

MANAGING YOUR CAREER (AND YOURSELF AS WELL)

A WORKSHOP DEVELOPED FOR THE BOSTON POE ADVANCED, 2011

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YOU'VE FOUND your passion in the organ. You've taken countless classes in theory, history, improvisation, and transposition. You might have even spent the required 10,000 hours experts say it takes for mastery. How do you translate it all into a successful career?

It is possible, and even probable, that after all this, a student still hasn't acquired the skills to effectively manage her career. In coaching musicians of all ages, I've developed these steps to enable my clients to work from their strengths and passions, and develop their intra- as well as interpersonal skills. I used this outline of teaching these skills with the Boston POE Advanced students, but it could easily be adapted for any age group or delivered as a chapter program.

The presenter or speaker should tailor the material from the topics below to the needs of the group. Actively engage the participants by using questions and tools to draw them out and send them out compelled to digest the handout and put a plan into action. Save the handout for the end of the workshop.

Tools for Self-Exploration

"Seek first to understand, then be understood." Stephen Covey via St. Francis of Assisi becomes "Seek first to understand yourself."

—Jeffrey Gitomer

The Internet and our technology-focused lives make knowing oneself, not to mention having inspired, original thought, increasingly difficult. We cannot begin to have a successful career until we have built our own inner integrity.

Give participants one minute to think about and then answer one or more of these questions in the group.

Who are you?

- Can you remember your earliest musical experience? What was it/when?
- At this moment in your life, what is the one most significant thing about you? Why?
- Name three things about which you feel passionately.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Strong Interest Inventory, Clifton Strengths Finder, and professional as-

sessments from professors, performers, contests, and colleagues will help further the exploration.

Your Personal Commercial/One-Minute Drill

Every time we meet someone is an opportunity! Each and every one of us should have at least one one-minute drill—we should have one for every position we hold or job we perform. Write it out and perfect it. Memorize it. Go back to it and continue to edit and improve it over time. Once you've got it down, you'll be better able to adapt it on the spot, depending on whom you meet, to ask a power question or two to engage him or her.

Tell the listener who you are. What do you do? Where? Be creative. Be you! Nobody else can do that. (30 seconds max)

Then ask power questions of the person to whom you're speaking. Where do you study/teach? What do you like about . . . ? etc.

Careers in and around Music and the Arts

"Whether you think you can, or whether you think you can't—you're right!"

—Henry Ford

Organists are such a creative and imaginative group of musicians. Most of us have several different jobs that span the distance from civic, educational, and religious institutions, and likely include "day" jobs as well. With careful consideration, it is possible to find a place in a number of these realms where we can passionately engage in the work we do. The old adage "if you choose work you love, you'll never have to work a day in your life" should be posted by every musician's desk. It is possible to achieve this, but it often takes tenacity.

"To my eyes and ears the organ will ever be the King of Instruments." —Mozart

Brainstorm careers in and around music and the arts—possibilities, teaching, performance, sacred posts, church work, music industry.

- What are the participants' dream careers?
- How to assemble a career in music? (winning combinations); where does each see himself based on various as-

sessments? (organ instructor, choral director, church musician?). What are complementary jobs?

- What training and preparations will get her there? Will the student wish to focus on an artist diploma, have access to the variety of programs at a large university, be best suited to a small incubator college, pursue music and another passion at the same time?

What College Suits You Best?

"I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes." —Walt Whitman

The variety of options in today's college market are as vast as the number of students who attend college. Having been through the college search twice and going around again now with my youngest son, I can say that it is likely the single most concerning, time-consuming item on many POE students' agenda. It goes without saying that we must help the student to match her own self-assessment, goals, and abilities with the various types of college music programs.

- Review of the different types of schools and degree programs (conservatories, universities, liberal arts colleges, state schools, artist's diploma, dual degrees).

- Give tips on acing the college application process (steps and time line for preparation). I highly recommend getting the best support for this process a student can afford. By this I mean supporting the student to do his/her best work (and not choreographing or doing the work for the student). Pressure is high to get into certain schools, but many students will do better in other schools—the powerful role of certain alumni associations notwithstanding. Statistically, more Nobel prizewinners and other prizewinners and success stories come from small schools.

Building Your Skills

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning." —Benjamin Franklin

Teachers and educational professionals do a great job helping students develop a formidable, balanced arsenal of skills. Rather than ticking down through a list of skills with the thought

"I know that," we should always ask "How well do I know that?" We can learn from everyone.

- Encourage students to search for the right teachers for them and the subject or instrument they wish to study. Great teachers abound, but matching teacher and student is key.

- There are as many ways to approach technical skills as there are teachers. POEs are a terrific way for students to break out of the one-way approach. Encourage them to do so with organ, choral, theoretical, and practical skills.

- Be an avid learner and never stop. Don't waste time.

Managing Career/Technology

"You must plan to win, prepare to win, and expect to win." —Zig Ziglar

Career and life management is rapidly evolving. The Internet has impacted every aspect of our society, not only in how we transfer information and what we think but in actually changing the way we think. We must always use it in a responsible, professional manner.

Manage your career so that you can also have a life (business skills).

- Always maintain a professional presence on the Web. It goes without saying that negative, derisive, divisive, lewd comments will never further your career.

- Build your brand and marketing by getting up to date with technology, so that you use less time with tech and more time creating!

- Is the Internet the best place to look for work? Sorry, but the majority of jobs are still filled through networking! However, employers will check out your online presence—so make sure it's worthy of your highest career goals.

Connections, connections, connections are essential to all aspects of your career development. You could do an entire day's presentation on connections and still not have covered all the salient points and perfected all the skills needed to connect. Harvey Mackay, organizational consultant and personal management guru, says that the two things that affect our growth and success in life are (1) the people we meet and (2) the books we read.

- Who, what, when, where, how to build and maintain your connections. It's said that students who graduate in 2012 will have at least ten jobs in their careers. Add in all the gigs we need to thrive, and that's a lot of interpersonal work.

- Social networking that is also professional. Always, always take the opportunity to connect with everyone you meet every day. Get their names, contact information, and a few items of per-



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sonal information into your PDA. Look for creative ways to stay connected.

- Develop effective behavioral skills, people skills and relationship-building skills. Make the effort to improve your interpersonal skills and work on them every chance you get. This is related to self-exploration and the will to learn and grow.

As you get your training, take the appropriate level AGO certification exam.

Perform, Compete, Lead

You've practiced, studied, and distinguished yourself among your peers. It's time to make a name for yourself. Don't feel ready? You might be one of these people who never will be ready without a push. With the approval of your teacher, go ahead and do it anyway!

Take advantage of opportunities to perform, either solo or with other musicians.

- Chapter events are wonderful places to get your performing feet wet.
- Accompany school or community groups and other instrumentalists. Perform a solo recital.
- Get to know the organs in your area. Organists will often share much wisdom and practice time if you'll only ask.

Ask your teacher about participating in a competition.

- You'll learn many management skills, work harder, and meet new and interesting musicians.
- Don't be afraid to go outside your area to a competition; you'll get the added bonus of travel to a new and interesting destination.
- Competitions and juries help prepare you for more auditions and the job market.

Take every leadership opportunity that comes to you (within reason, of course). Lead a chorus, teach a class, run for representative of your student organization. Get a church job, run for church council, or start your own publishing company. A good liberal arts education will afford the student ample opportunities for leadership and growth across disciplines.

Your comfort and level of skill in leading, performing and competing will increase in direct proportion to how much you put yourself out there. So get out there and just do it!

Mentors, Colleagues, and Vital Friends

The value of positive mentors and professional connections cannot be overstated! Get a positive mentor. Aim high. Be a positive mentor. You may have many mentors in your life, and you may mentor many. The mentors in my life have made all the difference.

Surround yourself with the absolute best friends.

- Your friends are a reflection of yourself; be the friend you want and you will be blessed.
- Are your friends helping you, or holding you back? Contrary to common wisdom, we outgrow some of our friends. It is neither realistic nor healthy to keep all friends for a lifetime.

Always give value first in all your relationships. What you give will return to you tenfold, but not necessarily from whom it was given.

Remember, people are always more interested in hearing or talking about themselves. Be a listener.

Young people can be cruel, especially to artists and musicians, and organists perhaps more so than others. It's very important to teach them how to handle the people who put them down.

- They need to part ways but with positive words.
- They should never return the favor by using the same tactics. Teach them to turn the other cheek and move on.
- Teach them to lead by positive example.

Avoid pukers at all costs. In his *Little Green Book of Getting Your Way*, Jeffrey Gitomer coined the term pukers to describe people who put us down, rain on our parade, or try to kill our dreams.

- They make us feel stupid, inadequate, ridiculous.
- They like to share failures or make fun of others.
- They do this to hide their own low self esteem, jealousy, envy.
- They're cynical.

The main reason people rain on your parade is because they don't have one of their own. How sad is that?

Your Success Is Up to You

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes."

—William James

So what will success look like? That's an important question to ask and keep ever before yourself. Many describe it as something like "the realization of progressively worthy goals." In the end, with all our excellent training, the 10,000 hours of practicing, it all comes down to attitude. Attitude is the most important thing you can develop to ensure career success.

"Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results; bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results." (As a Man Thinketh)

—James Allen

When you notice yourself saying these things, it might be negative attitude creeping in.

- What's in it for me?
- It doesn't pay enough
- It's not my job
- It's not my fault

Fear, rejection, justification, self-doubt, uncertainty, and the sense of being unlucky all contribute to negative attitude.

"Attitude is a gift—a gift you give yourself!"

—Jeffrey Gitomer

Everyone can develop a positive attitude by working at it every day. Even the people who may appear to have been born with that sunny disposition work at it. These tips will help.

- Work on your skills every day.
- Develop self-confidence, positive anticipation, determination to succeed, and a certainty that you deserve good fortune.
- Smile. People who smile are statistically more successful, and it takes fewer muscles to smile. Seems like a no-brainer.

As you work through this outline, encourage the participants to share their stories related to each of the areas—it's what they most want to do. Encourage them to talk about their greatest passions, college search experiences, dream careers, experiences with mentors, etc. As I proceeded through the workshop, I found most of the adults in the surrounding area not only drew near but sat up close. I hope it will also be a success for your POE or chapter program!

"Music is your own experience, your own thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you there's a boundary line to music. But, man, there's no boundary line to art."

—Charlie Parker

Suggested Reading

I'm a big fan of libraries, and will usually try books by reserving them at the library. I suggest that you purchase this basic library of "wisdom books." Go to Bestbookbuys.com, Amazon.com/used, or BarnesandNoble.com/used, and you should be able to purchase most of them for a dollar or less plus shipping. Then you can flag, highlight, and underline to your heart's content, so that you can access the information again and again.

Brockman, John, ed. *Is the Internet Changing the Way You Think? The Net's Impact on Our Minds and Future*, Harper Perennial.

These questions are provocatively answered by more than 100 leading thinkers from all disciplines and walks of life.

Canfield, Jack. *The Success Principles*, Harper Collins.

This success bible has few peers.

Cikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow*, Harper Perennial.

Finding and keeping in that state where we're so involved in our work that nothing else matters, and we would willingly do it even at great cost! Don't miss this book.

Emoto, Masaru. *The Hidden Messages in Water*, Ataria Books.

The stunning chronicles of the discovery of the consciousness of water and its sensitivity to music and the printed and spoken word—in any language! Probably the biggest runaway best seller in the history of the world. A must-read.

Gitomer, Jeffrey. *Little Gold Book of Yes Attitude*, Financial Times Press.

_____. *Little Green Book of Getting Your Way*, Financial Times Press.

_____. *Little Black Book of Connections*, Financial Times Press.

You will refer to these books over and over again for insight into achieving success in all areas of your life.

Hagberg, Karen. *Stage Presence from Head to Toe*, Scarecrow Press.

Elementary wisdom on all aspects of performance, so that, as Hagberg says, our bad stage presence won't ever again ruin our performance.

Jeffers, Susan. *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: Dynamic Techniques for Turning Fear, Indecision, and Anger into Power, Action, and Love*, Fawcett Columbine.

The original bible on getting past fear.

Johnson, Steven. *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, Riverhead Books.

While ostensibly analyzing the process of generating ideas, Johnson, in his broad and deep understanding of disciplines, takes us on an exhilarating trip through cultures to uncover new terrain in the generation of ideas.

Jordan, James. *The Musician's Soul*, GIA.

_____. *The Musician's Spirit*, GIA.

_____. *The Musician's Walk*, GIA.

The musician's bedside readers of wisdom, anecdotes, and quotes.

Keith, Kent. *The Paradoxical Commandments*, Berkley.

Keith submitted these as a Harvard student in the 1960s, and they are still relevant today. A book about the grace, wisdom, and happiness that comes from facing the worst in our world with the best in ourselves.

Langer, Ellen. *On Becoming an Artist*, Ballantine Books.

This professor of psychiatry and author of *Counterclockwise* gives similarly compelling insight into being an artist.

Leonard, George. *Mastery*, Dutton.

For anyone who wishes to master anything in life. Beautifully written.

Pressfield, Steven. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*, Warner.

Essential mind work for achieving success in any goal in life.

Rath, Tom. *Vital Friends*, Gallup Press.

Rath categorizes our friends into builders, collaborators, connectors, mind openers, champions, companions, energizers, and navigators. Having friends in all these roles, and being a friend to others in these roles is essential to our success.

Robinson, Sir Kenneth. *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Penguin Books.

This book should not be missed by any human being who wants to contribute at the highest level, and see and help develop the innate gifts of others.

Tzu, Lao. *Tao te Ching*, trans. Ralph Alan Dale or Stephen Mitchell.

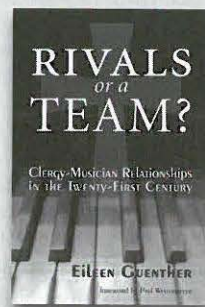
Absolutely essential wisdom!

Zander, Benjamin, and Rosamund Stone Zander. *The Art of Possibility*, Harvard Business School Press.

Any musician who does not understand "one buttock playing," and any person wishing to light a spark in life or career must read this book.

Cheryl Duerr, AAGO, is a career and life coach with the Concord Coaching Company in Lexington, Mass., Councillor for Region I, and minister of music at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Attleboro, Mass.

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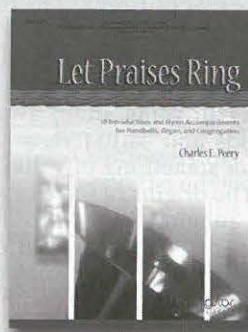
Rivals or a Team?

Clergy-Musician Relationships in the Twenty-First Century

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