
CRACK THE CODE!

WRITING MUSIC FOR FILM, TELEVISION, AND VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE

MANUAL #3

MARKETING/ CONTACTS

by MICHAEL BENGHIAT

CRACK THE CODE!

WRITING MUSIC FOR FILM, TELEVISION, AND VIDEO INSTRUCTION COURSE

MANUAL #3: MARKETING/ CONTACTS

©2003-2004 Michael Benghiat. All rights reserved. No part of this manual shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher. No patent liability is assumed with respect to the use of the material contained herein. Although every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this manual, the publisher and author assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. Neither is any liability assumed for damages resulting from the use of information contained herein.

Published by Ka-Ching Media, Inc. Los Angeles, CA
Printed in the U.S.A.
Toll free 1-866-675-3800
www.crackthecodemusic.com

NOTE: This publication is designed to provide competent and reliable information regarding the subject matter covered. However, it is sold with the understanding that neither the author nor the publisher are engaged in rendering legal, financial, or other professional advice. Laws and practices often vary from state to state. The author is not a music attorney, nor is he attempting to give specific legal advice regarding contracts or other issues. You should consult a music attorney regarding specific questions and concerns if you do not understand anything presented to you in a contract.

The advice presented represents practical considerations and is imparted to give you an understanding of issues that come up in everyday business matters, and how to deal with them. The author does provide real-life examples from his experience for information purposes only. None of this advice is given as an absolute. Always get competent professional legal and tax advice for specific matters. The author and publisher specifically disclaim any liability that is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of the contents of this publication.

Legal Disclaimer: You cannot use the videos supplied with this course for distribution or duplication on a video demo reel, or for posting on a website. However, the music tracks you compose for the lesson plans are 100% owned by you, and can be used in any way you choose.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Michael has been a freelance composer for over 12 years, and has scored television and film programs such as: Tarzan: The Epic Adventures, Feed the Children, Treasure Island, Devotion, Shadow of the Dragon, Buck Naked Arson, and Soul Survivors. He has scored dozens of television and film productions for clients including Disney, Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, Time/ Life, Pacific Theaters, Nickelodeon, DIC, and Disney Channel. He has also scored hundreds of commercials and promos over the years for clients like NBC, ABC, CBS, Paramount, MGM, Mitsubishi, Pizza Hut, Activision, Blue Cross, Apple Computers, Bell South, Wienerschnitzel, Sport Chalet, and J.C. Penney. He has also had over a dozen songs published and recorded.

Michael also is a recording artist with over 15 CD's in the relaxation/ massage/ new age genre. He has scored music for a Billboard #1 Chart program, written cues that have had over 1,000,000 performances, and cues that have never seen the light of day. Such is the life of a working composer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Demo CD Package	8
Chapter 2 Finding Work/ Who To Contact	22
Chapter 3 Making Contacts	47
Chapter 4 Putting It All Together	55

INTRODUCTION:

MARKETING 101

Marketing is the lifeblood of any business. Without marketing and advertising your business will die; in fact, no one will even know you are in business. Advertising, which basically involves generating awareness of your product or business through paid ads, is just one facet of marketing.

I'm going to use marketing in its broadest definition - a wide ranging campaign to attract new customers and clients, create more sales, and increase business brand awareness.

In fact, the good news about marketing is that many of the things you will need to do will not cost money. Anyone can pay for and run an ad in a publication advertising their product or service, and it can be very effective. But a marketing plan would

FACT

Marketing is a campaign to attract new customers, create sales, and build brand awareness.

supplement and extend this with: creating a newsletter or e-zine, providing a free seminar on a business topic, finding a related business or service and doing a co-op campaign, or other ideas.

YOUR MARKETING PLAN

As a composer with a music production business, your job is to create a marketing plan for making contacts through calls and networking, producing and mailing demos, following up on job and networking leads, and other promotional activities.

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Here is the simple key: consistent action. **Taking consistent action with a lot of small steps will lead to huge steps and huge rewards down the road.** Many composers who follow the system and do the work necessary start landing jobs on a semi regular basis within 12-18 months. Around this time you start to develop a client base, and they begin to call you, and/ or refer you to other jobs. Composers really start to reap the fruits of their labor within 3-5 years. It takes time, and this can be frustrating. But it is realistic.

FACT

Taking consistent action with a lot of small steps leads to big rewards in the future.

PLANNING TO SUCCEED

The road to success in anything requires having a map to guide you to the best route to take. 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 to use the 80/20 rule (see below). This will be your action plan. Do the most important stuff first.

- 2) Take action on the plan DAILY.
- 3) Do all jobs and work created by your action plan.
- 4) AT THE SAME TIME, continue steps 1 and 2 while doing Step 3.

I know this sounds simplistic, but it really is that simple. For your business, if you consistently contact people, in all eight of the areas to be covered in Chapter 3, and follow up on a regular basis, you will get results. The key is Step 4 above, which proves to be the hardest to realize on a consistent basis. You must continue to meet new contacts and keep in touch with existing ones while you are doing composing jobs and reaping the rewards from earlier efforts.

FAIL TO PLAN, AND YOU PLAN TO FAIL

What follows is an all too common experience with self-employed composers:

Lance Freelancer has worked 3 jobs in a row. He is happy because money is coming in, and he's doing what he really wants to be doing. But a few day after he has finished the 3rd job, the inevitable downtime appears. Lance takes a day off to straighten up his studio and do some backups for his computer. But then he starts to panic. He starts thinking "My phone isn't ringing! I

THOUGHT

Fail to
plan and you
plan to fail.

don't have any gigs!! I'm never going to work again!!!" Frantically, he starts calling around again, putting together demo CDs and sending them out. Lance ends up with another job, but it takes him 2-3 weeks of calling around and contacting people again to land this new job. When this job is done he goes straight back into panic mode.

Lance does not have an overall plan. He just wings it as it comes. The problem with this approach is that every time Lance gets busy, he stops doing all the things that made him busy in the first place: calls, networking, sending out demos, etc. By stopping the flow of marketing for his composing and music production services, Lance creates a lag between looking for work and getting work. Not only does this affect Lance's finances, but it causes stress in having to look for work under financial pressure. This sounds so simple and self-evident, but almost everyone does it.

Some composing jobs can run for months. I've worked on projects that have run for 6 months or more. Like Lance, I neglected my ongoing marketing campaign during this time. I discovered that after 6 months of no contact with many current and potential clients, I lost momentum I had spent many months and years developing. I had spent considerable time up to this point cultivating relationships with new people, and I had dropped the ball. A few client's phone numbers were now disconnected, and I had no way to find where they had gone. Some clients had ended up working with other composers because I was not available, and now these composers had replaced me. Don't let this happen to you.

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.

2) Follow up: A good rule in business is the **Rule of 7**. This basically means that people need contact at least 7 times with someone 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.

3) Use the 80/20 Rule: This basically states that 80% of your results come from 20% of your actions. You can also think of it this way: that 80% of your time will be spent on activities that produce only 20% of your income. 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 market, or vacuuming your studio.

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 that may need original music. Ask other composers to call you if they need someone to help with overflow. Ask a potential client to lunch to get to

TIP

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

IDEA

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

know them, and learn more about their business.

COMMUNICATION

Success comes with knowledge and experience. Knowing what to say and do is crucial to your future success in this business. I cannot stress this point enough. **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 we've 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 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, a director 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 work easier then you will create work 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.

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 always try to learn something from the situation. You only really fail at something 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.

IDEA

You have not
failed if
you learn
something
from the
experience.

MANY HATS

Many successful businesses in all areas were started by two people. One was usually the brains behind the company - the person who invented the product or wrote the software, or came up with the new way of doing something. The other person, just as important to the business - is the one who makes the contacts and "sells" people and customers on their idea or product.

For most budding composers, you have to become both. Unless you are financially independent or have a partner working with you, you will have to be the salesperson, composer, accountant, office person, errand runner, and janitor. Sometimes it will seem like being a composer is the least important and least used position you hold in your new company!

Wearing many hats can be good. It gives you experience in many facets of business, and hones your skills. It also gives you impetus to become successful so you can hire others to do those jobs you hate!

Let's now move on to the demo CD, your calling card to getting work.

CHAPTER 1:

THE DEMO CD PACKAGE

The heart of your marketing campaign will be your **demo CD** (also called a **demo reel**). Forget about cassette tapes; no one uses them nowadays. Your demo reel package is what you will send to directors, producers, and production companies. You will need a demo CD even if you have worked with the production company before, for sometimes they need to send your demo on to their client for approval.

If you are scoring commercials, a **video reel** is necessary, or at least having your work available on a website for viewing. Ad agency producers and creatives primarily want to see what commercials you have done. Promo and trailer production companies also usually want to see a video reel. But for most television and film productions a CD is all you need. We are only going to

FACT

Composers are starting to move to DVD reels, with both audio tracks and video spots.

focus on the CD demo in this course. Our other course **Crack the Code!: Writing Music for Commercials and Promos** goes into depth on putting together a video demo reel.

THE DEMO CD: WHAT GOES ON IT?

A good demo CD will showcase a composer's best work in a short amount of time. After the first two minutes, they will usually have an impression if you are right for the job. That is why it is vitally important to showcase only your best work, and ideally to give them what they are looking for right upfront. Giving a movie producer a tape of jingles will not usually get you the job, unless maybe it's a movie about the ad industry! Many composers now send out CDs with 20 or so cuts, and will usually indicate which tracks to listen to first.

Most composers would agree that hitting your contacts with your best work, and showcasing only the most interesting and creative tracks is the best way to go. Production people looking to hire composers many times want a fresh sound, and look for music that is different from the rest.

Think about how you can stand out from the crowd. Is there something that you excel at? Is your production top notch? Are lyrical melodies your forte? Can you crank out killer drum grooves with almost no effort? Are you a great guitar or keyboard player with a distinct style?

Whether you are creating a general reel or a specific one, be sure that your strengths are highlighted within a few minutes. Avoid putting tracks on that don't sound authentic. For example, many composers starting

TIP

Always put
your best work
up front.

out are writing all their tracks using MIDI instruments. In fact, most music, aside from big budget films and television shows, is primarily done with MIDI instruments these days. Composers are constantly balancing budgetary considerations with musical ones. Sometimes they don't have the money (or time) to hire a lot of real musicians, so they do it all with samples, and hire one or two real players to double the important lines or play solos.

With all the great sample libraries and tools like Gigastudio, composers can now create orchestral scores that sound amazingly close to the real thing. A good programmer can produce great jazz tracks. But having real drums on a jazz track is a whole other thing. Rock tracks with sampled guitar just doesn't have that real edge and excitement. People can hear and feel the personalities that go into the performances. A sampled sax solo just does not have any personality and will drag down the whole track into mediocrity.

The lesson is if you don't have access to great sample libraries, and your track sounds synthy, don't put that track on your demo. If you've been using synth sax or synth violin or synth guitar because you don't have the money to hire real players, don't put that track on your demo. Or redo it with a real player. Of course, the exception is using sampled instruments specifically to get a particular sound. The difference is that this is by choice, not necessity.

Remember that your competition will have great tracks with real players, and if your sound is not competitive, you will lose out on jobs. Production is key these days. Put your best stuff forward, and don't be afraid to invest a little money for a player here and there.

TIP

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

The \$100-\$150 investment for a great player will make you back many times your investment if it turns your track into a great one. This one great track could be the one that gets you a job. One bad track can cast a shadow over your abilities and judgment. You don't want that to happen, by any chance!!

DEMO CD INFO

These things may sound obvious, but make sure you have this info 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 each track, and give 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 who sent you his/her material 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

Nowadays there is no excuse for not having a professional looking and sounding CD. Color inkjet printers and inexpensive computers have eliminated the cost barrier to creating CDs and nice looking packaging.

Many composers use Quark Express, Photoshop, Pagemaker, Illustrator, and other graphics programs to design and print out their demo promo packaging materials. If you are creating one-shot demos or targeted CD's, it probably makes sense to just print out enough materials to make 10-20 packages at a time. Burning 20 CD's these days does not take a lot of time.

If you are creating a general demo, having a CD duplication house print and press 200 or more CD's may be the way to go. You get them back shrink wrapped and ready to go. Having your CD printed with your info directly on the CD looks really pro. Also, if you have your materials printed professionally (as opposed to at home on an ink-jet printer) you can take advantage of different print processes and effects to create a really high end looking product. This combined with color printed letterhead and envelopes can elevate people's perception of you and your company even before they hear one note.

Never underestimate the power of packaging. The entertainment industry runs on hype and marketing. Spending a thousand dollars on your materials (which is tax deductible) and giving people a powerful first impression makes a huge difference. For example:

Imagine you are a VP of music at a production company. You have a project that needs a composer. You have already called your composer contacts, but none are available. You open your boxes of demos that come in the

TIP

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

mail, and start to go through them. You realize that there are over 100 demos, most from composers you have never heard of. It's going to be a long afternoon.

You put one CD after another into your CD player. You listen to the first cut, then start skipping around. Some are pretty good, a few are really bad.

While you are listening, you look through the rest of the CD's. A few catch your eye. They just seem to stand out. They have cool graphics, or just have that look that says "listen to me, you won't be wasting your time". A couple of the composer's names ring a bell (they have been calling you regularly for a few months - hint, hint).

These few are the next to be listened to. One just isn't right for the job, but the other two are good, really good. Within 2 or 3 minutes, you have a real good sense that these composers would work for the job. Plus, you have had some contact with them, and they seem to be professional and respectful of your time when they call. You decide to call them to see if they are interested in doing a demo.

Ultimately, you will get hired on the merits of your music. But the above scenario is a realistic depiction of what happens. They first go back to people they have worked with before - it's easier, and they have proven themselves. There isn't much risk in this approach. As an up and coming composer, you have to break through this wall. It's not easy, and it takes some time, but it will happen if you persevere.

I recently ran a job notice in a composer's forum because I was looking for tracks for a project. I received about 40 CD demos in the mail. I also received about 60 emails from composers, with links to mp3s of their music. Before I played any of the CDs, I tried to guess the results

TIP

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

just from the packaging. About half looked more or less professional. Some women used the old tried and true approach of putting a picture of themselves on the CD, especially if they were attractive. Some demo CDs had 4 color printed packages, while one came with with note scribbled on a torn piece of paper.

In general, the ones with sloppy handwriting on the outside told me “Amateur Time”. And almost without exception, the tracks on the CDs were pretty bad, or not even at all what I requested.

The ones that looked decent from the packaging were generally good. A few were surprisingly good. Most of the good ones had some kind of name for their company, and the address was written on a mailing label, rather than on the mailer. These are all small things, but faced with 40 CDs to go through, I ended up playing the ones first that **looked** good. A nice package put them at the top of my pile.

WHAT DO I PUT ON THE DEMO?

There are 2 schools of thought on what to put on demo CD's:

- 1) Send out custom CD's tailored for each job.
- 2) Send out a wide variety of cuts.

I have taken all sorts of approaches over the years. Custom CD's are great, but very time consuming to put together. It can take two to three hours to put together a custom CD, burn it, and print labels, etc. I take this approach if it is for a really great job, and my competition

TIP

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

is going to be fierce. Also, importantly, if I have the time to do it. Many times you get a call, and they need your demo immediately. You end up delivering your standard demo that day, or FedExing one out for next day delivery. There just isn't any time to create a custom one.

I've sent out CD's with as little as 10 tracks to as many as 44 tracks. Some people think that sending out a CD with a little of everything makes you come across as a Jack-of-all Styles - Master of None. But the other school of thought is that someone will hear something they like on your CD that is just what they are looking for.

Sometimes you get jobs that you didn't think you had a chance, and other times you don't get a job that you figured was tailor-made for you. Here are some real world examples:

* Recently, I sent out my demo CD to a director of an indie film. Since this CD has about 40 cuts on it, I told him to listen to certain tracks. He called me a week later to talk about the possibility of me scoring his movie. It turned out he really liked a weird ethno-techno track I had on the CD. This was not one of the tracks I told him to listen to! If I had put together a custom CD that track probably would not have been on it -- it wasn't what he had requested.

* I sent out my 3/4" video reel (showcasing commercials and promos) to a production company. They called me to say that they loved my work and had a promo spot they wanted me to score, because of what they heard on my demo. The spot turned out to be a very urban street kind of vibe, and there was nothing even remotely like this on my reel. To this day I don't know

why I was hired. They were very happy with the track I delivered, and they have turned into a long term client.

* I get a call requesting “New Age” music for a scene in a spa for a network show. As I have done over a dozen CD’s of meditation/ massage/ relaxation music, I figured this is a sure thing. I send over 12 different CD’s. None of my tracks made it into the show.

* The longer you are in this business, the more weird and wondrous experiences you will have. I guess the point is: you prepare as best you can, and let the cards fall where they may.

TARGETED CDs

Some composers I know send out separate CDs just for animation projects, for film scoring type projects, for documentary type projects, and for :30 promo type work. Each CD targets the particular area. They are short and to the point. No filler or uninteresting material is left in. Once you have a lot of material, this is an excellent way to proceed.

TIP

If you have enough good material, targeted CDs can be a great way to go.

WHAT DO I DO IF I DON’T HAVE MUCH TO PUT ON MY DEMO?

Good question. Most composers at some point in their career write cues specifically for their demo reel, or edit their cues to make them more interesting. If you want to eventually score films, you need some tracks that sound like film music. If you want to write for music libraries, then you need cues in popular styles like

dramatic action, emotional, sports, rock, etc.

Go through your CD collection, listen to film scores, listen to television film underscore music, and start to write cues in these main styles:

- 1) Dramatic
- 2) Comedic
- 3) Action/ Adventure
- 4) Love theme
- 5) Mystery/ Tension
- 6) Horror
- 7) Misc. - ethnic/ world cues, operatic heavy metal, minimalist, etc.

The beauty of this is twofold - 1) you now have tracks in specific styles that are popular, and 2) since you own these compositions, you can sometimes fit them into a project you get, or license them. It is not uncommon that someone will hear a cue on your CD that they want for their project. You can license it to them if you own and control it.

MASTERING

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

TIP

Mastering
your tracks
gives your CD a
professional
cohesive
sound.

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. And distortion cannot be fixed.

In recent years, a number of tools for the project studio have appeared. **T.C. Electronic’s Finalizer** is a hardware mastering device that gives you these tools. There are also software mastering programs that allow you these tools for use 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 music that extra oomph and “pro” sound. Just about every composer I know, including myself, has the Finalizer, or uses a software product. My mixing board’s outputs are patched through the Finalizer, and go directly to DAT and my digital audio interface.

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 pay to have it done. Add this to your wish list, and put it near the top.

TIP

Mastering software is now available for all the major sequencer software packages.

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.

TIP

Include only those things in your promo package that work in your favor.

COVER LETTERS

With your demo you'll include a short cover letter telling a little about yourself. 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 5, 2004

Joe GigProvider
GigsRUs Productions
154 Jobs Rd.
Workville, CA 94567

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 Gigmaster video project.

I feel I would be a valuable asset to your team, as I have a lot of experience scoring similar videos. As you can see from my resume, I scored the award winning video series called "Gimme a Job: Gigs in America". 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. Also, 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 upfront. 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.

TIP #1: Always use the regular CD jewel cases for your demos, and print your name and info on the spine. This way your CD will be visible on a shelf. If you use slimline jewel cases or cardboard cases, your CD will get lost tucked between other CD's, and most likely forgotten.

TIP #2: A great source of mailing supplies is **Quill Office Products** (www.quill.com). Their prices are about half of what you pay in your local stores, especially for mailers.

CHAPTER 2:

FINDING WORK/ WHO TO CONTACT

Once you have a demo CD ready, the primary focus becomes looking for work. If you are like many composers, you don't have many contacts. Two questions commonly come up here:

- 1) do I need to live in Los Angeles or New York?
- 2) how do I find work- real paying jobs??

DO I NEED TO LIVE IN LA OR NY?

Living in Los Angeles does have its advantages in scoring music for television and film. For one, most of

the production companies are here, as are the post houses. Composers are frequently asked to bring their music to the post house for the final mix. Most of these are now in Santa Monica, Burbank, and Hollywood. I recently have had a regular Friday afternoon session at a Burbank post house for a series I'm scoring.

For commercials, production companies seem to favor post houses on the Westside, especially in Santa Monica and Venice. This is because many of the ad agencies are located in the Wilshire district, Santa Monica, Brentwood, and Venice. TV, video, and film production companies are located all over LA, but congregate in Hollywood, the Valley (North Hollywood to Woodland Hills), and especially in Burbank. Burbank is home to Disney/ ABC, NBC, Warner Bros., and many others. Most of the other big studios are in Hollywood, Burbank, Century City, and adjacent areas.

VIRTUAL STUDIOS

As mentioned before, more and more work is being done through the Internet. A composers might send mp3 demos to a client for approval, and upload final AIFF files to the client's FTP site (see below for explanation). This has become very common.

Using the Internet for recording sessions is also becoming common. I have frequently been emailed a Digital Performer file and mp3 of the track so I can add some guitar or bass. I download the files, place the mp3 in the DP file, and record guitar tracks to it in DP. I then create mp3's of my guitar tracks, and email them back. If need be, I send full bandwidth AIFF files or upload them to a **FTP (file transfer protocol)** site. Composers also

TIP

If you have a Mac G4, use the Web Sharing function to turn it into a server for client downloads.

use FTP sites to download Quicktime movie files and audio files that are too big to email. Some composers use the Rocket Network for collaborating on tracks.

Personally, I'm based in LA, but my clients are all over the US. I sometimes only meet them when they do a session at a post house here. I use FedEx all the time. I would not have said this five years ago, but I could probably move to another state and not have it affect my business all that much. This is mostly because I already have an existing client base.

Another advantage to living in LA is your proximity to great studio players and musicians, as well as other composers. If you are just starting out, networking in person is invaluable. If you live in a rural area or small town, you will not have as many opportunities to make contacts in person. Also, there are hundreds of recording studios at your disposal here. And most agents are based here.

New York also has a vibrant film scene. Also, it is a major hub for advertising, as is Chicago. For commercials, LA, NY, and Chicago are all excellent places to launch a career. For TV, video, and film, LA is definitely at the top. However, you will have access to great musicians, studios, and other resources in any large city.

In summary, it helps to live in Los Angeles. Almost all TV, video, and film composers I know of live within an hour or so of Hollywood. If you are really serious about a career, making the move here probably would benefit you.

HOW DO COMPOSERS GET WORK?

Most composers get work eight ways:

- 1) through an agent or rep
- 2) through cold calling/ contacting listings in production directories and certain publications
- 3) by repeat business: they already have worked with the director, producer, production company, etc. on previous projects and get called again
- 4) having a producer hear your work on other shows or movies that impress them, or through a referral
- 5) networking
- 6) organizations such as the Film Composers Network and TAXI
- 7) Staff composing jobs
- 8) Other composers

There is always #9) you get the job cause your brother is head of production at a company (This happens more than you care to know) But we will leave this one out, and don't mention this to other composers if you have such a relative!

#1 AGENTS AND REPS

There is a big misconception about agents getting their clients work. In the majority of cases, agents do not procure jobs for their clients; they handle the negotiations and do the deal making. Most composers do not understand this important point. Most jobs come from a composer's own networking and contacts. Producers will come to agents looking for a composer, but many

FACT

Most agents do not procure work for their clients.

times the composer's still have to do a demo in the hopes of getting the job.

Getting an agent is the classic Catch-22. You can't attract a good agent without having done some upper echelon work (TV series, feature films) and you generally can't get upper echelon work without an agent. The question is: do you really need one?

There is plenty of work you can get that does not require having an agent represent you. I have composer friends who have agents and some who do not. The producers of primetime network series and features generally work with established bigger name talent (this applies not only to composers but to directors, casting directors, actors, etc.) cause they have the budgets to do so, it reduces their risk, and it appeases the financial people.

Like it or not, proven talent has a built-in audience. Having "name" talent associated with a production has become increasingly valuable. For example, many film projects have trouble getting off the ground until they can get a "name" actor attached to the project. This many times instantly opens the doors to getting the green light to go into production. Bigger name composers have proven themselves over the years, and can be relied on to provide a top notch product. The producers do not have to worry if the composer will be able to deliver a great score on time, and on budget.

At a certain level (network TV series, star marquee movies) an agent is necessary to show that you are competing at that level. Even though the top guys have agents, remember that many times it's their past work and relationships that bring in the jobs. For the composer just starting out, my advice is to learn how to be your own

agent. You may not like it, but the experience will be worth it, and if you really hate contacting people and networking or are just not confident about doing it, it will motivate you to do whatever it takes to hire a rep or agent.

#2 COLD CALLING/ NETWORKING

I took this route out of necessity when I started, as you read in Manual #1. The key is, the more you get the word out about yourself, and the more people you contact, the more things start to happen. It's called the Law of Sowing and Reaping, as author Brian Tracy likes to say. Amazingly, the effort and energy you expend will come back to you many fold.

Let me add that I can trace 80% of the work I do today to a couple of contacts I made from sending out those first cassette demos. One initial job and the connections it has created over the years has been worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. But there was one big problem I had to face.....everyone has to face.....and overcome.....

REJECTION

I mentioned earlier in Manual #1 how I started out making hundreds of cold calls. Even today, there are people I still call from my original list, 12 years later, and keep in contact. I know of at least a few times I called at the right time, cause a composer they usually worked with screwed up, and I got a shot at a job.

Rejection is a big part of the job. After calling people for a week or so, and mostly leaving voicemail messages, it's easy to start feeling like you're wasting your time. And by the end of the following week, when no one you called the previous week has returned your calls, your enthusiasm starts to wane a bit more. And after a few weeks of spending a lot of time and money preparing demo CDs, resumes, and letters and dutifully mailing them out and following up to no avail, you're naturally disappointed. Your phone just doesn't ring. By this time you're getting very discouraged. Maybe even starting to feel depressed.

Unfortunately, this is how it is. You have to realize that there are literally dozens and dozens of composers doing the same thing you are doing, and many of them are farther ahead of the game than you. But you have to keep at it.

You have to also realize that production companies don't think that much about composers until they need one. And generally they go back to the person they hired the last time. Music is frequently the last element of the post production process to be dealt with. If they are over budget in other areas by this time, guess where they shave some money off of? The music budget, of course. And more and more they are eliminating the original music aspect altogether, and using music library tracks. It is unfortunately easier and less expensive to use library tracks for many programs.

This adds a new twist to the rejection process - losing jobs to libraries. This has happened too many times to myself and other composers I know than I care to remember in recent years.

TIP

The sooner you learn not to take rejection personally, the better off you will be.

Dealing with rejection is hard, no matter how long you have been at it. Rejection also seems to come in long spells, just as success tends to come all at once. I once sent out 40 CDs to new companies as well as previous clients, and 3 months later had absolutely nothing to show for my efforts. I started to believe that they were all thrown away by the Post Office. When I called to follow up, I only got voicemails. Eventually I reached a few people, only to discover that quite a few companies said they didn't receive it. In this case I think the Post Office did throw them away! I had to send them out all over again, which you can imagine I was not too happy about.

I also had one 6 week period once where job opportunities would come in the door one day, and leave the next. They would say "Hi Michael, just passing through! Just thought you'd like to know that this job was available, but not to you. Bye!" It got to the point I didn't even write down the possible jobs on my job board; it was too depressing to keep erasing them. At least 12 jobs in a row came and went in this manner . . . but finally, one stuck to break my losing streak.

On the other side, every so often you have one of those great periods where you can do no wrong. It's like a cosmic payday for all the energy and effort you expended months earlier, and frustrations you had to endure. Fate says "OK, this guy deserves a break this week. He's been working diligently and facing the uphill battle valiantly. Let's give him a little encouragement". Then, suddenly every job you demo for you get, jobs just come in the door, and life is nice.

TIP

A lot of
beginning
composers
give up in
disappointment.
Don't be
one of them!

PLAY THE ODDS

Why do you think casinos are so popular? It's because you have the shot at a big break - a big jackpot. Everyone knows that the house has the advantage. The slot machines, especially, are designed and set up so that people win just enough back at certain times so that they continue to feel that they can win big. Everyone has experienced the long periods where you lose over and over. But the casinos do not want disillusioned customers. If you lose too much, then you don't come back. So occasionally you get a small jackpot, which gives you hope. Sometimes you win 5 or 6 times in a row. Now you are on a roll. You start feeling confident, and bet bigger. The smart ones walk away with their winnings, because they temporarily beat the house. Unfortunately, most people continue to press their luck and lose most of their winnings.

Though it sometimes feels like you are putting money and time and effort into the music business slot machine and it keeps taking and taking, your odds are much better. You will have the house advantage if you use the principles outlined in this course on a consistent basis. Consistency, education, experience, and persistence are your edge and advantage.

REJECTION BATTLE PLAN

Rejection happens to everyone.. It can actually be a good thing - for it makes you stop and think about things, and formulate a new battle plan. It can tell you it's time to try something new, or find a new approach.

There is one great way to look at rejection. Most people who are very successful at what they do are successful because they have been rejected so many times. If you aren't rejected, it means you aren't out there trying! In baseball, a Hall of Famer strikes out 6 out of 10 times! Babe Ruth held the home run record, but most people don't know he also held the record for most strikeouts. He constantly kept swinging.

One approach I adopted helped me through the long stretches of no results. After a while I figured that if I made 100 calls I would usually get one job opportunity. If the job paid \$5,000, then each call was worth \$50. So each time I called someone and heard the words - "There's nothing going on now - try me back in 6 months" I figured I made \$50. Each time I left a voicemail, I figured I just made \$50. The money was on its way, but I just couldn't see it today. Try this approach and see if it helps you.

#3 AND #4 - REFERRALS AND EXISTING CLIENTS

These are pretty straightforward. One thing that seems pretty easy is keeping in contact with a client once you have done a job for them. But you would be surprised at how many people do not do this on a regular basis, not just composers but salespeople and business people in all areas.

It's often said that an existing customer is the cheapest customer, meaning that it costs less time and money to obtain more work or sales from them than to find new clients. Smart companies and marketers always look for ways to sell new products and services to their

TIP

An existing customer is the cheapest customer. Make sure you do not lose them.

existing customer base.

I often wonder why this is - why people are hesitant asking clients for more work. Is it a feeling of not wanting to bother them? Not wanting to look needy? In any case, if no one is aware you are looking for work, many times they don't think to call you. You have to keep in contact with people.

#5 NETWORKING

Networking means going out and meeting people, many times in a social or organized meeting environment. People are the lifeblood of any business, so the more people you contact, meet, and get to know, the better. In business there are people who are called **key contacts**. They are influential, have huge Rolodexes, and have the power to make things happen. A good part of this power is because they know so many people. They have mastered the art of networking.

You need to start going to music business related events. And film related events. Go to film festivals and talk to people. Go to music industry events and talk with people. Part of networking is telling everyone what you are doing. Pass out your business cards. It's easy to be shy and not talk at events, but this will not get you any work.

You don't want to brag about what you have done, or make things up if you have not yet done much. People sense and can see through BS quickly. Focus on the other person. Find out more about them and what they are doing. See if there is something you can do for them, even if it is something as simple as emailing them an article. If you help someone get what they want, they will

likely want to return the favor.

When you meet someone at an event, ask them what they do. People love to talk about themselves, and what they are doing. Talk to other composers at events. It's funny how a roomful of composers eye each other suspiciously. As you will see, other composers can be your best lead for getting work.

You should also explore if there is anyone you know who may know someone who knows someone in the business. Early on in my career, I told my Dad that finding work was difficult. As we talked, he suddenly remembered that the son of a friend of his had started a video production company. I called him and ended up doing 4 or 5 jobs for him.

Like the Kevin Bacon/ six degrees of separation idea- you may have a great contact available if you take the time to ask everyone you know if **they** know someone! You just never know.

You should always be prepared with business cards and a demo CD. Carry them in your car and in your wallet or purse. As they say, don't leave home without them!

TIP

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

#6 - ORGANIZATIONS LIKE FILM COMPOSER'S NETWORK, TAXI, ETC.

Currently, the **Film Composer's Network** and **Taxi** are two organizations that provide job leads, as well as services like courses, conventions, critiques, etc. A check online will provide details on their upcoming events and joining their organizations.

THE FILM COMPOSER'S NETWORK

(www.filmmusic.net)

The Film Composer's Network currently has four chapters in Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Boston. They provide a Jobwire jobs listing that members can access and send demo reels for jobs. They also have a film music industry email mailing list to keep current on news and information in the industry. They also have a Film & TV Music Directory, which is a comprehensive listing of companies and contacts. They also host a monthly live event with composers, music supervisors, and other music professionals who discuss their work and insights.

TAXI

(www.taxi.com)

Taxi is an independent A&R company based in Los Angeles that provides job listings and services to help composers and songwriters get deals. Record companies, publishers, and music supervisors use Taxi as a way to receive material.

Many record companies and production companies have a "no unsolicited material" policy that protects them from receiving hundreds of submissions, and also protects them from legal issues. Taxi screens the submissions for these music users in order to forward to them only the highest quality material, and also to make sure the material is what they are specifically looking for.

Taxi's A&R team consists of music industry pros. They also provide a service where these industry pros can critique and comment on your music, which can be an

invaluable benefit. They also host an annual Road Rally convention that features speakers and panelists. It is a great networking event.

Taxi currently is geared more towards bands and songwriters than composers. Most of their listings are for artists looking for songs. However, in recent months they have increased their listing of music libraries looking for tracks, and other listings of interest to composers. Please contact them for more information.

#7 - STAFF COMPOSING JOBS

Staff composing jobs? You mean these actually exist? Staff writing jobs do exist, though they are not very common.

Some animation companies like Saban have a team of in-house composers that work in company supplied studios. These composers basically just write music day after day. They are paid an annual salary. The main drawback is that, as employees of the company, they may or may not receive royalties on the music they create.

Some theme park production companies have in-house composers. Many music production companies specializing in scoring commercials hire composers on a full time basis with an annual salary. They do negotiate some share of royalties and union residuals. Some video game developers and promo production companies have in-house composers also.

For someone who really dislikes dealing with people, and just loves to be in the studio 24 hours a day, you might consider concentrating your efforts on finding a long term job like this.

#8 - OTHER COMPOSERS

This is one of the secrets of the business. Most composers think “Why would I contact other composers? There isn’t enough work as it is, and they don’t want the competition working with them? They’d be afraid I’d steal their clients!! And the budgets are so low these days that there isn’t enough for them to want to share.”

The truth is - contacting other composers is probably the best way to get a foot in the door. It’s often much easier to reach a composer than the head of music at some company. Most composers just don’t get that many calls that they leave their voicemail on all the time. Another big reason is that most people just do not follow up enough to become known to the composer.

All the composers I know, including myself, have others they call upon when deadlines get tight, or the job requires a style that is not their strongest, or they need a collaborator.

Offering to do a demo for free or a cue for a reduced rate is one way to get your foot in the door. Many times composers are chosen to do demos for jobs, and sometimes the more they can submit the merrier. I have done this for other composers, won the job for them when my demo was chosen, and everyone was happy. And now they come to me when things get busy for them, and in return I have another composer to turn to when I get too busy or need help with a project.

Sometimes small sound design or music editing jobs come about, and if you happen to be there at the right time, you can get your foot in the door this way. More on keeping in contact with people in the next section.

WHO EXACTLY SHOULD I CONTACT??

Let's take a look at the types of companies and people who are in the position to hire you.

One great guide listing many people and companies in the categories below is the **Film and Television Music Guide**, available at www.musicregistry.com. This directory has sections on Film and TV music departments, film composers, agents, music supervisors, and more.

1) COMPOSERS AND MUSIC HOUSES

Again, there is a big reason we listed other composers as the #1 contact choice for new composers looking for their break. There's a lot less competition, and you will actually be able to reach people on the phone!

Music production companies, also known as **music houses** are generally formed to score commercials. Most film and TV composers work independently. I know of only a few exceptions here in LA, notably Media Ventures (Hans Zimmer's facility in Santa Monica) and Mutato Muzika (Mark Mothersbaugh's company in Hollywood). But there are dozens of music houses in Los Angeles, as well as in other major cities throughout the U.S.

I can give you so many examples of getting work through other composers as to fill 20 pages. Here are but a few examples.

*** I had the chance to do a demo for a national car campaign. They wanted some cool jazz. Jazz is definitely not my forte, so I called a friend of mine to work on the track, who is a great pianist and composer. We put together a great demo that got us the job. I met him through his sending me a demo of his work (and he followed up!).

*** Another composer friend of mine does a lot of music for network promo departments. He needed some help with a package of orchestral cues and gave me a call. This led to about 20 cues.

*** Another friend was too busy to work on cues for an animated series that came his way, so he passed it along to a composer friend of his. The client was pleased with his work, and he is now working scoring cues for 3 different animated series.

The point is that getting work through other composers is so common that it should be at the top of your networking activities. Joining groups like the **Film Composer's Network**, the **Society of Composers and Lyricists (SCL)**, **ASMAC (American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers)**, **Taxi**, and going to events sponsored by them is vital - this is where you can meet other composers and make contacts. It's much easier to go up and introduce yourself to another composer than to go up and meet some music bigwig who you feel doesn't have any reason to talk to you.

You will still be faced with rejection a lot of the time, but as a whole composers will return your call more promptly. They know what you are going through,

because they are going through it too in some degree also.

Contact sources: As mentioned above, the **Film Composer's Network** can be an invaluable resource for meeting other composers. Check online for any other composer organizations in your area. **Taxi** can also be a source of composer leads, even though they mainly cater to songwriters. Even hanging out in the pro audio section of your local music store and talking with people may turn up leads.

LA411 lists many of the music production companies in Los Angeles. You can check online at <http://www.la411.com>. LA411 has a printed version that comes out on an annual basis, as well as their online listings. The online version is not as complete as the printed book. You may want to purchase the book, which is around \$65. They also publish a New York version.

Also, check out the **Film and Television Music Guide**, available at www.musicregistry.com.

2) PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Prominent examples are **Disney, Greystone, Warner Bros. Saban, DIC**, etc. They produce shows that require original music for television and film. The bigger ones have in-house music departments usually run by the VP of Music. Unfortunately, it is difficult for a new composer to get his or her foot in the door.

Note: In television production, usually the people who call the shots and will hire you are the producers. In movies, the director is responsible for the creative direction, so he or she will usually have final say in the

composer choice.

Contact sources: There are quite a few directories of production companies available. Samuel French bookstore in Studio City, CA is one of the best sources.

Also, check out the **Film and Television Music Guide**, available at www.musicregistry.com.

3) TRAILER HOUSES

These companies primarily produce movie trailers, and specialized promo campaigns for products.

Contact sources: Again, in Los Angeles, the **LA 411** guide is a great source of contacts. You can check online at <http://www.la411.com>.

4) AD AGENCIES

Ad agencies produce radio and television commercials through their broadcast production departments. Not all ad agencies do broadcast production. New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are the major hubs for ad agencies.

Contact sources: Again, in Los Angeles, the **LA 411** guide is a great source of contacts. You can check online at <http://www.la411.com>.

There is also the **Advertising Redbook** available in most libraries. This huge publication lists all the ad agencies in the U.S. Be prepared to spend hours looking through this one.

5) INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS

Hooking up with indie directors and producers and becoming his or her top composer choice can be invaluable. The great thing is that they can get you entry into jobs that you otherwise would not have had access to. These contacts are hard to find, but well worth the effort to cultivate a relationship.

Contact sources: One great avenue for this is student films. After all, many of the next big directors and producers are just starting out today. It's also a great source of obtaining work (though many times unpaid) and gaining real world experience and credits. This is one avenue that composers will experience the least rejection in, because as there usually isn't any music budget, student film directors are open to working with composers who are just starting out. Scoring student films can give you valuable experience in working on an actual project, developing working relationships, and getting some credits and exposure.

Backstage West Magazine sometimes has ads of student films looking for composers. Their address is www.backstagewest.com/backstage/index.jsp. Also check local film schools. USC here in Los Angeles has an especially acclaimed school.

The **Hollywood Reporter** Tuesday edition runs listing of films in preproduction and production. Be sure to check out this source.

Important note: If you work for free (or for credit only) be sure to negotiate for non-exclusive sync rights to

your music, and you should retain all copyright ownership.

6) VIDEO PRODUCTION COMPANIES

These companies produce training films, industrial films, corporate business films, and other short film or video projects.

Contact sources: Again, in Los Angeles, the **LA 411** guide is a great source of contacts. You can check online at <http://www.la411.com>. As mentioned before, you may want to purchase the printed book; you will get a lot of use out of it.

7) FILM COMPANIES

These can range from Warner Bros. and Paramount to small one or two person operations. Forget calling the music heads at the big studios; they will never return your call. At this level, an agent is necessary. Concentrate on the smaller companies that produce a small number of movies per year, or the mid producers that produce direct to video films. You'll have much better luck.

Contact sources: Again, the **Hollywood Reporter** Tuesday edition runs listing of films in preproduction and production. Be sure to check out this source.

You will have the best luck looking for films without any star names, which signifies lower budget productions. Many production companies are formed as a one shot company that disbands after the film is completed. Although you may not have heard of the

production company, films with major stars are usually associated with or distributed by a major like Warner Bros or Universal, and your chances of anything happening by calling are remote.

Another source is the **Hollywood Creative Directory**, published by Ifilm Publishing. Check them out at www.hcdonline.com.

8) TV NETWORK IN-HOUSE PROMOTIONS DEPARTMENTS

Though most network promo departments are moving more and more towards using music libraries, there can be opportunities to write for their in-house libraries.

Contact sources: Contact the in-house promo departments at the networks in LA and NY. I know for a fact that they are bombarded with composers looking to get a shot at this. This one will take a lot of perseverance and some great tracks to get results.

9) MUSIC LIBRARIES

This is one of the best avenues for up and coming composers. There are many many libraries nowadays, and if you can produce broadcast quality tracks in a wide variety of styles, you should be able to find work.

Many of the smaller libraries do not pay you any upfront money for tracks. If they are not paying you for your work, then you should retain some portion of the publishing, and some portion of the licensing revenue. You should retain 100% of your writer's royalties.

The license fees can really add up, so do not be quick to give away this portion of the pie. I've heard of individual promo oriented CDs earning \$40,000 to \$60,000 in license fees, all of which went to the music library.

The bigger libraries will pay for tracks, usually around \$1,000 a track, which includes a long version (2:00 to 3:00) a :60 version and a :30 version. Because they are paying you money upfront they usually want to take 100% of the publisher's, and all the license fees. You retain your writer's portion. They look at the money they pay you as an a buyout for your licensing. They don't tell this to you, but they know that the licensing is very lucrative. For example, CBS pays \$75.00 a use for a track being used in one of their promos. Each use is \$75.00. This can add up to a lot of money, money that you will never see if you do not participate in the licensing portion of the pie.

Your tracks must be top notch both in writing and production for a library to consider you , as they need broadcast quality tracks.

Contact sources: Again, in Los Angeles, the **LA 411** guide is a great source of contacts. You can check online at <http://www.la411.com>. Also do a Google or Yahoo search under **Production Music** or **Music Libraries**. **Post Magazine** sometimes runs articles and features on music libraries. **The Film Composer Network's** jobs bulletin consistently features music libraries looking for cues.

10) MUSIC SUPERVISORS

Music supervisors are people whose job is to match songs and cues with specific needs. They can either be hired by a production company or network to work on a specific show, or they may work freelance for many clients. Music supervisors are responsible for finding and licensing music for their clients, and taking care of all the paperwork. Sometimes they go to composers to fulfill a need, or they use their vast knowledge of music tracks, songs, CDs, artists, and libraries to find music that works for their projects. Many popular songs of the moment are licensed for TV promo campaigns, or licensed for placement in a show or movie.

If you are interested in pursuing licensing deals, your music must be owned by you **free and clear**, in other words, you own both the writer's and the publisher's shares, and you control the copyrights.

Sometimes a production company will call you to see if they can license a cue or song off your demo. Even if the piece was commissioned and not available for licensing, you can try to write another similar piece for them.

Most licenses of previously existing material are non-exclusive, and will be for that particular project only. Any other use will require an additional payment. A license can be made for any length of time. I have negotiated licenses for cues used as themes on an annual basis. Composers love these types of deals - it can provide a source of annual income.

Contact sources: One of the best sources is the **Film and TV Music Supervisor Guide** published by Film

Music Media Group. (Part of the Film Music Network)
Check them out at www.filmmusicworld.com. Also, the
Film and Television Music Guide, available at
www.musicregistry.com.

CHAPTER 3:

MAKING CONTACTS

OK, now you have put together a demo, and located some likely prospects through your efforts from Chapter 2. Now the question is: How do I proceed? What do I say when I call?

CALLING POTENTIAL CLIENTS:

Let's go over some of the facts that you will face when you begin to put the word out that you are a composer and are looking for work.

- 1) No one ever seems to be in their office. You will leave voicemail messages roughly 8 times out of 10 times for people.
- 2) No one will return your calls. Don't take this

personally. One thing that composers do not realize is that the people in the position to hire get inundated with submissions from composers and agents. Most of the time they don't have the time to listen to everything that comes in, and are not really interested in listening to CDs that come in, unless they have a job at hand. When they need a composer, their first choice is to call someone that they have already worked with before. Their second choice is to hire someone that's recommended to them by someone they know. So your odds are not great when you start out.

3) Your real job is to slowly but surely become someone that they know. Over a period of time, if you **consistently** keep in touch with people, never obnoxiously, but with respect for their time, you will be placing yourself in the position to get noticed from the crowd. The key is **consistently**.

As I mentioned before, the music business is a business, one that thrives on relationships. And relationships take time to develop. If you plan to be doing this 10 years from now, building up a relationship with someone over a period of years should not be disconcerting to you. If it is, then you must realize that there are other composers out there who have been calling the same people you have for years, and maybe are closer to getting a chance to work with them.

TIP

The music business is a business of relationships.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I MAKE CONTACT?

A general rule of thumb is NOT TOO OFTEN. No one wants to be pestered by someone who calls every

week, or worse, every few days. Would you want someone calling you every couple of days, especially if you have no need for their services? After a dozen calls in the space of a few weeks you wouldn't want to work with them even if you had a million jobs. They just seemed too pushy, or they just rubbed you the wrong way. Try to keep in contact every 4 -6 weeks, unless they tell you to call them before that. Always be courteous and respectful of their time. Always try to get to know the person a bit, or tell them a bit about you, so you begin little by little to become someone who they know.

If possible, try to set up a meeting for you to bring in your demo and play it for them. Ad agencies, for example, will meet with music houses for screenings of their work on occasion. This sometimes is hard to arrange - most of the time they will just tell you to send your demo, but it is worth the effort to try to arrange this.

MAJOR SECRET - As amazing as this sounds, most people send out their demos and NEVER FOLLOW UP!!! This is not just composers, but singers and musicians too. I can't even remember the number of demos (from singers and composers) I have received that were never followed up with calls to even see if I received them. Some of the CDs are really good, and I file them away for future reference.

When I need to hire someone, I first call my composer friends and see if they know anyone, or I call people I know and have worked with before. If this does not pan out I will then go through my demos.

When the time comes to hire someone, truthfully, most of the people in my files are not really in consideration because I have had no contact with them in

some time. I have no sense if they are reliable or not. **There is no relationship.** In this business you have to trust the people you work with, as one flaky person will make you look bad, or worse, will cost you money for sessions or recording time if they show up late or do a bad job.

As of the time I'm writing this, of all the people who have sent me their demos over the years, I can think of one person who still follows up regularly, and this holds true for most other composers I know. I get a call from him every few months, and I get promotional postcard every couple of months or so. No wonder this guy is constantly working and is successful. And it's not a surprise that I have hired him for quite a few jobs.

In Chapter 1, I mentioned that I once ran an ad looking for tracks, and received about 100 submissions. I maybe received 6-8 one-time followups from people, and never heard from them again. One person did put me on their mailing list for awhile, but I stopped getting emails 6 months ago.

Today, about a year later, 100 of those 100 people that submitted material have dropped the ball. Sad, but true.

Three vocalists recently sent me their demos. I have their reels in front of me. None of them have ever followed up to see if I listened to their demo, or to check if there is anything coming up. That is pretty amazing. Right here is a major reason for lack of success.

I have had a few people follow up for a couple of months or so, which is commendable, but then they disappear. Maybe their perception is I don't hire a lot of singers, musicians, or other composers, but the point is - they don't really know because they don't call to find out!

Now, the one major reason for this is that everyone gets busy after awhile, and as your career starts to develop you stop doing the things that got you started - the calls, meetings, events, networking, etc. Everyone falls prey to this, myself included. Following up on demos and materials you diligently sent out falls by the wayside when you get busy, but this is precisely my point. The networking and demo mailings you do get you work. You have to keep doing it consistently, especially when you are busy. This is the only way to keep the work flowing consistently.

I always set a goal to keep in touch with everyone in my call books - current clients, past clients, and prospective clients - every 4-6 weeks. The truth is, I don't always reach my goal, but it's a great goal to strive to achieve. You have to keep at it. And you especially have to keep at it while you're working and your energy is going towards doing the job at hand. Remember, this is how you will avoid big downtime between jobs.

Never underestimate how the power of **consistent contact**. It's like exercising - there is no ultimate goal where you say "That's it - I'm fit and don't need to exercise ever again". *It's the process - doing the consistent exercise on a regular basis that gets you the results.*

I WANT IT NOW! SYNDROME

For some reason people are wired for short term gains. We all want what we can have right now. Unfortunately, what we want right now is seldom what is good for us in the long run. Take the example of

someone who spends all the money they make (or worse, spends more than they make). It feels good to have that big screen TV now, to go out and party now, to have that nice car now. But many people find that years down the road they have no money, and no retirement. They had a spending plan, but they had no savings plan. Smoking is another short term gain, long term pain situation.

Being able to put off short term gains and focus on the bigger picture is how people become rich. A classic example is when someone saves a certain amount (say \$100 a month) from the age of 25 until they are 35, and then never adds another penny. They will then have more money when they retire at 65 than someone who starts at age 35 and adds \$100 a month every month until they are 65. Sure, it would have been easy to spend the \$100 a month on entertainment and stuff and enjoy life now, but the short term pleasure is many times at the expense of things later.

In finance, this difference is because the person started early, consistently saved the \$100 month after month, and also because of the magic of compound interest. In business relationships, the difference between keeping in touch and networking with people consistently and not doing so is immeasurable. Start doing your marketing now; do not wait. Results come with consistency. But you must keep at it - be consistent about being consistent!

SETTING UP AN EFFECTIVE CONTACT SYSTEM

One of the keys is setting up a system of keeping in contact with people, one that you will actually use. Some people use Palm Pilots, or their computer with File Maker

Pro, or little pieces of paper glued together.

People will tell you things like “Call me in 6 weeks when our next project starts post production”. How will you remember to call them in 6 weeks? And if they are then out of town for another 3 weeks - how will you remember to call them then? Or when you can’t leave a voicemail for someone because their box is full -- how will you follow up? If you can’t answer these questions, it means you do not have a reliable method. Without one you are setting yourself up to fail.

I personally use the old fashioned 3 hole paper in a 3 ring binder method, along with my Daytimer. I keep all contacts alphabetically in the binder. Whenever a client calls or I call them, I make a note. If I send out a demo, I make a note. Anything and everything to do with each current and potential client is written down, all referenced by date.

For some clients (and hopefully clients to be) I have pages and pages devoted to calls and meetings over the years. I can easily see within seconds all my contacts with this person or company.

In my Daytimer, if someone says to call them in 6 weeks - I go out 6 weeks and write it in. I have a system where if I didn’t accomplish something that day I forward it to the next day, including calls. This works for me, and I rarely miss calling someone if I said I would, or doing something I said I would. All undone items are always forwarded to the next day.

This simple low tech system works for me. Putting everything into a computer just seems like too much work. I would be stuck if someone calls when my computer is off, or has just crashed, which is quite common these days.

Whatever works for you, use it..... The key (again)
is to use it CONSISTENTLY.

CHAPTER 4:

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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.

Remember our earlier example of Babe Ruth, who holds the record for home runs. As mentioned before, 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. 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, couldn’t take the rejection, and it was too painful to continue.

We also talked about how many things you want long term will be painful short term. Exercising and dieting are great examples. For most people, changing your body is extremely painful 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 that 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 health and feeling better. 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 that could 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 discouraged, 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 doing it and 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 challenge at first. If you're unsure of what to say to

clients when money issues or copyright ownership issues come up, 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. This course was designed to guide you and give you the confidence, experience, and knowledge to pursue your dreams in music.

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 jump. 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, and even harder to make ourselves happy.

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 power in people, and in the potential for ourselves to do 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. To succeed as a composer, you have to push yourself when the going gets tough. Summon all your resources, do the best job you can do, and continue to learn and grow each day in your pursuit of musical excellence.

I hope this course has provided you with the tools, inspiration, and confidence to travel the path to becoming a successful working composer. The process is simple; the hard part is getting yourself to use what you've learned consistently.

Carpe diem (Seize the day)! I wish you the best of luck in your career. Start right now to make it happen!!