



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

EPI2: Stop Hating Your Day Job



You're listening to Episode 12 of the Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast.

Hello, and welcome! You're listening to Episode 12 - Stop Hating Your Day Job.

I'm your host, Suz - a mindset coach to help freelancers and DIY musicians become full-fledged music-preneurs by building sustainable careers in music.

For most people, part of the journey from part-time freelancer to full-time CEO is dealing with day jobs - the jobs that make it possible for you to work during your "off hours" to build the life you want.

For most, the jobs that keep the lights on are the laaassst place they want to be spending their time, causing an endless loop of heavily sighing: "I can't wait to quit my day job and do music full time!"

How many times have you said that to yourself and everyone around you?

The necessary evil of a day job that has nothing to do with music can make you feel you're never progressing fast enough to get your career off the ground.

It takes up too much of the time you could be spending practicing, writing new songs, networking, engaging with your fans, or anything else in the world that's more important than what you're currently stuck doing.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Finding ways to leverage your current day job will not only help move things along in your future career, but also keep that frustration from spilling out and getting you fired before you're ready to leave.

It also can put you in a more positive mindset, giving you more energy and focus to put towards your goals, rather than feeling burnt out and frustrated with your current situation.

In order to make the most of it, you have to reframe how you look at your day job and how you spend your time there.

After graduating Drexel, I approached my day jobs {as I had a number of them!} very methodically. Sometimes I had control over the jobs I took, and sometimes I did not.

But I always sat down and mapped out what I would take away from each situation and determined how that position would play a role in my ultimate goal of running my own company.

During my Junior year at Drexel University, my college roommate and I decided we were going to double up on classes and get out early so we could start working!

I know... what were we thinking?!? What I would give to have another year of college life...

We had created a business plan for a record label as our Senior Project together and we were set on bringing it to life after we graduated.

I would be starting work at Astralwerks as the Midwest Sales Coordinator. We both saw the obvious benefits I'd have of working for a record label when it came to learning the skills we'd need to run our own label one day. She got a job at a social media marketing firm, another job we saw great value in as we prepared our new business.

As I moved through my first official industry job and saw how it was **not** a good fit for me {you can learn all the juicy details in [Episode 2 - Why & How I Quit My Job 5x](#)}, she and I discussed what my next steps could be.

We made a decision to only look for jobs that would benefit our vision.

We knew our label wouldn't be built overnight. We knew we'd need to save money and learn a few more things before we were ready to execute our vision, and even then we knew we may need to continue to work other jobs as it grew.

I started looking for jobs in the legal field, as law had always interested me and we both knew having a legal background could benefit the future company when it came to making and negotiating deals and contracts.

We also discussed looking for jobs that either had flexible schedules or hours that didn't require us to take work home or work tons of overtime.

If our goal was to start our own business we couldn't be tied down at a job that required 50-60 hours a week of our time. It also had to provide a fairly predictable work schedule so she and I could plan our time together to work on content and future meetings with the band we soon signed.

Having a day job is often a necessity, but it doesn't always have to feel like a soul-sucking waste of time. Almost any job out there has its perks, you just have to look for them.

As usual, it's all in your mindset.

If you decide the job is awful and out to destroy your happiness, you will find evidence of that every day. If you decide it's a necessary component to the overall growth of your future career in music, you will find ways to support *that* vision.

I recently wrote a post for Sonicbids going over four skill sets found in most day jobs, all of which can be invaluable to the growth of your music career when applied correctly.

The first skill set is one you learn at most jobs: Customer Service.

The secret to fan engagement is giving people what they want. It takes clear communication, persistence, and the ability and passion to serve others.

Remember, promoting your music or services requires putting the spotlight on your fans. Waiters, retail sales clerks, and other customer service-based jobs deal with meeting the needs of others on a constant basis.

If you can learn to sell someone dessert after a large dinner or get them to sign up for your store's credit card, you'll be a pro at selling merch after a show and getting fans on your mailing list.

Done dealing with ungrateful customers that ruined the display you just created? How about someone who argued with you to take back the crockpot they clearly already used? Or the table of assholes who spent 4 hours eating half-off appetizers & left you a 5% tip?

Realize that as obnoxious as those people are, building a tough skin for difficult customers will make you more resilient when it comes to unruly audience members or internet trolls who want to bring down the message you're trying to spread.

It doesn't matter the industry or the medium, growing a successful & sustainable career starts with serving others. We often talk on this podcast about knowing your why & getting clear on your message.

Your message spells out how you wish to serve others. Maybe it's to create music that inspires people to get up and dance, or maybe it's to take action in their community, or maybe it's to give them the words they need to tell someone how they feel.

No matter the message, you are serving others by spreading it.

When you come from a place of service, rather than entitlement, you are positioning yourself to receive what others wish to give you in return.

Ever get stuck on what to offer or how much to price something or how to release your music? Work on your customer service skills.

Think about what you know from your day job about making the customer happy. Think about their behavior and what makes them buy or choose to get involved with your company.

After my business partner and I had split, I decided to take a break from the music industry.

I worked at Crate & Barrel first as a seasonal employee and then as Stock Room Manager. I'll admit, after getting my Master's it wasn't my decision to take a job in retail. I had planned to work in social services or in a guidance office at a school.

But with a slow job market in that field, and having a sick father at home at the time, it made the most sense for me to get a job with flexible hours

that allowed me to be with him during his chemo sessions at Sloan Kettering, which was only 3 blocks from the store.

During such an emotionally trying time, it was also important that I get a job that didn't require a lot of investment from me. I clocked in, I stocked shelves, I greeted customers, I processed orders, I clocked out.

Sometimes it was busy, but it often served as a great distraction and allowed me to meet a lot of interesting people and create new friendships - something I desperately needed at a time.

It also opened my eyes to how many other people were struggling with their own hardships every single day. It helped me get out of the victim mentality with what was going on with my dad.

Working at the company's flagship store I came across so many people every single day. I quickly learned how many people were carrying around such heartbreaking stress with them as they showed up each day to work or pick up their purchases.

It opened my eyes to the fact that a customer screaming about a chipped plate or throwing pillows at me because the threads were pulled {yes, that did happen} wasn't about the plate or the pillows but that the person in front of me was suffering from something greater than this situation we were in and didn't know how to handle it.

I learned a great deal about empathy and the ability to stop assuming I knew what a particular situation was about. We never know what someone

is going through or how the smallest actions cause us to relate to them on a deeper level than we ever thought possible.

When they first trained us to greet customers and said, "always smile, always say hello or good evening and always ask how you can help," I shrugged it off as cheesy and obnoxious.

But I learned that for some people walking through the store, your smile is the first one they've seen all day or you're the first one who's asked them in a while how they're doing.

These interactions taught me endless lessons about human behavior, possibly more than going for my Master's. It was a different type of education and one that's served me enormously well as I work with clients today.

The second skill set that many jobs offer as an invaluable lesson is marketing & branding.

A solid brand is crucial for any successful endeavor. It's important to have a consistent look and message in order to build that ever-important "know-like-trust" factor. Working in retail is like going to branding boot camp.

After I left Astralwerks, it took me a few months to land a job as a para-legal. In the meantime I took up a job at a flower shop, cleaning the floors, answering phones, and ringing up sales.

That job taught me a lot about the power of asking questions.

I first approached selling as telling people what to buy. I learned over time that it's easier to make a sale when you give people exactly what they're looking for, even if they don't know what they want that very moment.

Asking them why they were shopping for flowers or who the recipient would be would allow me to create a better experience for them and waste less of their time. It also allowed me to explain to them why a particular product would be the perfect solution to what they needed.

That's no different than a musician being able to market their music to the right people. It's crucial to ask your followers what they want and how they want to receive it. New singles each month, or a concept album? Investing in your Patreon or buying a one-time bundle of products?

Ryan Levesque is the founder of ***The Ask Method***. I'll leave a link to his [free eBook](#) in the show notes. He explains how asking questions to your audience can help you narrow down niches within your following and then market to them accordingly.

Additionally, whether you work in the stockroom or out on the sales floor, **spending time at a company that's already built a loyal customer base can teach you invaluable lessons in message consistency, product placement, and up-selling** {offering a higher priced item after a smaller sale or complimenting a purchase with a related add-on}.

After my dad passed I had an opportunity to stay on at Crate and train to be a manager. I was still figuring out my next steps so I decided to stay on and learn more while hanging with my new friends at work each day.

I had never worked for a company of that size before and I was really enjoying the water cooler talk!

But beyond the socialization, I had opportunities to come in early or stay late during seasonal turnovers to help the visual team prepare for new window or sales floor displays.

Shadowing the design department for an afternoon or asking to sit in on a marketing meeting can shed real light on how to set up your own brand. I began to notice the importance of consistency in the fonts used on the marketing materials and the branded vocabulary used to describe the products and ambiance.

Crate had created it's own type of language with its customer.

We would get memos from corporate on how to display certain items or how to discuss those items with customers. I learned the importance of consistency and the power of clear communication that knows how to address the way people feel about a product or service.

Which brings us to our next skill set: Clear Communication.

Whether you're pitching to a blogger, writing a newsletter, or posting

online, you must be able to communicate clearly. Staying organized is also a must in order to ensure details don't fall through the cracks.

Working as an administrative assistant, or anywhere where you're tied to a computer desk, it's important for you to practice your writing and organizational skills.

Working as a paralegal, I learned a LOT about communication. It was important a motion was powerfully written and effectively persuasive. It had to get all the relevant facts out and it had to paint a strong picture of why our argument was the one to win the case.

Drafting endless motions and cover letters, often chopped up with red ink by my boss, taught me how and when to say more with less and when to get into the minute details.

Going to court is no different than pitching your music to a music supervisor. You have a case you believe in and a perspective you believe to be the side the truth lies on and you want the decision maker to agree with you.

Practice pitching relevant ideas to coworkers or your boss, and soon you'll be fearless reaching out to venue owners and other industry leaders.

In addition, working at a job that required me to be at my desk in front of a computer all day allowed for some downtime for researching possible gigs, new contacts, etc.

When I got caught, I simply made a case for myself and how my taking a break from what I was doing was going to make the end result better. Lawyers respect a good debater.

Making a case for yourself also means having the confidence to speak in front of others. I often watched my boss, a quiet man who didn't like to brag about his talents, get up in front of a court room and argue his case in the most confident manner.

The power of public speaking and the ability to get your point across in a compelling way is invaluable to any creative who plans to perform live on stage and/or play to the camera in the endless amount of video content required these days when building an online following.

As we know, nothing builds a following like an engaging performance.

If your job requires you speak often in front of groups, like a teacher or consultant, use that time to work on your eye contact, audience engagement, and overall stage presence.

If you can win over a class of attention-deficient children, getting a noisy bar to pay attention to your show will be a breeze.

During my first summer off from Drexel, before my internships with Atlantic & WEA started, I got a job teaching horse back riding to campers at C.W. Post out in Long Island.

I had to teach proper grooming and maintenance to a group of Tweens, some of whom had no interest in being there. I got questions like, "Why are your eyes so big?" or "How old are you? Do you have a boyfriend?" or my favorite, "Why don't you ever wear make up?"

It was a challenge most days to get them all to pay attention and it was up to me to find ways to keep their attention.

After seeing a bunch of prepubescents stare back at me as I spoke, knowing they were critiquing everything from the way I spoke to how well my shirt matched my pants, allowed me to grow a tough skin and now speaking in front of crowds of adults who may be thinking the same things don't bother me in the least.

In the 15 years I've been in this industry, it's only been the last 3 and 1/2 that I've been doing my own thing full time. In that time I've had a lot of different jobs and they all had their own way of preparing me for what I'm doing now.

Trust in the process.

We've seen how some of the most respected and well-known musicians maintained their day jobs longer than most would expect. You can read about them in [another post on Sonicbids](#) that I'll post in the show notes.

When you're able to make your job work for you, it's no longer a hindrance, but another supportive structure in your journey.

Always remember it's up to you how your day goes. You have the power to make it count or throw it away. As I said, it may take some digging to see the benefits of your current situation, but they're there!

Which brings me to my freebie of the week - your **Day Job Audit**. You can go to www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep12 and download it today!

In it you'll find prompts that will help you arrive at your answer when it comes to making the most from the time spent away from your music.

If you have a day job that's dragging you down, I invite you to join us in the Rock/Star Collective - my private Facebook Group community of music-preneurs - and we can help you see how you can make the most of it!

You can gain access by going to www.facebook.com/groups/rockstarcollective or by clicking the link in the show notes.

I thank you for listening to today's lesson in navigating the ups & downs of being a music-preneur. We know the journey is never easy, but we can certainly learn ways to keep it from being harder than it has to be.

If you enjoyed what you learned today, you can access all current episodes using your podcast platform of choice, including iTunes & Spotify, or by visiting www.therockstaradvocate.com/podcast.

In the meantime, if there is any way that I can help you learn ways to stay focused & motivated, find a better work/life balance, or get some clarity on whatever it is you're going through, I'd be more than happy to!

Feel free to email me at any time: suz@therockstaradvocate.com.

Until next time, Rockstar! Have a wonderful week and stay tuned next week for my first guest - Sub-Radio. You may be familiar with them from the intro & outro music from these episodes. I hope to see you back here next Wednesday so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.