: You’re expanding your network and playing with musicians you wouldn’t otherwise play with. All of a sudden, there’s a whole new crew of people who have gotten to know your playing and you as a person. If the person you subbed for ever has to miss a gig again, you’re at the top of the list. Not only that, if they permanently can’t do it, you’ll be the new regular guy.

DON’T BE A DOUCHE

With internal networking as well as external, be kind and be genuine. There’s a specific type of douchebaggery that can take place with internal networking. It’s a slight hint of competitiveness, making sure you’re always one step ahead of your “competition.” Remember Tevin? Don’t fall into that trap. You’ll quickly make a terrible name for yourself and stop getting sub calls.

Speaking from my own experience, subbing has been a large source of work. Not only on one off gigs, but permanently taking over the reoccurring gig for friends of mine. I’ve been able to give my friends one off and permanent work when I'm unavailable.
Your fellow guitarists/drummers/singers/[insert your instrument here] are not your enemy. View them as your friend and you'll get more work then you know what to do with. Not only that, you'll have a great sub you can call when you can't make it. Don't try to kill each other. Threaten to eat poison berries instead. Wait, that part of the Hunger Games analogy doesn't work at all.

ASSIGNMENT:
Text 2 people right now! Set up a time next week to grab coffee, lunch, or just hang out. Then go hang out with them. Ask good questions. Be a good listener. Be a good friend.
We need to get your social media stuff in order. You may only think of it as a network of your college buddies, or a waste of time, but it’s much more powerful than that. Social media is communication, which is the biggest part of relationships, which is the number one thing you can do to get more work.

If you’re like me, you’re probably saying to yourself, "Yeah, I probably should be better at social media, but it just sounds like a lot of work. I think I’ll just keep taking BuzzFeed quizzes." Social media does take some work, but can do great things for freelance musicians.

WHERE TO START

“Friend me on Facebook! Follow me on Twitter! Follow me on Instagram! Respond to my never ending flow of LinkedIn requests! Repin my pins on Pinterest! I post on Vine too! Google + is like Facebook, but better! MySpace is really making a comeback, you know Justin Timberlake owns it now?! Hit me up on Xanga! Comment on my LiveJournal!”

Social media is the Internet. If you’re not on at least a few of these platforms, I’m not going to spend any time convincing you to join. I’ll just give it to you straight. Here’s the social media platforms you need to be on, go sign up right now if you don’t have an account. Seriously.

Facebook: Yeah, yeah, I know, it’s Facebook. But you can’t not be on it.
Twitter: “Why does anyone need to know what I’m doing right now?” Just sign up.
Instagram: “Why does anyone need to know what I’m eating right now?”

Stop it, go sign up.
These are the big 3 social networks. For now, don’t worry about anything else. Before we dive into specifics of what to post, let’s talk about the differences between these three platforms and why you should be on each of them.

**FACEBOOK**

Is Facebook still cool? Of course it isn’t. Everyone and their Mom is on it. But that’s exactly what makes it so great.

Facebook has over a BILLION users. That’s 1/7 of the entire planet. These days, it’s difficult to find someone who isn’t on Facebook. When you post something on Facebook, you’re basically announcing it to the general public. Even if you aren’t friends with people, they still may see your posts (more on that in a second). If you think about it, that’s pretty incredible.

FACT: 40% of all Facebook users is your mom.

The fact that your Facebook posts are essentially public shouldn’t scare you, it should excite you. That means there’s people that you aren’t yet friends with that can get to know you, without actually meeting you. Facebook helps you expand your network without any work from you.
HOW FACEBOOK EXPANDS YOUR NETWORK

There’s two main ways Facebook helps expand your network.

1. When Someone Tags You In a Photo or Status

   You’re playing a gig with Tevin Sebastian. He takes a picture of the two of you, posts it on Facebook, and tags you in it. Now your friends get a story in their news feed about how you’re playing with Tevin, and Tevin’s friends get a story about how he’s playing with you. Now Chaz (Tevin’s best friend, who you aren’t friends with) knows who you are, or at least that you exist, so when you finally meet him, he already has some idea of your level of playing, and if you’re a good person.

2. You Write a Status With a Lot of Shares or Comments

   Since there’s about a trillion things happening with your friends, Facebook decided to come up with a system of showing you popular stories. It’s in Facebook’s best interest to keep you on Facebook at all times, so they want to bring you interesting things to read. So if Chaz writes a status, “Just finished my first gig with Scott Stapp!” and 100 of Chaz’s friends (including Tevin) “like” it, you’ll get a story in your newsfeed letting you know that Tevin liked Chaz’s status. Now you know that Chaz, one of Tevin’s friends, is playing with Scott Stapp. In the future, when you need a guitarist for a mediocre 90s butt rock band, you know just who to call!

Facebook isn’t hip, but in the same way that email isn’t hip. Just because it isn’t sexy doesn’t mean it’s not incredibly useful. If you’re not already on Facebook, go sign up right now. If you are, keep up the posts.

TWITTER

Twitter differs from Facebook in a few ways. For one, your Mom is probably not on Twitter. For two, your favorite musician probably is, and they don’t have to accept your friend request for you to follow them. Let the stalking commence!

Your circle of musicians may or may not actively use Twitter. Regardless, it’s a great platform to meet new people. Follow musicians that you know, whether you play with them, or you’re just a big fan. You should also follow people that you aren’t friends
with. That’s why Twitter is awesome. You can follow and interact with people without being friends or having to accept a friend request.

**GO NUTS**

Follow musicians you like. Retweet stuff you like from other people. This lets your followers know a little more about you. Let’s say you see a tweet that there’s a new album coming from The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, so you decide to retweet it. Now all of your followers know that you love The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, so they’ll call you for the one MMB cover band gig in the country. Or something like that.

All kidding aside, Twitter is a great way to connect with musicians in your circle, but also the larger outside world. It allows you to see what your favorite musicians are up to, and join a larger conversation. If you’re not already on Twitter, go sign up right now. If you are, keep tweeting!

**INSTAGRAM**

Instagram is unique in that it’s platform is based on photos and videos only. There’s no statuses, no article sharing, just photos. If Twitter is pure text (which it isn’t always), then think of Instagram as the polar opposite.

Instagram’s people network is a little unique as well. You can still connect with your friends similar to Facebook, but kind of it’s own club (even though Facebook owns Instagram). Your Mom probably isn’t on Instagram either, and when you post a photo, it’s not quite as public as Facebook. Because it’s photo and video based, Instagram has a show and tell feel to it. You snap a picture, slap on a filter, add a caption and you’re done. This makes it great for sharing things you’re doing, and it feels a little more private, like it’s just you and your musician friends. Instagram is not as public as Facebook, and not as massively public like twitter (though you can follow celebrity status musicians as well). If you're not on Instagram, go sign up right now. If you are, keep posting photos of your lunch!
IT’S TOOL TIME

Social media isn’t a “tactic” or “hack” that you use to win more gigs. It’s just constant communication that keeps you connected with other musicians around the world. Remember, we’re not networking anymore, we’re focused on building genuine relationships. Use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as tools for doing just that.

ASSIGNMENT:
If you’re not on all 3 social media sites mentioned above (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), then go sign up for them right now! If you are, keep the posting up! If you’re wondering what kinds of things to post, click here to meet @giggingdbag
As musicians, we live in the space between work and play. This isn't to say that being a musician isn't work. We have to put in lots of hours practicing, learning songs, and making sure we are fully prepared for whatever work is on our plates. We do, however get to do something much more enjoyable than sitting in a cubicle and crunching numbers. Does getting to do what you love for a living mean you should occasionally do gigs for free?

There are two opposing ends to this debate:

**THE ANGRY PROFESSIONAL**

On one hand, you have the guy who is insulted at the thought of a free gig and quickly become angry. The "Angry Professional" as I like to call him. This side of the argument is easy to understand. If you took the "free gig" approach to almost any other profession, it would seem ludicrous: "Hey Doc, can you do something about these back moles, pro bono?"

For this guy, free gigs are never an option, and you should feel ashamed for even thinking of asking, and no I will not refer another musician who will play for free. The upside to this approach is that he is a great musician who will get the job done well. If you're looking for someone professional who you can pay very well, this is your guy. The downside is he's a little bit of an a-hole when it comes to money. "Hey, are we getting paid overtime for that last song? We ended at 9:04 and the gig was only supposed to go til 9..." While the Angry Professional has a point, he needs to loosen up a bit.
THE IDEALISTIC OPPORTUNIST

The other end of the debate is the idealistic opportunist. "Hey, it's great exposure, and you never know what could happen!" This guy will drive out to the desert for a 5 hour jazz set, no questions asked. Free recording session? Absolutely! He expects you to be there too, because you love music, right?? This guy will take literally anything and everything. The upside to this approach is that this guy once played with Rob Thomas of Matchbox Twenty (I guess that's an upside). The downside is that he has thrice gotten stranded on his way back from the 5 hour desert gig because he ran out of gas and money to get home.

"You said parking would be comped! I just had to shell out 2 dollars!!!"

Pictured: Rob Thomas and the Idealistic Opportunistic.
Fortunately for you, there's an easy system that'll tell you whether or not to take a gig.

THE 2/3 RULE

I learned this from a former professor of mine and have lived by it ever since. There are three factors that weigh in on your decision to take a gig.

MONEY

How much the gig pays, obviously. In the case of a free gig, the answer is nothing. This is the biggest and maybe only thing that the Angry Professional considers.

PEOPLE

The musicians you'll be playing with. This can make a big difference on your experience at the gig. If you're going into a gig knowing that that one sax player who's a tool is going to be there, you're in for a rough night. Future you is going to hate past you.

MUSIC

The type of music you'll be playing. Is it stuff you love playing and already know? Or do you have to learn 200 songs for that one desert jazz gig? Is it playing in a Rebecca Black cover band? Again, think about future you.

So we understand the three factors now, right? Alright, here's your rule: Every gig you take must have at least two of these fulfilled.

In order for you to take the gig, you need to either have:

- good money and good people OR
- good money and good music OR
- good people and good music

It doesn't matter if you're playing "Friday" for the umpteenth time if you're with your buddies and you're making good money. You'll all laugh about it later as you happily deposit your check.

It doesn't matter if that sax playing tool is going to turn around clap out the downbeats to you again if you're getting paid well and you're playing fun music. You'll still be generally happy with the music and very happy with the check.
It doesn't matter if you aren't getting paid if you're playing music you love with musicians you love. You're going to have a blast playing music, and that's worth enough to take it.

Occasionally, the stars will align and you'll get a gig that has all three. Enjoy it, that's the dream.

Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. If you're just starting out and you have no contacts, free gigs with good musicians can be a great way to get connected to paying ones. Or if it's something like a charity event or an event for a friend, consider it a donation of your time. But beware of taking too many free gigs. Other people could easily take advantage of your willingness to play.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Follow the 2/3 rule and take a free gig if it's music you really want to play, and with musicians you really want to play with. Yes, even if it's in the desert. Who knows, Rob Thomas could be there.

**ASSIGNMENT:**

Analyze the gigs and work you do right now. How many of them meet the 2/3 requirement? Which ones do you love doing? Which ones do you dread doing? Next time you get called for a gig, think about future you and apply the 2/3 rule.
What? That’s it? The book is over? No big closing summary?

Nope.

You’ve got work to do! You and I both know you skipped to the end without actually completing the assignments. You’re not fooling anyone.

Now get to work on those assignments! Start hustling!

If you enjoyed any part of this book, please let me know!

Here’s my Email
Here’s my Facebook
Here’s my Twitter

See you soon over at the blog!