

Taking Care of Business (pssst, it's a good idea!)

BY JIM COFFIN

Okay, sing along: "Taking care of business." That's enough; I can't remember the rest of it anyway. But learning about the business world is a good idea. Why? Regardless of whether you become a professional musician, an educator, end up in the business side of music, or have music as a hobby, business will be involved.

The intention of this article is to give you some insights, or a business perspective, regardless of your career choice.

Those enrolled in a university that offers a music business degree might already have some business background. But I might offer some additional business tips.

By the way, most of you will have eight to ten jobs or career changes in your lifetime, and two of them haven't been invented yet. So learning some business skills will be of value. First important tip: Take the word "luck" out of your vocabulary.

PLAYING THE CAREER GAME, OR REALIZING DREAMS

Like many of you, my dream was to become a professional drummer. However, my resume reads: professional player, music store employee, high school band director, university music professor, marketing manager for Premier and Yamaha percussion, writer of percussion method books, writer and editor, consultant for the music products industry, and now a script writer for a DVD. I count six careers, with eight career changes. (If you get a different number, math was never my strong suit.)

Before I get into basic business, following are some thoughts and tips to be thinking about. The following statement is the key to learning how to play the career game: Knowledge is only knowledge; learning is power!

Tip 1: Check out the successful people in the career area that you are interested in. Issac Newton said, "One must first imitate to later surpass."

Tip 2: Work on the fundamentals: A. Listening: Separate fact from crap. B. Writing: Don't use e-mail "buzzspeak." C.

Speaking: Ability to communicate: get rid of "like" and "you know."

Tip 3: Learn about power. Understand there will always be people who will be after you. People in power want to stay in power. (Later in the article I'll discuss The Wizard of Oz hoax.)

Tip 4: There are politics involved in all careers. You cannot escape this fact. Breaking down the word: POL, Greek word for "many." TICS, Blood sucking little varmint

Tip 5: There will always be change. You must develop the ability to handle it. Prior

Marketing is a matter of Image and Perception: the Package. Marketing is the function that covers all aspects of business. Selling, advertising, finance and budgeting, research, and dealing with wants and needs. With you being the initial product, rate yourself in the above areas. I am going to list all ten of a marketer's attributes: 1. Imaginative, 2. Inquisitive, 3. Researcher, 4. Determination, 5. Enthusiasm, 6. Patience, 7. Initiative, 8. Preparation, 9. Integrity, 10. Read extensively.

MORE TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Be Prepared: not just a Scout motto. Knowledge + Learning = Empowerment! Get a mentor. If you want to know something, don't ask the monkey, ask the organ grinder!

A mentor should be considered as a "lighthouse"—a beacon who will show you the way based upon his or her experience, knowledge, and being a good "game" player. You might have more than one mentor, but all of them will have been successful in their given area of expertise. Key words when working with a mentor: 1. Ask, 2. Listen, 3. Observe, 4. Act. Notice that "speak" is not on the list.

NETWORKING

This is a very important aspect of your career. It is taking care of yourself and setting goals. Harvey Mackay, in his important book *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty* (Currency/Doubleday) offers this advice: "Your talent alone will not save you in today's world. More training and education will not save you. The government will not save you. No matter how self-reliant, dedicated, loyal, competent, well educated and well trained you are, you need more than you to save yourself: you need a personal network."

Meeting people is important, but your reputation is the key when developing your network. Following are ten ways to create a successful network.

1. Start now! Make networking a high priority.

2. Don't miss opportunities to develop contacts.

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to change there will be a lot of gossip resulting in FEAR: False Evidence Appearing Real.

THE SELLING GAME

"Everybody lives by selling something"—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Although marketing covers all aspects of business, I like to start with the Art of Selling. First you must understand what your basic product is that you are selling. Whether you become a professional musician, an educator, or work in the music industry, when asked what your product is, it is you. Not your musicianship, your high school band, or whatever, you are the product. And your salesmanship must center on that premise.

Following are a few attributes: 1. You have a burning desire to prove you to someone. 2. You radiate confidence and strength. 3. You are highly goal-oriented. 4. You invest monthly in the greatest investment, your mind!

There are six more characteristics, but the above will suffice to give you an idea of what is involved. After you, there is a physical product that requires additional attributes necessary for success.

THE MARKETING GAME

"Nothing succeeds like the appearance of success"—Christopher Lasch.

3. Have business cards and stationary.
4. Develop relationships that are not “all business.”
5. The key word is ASK!
6. Keep in touch. Develop long-term relationships.
7. Get to know the right people.
8. Join appropriate associations, including alumni groups and PAS.
9. Remember people’s “special days.”
10. Look for ways to help the organizations you join.

Hang in there; I’m getting close to wrapping this up. (Do I hear sighs of relief?) I have only scratched the surface, but I do want to throw this out: My main goal is to get you to consider the necessity of taking some business courses before you graduate. One way is to go to your school’s business college and see if they have a business survey course. In that course you might discover that there are other offerings that might fit your career choice.

College-age people have attained just enough knowledge to be dangerous. You feel indestructible. But Mark Twain said it best: “The trouble with most of us is that we know too much that ain’t so.” I have found that to be the truth.

In order to develop professional attributes, the main ingredient is attitude.

Wrong	Right
Worry	Responsibility
Rush	Improve yourself
Overreact	Set goals
Neglect responsibility	Humor
Give up	Trust yourself

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

1. Pick out five other careers that would interest you if you didn’t or couldn’t have music. Being interested in a lot of things makes you more interesting.

2. You don’t always have to be working. The well needs to be filled up once in awhile.

3. Don’t be afraid of failure; everyone loses once in awhile. Turn that into something positive!

Whoops, almost forgot The Wizard of Oz hoax, or “find out what’s behind the curtain!”

Society has a game going, and you need to discover the game that affects you. In The Wizard of Oz, when Dorothy peaked behind the curtain she discovered that the know-all, see-all wizard was nothing but a little nerd working with smoke and mirrors. You have to find out who is behind the curtains that holds the power over you—your goals and aspirations. Power people want to keep you in the dark; that’s how they keep their power.

Good luck and have great careers.

Jim Coffin has had a varied music career, from performer to clinician, educator to business executive. For over 20 years Coffin was employed in the percussion industry, overseeing marketing, sales, educational and artists activities, and product development for Premier Percussion and Yamaha Percussion. He has served on the PAS Board of Directors and as PAS Secretary, and served as Drumset Editor for Percussive Notes. In 1999 he was the recipient of the PAS President’s Industry Award, and in 2005 he received the PAS Outstanding Supporter Award. Coffin established the Business of Music Seminars in 1995 and has lectured at several universities and at PASIC.