
MUSICIAN 2.0, 3.0, 4.0...

**Developing Music
Careers in Uncertain Times**

A Psycho-Spiritual-Musical Manifesto



By Peter Spellman

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If you were to judge the health of the recording industry by the mainstream press you'd have to conclude things do look pretty bleak. Industry trade groups like the RIAA and the IFPI continue parading their woeful data on global CD sales and there are no signs of improvement. In real dollars the industry has been flat-lining for nine straight years.

And it's not just the recording industry that's ailing. Other sectors of the biz – music publishing, music products and the concert industries – are also registering declines.

The key word here is "industry". It's important for those in the biz to make the distinction between the music "industry" and the music "trade." The former is primarily the domain of transnational corporations and organizations like the RIAA and the major music companies; the latter the domain of most musicians and a tremendous diversity of small music enterprises, most "under the radar" and perceived by the former as basically insignificant in the larger picture.

It's anybody's guess if the "industry" will re-emerge to its former financial glory (I doubt it), but if anything is clear to me as a student of history it's that "the next big thing" is, well, small. There are forces at work taking the rug of necessity out from under large sectors of the corporate side of the biz, and not just the music industry either. The

same is happening in film, design, hedge funds, travel, insurance, publishing, real estate and almost every other industry sector you can name.

Interestingly, the very same forces undoing long-standing industries are encouraging small-scale players. There is power in the corner of individuals today that there has never been before. In music, it's particularly acute.

To flip Paul Simon's lyrics from the song "Can't Run", "the music *business* suffers while the *music* thrives." It's nothing new that the coolest stuff has always come from outside the industry. But now the music trade has a chance to control its own processes too, apart from the pressures of corporate imperatives.

And that's exactly what it's doing.

What are these powers music workers now have? How about:

- the means to both produce and distribute music on a global scale,
- new business models to partner with in the world of music and beyond,
- the Internet pipeline that has clearly become an Open Mic to the world,
- lightweight plug-and-play software infrastructures providing musicians with ways to have the look, reach and efficiencies of larger companies.



We have the power to galvanize global audiences and build a network of support for the rest of our careers. Sounds pretty good, huh?

It should.

But remember the timeless words of Uncle Ben to Peter Parker: "With great power comes great responsibility".

And that's the rub...

WHY AM I NOT FAMOUS YET?

Fame is a bee. / It has a song / It has a sting / Ah, too, it has a wing.
– Emily Dickinson

First, let's get rid of some myths. Musicians sometimes fall victim to the notion they are doing something so precious and valuable that they can't understand why the world isn't shoving money in their pockets and adulation on their heads. "Why am I not famous yet?" – a question rarely asked out loud but certainly poking around inside many musicians – especially those aspiring to the heights of fame and worldly success.

Is it me, or is there a bit of an entitlement mentality here – that the world owes you a living, or something?

Well, surprise, your "work" is no more valuable than the auto mechanic's and the zookeeper's. Let that sink in.



Reality check: The "culture industries" we play in perpetuate the myth by allowing the marginalization of "art" on the one hand, and the divinization of the same on the other. "Art," according to this view, is created by the very few and must be protected behind marble and glass in buildings resembling temples of old. The message is clear: Look, but don't touch. At the same time, "Art" is elbowed out of reach of the common man, and the training of the same must happen in credentialed institutions of "higher learning," else you may not wear the badge of "Artist".

This might seem odd coming from someone employed by the world's top contemporary music college, but I base it on observation of hundreds of music careerists over many years. While most musicians I know take a humble stance in relation to their work, the myth persists and can affect musicians' inner lives to a great degree, sometimes without them even knowing it.

Let's face it. The upward climb *can* seem to last forever. In reality, it *is* never-ending — unless you are planning on hitting some pre-determined plateau and squatting there.

Don't fall into the trap of feeling that the race is not going well just because you're not at the finish line yet. The race has something to celebrate all along its track. What becomes tiresome to the aspiring musician is not achieving some significant milestones. We'll address that later.



Perhaps it's helpful to remember all those ten year "overnight" successes. Indie rockers Death Cab for Cutie released their first record in 1998 and didn't get their wider recognition until their first Grammy nomination in 2008. It took almost ten years of total immersion into his craft as a songwriter and vocalist for John Stephens to make the transition to Grammy-winning John Legend.

And, lest we forget, when the Beatles landed in NYC in 1964 for their first U.S. appearance, they had already been together since 1957 and had clocked an estimated 1,200 gigs, many consisting of eight hour sets at Hamburg and Liverpool clubs!

Here's the reality: A **full-time** performing (or, songwriting, or recording, or what have you) career may not be in the cards for you. The unrelenting laws of supply and demand are real, and are being felt more today than ever before. This doesn't mean you shouldn't try for it. Of course you should, and many *will* achieve it. But musicians need to give themselves permission to be weekend warriors with non-music day jobs too.

That's OK, ok?

Being a full-time "artist" is a fine goal, but try seeing that goal in light of Meister Eckhart's words: "An artist is not a special kind of person."

Rather, every person is a special kind of artist." A business meeting is a jazz jam; a DIY rock band is a management team. Don't let industrial age divisions of labor blind you to the possibilities for creative engagement *everywhere* and *anywhere*. You can create in myriad ways with myriad means in myriad venues.

Of course, the myth of the Artist is currently crashing on the rocks of the DIY revolution where everyone from your kid sister to Jay Z are seizing control of the means of production to put their creative thumbprints on the new music landscape. This revolution is empowering millions while at the same time creating more competition for everyone. I tend to agree with Producer Richie Zito that with the current technology, there is a tendency for artists to record long before they're ready. He reckons it's like cooking. You can have all the ingredients in the world, "but if you take it out of the oven too soon, it's not going to taste good." Here, here.

Just because you *can* record and release tracks and CDs doesn't mean you *should*. No wine before its time.

THE INTENTIONAL MUSICIAN

Feet on the ground, head in the sky.., David Byrne ("Naïve Melody")

While the music industry passes through its many phases of late capitalism (birth, growth, maturation, contraction) and be knocked about by technochanges, the musician, that is, the music "tradesman" can take a more *intentional* path. The musician isn't bound to follow industry trends – he's not a corporate entity enslaved to "corporate imperatives" which wreak havoc with human values and moderate goals.

Nor is he bound to indulge every tech fancy that *Wired* magazine lauds. In a real way, he can play his own game, and create his own economy, *if* he rises to the challenge of his new powers. Take a page from musicians like Bon Iver, Incredible String Cheese Incident, Toast or Corey Smith – successful music projects cutting their own tributaries off the main stream at their own tempos.

Today's musician can take it slow and, in fact, should. When you hit a foggy patch on a highway you slow down. If the current times are

anything they're definitely foggy. We're hovering between radio stations where static is loud and destinations unclear.

We're in a transition that began somewhere in the late 90s. Most are calling it "creative destruction" and that seems to describe it pretty well. The path that was once clear (though difficult) has now branched out like fractal geometry into multiple paths (which are *still* difficult, if not more so).

But, in case you hadn't noticed, this is true now of *most* careers, whatever that word means in these wacky times. The career ladder has been hacked to just a few rungs because we're all CEOs. The lure of the linear path is powerful. But that's early twentieth-century thinking. A better career metaphor might be a rouge wave, full of switchbacks and zig-zags. The game has changed but the rule book still needs to be written; the terrain has altered and boundaries have blurred, yet new maps are missing.



If we indeed are in a period of creative destruction, then the key to making the most of these changes is staying more *creative* than *destructive*.

How do we do this? I'm going to share some guidelines to help you set your sail for a forward-moving career trajectory. These aren't solutions for every career woe; they're provisional observations from someone deeply involved in the careers of musicians. Too, while some of this may be feel novel, most is a simple *re*-minding that, despite the swirling changes around us, a certain core of attitudes and actions will keep us pushing forward and, hopefully, upward.

Let's call them the four commitments.

THE 4 COMMITMENTS

1. Commit to Growth

He who's not busy being born, / Is busy dying. – Bob Dylan

Today we have the chance to compose our own lives. It's a liberating prospect, but also daunting, because it requires a high degree of self-knowledge. If we don't start at the core – if we instead accept reflexive, inherited, or half-thought-out definitions of who we are and what we have to contribute – we run the risk of being overwhelmed by the possibilities that we face.

Career musicians, in general, are slow starters but good finishers *if* they stick to it. There has to be a resolve to keep plugging on despite rejection, band break ups and personal misfortunes. Grit, spunk, moxie, doggedness – call it what you want: *Stick-to-it-ness* is the secret ingredient. As Nashville songwriter Tom Shapiro advises, “ You write a bad song to get to the good songs. You have to write the crap out of you.”

Commitment to growth also means sometimes making waves. It has a “mission ruthlessness” to it and may piss some people off. So be it.

● **Exercise creativity.** Most of us traffic with societies demanding little in the way of creativity. We can get by, even be very “successful,” with partial participation, recycled culture and conversation ad infinitum. Studies show that a child's creativity plummets at around age 5. What usually begins at that age? Right. We're in a psychic battle for our creativity, recovering from years of repressive and flattening “education” and “socialization”.

If the times we're living in are calling for anything, they're definitely calling for creative solutions.

Remember,

Light bulbs weren't invented by exploring candles.

Iron ships weren't made by exploring wood boats.

Skyscrapers weren't designed by exploring bungalows.

Cell phones weren't conceived by exploring land lines.

iPods weren't invented by exploring turntables.

Commitment= being bound emotionally or intellectually to a course of action; allegiance, dedication, loyalty. Pledging allegiance to not only your nation's flag, but to the work you feel called to do.



It's tough to get a new slant on something when you're looking at it head-on. A cube head-on is a square. Step left or right and see its full dimensions. Creativity begins with a different way of seeing familiar things.

"Creative" doesn't necessarily mean totally *new*. It also means exploring new combinations and making what already is, your own. "I studied Ray Charles when I was young,"

says Joe Cocker, "and he had the beautiful way of making a song his own." That's what gave Joe courage to find his own voice in familiar tunes.

Someone once said, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you will see every problem as a nail." Many of us are walking around today with outdated toolboxes. New challenges call for new tools. If we are to re-create our careers and businesses for the twenty-first century, we'll need to release our outdated beliefs about the way the music business works and replace our time-worn hammers with a radically new tool kit.

To break through to those other parts of ourselves that sit submerged beneath our everyday consciousness demands courage.

There is nothing more brave than filtering out the chatter that tells you to be someone you're not. There is nothing more genuine than breaking away from the chorus to learn the sound of your own voice. We can dare to be different.

Here are some practical suggestions for busting out and moving forward. You don't have to do all of them; just try those that resonate:

- *Mix up your routine.* Try offbeat restaurants. Read unusual magazines. Take detours to work. Play strange music. Go to unfamiliar films. Attend bizarre lectures.

- *Leave your isolation.* Lunch with different people. Call on suppliers. Visit workplaces of friends and colleagues. Spend more time in your client's world. Wade into the marketplace.

- *Break out of yourself.* Volunteer at a children's hospital or nursing home. Help a favorite charity solicit donations. Write letters to let professors and mentors know how they helped you. Call lost relatives and rebuild relationships.

Whatever you're working on ask: Can I flip it?, turn it inside out?, combine it with something else?, take something away from it?, add something?, put it to other uses?, re-arrange it?

Bust out of the box and then bring something new back. For years, the Funk Brothers backed up Marvin Gaye, the Temptations and other Motown greats. At night, they refined their signature sound by prowling and playing Detroit's jazz clubs. The next morning, they would bring fresh ideas back into the Snake Pit studio, adding jazz voicings and thick textures to their arrangements.

This is not to say that we should abandon *everything* in the old toolbox. While so much has changed around us, some things remain important for careers and for life: things like correct spelling, good grammar, preparation, face time, stagecraft, clear phone messages, punctuality, and calling when you're going to be late. Get the basics right or you'll shoot yourself in the foot before the race begins.

- **Strike inner-outer balance.** Creative people need both isolation and the crowd, thinking alone and working together. Managing isolation and managing relationships are equally important. Managing isolation allows a creative person to manage their



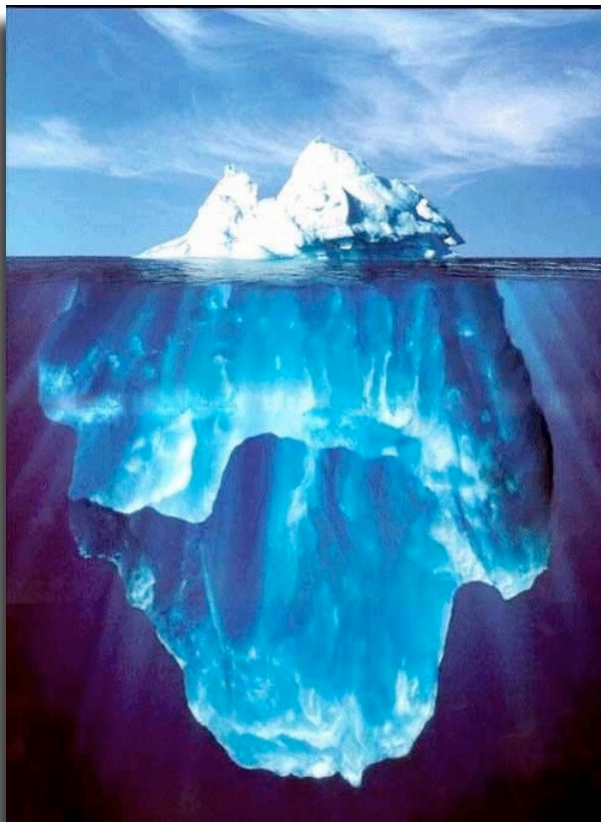
consciousness. Networking allows the exchange of ideas and information. The inner/outer juggle.

But it does all begin with our innermost parts, right? That's where we live and move and have our being. It's the seat from which our lives spring.

*The blizzard of the world
has crossed the threshold
and it has overturned
the order of the soul.*

– Leonard Cohen

At times our knowledge of inner human potential seems like a single match struck in a vast dark cave. I'm always roused by the iceberg image as a metaphor of human potential. Twenty percent active while eighty percent lies hidden. :-O



No matter what your belief system, I think we can all agree that many people, in fact, begin life as butterflies but somehow end up in cocoons. Something precious gets short-circuited somewhere between childhood and "maturation," and this affects us *deeply*.

Philosophers argue about what to call this precious core of our humanity: Thomas Merton used the phrase "the true self". Buddhists call it "original nature". Quakers "the inner light". Hasidic Jews speak of "a spark of the divine". Humanists call it identity and integrity. In popular parlance, people often call it the *soul*.

What we name it matters little, but *that* we name it matters a great deal. For "it" is the objective, reality of selfhood that keeps us from reducing ourselves, or each other, to biological mechanisms, psychological projections, sociological constructs, or raw material to be

manufactured into what society needs – diminishments of our humanity that constantly threaten the quality of our lives.

I suspect it can be argued that with the turning *outward* to conquer the world via machines we lost something of value in the process – a deeper sense of human power. Somewhere in the civilizing process mankind separated the conscious mind from the deeper instinctive strata of the human psyche, and with the meteoric rise of science (actually, *scientism*) and technology (*technocracy*), the unconscious mind could not keep pace and fell far behind. Do you feel it? Spiritual and moral traditions have disintegrated, causing worldwide disorientation, and our direct contact with Nature has diminished. This is only my opinion, as both a student of history and traveler on spiritual paths.

However, if we've decided our threshold of consciousness will rise higher than our jobs and societies demand, we're onto a very exciting path, one that may provide us a different angle on things.

The path may also force a look in the mirror we'd rather avoid. Like a tooth from the jaw, dealing with our sh*t draws spiritual blood, but it's certainly the first step towards wholeness.

● **Carve your goals/Set your sail.** The mind tends to follow what's in front of it, so write down your goals and post them where you can see them. Create both long-range goals (I want to cast a song with a top country artist, perform in Japan, score an EA video game) and then short-range goals that reflect your longer ones (I'll hone my songwriting craft through an online course, network with booking agents in the Asian markets, score a video game for a student in a new media program). When asked about her "success", musician Zoe Keating described it as "the sum of many tiny moments." Success is not someday; success is every day. Knit your success to conscious goals.

We consider 5% GDP growth pretty good; 10% fantastic. How might this apply to the tempo of music career development? Well, say you play 20 shows this year and your combined revenue for performances and music sales total \$2000. Now, let's say next year you play 30 shows and generate \$3000 total sales. While it might not *seem* that much, it's actually 50% growth! Project 50% growth per year out ten years and you've got a sustainable music career. Even 40, 30 and 20% are admirable business benchmarks.

The point is we should give ourselves permission to grow our careers at a tempo that makes sense to us rather than to over-strive and burn out too soon. A common phrase in scenario planning is “long fuse/big bang.” This refers to the “possible lives” that are going to take a while to develop, but will be life changing when they finally occur. Slow starter, good finisher.

- **Lead with your strengths.** It has been noted that musicians possess a strong and unique skill set – they tend to be disciplined, display an internal versatility, possess deep listening skills, can strike compromises among diverse groups, know how to orchestrate creative alliances, and, in general, demonstrate what cultural observer Daniel Pink calls “symphonic” thinking – an ability to synthesize disparate pieces into a whole. Often, these are accompanied by additional skills of confidence in public performance, technological fluency and a knack for problem-solving.

That’s quite a rack of valuable (AKA, *sellable*) skills and, while not every musician owns all of them, they often fly under the radar of most musicians’ minds. Why? Because they’re first-nature traits – Like the air you breathe, they’re rarely considered. The key is becoming conscious of them and then translating these awesome skills into statements of value. Example: I started and led a band. Translation: I can build and manage a coalition of diverse personalities. Nice. Use that. Be clear about your own assets and talents. Lead with your strengths in everything you do, ‘cause you have lots of them.

Commit to Growth.
Next...

2. Commit to Focus

Our life always expresses the result of our dominant thoughts. – Kierkegaard

World chess champion Gary Kasparov says the difference between a *good* chess player and a *great* one is not that the great chess player knows which moves to look at, but that he also knows which *not* to look at. Focus takes work. So there must be a commitment to it.

It's not for nothing that we say 'pay attention'. Attention – focus – demands something from us.

Focus a basketball team and watch out! Focus light and get out of the way! Emerson said, "Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade, in short in all management of human affairs." Focus concentrates energy but it also *takes* energy. So...

- **Attend to core priorities.**

With all the head-spinning changes in the biz, some things haven't changed in the least. Focus on those: great songs & compositions, fabulous performance events, creative packaging, and savvy business alliances. These still succeed. Work from your core priorities – sharpening your craft and nurturing your fans and audience. What else is there?



I have come to this conclusion regarding talent: how much native ability you have may not matter nearly as much as the *effort* you put into your art. The latest studies on "genius" and "talent" all suggest the same. It's more a matter of work ethic than special endowment (at least for most of us). Someone once said: "Luck is what you have left over *after* you give one hundred percent." Here, here. "Good enough" is *not* good enough. In the immortal words of Albert Grossman, "If it ain't great, it sucks". Work it until it's great or get out of the way.

Another myth about creativity is the belief that we need unlimited time and/or money to be creative. We conjure up notions of the wonderful creative projects we could do *if only we had all the time and money we needed*. But research has shown that creativity actually thrives with

moderate limitations (like deadlines or budgets) and decreases when unlimited resources of time and money are provided.

● **Niche yourself.** While the major record companies of the eighties and nineties were counting their Benjamins, the economy shifted from a music *mass* market to music *niche* markets. Those record companies were optimized for Mariah, Celine and Beyonce, and capable of selling multimillions of units. But give them an Alison Krauss record and they didn't know bluegrass from blue crab. The whole music industrial complex is set up for "major pop stars" not niches. The worst thing that can happen to a major corporation (like a major record company) is for its customers to become unpredictable and niche-oriented, and this is exactly what has happened.



A segmenting music market means there's a place even for the most idiosyncratic music project. Consider Phantogram, Dredg, Anja Garbarek, St. Vincent, Sharon Jones & the Dap Kings, Iron & Wine – all off-the-mainstream acts with buzz. A small piece of a big pie is still large enough. Niches may not make you super rich, but they're big enough for a small, sustainable economy – like you.

Hey, not everyone's going to be a Quincy Jones, U2, or Bonnie Raitt, but if an artist like Tom Waits is a vocalist, then there is definitely room for you, right? Do the work necessary to excel in your niche, whether it's writing charts,

engineering sessions, providing backup vocals, booking shows or teaching kids the basics of music.

Your goal, to use marketing lingo, is to "position" yourself in your "market" as the go-to person for that particular skill or talent. Don't worry too much about industry rejection. Every record label in Britain initially passed on the Beatles and The Rolling Stones, right? The key is believing in yourself and persevering beyond others' opinions (even those of "the industry").

You're an entrepreneur of your own talent. What is entrepreneurship? It's seeing an economic/social/spiritual need and then creating business forms to meet that need. It's finding a gap in a seemingly saturated market and creatively filling it in with your unique offering.

Maybe your specialty is tube amps, or Latin jazz arrangements, or building cool web sites. Whatever it is you can create a niche from it, a distinctive offering that stands out in the marketplace of useful things. Dig a hole an inch wide and a mile deep, and work it.

● **Think for a change.** Pause. If I were to ask you to concentrate real hard and imagine yourself growing an inoperable brain tumor, would you do it? Most of us would probably hesitate. Would you? Why? Perhaps because you believe deep down that your mind, or the way you think, can actually have an affect on your body. And you would be right.

Modern brain research, as well as quantum physics, are discovering that the mind is a form of energy that cannot be reduced to measurable quanta or manipulated like samples in a test tube. Thoughts are electric and they impact matter.

In 1820 it was discovered that an electric current produces magnetism. Did you know that there is electricity in almost everything, but it only flows when it is given energy or power? This energy can come from chemicals in a battery, from sunlight falling on a solar cell, or from thoughtful intention. If thoughts are electric energy then they also have magnetic properties.



Can good thoughts inside us magnetize good things outside us? On the other hand, can inner negative thoughts magnetize outer negative things? Seems so.

As the saying goes, whether you think you can or you think you can't,

you're right!

Visualization is based on the understanding that the mind is a powerful engine that can trigger mental pictures that can affect us intensely. Kids do this naturally, imagining themselves as superheroes, doctors, or ballerinas. How much energy are you putting into creatively composing your life?

Commit to Focus.

Next...

3. Commit to Flexibility

The one who runs straight bumps harder. – Anonymous

Flexibility plays counterpoint to focus. Especially in the early stages, a career musician must wear a number of hats. You might be a Performer-Writer-Teacher, or an Arranger-Mixer-Editor, or, more likely, a Singer-AdminAssistant-Barista or Producer-Babysitter-Sales Associate. That's appropriate; all of us have done it.

Some have called the current times we're living in the "Age of Ambiguity," an era of "boundaryless careers," where career development manifests through lateral and horizontal as well as vertical movement. Pretty familiar to musicians whose work tends to be of a freelance nature within "flexible work arrangements".



Creative people don't feel the need to stamp out uncertainty. They see all kinds of inconsistencies and gaps in life, and they often take delight in exploring those gaps – or in using their imagination to fill them in. Again, there are things to celebrate all along the way, if they are met with a flexibility of mind.

Write your goals in concrete and your plans in sand.

When asked about what advice he had for young players, pianist Ahmad Jamal once said: "Prepare yourself to have options. Many of the greats were lost because they didn't have options. If there is one exit door when a fire breaks out chances are you're going to get trampled to death. You can conduct, perform, teach, arrange, produce,

go to an institute of higher learning and get more options, and avoid the exit door.”

● **Practice patience/Stay humble.** Since success paths today have multiplied, musicians will experiment with more career-building methods and try a variety of relational constellations before the most resonate ones are found. This takes *time* and time is the new scarcity. Being in the Waiting Room *will* try your soul. But hurry and strife will just breed the same. A shortcut is often the longest distance between two points. Successful musicians are constantly reviewing their steps to ensure movement towards their goals. It’s a journey and, as the sage once quipped, the journey is the goal.

On this, it doesn’t hurt to remember the former jobs of famous musicians: Ben Gibbard (Death Cab for Cutie) was an environmental inspector for an oil company, Vocalist Chad Kroeger of Nickelback sold phones; Gwen Stefani scrubbed floors for Dairy Queen, Philip Glass was a cab driver, Jack White an upholsterer. Even P Diddy cleaned toilets. Humility is a big part of the dues-paying phase of music careers. The key is to stay humble and not *overpay* your dues.

● **Cast Your Net Wide.** It took a coffee company and a computer manufacturer to teach the music industry how to sell music in the digital age. Non-music businesses everywhere are seeking creative ways to add music-related services to their mix. This means that you needn’t be dependent on the traditional music companies for music career success.

Think of companies you already resonate with and try brainstorming ways you can link up. Consider ones with a similar demographic to yours. Start on a local level. It might be a gift shop, skateboard arena or arts organization. It may even evolve into a full-fledged sponsorship for a tour or recording project. Finds ways to add value to what these businesses are doing with what *you* have to offer.



● **Forget jobs; look for the work that needs to be done.** A colleague shared about a music production student with perfect pitch who found plenty of work in recording studios by providing his skill as the “last mile” on auto-tuned vocal sessions. What special skill do you have that can be used as a door opener?

Project work, outsourcing, contract work, and short-term assignments are becoming the primary way of doing business today. So it no longer makes sense to think only in terms of jobs with fixed “job descriptions.” Instead, as a creative worker, you will have a constantly fluctuating mix of responsibilities – “packages” of “deliverables” for which you will need to continually upgrade your skills.

Some musicians like the variety and make it an asset in their portfolios. “The key to a successful indie career is diversifying your income,” suggests singer/songwriter Kyler England. “I write country songs; I do session singing, licensing, and I help others on their gigs. That’s the key – diversifying.”

● **Entrepreneurial in Body & Mind.** Kyler is the entrepreneurial musician in action, scoping out market opps and providing service solutions wherever they’re found.

The French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say, who lived at the time of the French Revolution, invented the term *entrepreneur* to describe someone who unlocks capital tied up in land and redirects it to ‘change the future’. He was one of the first economists to introduce the idea of *change* and *uncertainty* as something normal and even positive. The entrepreneur sees gaps to fill, pain to alleviate, needs to appease, and is often driven by a passion to do so. But it is also often done without a clear path. Indeed, entrepreneurs often blaze their own path.

To bring and sustain a viable service, however, requires creating business ‘forms’ to hold and direct this passion. These forms – methods, tactics and game plans – provide ways for the entrepreneur to arrange and conduct all the energies flowing into and out from the enterprise.

Commit to Flexibility – a lot of work.
So...

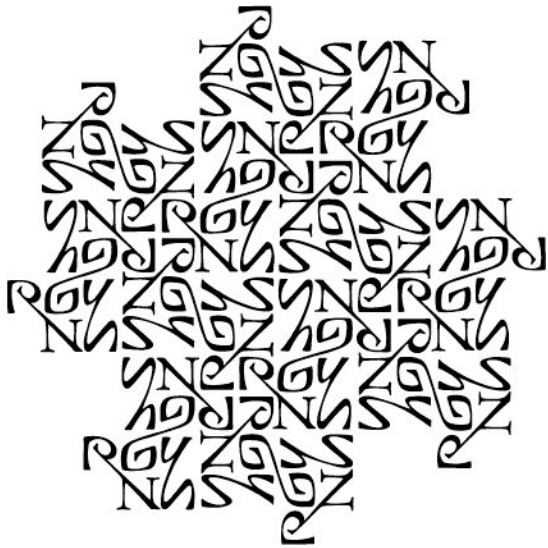
4. Commit to Synergy

One finger can't lift a pebble. – Hopi saying

Nothing feeds creativity more than linking up with other creative people. Music is a “who-you-know/who-knows-you” kind of business – perhaps the most relationship-driven business on the planet. The quality and quantity of your relationships will be the primary engines of your progress. What are you doing to nurture and expand your web of relationships?

Indie music bard Derek Sivers is fond of saying that D.I.Y. is better understood as “*Decide* it yourself” rather than “*Do* it yourself”. The “it” in DIY is primarily business and doing it all yourself is a recipe for disaster. You’ll evaporate if your candle is burning at both ends.

Seek, find and conspire with like minds.



Forging creative alliances is key to building a multi-dimensional music career. Teaming up can multiply your efforts and move your career in an upward trajectory.

Traditionally, musicians joined with “professional” teammates like management companies, high-level booking agents and established record labels. This still goes on, but in the DIY era we’re increasingly seeing artists and bands avoiding

the corporate players and instead finding friends and relatives as viable “partners” in the goal of growing a musical buzz.

Cyberspace is more crowded than real space and people who may be good at creativity may not be good at, or interested in, the rest of the business. What is most needed today are manager-partners who can link up with ascending musicians and help them arrange and orchestrate their careers. “Management is not 10 big decisions, it’s 1,000 little decisions,” says personal manager Jeff Rabhan. It’s the sheer everydayness of the dozens of administrative demands that can sap a musician’s energy and distract from more core priorities, like songcraft and practicing.

Having a creative co-manager with the administrative and outreach skills you don't have would be a smart and mutually beneficial move. Teams share the burden and divide the grief.

- **Network with the well-connected.** When meeting someone for the first time, always think, "what can I do for you?" The coin of the realm in relationship development is not greed, but generosity. Simply put, the goal of networking is *mutually* beneficial relationships. Seek to bring your own unique value to every relationship.

Networking (a worn but still useful word) is a high time, low cost marketing strategy. Just as in science, finding the right combinations of individuals that react well with your own chemistry takes experimentation before you reach the best mix. Slow but sure.

In pursuit of escaping vocational silos, aim for a *breadth* of contacts. For example, those providing music for visuals should traffic with new media professionals; music performers should link up with event organizers and stage workers – you get the idea.

One very smart tactic is to network with the well-networked. These may be politicians and their staffs, clergy, professional organization leaders, newspaper reporters – people who know a lot of people.

Try to resonate in your niche. Singer-songwriter Matthew Ebel calls himself a "big sci fi and fantasy nerd". His music has an affinity with a more geeky crowd, and he attends gatherings and conventions with these populations. No matter what interest you have, you can find a common ground on which to connect.

Spark network effects in your sphere of influence by associating with causes you believe in, whether it's hunger in inner cities, rainforest depletion, adult literacy, dolphin abuse or cat juggling (thank Steve Martin for bringing this one to the world's attention). Each cause has a corresponding organization through which you can connect and create.

If you cannot find the right network, start it. $1+1+1= 10$.

- **Plug into the crowd.** None of us knows what all of us know. Here's where "crowdsourcing" comes in. Based on the DIWO (do it with others) philosophy, its popularity is being driven by people getting big responses from their networks as they leverage their niche

communities to spread the work about their projects. American Idol, Flickr, Digg, Wikipedia and Google are all reflections of the crowdsourcing phenomenon.

Crowdsourcing is the music industry's first serious business model in the post-Napster era. Rather than a top-down model where a few CEOs filter what music gets to our ears, the market (crowd) itself now drives the biz.

Powerful stuff.

It's the *Big Flip* and it's the future. A traditional gatekeeper could never process and rank the thousands of bands and songs out there. So (industry be damned) just post your work on the global network and let a portal like YouTube (and its visiting millions) do the filtering. The cream rises to the top – Well, most of the time.

Of course, there's always room for "standout" filters – individuals whose point of view attracts a crowd, or who have a knack for framing the hyperabundance of content currently burying us, and giving it organization and meaning. Hypebot, Techdirt, and Mediafuturist are three, among others, I enjoy. This, itself, is a career opportunity for you and relates to the earlier discussion about niches.

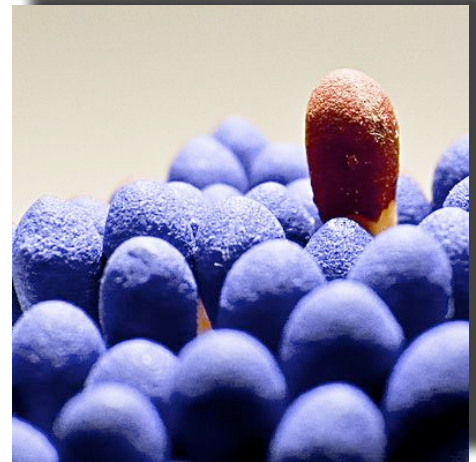
The finance arm of crowdsourcing, of course, is *crowdfunding*, a tactic used for everything from disaster relief to political campaigns. Visit a site like Kickstarter.com and you find a banquet of creative works to invest in: a fusion reactor, a video game based on 8-bit games from the 80s, earrings designed with a map of your street, a film documentary on the conscription of children into the Ugandan army, and, of course, lots of music projects.

Artistshare, Slicethepie, and Microfundo are music-specific services, pioneering new ways to enjoin musician support. Some artists, like Jill Soule, offer potential patrons a direct means of support right at her web site. Such "bottom-up" support strategies are more in keeping with the ancient musician-audience model: direct performance/direct return. Their attraction is obvious. How can you use it?

● **Softly Hype and Be Memorable.** In his book "Data Smog," David Shenk estimates the average person is exposed to more than 3,000 advertising messages a day. How do you get *your* signal through all this dense media noise? How can you focus peoples' memory so that their experience with you cuts through the

surrounding shallows? You do it with creative packaging, magnetic events, and going the 'extra mile' to brand your name (your band's name, your company's name) at the top of the mind.

When we have to promote another company, product or person it comes pretty easily. *Self-promotion*, however, is tougher. Even today we tell children, "Don't talk about yourself; people won't like you." So we think it's necessary to choose between remaining obscure or sounding obnoxious, forgetting that there is a creative middle ground.



Seldom are we encouraged to bring our background, our experience, and our enthusiasm to the table and weave them into a compelling human-interest story. Learn to build on your previous success to forge a path for your future. Ask yourself: Do I truly feel I have something special to share?

Your ability to succeed in selling yourself doesn't depend on what has happened in your past, but on how you see your future. Convince yourself that you will be successful and you'll convince others as well. Ask – how can I be a valuable resource for this person, this representative, this company? That's the key to being memorable. Synergy. $1 + 1 + 1 = 10$

Coda

To me, a "successful" music career is a conscious alchemy of creative work, compatible comrades, good information and breaks. Sometimes the stars will line up just so and you'll suddenly leap frog several steps to greater achievement. Mostly, you'll be working your butt off – practicing, schmoozing, failing, feeling disappointed, landing deals, negotiating schedules and washing the dishes.

It helps to remember that "career exploration" is a luxury in a broader view of the world. In some earth regions with struggling economies, career exploration may only be geared to finding *any* job at all, rather than allowing options from which to choose. So let's keep our perspective, be thankful, and not get *too* caught up in navel gazing. Music demands commitment; just like wholeness. Forward. ●

THE 4 COMMITMENTS

1. Growth

- Exercise creativity
- Strike inner-outer balance.
- Carve your goals/Set your sail
- Lead with your strengths

2. Focus

- Attend to core priorities
- Niche yourself
- Think for a change

3. Flexibility

- Practice patience/Stay humble
- Cast your net wide
- Forget jobs; look for the work that needs to be done
- Be entrepreneurial in body & mind

4. Synergy

- Network with the well-connected
- Plug into the crowd
- Softly hype and be memorable

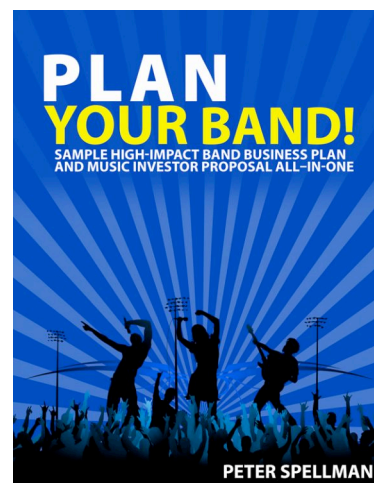
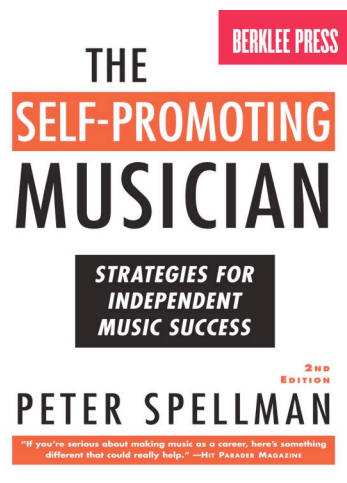
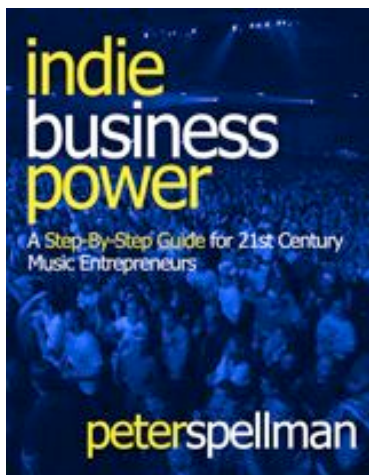


Riding your career

Peter Spellman, M.A. M.Ed., helps musicians apply their entrepreneurial instincts to create success. He is Director of the Career Development Center at Berklee College of Music, and founder of Music Business Solutions (mbsolutions.com), a training resource for music entrepreneurs. He has worked as a booking agent, label director, music editor, artist manager and producer, and performs as percussionist with the ambient-jazz ensemble, Underwater Airport. His newest book, *INDIE BUSINESS POWER: A Step-By-Step Guide for 21st Century Music Entrepreneurs*, and his other business-building books, are used in over a dozen colleges and universities across the U.S and Canada.



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(in no particular order – all great!)

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*The most effective way
to cope with change
is to help create it.*

– Anonymous