



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

Ep74: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Leah McHenry

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Hello! You're listening to [Episode 74: Music-Preneur Spotlight: Leah McHenry](#).

I'm your host, Suz - a mindset coach helping music professionals get clear on their goals and find the time to get it all done while maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

To be honest, maintaining balance is a tricky bitch. Some wonder if it's ever attainable. To me, balance is different for everyone. Some may define balance as an equal 50/50 split of their time between work and play while others feel more at home with a 60/40 split or looking at the split more intricately between family, friends, work, and self-care with different percentages assigned to each.

I tend to look at it like this - you're not always going to have balance, but if you have an idea of what you'd like balance to look like for you you have opportunities every day to make decisions that can get you closer to the balance that feels right for you.

When I talk about balance, no one comes to mind more than Leah McHenry. This mother of 5... yes, 5 children, has created not only a successful music career for herself *without* touring, she has also built a successful coaching career for artists who want to learn to do the same.

I'll let her tell you a bit more about how she's done all of this in her own words, but before you start making excuses that you "don't have the time," here are just a few of the things this Celtic & Fantasy-Infused Metal Canadian songwriter has been able to accomplish with structure, communication within her team, and the discipline to identify her priorities and stay focused on them:

She recently released her 5th album, [Ancient Winter](#), after yet another successful crowdfunding

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campaign that surpassed expectations, she created and runs her very successful company, [Savvy Musician Academy](#), teaching musicians how to use marketing to build their own successful careers, she hosts an incredible podcast & YouTube show that I had the pleasure of being on earlier this year - [The Savvy Musician Show](#), and she has created an incredible line of merchandise that she sells on her online shop.

She is a multi-six-figure earner WITHOUT touring. Leah will show you, it's not about choosing to be a musician vs. choosing to be a mother. It's choosing everything that matters to you and finding a way to make it work with help and organization.

She became super clear on her niche and is fully invested in serving that specific community with her music AND has become niche in her business as she focuses on teaching online ads and other key marketing tactics and tools artists need to be successful.

All of her links are in the show notes, but as you listen to our conversation, I HIGHLY suggest subscribing to her amazing podcast by going to savvymusicianacademy.com/podcast.

And with that, I am thrilled to bring you my conversation with Leah...

Suz: Well, Leah, thank you so much for being here! It's a real honor to have you on my podcast. I've been a fan for awhile, so thanks for taking the time.

Leah: I'm happy to be here and it was great to have you on our podcast, so yeah this is fun!

Suz: Haha! You do so many things, we'll try to hit upon everything in our short time together, but as a Celtic-Metal performer and musician, you know, that is such a great niche and you've really made it work for you. I also wanted to just congratulate you - you recently released the first track from your upcoming album and the latest release is called *Redemption*. Tell us a little bit about that and what spurred on releasing that now.

Leah: Yeah, so well the upcoming album is a Celtic-Fantasy, medieval-styled winter album. It's called *Ancient Winter* and the first track I released now for some specific reasons. One reason is that I chose that track because it's the least-wintery-sounding track and it was August when I'm releasing it, so I figured that's a good one to release now because it can still be like people's summer song, but it just goes with the collection of songs.

And the big reason why I released it was because I was also simultaneously releasing or launching a crowdfunding campaign on the same day and my theory is that if I'm gonna release something, you know, I'm gonna get a whole bunch of eyeballs, a whole bunch of ears and this attention for a very short window of time and I'd like to direct all that traffic to the thing I really want them to do, which is to, you know, pre-order the album in this big crowdfunding campaign cause I have quite a lofty goal - fifty thousand. And so it worked, you know, we hit the fifty thousand in ten days.

Suz: Wow!

Leah: Which is fantastic and so, you know, I was actually gonna do more than that - I was gonna do a lyric video the same day too, but just the way things happened I wasn't able to release it on the same day, but that's okay.

I always try to, you know, everything I do is not winging it, and that's something you'll learn about me. **I may be spontaneous at times. I'm fully, thoroughly an artist - I love being spontaneous! But I've learned the more I plan things out and the more strategic I can be, the better the result is.**

Releasing this song the day of the crowdfunding campaign allowed all that attention to get funneled toward the one thing I want people to do - go to this page and pre-order the album.

Suz: That's what I always love about your approach to everything is that there's a reason and an intention behind it. And that's something we talk about often here on this podcast is working with intention and I think that that takes a lot of slowing down, and as you said, planning and being thoughtful about each thing because everything you do always lends itself... Everything goes hand in hand and yet you do so many different things - I think that's really great.

And you mentioned your videos, you know, they almost look like video game adventures, you know? They're very visual. You have some wonderful photos and photography and the fonts and the way the lyrics come across your videos, it's very eye catching!

You know, as opposed to a typical performance video, what made you go more that route? Is that because you know that that's what your audience responds to or is that just more your

preferred way of doing videos? What helps you guide your choices for what videos to make for each single?

Leah: Yeah so I definitely have a few thoughts behind this. Number one, I'm not a performing artist at all - I'm strictly a recording artist.

And anybody who if this the first time they're ever heard of me, I have five children between the ages of four and thirteen. And so I, you know, during the last six years me creating this album or this music career from scratch, I was doing it during nap time and on weekends and whenever my husband would watch the kids, so touring was off the table for me - couldn't make it happen. So everything I've had to do I've done online, and therefore what I learned very quickly was that anything you do online is very visual, *extremely* visual, and people do judge a book by its cover. And so anything you're putting out there online whether it's video, images, photography, website - any of this stuff - it needs to be breathtaking.

Whatever that means for your audience! So my audience I just, you know, I've *studied* them, like I know them like the back of my hand. I know that they love this whole culture of fantasy video games, Game of Thrones, all of that stuff because I like that stuff and they're a lot like me.

And so I just know that anything I come out with, whether it's a lyric video, photography, or the album cover itself has to fit with the culture of my music. It has to fit with the culture - my fans and my culture and me and my music - it's all synonymous. And then especially because I'm a recording artist and everything you do is online, that means I treat my music business more like an e-commerce business.

And in the e-commerce business, if you want to succeed, you need amazing photography like visual components. Whatever the the designs are - your t-shirts, any videos - like it's absolutely a visual world.

So really some of what I do is out of necessity because I'm not a touring artist. I don't even have really a proper music video, actually, all my videos are either lyrics videos or they're hybrids of where my face is in it but it's still a lyric video because I'm literally... I'm so busy.

And they're expensive to make, like a *real* music video can be expensive to make depending on, well for my audience it would be, I'd have to go, you know, to Iceland and Scotland and like go to all these castles and stuff, so... and believe me I've looked into it.

Suz: Hahaha

Leah: It's not cheap to get licenses to shoot videos at these places, so I would do it but it all comes back down to knowing my culture, knowing my audience, and understanding exactly what my niche is so that I can bring that and represent it properly in any of the visuals that I put out there.

Suz: You know, you mention obviously your children and all the other responsibilities you have on your plate and I thank you for explaining all that to our audience because I knew why you didn't perform but I wanted them to get to know, you know, why you made the certain, very intentional decisions, and you made it work for you and I think that that's great because so many can get bogged down with their, you know, their excuses, reasons to not do something, and you always see a reason to do something and figure out a way to do it that works for you, so thank you so much for taking us through that.

I do want to get a little bit into your company and your family and how you manage everything, but first you brought up something about, you know, seeing your music business as an e-commerce business, and I noticed like your shop you have these beautiful line of bracelets that you sell, and you've got your podcast, you've got your YouTube channel, you've got your crowdfunding campaign... what prompted you, you know, was there a lot to learn or is it something you had before, maybe in a past life or other jobs that you might have held in the past, what prompted you to be able to switch this mindset and see your music career as an e-commerce business?

Or did you end up having to take courses and learn certain things or did you come with this knowledge of like, 'No, this is how we're going to approach it.' What was that kind of shift like? Because that's not how a lot of people usually approach it.

Leah: Oh yeah, I know. I think this the concept of treating selling your music online like an e-commerce business instead of a music business... this is new. This is a new idea I had never, no one's ever told me that. I definitely had a lightbulb moment and it came from constantly

studying. I mean this is like a part of my day - I'm always reading, I'm always learning, listening to podcast stuff outside of even what, you know, I'm currently what's even relevant to me sometimes I'll just, in fact good copy writers, people who, you know, write amazing copy that persuades people to buy stuff - the best copy writers in the world they study things outside of what's relevant to them.

You know? So read, be fascinated and everything, be interested in everything, and I've always taken that approach. So I'll read stuff about business or whatever that's not relevant to my, you know, music business. And it's amazing the light bulbs that go off this is exactly what happened with the whole e-commerce thing.

I was studying something else and it went, I was like 'Oh my gosh!' I just had this this moment where I was like if I... people are purchasing my music online. Now specifically I'm talking about from my website, from my shop. I'm like what is the difference between this and the next e-commerce store that's selling, you know, ugly Christmas sweaters or whatever it is that they're selling?

Suz: Haha right!

Leah: Like what is the difference? The only difference is that I'm selling music, but if I treat my music like bigger than just the music, if I'm like, "Hey listen, this is more than just music, this is really about the culture," then that's going to open up a world of opportunity to me to sell other items that are not music but fit with the music.

So now, yeah, I do I have jewelry, I have leather journals, I have things that just go with the music - it's all creating an atmosphere and ambience that suits my culture, that suits the music.

It all goes together and makes perfect sense and I make quite a bit of my revenue from this, so that shift really like 10x'ed what I was doing just in this one particular income stream. So that was a huge pivotal moment, and I teach all my students now... like we have our Elite program - we teach this extensively - like that's how much of a game-changer it is, you know?

Using Shopify and understanding the psychology of sales - when people are shopping online, you know, everything from product descriptions to where a button needs to be, to follow-up

emails when someone abandons their cart - all of these things are part of e-commerce and really nurturing a relationship from the beginning to the end and continuing that relationship.

These are things that musicians, I guarantee you, 99/9% do not even, this is not even crossing their minds.

Suz: Oh for sure! Mhmm.

Leah: So, yeah it's a game-changer though when this lightbulb goes off for you, you're like, "Oh my gosh!" And not only, I mean it's a little intimidating, it's a steep learning curve a bit, but it's also the most lucrative thing you could do online.

Suz: Absolutely, you know, it reminds me - Ariel Hyatt of Cyber PR, I know we've done a few workshops together and we've talked about the *themes*. You know, if you stop looking at your music as just an album by album but really what, as you said, culture... and what are the themes behind what you do and what you represent?

As you yourself said, if you're interested in it your community of fans are most likely interested in it, and so to build a business around that rather than just a particular song or a particular release, as you said, can change the game and open up possibilities for additional income streams that you haven't thought of.

And I love that you worded it as that you saw it more as an e-commerce business because that's what we try to do here with The Music-Preneur Mindset is get you thinking like an entrepreneur.

You know, for years I kept thinking, well I know the music business like the back of my hand, so I can, you know, I can build the business and I'll be successful and I had so many businesses not take off, and I couldn't figure it out because, I mean, I knew what I was talking about, I knew the stuff, but I didn't fully understand what it means to be an entrepreneur and that's a whole different ballgame and it wasn't until I understood income streams and funneling and onboarding new clients or new fans and the retention rates and how, you know, all of this other vocabulary and skill sets.

And so I love that you teach that to your students and open their eyes to really how to get this stuff done where they're not gonna learn that, you know, necessarily from anything else that's

out there that's teaching strictly just, you know, music industry information. I think that's so important.

Leah: Mhmm. Yeah, I actually, I mean, I attribute all the success that I've had so far to actually stopping studying the music industry. I just flat out stopped studying that and I just started studying what's working online for anybody.

Suz: Yup!

Leah: Anybody else... so it's all the other businesses like they're doing something right. I mean they're making millions and millions and millions of dollars every month - what can I learn from them and how can I translate that to what I'm doing over here? And I will tell you, it's awkward because music is not, you know, a typical commodity.

Suz: Mhmm.

Leah: It's not, you're not selling tools or, you know, socks, well I guess you can sell socks now-a-days with print on demand and all that...

Suz: Hahaha.

Leah: But, you know, it's just - it's art! And so I struggled and maybe people will relate that to this, I struggled with like, "Well, people don't really *need* music, you know? The way they need Tylenol or something to solve their pain, like does music really *do* that?"

And so then this becomes just a weird intellectual question that you have to say you know like - does music solve all pain? And like why do people need it? Where's the value in it? And it does turn into this intellectual question.

In the end, I have settled at least, you know, temporarily in that music does have intrinsic value, but I need to determine it.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: And I need to determine it by the way I price things and not make everything free. And yes there's streaming and those things I look at as my friends, but I can also, like you said, when you treat it as like a theme, it's just like, you know - I treat my music business where the music is the soundtrack to this magazine in a way.

Like what is the culture? What's inside the magazine? There's articles, there's ads, there's all these different elements, and who's the person reading it? You know, so you treat it like a lifestyle business, in a way, and you add the e-commerce element and it's really incredible. So music does have intrinsic value? You must determine what the value is and then price it accordingly.

You know there's so many, oh man there's so much we could talk about going into things.

Suz: Haha right!

Leah: But the important thing is learning what works in general, and then apply that to what you're doing now, and it is weird when you're dealing with art, right?

But, you know, once you get over that and you just find the way that is going to work for you, it *does* work, that's the thing. So I had to stop studying the music industry to get there though.

Suz: And it sounds like from what you're saying, too, and I can totally relate to this, it takes a lot of trust to walk away from getting used to studying the music industry and doing things a certain way to now saying, "Okay this might feel counterintuitive." You know?

Because musicians are often taught the scarcity mindset and that, you know, we hear stuff like, "People don't buy music anymore!" and all this stuff that we ascribe to, it can take a lot to trust these new ways of going, but it sounds like you're very good at trusting your gut and you felt, "I know that I'm gonna pivot and this is what I'm gonna do," and you committed to it, and I think that's great.

Leah: Yeah well part of being an entrepreneur, in fact the the very definition of being an entrepreneur, if you look it up, is someone who's willing to take financial risk. So if you're not a risk-taker at all and you only stay in the safe zone you're probably not going to see a lot of success in your life.

Suz: Yeah.

Leah: You must be a risk-taker. And I do think that a lot of musicians are because of just our creative nature, we're willing to put ourselves out there, we're willing to play in front of crowds of people and wear our heart on our sleeve, so I feel like the potential to be entrepreneurs is very, very, very great.

And there are some people who just haven't embraced it yet, so being an entrepreneur, being willing to take a risk, and trying things and being willing to fail - that's part of it! Like, if I'm not willing to fail and risk failure, I really am just gonna stay in my comfort zone and at that point I'm not really going to be doing anything of value or anything important, so, you know, you definitely have to be willing to take risks.

Suz: Absolutely! And, you know, one of the things that I know you've mentioned is that you know your fans *extremely* well, and I think that's definitely evident in everything that you put out and the reception that you got from them.

And so what I also noticed on your social media and especially on your YouTube channel and on your blog, you're very good at teaching your fans how to be great fans. So, you know, how to best support you - explaining to them, like I saw on your latest blog post about your crowdfunding what sharing the crowdfunding link could do for you, why it's important that they share it, how they can be a part of expanding this and getting more eyes on your album - you've got an understanding of how to teach them how to be good fans, but what do you think over the years, what have they taught you?

What have you learned from your fans that made you go, "Hmm, okay I need to either stop doing this or do more of this," or was there something that maybe surprised you that you learned from your fans over the years?

Leah: Well that's a really interesting way of putting it. I've never heard anybody say, you know, teaching your fans how to be good fans - that's really a unique perspective. Well yeah now that you mention it I guess I do do that and just spell out for them exactly what I want them to do, and I think that's, I mean I learned that in marketing.

Suz: Right!

Leah: I learned that by studying business, again, didn't come from the music industry at all. I just learned if you want people to do something never assume that they know that.

Suz: Mhmm.

Leah: Never assume that they know what you want them to do - spell it out and spell it out in detail, so make a list one, two, three, four, five - what can you do, how to do it, where to do it - be specific! Kinda like go down to kindergarten level in a way, and maybe this helps with me having kids is that I know if I'm not crystal clear with my kids on exactly what I want them to do and how I want them to do and how I want it done - it doesn't happen!

Suz: Right! Haha, yeah!

Leah: So maybe that helps when you're dealing with the public, but so aside from that, what they've taught me? Oh, man! Well first of all they have taught me, and I would say more recently, that the more, I think, transparent and vulnerable I am, the closer they become to me.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: And I think this is a big deal for a lot of artists that are probably over the age of thirty, where we grew up without the internet, and we grew up without like a selfie culture.

Suz: Haha, right.

Leah: Like we grew up with MTV where there's this mystique between the artist and the fan, and you don't, you know, there's a wall there, and you don't really cross that line, and you want to be, you know, still mysterious to them. **And nowadays that just absolutely will not work. You need to be more transparent, and this is terrifying by the way!**

Suz: Sure!

Leah: Transparent, open, honest, let them in, let them see you for who you *really* are. Show them on Instagram Stories the way you make your disgusting smoothie in the morning and the

way you fry pancakes and like show them your cat and they need to see that because, here's another principle I learned in the marketing world, is people buy from people that they feel like they know, like, and trust.

Suz: Mhmm!

Leah: This is something you'll hear over and over and over in the marketing world that you don't hear in the music world.

Suz: Yes!

Leah: So how do you do that? How do you get people to know you, like you, and trust you? The only way you can do that is by exposing yourself and putting yourself out and showing that vulnerability.

So I've been having health struggles the last couple of years - like everything from hormones and thyroid issues and weight gain that was totally unexplainable, and I just flat out told my audience, "I'm embarrassed to be in photos right now. I don't want you to see me. I don't want to be in videos because I don't feel like myself and this is been a huge struggle and I'm totally, I just feel this shame, and I know you guys love me and everything, but I've just got to be honest with you - I have to get this off my chest."

You wouldn't believe the kind of support that I got, I mean, I was shaking when I posted that. Totally shaking and I think I cried for an hour after I posted it on Instagram.

Suz: Aww.

Leah: It was just like it was such a like a freeing experience and a scary experience, but what I found out is like the more I put myself out there the more they really really show their love, and in a way that I just was not expecting. So all my fears were unfounded, so that's one amazing thing that they've taught me is just put yourself out there. It's okay if you have a polarizing effect too!

You know, sometimes when you put yourself out there it's going to be like a magnet situation - you're gonna draw some people to you and you will push some people away, and that's okay, too.

Suz: I loved what you said about the vulnerability because yes it is one hundred percent not easy, and I've been learning that lesson a myself over the last year or so. And, you know, when you see somebody so successful killing it out there and you idolize that person and so, you know, you want to support them, but when they're able to be vulnerable, and not even share failures or lessons necessarily, but just share that they, too, were, you know, thinking about some things or feeling a certain way, you immediately then can see, "Oh they're not this idol, they're like me and now when I support them I'm not just supporting them, I'm supporting me, too."

Leah: Totally.

Suz: It's a very empowering thing for your fans when you're able to to be yourself, and as you said, it's empowering for you, too, to then be able to receive that support back I think all around it's just a beautiful thing.

Leah: Yeah. I would also say I've learned to be a lot more aggressive in my marketing than I'm actually comfortable with and that gets so much better results. So if I only sent out emails and promo messages in ads when it felt right I wouldn't be making multiple six figures a year just as a recording artist that doesn't tour.

Suz: Right.

Leah: I have learned to be, yeah, ten times more aggressive, so I mean I'm sending a lot of emails and do I get unsubscribes every time? Absolutely! That's par for the course.

Suz: Right.

Leah: If you understand anything about marketing, you understand that you need to be building your list aggressively because every time you send an email a small percentage of people unsubscribe. It would be weird if it didn't happen.

Suz: Right.

Leah: So I am just really being aggressive about it. And by aggressive I don't mean in your face annoying, I just mean I'm putting my messages out there more than I would normally be comfortable with.

And what we spent a lot of time coaching students to do the same because we're all afraid to offend people. We're artists, we want to make the world, you know, Kumbaya. We don't want to offend people. We don't want to annoy people, we're scared of people unfollowing, like you said, and we just have all these insecurities and that's something we absolutely have to get over. And I don't really know that I ever quite get over it, I just do it anyway because I like the results that I get.

Suz: Right! Haha. That helps! Absolutely and, you know, you've brought up your family and your children and I wanted to, you know, talk about the fact, and I know you've gotten this question a lot but I think it's just so interesting, you know, between your music and everything that goes into your career and running Savvy Musician, you do have five children as you said, and you've got your line of merchandise, your podcast... how do you prioritize everything?

And do you find a way to connect everything so that it kind of works together? Or is it better for you to keep everything kind of separate and compartmentalize it all? Like how have you found a way to get it all done without, like I'm sure it's messy at times, but how do you keep it from like this tipping point of, "Okay goodbye everybody. I'm gonna go, you know, put myself in a resort somewhere for two months and disappear!"

Like how do you find managing all of that?

Leah: Yeah. Well, first of all, I'm not gonna say that I never get to that point because I do, let's keep it real here!

Yes I have a lot on my plate, I really do. First of all, the one thing that keeps me sane is my team and knowing that I can't do it all. I'm not Superwoman. I do not wear a cape. I have my breaking points and I'd say my weakness, you might not believe this, but my weakness is overwhelm.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: I mean people who look at everything I'm doing and they're like, "Wow, Leah, you're a really good multi-tasker. You must not get overwhelmed. You must manage that really well!"

Suz: Hahaha

Leah: No I don't! No I don't. Actually I have a sticky note on my computer that I'm looking at right now, and I wrote this out the other day when I was feeling it. I was really feeling it. I was feeling like I was at the bottom of Mount Everest, and I was having a serious moment. This is what my sticky note says in hot pink, it says, "Be in the present moment. What's in front of me right now? Don't focus on Everest."

That was me coaching myself because what happens is for me with when I do have all the stuff going on, is I wake up that morning and I'll feel like I'm standing at the bottom of Mount Everest and I'm looking at the top and I'm going, "How the heck am I ever going to get up there?"

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: I mean, I just want to cry looking at it. And so here's what I've learned and how I had to coach myself in that moment was, this is so cliché, but the whole put one foot in front of the other really is it. It's like be in the present moment and I think that the issue sometimes is with being a musician and a visionary we sometimes get in the big picture.

Suz: Right.

Leah: It's like you need the big picture, but if you focus on the big picture the whole time that's where the overwhelm is coming from because I'm seeing everything that needs to get done. And so I have to come away from the big picture and go back right into the present moment right now.

What's right in front of me this moment? What do I need to do right now?

And then put one foot in front of the other and the the funny thing is you're not looking at the peak of the mountain top way up there, you're just looking at your shoes and like what the next step is and, you know, don't trip on this rock and step over that branch you just repeat that over and over and over for a while.

And an hour goes by and you look down and you're like, "Wait a... hey! I actually made like a ton of progress here!"

So I have to coach myself on this stuff. I hope nobody ever thinks that I've really mastered this - I haven't but that is the key.

And the second thing is my team, you know, learning to delegate things that I shouldn't be doing I'm starting to hire out more in my music business, so I have a full-time assistant. I have a full-time customer support person now, and those are amazing forms of delegation, and I'll be building that out, my team, as I go, as the income supports it.

And then on the Savvy Musician Academy side we have a great team there as well. So I'm not doing everything and we're actually trying to get to the point, for me, where we really have determined that I shouldn't say we're getting to the point we are doing it now, we determined, you know, what's the one thing that I do in this business that moves the needle? And that's the only thing I should be focusing on - everything else we should outsource and build the team, etc.

So we've determined for me it's the frontend messaging, you know, it's webinars, it's the podcast, it's some of the coaching, all the frontend messaging is really where I need to be. And so that makes it really crystal clear. When I do those things over and over, the needle moves.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: First, you source out the things that you're not good at, and then you source out the things you are good at that's the usually the order of events that happens in businesses.

Suz: Oh absolutely!

Leah: Does that kind of answer the question? There's a lot there.

Suz: Yeah, absolutely. And I'm glad - bringing up your team, one of the other questions I had was you know how did you begin building your team? I mean I know you said so you start with the stuff that either you're not good at or maybe that you really don't like to do, but what's been the biggest obstacle to overcome for somebody who is good at so many things and, you know, musicians always usually start from a place of like do-it-yourself and, you know, what has been the obstacle as you grow and delegate and bring on new team members?

I mean has it been who you hire? Has it been what you give them to do? Or like, and I guess I know I'm asking kind of multiple questions at the same time, but I guess also like how have you worked out the kinks in terms of the communication between the team members? Like what has that growth been like for you as you've built over the years?

Leah: I love this question because I haven't really had the opportunity to talk about this before. So the first hire for me is kind of a multi-purpose virtual assistant, so I'll say from the get go actually both Savvy Musician Academy and my independent record label, Ex Cathedra Records, they're all virtual based - all virtually run, so every single employee is virtual which is amazing.

Though and it has its pros and cons too, I will say mostly in the communication department, but the biggest challenge is definitely in the hiring process.

Not just the process but choosing the right person, and this is, I mean these are were some of the hardest lessons are learned because you think you know what you need or what you want, and then sometimes that can change over time, but one of the best things that I ever learned from my a business coach that I had, was a very stringent hiring process.

So not only do I just, you know, create a job profile of what I need someone to do but I require a lot through the process to really filter through and discover who this person really is. So for example, it's very simple you'd be shocked at how many people do not follow instructions, so if you for example simply whether you're putting this out on Craigslist or somewhere on the Internet, if you say, "Email me at this email address with this specific subject line," I mean if you get fifty applicants I promise you forty nine of them or forty five of them will not use the subject line that you gave.

Suz: Right, right.

Leah: People can't follow instructions.

Suz: Yeah.

Leah: Those people are automatically disqualified, so I won't even read the email - just delete! If you can't follow one simple instruction like a specific subject line you're obviously not great employee material, so things like that that I never would have figured out on my own... but because I had a coach and a mentor that taught me this stuff, so that's huge and then I would say the next big important thing when you're considering hiring somebody to do something for you, is take them through an audition.

You know just like if you have a band and you're auditioning a bass player it's just like well that's great what you said you can do, but let's see and hear what you can actually do. Pick up the bass right now and show me how you can play.

So in the same way we do that with potential candidates and usually you, you know, this is after they've done a couple of other things but the what we call an audition usually, I have them do probably three different things.

So tasks that will be similar to something I might actually have them do so for a virtual assistant it could be organizing something or doing some research on something it just depends on what the job profile is, but it's usually something that's fairly telling. You know it's fairly revealing about what their skill level is, how bad they want this job because there's some people who as soon as you want them to do an audition they're like I'm out of here.

Like okay. So things that filter, right? It's a filtration process. And that has been some of the most revealing stuff ever in the hiring process for me both in Savvy Musician Academy and the music business side.

You know even if someone passes that test and they're like, "Hey they did a great audition! This is awesome," there's like a third interview that I have with them and it's strictly for culture fit. It's like do we gel together? Do we have similar values? Can I be friends with this person in real life? Will I enjoy spending a lot of time with this person because you will be, even in a virtual setting, you know, especially if it's just you the musician and you have one virtual assistant, you

are talking to them constantly, so communication matters a lot! And, you know, there's pros and cons to that being in a virtual setting

Like we use slack a lot but it doesn't really matter, whatever you're using, Skype or whatever, it's easy to miss understand people through text.

Suz: Sure.

Leah: Like constantly. And it's just one of those things, so learning to be clear, giving context to people whenever you're describing something, and being specific. I mean a lot of times I think I'm being really specific and I'm actually not and I go back and I read it and I go, you know, what I missed that detail, I actually didn't mention this and that thing, and no wonder they forgot this thing because I didn't actually say what I thought I did.

Suz: Right!

Leah: I mean that, for me, that's the first big hire anybody should make in any business and especially in the music business. And when I say a virtual assistant I'm thinking a full-stack person, okay?

Somebody who can help with your customer service, provided that you actually have some customers, that people are buying things regularly and you know, but even if they're not buying things regularly and you want someone to help you out part-time.

And then there's so much that they can help you with with social media, now it always needs to be your voice as a musician, I don't want to farm out my voice to anybody because they'll quickly know that it's not me, but helping you organize, plan things, schedule, especially planning album launches and keeping files organized, you know in Dropbox, that can become a mess really fast.

Just take that off your plate so you can focus on what you need to be doing which is really learning marketing and make more music and, you know, make the money!

Suz: And I know with Savvy Musician, what you've been able to build, you know, much respect! You've got some great courses, and I appreciate how you categorize them based on experience

level. You know I feel some people will just, you know, tell people, "Oh if you want to join you can join!" But, you know, I always say to people, I always say to artists, really understand if you're ready for a certain course, so, you know, I do appreciate that you have yours listed and that people can filter through depending on what level they're on to see what courses would be good for them at this particular time.

And so my question to you is how do you know when it's time to create another course? And how do you decide what audience to make it for? Like how do you decide, "Okay, I'm gonna make this one an expert level" or "I'm gonna keep it simple and just open it up."

What is that process like? Can you give us a little behind the scenes on that?

Leah: Yeah, so in Savvy Musician Academy our avatar is always going to be the same, so we're not really generalists where, "Hey, we teach a bit about mixing and mastering and we teach about Facebook ads and also management,"

Like we do not do that - we're not generalist. We only focus on online marketing, that's it. So our avatar, the person who would this would be most applicable to, is any kind of a singer/songwriter, solo-artist, band, we do have some industry professionals as well but there are fewer of them, and a lot of instrumentalists surprisingly, too but musicians who are trying to build their fan base online and make money from the music and monetize it from different streams.

Okay? So online marketing is the the general term that we just put - that's the big umbrella. And within that, we really have two flagship courses that we focus on - The Online Musician is the main one where pretty much everybody needs to start out going through that before they're even ready for our more advanced one because to be honest most musicians I ever run into, they do not have a good understanding of their niche. They do not have a good understanding of their brand. They do not know what their culture is. And really if you don't know those few things - doing Facebook Ads isn't going to help you very much.

You know, throwing money at something that's not working yet isn't going to help you, that's just a waste. So there are some fundamentals that need to be in place and like understanding how to connect with your audience on social media platforms and really, just doesn't even matter what the platform is, how to connect with them, how to build this culture. That's the key

behind it all, like if I didn't get that, if I didn't nail that, me doing all this advanced Facebook ads and crowdfunding campaigns that's just not gonna work.

So one thing, you know, first thing's first. And there's people who say, "Oh I wanted to do Facebook Ads," well that's great, but that's not going to work unless do you understand your fans like the back of your hand.

Do you know what they're reading? Do you know where they shop? Do you know the magazines they're into? Do you know all the other bands that they have in their collection right now? Do you know what kind of pop culture and TV shows they're watching right now?

If you don't know that stuff, Facebook Ads isn't going to work for you, so, you know, The Online Musician, that's really the foundational piece.

And then our elite, our Super Fan System Elite, is really the advanced digital marketing stuff. It's all the e-commerce stuff, it's the Facebook Ads, it's the launches - it's all of that stuff because that's where you're really dialing it in and using these more advanced online market principles.

As far as introducing other products, any other products that we introduced outside of those things are more just small mini-courses that may just aid and help people no matter what level they're at, and usually they're much lower in price.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: But we're probably going to be going away from adding too many more because we really want to focus on those two big pivotal, you know, places where musicians need to start out and build upon so which is you know, understanding who they are, who their audience is, how to connect with them, build a brand online. So that's The Online Musician.

Then, when they're done with that, they can graduate to The Super Fan System Elite. And in there that's where you're currently coaching for us, as well, which is amazing!

Suz: Mhm! Yeah, thank you so much. I'm so excited, it's such a wonderful community of musicians and other music-preneurs. It's been great! You know, musicians who are trying to step

into, much like yourself, this music-preneur role of, "Okay let me build my other income streams then."

You know I talk to some them sometimes about what courses they could create, and there's this glaze over them like, " Well, who would I make it for? Like how complicated or simple do I make it?"

And, you know, it's nice to get a perspective from somebody who's already done it and what you've learned from doing it. So I thank you for giving us behind the scenes peek at that - it's really appreciated!

I want to thank you so much for giving us a behind the scenes not only into your music but also your journey as a music-preneur.

All of the links to everything you've mentioned, all of our listeners, her music, her courses, everything that we've gone over today, you can find in the show notes, so please do check her out. And make sure, if you're not already subscribed to her wonderful offerings, be sure to check those out in the show notes and get subscribed!

And now, as we wrap up, I've got four rapid-fire questions that I ask every guest. We'll start with - if there was one lesson you could go back and tell your younger self, what would it be?

Leah: Oh jeez. Go to bed before 10PM!

Suz: Haha oh I am so with you on that!

Leah: Like consistently, yeah.

Suz: Absolutely. The next question is, if you could have any super power, what would it be?

Leah: The ability to eat anything I want and not gain weight.

Suz: Hahah man, we are soul sisters here.

Leah: Hahah!

Suz: So my next question is, if you could invite three musicians, living or dead, over to your house for dinner, who would they be?

Leah: The first person that came to my was Jim Morrison.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: Cause like he was a big influence for me. Uhm, actually I'd really love to have Devin Townsend over.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: I don't know if anybody knows him, but he's like a crazy Canadian prog-metal artist guy, but funny enough, we're not currently living in BC, but when we were last year, we lived probably an hour away from him, so at some point I am hoping that our paths will cross. Devin Townsend, he's a crazy guy too so he would make a very interesting dinner guest!

Suz: Love it.

Leah: And then I got a say I'd love to have dinner with Enya.

Suz: Mmm.

Leah: When I first learned about her career, I was like I want her career! She doesn't tour at all, and she lives in the castle and puts out records once every five or ten years - like that's the dream! She's amazing, and she's kind of mysterious because she just doesn't tour, she's not like on TV a lot, so I would love to get to know her.

Suz: Mmm. That's awesome, I love it! I am going to try to get myself invited to the dinner if it happens. So my last question is, every week on this podcast, or most weeks, we usually have a downloadable worksheet or checklists so our listeners can take action on what they've learned, so when it's an interview I always ask my guests, what is one action you would like our listeners to take this week?

Leah: Well if people are interested to follow what I'm doing with my crowdfunding or my music career you can definitely go to the crowdfunding page, you can see how I structured that whole page, it's ancientwinter.com, that's the album title and you can see what's going on there, and if you're interested in the music business side of things and learning more about what we do and how we help people with the e-commerce side of things, you can actually book a call and we can talk to you and just see where you're at and see if we're able to help or not, and that's just callSMA.com.

Suz: Wonderful! So everyone, links to everything that Leah has mentioned in this very inspiring podcast episode can be found in the show notes, so make sure you go check that out! Leah, I know your time is short, so thank you so much for spending it with us I really appreciate it.

Leah: Oh it was wonderful, and I'd love to come back anytime you'll have me!

Suz: Great, thanks so much!

Leah: Thanks!

I hope you enjoyed that conversation as much as I did. There are so many gems to take from today's episode but if you only take away ONE I hope it's this:

None of this is magic, a quick fix/one-size-fits all solution, nor impossible.

If you believe in your talent, if you take the time to get clear on the steps you're going to take and take them {and accept the mess that often comes with it}, if you are willing to get real with your fans and pay attention to what they need from you, and if you are committed to finding the right people for your team you CAN build the career you want on YOUR terms and in YOUR way.

Stop looking for someone to tell you what you should and shouldn't do {anyone listen to [Episode 73](#) recently?} and start finding people who are going to help you carry out what you want to do.

That all being said, there is SO much more to learn from Leah, not to mention so much more music to enjoy from her so be sure to visit the show notes for access to ALL things Leah

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McHenry - her music, her courses, and her podcast and more. Simply go to www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep74.

Feel free leave a comment on the show notes page to ask Leah a question or share what your biggest takeaway was from today's episode! And remember, you can also email me at any time - suz@therockstaradvocate.com - and I'll be sure to get back to you.

Until next time, Rock/Star! Have a wonderful week and I hope to see you back here next week so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.