

9. *Have both short-term and long-term goals.* Articulating your goals is important. You can't get somewhere if you don't know where you're going. Having realistic short-term goals, for each month or each week, will help keep you focused and motivated. Meeting short-term goals is the best way to work toward your long-term dream. At the end of each chapter there are practical prompts to help you determine your next short-term goals and action steps.

10. *Feed your soul.* How do you recharge and renew your creativity? What inspires you? Pay attention to what helps recharge your imagination and what helps keep your spirit alive. Whether you rebalance by attending to your spirituality, your family life, favorite hobbies, or by communing with nature, make sure that you are taking good care of your spirit.

Remind yourself of why you got involved in music in the first place. Your most basic reasons for being in music are crucial factors to keep you moving forward in your career. Keeping tabs on your motivation—on the essence of what music means to you—should help sustain you throughout your career.

On Inspiration

Israeli composer Lior Navok gave a presentation at New England Conservatory several years ago and spoke about creativity and motivation. In his talk, Lior described the drive that musicians have—the creative internal fire—and he likened it to a small gold box. It's something absolutely personal and irreplaceable in each of us, a precious gift that we need to safeguard. Lior's image of the gold box is powerful—it can serve as a reminder of our mission. His metaphor itself is a gift: when you conjure it, you may also find it has a centering and motivating effect.

Advancing in your career involves fine-tuning your goals, assessing your strengths, and discovering and exploring new opportunities. The kind of musician who puts these success principles into action can be described as an entrepreneur. Cultivate your entrepreneurial skills, and you cultivate your career.

The Entrepreneurial You ♦

Musicians do not usually view themselves as entrepreneurs, even though they are the quintessential “multi-preneurs.” Musicians regularly launch new ensembles, start their own teaching studios, create record labels, and publish their own works. A satisfying work life for a successful musician often in-

cludes concurrent start-up ventures. This is just one benefit to being a musician: the diversity of ways you can contribute to society.

Musicians create their own start-up projects for a variety of reasons. They may catch the entrepreneurial bug because of frustration with limited traditional opportunities or because they seek the satisfaction of being in charge of their own project. They may want additional income or the opportunity to perform certain repertoire with particular colleagues. Sometimes entrepreneurship begins with identifying a specific community need and seeing how a musician's skills would meet that need.

Boston-based pianist and entrepreneur Sarah Bob had always been interested in the connections between contemporary visual art and music. In 2000, she founded the New Gallery Concert Series to present the two arts in dialogue. Each concert is presented in collaboration with a corresponding visual art exhibition at the Community Music Center of Boston, where Sarah is on faculty. She selects the visual artwork and commissions composers to write musical responses to it. As of 2008, the series had hosted 26 concerts with over 123 musical compositions, 30 premieres, and hundreds of works by over two dozen visual artists from around the world. The series includes works that span the spectrum from classical-contemporary, improvisation, electronic, jazz, and avant-garde music, paired with sculpture, painting, indoor installations, photography, and film. (See <http://www.newgalleryconcertseries.org>.)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2005, on average, 2,356 people each day launched their own businesses. Individual proprietorships or businesses without employees, also known as "lone wolves," had receipts of \$951 billion and made up approximately 78% of the nation's 26 million-plus firms.¹¹ Whether you are starting your own ensemble, establishing a private teaching studio, contracting other musicians for gigs, or marketing and selling your own CD, you too are being entrepreneurial.

In addition to their musical ability, successful musicians tend to possess certain entrepreneurial characteristics, personality traits, and other skills. Not every successful musician has them all, but they often have a high percentage. See how many you possess now; subsequent chapters detail how to develop these skills and cultivate these traits.

Entrepreneurial Checklist

Skills to Manage Your Music Career

- Interpersonal
- Writing
- Public speaking/presentation
- Negotiation

Personal Qualities for Success

- Determination
- Ability to handle rejection
- Imagination, creativity
- Flexibility, openness to new ideas

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget/finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal integrity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual curiosity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to learn from one's mistakes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> Conscientiousness, reliability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer | <input type="checkbox"/> Good follow-through, detail-oriented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Interest in others, willingness to contribute |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimism |

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Oboist Jennifer Montbach started Radius Ensemble—a mixed chamber group with its own concert series—so that she could program the music she wanted and experiment with reaching a broader audience.

While she was a grad student, Jennifer gained valuable arts administration experience helping in the start-up of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, and later took on a job working in the publicity department for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Through this work, she acquired the necessary skills and professional contacts to launch Radius.

Within its first two seasons, Radius had already received great reviews, created an impressive website and fan list, and was playing to full houses. In addition to all the practice and rehearsals, the work involved forming a nonprofit organization, fundraising, and writing program notes and press releases. The payoff for Jennifer was seeing her vision realized. (See <http://www.radiusensemble.org>.)

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Toni Sikes is the founder of “the Guild,” a company that markets and sells online original artwork by thousands of artists. For an Arts Enterprise talk at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Toni explained that being an entrepreneur is “not a job title: it’s a state of mind.” And in terms of what’s necessary to move forward as an entrepreneur, she said people need to be adept at the following:

1. *Dreaming.* Do you have a vision? In business schools budding entrepreneurs are asked, “What’s your ‘BHAG’? The acronym stands for your Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal.
2. *Bootstrapping.* Can you take your vision and break it down into manageable pieces, starting small and working long and hard to bring your idea to life?

3. *Networking*. You need to get out and meet people, to gather ideas and suggestions for your work. Toni says, “Schmoozing is a contact sport: you need to rub up against others.” (Networking is covered in chapter 2.)
4. *The art of pitching*. You must be able to communicate an engaging and concise “pitch” of what you have to offer others.
5. *The art of doing*. Entrepreneurs have a bias toward action; it’s no good having great ideas if you don’t act on them. Toni says, “The hardest thing about starting is starting.”

Project-Based Career Advancement ♦

Through advising over the years, I have found that musicians often have an idea in the back of their minds for a special project, something they’ve always wanted to do, create, or help make happen. What I mean by *project* here is a music career-related venture that is concrete and specific. (This is *not a project*: “to become the best jazz ukulele player in the Southwest”! That may be a goal, but it’s not a project.) Projects are focused on *doing* as opposed to being: they have timelines and are task-oriented. Projects can be anything from researching and applying for grants to study abroad, to starting a reed-making business, writing a teaching methods book, launching a concert series, or raising money to buy an instrument. Music career projects demand a range of musical and non-musical skills, and they can be tremendously satisfying to work on and complete.

Unfortunately, musicians often keep their project ideas to themselves. Worse, they often talk themselves out of pursuing these projects, thinking they’re too ambitious or too time-consuming. The usual reasons given are a lack of time, collaborators, and/or funding. This is a shame, because it is usually these creative project ideas that lead musicians to rewarding and satisfying career paths.

In fact, most music careers are *project-driven*. A musician’s contacts and interests generally lead to a series of short- or longer term projects (such as commissions, recordings, tours, teaching studios, and ensembles). These projects, in turn, make up the fabric of most musicians’ artistic careers, much more than any particular “job.” So learning to manage a project is a great way to learn to manage your career.

To get started, think about what you’ve been dreaming about doing. Seek out advice and feedback on the projects you have imagined. If you don’t at least talk about your project, ask questions, and explore, you’ll never have the satisfaction of knowing whether it was actually possible. Ask current or former teachers, alumni, or your music school’s career development staff. Ask friends and family if they know anyone who has done something simi-

lar. People realize their dreams by talking about them with others and sharing their enthusiasm—which often leads to more ideas, collaborators, plans, and action. Do not underestimate the importance of other people; projects require collaboration, they take a team, if not a village.

Self-Assessment: Where Are You Now? ♦

In order to map your future, you will need to first orient yourself. Career advancement involves two kinds of work: the internal and the external. The internal work involves self-reflection and assessment. The external work involves research and networking. To help with the internal work, here are two essential questions and some help with finding answers:

What Are Your Strengths?

It can help to write all this down as a list. In what areas do you excel? Be specific. Think about all aspects of your musicianship in relation to the career you desire. Performers need to consider their technical performance abilities and levels, interpretive skills, range and repertoire, and performance experience. What is your reputation? How would your colleagues and mentors describe your abilities now? If you teach, what are your specific strengths as an educator? If you are interested in arts administration and music industry jobs, what relevant skills and experience do you have at this point? Everybody should consider their professionalism. Are you known as someone who is easy to work with, who shows up on time and is well prepared?

What Needs Improving?

We *all* have weaknesses. Write them down: be specific and honest. If you are serious about moving ahead in your career, you need to be willing to confront what needs changing and then work on making improvements.

Because we are not usually our own best judges, it's important to get objective feedback. Make individual appointments with three or four trusted mentors who know your work well. Ask people whose professional opinions you value, such as coaches or former teachers. Do *not* ask loved ones or close friends—they are biased, and for this you need objectivity. When you make these appointments, be clear that you are asking for unvarnished feedback on both your strengths and your weaknesses.

Be prepared for honesty. I recommend writing down everything you hear in these consultations—both the good and the bad—so you can sort it all out later. Listen calmly, do not get defensive, and do not make excuses. In meeting with different people, you may get contradicting input. Take time to think it all over carefully. It takes maturity to ask for and to process

this kind of critical feedback. Be humble and astute enough to ask for input, and then use it to improve your work—these are the hallmarks of a committed professional.

Clarifying Your Intent: What Is It You Want?

So, what exactly is your dream? What is your desired future? I like to ask the question this way: “*If a fairy godmother were to appear suddenly and bonk you on the head with her magic wand, what would you ask for?*” Write down your answers. What is the life you hope to be living ten years from now? Where and with whom would you like to be living? Do you see a house, pets, and/or children in the picture? Detail what you plan to be doing professionally. Consider how you want to be involved musically in your immediate community. Be specific and concrete about your future goals because you will need to think strategically about how to reach them.

Achieving Goals: Getting from Point A to Point B ♦

Career concerns and questions are essentially about choices: how to spend time and how to focus one’s energy. Many musicians have difficulty figuring out the action steps to take to advance their careers. It can be difficult to see a clear path toward that long-term dream. In order to succeed, musicians need to break down big goals into manageable smaller pieces.

Backward planning is the secret weapon of wedding planners, corporate executives, and savvy musicians. The idea is to work in reverse from your desired outcome, making sure you have a manageable timeline with benchmarking goals along the way to help keep you on track. By breaking down a big list of responsibilities into manageable weekly tasks, the work is doable and the stress is minimized. The trick in managing any project is to think strategically and realistically about what needs to be done and when. It’s great to have the satisfaction of crossing off tasks on your to-do list at the end of each week, knowing that you’re that much closer to reaching your goal.



Case Study: Determining Short-Term Goals

Suppose that your long-term career goal is to lead your own jazz quartet ten years from now, playing international tours and releasing your own recordings. You have started your own band and have played a few local jazz clubs, thanks to contacts through friends.

The question now is, what would help you move forward, toward your long-term goal? You realize you need to gain more performance experience. So what is

an appropriate goal to set for the next six months? And what specific action steps should you take this next week?

A reasonable six-month goal might be to arrange a small regional tour to gain performance, promotion, and booking experience. How should you get started?

Week 1: First things first. You will need to find where your band could play, right? This is basic research. You need to find performance venues in nearby cities that will be appropriate for your music. You can look on the web and talk to other musicians. You'll need to keep track of the information you gather—the names, locations, and contacts of the performance venues. Depending on how busy you are, this research might be a reasonable task for your first week, because it will involve both detailed web searching and connecting with colleagues and mentors.

Week 2: Once you have a list of target performance venues, you need to have promotional materials and a practiced telephone *pitch* before making calls or sending e-mails.

If the band needs to update its bio, sound clips, or website, this may be another week's to-do list. These kinds of action steps are described in detail in later chapters. But for now, we are focusing on how to break down a large goal into manageable pieces. And the most important piece of any plan is choosing the tasks you will complete *this week*: it's all about getting the work done.

Devising Your Career Plan

Goals are dreams with deadlines. Planning ahead drives you toward your goal. Without long-term goals and the concrete plans to achieve these, we are at the mercy of all the distractions and immediate concerns of life around us. The only one who can prioritize your time and energy to meet your needs is you.

“Ever hear about the Harvard study of business school grads? The study monitored graduates of an MBA program from 1979 to 1989. Researchers found that ten years after graduation the three percent who had written goals were making 10 times as much money as the other 97 percent combined.”

—Annette Richmond, “How to Develop More Effective Short-Term Goals,” on <http://www.career-intelligence.com>

Even if financial success is not your top priority, writing down your goals is important. It serves to help you consciously commit to your goals. It is a powerful method that focuses your thoughts and energy.

Start with writing down your long-term and short-term goals. You can revise them as you gain more experience. People change, so their goals and plans need to change with them. You may even find yourself revising your plan as you read this book and discover more about yourself and the music industry. That's fine, because researching and assessing your options is an important part of career exploration. The next chapters are all designed to help you fine-tune your career plan, to make it work for you.

Summary

Ultimately, success is about creating a life path that is meaningful. From a holistic viewpoint, lives and careers are all about process—experimentation and discovery. It's up to each individual to make the journey satisfying and rewarding.

Career Forward

Working through these questions will help you move ahead. Writing out your answers will help with thinking through and committing to your goals.

1. How do *you* define success?
 2. What *specifically* do you love about music?
 3. What *specifically* do you love about being a musician? (This is not the same as question 2.)
 4. What is your long-term goal? Describe in detail the life you'd like to be leading ten years from now. Where do you see yourself living? What kinds of work are you doing? Is there a family or significant other involved? A garden? Pets?
 5. What is your short-term goal? To progress toward your long-term goal, what do you realistically want to accomplish one year from now?
 6. What do you want to accomplish this month that will advance you toward your short-term goal?
 7. What's on your to-do list for this week?
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