
CRACK THE CODE!
WRITING MUSIC FOR
COMMERCIALS AND PROMOS
INSTRUCTION COURSE

MANUAL #3

MARKETING/ CONTACTS

by JOHN MIYAGI AUTHOR

CRACK THE CODE!

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MANUAL #3: MARKETING/CONTACTS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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In a previous life, he was also involved on the production side as an advertising agency producer for BBDO, as well as a freelance agency producer for a number of West Coast advertising agencies.

He has held staff positions at various well-known and established commercial music companies such as Ear to Ear, tomandandy, Decibel Architects, and Face the Music. He continues to work today making his living as a freelance composer and music producer for a number of music companies, as well as working directly with advertising agencies.

John is originally from Okinawa, Japan, and grew up a military brat. He has lived in Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Spain. He now resides in Santa Monica, CA, and is an avid beach volleyball player. He graduated from Pepperdine University in Malibu with a Bachelor of Arts in Music with emphasis on saxophone, piano and voice.

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Introduction: Marketing 101

In this manual, we will cover the basics of what you need to do to start developing your clientele. We will cover areas such as: how to put together a demo package, where to find potential clients, how to develop business relationships, and show you various resources of really expanding your contacts and various ways to "get in the door". After all, you can't make a living writing music if you live and work in a vacuum – your music has to get out there and listened to by people in order for them to give you an opportunity to write for them. You can be a fantastic musician, composer, sound designer, engineer, whatever – but if you stay inside your dark little studio year round and not talk to anyone, you won't be working!

The composers that have better demo reels, contacts, and communication skills are the ones who get the most work. It is not always their talent as a

FACT

It's not necessarily just talent that makes one successful. It takes contacts and marketing skills.

composer that gets them the work; more often than not, it stems from contacts, business savvy and marketing skills.

From my personal experience, I've been very fortunate because I actually worked in advertising as an agency producer before I started pursuing my career as a composer, sound designer, and music producer. I had already developed key business and personal relationships with people in advertising production – agency producers, creatives (copywriters, art directors, creative directors), editors, mix facility engineers, reps, and other composers – so I had a base that I could expand on to further my reach in developing clients.

It's like that "Six Degrees of Separation" thing. If you want to meet someone, you probably can find somebody who knows someone who knows someone who knows that person. Then once you're in the business for a while, you start to run into people who know people that you know. Once you start developing relationships, it's amazing how things will happen – synchronicity and opportunity come at you from all directions. The key is to get to that point in your career when people know who you are just by mentioning your name or the name of your company. It's a process that can take years.

As a musician, composer, or music producer, you have to **market** yourself. You have to get people to recognize your name or business name and also understand what your unique abilities are, and how to access your services. It's basically what the business of commercials and promos is about - name recognition, getting a product out there, letting people know where to get the product, and how to get it. This is basic **marketing**.

The definition of **marketing** as explained in the Merriam Webster Dictionary is:

1 a : the act or process of selling or purchasing in a market
b : the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service.

2 : an aggregate of functions involved in moving goods from producer to consumer.

We'll be defining marketing as 1b: **the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service.**

So now that we have a definition of what marketing is, we now need to define what these different elements are in the case of marketing yourself and your business as a composer for commercials and promos.

What is your Product or Service?

The first thing you need to determine is: What is the product or service you are promoting? If you are specifically going after a particular kind of work, you need to make sure you are marketing yourself in that light. If you send a CD of hip-hop tracks to a potential client, and the client is working on an orchestral job, it is highly unlikely you'll get the job. In the world of music for commercials and promos, versatility is key. In the writing lessons of Manual #2, you've had to go through many genres of music, some of which you may have never explored before as a composer. However, if you do find yourself leaning in one direction of music, perhaps that is the market that you should focus on. It's different for every individual; not everyone can be everything. We

all have strengths and weaknesses. You need to look in the mirror and determine what those strengths and weaknesses are, and determine what it is that you want to promote. Perhaps you need to work on your weaknesses to further enhance your skills as a composer. Or perhaps you may want to work with another composer who is strong in the areas where you are weak, and vice versa. Determine what services you have to offer and how to best market those services.

Developing a Marketing Plan

Now that you've taken a look to determine what your service is, now you have to design a **marketing plan** and be consistently working with it. The biggest pitfall that I find with composers is that when you're working on a job, you slack off a bit on the marketing side of your business, and the phone ceases to ring. You have to be consistent and try to make calls and send out reels on a consistent basis. Part of your job as a composer is to create a marketing plan for making contacts through calls, networking, producing and sending out demos, following up on sales activities, and other promotional activities. As we go through this manual, you'll start to develop a marketing plan that makes sense for you.

Planning to Succeed

The road to success in anything requires having a map to guide you to the best route. Here are some overall tips and strategies:

- 1) If at all possible, plan the night before what you will do the next day, and prioritize your work using the 80/20 rule (see below under Success Guidelines). Do the most important items first.
- 2) Take action on the plan DAILY if possible.
- 3) Do all jobs and work created by action plan.
- 4) AT THE SAME TIME, continue steps 1 and 2 while doing Step 3.

Success Guidelines

Here are four **Success Guidelines** that will help you set up a plan that works for you:

- 1) **Make it easy for people to work with you:** By keeping in contact, having a good attitude, being flexible, and doing occasional favors, you begin to stand out from the pack. You need to be easy to work with as well as be a great creative resource.
- 2) **Follow up:** A good rule in business is the **Rule of 7**. This basically means that people need contact at least 7 times before they feel comfortable in working with that person. It shows stability and responsibility when someone pursues a working relationship over time. After all, no one wants to hire someone unproven, or without recommendations from someone they know and trust. You may need to make many calls before you get a job from that certain individual. There have been many situations in my career where I've called an individual

TIP

Persistent follow up is a major key to success. Remember the rule of 7.

regularly over a long period time with no results. But by being persistent, I finally got a chance to do a demo. Never give up on a potential client.

3) Use the 80/20 Rule: This basically states that 80% of your results come from 20% of your actions. Another version of this rule says that 80% of your time will be spent on activities that produce only 20% of your results. Structure your day so that you tackle the most important things first - the actions that create the 80% of results. For example, make 10 calls a day first, before going to the supermarket, or vacuuming your studio.

IDEA

80% of your results come from 20% of your actions.

4) Ask if you want to receive: Surprisingly, many people just don't ask for things they want. Ask clients if they know anyone else who may need original music. Ask for leads. Ask other composers to call you if they need someone to help with overflow. Talk to musicians about jobs they may have heard about. Ask a potential client to lunch to get to know them.

Communication is Key

Success comes with knowledge and experience. Knowing what to say and do is crucial to your future success in this business. **Always remember, this is a business.** For the most part, people who act like prima donnas or act in an unbusinesslike way will not succeed over the long term. As mentioned before, talent is really not the most important attribute you will bring to your career. You will come across people who are succeeding on a large scale that are not necessarily all that talented, music wise. Why? It's because they have the ability to

communicate effectively. They have great people skills, and they know how to provide great music to their clients even if they cannot or do not write it themselves.

Successful composers make it easy for clients to come back to them over and over. Aside from providing fabulous music tracks, an agency or production company will call you for their next project if it was a great experience for them to work with you. Sometimes this can be something as simple as they like you as a person, or you share some common values or way of thinking. After all, wouldn't you rather work with people you consider friends, or have friendly working relationships with, rather than work with someone you're not comfortable with? If you make their job easier then you will create jobs for yourself. It's that simple. One of your most basic jobs is to make this happen. If you can do this on a consistent basis, you will be able to build a career in this business.

Composing is a service-based business, especially when it comes to advertising. You may have to work on a track over and over until they are perfectly happy with it, and you have to do this service with a great and willing attitude to please your clients.

Now, of course sometimes things don't work out as you expected. Maybe the client doesn't like your demo - or maybe you gave them a track that wasn't what they were looking for. When things don't work out, we should always try to learn something from the situation. You only fail if you don't learn from the experience. If you learn something to bring to the next job, or learn what not to do next time, you didn't fail. Chock it up as a learning experience you can use for the future.

Marketing is Absolutely Necessary for Success

Marketing for some people is not the most enjoyable part of the job, but it is necessary for you to be a successful composer. You may need to spend more time getting reels together, sending materials out, and making phone calls than spending time writing when you first get started in the business. As we go through this manual, you'll discover the many aspects of marketing and gain some insight into different avenues of getting work, developing relationships with clients, and developing successful marketing strategy to further enhance your career as a successful composer.

Let's get started!

CHAPTER 1:

Putting Together A Demo Reel

If you've gone through Manual #1, you have gained knowledge on how the commercial production process works, what the different kinds of music are for commercials, and what you need in terms of a studio or writing environment to do some work. Now the big question is -- how do you start working? Well, you get started working by working! You have to start writing! First of all, you need a **demo reel** (a demonstration reel) to show that you do know how to write music and have done some work. This is the typical Catch-22: you need to get work, but you need to have done some work in order for you to get work. Advertising agencies, editors, and production companies (or anyone, for that matter) are not going to take a completely unknown composer and give them a shot without seeing what kind of work they

have done in the past. When you're just starting out, how do you get a reel together? Don't despair, there are plenty of ways to get your demo reel started.

Start Writing!

Put together an **audio CD demo reel**. Start by putting together a number of tracks you've already written and/or produced on a CD. These can be sections of song demos, ideas for commercial music, anything to represent what you can do as a composer. If you don't have anything, start writing! Write a song. Write a jingle for a product, anything. If you've been working on Manual #2 you've obviously been writing music. Have you written 10 pieces of music yet? Now you have ten :30 music tracks you can put on your audio CD reel. You have to start doing work in order for you to get work, so just start doing it! You can't go out there and try to find work until you've started to build up your chops as a writer – it's like trying to go out and get a gig at a club before your band has rehearsed. You need to be prepared before you get that gig. You need to have something to represent your work and skills.

My first audio demo (it was actually on audio cassette, shows you how old I am) had maybe 15 or 20 tracks on it. There was stuff I did on my old Fostex 250 4 track. There were bits of songs I had written and produced, pieces of songs from my band, or short stylistic things I did to show my abilities as a composer. A lot of the stuff was written on a keyboard workstation (I believe it was an Ensoniq SQ80). At the least, it was a calling card and a nice representation of what I could do. It led to bigger and better things. As time went by and I

TIP

On your demo reel, always put your best work up front. They may not sit down and listen to the whole thing all at once.

started building a larger repertoire of work, I kept on upgrading my audio demo reel. Now I have hundreds of tracks I can pull from if someone is looking for something specific.

Make your CD Demo as Good as Possible

It goes without saying, but the contents of the reel have to be good. In fact, they should be great. Remember, an agency producer may be listening to dozens of composer and music company demo reels for a particular job. You need to make sure your reel “pops”. It should be sonically very solid, the material fresh and viable, and it’s got to have a little something better than the next guy’s reel. For example, there’s a big difference between a MIDI orchestra as opposed to a real orchestra recording. Samples are getting better and better, but nothing “breathes” like a real orchestral recording - you can sense the movement and phrasing of the strings, brass and woodwinds, as opposed to a more static MIDI arrangement. Fake guitar isn’t going to cut it on a rock track - you’ve got to have the real thing. I’m not saying go out and hire an entire orchestra for a demo reel, but you may have to invest some time and money to make your demos sound as polished as possible.

TIP

It is always worth spending a little money to make a good track great.

CD Reel Info

These things may sound obvious, but make sure you have these things on your demo reel:

Your name (and/or the name of your music company)

Contact info (phone, fax, email address)

A description of the contents (name your tracks, and a short description of what the track is, stylistically – like "acid jazz with tenor sax" or "hip hop groove with trombone" or "hair on fire punk rock")

It is incredibly surprising the number of CDs or tapes I've received over the years without this basic information. It leaves you thinking that this individual that sent you his/her materials is completely clueless, and that certainly is not an impression that one would want to make! With this basic information on your CD demo, people have an instant reference to who you are, and how to get hold of you. Having a log of contents helps them identify tracks, or helps them to find something they may be specifically looking for.

Make it Look Professional

You need to make your demo as good and as professional looking as possible. It's not hard to make a very good CD these days with the technology and software available. You can get a really good CD labeling kit at your local office supply store and make your demo reel look very professional. You don't need to go to a CD duplicator and make 500 CDs. There's no point - you'll probably end up revising your CD on a consistent basis, as you keep writing and developing fresher material. It's better to invest in a CD burner and software and a CD-label making kit.

You'll basically need CD burning software -- like Adaptec Toast with Jam, a CD burner (if you have a new

TIP

A pro looking package can put your CD at the top of the listening pile.

G4 this is already in your computer, or you can buy a Firewire CD burner for about \$200), and a CD label kit (Fellowes/Neato makes a great CD label kit you can pick up at Office Depot or Staples). Combine all that with a color printer, and you can make very professional sounding and professional looking CDs.

Put yourself in the shoes of an agency producer. Let's say he receives two CDs from two separate composers. The first one has a nice jewel case, with some nice artwork on the front and back, with the name of the composer clearly printed, contact info, and a log of contents. The second CD from another composer has the composer's name on it and a phone number, written with a black Sharpie right on the CD. There's no log of contents. There's no artwork on the jewel case, it's just blank. Which one seems more likely to be considered and listened to? The visual aspect of the CD is just as important as the way that it sounds. People do judge a book by it's cover; it's human nature. You need to do something that will catch a person's eye, in order to get them to use their ears to listen to your CD. Make it look good.

TIP

How your package looks can influence people's perception of your music.

Contents of your CD Demo

As far as content, it depends on you and your abilities. If you're a dance-oriented music producer, perhaps your audio CD demo is basically snippets of your dance tracks and/or remixes. If you're a rock guitarist, maybe it's all rock. If you're more versatile, it would be great to include three to five samples of music in different genres and categorize them (for example, a "rock" section, an "orchestral" section, and a "jingles"

section, and have a few samples in each genre). For my personal spots reel, I have a general CD reel that has many genres of music to showcase the versatility of styles I can write in, and it's easy for an agency producer to go right to the section/style of music he may be looking for.

I also suggest that you keep the tracks short and to the point. Again, put yourself in the shoes of the listener. If you're listening as an advertising producer, you want to hear the music get to the gist of the track right away – do you really want to hear a sixteen-bar guitar riff before it breaks into the main section? Do you want to sit through two minutes of nebulous synth pads before the track goes into the vocal section? Of course not. Keep your demo pieces short and to the point: :30, :60, up to :90 or 2:00 at the most. Even with songs, you may want to just fade up from the end of the verse, let the chorus play out and fade out during the next verse. Keep it short and sweet!

As far as the actual number of tracks to put on your CD, it really depends on how much stuff you have. Sometimes it can be a little as 12 - 14 cuts. I've seen CDs with 40 to 80 cuts on them. I suggest you put your strongest and best sounding tracks on and keep it to a smaller number - quality over quantity. Showcase your strengths. You can always write more music and update your CD on a semi-annual basis, every six months. You may even cut specific CDs for particular projects - maybe the agency producer is only looking for dance tracks. This can be very helpful so the agency producer doesn't have to go searching through the CD for particular tracks on your general CD.

TIP

Most composers have a general reel ready to go, and create custom ones if time permits.

Mastering your CD

Mastering is the process of sequencing and processing all the tracks into a unified whole. Each track is balanced in relation to the next, and overall compression and EQ adjustments are made to give it that professional “sheen”.

All commercial record releases are mastered - just look at the credits on any CD. You may think, “Why do they master the CD when they just spent hundreds of thousands of dollars recording in the best studios, with the best engineers?” The answer is that it is the last chance to try to fix little things, and make a cohesive overall CD. Mastering engineers have very high-end audiophile gear specifically tailored for this work. They can help tracks flow better from one to the next. Maybe one track is a little too bass heavy, or the vocals are a little lost in one song. Maybe a mix for radio needs a bit more compression to give it more punch. Mastering can clear up these problems.

Now, mastering cannot solve all problems. Mastering’s basic tools are multiband compression and EQ. A mix that is over compressed cannot be made less compressed. A poorly recorded vocal cannot be made to sound well recorded.

In recent years, a number of tools for the project studio have appeared. **T.C. Electronics Finalizer** is a hardware mastering device that gives you these tools. There are also software mastering programs that allow you these tools in your sequencing software.

In many ways, having one of these mastering units in your project studio is a must. They are not inexpensive, but they will give you the tools to give your

TIP

Mastering your tracks gives your CD a professional cohesive sound.

music that extra oomph and “pro” sound. Composers used to spend quite a bit of money to master their demos with a mastering engineer. Nowadays, you can probably buy the software or hardware for what you would have paid to have it done once. Add this to your wish list, and put it near the top.

What Should I Include With the CD?

No matter if you have called someone or met with someone, you should always include a cover letter with your CD. You should also include a resume. If you don't have any credits, or if they mainly consist of gigs you played in marching band, then don't include the resume. It doesn't look good to have only one or two things on your resume. Just skip it for now. **You always want to include only those things that work in your favor.**

Cover Letters

With your demo you'll include a short cover letter telling a little about yourself, and a resume of your work. Keep it brief - no one wants to read about your whole life story (when you're famous it's a different story). Make sure you write your letter on your letterhead, or on some kind of notecard in your business name. An example of a professional sounding letter is on the next page:

January 12, 2004

Mr. Joe Agency Producer
10000 Main Street
Anywhere, CA 90001

Dear Joe:

It was a pleasure speaking with you yesterday. As you requested, I am enclosing one of my composer demo CDs for consideration for your commercial for “Weed Killer Extreme”.

I feel I would be a valuable asset to your team, as I have a lot of experience scoring commercials. As you can see from my resume, I also scored the Clio Award winning campaign for Garden Weasel. My schedule also would allow me to fit right into your two week deadline.

I would be happy to do a demo, so please let me know if this will help.

Joe, thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you next week.

Sincerely,

Juan A. Gig

Encl: 2004 CD demo

Notice two things about this letter. One, it reminds the recipient that you had a conversation and that they requested your CD. And two, this letter is right to the point. It also lets them know that you are willing to do a demo if possible. This can be important because sometimes they don't have any money for demos, and don't feel they can ask someone to do work for nothing up front. This can help get you in the door.

I always send out my demo, letter, and resume in a padded mailer. A Kraft #1 padded mailer fits everything nicely (with paper folded in half). Some people put all their materials in glossy folders or other packaging.

The Video Demo Reel

A video demo reel is important if you want to do TV spot work, because it shows that you have the skills to score music to picture. Video reels can be delivered on 1/2" VHS videotape, 3/4" Videotape (still the ad agency standard), or DVD. DVD will become more and more dominant as the industry embraces this technology – even now there are a number of advertising agencies that will ONLY accept DVDs. With the new PowerMacs, it is easy to burn your own DVD-Rs. Or, you can even send out CD-ROMs with Quicktime Movies of your video spots.

Legal Disclaimer: You cannot use the videos supplied with this course for your video demo reel. The music you composed for the lesson plans is 100% owned by you, however, the video portions that comes with the lesson plans cannot be duplicated and/or distributed.

Where Do You Find Spec Spots?

You can develop your video demo reel at the start of your career by doing **spec work** - also known as “working for free!”. You will definitely have to do stuff for free when you first get started just to get your foot in the door, and to build your video reel. It’s that old catch-22; you have to do work to get work. People want to see if you can work to picture. But how do you find stuff to score on video? Here are a number of suggestions.

Film Schools

Check out the **film schools** in your area, and try to find people who are working on **short films** or or **spec spots** who are just starting out. Spec spots are "speculative spots" – work done to represent the ability and know-how of the director/editor/composer, and are usually done on their own dime. Universities with film departments have tons of students churning out student films and spec spots every semester. Find out if they need music or sound design for their work. There is much spec work out there to be found, if you look in the right places. There may be bulletin boards or postings in the film department area, or you can call directly and try to find more info. Check out organizations that sponsor local short film festivals, groups like the **AFI (American Film Institute at <http://www.afi.com/>)**.

I have a number of spec spots I’ve done over the years that are sometimes a lot better (creatively) than paid gigs, because spec spots tend to be a little more “out there” and more creative since the directors are not handcuffed creatively by the parameters of a client or

agency. It can be a very creative collaboration working directly with a young director in film school, and it's also a relationship builder with a potential client in the future. Who knows what will happen to that young director you're working with; he may be the next Steven Spielberg for all you know. Spec spots are usually the way in for a young director to start working with production companies and advertising agencies, and the director might be able to bring you in on the job.

Trade Papers

Look at **trade papers for the film and commercial industry**. People are always casting for actors for low or no budget films and spec spots. Why not call the director and ask if they need a composer for their short film? These people are also trying to build their reel and reputation as well. I've found quite a bit of work just by contacting people via email! You can also develop a relationship with directors and producers – that director you did that spec spot with could turn into the next big commercial director, as far as you know. Even George Lucas of Star Wars fame started his career doing very low-budget student films before he made it big. Just think if you started out developing a relationship with a guy like that when he first got started!

In Los Angeles, the main rags for the film trade are **Backstage West** and **The Hollywood Reporter**. They will list films in production, have listings for casting, listings for crew help, and on occasion, listings for music/sound design. Look for angles and avenues in trying to reach these people and send them your audio reel, and offer to do work for free if they don't have a

budget. It's important to develop relationships with directors and producers when they're first starting – it can pay off in the long run. And keep it mind, it's all about getting your video reel built.

Advertising Agencies

Offer up your services for **spec spots at agencies**. There are many young creative teams at advertising agencies who are trying to build up their commercial reel and may produce their own spec spots, along with a young director trying to beef up his/her reel. These are people you want to develop relationships with anyway, before they become more successful and start doing more and more TV work. You need to find these people – junior copywriters and junior art directors – and send them your audio reel, and maybe they'll have a project you can do some spec work on.

One of the first spec jobs I did was when I was working at an advertising agency as their audio-video guy. I was putting together **animatics** – these are test spots using animations or storyboards shot to video to show a rough idea of what the spot would look like – and I put my own music to these animatics, on spec. The animatics sold the campaign, and then I ended up actually writing a piece of music for one of these commercials, for Apple Computer's Powerbook. It was one of my first paying jobs, and I got it because I did quite a bit of spec work for the agency first, and they threw me a bone! But now, I had a real commercial, that aired nationwide, for my video reel!

Lists of advertising agencies can be found on the **AAAA** website (**The American Association of Advertising Agencies**) at <http://www.aaa.org>, and can provide you with names of agencies in your area and provide you with links to those agencies for more info.

The **Advertiser's RedBook** (<http://www.redbooks.com>) is a comprehensive listing of current advertising agencies and their clients that you can find in most libraries. Also check out trade magazines like **Adweek** (<http://www.adweek.com>) for the latest news about the industry – who's representing who, trends, who is working where, and what's going on in the biz.

Editors for Spec Spots

Try to find **commercial editors** to do spec work to build your reel. Editors for spots and films are a direct access to building your reel, because they are the people that are actually cutting the raw footage to create those spots and films. There are **editorial assistants** who are just getting a start on their career, and maybe they're cutting spec spots or student films to develop their reel and reputation. After working during the day and after those responsibilities are done, they're learning how to edit stuff after hours. Send them your audio demo reel, and maybe they can actually use a piece of music that you've written already and cut their commercial or scene to your track. Just like developing relationships with directors, copywriters, and art directors, having a relationship with a young and upcoming editor is of great value – they can help you get your video reel going, and may provide work for you in the future.

A great resource for finding editors is the **AICE**, which is the **Association of Independent Creative Editors** (<http://www.aice.org>). The website has lists of the top editors in the industry, with links, email addresses, phone numbers – everything you would need to find some avenues of work. There are industry trade magazines, such as **Post Magazine**, which is a trade publication about the post production world and new technology (<http://www.postmagazine.com/post/>), and includes articles on who's who in the commercial world.

Just like CD demo reels, your video demo reel should have quality, not necessarily quantity. It will take time to develop your video reel, since you need to depend on outside resources to get a hold of commercials or films for you to write music to. The reel should be as professional as possible, with all your contact info, a log of contents, and a professional look to it, with nice labels or art designed specifically for your reels.

Websites

Another way of presenting your materials is having your own **website**. In many respects, it's much cheaper and cost effective than sending out reels to hundreds of potential clients, because you can direct them to your website if they would like to see samples of your work, and it's right there, available almost instantaneously. It's very cheap these days to have your own site. For as little as \$10 a month, you can buy space on a webserver. However, if you do not have any experience creating websites, you will have to find someone to help you design and implement your website, or use a webservice that can supply you with assistance. I designed my

personal website myself because I learned how to use a program called Dreamweaver, which allows you to create websites without having to write actual HTML code. Many web service companies will have programs available to help you design a site. They have templates for websites you can start from and specialize for your particular needs. Just do a search for “personal websites” and tons of companies come up. Check out places like **Homestead.com** (<http://packages.homestead.com/>). **Yahoo!** can provide your own personal website on their very inexpensive and very easy to use **Geocities Service** (<http://geocities.yahoo.com/>).

What’s really great about having your own website is that you can provide a lot of marketing material that’s accessible immediately. If you make a call and if your potential client is web savvy, you can direct them to your website and they can immediately listen to your demos, see Quicktime movies of your work, and get all kinds of info. You can also quickly update your site with new tracks. Check out my personal website at <http://www.johnauthor.com/> to see how I designed my website. It’s very easy to navigate, there are several audio and video samples of my work, there is some biographical/experience information, and all my contact information is readily accessible. I send potential clients to this site all the time, and I have actually helped design websites for other composers. It’s a lot of fun!

Having a CD demo and/or hopefully a video demo is a fact of life. You need it as a representation of your abilities; it needs to look professional and have good examples of your work on it. Without a demo reel, there’s no chance for you to get work. Your demo reel is always

evolving as well. As you get better material, more spots, fresher work – you will be updating it, and it will only get better and better as you develop your skills. Remember that the demonstration reel represents you as a creative entity, so do the best job that you can and always, always look for new and interesting work to bring up your creativity level.

CHAPTER 2:

Finding Work

Now that you have a CD demo reel (and you're working feverishly on getting your video reel together!), you're ready to find some work! Well, on one level you've already been doing it. If you've been trying to find spec work through all the different avenues I've given you, you are meeting people who can get you work in the future. Getting work is primarily based on **building relationships**. There's no two ways about it, you have to connect with people who have the work so you can get the work. Until you built a great reputation and have built a big name for yourself, initially most of your work will come through a contact or a relationship you've developed as you pursue your composing career.

If you've read through the composer interviews in Manual #1, you will find one thing in common: Almost all the first jobs these composers did were through friends of theirs: a director, or a producer, or a musician, or

TIP

Search out your personal relationships for a chance at writing music for someone who's "in the biz".

a fellow composer, and they gave them a “shot”. So you can see how personal relationships are fundamental in getting your career off to the right start. Relationships are the cornerstone of success, in any business. If you have not already begun to build these relationships, do so. If you’ve made inquiries to directors, producers, agencies, and editors looking for spec work – that’s a great start. The more people you meet and talk to, and the more people that see your reel, the better.

When I first started in the business, almost all my work was obtained through people I had met when I worked at the advertising agency. I knew them on a work and on a personal basis, and they would listen to my audio demo, and give me a shot at a project they were doing. In most cases when people are giving you a shot for the first time, it is a competitive situation – you may be doing a demo for a commercial where three other composers are also doing demos. Until you prove your effectiveness and prove that you can deliver the goods, people are not just going to hand you a job on a silver platter. You will have to prove that you’re a good composer and understand how to score to picture. Once you’ve proven yourself to a client, they know they can rely on you and will give you more opportunities as they come along.

FACT

Relationships are the cornerstone of success, in any business.

Building Relationships

Building relationships is a time consuming task – if you want to reach more people for work, you’ll need to be a good marketing person -- spend time on the phone, knock on a few doors, and have a lot of meetings. It will always help to have other people help you in this area if

you feel you are not good at it – some people are more comfortable getting on the phone, making calls, and creating contacts than others. But if you yourself can do it at first, you have a chance of building relationships with individuals who could be your clients for years to come. I still work with people I did spots for ten years ago! As the years go by, you continue developing relationships with new people and keep up those older relationships – call them once in a while, see how they’re doing, find out what they’ve been up to, and if there is any work that’s coming up that you could get involved in.

Consistency

One thing that really needs to be stressed is that you **MUST** be consistent when it comes to developing relationships. The major mistake that composers make when first starting in this business is that once they get a music job, they stop the marketing side of things. You have to commit a certain amount of time to making calls, and consistently stay in contact with people you meet. To help you with this, it would be wise to create a database of all your contacts, and keep notes as to when you talked to them last, what projects they may have coming up, and any bits of information that may help you land a job through that individual. Go through this database at least once a week and call people you haven’t talked to in a while and see what’s been going on.

Let’s go over the different people and places you can build relationships with to get you making the big bucks.

TIP

Be consistent with maintaining contact with potential clients. That one call might get you the job.

Where to Find Work: The Advertising Agency

You can find work through advertising agencies. Ad agencies are where most broadcast advertising is developed and produced, and your best bet at finding a job directly. Almost every single large-scale advertiser is represented by an advertising agency. As mentioned previously, the **agency producer** is an excellent candidate for you to focus on. He or she is the individual who is in charge of a commercial production, and is instrumental in hiring the production team — the director, the editor, the composer and/or sound designer.

The agency producer views hundreds, even thousands of demo reels from production people every year and decides who the creatives (copywriter, art director, creative director) should consider hiring to do their commercial. If you're making a completely cold call into an advertising agency, the best bet is to try to get hold of someone in the broadcast production department and get some names of the producers there. Try to get them on the phone and get a meeting to screen your demo reel in person, if possible. Maybe there are assistants in the broadcast department who are not yet producing their own commercials, but will at least take a look and listen to your stuff. That individual may be moving up the ladder shortly – so you might as well send them your reel.

TIP

Use the techniques and strategies outlined in this course to give yourself an edge over the competition..

Creatives at the Advertising Agency

The other people you want to meet at the advertising agency are the **creatives** – the **creative directors**, the **copywriters**, and the **art directors**. These people, as we have learned in Manual #1, are the ones that

actually develop the concepts for TV and radio commercials. They are responsible for the creative content, brand strategy, and execution of their clients' advertising, so without them, there wouldn't be any work for you! Developing relationships with these individuals is just as important as having a relationship with the producer – after all, the creatives are the ones that are making the creative decisions. If they like you and your work, you will have a great chance of getting a job through them. Most advertising agencies will not relinquish names of the creatives at their agency to a cold call – but if you can get a list, there's a start. Maybe pick out a handful of names and try to see if you can send them a CD. You just never know.

Anyone Related to the Advertising Agency

If you know ANYBODY who works at an advertising agency - maybe your friend is an account executive or works in human resources – use that contact to get an introduction to somebody in the broadcast department or the creative department. It's all about building relationships, however you can do it. Networking is key in developing relationships with people who can get you work at the advertising agency.

Where to Find Advertising Agencies

Where do you find advertising agencies? Again, the AAAA is the **American Association of Advertising Agencies** (<http://www.aaaa.org>) and can provide you with names of agencies in your area and links to those agencies for more info.

I'll mention again the **Advertiser's RedBook** (<http://www.redbooks.com>), which is a comprehensive listing of current advertising agencies and their clients that you can find in most libraries.

Also check out trade magazines like **Adweek** (<http://www.adweek.com>) for the latest news about the industry – who's representing who, trends, who is working where, and what's going on in the biz.

ShootOnline (<http://www.shootonline.com>) is the online version of **Shoot Magazine** which covers commercial production news, the latest trends, the latest techniques and tricks of the trade, who's shooting what, and who's done what.

Also, a great resource is the **LA411 (now called 411Publishing on the internet at <http://www.411publishing.com>)** which is a commercial production industry standard reference guide, with listings not only of advertising agencies, but of anything related to commercial production. It includes directors, editors, music companies, audio post facilities, where to get stunt drivers, trained animals, casting agencies, restaurants, and favorite breakfast joints. You name it.

Directors and Production Companies

You can find work through **Director Production Companies**. If you have a good relationship with a director, that individual can be a very strong ally – he could get you in the door to work on a track for the commercial he is shooting. This happens all the time – if a director really wants a piece of music or to work with a particular composer, the ad agency people will at the least take it into consideration. After all, the ad agency has

hired this director for his vision and ability to deliver a creative product, and if the director feels that his friend the composer is right for the job, the agency will at least take a listen. Most commercial directors are "signed" with production companies. These companies provide all the needs for a film shoot: the line producers that handle all the equipment rentals, and the hiring of all production staff (lighting, makeup, grips, electricians, catering, casting services, etc.).

Where to Find Directors and Production Companies

Where do you find directors and people in production? The **AICP** is the **Association of Independent Commercial Producers**, which is an organization that represents the interests of production companies and service companies that specialize in commercial production. It is an incredible resource for finding contacts in production. The AICP has developed standardized bid forms so when agencies are bidding out for particular jobs, all commercial production companies that are members of the AICP used their standardized bid specs to keep things competitive and easy to understand.

The AICP's website (<http://www.aicp.com/>) contains information and links to member's company websites, names of people in the company, addresses, and phone numbers that are updated on a yearly basis. As mentioned earlier, trade rags such as **Backstage West** and **The Hollywood Reporter** are great resources for contacts to production companies and directors, and list projects in production looking for cast and crew. Local film and television departments at universities have budding directors you can develop relationships with, as

previously mentioned. Also check with film festival websites, and schools such as **AFI (The American Film Institute at <http://www.afi.com/>)**.

Editors and Editorial Companies

You can find work through editors or editorial companies. As I've said before, the editor can be the composer's best friend. The editor sometimes provides a musical direction. Once he's cutting the spot together -- he pulls out your demo CD, and lays down one of your tracks as a place holder -- and the agency gets used to hearing your music against their spot (this is called demo love, which has been mentioned several times in Manuals 1 and 2 - you'll hear this term all the time). What an easy way to get in -- because your music is already there!

Many composers and music production companies send editors their demo CDs strictly for this purpose -- they will send them a CD with different categories, and the editor can immediately pull up something off that demo CD and lay it into the spot. If you think about it, editors really do a lot more volume (if they are popular editors) when it comes to doing spots. It may take an agency months to develop one spot, a director may only work six times a year -- but an editor could be working on two or three spots at a time on a monthly basis. Some editors cut 40 -- 50 spots a year, maybe more, if they're doing something like weekly spots for a supermarket chain, or car dealer spots for local advertisers. A great resource for finding editors is the **AICE** which is the **Association of Independent Creative Editors (<http://www.aice.org/>)**, very similar and associated with the AICP, but specializing in the interests of the commer-

TIP

Commercial editors could be cutting 40 - 50 spots a year. They are a great contact for work.

cial editor. The website has lists of the top editors in the industry, with links, email addresses, phone numbers – everything you would need to find some avenues of work. There are industry trade magazines, such as **Post Magazine**, which is a trade publication about the post production world and new technology (<http://www.post-magazine.com/post/>), and articles on who's who in the commercial editorial world. And of course, to be redundant, the **LA 411** (<http://www.411publishing.com>) – did I mention it's an industry standard?

Even More Resources

There are tons of **trade publications** and **websites** in the production, post production, and advertising communities that have lots of great leads - examples being **Boards, Creativity, Adweek, Advertising Age, Communications Arts,** and **Adcritic.com**. If you just do a Google search on the internet, you'll find hundreds, even thousands of names and places you can look into.

So we've covered the major avenues of finding work – the advertising agencies, directors/production companies, and editors. One thing you should keep in mind, there are all levels of production – when you first get started, you don't need to necessarily compete to get a national Gatorade spot just out of the gate – there are tons of **local advertising** that needs music, too. A lot of production companies specialized in doing one-stop commercial packages – they will write, shoot, edit and produce the entire commercial for local advertisers. You can find these companies locally in your telephone directory and on the web. Or maybe you see a local advertiser, like a car dealership, doing weekly

commercials. Find out who produces their commercials. Give them a call, and send them your demo reel. Perhaps your **local cable provider** produces commercials for advertisers. Find out who produces these spots through the cable company.

And to reiterate – I must really stress this issue -- this business is all about **building relationships** with the people that can give you the work. You must be consistent with your calls and contacts, and keep expanding your client base. Don't stop making those calls once you get a job or two in the door. Always spend some time with your marketing duties.

Mentorship

Another great way to develop getting work, as well as developing your skills as a composer, is through **mentorship**. You've already been involved in this by taking part in this training course. Having a mentor and being an apprentice to that mentor is a powerful way for you to obtain work. In addition, you will become more proficient in all areas of the business as they share with you their experiences and give you guidance. You can try working for an established composer as an **assistant**, or working as a **ghost writer**, or **freelancing** for an already established music production company. This is a great avenue for getting started in the business if you yourself don't want to try contacting ad agencies directly. Someone who's already well established in the business will have work coming in regularly. It's just a matter of you getting connected with these composer and/or music production companies. In the interview section of Manual #1 Tim Boland, one of the composers interviewed,

actually gives the specific advice of trying to get a job with a music company or work for an already working composer. It's advice well worth taking.

When I first started, I had a number of mentors. I worked with a very seasoned recording engineer and mixer to really learn how to record and mix. He helped me by coming over to my project studio and giving me pointers and techniques to really maximize the quality of my recordings. While working for an advertising agency, I asked if I could come along on recording sessions just to learn and experience the different aspects of session recordings. For a number of years, I worked for a veteran composer as his producer to really learn the ropes on production and composition. If you find good people, they will be more than happy to share knowledge with you. Mentorship is the fastest way to really get working. You gain years of experience in a short period of time, just by being around your mentors.

There are a lot of successful composers who are just overwhelmed with work – so they need assistants, or other composers to write material for them. Even being a part-time assistant is a great way to get started in the business, because you'll learn a hell of a lot, plus you have access to the composer's studio. And eventually, you may get a chance to write some cues for him/her.

Writing music for a composer without being credited, called **ghosting or ghost writing**, is a common practice. A lot of composers don't necessarily write every single note, especially the more seasoned ones. They may oversee other composers who work for them to handle the excess workload. I think most people get started this way – everyone I know has ghosted for other composers at one point in their career. To find these

FACT

Mentorship is the best way for someone to "learn the ropes" of any business.

composers, it requires the same thing as we have been talking about – building relationships. Networking. A great venue would be professional organizations such as the **Film Music Network** (<http://www.filmmusic.net/>), The Film Music Network is a great resource for finding other composers, finding work (they actually have a job database available if you become a paying member), and they have lots of great information about the business of being a composer.

Another avenue of mentorship could be working for an established **music production company**, either as a staff composer, or as a freelance composer. There are many music production companies that specialized in commercial music production and sound design. These companies have staff composers, but may need outside help when either the workload is heavy, or their staff composers don't meet the creative requirements of a particular job. Perhaps the writers on staff aren't really hip on using loops and writing techno. In this case, they may bring on board a freelance composer who has these skills.

Working for a music company either as a staffer or a freelancer, you will be critiqued by a music producer or a music creative director, and they can give you pointers on making your tracks better and/or providing guidance on becoming a better writer. You can find these music production companies in the LA411 (what can I say? It's an industry standard). Another great resource is **planet-point** (go to <http://www.planetpoint.com/>) – not only can you find music/sound design companies, but you can see some of their work. Another resource is **AMP – the Association of Music Producers**, whose common

interest is that of music and sound design for commercial production, and issues relating to the business of music and sound design in advertising (go to <http://www.amp-now.com/>). You can find member listings, plus some great information on guidelines on doing music for commercial production.

Working Freelance

Working as a freelance composer for these music companies can give you a great advantage – since it's on a freelance basis, there's no real conflict of interest, and you can work for several companies at once. I myself on occasion have freelanced for three music companies within the span of one week! (Don't tell anybody, it'll be our secret). The money is not bad, either. Most music companies will pay you about \$100 - \$250 to do a demo, and if they pick your piece for the final production, the creative fee paid out to you can be between \$1500 - \$4000 depending on the scope of the job. The only problem working freelance is that if you're pocketing \$2000, you know that the music company is pocketing \$10,000 plus. So your approach to it has to be that you are getting a chance to do some writing, build up experience, make some money, and hopefully it will lead to other relationships and other work.

Staff Writers

Having a steady job as a **staff writer** may be more secure (I say this with chagrin, because nothing, these days, seems secure!), but it is quite hard to find a gig like this. It can be a great gig if you can get it, because you'll

have a steady income, a studio to work in, you'll be in an environment with other people in music production, and be in a position to develop relationships with lots of people. I've worked as a staff writer at a couple of different music houses and it can be fun and lucrative. These types of jobs, however, are getting more and more scarce. . The trend does seem to be that more and more music companies are using freelancers - this makes a lot of sense, because it keeps their overhead costs low, and still have a lot of creative product coming in from many resources. With today's technology, composers can work at home getting Quicktime movies through the Internet, do their demos, and post them on an FTP site or just send back MP3's via email. On many occasions, I have posted splits as AIFF files on an FTP site. As broadband gets more and more common, it's only going to get faster and easier.

FACT

Being on staff at a music company can prove to be a great way to find a mentor.

Representation

Most music production companies and working composers will have **representation** in the form of a rep or an agent - like a talent agent, or sales rep. In the commercial world, a rep's job is to find out what's going on in the advertising community from a broadcast production standpoint, and submit demo reels for work for people on their roster. Most reps have a number of people that they represent - they can represent directors and production companies, editors, animation companies, special effects companies, broadcast graphic designers, sound designers, music houses - so there is a variety of talent they have access to, and can promote.

The Rep's Job

Reps routinely call in to advertising agency producers to get a feel of what's going on – and schedule screenings with producers and creatives when there is new work to show. Reps can also be involved with marketing and PR responsibilities, depending on the arrangement they have with their clients. Another possibility is that they could put together whole production packages - that is, one stop shopping for the ad agency. Let's say an agency needs a whole production to cost X amount of dollars – the rep can match the clients he/she represents - director A with editor B and graphic designer C and composer D, all inclusive for X dollars. They work out a deal so they all get the job as part of an all inclusive package.

How a Rep Makes Money

Reps usually work for their clients on a percentage basis – different deals are made for different types of clients, but generally for music houses they earn 10% of the gross of each job. Reps usually get a basic stipend to take care of expenses as well. Reps are also usually divided up regionally – there are reps that only cover the West Coast, ones that do the Midwest, and ones that do the East. It's easy for them to cover specific regions by focusing on the areas they live in and are familiar with. Many of the larger music houses, editorial companies, and production companies have representation not only in the major three geographic areas of the U.S. (West Coast, Mid West, and East Coast), but in Europe as well.

The Advantages of Having a Rep

As you can see, having a rep can be very advantageous – they are basically your sales person and marketing person and on the lookout for finding you work. You can spend the time writing music and working on jobs you have, or developing your skills, instead of making phone calls looking for that next job. But, on the other hand, getting one to sign you on is not easy. Unless you are an incredibly talented composer who has material that is unlike anything out there, a rep is not going to sign you on if you have little or no experience. Getting a rep usually only comes after some time and experience. However, there may be young reps who are just starting out who may want to sign you to help you develop your career – it’s an investment of their time, and if they believe you are talented, they should be able to sell your creative skills. One way you can approach a rep is to look at the financial picture – maybe you can offer a bigger piece of the pie – more like 15% instead of the standard 10% - to make it more enticing for a rep to sign you on.

Wrap Up

We’ve discussed a variety of ways for you to find work -- whether it’s directly from advertising agencies, or work through production companies, editors, music houses, or through reps. The most important thing is to keep building those relationships and keep in contact with people you network with. Always look for new avenues to make contacts – be involved in industry events, such as award shows and charity events, and meet and mingle

among the people that can get you work. You have to always remember to keep in touch with people and keep building bridges to further enhance your job opportunities.

CHAPTER 3:

The Gameplan

Once you've put together your CD demo and/or your video demo, and perhaps you've even put together a personal website, you need a plan of action. You have to put together a marketing plan that makes sense to you and that you can work on a consistent basis. It is hard work, you have to keep yourself motivated, you have to be consistent, and you have to be able to handle rejection. But if you remain steadfast and look at the big picture, you will eventually get work, and the more persistent you are, the more work you will get. It's always the toughest when you first start, because you don't have a lot of experience or connections. You have to look at it in this light: even those people who are famously successful today started just like you, with little or no experience. Once you get that "break" into the business, it's the open door that will eventually lead to many other things.

Game Plan Part 1: Get to Know the Business

To be successful as a composer for commercials, you have to understand the business and just BE a part of the business. That's what this whole training course is really about. Understanding it from an insider's point of view is the most powerful way to be a part of it and to make a career being in it. You can't just be a composer that works in a vacuum; you have to understand and be a part of the world of advertising. You should be aware of trends in advertising, who the hot directors are, who the hot advertising shops are, who's the latest and greatest editor, etc. Find out who the "players" are in the business. You have to know what's going on in the spot world - what the buzz is about, and what kind of events are going on. There are tons of awards shows every year that anyone can purchase a ticket for and attend, and it's a great networking opportunity to attend such events. There are charity events all the time, there are holiday parties at post production facilities and mixing facilities, advertising sponsored sporting events - the list goes on and on.

Read trade magazines like Adweek, Brandweek, Creativity, Advertising Age, 'Boards, Post, and Shoot. Get to know who the players are. Get to know what's going on in today's broadcast advertising business. There are so many resources available on the Internet, tons of articles on creatives from different shops, articles on film production techniques and editorial techniques, advances in post production, articles on mixing and sound design, and many articles on composers who work on music for advertising. Understanding the business as a whole can only make you a stronger composer - you need to be a

part of the environment that you are working in.

Game Plan Part 2: Start Making those Calls

Making phone calls is hard. It just is. But it's part of the job, and so you'll have to get used to it. Just like anything else, it's difficult in the beginning, but after a while, it can be second nature. You have to develop this skill in order for you to be successful, or find someone to do it for you. You have to be engaging, to the point, and make a connection with the other person on the end of the phone so they want to talk to you, and they are willing to give you a shot or willing to take a listen to your demo. If you approach this part of your job with enthusiasm and optimism, it will be much easier and more successful.

Create a Database and Call Log

The first thing you need to do is create a database of names, companies, addresses, phone numbers, and a call log. It's as easy as using a spiral notebook or a three-ring binder and keeping track of all this info. Or you can use a computer and create a document in Microsoft Word or Excel, or perhaps you have a device like a Palm Pilot. On the following page is a sample of what you may want to put together.

SALES CALLS FEBRUARY 2002

Name	Company	Address	Phone	First Call	Sent Reel?	Follow Up Call	Notes
Frank N. Berry	Adcom Advertising	12345 Main Street Santa Monica CA 90404	310.555.1212	2/3/02	CD 2/7/02	2/14/02	loved reel, call again in March
Roselyn Green	The Edit Shop	3332 Broadway Santa Monica CA 90404	310.555.1332	2/3/02	CD 2/4/02	2/10/02	left message
Jim Smithy	Smithy and Smithy Advco.	5280 8th Street Santa Monica CA	310.555.6982	2/4/02	CD 2/4/02	2/10/02	meeting: 2/28/02
Miko Daberc	Two Cats Music	9809 Oaks St. Bakersfield CA 90012	818.555.8710	2/5/02	CD 2/6/02	2/10/02	left message

This is the important and pertinent information you should include on your calls log:

1. Name
2. Company
3. Address (shipping address to send reels)
4. Phone number
5. First call date
6. Sent Reel? (what you sent and when)
7. Follow up call (after they receive reel)
8. Notes

EACH and EVERY time you make a call to any individual, you should make a note as to when you called, if they have any projects happening, if you can come in and see them, etc. This way you remain consistent with your calls and you can note the last time you called that person, and if enough time has passed, when you can call them again. You don't want to be calling every week and pestering someone; they'll never hire you. Once every three to four weeks is good.

TIP

Consistent
action leads
to consistent
results

Cold Calls

A cold call is when you call an agency, production company, editorial company, or any other entity in the business not knowing anyone there and not having any referrals. This is really tough because it's hard to get someone on the phone to talk to you! The best approach is to be warm and sincere (this goes without saying) and tell the person who picks up the phone who you are, what you do, and you'd like to speak to so-and-so (your target individual, maybe it's the agency

producer) about doing some work for them or sending in a reel. A lot of times that person you are trying to reach may not get on the phone, and the call is handed off to an assistant or voicemail. If you get someone else on the line, maintain your composure and just tell that person who you are, what you do, and if so-and-so would be willing to listen to your reel for consideration for a job. More than likely they'll say, "Sure, send it in" so you've made your initial contact. Also, that assistant can be a great ally - he or she is your initial contact to that particular company. That assistant can also move up over time in his or her capacity. Much of my work (and yours) is maintaining relationships with junior people, who eventually become the decision makers.

Following Up

This is where most people drop the ball. They make the initial call, get a name and a "Go ahead and send your reel" response. They send in the reel. And then they never make a follow up call! You CANNOT expect that once you send in a reel, they will call you and tell you "Yes, we got it, here's a job for you". This hardly ever happens. In fact, after your reel shows up at the location, it may never even get listened to or reviewed. They may have STACKS of reels sitting around that have never been reviewed. Getting your reel to the location is just the beginning of the process.

After you send your reel in, let enough time pass by so that you know that they have received it, maybe a week. Then call up that initial contact and ask whether or not they've received your reel. If yes, ask if so-and-so (your target individual) has reviewed the reel. Try to get

FACT

Most of your competition will fail to follow up consistently. Be Consistent!

them on the phone if you can. Try to get an honest opinion on your reel and the possibility of doing a demo or job for them. You may have to call several times and send out updated demos to this individual a number of times before you even get a shot. Remember in the Introduction of this manual when we talked about “The Rule of 7”? It basically means it takes around seven times of contact with someone before they feel comfortable enough with you to do business. This frequency shows that you are reliable, consistent, and are professional.

TIP

The music business is a business of relationships.

The Referral Call

Having a referral is the best way to make a call - you know someone who knows someone. Let’s say you went to an advertising event and met an account executive at an ad agency - we’ll name him Bill. You tell him what you do and he says, “Oh, you should send in a reel to this producer I know -- Laura Johnson.” Bells and whistles go off in your head, you get the guy’s business card, and write down the name of this producer he knows at the agency, Laura Johnson. Within the next couple of days, you call the agency and ask for Laura. You tell the assistant, “I met Bill Smith from your agency the other night at an advertising event and he suggested I give Laura a call to see if I can meet with her and show her my reel.”

This type of call is a lot easier, because at least there is a referral and a connection, no matter how slight it may be. People are most likely to be more open to meeting you or reviewing your reel if you know someone in common. As said many times before, this business is all about relationships. Networking like this

is a very strong tool and helps builds relationships.

Handling Rejection

Unfortunately, you're going to get slammed sooner or later -- flat out rejected. You may send in your reel, and they don't like it and tell you that you basically stink, and it can be quite painful. Most people aren't that blunt or curt about it. They may say something like, "It's not up to our standards" or, "Thanks but no thanks, you're not what we're looking for". It's still rejection. And it sucks!

You know what? You're going to have to deal with it. You're going to have to develop a thick skin which comes with experience. Being criticized on your music is tough - because it's such an emotional experience for most of us musicians and composers.

A lot of the time our music is an expression of our personal emotions, experiences, thoughts, and internal dialogue. But you have to understand that from the perspective of someone listening to your music, they will not have the same "ears" that you have. They don't have the same experience that you have. It's their own perspective and their own subjective view. To them, it may be just another music reel, while to you, it's your baby! They haven't spent hours of time and energy developing that reel as you have. They may only listen to a part of it and pass judgement quickly and harshly. So try to understand their perspective and try to learn from the experience. If you can get them on the phone, ask them what was wrong with your reel. You may not always get an honest answer, but try to learn as much as you can.

TIP

In order for you to be successful, you must learn from your mistakes and be learn how to handle rejection.

And frankly, your reel may not stand up against some of the more seasoned composers that are your competition. That's just a fact of life, especially when you are starting out. If I compare my music today to what I did 10 - 12 years ago, of course there's a world of difference. I've developed my writing and arranging skills, I have better engineers and equipment, I have better ears, and I have a ton more experience. With time you too will develop an impressive reel.

And believe me, EVERYONE has been rejected at one time or another. The ones that learn from being rejected are the ones that eventually become successful. Don't lose sight of the big picture as you run into the many, many bumps in the road along the way. That's life! Try to learn from the experience of rejection, and try not to respond to it on an emotional level, as hard as that may be.

Keep Consistently Making Calls

Remain consistent with your calling and your call log. Tell yourself, "I need to make at least ten calls today" and just do it. Get it done before you settle into your writing studio and forget about doing it. Go through your call log book and make sure you are following up on the calls you need to make.

At the beginning of my career, I worked out the ratio of the number of jobs I got to the number of calls I made. For every 80 calls I made, I got one job. That's a lot of phone calls! As I got further in my career, the ratio has become a lot better. Now I get people calling me (not as often as I'd like, but I do get calls) for jobs. I still have to make calls today. It's part of the job as a

composer and as a successful business person. You have to find work. It's not going to come to you. You have to actively make calls and be consistent in your follow ups. Don't be lazy, make those calls, and follow up. Be consistent.

Game Plan Part 3: Networking and Maintaining Contacts

You frequently hear people say that the world is getting smaller every day. In the world of advertising, it is a small world. Case in point: I recently got a call from a friend of mine who is an agency freelance producer. She called to see if I could help her out with some spots that were really low budget. She was basically asking for a favor. Of course I said yes because we have a strong friendship and I certainly can use a couple of extra bucks. I went in for a meeting and it turns out that the principals at the advertising agency were guys I had met with years ago when we were all starting out in the business -- I used to go to this one guy's house for keg parties! We hit it off right away and I've done work for them on many occasions.

You just never know who you may run into down the road. Because I kept in touch with the freelance producer -- although I haven't worked with her for a number of years -- it paid off in the form of another contact and more work. As you develop relationships initially by making cold calls or referrals, or meeting people at events, you must foster and maintain those relationships and expand by networking. It's the whole six degrees of separation thing - everyone knows everyone else in the whole world by a degree of six

TIP

Maintain those relationships. You never know what may happen down the road.

handshakes. That's actually a pretty incredible thought, but probably true. It's really surprising as to the number of contacts you can make just by asking people you know who they know. I can't tell you the number of jobs I've done because of maintaining relationships and networking.

Here's another real world example: I recently did some spec work for a young director. For absolutely nothing, I did sound design and music supervision for him - I built all the sound effects, and found some music and edited it down to work in his two spec spots. It turns out his girlfriend is a film producer. She saw my work and asked if I'd be interested in doing sound design for a full-length independent feature, for pay. Of course I'd be interested. The editor who did the spec spots is also someone I stay in touch with and hope to work with on a job in the future.

It's all about meeting people, and using those people to meet other people. It's about asking people who they may know who can help further your career. You can't be bashful, just ask, and sometimes, you will receive. You'll never know unless you do so.

Relationships with Musicians and other Composers

I have relationships with other composers as well. I keep in touch with people I used to work with at music companies. In fact, I got a call recently from an individual who had left a company to go off on his own. I talked to him about what I've been up to over the last few years and gave him some advice. Now, he's called me back since then, and asked if I'd like to do some freelance work with him and a few of his business

associates. Of course I would. I know lots of musicians from the years I've spent in the business, and I keep in touch with them, just to see what the recording climate is like and what kind of stuff they've been working on, and for leads. Singers I've used call me for work, and I find out from them what they've been up to. I call up engineers I've used for jobs to see what they've been up to and to see if there are any leads through them. Network, network, network. It's all about being connected in the community of music production and the advertising industry. I know I've said this a hundred times, but it is that important. You never know what or who you may come across.

Maintaining Relationships

Maintaining relationships can be really simple. It's just a matter of keeping in touch with people you meet throughout your career, updating their contact information, and finding out what they're up to. You have to make that time and effort to do so. Whether they are clients, potential clients, vendors, musicians, singers, editors, directors, creatives, agency producers - people go through changes. They move up in their field, change jobs, etc., and so it's good to keep your finger on the pulse of all these people because they will lead you to work and other networking situations. Let's say you know someone at an agency who is an assistant producer. He moves to a new town with a new job as a producer at another agency. Now, you know someone at this new agency who is a decision-maker, and you can network even further at the new agency and the new town because you know someone there. As you develop your list of

contacts and relationships, you should continue maintaining these relationships through the years as people move around and do different things - it will open up many other avenues for you.

Game Plan Part 4: Keeping your Materials Current

It's a good idea to keep updating your materials as you write and produce new music. As you write cool new stuff, update your reel with new material, and let people know what you've been up to, and what your latest news is. In the past before I had a website, I used to do little newsletters - a little report of things I had been doing over the last, let's say, six months. It was a cheap and easy way to get news out and to remind all my contacts who I am and what I've been up to. I'd list a number of jobs I had done, put in a little blurb about a new reel, and list my contact information if they'd like an updated reel. I would put all the names and mailing addresses in a label making program, print out all the mailing labels, photocopy a bunch of these newsletters, and send them in the mail. It's cheaper than sending everyone you have on your contact list a brand new CD or Video demo reel.

Of course, you should always tell all your clients and contacts if you've had an address change, a new phone number, a new email address, things of that nature. You want to be sure people always know where you are and how they can reach you.

Wrap Up

So here is your game plan:

Game Plan Part 1: Get to Know the Business

- understand the business
- discover who's who in advertising
- discover who the players are in production
- be a part of the business, not an outsider

Game Plan Part 2: Start Making those Calls

- make a call log
- start building you database
- make those calls
- be consistent
- always follow up

Game Plan Part 3: Networking and Maintaining Contacts

- keep in touch with people as they move
- maintain contact on a regular basis
- keep people aware of your changes
- network, network, network

Game Plan Part 4: Keeping your Materials Current

- update your reel(s)
- do a newsletter
- stay in contact with people as things change

If you follow this gameplan, you're well on your way of developing a successful career. The main thing is to be consistent. Always make an effort to do some marketing every day, if possible. Remain steadfast and keep your eye on the ball.

Chapter 4: Staying Motivated

Throughout this course we have stressed that there are certain qualities or traits that are a necessary part of success. Preparation is one key. Persistence is another key. And taking action in a big way is also another key. You really need an abundance of all three to be able to be get jobs and gigs on a regular basis.

It's well known that the great Babe Ruth holds the record for home runs. Many people do not know that he also holds the record for most strikeouts. It was only by going to bat over and over and over that he was able to make the record books. Although he had great achievements, it also shows that he had many strikeouts. But he prepared, he persisted, and practiced and played every moment he could. The same applies with Michael Jordan, or Serena and Venus Williams or Tiger Woods. They are all world class champions because they never

gave up, not even when they wanted to, or people told them they should, or anything.

The champions of the world, whether in sports or business or relationships, do not rely on luck. Luck is really a combination of preparation and timing. When an opportunity presents itself, some people - the “lucky” ones - have spent much effort and thought to make sure they are there to benefit from the opportunity. The fact is, most people try things a few times, and when things don’t work out, they give up. It is easy to give up and blame other people, or circumstances, or money issues, or the economy, or that they didn’t have the time. People come up with hundreds of excuses why they could not succeed. Few of these reasons give the truth that they just got frustrated getting no results, or rejection, and it was too painful to continue.

You have to look at the long term versus the short term, and stay motivated. The short term sometimes can be annoying or painful to deal with. Exercising and dieting are great examples. For most people, changing your body is a painful process in the short term. The results don’t come quickly, and you have to put up with tired muscles, cramps, hunger pangs, and you have to stop eating pizza and chocolate. But to have a strong lean body requires that people break through the short term pain to get to the long term gain.

Gyms and fitness clubs know that most people who join will come to the gym very regularly for the first month or so. When people first join, they are excited about making changes in their bodies, and want to feel healthy and better about themselves. After a month or so, the enthusiasm fades, and the daily grind of life and the stresses of the short term pain become too much. So they

stop going. This is why gyms sign up many more people than can actually fit into the facility. They know that many people will stop coming altogether after a few months, but will continue to pay their monthly membership out of guilt and the idea that they will start going again *next* week or *next* month. We all know what usually happens.

Getting back to music, most composers, singers, and musicians start off strong. They are excited, make a bunch of calls, and mail out 20 or 30 packages, and then stop, expecting the phone will ring. Sometimes it does, but more often, nothing happens. Making more calls and sending out more packages becomes harder and harder. They feel like they are wasting their time.

Unfortunately, this is how life is. Climbing the mountain of success is hard. You can spend your whole life doing things right, climbing one step at a time. It only takes a few missteps to fall all the way back to the bottom, and you can fall really quickly. If success in life was really easy, then everyone would be very successful. But it is not, and the challenges and struggles you face on the way up make you a better and stronger person. It's who you become on the journey that is important, not so much the goal.

If you are just starting out, you will face a lot of discouragement and frustration. I wanted to give up many times in the beginning. It always seemed like other people were doing much better than me, that they got results when I didn't.

Part of this success process is a learning curve. If you are not used to calling people and selling yourself, it will be difficult at first. If you are not used to putting

together professional looking demo packages, it will be a daunting task at first. If you're unsure of what to say to clients when talking about a job, you will definitely feel stressed at first. But it does get easier each time you get a job, or encounter something new. You learn and grow in your talents, abilities and ideas of what you can achieve.

Most people have a **comfort zone** of ability that they have defined for themselves. They get uncomfortable once they reach the edge of their zone. But we only really learn and grow by breaking through our comfort zones and doing new things.

One reason that people get such a rush from hang gliding, or bungee jumping, or parachuting is that it takes a huge effort to break out of their comfort zone and do the activity. Part of the exhilaration afterwards comes from the feeling of being alive, from succeeding by breaking through their own limitations and becoming a different person in the process. Many success coaches feel the whole point of life is who we become in the process. If we don't challenge ourselves and push ourselves, it is hard to get the results we want.

When we see an athlete struggling to make the finish line, and they finally do, in great pain, we all cheer. Inside, we recognize the greatness in this person to summon all their resources and push themselves farther than they have ever gone. The goose bumps we get are a reflection of recognizing this excellence in people, and in the potential in ourselves for the same.

When you are at this edge, focus on what you'll get by breaking through. This can give you the impetus to keep on going. Stay focused and motivated!