THINK BIG (MONEY)

For Live Musicians,
Performers & Entertainers

J C Sum

At Backstage Business Academy, we explore extra income ideas for live entertainers and anyone who wants to make money with a creative passion, whether it is full-time, part-time or just for fun.

Our free articles, videos and podcasts will give you the tools, ideas and inspiration to pursue your creative passion in a practical way and develop viable streams of income regardless of your financial goals.

We believe if you can make money doing something you love, you will be happy.

"The more happy people in the world, the better the world will be."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born & raised in Singapore, J C Sum is a headline entertainer, author & creative entrepreneur.

He is an international award-winning illusionist and has performed over 3500 shows in 34 countries on 4 continents. More than 120 million people have seen his magic on live shows & television with appearances on 26 programs across the world (www.jcsum.com).

J C is one of the most commercially successful illusionists in Asia and currently performs regularly as a headline entertainer for luxury cruise liners and corporate events in Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

As a creative entrepreneur, he runs a magic production house that produces shows and consults for events & TV. He also developed several successful online properties in niche domains such as illusionbooks.com, illusionbookstore.com and magickabukidrop.com.

He has authored more than a dozen books covering a variety of subjects including technical illusion design, theatre stage craft as well as business & marketing for creatives.

J C's work affords him a unique perspective from both sides of the creative business; both as a creative professional for hire as well as a client to creatives of all types.

His extensive experience in entertainment marketing also offers a different fish-eye view on how a creative of any type should be marketed.

J C graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelors of Arts in English Language & Sociology with a minor in Philosophy. Since 2008, J C has given numerous talks locally & overseas on his perspective and approach to creativity and creative entrepreneurship for numerous organizations as well as TedX Talks and TechFests.

He has been nominated for a "Spirit of Enterprise" business award and has been featured in leading business publications such as The Business Times and The Edge.

Through Backstage Business Academy, J C shares his experience, original thoughts and approach to building a creative business, making a consistent 6-figure income as a creative professional and developing extra income ideas.

INTRODUCTION

I still remember the very first paid show that I ever booked. It was in 1993 for a children's party at a social club. I was paid the princely sum of SG$80 (about US$50 at that time). While it was not a large sum of money for an adult, it was a lot of money for a school boy who was taking his hobby to the next level. I was ecstatic that someone would actually pay me to share my creative passion with an audience.

I'm sure you have had a similar experience. Whether you are a live musician, variety performer or comedian, your art is your creative passion. And, when you are recognized in the form of being compensated with cold hard cash, it is a strong form of validation that what you do has commercial value.

After booking your first show, you get hooked and can't wait to book your next show and then the next. Eventually, the never-ending goal is to book more shows and get more gigs to make more money. Some are successful at getting a steady stream of shows while others find competition very stiff and are constantly struggling to book enough shows.

Going for more shows to make more money is certainly needed, especially when you start off in your show business career. But that can't be your end goal, especially for a professional live entertainer.

The key is to have a paradigm shift. The key is to move from a "more shows more money" approach to your career to one that is focused on increasing your differentiated value to secure big money shows.

This little book will start you off with the mental blueprint to create a money-generating brand, make a consistent 6-figure income and set up for eventual retirement.

I have to admit that I also have a selfish reason for writing this book even though the primary goal is to help live entertainers transform their mindsets. You see, if there are more live entertainers who have differentiated quality products and become highly successful, the general market for live entertainment will be elevated.

The value, fees commanded and perception of entertainers will be raised. More clients will be interested to book higher quality entertainers. The media and public interest in live entertainment will grow. Investors will be drawn to live entertainment projects and venues due to the increase in demand for live entertainment. Entertainers will be booking more shows that pay more.

As an industry professional, this overall upward shift in the market will have a direct benefit on me. So, this book and my full course "The Showbiz Master Plan" are not 100% altruistic endeavors. It is a devious master plan to make more money in the longest and most difficult way possible.

I hope you find value within these pages and more importantly, are inspired to achieve the ultimate balance between financial, personal and professional goals in your life while doing what you love.

Feb 2016

THE CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR

At some point in one's life, a person may consider the possibility of making money from their creative passion or even making a career out of it. After all, it sounds like a dream job. You get to do what you love, be your own boss and manage your own time.

As an entertainer, you are one of the few who are bold (or crazy) enough to do what you love and charge people for it. Cheers to that!

However, once you start making your living or part of your income from your creative passion, there is a need for a paradigm shift. When you decide to monetize your creative passion, you move from being a pure creative artist or hobbyist to become a creative entrepreneur.

In his book, "The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas", John Howkins, defines creative entrepreneurs as people who *"use creativity to unlock the* *wealth that lies* within themselves" rather than external capital.

In simple terms, a creative entrepreneur is a person who sets up a business for profit in a creative industry. In essence, creative entrepreneurship is where passion and profit meet.

Being a creative entrepreneur requires knowledge and a skill set beyond just expertise in the chosen creative field or the ability to create a creative product. It requires you to derive commercial value out of your expertise, brand and creative product.

Mark McGuinness expounds on this point in his article "The 3 Critical Characteristics of the Creative Entrepreneur" from LateralAction.com, *"The value they create lies not in their physical products (if any) but in intangible assets such as their brand, reputation, network and intellectual property. They are adept at projecting a desired image and creating a personal brand, both online and offline. They also understand the principles of intellectual property law and use copyrights, trademarks, patents and licenses to exploit the full potential of their ideas."*

In today's economy and business environment, it is not possible to be just a creative artist.

A creative entrepreneur must be just that, a creative individual coupled with entrepreneurial skills. You will need to learn business and financial management and equip yourself with sales, PR and marketing skills.

In his article, "The Death of the Artist - and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur" published in The Atlantic, William Deresiewicz, highlighted how the image of the artist has changed from the *"hard-working artisan, solitary genius to credentialed professional"*. He notes the importance of creative entrepreneurship as reflected by the curriculum of several universities where creative arts and design students have to study entrepreneurship as well as their respective creative practice.

There is a saying in entertainment. An entertainer is in show business. So, an entertainer must work on the show as well as the business. And because business is spelt twice as long as show, you need to put in twice the amount of effort in the business. This directly applies to the creative entrepreneur as well.

I'm a pragmatic artist (is that an oxymoron?). I want to present the most artistic and creative product possible but have no intention of being a starving artist. In fact, I am not even interested to just get by or make a living. I am very much for being a highly successful creative entrepreneur.

It is a delicate balancing act that is not without compromise at times. You must have as much passion for your creative field as you have the drive to build your business and brand as a creative entrepreneur.

The desire for making money must not overshadow your love for your creative passion. At the same time, you must work towards being well paid for what you are worth. Balance is key to ensuring commercial success and longevity as a creative entrepreneur.

As I think entertainers can learn from successful creatives, throughout this book, I will use examples of other creative entrepreneurs, even if they are not entertainers.

TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

To conclude this chapter, I have adapted a list of five common traits of successful creative entrepreneurs from art advisor, Aletta de Wal's, original list of traits of successful fine artists.

Their Creative Passion is the Core of their Lives

Successful creative entrepreneurs wake up and go to sleep thinking about their creative passion. They carve out time in their day making art or marketing it. (In fact, for these creative entrepreneurs, there seems to be no clear distinction between the creativity of making and marketing.) If they have a full-time job, it is secondary in their minds to creative passion and mostly a means to an end. Their real job is being a creative entrepreneur.

Award-winning graphic designer & founder of 'JUST™ Creative', Jacob Cass declares on his blog, *"My life is design, I love it and I surround myself in it every day."*

Successful Creative Entrepreneurs Understand How Business Works in their Creative Industry

Successful creative entrepreneurs understand the entrepreneurial aspects of being a creative entrepreneur. From business management to managing cash flow and creating synergy between the creative product and sales, marketing, PR and branding efforts; successful creative entrepreneurs are multi-skilled individuals.

Sophie Andrews, author of The Creative Collection, in an article written for Huffington Post "The 5 Biggest Profit Secrets for Creative Entrepreneurs" correctly assesses that *"rather than focusing on the business side of their enterprise, creatives are often more inclined to sacrifice their financial security at the altar of their artistic integrity. They invest their time, capital, and energy in an unbalanced manner that all too often results in the failure of businesses positively overflowing with unrealized potential.*

To unlock this potential, you'll need the key, which is a business structure built upon organized, unshakeable financial foundations.

The world of business moves at an incredibly fast pace with new ideas and new trends emerging constantly. Add to that the global *financial crisis, the emergence of new markets of competitors, and the rising cost of raw materials, and it becomes apparent that the creative who wants to succeed and be recognized needs to understand precisely what this business climate demands."*

Successful Creative Entrepreneurs have a Strong Work Ethic

Successful creative entrepreneurs manage themselves, their creative energy and resources. They balance the time to produce their creative product and to market it. Successful creative entrepreneurs are consummate professionals. They do not let their emotion affect their work.

They are disciplined and hardworking, working relentlessly on both their creative passion and the business of their creative enterprise.

Successful Creative Entrepreneurs are Resilient

Successful creative entrepreneurs know that success does not happen overnight; it requires working hard, working smart and a bit of luck. Creative entrepreneurs understand that mistakes and failure are part of the business and part of life. When they make mistakes, they focus on solutions, not on regrets.

In his article, "How to Increase Your Art's Market Value and Make the Most of Your Career as an Artist from Artbusiness.com, Alan Bamberger, stresses the importance of being resilient, "… *continue creating art no matter how difficult the process becomes. Continue even though you're not selling anything. Continue even if you're dissatisfied with what you're producing. Persevere, work through the tough times and you'll be glad you did."*

Successful Creative Entrepreneurs Do Not Spend Time with Negative People

Successful creative entrepreneurs limit their time and emotional involvement with people who are negative, especially if they are not supportive of their careers and offer no value, knowledge or skills.

They recognize false adulation and instead crave for constructive criticism so that they can improve themselves. They do not surround themselves with "friends" who attempt to pull them down when they achieve success, out of envy, conspiracy or competitive feelings.

THE INCOME TRIANGLE OF THE CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR

Most creative entrepreneurs earn their income only when they work. As an entertainer, you are likely no different.

You get paid when you perform you show or act. If you have no shows, you get no income. And, because you are unique to your creative passion, you are not easily replaceable which means your income is not easily replaceable.

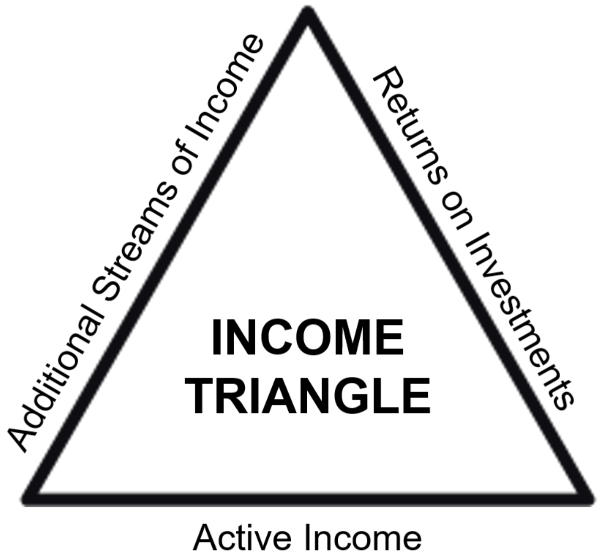
The goal of this book is to show entertainers one way of making good money that can sustain a lifelong career. Equally as important is how to manage your money and maintain cash flow.

Virtually all successful creative entrepreneurs have one thing in common; they derive their income from several different sources. You should be no different.

I use a very simple concept to view my income and understand where it should be coming from. This is what I call the "Income Triangle" for the creative entrepreneur.

There are three main sources of income for the creative entrepreneur:

- **Active Income** derived from the creative entrepreneur's creative product
- **Additional Streams of Income** related to the creative entrepreneur's creative passion, expertise or experience
- **Returns on Investments** from income-generating assets



Active Income

This forms the base of your income triangle and is your primary income that you derive from your creative product as a creative entrepreneur.

Generally, your active income refers to income that requires your presence or participation for the creative product to be delivered; in this case, performing your show or act.

The majority of your income (if you are a full-time active entertainer) will come from your active income.

Additional Streams of Income

Many established entertainers work on developing additional streams of income.

Common income streams include selling creative products (merchandize, video/ audio content), informational products (books, DVD, ebooks, streaming videos), teaching and selling tools of the trade (equipment, gear, props & accessories related to your field).

Personally, I think it is important that your additional streams of income should complement your active income and should not distract or affect the quality or continued innovation of your primary creative product.

The additional stream of income should also be related or complement your market.

Returns on Investments

When most think about investments, the common impression is that you are investing for the hope of a return on the investment when you eventually sell it or it matures.

Long-term financial planning is no doubt one of the most common goals of investing. However, you can also invest into income-generating assets that can offer regular income or cash flow while still appreciating in value over time.

Investing in real estate that generates rental income or investing in stocks that offer regular dividends or investing directly in a business that gives out profits are all examples of assets that can also be a source of income.

The key is to learn where to invest your money based on your locality, risk tolerance, time horizon and investment goals.

Naturally, for most of your career, your active income, in this case from performing your shows or acts, will make up the bulk of your income.

However, over time, your goal should be to diversify your income and make your income triangle into an equilateral triangle. That is, make it as equal-sided as possible.

If you can reach a stage where your total income is almost equally divided between your active income, additional streams of income and returns on investment, you would likely have reached an ideal state of financial stability.

One of the greatest benefits of having an equilateral income triangle is that you are not solely dependent on performing.

In fact, even, if in the unfortunate situation where you are injured or ill and cannot take on shows or just want to take a break, you will still be generating 2/3s of your total income. That's not too shabby right?

THREE STAGES OF THE CREATIVE ENTREPRENUER'S CAREER

After understanding the income triangle for the creative entrepreneur, it is helpful to look at the three distinct stages of a creative entrepreneur's career and how income is generated over your professional lifetime.

Being aware of the three stages will help you chart your career better and make the necessary decisions to support that stage of your career.

There is no specific timeline that any of these stages follow. Different creative entrepreneurs will spend different amounts of time in different stages of their career. The difference is due to the nature of the art, chosen market, health, personal choice and financial goals of each creative entrepreneur. However, each successful career will follow these three stages.

Stage 1: New Creative Entrepreneur

<u>Building Your Brand and Dominating Your Niche</u>

When you are at this first stage of your professional career, you should be working hard to identify & create your value, build your brand and dominate your niche market.

You will be investing a lot of money into your act/ show and marketing as well as reinvesting money earned back to enhance your product and brand. This is not the stage of your career to be miserly and to count your pennies. Reinvesting your money to grow is essential to propel you to the next stage of your career.

Stage 2: Established Creative Entrepreneur

Making Money with Your Brand & Creating Wealth

As you establish yourself as a seasoned creative entrepreneur, there will come a point where you have to be smart and try to make as much money as possible as well as manage the money you make.

At this stage of your career, you will start to monetize your brand as much as possible and generate as much active income as you can.

Essentially, you will be leveraging on the goodwill of your brand that you have spent years building and getting maximum dollar for your value.

Concurrently, you will be managing your money better. This includes developing other streams of income that will generate you additional passive income as well as investing your active earnings in income-generating assets to grow your money.

Stage 3: Veteran Creative Entrepreneur

Reinvesting & Further Growing Your Wealth

As a veteran creative entrepreneur, ideally at this stage of your career, you are performing because you want to or are working towards retiring as an active creative entrepreneur. The money you have earned in the second and this stage of your career will be working for you.

At this final stage of your career, you (hopefully) have made some significant money and your income-generating assets are maturing and/ or are giving you returns, dividends and profits that can replace your income as a creative entrepreneur or, at the least, cover your monthly/ yearly expenses. Your other income streams should also be providing you with some cash flow.

As you continue to perform and earn an active income as a veteran, the returns from your assets will be reinvested back for compounded returns. At the same time, you will continue to invest your active income into more assets until you decide to retire as a creative entrepreneur.

Essentially, your wealth should be growing for your retirement or will allow you to comfortably embark on another career out of interest.

Which stage of your career are you at?

Are you doing the things you need to be doing to build your income triangle?

Do not worry, it is never too late to start.

THINK BIG (MONEY)

MORE SHOWS, MORE MONEY

Assuming we confine the discussion of the source of making money to just performing shows, there are really only two ways for an entertainer to make more money.

1. Do More Shows

2. Get More Money for Each Show You Do

If you want to make more money, you try to book more shows. It is logical and intuitive and this is what most entertainers work towards.

Like most entertainers, at the beginning of my professional career, I was hungry to book as many shows as possible in order to make more money.

I worked hard at the "more shows, more money" approach during the first 6 years of my commercial performing career. At my peak during this time (in my 5th

& 6th year as a commercial entertainer), I was performing an average of 15 – 20 shows a month with up to 35 shows during peak months.

I would be doing multiple shows a week with several per day on weekends. My personal record was performing 9 different gigs over a two-day weekend. I was killing it!

I should mention that my success at booking a high volume of shows was due to a combination of reasons:

At that time, I was the only one in my country who was specializing in corporate event work. All other magicians were "magicians for all occasions" who primarily performed kids shows.

I invested a lot of time, energy, effort and money into developing original material or presentations for existing acts so that my acts would be different from any of my direct competitors in the market.

I was very aggressive in my marketing. There are many books, courses and systems that are geared to teaching you how to book more shows and keep your calendar full. I got my hands on all these resources and applied all the strategies, techniques and tactics as suggested.

My fees were within budget. While my fees were higher than any other direct competitor at that time (the "average market" rate was SG$350, my fees were an average of SG$600), they were still within the entertainment budget for most mid-level corporate &

special events.

I did a wide spectrum of shows that fell under the local & regional “corporate & special events” market.

As a magician, I would be performing “close-up magic” for private parties, corporate events, weddings and promotional events. On stage, I would do a small illusion show or a stand-up show for corporate dinners, lunches, launches, trade shows, exhibitions, road shows and conferences.

This “more shows more money” period in my career was a formative time for me. I worked very hard and I made, what would be considered, decent money at that point in my life.

However, a realization came to me after one particularly long month of doing (too) many shows.

I had performed as many shows as I could possibly take on and realized that the amount of money I made was finite. The amount would not increase unless I could do more shows but I was already up to my neck in shows. All of my time was spent marketing, booking, rehearsing and performing shows.

While the "more shows more money" approach made me some money, it was tiring and literally back-breaking. In fact, the constant carrying of heavy cases, transporting for shows, setting up and tearing down day in and day out caused me to injure my lower back. I was experiencing discomfort daily for a couple of years.

After years of performing, I was also not content with the artistic quality of the shows I was presenting. My show was developed as a "worker's show". That meant the show could be performed anywhere, packed small and was able to set-up/ pack down quickly.

It was efficient, practical and allowed me to perform back to back shows and multiple shows in a day if needed. The type of events I was booked for also did not allow me to present artistically high-level shows simply because of the event venues I was performing in.

The "more shows, more money" approach requires you to work in a market that allows you to do more shows. A market that offers a high volume of shows tends to be one whose shows are low to mid-market ones. Like me, you would also have to do a wide variety of shows to maintain the volume of work.

If you like performing a lot at all types of events & shows, enjoy this lifestyle and you are content with the money you are making, that is awesome! You are happy and that is the most important. No one can take that away from you or tell you otherwise.

However, as your career develops, your goals in your professional life evolve and priorities in your personal life change, you might reconsider; as I did.

After two years of an almost-daily grind, I did not want to have to be performing 20 – 30 shows a month to make good money for the rest of my career.

The artist in me wanted to be able to perform better quality, more elaborate shows that required good venues and technical support that only higher value shows would allow.

I also wanted time to work on developing other forms of passive income as well as invest my hard-earned money.

I needed another approach.

The only way that I could make more money without doing more shows was to be able to get more money per show.

While simple in concept, it was also not possible to simply raise my price significantly for the shows I was currently doing.

The shows I was booking had a budget limit. These were low-to-mid value shows for mid-value events so budgets for entertainment were more or less fixed. It was not a matter of whether the client or event producer thought I was worth it, the issue was there was a certain budget for entertainment and they could not pay me more even if they wanted to.

The solution was to find and book higher value shows that would pay Big Money.

This is what I call the Big Money approach - being focused on and getting booked for Big Money shows.

It meant changing my approach from taking on any type of show and as many shows as possible to one where I concentrate on high-value shows that would pay more. So, instead of being paid $600 for a show, I tried to figure out how I could be paid $1000 a show, then $2000, $5000, $10,000 and so on.

The fantastic by-product of the Big Money approach is that in time, I got to choose to perform fewer shows and yet still make Big Money.

Going for the Big Money shows is the approach that I have since adopted for most of my 20-year professional career. The hard work over time has resulted in me now being able to be selective with the number of shows I take on but still live the lifestyle I want.

My current primary work, in 2016, is performing exclusively as a headline entertainer for international corporate & special events as well as for international luxury cruise liners in Asia. (You can check out my portfolio of work at www.jcsum.com)

While performing shows still forms most of my active income, I can spend most of my off-stage time on non-work things that I like to do.

I have time to develop passive income such as managing my businesses and investment portfolio which is diversified across asset classes including property, businesses, equities, precious metals and held-to-maturity investments. In the former case, I work on my businesses and not in my businesses.

I have also have time to share my experiences and specialized knowledge gained over the years in three content resource websites that I will discuss later in the book.

And oh, my lower back no longer hurts as it healed years ago.

THE BIG MONEY APPROACH

It is my hope that you can learn from what worked and what did not work for me and apply it to your own career as an entertainer to reach your financial freedom.

Would you like to charge $200 a show and perform 10 shows to make $2000? Or would you prefer to charge $1000 and perform just 2 shows to make $2000?

I think most will find the logical answer obvious.

Here are more benefits of the Big Money approach. It will:

- Raise your brand value and position in the marketplace

- Free up time that you can spend with your family & loved ones and do things you like outside of your art.

- Give you more time to improve your act, develop new acts and add value to your overall product.

- Allow you to have time and energy to develop other streams of income and business opportunities.

- Pave the way for bigger opportunities and shows, which will result in Bigger Money.

Of course, this is easier said than done. After all, if it were easy, everyone would be focusing on the Big Money approach and not the "more shows, more money" approach.

So, how do you go about booking Big Money shows?

It starts with understanding a few key concepts.

BASIC BIG MONEY CONCEPTS

The Market

You must understand that you are part of a market. You, your show or act, do not exist in a silo. You are just one part of the collective market place. Your show or act is a product offered in the market.

Naturally, the marketplace also includes competitors who offer alternative products to yours.

The consumers are an equally important part of the market. Consumers refer to your clients, agents, venues, individuals and organizations who book your show.

The market also consists of trade media as well as related support service and product providers.

Competition

To be successful in any business in today's economy, you have to understand the competition. This is especially true of the Big Money approach as it adopts a positioning marketing strategy to raise your value in the market.

Positioning is a marketing strategy introduced by Jack Trout & Al Ries where a business or brand identifies and attempts to occupy a market niche in the minds of consumers.

Positioning requires you to be positioned against your competition so knowing who exactly your competitors are essential.

Most entertainers think that their competition is other similar entertainers. The truth is, other similar entertainers make up only 20% of your competition. Who makes up the other 80%?

To see whom your competition is; do a localized Internet search for 'Entertainers' in your area. You will no doubt get dozens of pages of entertainers ranging from magicians to jugglers to bands to impersonators to singers… the list goes on. Now multiply this with all the number of entertainers outside of your city or country. That's a huge number right?

It now becomes obvious that entertainers that are of the same trade as you make up only a small number of entertainers in the industry. With the realization that your competition extends beyond your own art, you will broaden your perspective on:

- What is expected from the content of your show in terms of quality

- The degree of effort needed in marketing your show to stand out from the immense competition.

Besides other entertainers, there is actually one more form of stiff indirect competition. And that is the option for the client not to have any professional entertainment at all. This is the form of competition that most don't even realize!

Unless it is a professional entertainment venue, a corporate event client, for example, may decide not to have any professional entertainment at all and choose to spend the money on better food, lucky draw prizes or have its own staff perform for the event.

Thus, the entertainer has three forms of competition in all:

1. **Direct Competition** - Other similar entertainers
2. **Indirect Competition** - Other entertainers
3. **Indirect Competition** - The choice of the client not to have any professional entertainment

Being aware of your competition is very important in crafting your marketing strategy for your target market segment.

Value

Value is how much consumers in the market think your act is worth. It is a perceived notion; just as a $100 note is perceived as more valuable than a $10 note, even though both are pieces of printed paper that may actually cost 3 cents to print.

The value of an entertainer is generally represented by price. Price, for an entertainer is most commonly equated to the performance fee. However, value can also be represented by other things that I will elaborate on shortly.

Your value is determined by the consumers, not by you. You can propose what you hope your value to be, but the actual value is ultimately determined by the consumers.

So, in the case of your performance fee, if you want to charge $500 a show and most clients are willing to pay $500 a show, your value in that market is $500.

However, if you want to charge $500 a show but most clients are always asking you to lower your price to $400 a show, your value in that market is $400.

I mentioned value does not always equal to price because your value may include other things besides your performance fee.

For example, when a client books you, you might request for business class travel & accommodation, a fully equipped dressing room with certain luxury items and accommodating your entourage.

You might also request for marque billing or a certain amount of promotion to ensure your show is well attended. All these will cost the client money, on top of your performance fee. All these add to your overall value.

As an illusionist, my act requires props & equipment to be shipped. This can amount to tens of thousands of dollars depending if the gear is shipped by air or sea due to the size & number of cases that are shipped.

I also have a technical rider that includes specific staging, audio, video and lighting requirements. The client has to commit to all these costs that contribute to the overall value of my show.

How Do Consumers Assess Your Value?

These are two types of value that consumers assess to determine how much they think an act is worth:

1. Tangible Value
2. Intangible Value

Tangible value refers to the physical elements in your act as well anything that can be experienced by the senses. Some entertainers may view this as "real value" (even though technically that is ironic since value is a perceived notion).

Tangible elements include:

- The Physical Skill Displayed in Your Act
- Physical Look & Styling of the Entertainer
- Props & Costumes
- Music
- Supporting Elements like Visual Media, Specific Lighting Design, Pyrotechnics and Special Effects

While tangible elements make up the base value of your act, it is the intangible elements that can contribute more to the overall perceived value of an entertainer.

Intangible elements may include:

- Originality
- Constant Innovation
- Showmanship
- Audience Engagement

- X Factor
- Brand Value
- Media Recognition
- Awards
- Industry Experience
- Professionalism
- Off-stage Business Dealings

HOW DOES THE BIG MONEY APPROACH WORK?

The Big Money approach advocates that you focus on getting high value shows that pay more.

The "Basic Big Money Concepts" highlighted above reveal that the key to getting these high value shows is to raise your own value. So, how do you raise your value?

The solution can be summed up in a single sentence:

An Entertainer has a Higher Value when the Consumers Believe the Entertainer Offers a Differentiated Quality Product in the Relevant Niche Market.

This may sound very convoluted so please read that sentence again and try to digest it.

The entertainer's value is directly proportionate to the consumers' belief in the entertainer's differentiated quality product and the value of the niche market itself.

This means:

- The stronger the consumers' belief, the higher the value they will attach to the entertainer.

- The higher quality the product, the more the entertainer is valued

- The more differentiated the product is, the more the entertainer is valued

- The higher the value of the niche market, the higher the value of the entertainer that caters to that specific niche market.

To elaborate on the last point: The value of the niche market refers to the level that consumers spend on products in a specific specialized market. The more consumers are willing to spend, the higher value the market is.

So, the diamond market is considered a higher value market than the toy market because consumers are generally willing to spend more on diamonds than on toys.

Your job is to figure out how to ensure your show is of high quality, ensure that it is different from your competition and find a good niche market that you can own.

If you succeed, you are almost guaranteed to book Big Money shows.

Here are 6 keys of success for a Big Money entertainer:

Understand that Value is More Important than Price

Remember, price, in this case your performance fee, is just one component of your overall value. Do not make the mistake of equating your value only to your performance fee.

Ensure the Value of Your Show is Higher than Your Performance Fee

My rule is that whatever you charge, the value you give should be at least 50% more than what a client is paying. So, if you charge $1000 for a show, you should deliver a show worth at least $1500.

Be a Specialist in Your Art/ Field.

A Big Money entertainer is NOT an "entertainer for all occasions". Focus, sacrifice and positioning are essential to increase your intangible value that contributes to the increase of your overall value.

Ensure that Your Show is not just of High Quality but also Different in Your Chosen Market

It's good to be great but great to be different. Being good in today's market is not good enough; you have to be different as well to command a high value.

Choose Markets that have Mid-to-High Value so that they can Support a Higher Performance Fee

Commanding Big Money requires markets that can appreciate and support higher value products. It is important to target mid to high value markets. Otherwise, even if you are successful in raising your value and differentiating yourself, a low-value market will not be able to bear your value.

Give the Big Money Approach Time to Work

There are too many variables to put an exact timetable on the positive results of the Big Money approach. It depends on your level of experience in the industry, the nature of your act, the market, economic market conditions, how fast you work and a host of other variables.

You may see results as soon as a month or up to a year. However, by applying the Big Money approach, you will be guaranteed to increase your value, dominate your niche market and create wealth over time.

Are you ready to start work?

RICHES ARE IN NICHES

As explored earlier, the solution to getting Big Money shows is:

An Entertainer has a Higher Value when the Consumers Believe the Entertainer Offers a Differentiated Quality Product in the Relevant Niche Market.

The above statement also lays the step-by-step blueprint for securing high-value bookings.

You might be wondering why the second chapter of this book is about the discussion on the "Markets" and not on the "Product".

Isn't the product (your act) the first thing an entertainer should work on? Well, the answer is yes... and no.

As an entertainer, your product (your act) is fundamental and is your defining quality. However, as a commercial entertainer who performs for money, the right approach is to first examine your market viability and potential business opportunities.

It is the understanding of your market opportunities that guides the creation, presentation and marketing of your product. Most entertainers work the other way around.

The most common approach is for an entertainer to work on an act first and then try to find work with the act. This is the traditional way.

The problem with this approach is that there is a large possibility, especially in today's market, that you might have an excellent act but no viable market to perform it in. You want a market that will give the desired financial returns for all the time, effort and skill required to perform the act.

This is one reason why some entertainers are not as successful as they can be or why some businesses fail in general. They fail to research the market and end up creating a product that does not have a place in the market or does not add great value to the market.

"Don't fall in love with a product, fall in love with a market. If you spend all your effort building the most perfect product and hope that there's a market, you're going to be disappointed." ~ Russell Brunson

Another mistake that many entertainers make is to look at markets where other entertainers seem to be working and doing well. They then flock to these markets and try to fight for a piece of the market. This typically does not work well for everyone unless you have a product that adds more and better value than any other product in the market.

Yet another traditional or instinctive thought process, that is not particularly effective in today's market, is to cast a wide net to try to capture as big a market as possible or to reach out to as many potential clients as possible. That is, being a generalist for a general market.

The problem is, you have limited resources (time, money & energy) to market your product and can only be performing at one place at any one time. Competitors who position themselves as a specialist to segments of the general market will also likely be more valued by consumers than a generalist.

To be a really successful entertainer, you should not target a general market or an existing saturated market. Rather than fight directly with competition and try to gain some share in a saturated market, a Big Money entertainer finds an untapped market or a market segment that he/ she can dominate and own.

Essentially, you must identify a relevant niche market that you can excel in.

There is that phrase again - "relevant niche market". So what exactly does that mean?

WHAT IS A NICHE MARKET?

A niche market is a specific market within a larger general market that has specialized needs. It is a subset of the general market, also known as a small segmented market.

Niches do not 'exist' but are 'created' by identifying needs, wants, and requirements that are being addressed poorly or not at all by other product or service providers.

That is an important characteristic - niches do not 'exist' but have to be identified by you.

As a strategy, niche marketing is aimed at being a big fish in a small pond instead of being a small fish in a big pond. It is also known as micromarketing.

Examples of niche market products include the hundreds of cable TV stations as well as thousands of podcasts and websites that target specific audiences of specific interests and tastes. Each audience represents its own niche market.

So, all the podcasts on the Internet form the general market. However, podcasts discussing sports is a niche (subset) of the general podcast market. Podcasts discussing a specific sport such as mixed martial arts is an even more niche market.

Interior decorators can find work in a general market such as in retail. But, Peter Marino found a niche market within the retail industry by designing stores for fashion houses such as Chanel, Christian Dior, and Louis Vuitton. He has designed more high-fashion boutiques in high-fashion capitals than any other architect in the business.

Jonathan Woodward is an illustrator who has found a very specific niche. He is an environmentally friendly wildlife illustrator that uses a cut paper collage style both with recycled magazines and digitally to create his art. He caters to a highly specialized market that includes creating illustrations for children's book publishers to zoos to toy manufacturers.

Artist James Niehues' canvas is the ski trail map, a very niche and different market for a painter. Since 1986, Niehues has created more than 240 different maps for resorts on five continents including Aspen Highlands, Sun Valley, Vail, Whistler Blackcomb, and Big Sky.

"The Showbiz Master Plan" book in itself is targeted at a highly niche market. Business and marketing courses target a very wide general market. But a course written specifically for entertainers based on the specific needs and nature of the live entertainment industry is a highly niche market. The book is highly valuable to the consumers in this niche market yet has little value to people outside the market. But, that is the nature of a niche market.

So, how do you go about identifying and creating a niche market?

IDENTIFY A GENERAL MARKET THAT YOU CAN ADD VALUE TO

Before you can identify and create a niche market, you must first identify the general markets that are relevant to you and that you can be of value to.

Here is a non-exhaustive overview of general markets that entertainers can work in:

- Amusement Parks
- Art-specific Conventions
- Associations Events
- Birthday Parties
- Cabarets
- Carnivals
- Casinos
- Clubs
- Circuses
- Colleges
- Community Shows
- Consumer Exhibitions
- Corporate Events
- Country Clubs
- Cruise Liners
- Dinner Theatres
- Entertainment Venues
- Fairs
- Family Events

- Festivals
- Four-walling
- National Special Events
- Open Houses
- Performance Arts Centers
- Private Parties
- Production Shows
- Public Open Houses
- 'High Society' Private Parties
- Shopping Malls
- Television
- Theatres
- Touring Shows
- Tourist Attractions
- Weddings

Each market has different potentials for growth but each market has to be approached differently. The needs of each market are different and expectations are different. The challenges and rewards are varied for each market.

For example, the corporate market. Fees can be high; however, it may be hard to present an artistic act as the performing conditions for corporate events may not always be ideal.

The cruise market allows you to perform in more traditional performing venues like theatres with excellent technical support but you need about 70 minutes of different material. You also may have to be away from home for extended periods of times.

Kid shows are generally considered a lower-value market with less than ideal performing conditions. However, it is possible to make up for the lower value with a high quantity of shows. You also have the benefit of having new audiences each year.

Some things to consider when narrowing in on general markets include:

- Are you prepared to travel frequently?
- Are you prepared to stay away from home for long periods of time?
- Is the market available where you live? If not, can you access these markets even if you are not living in the right area?
- Does the market interest you?

IDENTIFY A NICHE MARKET WITHIN THE TARGETED GENERAL MARKET

Once you have chosen a general market to focus on, you need to identify a potential niche or segment that is untapped.

Remember, niches do not 'exist' but have to be identified by you. It is possible that a niche market has been created by someone else but they are not serving the niche adequately. You can take advantage of that and bring more value to the niche market and potentially "steal" it away.

This does take some creativity and thinking. It may not be intuitive and may require much effort for you to consider all types of angles. You are literally trying to identify an opportunity that no one has capitalized on before.

The good news is that as an entertainer, you are a creative individual! That means you have the capacity to identify a niche market if you gear your mind towards it.

If you do not seem to be able to identify a viable niche market, that is fine. Seek experienced experts.

Speak to marketers, entrepreneurs and successful business owners in niche markets, inside and outside of entertainment, and see what ideas they might have. Experienced marketers often can identify niche markets almost instantly and give you some ideas that you can research on.

Here are some examples of niche markets for entertainers:

Kids Shows General Market

Niche Markets:

- School Show Market
- Exclusive High-end Birthday Party Market
- Kids Shows within a Specific Geographical Region

Corporate Entertainment General Market

Niche Markets:

- Specific Types of Corporate Events. E.g. Trade shows, Conferences & Meetings
- Industry Specific Markets. E.g. Luxury Brands, Technology, Finance or Pharmaceutical
- Corporate Events that Require a Performer who can Entertain in Different Specific Languages

Cruise Entertainment General Market

Niche Markets:

- Region specific. E.g. European Market, China Market, Australia/ New Zealand Market
- Audience Profile specific. E.g. Exclusive High Net Worth Guests, Mass Market Family Guests

Here are a few considerations when choosing a niche market:

Identify and target mid to high value markets that can appreciate and support higher value products. If not, even if you are successful in raising your value and differentiating yourself, a low-value market will not be able to bear your value.

Choose a viable niche market that can sustain your career and has room for growth, expansion or scalability. You do not want a niche that is too small that will "dry up" after a short time.

Choose a market that you like. This is your passion and your life! So, you must do what you like. At the same time, passion must also be balanced with practicality. So, sometimes a compromise has to be made.

MULTIPLE NICHE MARKETS

At this point, you might be wondering if it is possible to cater to multiple niche markets.

The short answer is yes. But, this topic is discussed in a later chapter "Finding Your Big Break".

For now, especially if you are not currently successful in any one niche market, the focus should be on a single niche market that you can dominate.

GOOD TO BE GREAT, GREAT TO BE DIFFERENT

After identifying a niche market that you want to dominate, the next step is working on your "Differentiated Quality Product" to cater to that niche market.

Let's start with just the "Product".

A strong product (both artistically and commercially) is essential for an entertainer to build a successful career. Your act is the tangible aspect of your value.

The lack of a strong product is one major reason why many full-time entertainers find their careers stagnating after a certain point in the business.

Are there bad acts that do get work? Yes, they get low-value work. However, bad acts will never be able to book

Big Money shows. They can only do a high volume of low value shows to make their money.

If you want to secure high value bookings, you must have a good, if not, great quality product.

It is good to be great, but great to be different.

A QUALITY PRODUCT

This is not a course on how to produce a quality act. I am sure there are ample resources available to you on the technical aspects and producing of your particular art.

So, it is not my place to tell you how to produce and learn your art. If you are reading this book, I am 100% confident that you already have a product that adds value to your market.

One word of advice I will offer is to always benchmark yourself with entertainers in one market/ level above you, not just with entertainers in the same market/ level as you.

If you compare yourself with entertainers at the same level as yourself, it is easy to get complacent and comfortable. Benchmarking yourself with entertainers a level above you will drive you to improve and grow as an entertainer.

ACT OR SHOW

The terms "product", "act" and "show" are generally used interchangeably in this book. For purposes of this book, when I refer to either of these terms, I am referring to the same thing - the performance you deliver on stage.

However, when creating your product, you must be aware that there is a difference between an act and a show. It is important to determine if a show or an act is better for the niche market that you have targeted.

An act is a short specialty act that generally is between 6 - 12 minutes long. It is highly specialized and features one or two routines/ genres of your art. It features multiple effects or "tricks" in a self-contained "story" that is told within the performance of the act.

A show is a longer performance made up of different acts or routines. The different acts or routines may or may not be related to each other. Generally, for variety, the individual acts or routines that make up a show are different from each other in effect/ "tricks", texture and presentation. A show can run anywhere from 20 minutes to 90 minutes.

Most entertainers start their careers on either path. An entertainer either first creates an act or a show but as his/ her career evolves, he/ she either builds more acts to create a show or takes the best act/ routine in a show and make it as a featured act.

The initial path you take is typically determined by your market, city or country especially at the start of your career.

For example, traditionally, European countries and North Asia tend to produce more entertainers with acts than shows. This is due to the strong presence of circuses, varieties, theatres and cabarets in these markets. But, it is the opposite for countries like the US, Australia and South East Asia where full shows and not short acts are commercially favoured.

In Singapore, when I got into the business, the seemingly only choice for a commercial entertainer was to perform at events. We had literally no showrooms or theatre-style venues for magicians. So, it seemed the only route was to develop a 30-minute show, which was the industry standard.

However, in years to come, more opportunities presented themselves as my product became more differentiated and better. In fact, I headlined a venue in the country's first permanent magic & illusion show for 13 months. Currently, I have both a show and an act available. I can do a full illusion show up to 75 minutes long but I also have an original act that is 6.5 minutes long that can be performed with as part of a 30-minute stage show.

Having said the above, I think the binding effect of your specific market and geographical location is not as strong as before. In 2016, the world is so connected with the

Internet and the ease of global travel.

10 - 15 years ago, I would have told new entertainers to develop a show as I believed a show offers more opportunities and has more value than an act. However, in 2016, I would recommend new entertainers to try to develop a unique act but build a show around it at the same time.

This approach allows you to get a variety of work. This means you get experience and exposure in different markets that allow you to identify niches that you can then specialize in.

Here is a look at the advantages and disadvantages of an act and a show.

Note: This may not apply to all acts/ shows because some acts/ shows have specific technical requirements that negate the advantages or disadvantages.

Advantages of an Act

- An act is generally self-contained, making it easy for it to fit into variety shows, circuses, production shows and TV appearances.

- An act has more opportunity to work in highly specialized venues.

- It is cheaper to produce an act than a full show.

- It is easier & less expensive to transport.

- It is easier for an entertainer to stand out if he/ she performs a truly unique act

Disadvantages of an Act

- The biggest disadvantage of an act is that an act has less ability to scale and increase in value/ performance fee due to nature of an act and its duration.

- An act can be a victim of its own success as often an entertainer is recognized for only a single act and finds difficulty growing beyond the successful act.

Advantages of a Show

- The biggest advantage that a show has over an act is that it is generally viewed as higher value with more ability to scale and increase in value/ performance fee.

- A show's format allows it to be more flexible to adapt to a variety of show programs and entertainment venues.

- There are more opportunities for a show to work in general markets.

Disadvantages of a Show

- Full shows are expensive to produce and takes much longer to produce than an act.

- It is much harder to have a consistent high quality of an entire show. As such, it can take an entertainer much longer to break out and be successful as a show than as an act.

- A show is also harder and more expensive to transport.

THE DIFFERENTIATED QUALITY PRODUCT

"Differentiate or Die" ~ Jack Trout

Remember, the solution to booking Big Money shows is:

An Entertainer has a Higher Value when the Consumers Believe the Entertainer Offers a Differentiated Quality Product in the Relevant Niche Market

Differentiating your product is one of the most effective ways of increasing your intangible value; which directly increases your performance fee. Therefore, being different is essential for being able to secure Big Money shows.

Having a quality product is a "given". This means it is a basic expectation and the minimum standard needed. So even if you have a quality product, in order to book Big Money Shows, it is not good enough.

You must have a differentiated quality product.

Many entertainers find it difficult to differentiate themselves from others. What is even harder, is to differentiate oneself in a way that has value to the market.

Some entertainers have it; that natural artist eye and performance flair that gives them the coveted ability to create fresh new artistic products. This can be referred to as pure creativity.

The good news is that being different does not mean you have be a pure creative artist. You can be different in any way that is of value in the marketplace.

You can be innovative in the way you present an act, apply your art to a specific market, introduce your art to untapped markets or even market yourself.

The most important thing is to identify what makes you different.

If you cannot seem to find anything that makes you inherently different, you need to identify an area that you can work on to make yourself different.

So, the question is: "How do I know if I am different or what I do is different?" I have a simple test that I call the intuitive test, also known as the "duck test". If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck; it is a duck.

Follow what your gut tells you when you watch something. For example, if you are watching the performance of a singer; ask yourself these questions. Does anything feel familiar? Which parts of the performance reminds of you of someone else's (or everyone else's)? Does the dressing, style or image feel different? Does it feel like a "copy" of what other popular successful artistes are showcasing?

All you need to be is honest about how you feel and be knowledgeable with what is already out there. Sometimes, you can't really put your finger on why something is different but that is why I emphasize, "feel". The individual differences may be minute and only feel different as a collective.

Every time I look at adding a new routine or illusion to the show, I always go through this test. While a routine may not be 100% original or is something I acquired off the market or from another creator, my primary concern is whether it feels different and if the mainstream audience will like it after I add my own touch to it.

HOW TO BE DIFFERENT

Here are some approaches to differentiate yourself and your act from any other entertainer in the world.

Develop & Showcase Unique Content

Do you have original content? Or are you just copying a known performer's act?

If you are a magician (who is not deliberately playing homage to a vintage act), are you still performing in tail coats and a top hat? If you are a female singer, are you copying Lady Gaga's music and styling from 2007 or worst still Madonna from the 1990s?

To be successful at a high level, you need to differentiate yourself from others in your field. When you first start out, you have to be different from other entertainers in your locality or region, and then expand to your country, neighbouring region and eventually the rest of the world.

Constant innovation and being at the cutting edge in your industry, locality or market, ensures you will have mindshare and Big Money show bookings.

Juggling artist, Viktor Kee, is one of the most innovative jugglers in the world. He is constantly inventing new routines and introducing new juggling acts. It is no wonder he is one of the most in-demand acts (not just juggling acts) in the world today.

I will be the first to admit that it is almost impossible to be original in every aspect of your work. There are very few entertainers who perform 100% completely original material in every act or performance they do. As an entertainer, your work will likely be built on the work of those before you. After all, we stand on the shoulders of giants.

However, the good news is that it is possible to still present unique content that is not 100% original. Here are two ways to be innovative in your content.

<u>#1 - Inject Original Elements in 100% of the Acts that You Present</u>

These original elements alone are enough to make you stand out from others. The elements can be in the form of presentational touches, a storyline, motivation or context, costuming, the dressing of the act, music or props used.

For example, look at any season of "American Idol", "The Voice" or your country's equivalent of a singing contest TV show. While the contestants all sing covers of known/ existing songs, the ones that get lauded for originality or innovativeness are those that add little touches and changes to make it their own. They did not write the songs (invent) but still made them original.

Make noticeable and significant original changes to existing acts that you perform. It is important that an audience can see the original elements that you add in and the changes are just not technical changes.

If you showcase enough original elements in your entire body of work, producers, your peers and eventually your audience will notice it. This, coupled with one or two completely original acts, will differentiate you from others.

Rad Hourani is Canadian fashion designer known for his unisex asexual high end brand, which was a first of its kind for high-end fashion. He is known for pushing the boundaries of the gender binary that is deeply rooted in the fashion industry. In 2013, became the first invited member by La Chambre Syndicale de La Haute Couture in Paris to design and show a Unisex Haute Couture collection in fashion history. He added originality to high fashion that made him different.

<u>#2 - Showcase Your Act/ Effects/ Routines in New Ways</u>

Besides original elements, you can be innovative in your presentation, packaging or medium of your content.

In magic, when David Blaine first burst on the TV scene and basically revolutionized magic, many "old fart" magicians and haters called him unoriginal, as he was not presenting "ground-breaking new" material to them.

True, he was presenting solid close-up magic that magicians had been performing for decades but he presented the magic in a style, environment and format that had never been done before. Did he invent the magic he performed? No. Is he original? – Absolutely!

San Francisco-based designer and letterer, Erik Marinovich's offers a unique product called, 'Do Not

Open', which is a one-of-a-kind hand-addressed envelopes. Customers submit the address and he transforms them into works of art. Having envelopes custom designed with typography is not new, but the idea of making the envelope itself the main focus and a collectible was very unique, and it became hugely popular. Erik did not invent envelopes but made them original in his own way.

Hugh McLeod is an American creative entrepreneur who built his business based on "cartoons drawn on the back of business cards". He made regular business cards conversation pieces that he calls a "social object". Subsequently, he started blogging on marketing to affect change in business and business culture, using his distinct style of drawing. Hugh did not invent business cards or drawings but made them original in his own way.

Have a Commercial and Marketable Image/ Style

If you are commercial entertainer, you have to go beyond just your act and think about how your act fits in the marketplace.

You have to develop a personal style that appeals to the market and makes you different. To be successful at a high level, you have to appeal to not just the core audience that sees/ experiences your work but to the mainstream public and media. These are people whose opinions matter.

For many creative entrepreneurs, their distinct style transforms an ordinary product into a unique creative product.

Mark Ong is a Singapore-born international designer and artist, and owner of cult favourite sneaker label SBTG. Renowned for his scientifically precise brushstrokes, Mark has an inimitable and ever-mutating punk rock, Americana style of cut and paste and a color he calls 'regalia militia', which is a combination of olive drab, scarlet red, gold and black. SBTG is synonymous with the art of sneaker customization and he has been commissioned to design for Nike, Casio, Redbull, New Balance, DC Shoes and Gelaskins. His 2006 Asia-exclusive release of the Nike Sabotage SB Dunk drew overnight crowds region wide and sold out within an hour of launch in every country it sold in.

Japanese nail artist, Mei Kawajiri, who is currently based in New York, is a skillful artist whose nail art features hand painted, photo-realistic images painted without stencils or stickers. But, it is her knack of translating pop culture such as the parting of the Red Sea, Picasso interpretations, SpongeBob and Jay Z lyrics into cutting-edge manicures that quickly attracted the attention of trendsetters such as celebrities, fashion magazines and nail art blogs. Her unique difference has resulted in her being one of the most requested (and imitated) artistic manicurists in the industry as well as earning a $300,000 income.

Craft Your Onstage Personality

Here is one big secret to creating unique material that fits you – perform with a strong distinct onstage personality.

At the heart of every successful entertainer, hit TV show, critically-acclaimed movie or book is the compelling characters and how different characters interact with each other. A character's personality guides the motivations and actions of the individual. Similarly, an entertainer's personality directs the material he or she presents.

What separates the seasoned pros (or enlightened younger entertainers) is the process of choosing and approaching material. Newer entertainers tend to perform material that they want to do or like. The seasoned pros will only perform material that suits their character, personality and strengths. They consciously avoid material that they love but do not play to their strengths.

But, the reason the seasoned pros can even make that choice is because they are very sure of who they are as entertainers and know what their strengths are. Newer entertainers may still be on this road of self-discovery and many do not even know how to start that journey.

When you know your style, strengths and personalities, you will naturally be aware of what material suits you.

This means being able to determine what type of routines, props and styles of presentations will work for you.

Many young entertainers or even long-time entertainers who do not understand this point are always drawn to the coolest new acts, fads or routines they see others do well. But, even if they perform those acts well, they can never be as good as the original. Or, if the routine does not fit the performer's personality and character, the act will also not be able to be presented exceptionally well.

So, the question is: "How does one find your own character and personality?" That is tough to answer. If you have an experienced producer, that can help you greatly. All the world's top entertainment stars have producers who mold, shape and build the star's image. They help the entertainer find themselves by exposing them to different projects and allowing them to grow and experiment.

You can start your own journey by creating your own character on paper and work towards a crafted stage persona. But, you need to spend as much time on your character development as you would on your craft. Most entertainers hone their technical skills but hardly work on their characters. That is one reason they never become "personalities" even though they may be very skillful at their art.

Watch movies and listen to commentaries by directors and actors to hear motivations and reasons behind the characters of a film. Read books on character development for acting. Observe and analyze successful characters from film, TV or books.

Assuming you have internalized your performing character, material selection and development will be a more guided process and you can apply other techniques to produce "fresh" material.

Believe it or not, your professional personality and image are as important, if not more important than your product. You are as much a product as your product.

If you are a creative entrepreneur, you should go beyond just your product and think about how you can stand out in the marketplace.

Some creative entrepreneurs do not feel comfortable with having a public professional personality. They prefer for their product or work to speak for itself, believing that a superior product will always lead to success. In reality, that is not always true. Think of the most well-known people in business, they have great business but also distinct personalities.

Joy Mangano is an American inventor and entrepreneur known for inventions such as the self-wringing Miracle Mop and Huggable Hangers. But what helped her become a success was her on-air personality. After selling her Miracle Mop consignment to home-shopping cable channel, QVC, it sold modestly at first. But once QVC allowed Mangano to go on-air to sell it herself, she sold 18,000 mops in 20 minutes. Ten years later, her company was selling $10 million worth of Miracle Mops per year.

Chef Gordon Ramsay opened a number of highly acclaimed restaurants across the world but became a culinary superstar due to his fierce personality and temper stemming from his goal of culinary perfection. Like his music producer counterpart, Simon Cowell, of Pop/American Idol fame, Ramsay drew public and media interest for his often entertaining criticisms and thrashing of other prospective chefs and restaurateurs.

Deliver a Consistent Quality Product

"A chef should strive to be consistent at experience, but not consistent in taste" ~ Bradley Copper as Adam Jones in the movie Burnt

While I'm sure that quote resonates with chefs or cooking enthusiasts, it struck a strong chord in me too when I watched the movie. I think the same applies for entertainers. Your show or act should be in consistent in experience for your audience but the performance itself should not be completely consistent. Otherwise, it would just feel like a robotic reproduction of movements and choreography. The entertainer has to feel the energy of the room and react to his or her audience.

Having said the above, the show or act still has to be presented at a consistent high level. This consistency is very important for a commercial entertainer.

Clients book acts that they are comfortable with and can depend on. Consistency builds your brand slowly but surely.

Patricia Urquiola is a multi-award-winning architect, interior designer and furniture designer who no doubt is extremely creative and understands what the market needs. However, one of her critical keys to continued success is that she consistently puts out new designs each season. Over her career, she has a staggering several hundred designs that have reached production. Her consistent and prolific creative output has resulted in her being sort out to collaborate with numerous major high fashion and luxury brands.

Stephen King is one of the most prolific writers of our generation and maintains his high quality consistency by setting a daily quota for himself. According to King, he writes about 10 pages a day; which equates to about 2,000 words, seven-days a week, every week. Even holidays.

Are you consistent with your rehearsal or creation of new acts?

Consider the following, a single penny doubled every day for 31 days results in a whopping $10,737,418.24. A single penny doubled every other day for 31 days yields just $163.84. That's less than 1/100th of 1% of the ten million you would get if you doubled it every day! That is what consistency can do.

So, what makes you different? Here is a short checklist to set you thinking:

- Is your signature/ trademark act original? Is there anyone else in the world performing a similar act?

- Are you performing acts that another entertainer also performs in your market/ region?

- Is your act presented in a unique way or with a different narrative?

- Do you work exceptionally well with a particular audience that few entertainers can do?

- Are you replaceable with another entertainer for the same price if you are unable to take on a show?
- Do you use the same music used by other entertainers, even if the music is from a different type of act?

- Can you describe what makes you unique from anyone else in your market/ region in one sentence?

- Is there anything unique about your stage character?

- Have you received any awards that set you apart from other artistes in your market?
- Have you received any high profile media coverage?
- Have you starred in or made appearances on any high profile TV shows?
- Can you perform your act in a language(s) that others cannot?
- Are you of an ethnic heritage or minority that is of differentiating value?
- Do you have an unrelated skill that can be used to make your art different?

If you answered the questions honestly, you will realize how much work you need (or do not need) to differentiate yourself.

THE STRATEGY CANVAS

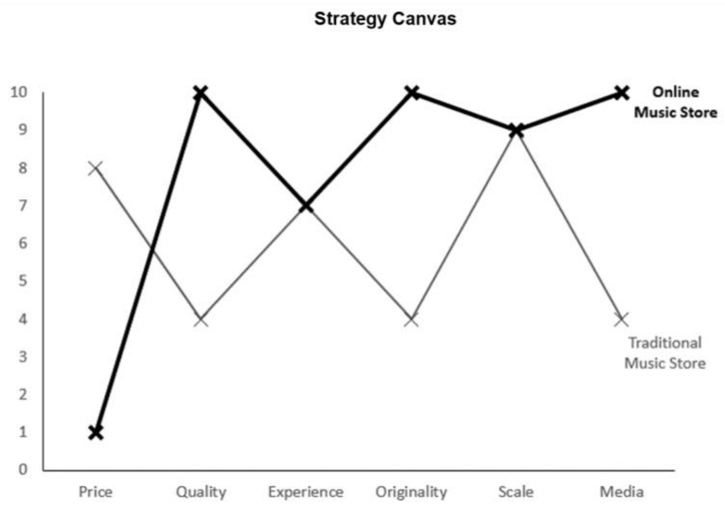
To help identify differences that have value against your competition in a single graphical representation, I recommend using an analytical tool called the Strategy Canvas. This is used by practitioners of the Blue Ocean Strategy, conceptualized by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne.

The basic component of a strategy canvas is the value curve that maps a business' competences against competitors in the industry.

The horizontal axis captures the key factors the industry competes on and invests in. The vertical axis of the strategy canvas is a rating scale that shows the relative value consumers receive across all these key competing factors.

This mapping helps us understand where the competition is strongest in; in the way they present, market, sell, distribute and price their products to consumers in a market. It is a very useful tool in identifying key differentiating and competitive points.

Here is an example of a strategy canvas for an online music download store and a traditional brick & mortar CD music store.



As you can see, based on the strategy canvas, at one glance, you can see the relative value of each business. In the above example, it is also clear that an online music download store is rated much higher across all key factors over a traditional brick & mortar CD music store. The strategy canvas easily shows why brick & mortar CD music stores are on the brink of extinction, if not mostly gone.

It is possible to plot several different businesses on one strategy canvas so that you will have multiple value curves to represent all market competition on a single canvas. Different colours are used to map each business to avoid confusion and to paint a clear picture.

Good market research is critical to be able to accurately rate key factors of your competitors. If you are established in a market, you should have a good feel of your competition. Use this strategy canvas as a starting point to map out a strategy that will differentiate yourself from others.

If you are new to the market, you will need to conduct research by talking to established "industry players" (other entertainers, agents, event producers and even show/ event support businesses) in the market. Good research will allow you to map out an accurate strategy canvas that allows you to create a positioning and marketing strategy to make a strong impression as a new entry into the market.

For entertainers, the following key factors can be used to compare competencies in the industry:

- Universal Appeal of Art
- Unique Aspect of the Act
- Unique Aspect of the Stage Character
- Quality of Act
- Scale of Act
- Originality & Innovativeness
- Performance Fee
- Complexity of Technical Rider
- Media Coverage
- Experience in the Market
- Profile & Visibility in the Market
- Language
- Awards
- Formal Training & Certification

Example of a blank Strategy Canvas for entertainers:

You can add any other key factor that relates to your specific art or market.

Based on the strategy canvas that you map out against all your competition in your market, extract the key factors you rate highest in (compared to the competition) and identify your differentiating points. These points will form the basis of your positioning strategy that will be explored in the next chapter of the book.

In my case, based on my latest strategy canvas that included magicians in Asia, the key factors that I rated highest in were:

- Scale of Illusion Show

- Innovative Illusions
- Original Mega Stunts
- Languages - English & Mandarin

Based on these key factors, I identified the following strong differentiating points:

- An Asian Illusionist with an Illusion Show with Western Sensibilities.
- An Ability to Perform a Large-Scale Illusion Show Bilingually in English and Mandarin.
- An Ability to Create & Stage Original Stage Illusions & Mega Stunts.

After you have identified your strongest differentiating points, you must produce, adjust and present your act to reflect these differentiating points.

If you already have a differentiated act, more likely than not, your act already reflects your difference. However, look at ways you can further improve your act to demonstrate your differences.

If you have identified new differentiating points after mapping out a strategy canvas against your competitors, you need to produce your act to reflect these newly identified differentiating points.

WHAT'S NEXT?

I hope that the sharing of the Big Money approach has inspired you to get out of the entertainment rat race.

If you are content with a "more shows more money" business model and think you can sustain a high rate of shows for your entire career, then read no further. If you are happy, that is all that matters and no one should tell you otherwise.

However, my personal hope is that this book has got you thinking about how to move from being just a "gig-to-gig" entertainer to becoming a creative entrepreneur that offers a differentiated quality product of value in a niche market; while developing a well-balanced income triangle.

Of course, thinking BIG (money) is just the very first step. The next step is to take action and craft your master plan.

Simplified, your master plan consists of 3 steps:

STEP 1 - CRAFTING THE BIG MONEY STRATEGY

Your master plan starts with the basic Big Money strategy as explained in this book:

- Identify Your Niche Market
- Ensure that You have a Quality Product
- Identify Your Unique Difference(s)
- Figure out How Your Unique Difference(s) Can be of High Value to Your Niche Market
- Ensure that No One is Already Offering the Same Differentiated Quality Product with the Same Value in the Same Niche Market
- Create or Modify Your Act, Show, Stage Persona or Image so that it is Reflective of Your Differentiated Unique Value

It will take significant time, effort and likely money to develop your Big Money strategy and make the necessary adjustments to your product and brand.

You will first need to conduct market research (to know the market and competition) in order to draw out your strategy canvas as outlined at the end of the previous chapter.

This will then allow you to identify niche markets and identify your unique differentiated value. If your unique differentiated value is not apparent, you may need to "manufacture" one which will take additional time, effort and money.

Only when you are confident that you have identified a niche market that you can add unique differentiated value to, can you work on creating or modifying your act, show, stage persona or image. Again, this will take time, effort and money.

Realistically, this entire process will take several weeks or months to really figure out. But, the process is necessary before you can even move to Step 2 of your master plan, which is executing the marketing strategy and tactics.

STEP 2 : THE MARKETING EXECUTION

In Step 1, you worked towards identifying a niche market and creating a differentiated quality product for it.

You now need to put your Big Money strategy into action with a solid marketing plan.

The marketing plan includes:

Creating a Positioning Strategy Based on Your Unique Differentiation(s)

Jack Trout and Al Ries introduced the concept of positioning in the late seventies/ early eighties. Although the approaches to the concept have been refined over the years, the basic concept remains the same.

Positioning deals with creating a 'position' for your business in the minds of the consumers. It has got to do with communicating a 'position' that comprises of your brand values and perceptions that you want consumers to have about your business.

Successful positioning means making your name/ business synonymous with a particular product category. When you think of creative tech devices, you think of Apple. When you think of fried chicken, you think of KFC. When you think of hamburgers, you think of McDonald's.

Imagine that the consumers' minds are made up of different ladders for different industries and each rung represents the position of a business in that industry. The top rung will be occupied by the business that owns the position of market leader in that industry.

Knowing what you want your position to be and actually owning that position are two completely different things. Firstly, you cannot go about creating your position and expect the market to accept it. Just like value, your position is determined by the consumers, not by you. The position you own has to be given or accepted by the marketplace. All you can do is to do your best to make a strong case of why you should own a particular position.

Pricing Your Differentiated Quality Product Correctly for Your Niche Market

One of the secrets of making money as an entertainer is to know what to charge at different stages of your career.

Most entertainers adopt pricing models based on the work they can or want to take on. This translates to one of the following three models:

1. Low price, high quantity
2. Mid price, mid quantity
3. High price, low quantity

All entertainers will start off with a low price/ high quantity model. Some will try to increase their price along the way and balance it with enough shows to make enough money that they are content with.

Entertainers who go for Big Money shows break away from the pack and strive to command a high price with the expectation and intention to accept a lower quantity of shows.

This requires offering a differentiated quality product that has high value to a specific niche market.

Communicating Your Positioning Strategy with the Right Marketing Tools & Tactics that Suit Your Niche Market

Your positioning strategy is king. It dictates what marketing tools to use and how they are used (tactics). And the tools and tactics you use strengthen your position in the minds of the consumers.

Marketing tools refer to the techniques, methods and platforms you use to promote and sell your product and brand. Some marketing tools include:

- Identity (Logo, Promo Photos, Business Cards, Slogan, Moniker etc)
- Online Marketing (Website, Blog, Video Platform, Google AdWords, Search Engine Optimization etc)
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc)
- Agents, Show Bookers and Talent Managers
- Event Producers
- Media & PR
- Advertising
- Direct Marketing
- Exhibiting at Trade Shows
- Referrals and Word of Mouth Marketing
- Business Partners
- Showcases

Marketing tactics refer to how you use your marketing tools. Different niche markets will require different marketing tools and tactics to effectively sell your product and brand.

There is no cookie-cutter approach that can be applied to all markets. However, your positioning strategy and niche market will determine which tools and tactics to use at the right time.

Online Marketing

For new entertainers, online marketing is particularly effective as well as low-cost. In most developed markets, potential clients, show bookers, agents and media will go online to scout for talents or find entertainers that match their entertainer needs.

As such, you should pay special attention to marketing yourself online, especially when it comes to your promotional website. Your promo site is essentially your online portfolio and after you build it, you need to ensure that your website is search engine-friendly or more importantly, "Google friendly".

Being "Google friendly" is vital since Google is the world's most popular search engine. You want to ensure that your website adheres to the Google Webmaster.

This in-turn ensures your website is indexed and can be found by potential customers & clients. You also want your website to be re-indexed by Google's "web crawlers" or "Google Bots" whenever you update your website.

If you subscribe to Backstage Business Academy, you will receive a free download in the form of a checklist of essential things you need to do to ensure that your website is Google friendly..

Troubleshooting Along the Way

If your positioning strategy, marketing tools and tactics do not seem to produce results and you are consistently failing to book shows, secure contracts or get rejected for opportunities, you may need to do some troubleshooting and adjustments.

This means assessing your price, your product, the market you are targeting, your positioning strategy and marketing execution to see what is not working or being rejected by the market.

Troubleshooting is an ongoing process. You will be continually tracking your successes and making adjustments.

STEP 3: DEVELOPING YOUR INCOME TRIANGLE

As highlighted, it will take you some time to work on Step 1 of your master plan. Time will also be needed for Step 2 as you will need time to craft and employ your marketing tools and tactics.

Even if you are already a working performer with an established presence, it will take time for you to transition towards Big Money markets.

Your tools and tactics will also need time to work and build your brand and position.

Remember, one of the keys to success for a Big Money entertainer is:

Give the Big Money Approach Time to Work

There are too many variables to put an exact timetable on the positive results of the Big Money approach. It depends on your level of experience in the industry, the nature of your act, the market, economic market conditions, how fast you work and a host of other variables.

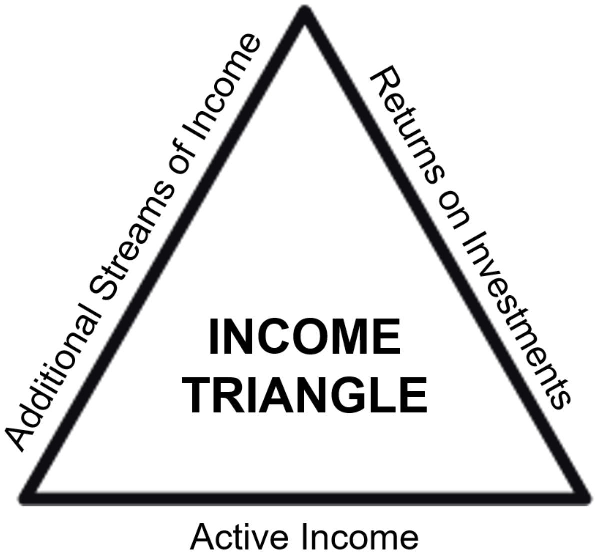
You may see results as soon as a month or up to a year. However, by applying the Big Money approach, you will be guaranteed to increase your value, dominate your niche market and create wealth over time.

While you are waiting for results, this is the perfect time to start Step 3 of your master plan and develop your income triangle, if you have not started on that yet.

With Steps 1 and 2, you are working on developing the base of your income triangle, which is your active or primary income as an entertainer.

It is equally important to develop the other two sides of your income triangle.

This includes learning how to get paid without performing by developing additional streams of income as well as investing in the creation or acquisition of income-generating assets that produce a return or cashflow.



Additional Streams of Income

Additional income streams will help tide you over without having to dip into your savings.

I cannot stress how important it is to start developing the other two sides of your income triangle as early as possible. Time is your strongest asset. Most people wait till they are at the tail end of their careers before they start thinking about generating other income streams or investing.

Let's say you earn an additional $1000 a month. In comparison to your active income that might be just a fraction of your active income. However, put it into a long term perspective, say over ten years. This $1000 a month could offer the following returns:

High Interest Savings account: $1,000 a month ($12,000 per year) in a savings account at 1.5%, compounded over 10 years would amount to $131,519.70.

Equity Investments: $1,000 a month ($12,000 per year) in an investment account at 6%, compounded over 10 years would amount to $169,450.55.

Employment: For many employed individuals, it would take them many years to get a $12,000 increment in salary.

Covering Expenses: An extra income of $1,000 per month could cover car payments, help pay down credit card debt, or cover some or even all of a mortgage payment.

The point is that even relatively small amounts of extra income can go a long way.

Identifying, developing and investing in an alternative stream of income that complements your field and market requires research, thought and effort to develop.

Common income streams for entertainers include selling creative products (merchandize, video/ audio content), informational products (books, DVD, ebooks, streaming videos), teaching and selling tools of the trade (equipment, gear, props & accessories related to your field).

Returns on Investments

Investing is completely different from developing income streams. Developing an alternative income stream is an entrepreneurial endeavor that you should be fairly familiar with, since it is similar to how you build your business as an entertainer. Investing, however, requires a different mindset and skillset.

I will be the first to admit that you will likely find investing a huge challenge, as I did. If you have never invested before or do not have a finance background, it will be very alien to you and very daunting. This is especially so for us entertainers who generally are creatives who dislike numbers.

However, investing is a necessary evil. No matter how intimidating and hard it might seem, the earlier you start learning about investing and actually start investing, the better.

Investing means putting your money into an asset, instrument or venture with the desire to make more money.

Usually, there is an implied passiveness to investing; meaning, you do not have to actively manage your money after the initial work of choosing the investment vehicle. The money "grows" on its own. That is what people mean when they say "let your money work for you". For entertainers, my recommendation is for you to be a passive investor, not an active investor.

You can invest in a lot of different things such as financial assets (like bank deposits, stocks and bonds), real estate, businesses, collectibles or commodities (like precious metals*, grains, oil and natural gas).

** Technically, precious metals, by definition, are not really commodities but they are classified under commodities in the investing world.*

It is important to recognize that investments have an expectation of producing income or profit. These investments are commonly referred to as income-generating assets.

For example, a common misconception is that one's home is an investment. That is not correct. The property that you live in is not an investment because it fills a basic need. The house you live in fills your need for shelter. You might think it is an investment as it may appreciate over time and when you sell it, you will make a profit. That is only true if you downgrade or choose to live in a cardboard box after that.

Your home also does not produce income. In fact, it is not an asset if you live there, it is actually a liability because it costs you money to live there. You might have mortgage payments, bills and taxes to pay for owning and living in the house.

Just like additional streams of income, the earlier you start investing, the better. In investing, with time, you can benefit from the compounding effect.

Compounding is the process of generating earnings on an asset's reinvested earnings. Sometimes called "compound interest", Albert Einstein called it *"the greatest mathematical discovery of all time"*.

To work, it requires two things: the reinvestment of earnings and time. The more time you give your investments, the more you are able to accelerate the income potential of your original investment, which takes the pressure off of you.

STARTING WORK ON YOUR MASTER PLAN

Now that your master plan has been laid out, the next question is how to go about doing everything.

The first step is to gain knowledge and learn everything you need to know about developing all sides of your income triangle.

It may seem like an insurmountable task but every journey, no matter how long, begin with a single step.

The Internet has information on every aspect discussed in this book but you will have to weave through hundreds of websites, blogs and forums to distill the information that is relevant to you.

There are books on specific subjects that you should read and I have shared some important ones in the bibliography at the end of this book.

You can also consider investing in my expanded book **"The Showbiz Master Plan: A Blueprint to Building a Successful Entertainment Career"**.

This is a book written specifically for performing artists such as musicians, comedians and specialty variety artists.

The goal of any entertainer is to bring joy to people but most will agree that making money is also important. While the notion of a struggling artist is a common perception of the realities of show business, it does not have to be the case.

The truth is; while there are many entertainers who barely make ends meet each month, there are also many entertainers around the world who make a decent living from their art or craft.

In fact, there are also many entertainers around the world who are very successful and financially comfortable. These highly successful entertainers may not be A-list international celebrities, movie stars or recording artists, but are giants in their respective specialized fields or cities/ countries.

One thing many of these entertainers have in common is the strategy and approach to their business and careers. They all understand that show business is not just about the show but also about the business.

"The Showbiz Master Plan" is a live entertainer's blueprint to creating a money-generating brand, making a consistent 6-figure income and setting up for retirement.

The book is filled with incredible stories, practical advice, time-tested tips and market-proven action-steps on how to build a successful career as a performing artist and live entertainer.

It continues where this book leaves off and details the critical how-to information on executing the master plan outlined above.

You will learn how to:

- Be a Successful Creative Entrepreneur
- Build Your Brand
- Dominate Your Niche Market
- Harness the Power of Positioning
- Price & Negotiate Big Money Shows
- Find Your Big Break
- Grow Your Business
- Get Paid Without Performing
- Invest for Your Future
- Handle Career Challenges and Failure

As a bonus, you will learn three instant money tips to increase your income immediately without performing more shows.

I will teach you what I have spent almost 20 years and tens of thousands of dollars learning – how to increase your value, differentiate yourself from the competition and push your career towards the "Big Money" level.

For the very first time, you will learn my time-tested and market-proven approach, strategies, methods and tactics that have been used not just for myself but by dozens of successful performing artists & entertainers.

Nothing is held back.

So now comes the million dollar question. How much does "The Showbiz Master Plan" cost?

Well… Not a million dollars. Not even close.

First, consider the following:

In 2003, I engaged the services of a business consultant. The business consultant helped me think in terms of growing the business and exploring different markets but he was not a specialist in the entertainment market nor had experience in working with a performing artist or entertainer. I paid a retainer of $3000 a month for a year for the business consultant. The total investment was $36,000.

Next, consider how much of your valuable time the book will save you. I have spent the last 20 years testing and implementing different business & marketing approaches, strategies and tactics to find out what works best for entertainers. Not to mention the thousands of dollars I spent on books and business programs.

Subsequently, many more years and thousands of dollars were spent on developing my "income triangle" that includes building multiple income streaming and investing in income-generating assets.

Essentially, I have done all the work and research for you and used only the positive results to put together the information in the book. These are years of time, effort and money that you do not have to spend.

"The Showbiz Master Plan" is a tiny fraction of what you would invest in a business consultant. And unlike a general business consultant that is not an expert in developing your career, "The Showbiz Master Plan" is tailored to you – the performing artist & entertainer.

The book is available as a printed book and eBook from www.BackstageBusinessAcademy.com

BONUS:
WORKING WITH AGENTS

As an entertainer, show bookers and agents will likely make up a significant percentage of your bookings. Agents are essential in helping you secure bookings that will typically be beyond your reach.

For entertainers, the term “agent” is used to refer to a broker or “middle man” between a client and the entertainer. An agent or show booker can be an entertainment agent, show producer or event organizer.

An entertainer can have multiple agents that include you as part of their talent roster. Unless the agent is a highly reputable one with a strong presence in your market segment, I would advise against working exclusively with one agent. However, this depends on the practices in your respective city/ country.

In addition, in highly specialized markets, it is common to have an exclusive agent to promote and handle your bookings. For example, I work with dozens, if not hundreds, of entertainment agents and event producers in the world for one-off events as well as for short-run shows. However, I only work with one agent for headliner cruise work.

Note: There is a difference between a personal manager/ business manager and a show booker/ agent. A manager is much more involved in the career of the entertainer and may oversee multiple aspects of the entertainer's professional and personal life. A show booker/ agent focuses on booking the shows only.

TYPES OF AGENTS

Entertainment Agent

An entertainment agent typically has a roster of different entertainers & talents whom they represent. They propose and recommend entertainers based on a client's needs. Some entertainment agencies specialize in specific markets such as corporate & business events, hotels & resorts, weddings or cruise market.

An entertainment agent either marks up a profit from the fee that you charge him/ her or the agent takes a commission, typically between 10% – 20%. The arrangement varies from agent to agent.

Show Producer

A show producer produces a show for special events, entertainment venues and production shows. His/ her job is to choose the show team (inclusive of artistes, stage managers, production crew and backstage crew) and put together a show. More often than not, a show producer works for an organization or venue and typically does not take a commission or mark up from your fee.

In most cases, they are in control of the entire show's budget and will allocate an amount for your show fee. However, it is still possible that a markup is made on your fee when the costs and budget are presented to the organization or venue.

Event Producer/ Organizer

An event producer is like a show producer except that he/ she manages all aspects of running an event. Entertainment may be only one aspect of an event.

For large events, it is very possible that an event producer contacts an entertainment agent to hire the entertainers. In this case, you will just quote and charge your fee to the entertainment agent. If the event producer engages you directly, they will also work on a commission or mark-up basis.

WHAT SHOW BOOKERS & AGENTS LOOK FOR IN ENTERTAINERS

Working with agents is slightly different from working with direct clients such as a corporate organization who books your show directly for a special event.

Agents depend on good entertainers to provide a great product to their clients. Their reputation depends on the entertainers delivering a good show and being professional. If you can provide a high quality show at a price that they can sell you at, they will want you.

This does not mean you have to offer an attractive price. But, you must have the quality show and promotional material that reflects your value in order for them to sell your show to their clients.

You should also package your act appropriately and make sure it fits the requirements of the market that an agent might be serving. Here is a quote from the guidelines for entertainers of Bransom Entertainment, a show booker for cruise entertainment.

"If everyone who wanted to work in the cruise industry could get a booking, we would be very happy. Unfortunately, that is not the reality of this business.

Many artists who have achieved incredible success in various venues on land simply do not translate well to the confines and constraints in working on a ship. Not every act is going to fit into the entertainment program of every cruise line."

The above guideline can be said about almost every specialized market with specific needs.

Be sure that you can serve the needs of the market that an agent caters to. Since agents are your third party marketing tool, you need to help them out as much as possible. This is to ensure that they represent you accurately and as effectively as possible. They will also recognize your professionalism and appreciate your efforts to make their jobs easier.

Here are some tips when working with agents:

Be professional and helpful. Different agents have different working styles and arrangements. So, be patient when working with new agents and try to be as flexible as possible. Remember, both parties are working together to provide a good product to the end client. You are on the same team.

Constant and regular updates are important to keep the agents' information on you current. Updates can be the form of a newsletter, e-mails, updating of your website, phone calls and mailers.

Keep agents informed of your new shows, successful projects and upcoming ventures. They will appreciate the frequent flow of info and it shows that you are a busy working professional.

Make sure your promotional material is as comprehensive and clear as possible to ensure the agent does not misrepresent your show.

I'm sure that there is no need to mention this, but you should never bypass an agent to a direct client if you know an agent is servicing that particular client. This is basic professional etiquette and is an expected practice in business.

Finding agents for entertainers in today's business environment is not very difficult. You will market to agents with a variety of marketing tools. Your website, video channel, social media, act, word of mouth marketing, networking, PR and direct marketing efforts will all be utilized to get you in contact with agents.

Get recommendations from fellow entertainers that you meet. Most entertainers (of a different art form) are generally helpful and will point you in the right direction and may even recommend you directly to agents that they work with.

A significant number of agents will also find you on their own. Good agents are always on the lookout for new and fresh quality talent that they have not had a chance to work with.

For example, a large percentage of my international work easily comes from agents who find me through my website and YouTube channel. So, it is very important to have a good website and video channel as you will be judged based on these marketing platforms.

Some countries and markets organize showcases where you get a slot to present part of your act to try to impress agents who will then "put you in their books". If you are new to a market, this may be something you want to consider.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR IN AN AGENT

While you know what an agent looks for in an entertainer, there is also the other side of this dialectic relationship. Just as it is important for you to put in effort and work well with agents, I also firmly believe that the agent has to put in the effort and work well with you.

An agent is your industry partner and as mentioned, both parties work together to provide a good product to the end client. You are on the same team.

Both of you are equally important in the team. Without you, the agent has no show to sell. Without the agent, you may not be able to book shows in certain markets.

As such, both parties must work to make your show look good. In fact, both parties work for each other. Some lower-level agents do not understand this relationship. They think they only work for the client and service the client's needs. In actual fact, an agent also works for you.

Basically, you want an agent like Ari Gold, from the TV show "Entourage" to represent you.

A good entertainer, especially one who wants to book Big Money shows, will have high standards and require (deserve) all the support he/ she needs in order to do a great show. Your agent is supposed to ensure that you get everything you need. That is their job! It is not a favour. They earn a profit or commission off you so they have to work for it.

There are many excellent highly professional and competent agents in every single country. However, just like any industry, there are a couple of bad eggs.

In the first half of my career, I worked with a number of lower-end agents that have very low standards, little professionalism and a poor work ethic. But, I now know that is also probably why they booked me in the first place. They wanted acts that were "good enough", did not charge a high fee and were "easy to work with"; that is, had no riders.

Obviously, when I was starting out, my show was not a differentiated quality product and I did not have the demands and technical requirements I have now.

However, as I evolved as a Big Money entertainer and improved my standing in the industry, I outgrew these lower-end agents. I required agents that were used to catering to higher end clients and markets. Such agents also work with international artistes and understand what riders are and how important it is to provide an entertainer with what is needed to do a high-level show.

You are a reflection of your agents so the quality of your show reflects on them. However, the opposite is true as well.

When you first start out as an entertainer, you will and must work with anyone. You cannot be picky and it is part of the learning process. However, as you grow as an entertainer, you must work with agents that have the same standards and desire to present a high quality product to the client and audience.

Here are some warning signs to let you know that an agent may not be fit to represent you. The agent:

- Cannot recognize your value even though you have a differentiated quality product
- Does not respect you and thinks you owe him/her a living
- Cannot ensure you get proper technical support to do your best show
- Does not think technical support is essential to stage a show
- Tries to make more money than you when selling your show to a client

- Does not make timely payments
- Lies to you
- Lies to the client

For the record, the above are all legitimate reasons why I have stopped working with certain agents. In the event, I really have to work with them, I increase my fee and insist on payment 3 days before the show (for the cheque to clear).

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