Indie Band Insights

Thrive instead of survive

Michael Ippersiel

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Introduction

Thank you for downloading your copy of Indie Band Insights. I hope that you enjoy reading about the major keys to achieving success as an indie band today and that you find this report of value in your music business pursuits, whether it's getting more gigs or making a full time living as a musician.

This book has been written as a result of years of direct experience in the indie music scene as a performer, song and lyric writer, manager, booking agent, chief cook and bottle washer. I toiled away in haphazard fashion for years before a lot of the wisdom present in this book was revealed to me. The unfortunate thing is that by the time I had come to most of these conclusions - I was no longer active in the scene and therefore unable to truly capitalize from what I'd learned.

My last few years in the music business brought a lot of clarity and understanding. I realized that most bands are working much harder than they need to. There are amazing bands toiling in relative obscurity that will never see a shred of the success that they deserve, I know this because I worked alongside some of them and counted myself among their number.

While I could keep what I've learned to myself and let everyone else figure things out the hard way like I did, I realized that all those years of experience I gained would have been meaningless - and that didn't sit well with me.

Looking around the internet, I didn't see a lot of other options for indie bands. Most of the information online is related to the music industry and how it's changing - which while good to know isn't going to necessarily help you with your gig this weekend. Other sites promise amazing marketing techniques and tips but require that you pay up first. While I'm not knocking these sites (in fact I highly respect some of the people behind them) I think that there is a better way.

Looking back on my origins in music I wonder what could have been different if someone had shown me the right way early on in my career. The internet wasn't an accessible resource in those days, but today it's the reason why I can freely offer this report to help anyone that's looking for indie band advice from someone that's been there.

Beyond coaching others another question kept nagging at me: What would be the outcome of more indie bands working together for their mutual benefit?

Entire scenes could change almost overnight and spread to others, eventually spanning the continent. Maybe I'm a dreamer, but I believe that this change is possible. We have the opportunity to balance the scales and earn a great living with the music that we make.

Can one little report do all that? Not really. There's no way I can put everything I know into a small report, but there is more on the way. Read these indie band insights, think about them and apply them to your band. If they truly resonate with you there will be more direction for you at the end of the report.

I want to commend you for searching for answers rather than settling for the status quo. If you've ever thought that there must be a better way to get by in life as a musician, I hope that this report will confirm it.

The main insights that make up this report include:

- Your band is a business
- The importance of your music scene
- Belief in yourself
- Leveraging your resources
- Making allies instead of enemies
- **D**o **I**t **Y**ourself or **DIY**

I'm not going to pretend that I invented everything in this report. Besides my 30-something years of life experience as a musician, father, husband and writer, much of the wisdom I'm presenting to you was discovered through research in business, self help and spiritual literature. Many musicians might not think to look in these areas for ways to improve their fortune in the music industry, perhaps now they will.

Sincerely,

Michael Ippersiel

Making Money and Overcoming Self Doubt

In the movie The Matrix, Neo is prophesied as "the one" who can bring down the Matrix and single-handedly save all mankind from enslavement. He's the best of the best, Morpheus knows this but there's just one slight problem: Neo doesn't quite believe it himself.

Neo (from the movie the Matrix) had Morpheus' unwavering belief and support, who do you have in your corner?

Even though he has a kick ass mentor (Morpheus) to show him the ropes, self doubt stops Neo from believing that he's capable of living up to the expectations placed upon him.

Let's cut back to reality here for a moment; do you have some self doubts that are holding you back?

Chances are that you do. I mean, compared to Neo (who has a prophecy to back him up and a mentor like Morpheus who trains him and reveals every secret that he knows about the Matrix) we have squat!

Musicians are often surrounded by people who reinforce that you can't make money with music – they're like Cipher who gives Neo the sage advice: "If you see an agent, you do like the rest us: run!" If Neo followed that advice the movie would end right there.

So how do you create belief in yourself?

That's a great question, and there are a few different ways to do it. Here are the ones that work best.

1. **Validation**. Neo had Morpheus' unwavering belief and support, who do you have in your corner? A parent or significant other is a good start; but deep down we know that they might be somewhat biased – right? Having other

people like a promoter, booking agent or manager saying good things about you will go a long way to helping you really believe in yourself. Submit your demos to others for an honest review – preferably as one of those demo review panels at a music conference like North by Northeast. Get the feedback you need so you can know if you need to strengthen your song-writing Kung Fu or whether you're ready to make a career of it and swallow that red pill.

2. **Actual Proof**. Similar to validation, but more about the actual tangible results of your efforts. Do you have any sales to speak of? Increasing members or comments on your websites? Are you asked for autographs? Has someone set up a fan website for you? Have you won any competitions? Even unexpected praise from another band could well be the bit of proof you need to start believing in yourself.

3. **Surround yourself with positive messages** regarding your goals. Rather than associate with people that imply that you'll "never make it" associate with those that believe in you. Find sources that inspire and empower you like self improvement books, or reading biographies of famous musicians that overcame adversity to reach success. Think positively about your chosen career.

4. **Find a mentor**. There are plenty of people that you may never have heard of that pay the bills from the gigs they play and the music and merchandise that they sell. Find them and learn as much as you can from them. Let them be the inspiration and proof that your dream is achievable. You'll come to realize that these people are no more special or talented than you are. Your goals will seem that much more achievable as a result.

Any one or two of these items will slowly build your trust, but incorporating all of them (especially #4) will really help jumpstart your belief. Keep telling yourself that you can do it. Don't let any failures get to you…just keep at it.

If you feel like you're lying to yourself, like you don't actually 'believe' in yourself – keep repeating all of the above until you do. The more proof, validation and encouragement you have – the more realistic and believable your goal will become!

The Facts are over Rated

We may have a tendency to focus on the facts too much at first, and use them to justify why we can't believe or achieve something. For instance, if one goal is to have

100 people come to your show and you've never had more than 10 – you may think something like, "Yeah right, I'll never get 100 people out to one of my shows".

But that's a cop-out! Just because something hasn't happened *yet* doesn't mean that it can't happen at all.

Think about it, at one point in your life you couldn't walk, speak or feed yourself – then suddenly a day came when you could. The facts are 100% against you up until that particular point in time when something changes and you can magically do something new. The same is true with the music business.

One minute Neo couldn't dodge a bullet – the next he could.

The facts are overrated and belief is underrated. If you don't believe in yourself – nobody else will either. Follow down this path and your lack of belief will become a cancer that eats away your dreams until there's nothing left.

Without belief, you'll undermine yourself and create a self-fulfilling prophecy. You'll stop marketing online or hanging up posters thinking to yourself, "Why should I bother? I'm lucky if even 10 people come out no matter what I do!"

As Henry Ford said:

> *"Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right."*

So which would you rather be?

Will you take the blue pill and sleep walk along in self doubt and denial? Sabotaging your efforts by rationalizing (telling yourself rational lies) based solely on the facts? Or will you take the red pill, face the uncertainty head on and soar to heights you've never even dreamed of before?

The choice is yours.

Your Band as a Business

A band is a business - I believe this to be true, but many feel that a band is supposed to be 'fun' and running a band like a business would be too much of a 'downer'. I'll state my case and then you can make up your own mind.

Let me further clarify; any serious band is a business. Being a “serious” band doesn’t mean that you scowl a lot, or write deep lyrics about the current state of the world - it means:

- You plan to get paid
- You plan to perform in public
- You plan to write and distribute your own music and merchandise (i.e. product)

If this sounds like your band, then your best chance for success is to start thinking like a business. This doesn't mean that you're 'selling out' or abandoning your creative muse - it means that you don't plan to carry the cost of the band as a personal expense.

If your band isn’t generating any income, you’ll find it next to impossible to:

- Keep your band together
- Make any significant progress
- Record in the studio
- Create merchandise

Believe it or not, playing for fun can turn into no fun at all. Let's explore this idea.

The theory is:
IF playing a show = **fun**
THEN playing more shows = **more fun**!

This sounds pretty straight forward but there's another factor to consider that may not be immediately obvious:

More shows = more costs.

Have you seen the price of gas lately? Booking more shows is going to mean leaving your home town; you're going to have gas, parking and food to purchase. There's also the upkeep on all of your equipment and vehicles.

Playing more is also going to require a deeper set list to draw upon – you can't simply rehash the same songs week after week and expect people to be excited about it. This may require more rehearsal time, which could translate into renting a room hourly or by the month. You may also need to get a recording of your band to be able to successfully book gigs in other towns. Then there are the long distance phone bills for calling venues in other towns to book shows.

Lastly, there's the time it takes to do all of these things and as we all know: time is money. Unless everyone in the band has a day job with similar hours, sooner or later someone is going to have to book a day off, leave work early or switch shifts to make a gig.

The costs add up over time as the gig frequency increases, and what was at first manageable for all can turn into a situation where certain members cannot keep pace. The more financially secure band member(s) may help out these other members, but like any debt unpaid – this can easily become a source of tension within the band.

'Working poor' members within the band may be able to scrape by without buying food or drinks at a show; they're the ones that bring bagged lunches and snacks to save money. Eventually, someone decides to make a run for Tim Horton's or pizza or even split on a pitcher of beer and guess who feels left out?

Are you starting to get the picture? While performing on stage is fun, there is a lot of work that happens before and after the show. If you choose not to be serious about your band and treat it as a business, you are unwittingly choosing to place a serious burden on yourself in other ways. As tensions increase, members may quit and perpetuate a revolving door of musicians that come and go in your band.

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Many musicians will endure these needless hardships because of the fun of being on stage, and because they believe in their music. However, even they pack it in when they continue to play more shows to empty seats and the sinking feeling that they're wasting their time finally sets in. That's when the band finally dies a death by a thousand cuts.

This is the ultimate cost; losing the band, friendships and your dreams of becoming a successful musician. Deep scars can result with many not being able to shake that they failed, and carry it with them in their future (non music) pursuits. Is this the price you want to pay for having 'fun'?

I don't mean to paint a bleak picture, but this can happen to you if you take the easy and fun way out. Treating your band like a business is the only option unless you wish to play a handful of shows with no general aim or purpose aside from having a few laughs and killing time.

The alternative is treating your band like a business. For your efforts there are many benefits: registering as a business and getting money back from the government,

playing before appreciative audiences, making fans, friends and amazing memories that can last a lifetime and yes…even earning some money along the way.

Wouldn't it be great to have a place to go for band business tips, info and tools without having to pay big bucks or enroll in some college or university program? More on that later…

Why Your Scene Is Important

What is a scene and why should you care? Good question.

A scene is basically the musical embodiment of your city and the participants within it: the bands, audiences, venues, festivals, promoters, and retailers that exist there. Not caring about these things is about as smart as a farmer not caring about the quality of the soil that he plants his crops in.

If a scene doesn't have many venues, then there will be fewer opportunities for bands to perform. If a scene has a low threshold of musical talent, there may be less of an audience willing to come out and listen to live, local music. In the rare instance of amazing venues and terrific bands with no audience - either the bands or venues need to get better at marketing or neither will last for long without an audience to support them.

Bands require both an audience and quality venues to perform to survive. It's in your best interest if you want to maintain a long term music career to ensure there are plenty of both in your town.

While it's safe to assume that bands want to perform in a good local scene - how many of them actually work on scene-building? Let me ask you this up front - how often do you visit your favourite local live venue when you're NOT performing there? If the answer is "hardly ever" isn't that comparable to showing up at your girlfriend's place only when you want sex?

Unfortunately, most bands spend their time deciding why they're better than the other bands on stage instead of thinking about the scene and how to make it better. Many will just bitch about the scene instead. They don't realize that by doing the following things that they are contributing to the demise of their music scene:

- Disregard for other bands – leaving early or right after their set
- Placing all the emphasis on themselves – not helping or promoting other bands
- Headliners refusing to share their earnings with other bands
- Show up late or last minute cancelations
- Unpolished, anti-audience and anti-band behavior, long tear down, lame sound, exceed set time limit, playing drunk and loud.

You can boil all of the above points to one thing: selfishness. Selfishness is at the core of a dead or slowly dying scene. It begins a vicious circle I like to call the **Doom Loop** that churns out nothing but egotistical and jaded indie bands that wouldn't piss on each other if their hair was on fire.

The first way to fix the scene is accept the responsibility that your actions have a direct affect on the rest of the scene. Every single time you interact with another band or venue little ripples are sent out that will eventually find their way back to you. Do your best to help others and good will eventually come of it. Take every opportunity to rip people off or play the part of the unproven rock star and waves of negativity will be your just reward.

One option to fixing the scene is to just leave town and go to a better one. It's not necessarily a bad one, but I also caution you against running away from problems - it's funny how they end up following you in new and varied forms until you face them head on and deal with them!

For those that don't have the option or don't intend to pack up and leave town in search of greener pastures elsewhere, there is hope for your scene if you're willing to put in some effort today.

Making Your Scene Better

The methods of reversing a lame scene are quite simple, I've listed a few of them below.

- Treat others as you'd like to be treated
- Respect other bands, venue staff & sound techs
- Promote yourself and all the other bands on the bill
- Build win/win solutions

At the heart of any great band, scene or venue is a true music enthusiast - someone that lives and dies for live music.

None of these concepts are rocket science - in fact most of us should be quite familiar with them if we've had anything remotely resembling a civilized upbringing. I don't have the space here to go through each point and state why acting in this manner is important, but I hope for the most part they're self explanatory and can be summed up with two further statements:

1. You'll get a lot further in life making friends rather than enemies.
2. Don't shit where you eat.

Here's another fundamental secret to bringing back a music scene from the dead - at the heart of any great band, scene or venue is a true music enthusiast - someone that lives and dies for live music. Think about it for a second - why did you want to perform in a band in the first place? It should be the same reason why the bar owner started a business with an emphasis on live music, or the sound tech went to school for audio engineering - because deep down inside they loved music.

Is that an overly ideal notion? I don't think so. Before any of us could make music ourselves we were fans of other people's music. We sang along to nursery rhymes as toddlers and eventually graduated to listening to the radio before figuring out how to play an instrument ourselves. It is the same for rock stars that sell out stadiums; before they could play a single chord or sell one CD they were fans of music.

If you've been around the block a few times in your scene, you may have lost sight of the side of you that still loves music. You may have become jaded by playing for an unappreciative audience in dive bars while being ripped off by other bands. Yeah, being in a band does have its downside from time to time, but if you can find within you that original music fan and stop thinking about your problems, you'll get a lot further with your music. Trust me.

If you want to make your scene better, you have to take action. Discover other bands, check them out and approach those that mesh well with your sound. Help out a younger band or team up with a veteran band.

Nobody wants to pay good money to watch a lame band butcher songs while staring at their feet and playing through a piece of garbage sound system.

- Pay sincere compliments
- Network
- Plug other bands
- Stay for their full set

Back in the old days, it didn't take much to pack a bar full of music lovers, just add a live band, advertise "Live Rock Band" and watch the building fill up with a line around the block. It doesn't quite work that way today does it?

Now there are many different styles of "Rock" music, people work longer and more varied hours, can't smoke in bars (in many parts of the country) and are increasingly distracted by HD TV and video games – not to mention any other concerts that are going on in the area.

There's a lot of competition for the audience dollar today, and the only way to increase the chances of seeing more of it is to not only be the best band you can be and give them their money's worth, but help build up the scene at the same time.

Nobody wants to pay good money to watch a lame band butcher songs while staring at their feet and playing through a piece of garbage sound system. They don't want to

listen to an act "tune up" on stage for five minutes and they don't want to wait an hour between bands

Audiences are spoiled today; they need more to be entertained, they expect high quality for their dollar and why shouldn't they? Part of the reason that music scenes are suffering is because we, as musicians, aren't providing the type of experiences that the audience wants. We need to produce consistent high quality music with engaging and interactive performances and great sound quality.

If we can do this together, we can slowly win back the live scene, gaining and growing new fans in the process.

Venues

Is there a good venue to perform at in your town? If so – don't just wait until you have a show to pay a visit – check it out at other times too. Not only is this a great way to network and maybe learn some new ways to approach your show or set, it's also about supporting a venue that you like and your scene at the same time.

If there isn't a venue doing live music in your town, maybe you can approach a few and offer to host a jam night. Or perhaps you can start out with basement parties instead; opportunities will arise for those that are on the lookout for them and that aren't afraid of getting directly involved in creating the solution.

A great scene can eventually catch the attention of the whole industry or continent like the Seattle scene did during the grunge era. Though Nirvana, Alice In Chains and Pearl Jam were the biggest acts to come out of that scene – the increased media attention raised the profiles of many other local bands at that time as well. While they may not have had the same careers of their more famous counterparts, you can be sure that they enjoyed added sales and larger more appreciative audiences as a result of the success of these bands.

Competition

Many of you may feel some resistance to helping out other bands, and I'm not surprised if you do. A lot of the first shows that musicians or budding bands are

exposed to are competitions of some kind: battles of the bands and talent shows only have one winner – everyone else is considered a loser.

High school is a time when many bands are formed and it's easy for social groups or cliques to play a part in how bands relate to each other. It's not cool to like another band that isn't part of your music genre.

Having to be the 'best' while other bands are considered 'the enemy' is a concept that doesn't help anyone. One of the great things about music is that there is no real competition involved. Sports enthusiasts must pick a team and cheer for it – any 'real fan' would not be caught dead with another team's jersey. Music doesn't quite work like that – sure music enthusiasts aren't going to enjoy every single band under the sun, but they're also going to have CDs and T-shirts from multiple bands.

It doesn't matter who 'wins' at a competition - whether in music or in sport - nobody goes home with all the fans. So why act like its winner take all?

The bands that fixate on competing with other bands are missing the point.

It doesn't matter who 'wins' at a competition - whether in music or in sport – nobody goes home with all the fans. So why act like its winner takes all?

Competition, even if it is mainly imagined, can be fierce between younger bands. My band had our rivals allegedly detune our instruments before our set. We didn't actually witness this happening, only surmised afterwards (we played on oblivious to it until we watched the video tape afterwards and wondered why it sounded so bad). At another gig we had another rival band perform before us and then left just prior to our set…taking every single one of their numerous fans with them. We were left playing to hardly anyone as a result.

What was the point really? In each case the other bands attempted to outdo us by making us sound or look bad. While I'm sure the other bands had themselves a good

chuckle about how they pulled one over on us – aside from that, no harm was done. While both of these bands ceased to exist after their high school years, our band continued and grew more prolific; performing more shows than ever before.

I'm not writing about this to claim any sort of superiority over these other bands, but to point out the futility of it all. You don't have to like every single band that you meet – but you also don't have to beat them or make them look bad to succeed. Winning a competition of any kind is not a guarantee that you will continue onward to success, so don't let it go to your head.

You're only as good as your next gig!

If anything, having rival band #2 take all their fans with them while exiting the bar was a gift for us; it taught us for perhaps the first time what it was like to be the 'visitors' at the home team's arena. If for no other reason than spite – we learned to play our hearts out to the few people that remained, and took pride in being able to play enthusiastically whether we were faced with 500 or 5 people in the audience.

There will undoubtedly be times when you play in front of either a hostile or a non-existent crowd. The reality is that this'll happen probably more than you'd like. The sooner you can accept it and move on, the better prepared you'll be.

So rather than waste time and energy creating imagined feuds and rivalries with other bands, work on creating win/win scenarios; tour together, respect each other and help each other get to the next level. Chances are that you'll be happier, go farther, grow your audience and make some friends in the process.

Wouldn't it be great to have a place to learn from and partner with other serious musicians? Like a back stage pass where you could be connected with others that 'get it'. Where you could work together and create opportunities instead of competing and trying to drag each other down? Keep reading to find out more.

Leverage Tactics 101

I recently had the pleasure of taking my seven year old son to his first soccer practice of the year. As I watched the boys playing for a while, something began to dawn on me: believe it or not I discovered that the music business is a lot like a kid's soccer game.

Allow me to elaborate.

At age seven, the basics of soccer are understood, but only a few of the kids understand the nuances of the game. Everyone wants to kick the ball, carry the ball for as long as humanly possible and to score a goal. As a result it's not uncommon to find a huge mob of players from both teams chasing the ball en masse. Players at this age have a tendency to hog the ball and attempt to carry it the entire length of the field by themselves. Maybe one in 50 attempts are successful, the rest of the time the player in question is usually robbed of the ball or completely out of steam by the time they're in range of the goal.

While this is entertaining to watch to a certain extent, it's not exactly the most effective way to actually score a goal is it? Let's face it – playing against everyone on both teams is hard work. But why work hard when you can work smart instead?

Remember that little 'nuance' I mentioned earlier? It's a tiny little concept that only the best teams possess in abundance. While it's a hard pill to swallow at first for many of the kids, it's painfully obvious to the parents standing on the sidelines what the team needs to succeed…

It's called teamwork.

Okay, so how does all this apply to the music business and what can you take away from this to make booking gigs get a whole lot easier? Read on my friend.

For the typical seven year old, passing the ball to a teammate is an alien concept. However, a team of ball hogs never (or rarely) score. Eventually the kids realize that no matter how much they hog the ball, they're not actually scoring any goals. Even these kids know that you can't win a game if you don't score a goal!

I've seen similar scenarios with indie bands and gigs; everyone wants a gig, but nobody wants to book one. Bands often feel like they're in competition for gigs; they're hogging the ball instead of willing to pass off to another band. It's a completely alien concept for these bands to consider the advantages of teaming up instead of making another trip up the field only to run out of gas before mustering a kick at the net. With a little teamwork that wasted effort could be transformed into the game winning (or gig winning) goal.

Nobody succeeds in the music business alone. If you don't believe me, watch the Grammy's awards ceremony sometime – I have yet to hear someone thank only "me, myself and I" during an acceptance speech!

Before we go any further, I am not suggesting that you give your gigs away to another band – I'm recommending that you invite another band to perform at your gig. There are numerous advantages that can be had this way, you can relax a little bit and let someone else help carry the ball for you. A second band can help with both online promotion and the ever so vital routine of hanging posters as well.

Get this straight right now; nobody succeeds in the music business alone. If you don't believe me, watch the Grammy's awards ceremony sometime – I have yet to hear someone thank only "me, myself and I" during an acceptance speech! If you're not at the stage where you have a manager or a booking agent, having good associations with some cool independent bands similar to yours can make all the difference in the world.

So, are you hogging the ball? Or are you open standing next to the goal waiting for the pass that never comes? Have you been doing things the hard way all this time?

Just like the soccer kid who 'gets it' and passes the ball is more likely to receive a pass in return – the same goes for bands. The only catch is you must be willing to book your own shows to really get this concept working for you.

Let's say you play one show a month, or 12 in a year. You're booking it yourself, so you're going to handle everything from designing and distributing posters, to promoting the gig online, to collecting the cover charge at the door. You're going to have to contact the talent buyer or promoter numerous times to confirm each show. Your potential audience for the show is whatever your typical draw is plus whatever walk-in traffic the venues normally have. If you do some great promotion – end up on a high profile college or internet radio show, or in the local paper, you may draw in some complete strangers that only just heard of you. In most cases, you might only get that kind of attention with a CD release.

So how do you expand your reach without working all that much harder?

Invite other bands!

The first benefit is this – since bands are pretty much always looking for shows to perform at, they'll be thankful to have a good quality show with a cool band like yours just fall into their lap without having to hassle promoters themselves. The second benefit is that you've now added another bands audience to the total potential concert attendees. Having more people at a show is great, more people pay to get in, more beer is sold, the potential to sell merchandise increases and hey – it's just plain more fun to play in front of a larger crowd right?

Chances are you're familiar with another band that you can probably invite right now. Now it's turning into a party, you get to perform and hang out with a buddy band at the same time in front of a potentially larger audience. But why stop there? Though it may be tempting to only do shows with one or two bands that you know really well and like, you're limiting your exposure.

I found an ideal scenario to be three bands per night. Not only does this arrangement allow each band to have a decent amount of time to perform on stage (who wants to play for 20 minutes or less? You're just getting started!), it also exposes you to the fan base of two other bands besides your own. They're going to promote the show on their website as well, so word about the gig will be carried by more than just you.

Want to have new gigs find you instead of you always having to chase them? Here's how to formulate some powerful win/win scenarios with other bands using something that I like to call my viral gig-generating formula.

Here it is in a nutshell:

The viral gig-generating formula

Start out by inviting two different bands to every show you do for the whole year. If possible try to have at least one other local band (to maximize the number of fans that will attend your show - the more local fans you have the more likely they will show up) and another band from a semi-local scene farther away that you'd like to break into.

Are you with me so far? You've got 12 shows per year and are ideally playing with a maximum of 24 bands (2 different bands per show). Want to know how to triple your gigs overnight without working any harder? Or in this case – how to turn 12 gigs into 36?

You ask to 'trade shows' or 'swap gigs' with them. If all 24 bands that you play with give you one show in return then when you add their shows to the 12 that you're already booking yourself you have 36 shows for the year instead of 12. That was easy!

This model works in four ways:

- You create working relationships and contacts with many bands
- Increase your exposure to more live music enthusiasts
- Break into new markets/scenes much easier than cold calling

- Discover new venues/promoters easily through other bands

The best part is that you generated these extra shows while being the 'good guy' - offering quality gigs to other bands first rather than begging them to give you shows.

Now I admit that this is an ideal scenario. Unless you live in a 'perfect scene', there are good odds that not every single band that you play with will honour their end of the agreement. Bands will break up or they may offer you a show on a date that you're already booked to play elsewhere. Still, if you manage double or even 1.5 times the gigs with little extra effort, I think it's worth the risk involved.

Good bands add to your credibility and help to turn your next gig into an 'event'. They're also experts on their particular scene as well, and can refer you to other key contacts.

Adopt this mindset and you see that other bands rather than 'rivals' can become a valuable resource. Good bands add to your credibility and help to turn your next gig into an 'event'. They're also experts on their particular scene as well, and can refer you to other key contacts.

So get smart, work these contacts, organize them and be a true professional. Making the first contact and offering a gig to another band invokes the law of reciprocity – they'll feel obligated to return the favour for the gift of the gig.

Always be on the lookout for more bands to partner up with. Not only can they help to fill up your gig schedule and diversify your fan base – they'll also replace older bands that go on hiatus or breakup.

Not only are you helping other bands and yourself, you're making the scene better one gig at a time. Everyone wins.

Putting together win/win relationships requires having other great bands to work with. How do you find them? How do they find you? Imagine how much easier it would be to have like-minded people in the same place who understand and are eager to apply the 'viral gig-generating formula'?

I hope this has opened your eyes to see that there is a lot of potential in booking your own shows and working with (instead of fighting against) other bands. Now I'm going to give you another great tip on how to get more people out to your shows.

Exploit your Guest List

Most of us overlook the guest list and how by using it correctly you can draw more people and have a heck of a lot more fun at your shows. You'll even get some crucial networking in at the same time. Want to know how…just keep on reading!

When you book or are booked to do a show, it's a good habit to find out if you get a guest list. A guest list is basically a VIP list of people that get to see the show and pay nothing to get in. This is very important and worth repeating - these people on your guest list do not pay a cent to come in and watch your show. Why is that a good thing?

People love to feel like they've been 'hooked up' with a deal or a discount; it makes them feel important - who doesn't love that? This is great for you because not only have you made someone quite happy, you've also gotten someone else to come out to your show and be part of the audience out there cheering for you. Sounds like another one of those dang win/win scenarios doesn't it?

Most bands are only concerned with getting out paying customers to their show, either because they're collecting the cover charge or because they have to sell a certain amount of tickets to be able to participate in the show for some large night clubs. Even your die-hard fans will get sick of you asking them to come out and support the band; but I can assure you that nobody gets tired of feeling important or getting something for free - like admission to a show.

Although I have more to share with you on this topic, I'm going to stop there and let your mind drink in the possibilities. This is a simple and yet powerful concept that can get more people out to your shows and allow you to network with peers from other bands. Also, and perhaps more importantly, having people there to see you at the show is just plain more fun.

The guest list members tend to be more interactive with the band, and are merrier (might have something to do with spending the money they saved on admission for beer or merchandise instead?). Get a few of these people in the room and they can help warm up a crowd of strangers over to your side by the time your set is finished.

Embrace Technology

We live in an amazing time in history, when else can your music take on a life of its own and be heard around the world? Not only can people learn about you and download your music 24 hours a day from your website, you don't even have to be awake!

It's easy to take technology for granted and complain about how much harder it is to sell music today. The key is to not try and be all things to all people. Be yourself and find your target market and go from there. If you're open to the idea of giving your music away for free under the Creative Commons license – you can potentially reach the whole world with your music.

Put it out there and see what happens. The key is that you have to offer something unique – you can't just be like everyone else. How engaging is your material? Do you change it up and interact with your audience during the performance? If somebody made a video of your gig…would anyone want to watch it?

Technology has come a long way fast. The record industry has become virtually unrecognizable overnight. Just as CDs have become digital downloads that can easily be replicated and sent around the world in seconds via the internet. Soon you'll also be able to perform live in your local bar while being webcasted online; fans will be able to attend every concert regardless of where they live in the world. All you'll need to do is give them a good reason why they should bother to watch you online in the first place.

Virtual concerts will be the way of the future.

Technology is your friend and has truly made it possible for an unknown indie band to reach the entire globe with their music.

Don't let technology scare you. If you're not into learning how to do all of this stuff yourself – others can help you out. You can also phase-in certain things over time, do the ones you can for less and delegate the rest to others for a fee.

Technology is synonymous with change – it's always evolving in new ways. While this could be a source of frustration also remember the benefits: technology renders:

- The impossible – possible
- The slow – fast
- The expensive – cheap
- The difficult – easy

Don't believe me? Just compare what it used to be like to create and manage a website in the 90's versus running a blog today – big difference! For the benefit of those who weren't there, it took more than two clicks and required an FTP upload (on dial-up no less!) to do something as simple as change a little bit of text on a website. Blogs eliminate all of these steps and automatically display your newest posts first - gotta love that!

Not so long ago, bands sent newsletters or fanzines by snail mail. They had to pay for photocopies and postage to mail their list, spending their own precious dollars in the hopes that someone might actually order a t shirt or CD through the mail to help offset all these costs. Now you just need to send an email. Aside from paying for your internet service provider - it costs nothing more to email 10 or 10 thousand different people and it only takes a few seconds.

There are many people that fear technology, but don't let it be you. Technology has continued to liberate musicians over the decades and now provides us with the ability to reach people over time and distance whether awake or asleep. A lot of the

administration, distribution and sales functions that used to make getting a major record label deal attractive can now be semi or even fully automated.

Here are some tools of the trade that you should consider using to get your band up and running on the internet.

Website(s) - Yeah, plural. When it comes to websites, the more you have the merrier. Each site or web page that you have is like a sign post that you can use to direct people to your main site (this is ideally your bandname.com) making it easier for you to be found. Having multiple web pages point to your official .com website is crucial to making it easier to be found in a world with billions of websites.

Having pages at Facebook, Myspace and ReverbNation are great for starters, but you should also have your own official band website complete with a fully registered domain name. Having your own website will mean two immediate expenses, a domain registration fee (for www.yourbandname.com) and webhosting charges. Getting your own domain costs between $9 - $15 for most of the competitive domain name registrars out there like Godaddy, or Sibername (the company I use).

Webhosting can be as little as a couple of bucks a month if you know what you need and where to look and is well worth it because you can easily set up a Wordpress blog to run your website. A self-hosted Wordpress installation is free and there are tons of plug-ins and themes that you can choose from to tweak the functionality to your heart's content. You also don't have to be a computer programmer to figure out how to use it all (and Wordpress has excellent documentation available).

Still, if you're looking to start small - the least you can do is purchase your official band domain. Then you can use what is called a 'redirect' or 'domain forwarding' to point your URL to a free page you have on a site like Myspace. Having your own website is best, but this at least means you own your band name online and that you can upgrade to webhosting at any point in the future. Hostgator, Bluehost and Geekhosting (the company that I use) are some great services to check out.

Autoresponders - This is a program or web service that allows you to follow up with your fans via email and create segmented lists to maximize the impact of your message. For example, you could have one list that goes out only to local fans and another one for long distance fans - that way you don't have to send needless gig reminders to people that can't attend. Two services to consider include Aweber and Email Aces.

E commerce: If you're like me this is an exciting word because it enables you to sell your digital merchandise (like MP3s, ringtones and DVDs) to people all over the world. Paypal is a great option for bands; there are no monthly fees and they only take approximately 3% of the amount paid out to you when you make a sale. That means if you sold something for $1.00, Paypal would keep 3 cents and pay you the remaining 97. You can hook up your Paypal account to a bank account and transfer money from Paypal to it, or just keep the money there. You can make purchases directly from your Paypal, it's well recognized and safe to use.

If you don't have any web hosting to store your music online you'll have a problem; while Paypal allows you to receive money, you'd still have to manually email the person the MP3s that they purchased. What if you're out of town or your computer is on the fritz? Chances are your customer won't be pleased with you for not getting their merchandise even though you've received their payment. However, that's where a service like Payloadz comes to the rescue. You can create your product and upload it to their service and configure it to automatically send the appropriate file when payment is received - sweet!

I can't go into every technological solution available for bands on the internet here, but I want you to know that there are some amazing opportunities to automate your business online. The population online is huge and is only getting bigger by the day; making money online is a complete numbers game where if enough people are exposed to your stuff you'll eventually get a sale. At first this won't be enough for you to live on, but if you're willing to learn and put in some effort you could see a major portion of your income from online sources.

Wouldn't it be great to learn about the technology you need to use online to promote your band, connect to your fans and sell you music in one place, quickly and easily? With information presented to you in such a way that a musician and not a rocket-scientist can understand it?

Conclusion

If you made it this far in the guide, you obviously have a passion for your music and maximizing your chances for success. I've touched on what I believe are some of the main concepts and mindsets that you need to succeed in the music business; plus I've given you my coveted viral gig-generating formula and a good tip on how to exploit your guest list.

I've started a blog called the Indie Band Alliance that is built on these concepts and expands on them further. If you believe as I do that we can achieve more by working together, learning together, applying solid business techniques and using technology to its fullest – then I invite you to check it out and consider joining. Add your voice and help advance this grass roots "experiment" to the next level. A level where thousands of musicians realize there is a better way to achieve the success that is rightfully theirs. Thank you for reading this report!

Sincerely,

Michael Ippersiel

P.S. I've mentioned a few times throughout this report about the importance of having one place to learn about business, technology, empowerment and alliances in the music industry. A place where there are step by step guides on how to use technology and hook up with other like-minded musicians. This place doesn't exist yet, but it will soon with your help.

I'm creating a members only area that is reserved for only those who have enjoyed the information provided in this Indie Band Insights report and want more. For those that want step by step details, that want audio and video instruction on top of written reports like these and who want to come together and network with other musicians that 'get it' while creating beneficial relationships instead of rivalries.

It's not your fault that you've been struggling to make money with music - almost everything you've ever seen, read or copied from others has been wrong. We can change it by coming together as a community.

If you've gained value from this report and feel that it can benefit others, please share it, and I hope you'll consider becoming a member of the Indie Band Alliance Community. Just register at that link and visit the resources page to find out more. It's 100% free, but only for a limited time.

