

How to Make Money Teaching Music

A beginner's guide for independent musicians and music teachers on creating a profitable business you love

By Eric Branner



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Chapter 1: Make the Decision

Is Teaching Right For You?

So, you've been playing guitar for longer than you can remember, or you got a near perfect score on the math SAT, or you love talking about correct posture for deadlifting at the gym more than anything else. You might be a good candidate to start an independent teaching business. You can make a great living teaching your skill set. There are few things to consider before you jump into the water.

Adopting a Business Mindset

If you decide to start a business, you've got to decide to make it a business and run it like a business. If you don't, there are many easier ways to not make money. So after you've decided to run it like a business, this means setting boundaries, making goals, and being professional. I've taken lessons from so many talented teachers, but many have no idea how to run a business. They'll tell you, "I just love the art." "I'm not educated enough to charge." "Pay me whatever." If they're lucky, they have trust funds. If not, they live at a salary level that doesn't adequately reflect their level of expertise.

Hard Work is Worth It!

I am going to reiterate this throughout the book. You've got to treat your business like a business. It's going to take hard work to get it



off the ground. You earned a master's degree in piano performance-did you learn how the marketing funnel works, or how to make a profit and loss statement? Building a business from scratch takes a lot of hard work and effort, and that is not a path for everyone. And that's okay! But if you're still on board, get ready to hustle! (You won't have to do it forever.)

How Much Do You Want to Make?

This book is a guide for creating your business plan and building your business, so let's cut right to the chase. How much do you want your business to make? 25k, 50k, or 100k? If you're just out of school, or have no experience teaching, or you're in a new town, 100k is a bit of a reach for your first few years. Any book or promotion that promises you that is peddling snake oil. However, you can certainly build a six-figure income, and more importantly a supportive community, as an independent teacher if you work at it!

Set up Your Business in Under an Hour!

If you are ready to dive into starting a teaching business, or wanting to grow the one you already have, you'll need to do a few things at some point. Perhaps you'd rather start teaching, and then set your business to right later. Here's a checklist of things you'll want to take care of as you start a new teaching business or streamline an existing one.

5 min: Decide on Your System & Policy for Scheduling, Billing, and Reporting

You'll need a calendar, a contacts list, a billing tool, a studio policy, and a way to report income.

Early in my teaching career, I pieced 4-5 different softwares together to run my teaching studio. Doing all that admin work was



a nightmare. I've tried everything from spreadsheets, to iCal, to every other option on the market.

But now I obviously recommend Fons (<http://fons.com>) for all of that! It takes care of the administrative side of your teaching business by providing everything you need to support your teaching business in the most streamlined way with almost zero administrative time. It'll take less than 5 minutes to create your Fons account.

10 min: Get a Business License

This is all dependant on the state you live in, and perhaps the city. We encourage you to consider talking with an accountant to make sure you have all of the licensing you need in place to teach. It's better to just get it out of the way and make sure you're above board. Another great resource for new business owners is the Small Business Administration.(<https://www.sba.gov/>)

20 min: Get a Business Checking Account

Life (and doing your taxes) will be much easier if you can separate your business from your personal accounts. You will really appreciate having all of your business expenses and income in a separate, designated account come tax time. This also makes it easy to "pay yourself" by transferring money over to your personal accounts. Call up your local/current bank(credit unions are rad) and someone there will be more than happy to help you through the process. This can take as little as 10 minutes!

15 min: Consider Using an Accountant/Bookkeeper

Personally, the most important business expense I have is to my accountant. I used to fancy myself good with numbers, and did my taxes myself. It stressed me out, took a ton of time, and I always worried if I'd done them correctly. Meet with a CPA, and find out what you'll need to get started, what licenses and taxes are like in your state and/or city, and what you can deduct as business

expenses. It won't cost that much for a meeting, and after that, you'll only need a few hours of his/her time at tax time to prepare your taxes.

15 min: Call your Insurance Agent

If you're teaching out of your home, or in student's homes, call your insurance agent and make sure you've got basic liability insurance. You'll probably never need it, but it doesn't cost much and it's good to have. Policies can cost as little as \$92/year.

Look at you! You're a full-on professional! Here are just a few more things for you to think about doing as you're setting up your business.

Create a Website

I highly recommend that everyone have a website. It can be a fantastic way to market and promote yourself and to give a sense of who you are as a teacher to prospective students.

Squarespace is awesome for making pro looking websites. It's super quick and easy to set up and all their templates are really professional looking. Pick a classy template, write a good bio, and find a good picture of yourself (or get a headshot done professionally.) Headshots are worth it! And a quality looking cell phone taken by a friend will do just fine too!

Print Business Cards

Business cards are good to have around, and you'll be surprised at how many you hand out. Pinning one up on the cork board at your local coffee shop is a great place to start.

I really love Moo cards (<http://moo.com>) You can create really gorgeous business cards in under 15 minutes via their site!

Set Up Your Social Media

You don't have to spend a ton of time creating different social media accounts for your business, but It makes sense to at least



have a Facebook page. There are many marketing/networking opportunities on Facebook such as community groups, targeted advertising, and professional groups.

Here's the link to join the Fons' Community of Music Teachers:
<https://www.facebook.com/getfons>

Phew! I know that all sounds exhausting, but once you've done all of the above, you'll be in really good shape.

Chapter 2: Where and How to Teach

There are so many ways to teach! You can teach in your home, your student's home, a rented studio, a school, or online with video lessons. Here's a few things to think about.

Finding the Right Space

Over the years, I've taught in schools, student's homes, music stores, my own storefront, my home studio, and sometimes online. Each scenario has it's benefits and challenges, and are important to consider as a professional instructor. Cost, travel, commitment, vibes, customer experience, taxes, and risk are all factors to consider when choosing where and how you'll teach. Let's take a look at them.

Teaching in Student's Homes

When you're first getting started as an independent teacher, you probably don't have many students or experience. I got my first student working the register at a small, neighborhood grocery store. I'd take my guitar into work, and practice Albeniz during lulls. A regular customer asked if I taught, and of course I said yes.

I offered to teach in-home lessons after my shift one day a week. That went pretty great, except for the days when there was laundry piled on my student's piano bench! Soon I had my first quiver of in-home students from word of mouth. Travel time became an issue as my roster grew, and I started getting students from other parts of town.



Lesson learned: Teaching lessons in-home has an opportunity cost of one or two lost lessons per teaching day.

Teaching For a School

I really enjoyed teaching, and got a job teaching for a school run by a local music store. Most of these spots will either charge a rental fee for a room, or take a percentage of your teaching revenue. They also can provide you with students if you don't have any, which really helps. I loved having other teachers to hang out with, and a (somewhat) clean practice room stocked with teaching equipment. Having a copier there too, that was big. Teaching for a school is a great way to get started, and perfect if you don't have much time to devote to marketing and admin. However, there may come a time when it makes more sense to go out on your own!

*I'm not including working for universities or salaried positions here - once you're on the payroll, you're technically not an independent teacher.

Renting a Studio

Right around the time I became a father, I decided to open my own studio, Blackforrest Music School. I found an amazing space in downtown Seattle. A street-level retail space with a live-in apartment connected above. I had a pretty large base of customers at this point, and had been teaching for the nearly a decade. I signed the lease, built out the space, and had a few of the most successful teaching years of my career. My visibility brought in plenty of new students to keep me busy. The cost was obviously high, but I kept all of the money, got a ton of deductions for tax time, and had a great space to practice my craft.

The Home Studio-Living the Dream... Almost



After our lease was up, our family decided it was time to move to a home. We found a house that had a separate, mother-in-law unit in the backyard! We bought the home, converted the mother-in-law, and created the home studio. I'd never have to rent a space, go to a student's home, or change out of sweatpants again (unfortunately for me, my wife imposes a hard, no-sweatpants rule. She believes "life isn't that casual.") This scenario worked wonderfully, until it occurred to me that many of my customers lived in other, more central parts of the city, and that making the trip to our house was a major inconvenience for them. I'd either have to focus on building a new clientele in the new neighborhood, or find a place to teach closer to my students. I ended up doing both.

Getting Creative

The home studio was not yet the perfect solution for me, so I briefly returned to doing in-home lessons. I perfected the mapping, time slots, and imposed a pretty strict cancellation policy since everything had to run like a sewing machine. That really was a pretty stressful situation. I was racing around to lessons, always feeling behind, and not bringing the great vibes to lessons that I wanted. Then the perfect solution for me surfaced. I began looking for a new studio space, and the parent of one of my students asked if I'd be interested in teaching at her house. She had tons of space (and truly one of the most beautiful homes in Seattle), a separate entrance, and the location was exactly in the center of all of my customers. We gave it a trial for a month, and three years later it's coming to an end as they have sold the house. Everyone won in this case. I got an amazing space to teach, my customers loved coming to this location, and the family that hosted us got some great music and energy in their home. The vibe was just tremendous! Finding a creative space by thinking outside the box is a wonderful way to solve the "where to teach problem."



Online Lessons

Internet-based lessons have had quite a bit of growth recently. There are many benefits to online instruction, such as being able to see a specialist from afar and avoid travel altogether for customer and teacher. For me, online lessons are not really awesome unless you're studying with a really high level teacher that cannot be replaced locally. I think there is great value in communicating with real-life people in the same room. I also like to shake hands and hi-five. I do love web-based lessons for snow days and reschedules! Again, that's just me... I know some folks that just love teaching over a webcam.

Group Lessons

Group lessons are very popular amongst the piano teaching community, and of course wellness/fitness teachers. Group lessons are an awesome way to build community, increase your income, and offer your customers a better rate. They are especially good for beginners. But make sure you're making it worth your while to provide group lessons! In my experience, groups lesson students don't have the same retainment as a committed private student. They often come for awhile and move on. For teaching music, I prefer to have a stable group of private students and offer group lessons on an occasional basis.

Where You Teach is Not as Important as How You Teach

It's important to remember, where you teach is not as important as how you teach. I'd love to convert an RV into a teaching space, travel around, and teach in a new town every month! I can't do it now, but I look forward to a time that I can. The perfect teaching situation can and will change depending on what's happening in your life. Maybe you'll teach at home, online, for a school, or in the corner of a car battery warehouse (my first guitar teacher did and it was awesome). You can make it work for you.

Chapter 3: Setting Your Rates and Policies

Setting Your Rates

Money shouldn't have to be an awkward part of the client-instructor conversation, but it often is. Good instructors don't teach to earn billions (although that would be nice!), they teach because they have spent years perfecting a skill - and they want to teach others how to perfect that skill.

This makes it difficult to pinpoint how much you should charge as an instructor. There are many factors to take into consideration. How long did you work to perfect your craft? How much did your education cost? How much experience do you have as an instructor? How much did you just pay your plumber to come and fix your sink?

You need to have some serious self-respect when deciding your worth as an instructor, and appreciate the vast range of factors that come together in the professional package you offer clients.

I know that it's easy to tell a client "I do this because I love it, pay me whatever you're comfortable with" because I've done it a million times. It's true, you do love what you do, but this approach can be damaging - for you and the client. In my experience, the client will not respect you unless you respect yourself enough to command a fair wage.

Things to Consider Before Setting Your Rates

One of my favorite guitarists is an internationally recognized flamenco player. He once tried to calculate all of the hours he had practiced, the lessons he had paid for, the guitars he had purchased and the benefits he had forfeited to be a full-time musician. He practiced guitar 5-7 hours a day for 15 years and toured the world many times while studying and performing. How do you factor that into an hourly teaching rate?

Geography & Demographics

Of course, you have to factor in your geography and the demographics of your location. If you live in San Francisco, you'll obviously charge more than if you live in Pocatello, Idaho. This is where a little research can go a long way. What do professionals charge in your town? What's the going rate of your mechanic, lawyer or plumber? What do other instructors charge in the area? Figure this out before you go setting your rates.

Your Experience

Experience also plays a part when setting up your rates. How long have you been an instructor and how long have you worked to master your craft? If you're just out of an education program as a yoga teacher, you're probably going to have to teach at a studio and charge a little less for private lessons. On the other hand, a youthful, energetic instructor can be more effective and awesome than someone who's been teaching for decades.

You Can Only Charge What People Are Willing to Pay

It may surprise you to find people are willing to pay more than you expect. About 10 years ago, I really needed to pick up some new



students for my studio. A mentor of mine casually suggested that, if I wanted more students, I should raise my rates.

Raising Your Rates

I know raising your rates is a tough call for instructors. I thought this move would kill my career, so I avoided it for a month or two. When traditional marketing failed, I finally took his advice. I raised my rates for new students and was booked solid within two months.

This is one of the most important lessons I learned while maintaining a private studio. Charge a little more and your clients will take you more seriously. New clients will seek you out and your current students will improve. This is a neat economic idea called “perceived value,” and it’s absolutely true.

Clients and potential clients will regard you as a better instructor if they are paying a fair wage for your services. Clients want you to thrive and make a decent living for your hard work and experience!

Provide Value to Your Clients

Lastly, you must provide value to your clients. I am in no way recommending that you should over-charge. It may be important to you to teach people for a very reduced rate in special instances, for example single moms or less fortunate students.

If you are a self-employed, hard working, highly skilled instructor, you deserve to make a living. You will pay for your own benefits, from your self-employment taxes to your retirement, and you need to charge accordingly. Figure out what the going rate is for someone with your skill set in your area of expertise with your level of education or experience. Set your rate at the higher end of that spectrum and don’t feel embarrassed about asking for it. Your clients will be happier, your studio will grow quickly, you’ll feel better about your job and you’ll have a waiting list in no time!



So have a little self-respect. If you're willing to work hard and share your life's work, you should be able to support yourself. The community you're building wants you to thrive as well.

If you can't make a living, you can't teach.

Setting Up Simple & Ironclad Lesson Policies

A clear lesson policy is as an absolute must for any instructor. A policy sheet lays out the ground rules for a student-teacher relationship. It explains the instructor's rate, accepted payment methods and cancellation policies. It can also outline the commitments expected by the student regarding practice and lesson attendance.

I've reviewed hundreds of different lesson policies while developing the framework for Fons. In doing so, I discovered the fundamental way to reduce your administrative time as an instructor is to simplify your policy agreement.

Billing Policy

Billing is perhaps the most important part of your policies statement, and the easiest place to simplify your teaching life. I used to offer 30, 45 and 60 minute private lessons - with a different rate for each slot.

I wanted to encourage students to take a longer lesson, so I offered a rates break for an hour slot. I also taught in two different studio spaces and charged a different rate for each one. I created six different pricing structures for my students. When billing, I'd often forget who owed how much. it was a mess.

So I switched to offering only one hourly rate, reducing my billing to one option. It had absolutely no effect on how students chose a lesson duration. Younger kids should probably take a shorter



lesson, older students can handle a longer lesson. Simplify your billing practice. You will be so happy that you did.

Here's my old billing policy:

Lessons on Capitol Hill are \$x/hour, \$x/45 minutes, and \$x/half hour. Lessons in the West Seattle Studio are \$x/\$x/\$x. Payment is due by check or cash for the month on the first lesson of that month. Payment not received by the 10th puts me in the uncomfortable position of having to ask for it. Multiple late payments may lead to a penalty, or termination of lessons.

Here's my new billing policy:

Lessons are \$x/hour, available in 15 minute increments. All lessons will automatically be charged to a credit card at the time of lessons.

Wow, that's easier huh? For everyone! No more chasing checks, no more dealing with missed lessons and no more squirrely accounting. Just one automatic rate and policy enforcement. This makes life easier for everyone involved - both teachers and clients.

Cancellation/No-Show Policy

This is a sticky topic for some instructors to address and enforce. You've got to have a cancellation policy and stick to it! Here's my old policy..

In the event of absence by the instructor, credit will be forwarded to the next month's lessons. Absences by the student will be credited to the next month only if the instructor is given 48 hours notice. Excessive absences will result in termination of lessons.

Once we simplified our billing practice by not collecting for the month up front, we made our cancellation/missed lesson policy much easier. If I miss a lesson, I simply don't charge the student for their lesson that day by cancelling the appointment in FONS. No credits necessary.



I do still ask for 48 hours notice to cancel a lesson. I charge the lesson fee for a no-show or unexcused cancellation. Using the Fons app, I can also easily cancel a missed lesson charge if I feel the student shouldn't be charged for any reason.

In short, your cancellation policies need to cover a cancellation by you, the teacher, how much notice you need for a cancellation from a student, and how you will address an unexcused absence.

Fons Will Enforce Your Policies For You

Using Fons and the best business practices built into the app, my new cancellation policy reads like this:

In the event the instructor cancels a lesson, you will not be charged for that lesson. Absences by the student inside 48 hours of the lesson will be charged their lesson fee at the time the lesson was scheduled. Reschedules incur no additional fees, and are at the discretion of the instructor.

That's it. A super-simple policy for billing and attendance. The other areas of an agreement like practice and supplies are totally up to the instructor. I just wanted to address the business side of the student-teacher relationship and how we have drastically simplified the process in creating the Fons App.

Charge a single hourly rate and stand by your cancellation policy. If you do this, you will reduce your admin time by more than half. You will also save your students time and energy. The more simple and straightforward the better.

Tuition - The Other Way

Many awesome teachers prefer to do a flat-rate or tuition model for billing. Fons has a really fantastic billing system that can automate tuition through monthly subscriptions as well. This is basically saying you'll pay for a certain number of lessons, whether you show up or not. Teachers can roll admin costs and planned



absences into a semester, or a year of teaching time. I think this works great for teachers that have been in the game for awhile.

Advantages & Disadvantages of The Tuition Model

The advantage of this model is you can count on a pretty steady income stream, and budgeting is easy for your customers. The disadvantage is that you are indebted to your customer to provide a certain amount of lessons. The tuition model can also breed a bit of contempt from customers that might feel like they haven't gotten all of their lessons in or that perhaps you've taken one two many vacation or sick weeks.

I feel like the best business practice for an independent teacher starting out is to bill by the lesson, but of course, go with what feels right to you.

Example of how a tuition model can be built. Most teachers seem to have some variation on time/weeks/and payment options.

42 weeks of teaching x \$50/week = \$2,100

You could make two 16 week semesters, and a 10 week summer semester to break this up.

So you could charge a flat tuition of \$175/month to your customers! It is pretty simple, and many teachers swear by it. Especially piano teachers that focus on younger children.

Chapter 4: The Ideal Lesson Duration

How Long Should a Private Lesson Last?

It's difficult to pinpoint the perfect lesson duration. Some students thrive on a 30 minute slot, others may benefit from 90 minutes of your time. I encourage new (or veteran) teachers to try one or all of the following lengths out and then choose which one works best for them.

For me, 45 minutes is the perfect duration for a private lesson. And I bet 45 minutes is the perfect lesson length for 99% of your clients too.

Let me explain my logic here. When I first started teaching, I used to offer 30 minute or one hour lesson slots. It seemed logical - I assumed 30 minutes would suit young students and an hour is enough time for a progressing child or adult student.

I was wrong for both timescales.

It became apparent that 30 minutes wasn't enough time to settle into a lesson. I like to start a lesson with a technique or warm up, then move onto the previous week's assignment before introducing new material for the week ahead. I'll then review the entire lesson in the last five minutes before we wrap up.

It's an adjustable template, that last five minutes could be spent listening to a high school drama instead of critiquing the lesson! But you just cannot get a quality lesson in 30 minutes.

An hour-long lesson can feel like an eternity. Sure, your best students come into lessons armed with a list of their goals for the week. Most students won't. And I found the last 15 minutes can



really wear you and the student down. Your focus goes and it's a waste of everyone's time.

Yes, there are exceptions and you need to be flexible. I do offer 30 minute slots for very young students or families that simply can't afford a 45 minute slot. I'll happily teach highly motivated students or those that only make lessons once in awhile for an hour, or even 90 minutes. But 45 minutes is the perfect duration to get the most out of a lesson.

Try scheduling lessons to 45 minutes. I think you'll really like it. My teaching days are based around 2-3 hour teaching blocks. For example, I'll work in a three hour block, teach four students, then I take a break and teach another four students for another three hours.

To me, that's the perfect teaching day. No burnout, just quality teaching time with some quality students. Let me know how you like to do it.

Chapter 5: Marketing Yourself and Acquiring Students

You don't need a marketing degree or a sales background to get a full roster of students. You should understand a few basic ideas about marketing. Starting out a teaching business is hard work, and you're going to have to hustle if you want it to work. It'll be worth it. Most teachers I know have gone through three distinct phases of studio growth... hustling, growth, and word of mouth.

First off, your end goal is word of mouth. I get at least one phone call a week from a prospective student, all from word of mouth. I just do my deal in the community, and try to give people really good guitar lessons. My studio has remained packed for the last decade. However, it took me ten years of teaching to get entrenched enough in my community to do it. If only I'd known a better way to get there.

The Hustle - Getting Your First Few Students

You've got to hustle. Hustling simply means doing what you have to do to get your first batch of customers. I got my very first student working as a checker in a small grocery store. I'd play my guitar behind the counter, and one day a customer became my customer! I had one student, and that was all I needed to know that I wanted forty more! If your community does not know you as a teacher, you've got to let them know. Announce on social media, ask people in organizations you know, call family members, tell friends... do all the uncomfortable things necessary to get one student! I promise you that this phase will be sad at times. You'll



find that the people you've known forever, that have sworn to always support you, will in fact decide not to take lessons from you. It happens all the time. I hear about it all the time. Don't lose hope! Hang up fliers at your local coffee shop, advertise on Facebook, put a post up on Nextdoor. Consider teaching for an existing music school. It won't be as great as working for yourself, but you'll be teaching, getting experience, and making contacts. You've got to let the world know that you're teaching! You can also pay for leads as well on sites such as Thumbtack.

Get creative with your marketing! If you are into jazz, call the local jazz band directors and offer to come into help coach small groups. You've got to get your name and your person into the sightlines of those who might want to study with you. The best thing you can do is be active in your community! Show up to events, network, volunteer, perform. Get visible.

Make a goal! Tell yourself you'll get 1 student this week. And you'll probably fail. However, if you keep working, the work you've been doing this week will bring three students next week! This phase kills off most of your competition, because they aren't willing to do it. You will be successful if you keep working to get your first batch of students.

Do You Offer a Free Introductory Lesson? Try an Informal Meet and Greet!

Here's a simple tip to vastly improve your teaching business: Don't offer a free introductory lesson, offer an Informal Meet and Greet instead.

More than half of the teachers I know offer a free lesson to market their services. They also admit that many of these meetings do not lead to a recurring student-teacher relationship.

I also know people that hop around town and take advantage of such new student promotions. They rarely continue with lessons after the free trial period.



Personally, I feel like offering a free lesson cheapens your message as a professional instructor. It invites people to come take a lesson, even if they have no intention of signing up as a student.

However, I absolutely encourage you to offer an Informal Meet and Greet session with a potential student to see if you are a good fit for one another. It makes the whole process a two-way street, and that's exactly what teaching is all about.

The Informal Meet and Greet encourages students to show up knowing that it's not a given you will be their instructor. You're looking for serious students to add to your roster and this method will encourage that relationship. The Meet and Greet also lets the student assess you as a teacher - and gives you the chance to recommend another teacher if it doesn't feel like a good fit. It's a win-win as the student finds the best teacher, and vice versa.

Often, a meet and greet also turns into a lesson. It rarely ends at the meet and greet stage. Most students come to a meet and greet willing to sign up for regular lessons, or appreciate your frank opinion if you are not a great fit for one another.

If you're just starting a teaching business, or desperately need new students, a free lesson may appeal to get people in the door. But usually it doesn't work. A great example is Groupon. I know many small businesses that used Groupon to promote their product or service at a ridiculously reduced rate. They quickly realise Groupon does not build a base of loyal customers. It attracts customers that want a one-time deal. It does not attract customers willing to invest in your skill set or experience.

I've never enjoyed pursuing that segment. As a teacher, you are building a community that will sustain you and that will benefit from your experience and contributions to that community. It takes time, honesty, and patience to build trust within a community. It's totally worth it.



Try switching your Free Lesson offer to an Informal Meet and Greet. I bet you'll be glad you did.

You've Got a Student! Growth and Retainment

Once your studio begins to get some legs, you'll begin to feel as though you can let off from marketing and community building efforts. Not so! Any successful business owner will tell you that marketing is critical to operating a thriving business. However, once your studio is up and running, you can shift your focus to Growing Your Studio and Retaining Students... and this is the fun part.

Before we talk about building your studio, we should talk about Retainment. Retainment just means keeping your customer. The great thing about teaching, is that you see your customer on a recurring basis, creating a long term cash flow. My students on average stay with me 4-6 years. I do everything I can to keep them happy and progressing. All the hard work you did to get your customers, you must use that same energy to keep them coming back. Techniques for growing your studio and retaining students are the same: be awesome, build community, and show up.

Growing your studio to whatever size you wish is as simple as treating your customers amazingly. Remember, the best way to get new students is through word of mouth. The best way to get word of mouth referrals is to be absolutely dedicated to your students. Here are a few ideas to help you grow a studio of 4-5 students to a studio of 45 students!

Be awesome in each lesson. Seriously. Prepare a lesson plan, and be open to making a creative leap to another topic if your material isn't engaging. The beauty of lessons is that they are alive and spontaneous. A large number of referrals I get are students coming from another teacher that was "phoning it in."



Go to student recitals, matches, whatever... If I have a student performing in a school talent show or a recital, I'm there. For one, it's fantastic to see people perform, and another, I always get lesson requests following a talent show. Parents see the teacher at the show, it makes them think, "wow, I should get Jimmy into music lessons." They ask for my card, or ask the parent of the performer.

Word-of-Mouth is the Best Marketing

I know it's hard to imagine this when you're starting out... Once you get over the initial grind of starting your business, word-of-mouth will be all the marketing you'll need. Happy customers talk, ecstatic customers can't stop talking. If you love the work you are doing, and take great care with your customers... your phone will ring. Trust us, you won't have to work this hard forever to get great clients.

Don't Have a Recital - Have a Guitarbeque!

A creative performance opportunity or gathering is a way to thank your community and keep your students engaged. At my first recital, I had three students show up. It was a traditional setting in a music school, and not so much fun. The next year, I opted to rent an outdoor amphitheatre, I cooked a whole lot of barbeque, and had over 100 attendees! The Guitarbeque was born. Now, my annual recital has around 200 guests. Students perform on a stage for their friends and families. Performances are filmed and shared with co-workers and friends. I get phone calls all year long from people hearing about the Guitarbeque.

Run it Like a Business!

Many awesome teachers avoid treating their studios like a business. Perhaps they are afraid of mixing art and money, or maybe they just don't have a much business training or acumen.



Fair enough. Well, if you want to make a good living, enjoy your job, and be your own boss, you've got to run your teaching business like a business! What does that mean? We've already looked at the getting setup professionally, marketing yourself to get students, and working to retain customers. Once these things are in place, it's critical to make goals, revisit your business model, build community, and take breaks.



Guitarbeque at Camp Long, WA

Closing Thoughts

We just scratched the surface of running a great business! Hopefully, this book has given you inspiration and encouragement. We've enjoyed talking with hundreds of instructors and appointment-based professionals in developing these ideas. A few things to remember...

You can make a tremendous living teaching what you love! I don't know anyone that teaches for a living that hasn't had to work hard, and that's how it should be. It will be worth it.

Charge what you're worth, care deeply for your customers, be professional, love your craft, build a community,.. Be awesome!

That's it. There will soon come a time when you will be as busy as you want, and even have to turn customers away! Best of all, you get to work for yourself! You are free! You can follow our newest posts on appointment-based business at Fons Amplify, and join our Fons facebook group here. [Fons Amplify Group](#). We'd love to hear your thoughts and experiences as well. Feel free to contact us anytime at support@fons.com.



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