



Getting Your Music Into Film & TV In Today's Economy

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GETTING YOUR MUSIC INTO FILM & TV IN TODAY'S ECONOMY

As this publication is being written, the world is experiencing economic turmoil never seen before by this generation. Global financial markets are unstable, and fear is the motivating factor behind what is by all accounts an unprecedented economic contraction. Simply put, both people and institutions such as banks, have lost confidence and are holding on to their money rather than lending it out, using it to make films and television productions, and purchase things.

It's a negative economic climate unlike any most people have seen before. Except, that is, film and television composers and songwriters, because our industry has seen tough times for more than a few years now, as an oversupplied market for music with too many composers and songwriters in the marketplace as compared with the number of jobs and placements available causing licensing fees and composer fees to be driven down to levels never seen before.

This guide will describe specific actions that composers and songwriters can take in order to compete in today's marketplace, a marketplace whose highlights include:

- Declining film and television production
- Declining composer and licensing fees
- Declining corporate spending on industrials and other internal productions
- Far too much music in the marketplace
- Far too many composers competing for a declining number of scoring jobs
- An increasing number of music libraries competing for the same jobs that composers and songwriters are competing for

FIRST STEP: TIME FOR A REALITY CHECK

One of the biggest problems that composers face, especially those who have been in the business for a while, is that they are unwilling or unable to confront the reality of today's marketplace, business climate, and industry situation. This inability to confront leads composers to make bad decisions and assign incorrect priorities to various aspects of their lives and careers, and often succeeds only in creating a distorted or unrealistic view of the industry that feeds a fear of true reality.

Like it or not, the composing business is not a healthy one for all except the very top folks, and even they are facing some very tough competition at their level of the business. Here's a little "tough love" about where we stand as composers today:

THERE ARE WAY, WAY, WAY TOO MANY COMPOSERS AND SONGWRITERS IN THE MARKETPLACE TODAY

This is perhaps the most important reality that we as composers must face. Until there is an "adjustment" in the marketplace and the number of suppliers (composers and songwriters) declines to a reasonable number as compared to the declining number of jobs (composer scoring jobs and music placements), we will have no choice but to work in an environment of severe oversupply.

SCHOOLS ARE CHURNING OUT EVEN MORE YOUNG, TALENTED COMPOSERS EVERY YEAR DESPITE A JOB MARKET UTTERLY UNABLE TO ABSORB THESE NEW COMPOSERS

Various colleges and schools amazingly continue to churn out hundreds of new film and television composers every year with little regard for the bleak career prospects for most of these people, at least for the first 5-7 years of their careers. Often, these new composers are not fully aware of the realities of the industry until they arrive in Los Angeles and are horrified to learn that filmmakers are not beating a path to their door and the number of assistant and apprentice jobs with established composers are very limited.

It's easy to see why colleges, also facing competition, are eager to paint a rosy picture of the world of film and television composing – if the true realities of this industry as it exists today were disclosed to those ready to plunk down tens of thousands of dollars and four years of their life on a college degree in film composing, it's easy to see how enrollments might decline, perhaps considerably. I cannot think of a tougher career path – one where having a college degree means next to nothing when you're attempting to find employment as a film composer.

Bottom line: being a film composer is a lousy career path compared to many other careers. Sure, there are notable exceptions, but the number of exceptions is very, very small. As far as I'm concerned, schools have a moral and ethical duty to disclose the true nature of the industry and workplace/marketplace facts to students before they undertake a four-year course of study. As part of their programs, students should get a much, much greater amount of education in areas such as marketing, management, financial areas such as royalties, and contract law. Most of all, it's time for more schools to really tell the truth to incoming students about their prospects of having a lucrative career as a film and television composer.

MUSIC LIBRARIES ARE DUMPING TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TRACKS ONTO THE MARKETPLACE FOR FREE, SEVERELY DEPRESSING LICENSING FEES (aka SYNC FEES) FOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

One of the most predictable traits of an oversupplied market is plummeting prices and desperate actions, and the actions of music libraries in this regard are a great demonstration of these traits. It's literally a "race to the bottom" and the growing number of music libraries that offer music for free to filmmakers and television producers – hoping to reap the income on performing rights royalties from ASCAP, BMI and SESAC after broadcasts – is increasing. Add to that the overall huge increase in the number of libraries in the marketplace with many composers setting up their own libraries and you have a quickly-saturating library market that, due to fierce price competition, is only accelerating the decline of the "value" of instrumental music for film and television.

MOST COMPOSERS ARE MERCENARIES AND DON'T CARE ENOUGH ABOUT THE INDUSTRY TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE OBVIOUS AND BLATANT PROBLEMS THAT EXIST FOR COMPOSERS.

That's the raw truth, unfortunately. Often out of fear, sometimes out of apathy, or sometimes out of frustration, composers are notoriously bad at getting together and using their collective power and

market share (most music on television is still instrumental music) to create any sort of positive change as an industry. Composers seemingly would rather undercut each other in brutal price competition rather than working together to make this industry a better place for all composers.

This is exactly why ASCAP gets away with paying a one-minute cue in film and television only 20% of what a one-minute song is paid on the same show, watched by the same number of people. If composers ever stood up and said, "Enough!" to this outrageous devaluation of instrumental music, it could stop tomorrow. Problem is, most composers either don't care, or are afraid to offend the royalty societies and others, so the lousy treatment continues.

STUDIOS, NETWORKS AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES ARE OFFERING COMPOSERS SUCCESSIVELY WORSE DEALS AS TIME GOES ON

Well aware of the oversupply issue and the fact that composers have no union or organized industry group, production companies and others who employ composers have been offering deals that have been getting worse and worse over the last 10 years. Composer fees are plummeting, any chance of composers retaining publishing is quickly disappearing, contract terms are getting worse – including cutting composers out of any third-party revenue that the production company might create from music, such as the creation of music libraries.

Add to that the unethical practice of production company executives and a few unscrupulous music supervisors insisting on cue sheet credit as a condition of music placement or employment and the willingness of the performing rights societies to pay huge sums to these known cue sheet "fraudsters" every quarter and the result is a system that lacks any sort of credibility or integrity – it's basically the wild west. Everything - including writer's royalties - is negotiable, and individual composers up against monolithic production companies don't stand a chance, especially with a line of composers behind them ready to take the gig at any price, under any conditions, just to get a credit.

MANY OF TODAY'S FILMMAKERS HAVE MUCH LOWER EXPECTATIONS FOR THE QUALITY OF MUSIC AND THE PRICE OF MUSIC

Whether as a result of the educational system for filmmakers, new filmmaking/editing technology, better sample libraries, lower budgets, a new generation of directors brought up on electronic sounds, or the simple fact of huge numbers of "composers" in the marketplace who can't begin to write for live instruments and instead rely completely on electronic sounds to create scores, many of today's filmmakers seem perfectly happy with synthetic, electronic scores.

In many cases, it has become a struggle for composers to make the case to filmmakers that live musicians should be used. The "quality" of music, as judged by many filmmakers, no longer reflects the axiom that live musicians are always better than electronic samples. To filmmakers, electronic samples are often "good enough" and they're happy to slash the live music budget from their film. Many filmmakers believe that editing music real-time should be just as simple as editing with their AVIDs where changes are instantaneous and easy to do.

Add to this, the fact that many filmmaking schools barely cover how filmmakers can and should work with composers – both business-wise and artistically – in their programs. What mention there is, in

some cases, often indicates how music has declined in value severely in recent years, and how composers and music can be obtained for films now for little or no money.

This reflects a fundamental change in expectations for music by filmmakers that has implications on composing, composer technology, delivery times, budgets, and much more.

THE ADVENT OF BETTER, FASTER FILM EDITING TECHNOLOGY MEANS THAT TEMP TRACKS ARE FAR MORE ELABORATE, AND OFTEN SERVE AS A PRECISE BLUEPRINT FOR MUSIC THAT COMPOSERS ARE EXPECTED TO COPY/RIP/IMITATE

Today's temp tracks – music matched to film for early screenings before a composer is hired – are very elaborate, and many filmmakers have come to use the temp track as a detailed expression of what the filmmaker wants the composer to write. While this has given newfound power to film editors and music editors who create these tracks, it can reduce the composer's job to one of imitation, rather than creation.

Bottom line: when a filmmaker is extremely satisfied with a temp track, that filmmaker rarely wants to see it completely abandoned in favor of whatever a composer might or might not come up with.

These “reality check” observations are included here not to depress or discourage you, but to give you some of the facts about the industry today. The remainder of this guide will focus on specific actions you can take to increase the chances that you will be hired and your music will be used in film and television in today's economy.

In the remainder of this guide, we'll discuss 10 specific things you can do to help get your music into film and television projects. While not all of them involve your music directly, all of them can make a significant difference in how to achieve financial success with your music through usages in film and television.

1. GET CREATIVE AND TAKE CONTROL OVER THE FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF YOUR CAREER, ESPECIALLY WITH THE CURRENT WORLDWIDE ECONOMIC ISSUES

There are some basic financial planning tasks you can do to help turn chaos into order when it comes to your income from writing music – here are 6 basic financial steps to help organize and track your finances as a composer or songwriter:

- **Make a budget for long-term future income targets.** Long-term future income can be described as income flows that will happen in the future that are generally spread out over an extended period of time. Long-term future income for composers and songwriters primarily comes from performance royalties (composers) and performance royalties and mechanical royalties (songwriters). Create a goal for your long-term income targets on a monthly basis, going at least 3 years into the future. Based on where you're at now, identify how much music of what type (network usages, etc.) you'll need to meet your long-term income targets.
- **Make a budget for short-term income targets.** Short-term income comes from licensing fees, profit from composing fees, teaching, arranging, or other types of work where once you've completed the work, your fees are paid. Ideally, your music income budget contains a good mix of long-term and short-term income that grows over time. For short-term income, don't overlook opportunities like private teaching, which can generate some immediate cash as well as provide a recurring weekly or monthly income.
- **Track your income and expenses weekly or monthly and compare graphically to your budget.** This basic task will help you see very quickly how you're doing financially, and perhaps more importantly, where you're headed as graphs can quickly show trends. Consider posting your graphs on the wall in your office or another place where you'll be reminded of the results.
- **Allow for contingencies in your financial planning.** Allow at least 10% for unplanned expenses or drops in income, and perhaps more depending on your situation. Don't be pessimistic, but don't be overly optimistic – be realistic and your budget will be more practical.
- **Establish a savings fund.** It's amazing how many people have little or no savings, as a result of "spend now, pay later" thinking. In days of uncertain economic circumstances, this kind of thinking can have catastrophic financial results. Consider saving at least 10% of all income in a fund to be used for emergencies or for projects like future expansion when circumstances warrant.
- **Spend money only if it will make you money.** For each expense you are considering, ask yourself 2 key questions: "Will this directly contribute to me making more money?" and "How much time will it take for this new expenditure to pay for itself?" If the new expenditure will not increase your income, consider delaying it until you've got a surplus of funds to spend. Above all, avoid the "gear junkie" syndrome where you spend too much valuable time and money purchasing and tweaking your gear instead of going out and building relationships. While it's far easier to spend money at the music store where you'll always be appreciated and never told, "no", your career will grow based on new, developing relationships, not gear.

2. MAKE SURE YOU AND YOUR MUSIC MUST STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

In an oversupplied marketplace, one of the best ways of getting noticed, regardless of the number of competitors you're facing, is to be unique. This means making sure your music is unique and not derivative sounding, and being unique yourself.

The marketplace is full of the "typical" score composer – you know the type – usually male, age 25-50, wears a lot of black clothes, not very personable, very technically savvy, often lacking in people skills, not prone to be social with filmmakers, and not very happy about the state of the composer industry despite outwards indications of success. One of the surest ways of not being successful in today's marketplace is to be "yet another" typical score composer – whether in LA or any other area, the same principle applies.

So be different. And make sure your music is different. Nobody wants to hear yet another rip of John Williams, James Horner, Danny Elfman, etc. The days of the "jack of all trades" composer who can emulate any "famous" style with ease is over – replaced by the new sounds of new composers like Carter Burwell, John Ottman, Bear McCreary, and others who have made a name and a "sound" for themselves.

Look inside yourself and find out what really makes you "tick" musically. Stop imitating your favorite composers and build a style for yourself – a style can and usually is the result of a composer combining the best elements from a variety of musical influences into something new and original. Don't be afraid to experiment and stretch out musically, and be cognizant of the various new styles that are appearing in film scores and music today.

3. DEVELOP SOME GREAT PEOPLE SKILLS, STOP BEING AFRAID OF THE PHONE, AND MAINTAIN A SOCIAL AGENDA

If your goal is to be hired to write music by filmmakers and music supervisors, people skills are a must – it's a simple fact. Once you're established, have all the money you'll ever need, and don't care what people think of you – perhaps then you can afford to be the “introverted, eccentric” composer if that's what you want to be. Until then, it's absolutely critical that you develop some great people skills and be able to create a positive impression on people you'll meet.

Here are 5 simple things you can do to energize the effectiveness of your social activities:

- Get over your fear of the phone. Most people are afraid to pick up the phone and call someone to introduce themselves and try to determine if there is a need for your music by the person you're speaking to. One of the most productive things you can do for your career is to, one way or another, get over this fear and become very comfortable with the phone. The bottom line is: you need to constantly be meeting new people in this business. If you're afraid to reach out and make contact, that's a major career liability in many cases.
- Learn how to mingle comfortably in different settings. Get comfortable being with a variety of different types of new people in different social settings ranging from cocktail parties to film receptions. Find things to talk about with people you've just met, learn basic social etiquette, and learn how to get people to talk about themselves (vs. you talking about yourself).
- Become a great listener. In social settings, far more can be gained by listening than by talking in most cases. Getting people to talk about themselves, their careers and their projects can help you quickly identify potential opportunities. Then, and only then, consider talking about yourself, once you've determined there is some interest from the person you're talking to.
- Take someone new to lunch at least once a week. Most people will not refuse a free lunch (especially in LA) and it's a great opportunity to discuss the business, get them talking about themselves and their projects, and identify opportunities as well as maintaining visibility and exposure for yourself with the person and others they know.
- Be someone who is positive, fun and easy to get along with. Beyond any basic personality alterations/upgrades, this typically involves mastering the ability to have something interesting and positive to say to about anyone you meet, combined with the ability to be a good listener (see above). Avoiding discussion of polarizing issues (politics, etc.), the negative state of the business, any personal issues or problems, etc. can also go a long way towards making you the life, not the downer, of the occasion.

4. ELIMINATE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE AND CAREER

Sometimes it can be helpful to take an inventory of people, things, and circumstances in your life. Here's a simple way: make 3 columns on a piece of paper – positive, neutral, and negative. Something is positive if it contributes to the success of your life and career in a meaningful way. Neutral can be defined as something that neither helps, nor hurts your career and life. The aspects to really focus on are those people, things and circumstances that are holding you back, limiting you, or having some sort of negative affect on your career and/or life.

Simply put, you need to eliminate or at least minimize the negative drags on your career and life. In the case of people, you simply cannot afford these types of “toxic relationships” in today's incredibly competitive marketplace.

And you must be vigilant – some of the most negative, destructive relationships are ones that may seem innocuous on the surface. Be on the lookout for constant, subtle minimizing of you and your career, suggestions that you do something other than music, negative comparisons of yourself to others, and other insidious forms of negativism.

Negative habits can be as much of a career drag as negative associations. We all have negative habits – it's part of being human, many say, but consider how many of these negative habits you choose to indulge in may have a direct and dramatic effect on your career. If “going out for a beer a couple of nights a week” is a negative habit that you simply don't want to give up, then consider changing it into a positive habit by frequenting places that filmmakers might go for that beer. Force yourself to build your networking and people skills by meeting new people when you're out, and turn what was a negative habit into a positive marketing activity.

5. TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR TIME

In a massively, oversupplied industry with lots of competition, it is vitally important to your career that you maximize the amount and quality of time you spend on your career. You need to make the very most of the time you are able to spend in order to create the most effective results both financially and career-building wise from that investment of time.

Speaking of investments, consider that for most musicians, time is the biggest investment they make in their careers – years of lessons, gigging, and much more. Sure, equipment and instruments are investments, but too many musicians fail to put a value on their time as they consider both how they price their music and how they evaluate the financial big picture of their careers. Don't make that mistake.

A sobering, but often necessary exercise, is to write down everything you do during a day, listing each task and how much time you actually spend doing it. Then, divide that list into categories such as meals, work activities (marketing), work activities (production and other), relaxation, and other. You might be surprised at the results.

A major misconception in our business is that creativity and discipline are mutually exclusive – that you cannot have both. Consider creating a schedule for yourself and sticking to it. If you wait until you're "in the mood" to get on the phone and start contacting music supervisors and others you wish to build relationships with in the industry, it's a sure-fire recipe for low productivity. Schedule things you like to do (like writing music) and things you need to do (like marketing), and leave room for your social activities as well. For more than a few composers, actually establishing a work schedule can be a life-changing experience. Remember though, a schedule is only as good as your willingness to stick to it and keep discipline in place.

A note on time and families: If you're the parent of a young child, you may find yourself faced with frequent interruptions in your daily life to help care for your child. There is no magic solution to this, other than learning to work with interruptions. However, there *is* a point to working with your partner to put together a schedule where you can get some "do not disturb" work time each day where you can be on the phone speaking with business associates without the concern of being summoned for a family task.

6. DEVELOP A MARKETING PLAN AND EXECUTE IT EVERY WEEK

A simple definition of marketing for composers and songwriters interested in getting their music into film and television could be, “activities which bring visibility and exposure to you and your music to people who are in a position to hire you or influence those who can hire you.” But, where do you begin with marketing yourself as a composer or songwriter?

The first thing to realize is that marketing must be targeted towards the right people – people who can hire you or people who can influence those who can hire you. Your top targets may be filmmakers and music supervisors, and secondary marketing targets can include film editors, music editors, and others such as producers and various other production company personnel involved in projects.

Remember, this is a relationship-driven business. Most hiring in this industry comes as a result of relationships, so the process of building them should be a key element of your marketing plan.

Here are some key elements of a successful marketing plan:

- Schedule – when will you conduct your marketing activities, and how often?
- Marketing Targets – who or what are you pursuing? These can be broken down into:
 - People – people you want to build relationships with, such as music supervisors and filmmakers.
 - Projects – projects you believe are a good fit for you and your music
- Outreach Methods – how will you reach out to those people and/or projects that you are interested in? Here are some ideas:
 - Gather information – learn as much as you can about the person or project so you’re prepared to have a meaningful, informed discussion.
 - Determine your target – if you’re pursuing a project, you need to determine who the music decision maker is. If you’re pursuing a person, then that person is your marketing target.
 - Contact your marketing target by phone and determine interest in you and your music – ask questions, get as much information as you can. Phone is usually best for this as it’s instantaneous, two-way communication
 - If appropriate, ask for permission to send a demo package
 - Proactively follow up as necessary – don’t wait for them to call you!
- Persistence – follow your marketing plan and work it according to the schedule you plan.

If you put together an effective marketing plan and work that plan each week – even when you’re busy on a project - you’ve got a great shot at keeping projects in the pipeline so you’re never out of work.

7. STARTING NOW, MEET FILMMAKERS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS EVERY WEEK

This is a key element to getting work. It's vital that you find ways to meet and forge relationships with filmmakers in order to build the kind of quality relationships that it takes to maintain a career as a successful film composer, especially in today's economic and competitive climate.

How to meet filmmakers? Here are 5 places you can start looking at today:

- Film Festivals – especially panel discussions and social events
- Filmmaker Associations – there are many organizations and clubs for independent filmmakers
- Filmmaking Courses – taking a filmmaking course can be a great way to learn how filmmakers think and work, not to mention a great way to meet filmmakers
- Entertainment Industry Mixers and Associations – LA, NY and other locations have entertainment industry associations which meet weekly or monthly
- Guest Speaker at a Film School – film school course programs often have very little hands-on experience with music professionals, so why not offer your services as a guest lecturer – filmmakers need to know the basics about how to hire a composer and license music, and you can quickly establish yourself as an expert in the area with both students and film school instructors alike.

8. STARTING NOW, MEET MUSIC SUPERVISORS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS EVERY WEEK

Music supervisors have become a critical element in the composer hiring process, and have always been a critical link in terms of selecting music to license for film and television. Building relationships with music supervisors is critical for both composers and songwriters in today's economy.

While you may meet music supervisors at film festivals, chances are they are there to scout out new filmmaker clients, so you may not find them to be as receptive an audience as you need in those settings. Often, it's better to simply contact music supervisors, introduce yourself, see if they have any projects that they need music like yours for, and ask for permission to send your music.

The good news here is that there are 2 excellent directories available that list many of the industry's music supervisors:

Film Music Magazine Directory of Music Supervisors, including Music Executives and Music Licensing and Clearance Professionals

PDF: http://www.gmostore.com/cart.php?m=product_detail&p=59

Database: http://www.gmostore.com/cart.php?m=product_detail&p=60

The Film & TV Music Guide

Hardcopy: http://www.gmostore.com/cart.php?m=product_detail&p=55

Bottom line: you need to reach out to new music supervisors on a regular basis to build your network. In addition to reaching out and building new relationships, it's important to maintain the relationships you already have with music supervisors. Relationship maintenance can take on several forms, from sending out postcards each month with an update on your latest activities, to email updates, to inviting music supervisors out to lunch or coffee to learn what's new with them (and of course, let them know what's new with you).

Music supervisors tend to be very busy, and you'll be expected to make the case why they should spend any of their valuable time with you, even for lunch. Think about what's truly unique and compelling about you and your music, and reduce it to a single sentence that you can use if and when you need to. However, if you are in a situation where you feel you need to justify why a music supervisor should take their time to meet with you, don't make the critical mistake of getting defensive – this is the #1 mistake people make in this situation, and it can be a relationship-killer. Remember, this isn't about you, and it isn't personal. Keep your cool, and get excited about your music and why it's something that a music supervisor needs to hear.

9. GET GREAT PUBLICITY, FAST AND WIDE

Whenever you complete a project, even a short film or small project, it's important that people know what you're doing and learn of your accomplishments. This is the value of publicity, and in many cases it can be an absolutely critical part of getting "heard" and "noticed" in today's highly competitive industry.

There's a concept called the "Third Party Principal" which states:

"A third party such as a representative, agent or manager, can often promote you with language that would sound ridiculous and offensive coming from you."

For the same reasons that it can often be helpful to have someone representing you in negotiations, it can often be helpful to have someone promoting your achievements to the industry – this is the job of a publicist.

There are 2 key elements of publicity:

- It must be timely – publicity should coincide with the completion or release of a new project. Old publicity is next-to-useless.
- The wider the better – the more people who read or are exposed to the results of your publicity – such as press releases, articles in magazines and newspapers, etc. – the more chances that the publicity will have a positive impact with people in the industry who are in a position to help you.

When looking for a publicist, consider the track record of the publicist in terms of promoting composers and songwriters. Publications come to trust certain publicists who send them great stories and don't waste their time with pitches that are off-target. But one way or another, whether you do your own publicity, have a friend do it, or hire a professional publicist, make sure you are undertaking efforts to get yourself written about in magazines, newspapers, industry websites, and other outlets.

If you write your own press releases, here's a great link with some tips:

<http://www.publicityinsider.com/release.asp>

Finally, make sure you've got a great headshot ready to go in a high-resolution graphics format – often these are not sent out with press releases, but when an article is ready to run, a picture is often a necessity. Have a link to your graphics on every outgoing press release, or include the headshot with the press release.

10. BE A WINNER IN AN INDUSTRY FULL OF LOSERS

The sheer numbers involved in today's competitive climate for composers and songwriters interested in getting their music into film and television mean there will be far more losers than winners. However, realize that being a "winner" in today's industry doesn't necessarily mean winning every job you submit for – that's a virtual impossibility for all practical purposes.

Being a winner *does* mean making the most out of every opportunity that you create through your relationship-building efforts, combined with the knowledge that from successful relationships, will come successful projects and jobs. Here are 10 things you may want to consider as you create your own winning attitude:

- Realize the ugly nature of today's competitive industry climate and stay positive.
- Never, ever take criticism of your music or rejection from a job personally. Remember, it's almost always a "fit" issue about whether your music is the best fit for the picture, rather than being a quality issue of your music not being "good enough" etc.
- Always be building relationships with people in the industry.
- No matter what adversity may beset you, never get jaded or bitter. Being bitter about the industry or your failures only serves as a negative force on your life and career.
- Be easy to do business with – know the business side of things well, always be available by mobile or other means, and serve as a resource, not a vendor, to your clients and others you have industry relationships with.
- If in doubt, communicate. If you're unsure of some aspect of a business relationship, project, music submission, or other matter, often the best thing to do is to communicate with the person involved and clear things up. Leaving matters to chance or guesswork can have disastrous results.
- Dress to impress. Like it or not, people who meet you will judge you by your appearance. Whether you're a "1" or a "10" on the beauty scale is something that you may or may not have much control over, but what you wear is something that you can and should consider. If in doubt, dress up. Always remember that just because you're not in a career where you're expected to wear a coat and tie, that's no excuse to look like a bum or a slob when you're meeting people. Especially in major cities, people in the entertainment industry can be very fashion-aware.
- Listen to other music in films, and listen to what's on the radio today. If you're going to compete, you had better have good information on what people are buying today, and what people of all ages (not just your own) are listening to.
- When evaluating the compensation for a project, remember the long term. Be aware that for most film and TV projects, composers earn the majority of income from performance royalties, not from up-front composer fees. Don't lose a job that could earn you tens or hundreds of thousands of long-term royalty dollars, not to mention great potential exposure and visibility,

over a relatively small difference in what you want vs. what they want to pay for an up-front composing fee.

- Always be positive. If you can maintain a positive attitude, even when things are going wrong or you're faced with rejection or unexpected challenges, it will establish you as a person who can be counted upon in all situations. Likewise, if you're known as a person who panics easily or who does not maintain positive control over situations when things go wrong, people may have difficulty in trusting you with important projects.

A final note: A short guide like this can only scratch the surface of what it takes to be successful in this business. There are a lot of intangible factors that play an important role in careers, including most important of all, your music. Another factor is luck – some people believe in luck, others believe that luck is “created” through proper planning, building relationships, and other career-building activities.

A great way to learn more about ways to create a successful career is to study the careers, activities, attitudes and beliefs of people who have already achieved success in this industry. There are many articles online and in print about successful composers where you can learn about their successes, but people often are more inclined to be candid about their personal careers in a one-on-one situation. Consider contacting a composer whose career you admire and ask him or her if they are available for lunch – it's a great way to learn about how successful composers got that way.