

Start Your Year the Right Way

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Dedicated to Mabel.

*Thank you for cheering me on and helping me come
up with new book ideas.*

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Start Your Year the Right Way

**Goal-Setting, Planning & Achieving Big in
Your Music Entrepreneurship Career**

DAVID ANDREW WIEBE

Introduction

At the outset, I want to point out that *this is a different kind of book*. I know that may sound a bit ominous, so let me clarify (don't worry, you didn't buy a *weird* book by accident).

Every year, on The Music Entrepreneur HQ (my online business), I publish a series of posts to wind down the year past and clear the way for the year ahead.

I affectionately call this our New Year Content, which is typically comprised of several blog posts and podcast episodes, and sometimes videos too.

At first, it wasn't anything spectacular or out of the ordinary. I shared a post or two about goal-setting and productivity and went on my merry way with publishing relevant content for my audience.

But as the years progressed, I started adopting more processes and habits that my life now revolves around.

It's become hard to imagine *not* following these New Year rituals now. They've become a part of my DNA (and my business' DNA too).

From closing the chapter on the past year to setting theme words for the New Year, these processes have brought a lot of clarity to my world. They've helped me reflect on what I've learned and achieved, unload baggage from years past and set my intentions for the New Year. It sounds simple, but the results have at times been surprising and even miraculous.

And, with more processes and habits came more blog posts too. I started publishing more New Year Content to help people like you achieve clarity around your goals, be more productive and stay motivated throughout the year.

Motivation is important. But we all need access to something more than rah-rah motivation which doesn't last.

Let's face it – the entrepreneurial journey isn't always easy. Challenges can come in many forms. And, it's essential to build a strong mindset and find motivation and fulfillment in the work we do.

If there's no motivation to *do* the work, then there's no motivation *in* the work either. If that's the insane cycle you're in, you need to find a way out.

As we work hard to make our visions a reality, we can easily lose perspective on what we're doing and why we're doing it in the first place.

But there is a solution to all this.

Here's what I've come to realize:

Thought and reflection are powerful tools, and I don't think most people understand their value or tap into their power often enough.

In the hustle-obsessed culture we live in, people mostly seem concerned with how many hours they've worked as opposed to whether they were doing the right things or how effective they were.

Imagine! Spending countless hours at work not knowing whether it has any bearing on your career or business. If that's not insane, I don't know what is.

I think if you spend more time thinking and reflecting, especially during the week before and after the New Year, you'll gain a lot of clarity around what to do next to get to where you want to go in your career. By extension, this will also help you progress towards your goals more rapidly.

Thinking and reflecting can also help you silence your incessant mind chatter. It can bring peace, calm and tranquility, even amidst the madness you daily encounter in your business.

That's the value of thinking and reflection, and that's what this guide will help you tap into as you look to do and be your best in the year ahead.

How?

This book essentially does four things:

1. It introduces a topic (i.e. theme words, closing the chapter on the year, productivity, etc.).

**Imagine! Spending
countless hours at work not
knowing whether it has any
bearing on your career or
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insane, I don't know what is.**

2. It offers insight into the established topic.
3. It summarizes the topic, so you know how to apply it to your life and what to do next.
4. It prompts you with important questions or asks you to walk through an exercise.

This is how every chapter is set up.

So, what you hold in your hands is a journal and a workbook as much as it is a guide. There are valuable insights contained within. But the greatest value you derive from this book will come from the effort you invest into yourself.

Why do I say that?

You see, *only you know what matters to you*. I can't tell you what goals to set or how to reach them. But I can offer some tips on how to set yourself up for a great year.

If you didn't have a great year, you're probably going to want to make this year count. And, if you *did* have a great year, you're probably going to want to figure out how you can have another great year.

Honestly, I've come to the point where I don't believe in good years or bad years anymore. There are only years. And, thinking that way has served me well, because it leaves space for great things to happen in the year ahead.

After all, I'm looking to create something new. I'm not interested in rehashing the old. The best way to start a year is to start it with a clean slate. I can't do that if I carry last year's baggage into the New Year.

Now is your time to consider or reaffirm what's important to you. It's time to look ahead and decide what you want to accomplish. It's time to plan and figure out the steps you're going to be taking to reach your goals.

Don't worry about what *didn't* happen last year or the year before. Get complete with it. Whatever happened, happened. What didn't happen, didn't happen. Whatever you did, you did. Whatever you didn't do, you didn't do.

And, that's okay.

This is a New Year. Start it fresh. Embrace new possibilities.

Also, it doesn't matter *when* you're reading this, whether it's at the dawn of another New Year or smack dab in the middle of the hottest days of summer. Forget yesterday. You can start fresh now. You don't need to wait for another year to arrive.

Approach the New Year with a clear mind and clear heart.

It's 2019, or 2020, or 2021 or beyond... And it's time to set yourself up for the best year ever!

Another New Year has arrived. Are you excited?

Whatever you achieved, whatever successes or failures you experienced, whatever challenges you encountered, it's time to reflect, let go, and start the New Year with a bang.

I'll be talking more about the exact process you can use to jettison your baggage from the past in a moment. Going through this process will enable you to remain fully present in the New Year.

But first, let's celebrate the New Year and consider what we there is to look forward to.

The reflection that follows is from January 2018, but it could just as easily apply to any year. Pay no heed to the date.

First, let's acknowledge and celebrate the New Year. Second, let's consider what's ahead. Then, let's determine what we're trying to accomplish.

Here's your overture for the New Year!

Welcome to the New Year

Are you ready for the New Year?

For me it represents new beginnings. What does it represent for you?

I'm starting the New Year in a new home. That was somewhat unexpected.

But I would be lying if I said it wasn't a positive change. Little did I know how much my creativity was being affected by the environment I was previously in. Sometimes you must leave a situation to find out how oppressive it was.

Even though I'm not fully moved into my new home, and it was a sudden change, I already feel happier, more energetic and more creative. That seems like a massive step forward in itself.

And, if that's how I'm feeling now, and how I will continue to feel in the New Year, I think it's only natural that I will be more productive and prolific this year. I'm excited for that.

What's in Store for This Year?

This will be an exciting year. Why? Well, this might sound a little woo-woo, but...

The number 1 represents manifestation. The number 8 represents abundance, prosperity, harvest, progress, and forward movement. 2018 is therefore the year of manifesting abundance. If you've been diligently planting seeds for your future, there will be a harvest to reap this year.

Does this mean abundance is waiting for you? Not necessarily – it's just one possible outcome of many, as with any year.

But if you remain open to the possibilities, learn from your mistakes, work hard, and keep moving forward regardless of what comes your way, you may see some amazing blessings come into your life.

I would suggest reflecting on what you accomplished last year, because whatever you worked hard to achieve is about to bear more fruit.

What's in Store for The Music Entrepreneur HQ in the New Year?

Every year, I spend a lot of time and effort working on the content programming for The Music Entrepreneur HQ, especially for January.

This is because I want to set you up for success in the New Year. I want to offer inspiration and practical advice that will help you make the coming year the best one possible.

If you remain open to the possibilities, learn from your mistakes, work hard, and keep moving forward regardless of what comes your way, you'll see some amazing blessings come into your life.

I still plan to develop and publish some great content for early 2018, but it may take more time than usual for me to get it all out there. This is mostly due to my recent move, and the lack of a Wi-Fi internet connection at home (I'm working on that).

Some years, the holiday season seems to offer a lot of time to plan and reflect, and some years it just breezes on by. I probably don't have to tell you which way it's gone for me this time.

In addition, I see myself:

- Publishing more content on the blog than ever, including new podcast episodes.
- Finishing and publishing my forthcoming book, *Flashes of Elation* (finally).
- Getting back to work on Music Domination Formula.
- Finishing an independent radio and marketing campaign I started last year.
- Putting together a new eBook resource.

This is just the starting point, and I think there's plenty more I'll be working on and sharing with you.

Keep an eye on the blog to learn more about goals I've set, books I'm reading, theme words I've decided to live by in 2018, and more.

Final Thoughts

It's going to be fun reflecting on 2017, because it was a life-defining year for me (you'll be seeing my reflections on it soon). A lot has changed in my life, and I see more fun, more trips, and more adventure in my life in 2018 than ever before.

Remember – life is what you make of it. Your choices have led you to where you are today. If you want to be somewhere else, it's time to start making different choices. No, your life won't change overnight, but if you keep making positive choices daily, in time, you will see your life transformed.

What can you do today to make progress towards your dreams and goals?

Summary

- The New Year represents new beginnings.
- Reflect on what you achieved last year.
- Life is what you make of it – so make it good!
- Your choices are what have led you to where you are. So, if you aren't happy with where you are, start making new choices.
- Consider what you can do today (and every day moving forward) to progress towards your goals and dreams.

Questions/Exercises

What did you achieve last year? Every victory should be acknowledged and celebrated, even small ones.

What do you see as possible for the year ahead? Take a moment to reflect on this, as it can make you present to any mental blocks you may have or baggage you might be carrying into the New Year.

It's not about time management or even priority management. It's about energy management!

Let's face the facts.

We live in a world of limitations. There's a limit to your time. There's a limit to your money. And, more importantly, there's a limit to the amount of energy you can spend on any given day. That puts a cap on how much you can accomplish individually.

One way to reduce the amount of energy you expend is by setting your defaults.

This simply means having a plan for your day. You don't need a complicated plan. You don't even need to pull up Google Calendar and time block every available hour, because every time you don't follow your plan, you'll feel like a failure and lose confidence in yourself and in the method.

What you need to do is set an intention for each day you'll be working.

And, by the way, you can have a plan and still leave room for synchronicities to occur in your life. So, again, don't feel obligated to account for every available minute in your schedule.

Whether you need a comprehensive and structured plan, or just basic guidelines for your working life, here are some insights to help you on your journey.

Setting Your Defaults

Planning can require a great deal of time and effort.

But I believe it's worth every minute you spend on it, because if you don't plan how you're going to live, you may never get to where you want to go in life.

It's like setting out on a journey with no specific end in mind. You will get somewhere, but is that somewhere a place you want to be?

I don't know if it's possible to live by your plan 100% of the time. Life is full of surprises, and the unexpected can happen. Just when you think you've got the hang of things, your plans can be derailed by people, events, and circumstances.

But if you have an agenda to fall back on, you can always get back on track. Maybe not the same day, maybe not even the same week, but usually within a short amount of time, you'll find yourself back in your routine.

I believe an important part of creating your routine is setting your defaults.

Why Set Defaults for Yourself?

By setting your defaults, you can eliminate a lot of unnecessary thinking and conserve your energy for the things that matter to you most.

Steve Jobs was said to have worn the same clothing every single day, so that he wouldn't have to go through his closet trying to figure out what to wear in the morning. He saved his energy for what he felt was most important in his life.

Since we all have limited willpower that diminishes through the day, using up that willpower for the minute details of life can steal energy and creativity that could be better applied to your highest priorities and projects.

Where's the Fun in Defaults?

I can hear some of you objecting already:

“If I set defaults for every part of my life, I will never have any fun!”

I know exactly where you’re coming from. I enjoy being spontaneous, and I have a lot of fun when others involve me in their spontaneity too.

But therein lies one of the benefits of setting defaults for yourself – you’ll eliminate a lot of boredom!

Since we all have limited willpower that diminishes through the day, using up that willpower for the minute details of life can steal energy and creativity that could be better applied to your highest priorities and projects.

If you're the fun-loving, spontaneous type, there's a good chance you find yourself bored a lot of the time anyway. So, think about it – if you always had something new and different scheduled in your calendar, you would have a lot to look forward to, and you wouldn't get bored or restless as often.

Plus, you can schedule spontaneity blocks into your life. There's no rule against it!

Easy Decisions & Hard Decisions

If you're anything like me, you've probably wasted a lot of time trying to figure out what to do on a given night. In the last six years or so, I often defaulted to work, because that was the easiest thing to do. I was already at work, so soldiering on and doing more work was an easy decision to make.

At that time, finding something to do, asking friends to join me, and going out was the harder decision to make, as weird as that might sound. And, that wasn't part of my value system at the time.

The easy decision isn't always the right one, though, especially long-term, as evidenced by the fact that I was severely burnt out before going on my trip to Japan in November 2017. Yes, I did it to myself as much as anyone else, but at least I learned from it and took proactive steps to correct my mistakes.

I hadn't taken much time off, if at all, in the last six years. At times, I was burning the candle at both ends. So, in 2017, I booked time off and set aside my work for two weeks. I was deliberate about this.

Was going to Japan an easy decision or a hard decision? Believe it or not, it was a hard decision for me.

When I reflect on my trip, I recognize it should have been an easy decision to make, because I enjoyed myself tremendously and created a lot of incredible memories.

The hard part was the cost and anxiety associated with making such a commitment.

There can be opportunity costs associated with taking time off too, but in this case, that would not have amounted to much because I had no mental space or energy to handle more projects.

Setting defaults can help you make hard decisions when you don't feel like it.

Let's say, for instance, your calendar app reminds you to practice your guitar at seven in the morning.

There's a part of you that might dread having to start your day that early.

But if you're committed to your success, and you're not a flake, then you would follow through on the decision to practice your instrument at the specific time you set aside for it.

Commitment begins with self. If you can't commit to your own priorities and follow through, you can't commit to others wholeheartedly either.

What Does a Default Look Like?

Let's say you go to book club on the first Thursday night of every month. So, that would be a default of yours, though you may not have identified it as such.

We all have defaults – work, church, meetings, meals, family life, date nights, social events, and so on.

It's worth thinking about what your defaults are and mapping them out in a calendar app, or even on a piece of paper.

I'll talk more about this in a moment, but our defaults often go unexamined, leading to wasted time and energy drains. I think you'll see this for yourself if you audit your schedule.

If you want to create a new default, look at the available time blocks in your calendar and schedule something new in an open slot. Let's say you want to work on your personal growth. So, you set aside 7:30 PM to 8:00 PM on Wednesday nights as your default time for reading relevant, value-adding books.

Then, it's just a matter of living by the defaults you set in your life.

When experimenting with a new default, try it out for at least a month and decide whether it works. I would suggest not creating too many defaults at once, because it takes time to adopt new habits. Starting with one or two would allow you to get the feel for things before you commit to more.

Create Contingency Defaults

Let's say Thursday night at 6:00 PM is when you hold band rehearsals. But things can come up, and sometimes rehearsals get cancelled, right?

If you didn't have a contingency default, you might twiddle your thumbs for a while and think about what to do with that time. Should you eat? Should you go out? Should you work on that recording project that's been on the backburner for a while?

Having to think about all this in the moment wastes time and can even cause anxiety.

Meanwhile, if you had a contingency default, you would waste a lot less time and energy thinking about what to do next. Your contingency plan could simply be personal practice instead of band practice. That way, you would still be improving as a musician and preparing for your next gig or recording project.

I understand this can be a lot of defaults to be thinking about, but if you want to achieve big and enjoy life, you need to be intentional about your plans.

Question Your Defaults

Are your current defaults truly benefiting you? Are you making progress towards your goals and dreams, and are your habits supporting your progress?

As I already pointed out, everybody has defaults whether they're aware of them or not. And, actions always reveal a person's character and priorities. Words are unreliable, but actions never lie. I can always tell what someone's priorities are by watching what they do.

I would encourage you to question your defaults, as more than likely there are items in your schedule that need not be there. They are holding you back from becoming the best you can be and accomplishing what you're truly capable of.

If you're going to book club, ask yourself why that's a default of yours. Reading can be beneficial, and I talk quite a bit about the importance of reading myself, but with something like book club, you also need to look at the material you're reading and the people you're hanging around.

Are you reading material that stimulates your creativity or benefits your life in some way? Are you meeting and spending time with people that add value to your life?

If you want to optimize your schedule, you need to be willing to question everything you're doing.

You have both positive and negative habits, as we all do. The goal of setting defaults is to create a set of habits that continually push you in the direction of your dreams.

Purging unproductive defaults can be challenging. It's easy to get attached to an activity or group of people. And, it's also easy to rationalize and justify an emotional decision with logic later.

But ask yourself – what is the long-term impact of what you're doing? If it's going to make you unhealthy, unhappy, or unproductive, you need to examine it seriously. There can be dire consequences for sticking with a bad habit for too long.

Summary

- Planning is worth every minute you spend on it.
- You can eliminate a lot of unnecessary thinking and conserve energy by setting defaults.
- Commitment begins with self.
- If you want to achieve big and enjoy life, you need to be intentional about your schedule.
- Actions always reveal a person's character and priorities.

Questions/Exercises

What defaults are already in motion in your life?
Consider whether they are serving you.

What defaults could you create for yourself? How could they assist you in achieving your goals in the New Year?

Distractions, distractions, distractions... .

The internet is a blessing and a curse.

It's the gateway to a near limitless number of distractions.

Distractions kill personal effectiveness and lead us down tracks we need not go down.

As much as possible, everything you do should serve a purpose. Everything you own should serve a purpose, too.

When you're intentional about what you allow into your life, you can accomplish more with less. A distraction-free environment ensures that you focus on the right things without getting pulled away by the urgent things in life.

I'll show you what I mean.

The Fewer The Options, The Better

I recently moved into my new home.

Upon arrival, the internet was supposed to work. It didn't.

I called the cable company, but to no avail. They couldn't help me get my internet up and running from their support center either. They said a technician would have to come by the following week to get it connected.

But life goes on regardless of your problems. Deadlines don't adapt to your circumstances. When you have work to do, you must find a way to get it done.

Where I live, Wi-Fi connections are available everywhere, and I own a couple of laptops, so finding a place to do my work wasn't exactly an issue.

But there are some slight inconveniences to working on one of my laptops versus my desktop computer.

For one, I don't have as much screen retail space to work with. For another, many of my most important files are stored on my desktop computer, which has more hard drive space.

But sometimes you must make do with what you've got, which is what I did.

As I took my laptop with me around town to do work, I had an important realization about the limitations I was forced to work with.

I discovered I was able to concentrate better on the tasks in front of me.

The problem with computers is that they are a gateway to a near infinite number of possibilities, especially if they are connected to the internet.

When working at coffee shops with limited connectivity, or working at home where I had no connection, I was better able to focus on my writing.

While writing, I was fully in writing mode, not distracted by social media, Photoshop, email, an article that's open in my browser window, and half a dozen other things.

This caused me to realize that the fewer options you have out in front of you, the better, especially when you're working on something that matters to you.

I tend to spread my time between many things, such as graphic design, web development, email, songwriting, audio production, video editing, and writing. But one of the highest priority activities in my life is writing.

Writing is how I've built a popular music industry blog. It's how I've earned two-thirds of my living for many years. It's how I've built many valuable industry connections. It's how I develop books, courses, and other resources that thousands of people consume and pay money for.

So, it would make sense for me to allot a larger portion of my time to writing over anything else. I derive some of the greatest value in my life from writing.

The ability to focus on that discipline without being distracted has resulted in increased productivity, even though the lack of an internet connection at home has proven inconvenient at times.

I don't know about you, but I can be easily distracted. It's not a weakness to admit that. Rather, it's something you should know about yourself, so you can come up with strategies to cope with it. For me, clearing away the excess clutter has obviously been beneficial.

It's important to realize our lives are more cluttered than ever. We have so many ways to communicate and consume information, and so much coming at us all the time that we forget we're being inundated with other people's agendas and priorities. We barely pay any attention to what matters most to us. We live in the past and the future instead of in the moment, which is what matters most.

If you aren't convinced, then let me paint a picture for you.

What if you had a special room with only a guitar in it? What if you locked yourself in that room every day for an hour? What if you had no distractions, your mind was clear, and you were motivated to get some work done? Do you think you would get better at guitar?

Some people tell me it can be hard to advance as an instrumentalist, especially if you've been playing the instrument for a long time.

Our lives are more cluttered than ever. We have so many ways to communicate and consume information, and so much coming at us all the time that we forget we're being inundated with other people's agendas and priorities. We barely pay any attention to what matters most to us.

I must disagree. I find 15 minutes of focused practice time is more than enough to make progress as a guitarist, and I've been playing for nearly 16 years! Sometimes, I can learn an entire guitar solo in that time.

The problem today is people don't focus. We're under the illusion that we're focusing, when we're allowing unnecessary distractions into our lives all the time – TV shows and movies, YouTube videos, emails, texts, instant messages, phone calls, postal mail and the list goes on. If you're guilty, say "ugh".

Here's another example. Let's say you're an electronic music producer. Maybe you only own one laptop right now, so you use it for everything – email, word processing, spreadsheets, video games, and so on.

What if you had a single laptop dedicated for the purpose of audio production? This would allow you to get away from other distractions and simply concentrate on the act of creating great music.

The money you put into that laptop would be worth it, because you'd probably be making more money from your music.

Please note: I'm not asking you to cut everything out of your life and stay focused on your highest priorities for the entire duration of your waking hours.

Some people can do that, but for most, it would be ridiculous.

Plus, I've been finding considerable value in having a life outside of my work, especially in the last six months. I think you would too. If you've been going at it hard lately, then please do yourself a favor, take the day off early, go see a movie, get out in nature, or do something that energizes you. You'll thank me for it later.

What I am asking you to think about is what would be possible if you dedicated an hour – with every bit of attention and concentration you could muster – to each of your highest priority tasks every single day.

This may surprise you, but I think you would find yourself more productive than 80% of people out there.

By the way, I would not advise picking more than two or three things to focus on, because that seems to be about what most people can handle at a given time. If you take on too much, you'll wear yourself down and spread yourself out too thin.

As it has often been said, work will always fill the space you've allotted for it. This doesn't mean you can complete something that takes six hours in one hour, but it does mean one hour of focused effort can produce better results than six hours of halfhearted, tired or distracted effort.

In closing, here are a few questions to get you thinking:

- In what areas of your life do you have too many distractions?

- What would you consider your highest priority tasks?
- Do you think dedicating an hour of focused effort with each of your most important projects would allow you to achieve more?
- Where are you wasting the most time, and what could you do to reclaim it?

Summary

- Be intentional about what you allow in life.
- You'll get more done while you're working if your environment is distraction-free and you're focused on what you need to achieve.
- Our lives are more cluttered than ever. It's good think about how to remove some of this clutter to focus on your highest priorities.
- A lot can be accomplished in a small amount of time if you're focused on what you're doing.
- Work will always fill the time you've allotted for it.

Questions/Exercises

Come up with some ideas around what you could do to eliminate distractions and spend more time concentrating on what matters to you.

Now, take some time to identify what your highest priorities are. Limit it to two or three items.

Before you can move forward, you must let go of what's behind...

Earlier, I mentioned that I would introduce you to process that allows you to let go of any baggage you've been holding onto, so you can start your New Year fresh. That's what we're going to get into now.

I learned how to do this from Michael Hyatt, who's a known expert in the leadership space.

I love clearing the clutter in my life. It's what I do whenever business is slow. It tends to pick up very quickly after I let go of what's holding me back.

Many people have a boat anchor holding them down, because they don't process their mail, they don't get rid of clothes they don't wear, they don't talk through their emotions with a counselor, and on and on.

Let's get that mental, physical, and emotional clutter out of the way.

Let's clear the path for the New Year by reflecting on the last.

Again, *the reflection that follows is from January 2018*, but could just as easily apply to any year.

Closing the Chapter on 2017

2017 is over. Hard to believe, isn't it?

In my life, there was quite a bit of push and pull. Not just at the gym, but also in terms of how I experienced time.

Albert Einstein has been quoted as saying:

Time is relative; its only worth depends on what we do as it's passing.

I can't even begin to unpack the depths of what that truly means. What I can share with you is that my life slowed to a crawl during the summer months, and quickly picked up afterwards. It was strange.

My summer was a life-defining one and has had a huge impact on who and where I am today.

I made some excellent memories in 2017, but I'm still excited to close the chapter on it because I'm looking forward to what 2018 brings.

So, as with last year, I will be following Michael Hyatt's process for closing the chapter on another year. It doesn't make sense to drag your last year into the new one, so we must take adequate time to process our experiences.

Here are the seven questions he asks himself, the same ones I will be asking myself:

- If the last year were a movie of your life, what would the genre be?
- What were the two or three major themes that kept recurring?
- What did you accomplish this past year that you are the most proud of?
- What do you feel you should have been acknowledged for but weren't?
- What disappointments or regrets did you experience this past year?
- What was missing from last year as you look back?
- What were the major life-lessons you learned this past year?

Without further ado, here are my answers.

My Answers to the 7 Questions

1. If the last year were a movie in your life, what would the genre be?

Adventure and new experiences became the theme of the year, especially as summer approached. I spent some time away in British Columbia in August, and then two weeks in Japan in November.

Both trips embodied a mix of familiar and new experiences I will value and treasure for a long time to come. I tried new foods, went new places, made new friends and pursued new experiences.

2 What were the two or three major themes that kept recurring?

- The first half of the year was dominated by conversations about business and what it means to be an entrepreneur. It helps that my best friend is a business owner as well. These were valuable conversations that formed the basis for questions I've asked other people in real life and in podcast interviews.
- Discussion and rumors about relationships grew significantly this year. I shared and listened to people talk about girlfriends and boyfriends, spouses, engagement, marriage, honeymoons, children, and so on.
- Moving became a bit of a theme in August. I didn't expect to be moving sooner, which I recently did, though I'm still in Calgary at this point. I've had a lot of conversations about California, and the word has randomly popped up in a lot of places. These three themes kept coming up while I was in Japan as well.

3. What did you accomplish this year that you are most proud of?

- Completing the manuscript for *Flashes of Elation: Navigating the World as a Sensitive, Creative Soul*. The book isn't done yet, but the hardest part is.
- Releasing two new singles through the year – “Waves” and “Your Eyes Give It Away”.
- Performing with Frederick Tamagi at his CD release in March.
- Publishing 49 episodes of The New Music Industry Podcast.
- Publishing 50 episodes of Using Your Power.
- Speaking at WordCamp.
- Performing at and being a part of Listening Room YYC.
- Being a part of The Question.
- I participated in Wommy Saves Xmas – The Final Episode as a voice actor and put together the theme song for it too.

4 What do you feel you should have been acknowledged for but weren't?

Nothing specifically. I feel like the people I've been working with have been kind, supportive, and complimentary. I would love to see more of my work reach more people, but that's been true every year.

5. What disappointments did you experience this past year?

Not finishing *Flashes of Elation* is probably my greatest disappointment. At least I got the manuscript done.

6. What was missing from last year as you look back?

There isn't much I can think of. I lived by my three theme words in 2017: Adventure, Health and Collaboration.

I worked out harder than ever. I took vitamins and supplements. I changed my diet and quit energy drinks. I went for a lot of long walks. I got outdoors and into nature. I made a new best friend. I took breaks and got away from my life in Calgary a couple times. I went overseas for two weeks. I went to a business event and ended up meeting a new collaborator. I played musical genres I've never attempted before. I became more spiritual. I collaborated with people I respect and admire.

Much of what I said would happen in 2017 indeed happened, but it was more than I'd even bargained for.

7. What were the major life-lessons you learned this past year?

- I love what I said last year, and I quote: “Even when similar situations seem to repeat themselves in life, your past does not dictate your future. Just because you feel the same does not mean that things will turn out exactly as they did before.” This was a major theme in my life during the summer. There were some situations that appeared to be repeating but turned out differently than expected. Now I feel like I was talking prophetically about things to come.
- You can take a break, and it’s okay. On July 3, I was sitting down to have lunch with my best friend. Normally, I would be getting together with Maveen Kaura at 1 PM. You might know him as the co-host of a podcast I’m a part of called Using Your Power. My friend said to me, “Why don’t you call him and see if you’re still getting together today?” As it turns out, we weren’t. Maveen pointed out that there probably wasn’t much point in engaging the marketing work we needed to do, because summer was just beginning. My friend and I ended up going to Banff and had a great time. Surprisingly, a lot of things kind of worked themselves out while I was away that day. I was able to hand in some of my work a little late, and no one had any issues with that. That may not be how things go every single time, but sometimes you need a break, as I did, and taking that break won’t cause everything to fall apart. It’s okay.

- Be aware of your surroundings before leaving on vacation. I was extremely burnt out before going to Japan and had no choice but to leave a couple of projects hanging. For the most part, this was okay, but one client didn't like it too much. Communication is always best when it's clear. So, if you're going to be away for a couple of weeks, make sure everyone knows what you're up to. Even then, your clients may not be entirely happy with you. It's never a good idea to leave them hanging, so if you can, try to have someone handle your work for you while you're away, or have a system in place to deal with it.

Final Thoughts

What a ride. When I first started closing the chapter on the year in 2014, I'm not sure I had much to process or say. That's clearly been changing fast.

My theme words meant a great deal to me last year compared to other years too. That's another reflection for another time.

Have you taken the time to close the chapter on 2017? What did you learn, and how did you grow?

Summary

- Clearing the clutter in your life allows for new things to enter.

- It's good to have a framework you can follow to close the chapter on another year.
- Thinking and reflecting allows you to pinpoint exactly what you did and didn't do in the last 365 days, without bias.

Questions/Exercises

You guessed it – in this section, you get to answer the same seven questions I ask myself at the beginning of every year. Let's get to it!

If the last year were a movie in your life, what would the genre be?

What were the two or three major themes that kept recurring?

What did you accomplish this past year that you are the most proud of?

What did you feel you should have been acknowledged for but weren't?

What disappointments or regrets did you experience this past year?

What was missing from last year as you look back?

What were the major life-lessons you learned this past year?

The words that rule your life...

Words are powerful. My experiences prove it, and I simply cannot come to any other conclusion.

Each year, I set three theme words for the year, just as Chris Brogan does.

Setting my intentions for the year in this way has been far more practical and useful for me than goal-setting. My goals are a moving target, and change easily based on people, circumstances, events, and even what's inspiring me at a given moment.

But setting three theme words for the year causes me no anxiety. If I'm aligned with my purpose and the overall flow of energies, I can set it on autopilot and allow the year to unfold in the way the Universe best sees fit.

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer even has a book called *The Power of Intentions*, and it's one of his best works. He is right – there is power in intention.

Here are my reflections on my theme words from 2017.

There is power in intention.

Reflecting on My 3 Theme Words from 2017

“What’s your New Year’s resolution?”

This is a common question to ask this time of year.

And yet, the thing that I’ve found the most value in over the last few years is setting three theme words for the year instead of setting goals or resolutions.

I’ve found that these words can set the intention for the year, and if you keep them out in front of you where you can look at them and contemplate them regularly, you’ll be reminded of what’s important to you and what you’re looking to achieve that year.

You’ll find that people, circumstances, and events line up in unexpected and beautiful ways. Fresh opportunities will come your way if you remain open to the possibilities.

Setting theme words for the year is an idea I got from Chris Brogan, CEO of Owner Media Group. Since 2015, it has become a yearly practice for me, though I admit I almost gave up on doing it last year. I’m glad I didn’t.

If you’ve never done this before, I would suggest giving it a try. And, maybe the stories I’m about to share will inspire you to do just that.

So, here are my three theme words from 2017, and what happened as result of holding these intentions for a year.

1. Adventure

I admit there was a lack of adventure in my life from 2014 all the way to the first half of 2017. That's probably why I wanted to set "adventure" as one of my theme words for the year.

This is what I said in last year's blog post about adventure:

*Life can be too much "business as usual".
I've got to do things that make me come alive,
and that means doing some things that might
scare me.*

So, how did adventure manifest in 2017?

I already talked about how I made some new friends in 2017, and that played a significant role in bringing about fresh experiences.

I know that a lot of you follow me on social media, and often comment on what I'm sharing, usually in person, including photos of the trips I've been taking and the blog posts I've been writing.

I've already mentioned a few times on The New Music Industry Podcast that I spent a week in Chase, BC in August.

One friend commented how he thought it was interesting that I approached my experiences there as though they were entirely new, even though they weren't.

That's the approach I took the entire summer. Sure, I've been to BC before, but I think it's one of the first trips I've ever taken alone. So, the difference was that I got to experience everything for myself.

Many of my other adventures during the summer, and even fall months were driven by a new friend I had made, but I was also intentional about getting out into nature alone.

The most significant adventure was that of returning to Japan after 14 years for two weeks in November. It's almost as if that trip was tailor-made for me, as I could never have planned for everything that followed. It was incredible.

My desire for adventure was fulfilled in many ways in 2017, and I plan to continue exploring in 2018, even if I don't go overseas.

2 Collaboration

I was just beginning to collaborate with more people at the end of 2016.

There's nothing wrong with working alone, and since I'm in a creative industry, most of my work must be done in solitude, or at least somewhere I can concentrate on my work, such as at a coffee shop or a library.

Last year, this is what I said about collaboration:

I'm looking forward to working with more people, even if it's just in smaller capacities, whether it's guest posts, three-question interviews, podcast discussions, or music.

In the first half of the year, I worked with Maveen Kaura on publishing podcast episodes for Using Your Power. There are reasons why things started to slow down a bit in July, but I'm certain we're going to get back into a regular schedule in 2018. Maveen and I also collaborated on a successful crowdfunding campaign and independent radio campaign.

As far as guest posts, interviews, and podcast discussions go, plenty of opportunities came my way.

You may be surprised to find that I'm not entirely hands-on with the guest programming for The New Music Industry Podcast. Typically, people will send requests my way, and I will decide whether I want them on the show.

This isn't to suggest there aren't people I haven't hand-selected or want to talk to, but lining up, preparing for, and publishing those interviews can be hard work. I'm glad I decided to interview many of the individuals that approached me, because I think some great content came as result, and I got to talk to some cool people.

People also approached me about being featured on their blog and interviewed on their podcast. I cherished those opportunities.

Finally, I enjoyed being a part of a couple of communities – The Listening Room YYC and The Question and got to collaborate with some people I have a lot of respect for.

3. Health

Here's what I said about health last year:

It's time to get into a steady routine of eating well, exercising, and taking supplements to help me achieve optimal health.

That's a great description for what happened in 2017.

For whatever reason, I didn't have much success becoming healthier in 2016. I tried to walk more – anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 steps per day – but that didn't appear to be producing results in how I looked or felt.

Now, to be fair, I didn't always reach those types of numbers daily either.

I know now that I had to make some dietary adjustments. But in 2017, it all started with working out regularly. That was the domino that set a chain reaction in motion.

I had an invitation from a friend to work out with him at the gym, and I said I would join him. I was in for quite the surprise when, after our first upper body workout, I could barely lift my arms or sleep properly for nearly a week because I was so sore!

He also filled me in on what and what not to eat. I changed my diet gradually, and by the end of 2017, I had almost completely moved over to an organic diet.

I had another friend tell me about fulvic and humic acids. The verdict is still out on these, so I'm not necessarily suggesting you take them yourself, but I felt I was presented with another important opportunity to become healthier when I learned about these liquids, so I took them.

Through the summer, I went on a lot of walks, and tried hot yoga a couple of times.

I stopped drinking energy drinks by spring, because in the early part of the year, I was struggling a lot with anxiety and didn't know why. As it turns out, it was probably a combination of caffeine and chemicals that can be found in energy drinks. Cutting that out of my diet hasn't eliminated anxiety, but it's rarely a major problem now.

I set the intention, and the avenues for betterment presented themselves.

My 3 Theme Words for 2018

I was in love with my theme words from 2017, because of what manifested, and how things changed for the better.

But this is a New Year, and circumstances are already different than they were in December.

So, I was dragging my feet a bit in coming up with my next theme words, but I finally decided to write them down, so I could bring my focus to the present moment.

Here are my three words for 2018

1. War

This theme word came to me while I was in Japan. One of my favorite bands right now is Disciple, and I first came to love their music in summer 2017, though I had been aware of them for several years. One day I realized how they use violent imagery and lyrics in their music, and I thought to myself, “war – I’m going to make that one of my theme words for 2018.”

I did not set this theme word because I want to invite war into my life. Rather, I chose it because I want to wage war on mediocrity in my life. I want to associate with excellent people. I want to do excellent things and pursue high-quality projects. I want to be engaged in the work I’m doing and do it with purpose. So, basically, I’m pursuing quality things in my life, more than anything else.

2 Initiative

People sometimes call me “passive”. Usually, what they’re referring to is my laid-back, easygoing personality, not my work ethic. If you’ve seen the amount of work I produce and the effort I put into it, I don’t think you could refer to me as passive.

But up until June 2017, I had relegated fun to the Universe, because I didn't feel as though there was anything worthwhile out there. I had given up on the notion of fun, connection, and even romance, and unfortunately, I may have made people the enemy in my loneliness and resignation, most of which I decided not to acknowledge any longer.

But in 2017, my heart started to open again, and I allowed myself to feel and to want what I wanted. This did lead to some heartbreak, but it didn't shake my belief in myself. If anything, it affirmed that I was far more capable and resilient than I thought I was. I became a far more confident individual.

In 2018, I want to take more ownership of my life. I want to take initiative in my business. I want to take initiative in relationships. I want to take initiative in my fitness and health and continue to seek betterment.

3. Connection

In a way, I've substituted "collaboration" from last year for "connection" this year.

Collaboration implies you'll be working with others. Connection has a similar connotation to it.

Certainly, I can be connected to my work. I can be connected to my spirit, my thoughts, my emotions. But connection with others, in my estimation, is even more important, and it stems from my intention to take initiative and be a better leader of myself in 2018.

I desire deeper connections. I want to build a support group. I want to be proactive in reaching out and connecting with others. I also want to share valuable and worthwhile messages with others.

So, I'm looking forward to making lasting and valuable connections this year.

Final Thoughts

Amazing things happened in 2017.

But 2018 is a new year, and it's a clean slate.

Even though I'm reeling from the sudden changes that transpired, I'm excited for what 2018 will bring, because I know I will continue to grow and experience new things.

What are your three words for 2018? What are your intentions for the year?

Summary

- You can set intentions for the New Year with your theme words.
- Intentions have the power to manifest change in your life.

Questions/Exercises

You know what we're going to do now, don't you?
You get to take a moment to set your theme words for
the year. Don't cheat yourself – think carefully about
what intentions you want to set for the year ahead.

What will your first theme word be?

What will your second theme word be?

What will your third theme word be?

What did you accomplish last year? Think carefully on that question, because the answer might be more than you even realize... .

By now you might be saying to yourself, “what’s all this reflection business about?”

Well, in my opinion, most people don’t spend enough time reflecting.

So, they don’t learn much. They don’t consider what went right, what went wrong, and why.

A year might seem like a short amount of time, but there are always lessons to be learned within a 365-day container.

Here’s what I realized as I reflected on 2017, which wasn’t necessarily a standout year for me on the professional side. But I wouldn’t know that if I didn’t reflect, would I?

What Did I Accomplish in 2017?

As I think back on 2016, I recognize that one of my biggest achievements was going from working several jobs at several locations to becoming a full-time work-from-home freelancer and entrepreneur.

Prior to that, I had been working as a guitar instructor, theatre technician, and freelance writer. By summer 2016, my ghostwriting and freelance writing work had taken off to the point where I didn't feel I needed the other off-site work anymore.

As exciting as these changes were, it was a bit scary going from working in several capacities to narrowing my focus to one thing. But if that hadn't worked out, I may not be sitting here sharing these insights with you.

So, recently I gave some thought as to what I had accomplished in 2017. At first, I didn't feel like it was quite the standout year 2016 was. I encountered many challenges and went through a great deal of growth in 2017, especially in my personal life, but because of that, my revenue numbers suffered compared to 2016.

As I reflected, however, I realized that revenue figures aren't everything. I still accomplished a great deal that I'm proud of last year.

So, here are three things I accomplished in 2017.

1. Freedom

Many of us get into business because of the freedom it offers.

I love what Christopher Sutton of Musical U said in episode 68 of The New Music Industry Podcast:

...as an entrepreneur, you have incredible freedom from day one and you can increase that over time as your business grows and becomes more successful.

When you think “freedom” as an entrepreneur, what comes to mind is probably the laptop lifestyle. The ability to go anywhere you want, and work from any beach you want across the world.

I’ve probably been able to live that type of lifestyle since 2016, since my work was no longer tied to a physical location. I probably had enough freelancing income to do it even a year prior to that.

There are reasons why I didn’t do that. For one, I had – and still have – several collaborative projects I work on with people I respect and admire in Calgary.

For another, I had lost sight of anything outside of work between 2014 and the first half of 2017. *My life was work*, as I’ve shared before.

That meant it didn’t matter a whole lot where I was in the world, because I hardly interacted with anyone.

**...as an entrepreneur, you
have incredible freedom
from day one and you can
increase that over time as
your business grows and
becomes more successful.**

**- Christopher Sutton,
Founder of Musical U**

I had some vague notion of visiting Japan in 2017, and I knew I couldn't delay that trip any longer because I had been thinking about it for a couple of years, but I had no idea just how vital that experience would turn out to be.

Most of the year appeared to be going along smoothly, at least until June. More on that in a second.

Prior to leaving for Japan, I was sick and burnt out, and barely able to function. I was beat up in virtually every capacity – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

So, going back to what I was saying about June. I was already nearing burnout at that stage. I would catch myself working straight through the day, getting up only to go to the washroom, make meals, and walk the dog. I would end my days at 10, 11 or 12 at night, with barely any time left to wind down before going to bed and starting the same cycle all over again.

That's when a friend interrupted and changed my life for the better. She started taking me out on adventures and showing me that there is a life outside of work. She drew things out of me that were probably always there, but I had simply forgotten or shoved down. I felt like I was going through personal transformation.

In ensuing months, I ended up taking liberties and exercising quite a bit of freedom. And, to some extent, that has carried over into the New Year.

I also took breaks. I went on a weekend trip to British Columbia with another friend in August. I went to Chase, BC for a week the same month. Then, in November, I finally got to make a return trip to Japan after 14 years of not visiting.

These events, however, were planned. I didn't just wake up one day and say to myself, "I should go to Japan next month". I had been planning for these trips, because I knew I had failed at taking proper breaks in years prior, despite my best intentions.

There is greater freedom to be had, and I'm in pursuit of that. But I'm glad I took some time out to "rebalance" my life in 2017.

2 Clarity

The Music Entrepreneur HQ has been a passion project of mine for many years.

I've built lot of other niche websites and blogs over the years, but after I started seeing some traction with this project idea, I decided to dedicate more time to it, and even redirected many of my other domain names to The Music Entrepreneur HQ.

I think writing and publishing my first book had something to do with that decision as well. Out of any product I had ever created online, including music, other courses and eBooks, the one that consistently drove revenue was the book.

I may be driven and prolific, but I don't think I could have written books for all my blogs and websites. And, it's possible I would have had to do that to drive income from those sites as well.

I had to make some tough decisions about what I wanted to focus on, but with my email list and traffic at The Music Entrepreneur HQ growing, it seemed like a no brainer to continue to add value to the world through this channel. And, as you've surely discovered, I've been sharing about a lot of things that you wouldn't typically find on a music blog.

Despite having a few sources of revenue, up until recently, I wasn't entirely sure what my business model was. After spending some time in Japan reflecting and letting my thoughts simmer, I finally achieved clarity around what The Music Entrepreneur HQ was and could be.

As you can imagine, that makes it a lot easier for me to know what to focus on moving forward. And, gradually, after the whirlwind events of 2017, I'm finding my focus and determination again. Being in a new environment certainly helps – I feel happier, more creative, and more energetic in my new home.

It's time to take this business above and beyond!

3. Health

I had set the intention to focus on my health in 2017. I've already shared a little bit about this.

This was important to me, because I felt my workouts in 2016 weren't yielding results, and in some ways, I was beginning to feel worse off physically. I knew I had to make different decisions in 2017.

"Health" was even a theme word of mine for 2017.

Having set that intention, I was surprised to find the Universe presenting me with new opportunities to care for my wellbeing.

One friend asked if I wanted to work out with him (which I opted to do) and showed me how to eat healthier. Another took me to hot yoga a couple of times, and sometimes went on walks with me. Yet another told me about humic and fulvic acids, and how these liquids could help with gut health, energy and clarity of mind.

During the summer, I was incredibly restless and went on a lot of walks, both during the day, and oftentimes at night. I loved those late-night walks, despite how unbalanced I was feeling emotionally while on them. It gave me time to process my thoughts, and I felt like those walks brought a lot of clarity to my life.

I wouldn't say I've achieved all my health and fitness goals. But I have more energy, I've gained muscle mass, toned up, and cut fat. That's the direction I want to continue towards in 2018.

Some friends have commented on the many changes I've gone through physically, and it inspires me to push ahead.

Conclusion

2017 was a different kind of year for me, but it's almost as if it had to be that way.

If I had kept up that crazy routine (from the first half of the year), I might be in the hospital and not sitting here and sharing my journey with you as I am today.

If I hadn't set the intention to become healthier and to grow as an individual, likewise that could have led to some poor choices and unwanted consequences.

I needed to change, and I had set the intention to do exactly that. But it's almost as if the universe had to shake me awake before I was willing to do anything about it. I didn't know what steps to take, and I needed the help of some friends to show me.

2017 was difficult, but I believe I will remember it fondly. Now, it's 2018, and my life is changing again. I look forward to the journey and adventures ahead.

Summary

- Freedom is available from day one of your business.
- Don't forget to take breaks throughout the year. If possible, schedule them in now.

- Putting yourself in different environments can help you find new inspiration.

Questions/Exercises

From a bird's eye view, what are three things you accomplished last year? Don't limit yourself to achievements in your professional life. Consider other categories like fitness, relationships, finances, leisure, recognition and so on.

How did you spend your time last year? How will you spend your time in the year ahead?

How did you spend your time last year? How will you spend your time in the year ahead?

Whether you're a musician, music entrepreneur or something in between, there are certain tasks and projects that should be considered more important than others.

A musician might say that making music is their number one priority. An entrepreneur might say that product creation is theirs.

Each year, I think about what I did that moved the needle on my career or business. For my 2018 reflection I came up with 10 things.

Here are those 10 things.

**Whether you're a musician,
music entrepreneur or
something in between, there
are certain tasks and
projects that should be
considered more important
than others.**

10 Things I Did in 2017

What does the life of a music entrepreneur look like? Well, if you've listened to the stories of those that have been on my podcast, you're probably starting to get a bit of an idea.

Whether it's Bob Baker, James Moore, Ross Barber, Eddie Meehan, Christopher Sutton, John Petrocelli, DeCarlos Garrison, Ian Temple or Melina Krumova, you should be starting to see the dedication and effort required to be in business.

It isn't necessarily about smarts because I've interviewed several people with successful businesses that weren't the sharpest people I've ever met. I'm not calling them out and I'm not referring to anyone I've had on my show, but I know people who are further ahead on their business journey that have a simplistic approach to life and business.

I tend to analyze and think things through a lot and I also get distracted by shiny objects easily, so I could probably learn a thing or two from the 100+ entrepreneurs I've interviewed over the years.

"But *you're* the music entrepreneur DA", you might be saying.

But the way I want you to look at it is that *you* are the music entrepreneur. I'm just trying to empower you with the tools and mindset necessary to go and make your dreams happen.

So, I wanted to share about 10 things I did in 2017. I don't share this to brag or even draw attention to myself.

Rather, I share this with you to give you a sense of what a music entrepreneur could be doing with their time. This may also shed some light on possible revenue streams for you. So, let's get into it.

1. I Wrote Songs

Each year I'm inspired to write new songs as events unfold in my life and I tap into inspiration. I have a lot of songs in my archives already, so I don't necessarily make it a point to write a certain number of songs in a year these days (I once wrote 365 songs in a year). My time is mostly taken up by other things, but I still enjoy the process.

Writing a song doesn't always lead to immediate income but when you think about it, a song has a lot of long-tail value.

You can record and sell the song. You can perform it at your shows. You may even be able to get other artists to cover it or find licensing opportunities for it. It's a good idea to look at the individual revenue streams connected to writing a song because there might be more there than you even realize.

2. I Recorded and Released Music

I released two new singles as a solo artist in 2017 – one called "Waves", and another called "Your Eyes Give it Away". You may not know this, but I also released one new single under a pseudonym, Compuxor. The single is called "Christmas Surf".

This was created for the third installment of Whammy Saves Christmas, a series I've been part of for three years and have done some voice acting for.

I also demoed several other songs that I never released but more than likely I'm going to keep working on those until I'm satisfied with them and then release them when they're ready.

3. I Performed

Performance is the reason I got into music and it remains one of the top reasons I'm still active as a musician. I performed with Long John Lev, Adrenalize and a Nigerian band. I played some solo shows. I did a bit of live session work too. Thanks to these experiences, I feel like I've grown a bit as a musician.

4. I Blogged and Wrote Articles

I published a little less on The Music Entrepreneur HQ in 2017 compared to years prior but that's not my plan for 2018.

I'm looking forward to publishing more, and if you've been following along, you already know that.

Content is an important part of what we offer, and it is usually how people find us online, making it one of our top assets.

You may know that I'm also a staff writer at Music Industry How To where new articles are going up all the time, and that remains a significant focus of mine too.

5. I Published Podcast Episodes

The podcast is still one of my major focuses. I published 49 episodes in 2017. I enjoy the audio medium. While it takes more time to produce audio than articles, it generally takes less time than videos.

These days I'm starting to think about different ways to monetize the podcast.

6. I Made Videos

I started taking the creation of videos more seriously in 2017.

I didn't get around to making quite as many as I thought I would because of any content type, I find video requires the most effort and time to produce.

Recently, I've started thinking more about making videos again because I know it's one of the number one ways people consume content online today.

7. I Helped Organize Events

It's been an honor and a privilege to be a part of the Listening Room YYC collective.

We went from running two events per month between February and June to running four events per month from September to December.

I'm still part of the collective and helping organize additional events in 2018 (note: as of July 2018, I'm no longer a part of this collective).

It's a lot of fun showcasing talented artists in this way and giving them the opportunity to perform in front of an attentive audience.

I also got to perform at a couple of these events.

8. I Coached

Coaching and teaching are huge passions of mine. I enjoy helping other musicians, creatives, and business owners succeed in their ventures.

I am planning to launch coaching packages soon. I used to do one-on-one coaching on a per session basis, but something I would like to offer is the ability for you to purchase multiple coaching sessions at once.

9. I Helped Run a Successful Crowdfunding Campaign

This is the first crowdfunding campaign I ever helped with, so it was very gratifying to have been a part of a winning team. It was immensely successful, generating over \$10,000 for the artist. It gave me increased confidence as a marketer and I made bit of money in the process, but not necessarily a lot.

10. Miscellaneous or Unfinished

There are a few other things I worked on throughout the year that I didn't necessarily get around to finishing but occupied quite a bit of my time.

One was I initiated an independent radio campaign. This is something that I'm finishing up as I write this, so the campaign should be over in March.

I worked on *Flashes of Elation* and finished the manuscript. Many of you have been asking "When is the book coming out?" Well, I'm looking at my whiteboard right now and there are four boxes that have yet to be ticked.

One of the things I'm waiting on right now is a foreword that's going to be written by someone special. Either way, I promise I'm working on it and we should be entering the editing phase soon. That's how you know we're close.

I also spent some time building new partnerships, especially with the people that came on my podcast. I'm excited about how those are going to play out.

Those are some of the major areas I spent my time in 2017. I'd be curious to know how you spent your time and what you were able to accomplish.

Summary

- As a musician or music entrepreneur, you must prioritize what to work on.
- There are many activities you can engage in as a music entrepreneur. But it's also important to cultivate focus.
- As you begin to figure out what's working for you, you should double down on it without hesitation.

Questions/Exercises

Identify how you spent your time last year. Then, make a list of the top 10 areas you gave the most time to. If you can't think of 10, that's fine. The key here is to understand where your time went.

How will you stay motivated in the year ahead? What books will you be reading?

Each year, I like to think about what books I'll be reading.

Sometimes I read more. Sometimes I read less.

But either way, reading remains an important discipline in my life. It shapes my thinking, gives me new ideas and challenges me to go above and beyond in my life and career.

Here I talk about four books that impacted me most in 2017. But there are so many more. Maybe you'll find a title or two on this list that will keep you growing in the New Year.

4 Impacting Books I Read in 2017

I didn't get around to reading quite as much in 2017 as I had in the two years prior.

I've already shared about many of the events that sent me reeling last year and how that caused me to rethink my approach to life.

**Reading can shape your
thinking, give you new ideas
and challenge you to go
above and beyond in your
life and career.**

My burnout and newfound social life both played a significant part in book reading taking a bit of a backseat.

I don't think I learned any less in 2017 compared to years prior. I believe I learned a lot of practical, real-life lessons that I could not have learned except through the experiences I lived.

In some ways, I felt like I was tossed right into the big leagues. I've always been invested in my personal growth, but I had no idea I would be pushed this far this fast.

Anyway, there were still a few worthwhile books I read in 2017, and I wanted to share them with you. Here they are.

1. Do You Talk Funny?: 7 Comedy Habits to Become a Better (and Funnier) Public Speaker by David Nihill

How important is humor?

David Nihill says that humor is one of the nine key elements of successful TED Talks. He shows why funny people tend to have better relationships and get more opportunities.

You may not consider yourself a comedian, and I don't think of myself as one either. But if we can learn to inject a bit of humor into everyday conversation, we will stand out from the crowd and be more memorable. That could open doors for us.

In *Do You Talk Funny?*, Nihill explains how you can adopt a number of comedic habits, not just to enhance your speeches, but your everyday relationships.

As with any book, taking what you learn and applying it is the hard part, but I took a few valuable ideas from this book, some of which have served me well, such as The Rule of 3.

Pick up this book if you're looking to take your public speeches beyond or you just want to create a better rapport with people.

2. I Will Teach You To Be Rich: No Guilt. No Excuses. No B.S. Just a 6-Week Program That Works by Ramit Sethi

Managing your money isn't easy. This is because there is a lot of misinformation out there, and in today's instant gratification society, it is so easy to overspend and rack up a lot of debt. It's also easy to be lazy.

Author Ramit Sethi brings it back to the basics and shows us how we can get our financial life on track. But he isn't unrealistic either – he points out that you can't have everything. You can drive an amazing car, you can live in a mansion, you can buy that bass boat you've always wanted. But you will likely need to pick and choose which of those things you truly want – it will prove difficult if not impossible to have it all.

When you hear the word “frugal”, you probably assume it means to spend cautiously. Sethi says it’s about choosing what to spend extravagantly on, and not spending on what you don’t love. I love this idea.

In this book, you will also learn what to invest your money in. Many people are naïve and assume they will never need investments to reach their desired goals. Even some business owners I know aren’t thinking about saving or investing in their future. This is a mistake. Sethi has some great recommendations on how to get this area of your life handled.

So, if you’re looking for a simple plan you can follow to get your money under control, I recommend reading *I Will Teach You To Be Rich*.

3. The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don’t Work and What to Do About It by Michael E. Gerber

The E-Myth is not a step-by-step process on how to transform your small business. Rather, it illustrates, through story, how to approach it in a way that allows you to regain your freedom and enjoy your work again.

Most successful small business owners reach a point in their career where they can’t take on more work. This can be exciting for a while, but eventually they become exhausted stressed out. That leaves them longing for earlier times when their business was their passion, and they loved going into work every day.

So, how do you build a business that can grow and scale? Author Michael E. Gerber suggests that you must think of your business as a franchise. You must systematize your processes and delegate work to your employees.

I've talked to a lot of business owners about systems, so I'm quite familiar with the idea of systematizing a business. Still, this was a worthwhile read, and there are a lot of great insights into marketing and selling that go beyond just systematization.

Read *The E-Myth Revisited* if you're stuck in your business and don't know how to keep growing while achieving more freedom in your life.

4. Virtual Freedom: How to Work with Virtual Staff to Buy More Time, Become More Productive, and Build Your Dream Business by Chris Ducker

If you've spent any time listening to business podcasts, then you've already heard about hiring Virtual Assistants and outsourcing your work.

In *Virtual Freedom*, author Chris Ducker demonstrates how this works in practice, and the steps you need to take to ensure your virtual team completes their work to your standards.

There can be some hiccups to setting up your virtual team if you don't know what you're doing, and Ducker explains how to navigate these challenges.

As I was reading this book, I wasn't ready to hire anyone yet, though I did eventually hire a transcriptionist last year. This was one of the best decisions I made for my business, because she delivers excellent quality work for an affordable rate.

The fact that I was willing to transcribe my own podcast episodes shows commitment and dedication on my part, but it's still not work I should be engaging in when I have content to create, books to write and vision to think about.

This would be timely read for anyone overworked and stressed out. Don't wait until you burn out to hire, because by then it might be too late.

Final Thoughts

I've started reading more in 2018 already, though I'm not certain I will make it to 52 books like I did in 2015 and 2016.

The book I'm most excited about reading, and have already started on, is James Schramko's *Work Less Make More: The counter-intuitive approach to building a profitable business, and a life you actually love.*

I have a feeling I will be reading through it multiple times, because most of what I've built in the last year or two has been based on James' methodologies.

Do you know what books you'll be reading in the New Year? What are you excited to read?

Summary

- Reading books has many benefits – it can shape your thinking, give you new idea and challenge your thinking in areas where it needs to be challenged.
- Have you heard about any books you might be interested in reading? Consider adding them to your reading list in the year ahead.

Questions/Exercises

Consider what topics you'd like to learn more about. Think about the current challenges and problems that exist in your career or business. What issues need to be dealt with? In what areas do you need to grow?

Based on the topics you've identified, what books can you find? Do a quick Google or Amazon search and jot down your answers below.

How do you decide what to do next? What should you be focusing on?

Feeling inspired now? Good. But unfortunately, that's not enough.

What you need is motivation. And, in my opinion, no one can motivate you. It comes from the inside.

What you need is a focus. But once you've decided what that focus is, you must determine what filters to put in place to keep you on track. Otherwise, you will get derailed at some point.

This next section provides some ideas on what filters you can use to stay on course.

How to Determine a Focus for Your Music Entrepreneurship Career

Some of you come to me with questions about my credentials and qualifications in the music industry.

**What you need is
motivation. But no one can
motivate you. It comes from
the inside. It comes from
doing the work.**

These are fair questions to ask, because if you're learning from someone that doesn't have results or isn't at least on their way to achieving the kinds of results you want, you could end up spinning your wheels or wasting your time learning from them.

All along, I have been quite transparent about where I stand regarding various aspects of my career. I've basically been documenting my journey as it happens, even if it wasn't all pretty.

On the blog, I've talked about 21 ways I've made money in the music industry. That number continues to rise.

I've also talked about the fact that I work almost exclusively from home. Some of the community work I do gets me out of the house and into music venues and other spaces, and I also have the occasional meeting. But aside from that, I'm not required to go to a specific workplace to do my work. I don't actively brag about this fact, but it was a huge achievement for me personally in 2016.

Additionally, I'm the kind of person that craves variety in life and likes having a few irons in the fire.

I recently met up with a friend I hadn't seen in about seven years, and he said to me, "You're the kind of guy that if one thing doesn't work, or if you get bored of it, you always have other projects ready to go."

He's right.

I've started many blogs and websites with various product and service offerings.

A few years ago, The Music Entrepreneur HQ was just one among many. I decided to stick with this project because I'm passionate about music, creativity, and business. And, to be fair, it was the business unit that was producing the best results.

After spending years spreading myself out and trying different things, I decided to dig in and get focused on this project.

If I wanted to be doing something else, I could be. But I think it would prove difficult to find anything quite as fulfilling for me.

So, that brings me to an important point. Many of you have suggestions about what I should be doing with my time to prove my worth as a music entrepreneur.

Some of you say I should be making and releasing more music.

Some of you feel I should be talking more about sync licensing and placement opportunities.

By the way, I don't know everything there is to know about the music industry, which is why I often bring guests onto my podcast to share about subjects I know nothing about.

And, some of you believe I should be creating a university level education for music entrepreneurs.

These are all valid pursuits, and I think there is merit in all of them.

Rest assured, I have no shortage of ideas of what to do and what I'd like to do in the music industry, and some of the things just mentioned are on my radar.

But going back to what I was saying earlier, I like having multiple pursuits. I like the fact that my life doesn't revolve entirely around recording and publishing music, live performance, or session work.

I get to do all those things and make money at them, but they don't rule my life. If they did, I'm not sure I would have time for The Music Entrepreneur HQ.

As I write this, it's tax season, and I recently had to get all my ledgers and receipts in order to submit to my accountant. I decided to do a bit of an analysis of the various income sources I have. So, let me give you a bit of an idea of where I tend to see the biggest results from.

I had 17 distinct income sources in 2017, but the top five were:

1. Content writing.
2. Ghostwriting.
3. Community.
4. Live performance.
5. Crowdfunding.

It's worth noting that roughly a quarter of income had very little or nothing to do with the music industry.

Regardless, content writing and ghostwriting alone made up over 50% of my total income, and if I included other income categories like content marketing, book sales, and product sales – all of which represent other forms of writing income – that number would be even higher.

This type of analysis can help you gain clarity on objective reality. What you say doesn't matter as much as what you do, and if you want to determine what motivates someone, watch what they do, not what they say. That way, you'll never be confused. You can see from my income analysis that most of my energy went into writing content.

Having 17 income sources is a good thing – it mitigates risk. If one income source is lost, I can always fall back on another and find a way to grow it.

But I don't think it's worth thinking about how to grow every income source, especially when I have that many.

At most, I would look at the top five categories, and maybe only the top three. If I was 25, I might think about this differently. But I'm 35 now, and while I do have many productive years ahead, I already have several years of momentum behind me, so though I want to remain flexible and adaptive, especially as technology continues to bring about change, it makes more sense to ride the wave than to push against it.

So, in my case, my top three income sources would be content writing, ghostwriting, and community work.

If there are certain income numbers I'm looking to reach, and I am, I would focus on enhancing my earnings from these categories, and not worry too much about trying to grow the others, which will basically take care of themselves because of the reputation I've established and the relationships I've developed.

This also works well for my personality and temperament, because as I've already said, I crave variety.

Doing too much of the same thing can bore me and leave me unfulfilled. I don't like being restricted.

That may not be how you operate, which means you may prefer to limit how you spend your time instead of spreading it across multiple projects and income sources.

For example, you might look at how to get as many gigs as possible, and if you dedicated the most productive hours of your day to this task, I have little doubt in my mind you would see huge results from your effort.

Basically, what I'm saying is this:

I'm a good generalist. I'm not a great specialist. I've done a lot of things in the music industry, not all of them great.

I would say I'm great at least a few things, such as playing guitar, content writing and web design, because I've put a lot of time into those things.

But I may not good enough to be world class in any one area, because of how many things I can do and am competent at.

No, I may not have results in areas you want to achieve in. But the work I do is still important. Who is going to do the research? Who is going to write the articles? Who is going to interview the experts? Someone needs to have a foot in both worlds (music and business), and I enjoy being that person. There are plenty of perks to being someone in this position, too.

Regardless, let's say I was looking to grow my income to six-figures, and I am. If you were me, which income sources would you focus on?

I could work at my music sales, session playing and live performance income. Particularly, live performance is in my top five revenue sources, so it's obviously possible to increase. I enjoy all those things, and I know I can make a decent income in those areas.

But it would be necessary to dedicate most of my time to them, leaving me with significantly less time to write content. I would end up pushing against a wave of momentum.

My daily responsibilities include writing content for various clients. So, it's much easier for me to boost my income as a writer than in other areas.

When I finish my work for my clients, I'm already at my desk, my mind is already in gear, and I can save energy and remain effective for longer if I'm not constantly switching between different tasks.

So, based on what I've just shared with you, here are several questions you can ask yourself to determine what the focus of your music entrepreneurship career should be:

- What do you enjoy doing? Does your personality thrive on variety? Do you prefer to focus on one thing at a time?
- What are you doing that makes you the most money? Is there room for you to grow it, or are you capped?
- What could you do to reduce single-source dependence? Could you diversify your income, so you aren't caught off guard if you end up losing one or multiple sources?
- What skills and experiences have you gained through the years? How could you combine them to get the greatest leverage from them?

- In what areas do you see the greatest upside potential? If you're riding a wave of momentum, what could you do to ensure you stay above the waves and not get swallowed up by the wave?

Summary

- Inspiration is not enough. Motivation is what you need. And, motivation can only be found within.
- It's okay to spend time experimenting with a variety of projects. But once you find something that works for you, it's time to get focused.
- Doing an income analysis can help you determine what your highest value activities are.
- It's a good idea to be aware of your personality quirks as it applies to building your career or business.

Questions/Exercises

In the last year, what areas of your business or career have you been focused on?

Besides revenue, what are some other factors that could help you determine your focus? Think about your values – God, family, health, fulfillment and so on.

Conclusion

There is no perfect way to start another year.

And, the quality of the year ahead will depend on a few things:

- Your willingness to get complete with the year past.
- Your willingness to think about and reflect on the year you just experienced so that you can extract key lessons from it.
- Your willingness to envision where you want to be in a year from now.
- Your willingness to consider and identify what your next steps are and to begin planning around them.
- Your willingness to stay the course regardless of the distractions, challenges and obstacles that come your way. Trust me – they will show up!

Let's explore each of these areas, shall we?

Your willingness to get complete with the year past

People generally get complete with *nothing*. That's an audacious statement, I know, but you can see it in the baggage they carry everywhere they go.

So, just for a moment, think of all the events that you keep turning over in your mind.

I'm talking about all those would've, should've, could've moments.

We've all got plenty of them.

And, the reason they stick around is because you're not complete with them.

So, think carefully:

What could you do that would bring completion to these events?

In some instances, you might be able to think back on the memory, consider what meaning you've assigned to it, and separate your personal meanings from the event itself. I can tell you right now that *what happened* has nothing to do with how you personally interpreted it.

But in other cases, you might have to dig a little deeper.

You may need to make amends with a friend or family member.

You may need to take an action that allows you to fulfill on what you consider important to you.

You may need to pay someone back, give up a habit, start a new project and so on.

Whatever it may be, don't wait – get complete. This will clear the way for the year ahead.

Your willingness to think about and reflect on the year you just experienced so that you can extract key lessons from it

We learn from both the victories and failures we experience.

If you only learn from failure, you're missing out on all the lessons that can come from success.

And, as my mentors taught me, success breeds success. So, knowing what factors contributed to your success is critical to replicating said success.

Additionally, if you don't take time to think and reflect, *you risk learning nothing*. That's the last thing we want, because you can easily repeat past failures.

Have you ever quit smoking only to start again?

Did you ever start an exercise plan that you didn't follow through on for more than a month?

Did you start working on your second album for the 12th time (you laugh, but it happens)?

We all have experiences like that. And, that's what we don't want to repeat in the year ahead.

Your willingness to envision where you want to be in a year from now.

To be fair, a year is not a long time. You may want to think even further ahead than that. For some, thinking more than a year ahead could seem overwhelming. So, do what's right for you.

But the mind is a powerful tool. We're all capable of imagining ourselves doing what we want to do, being with who we want to be with, living in a house we want to live in, owning the things we want to own and so on.

So, we need to tap into that power.

The first step is in seeing yourself where you want to be. If you aren't sure how to do this, start paying attention to your daydreams. Envisioning is little more than daydreaming.

The second and often forgotten step is to work your way backwards from the destination and determine what the journey will look like. You need to chart a course for success!

That's where the next part comes in...

Your willingness to consider and identify what your next steps are and to begin planning around them.

Getting to where you want to go might require that you remain consistent with your current habits. It might mean making little tweaks. Or, it could mean giving your habits a complete overhaul.

Regardless, you should think carefully on these questions:

To get to where you want to go, who would you need to be or become? What habits would you need to adopt? Who would you need to get to know? What skills would you need to acquire? What education, training, coaching or mentorship would you need to obtain?

Identify the steps you would need to take to arrive at your chosen destination.

You need a plan. While the plan you start with doesn't need to be perfect, you should be willing to adjust as you go.

There are many variables you can't even see right now. But you can cross those bridges as you come to them. Decide how you need to adjust as you come to those bridges.

Your willingness to stay the course regardless of the distractions, challenges and obstacles that come your way. Trust me - they will show up!

It's all well and good to have a plan. But you must also consider what might stop you on the path towards achievement.

The answer isn't "nothing", as I first assumed.

If you broke up with your significant other, would that stop you?

If a family member passed away, would that ruin your dream?

What if you were on the verge of going broke? Would that be the end of you?

What if your health took a sudden and unexpected dive?

I've experienced every challenge I've just mentioned. And, that can happen to anyone. I'm not speaking these challenges into existence. I'm just making you aware of some of the variables that are outside of your control.

So, be aware of what has the potential to stop you. It's easy to say it won't stop you now, but when you're facing that obstacle, it won't feel like a molehill – it will feel like a mountain!

Finally, if you did all the exercises in this book, you're well on your way to having a great year. If you didn't, go back and do them now.

I wish you all the best in 2019, 2020, 2021 and beyond.

Tools & Resources

The Music Entrepreneur HQ

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/>

011 – The Importance of Reading in Personal Development

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/reading>

Michael Hyatt

<https://michaelhyatt.com/>

Seven Questions to Ask About Last Year

<https://michaelhyatt.com/seven-questions-to-ask-about-last-year/>

The New Music Industry Podcast

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/podcast-archives/>

Using Your Power

<http://www.usingyourpower.com/>

The Question

<http://www.thequestion.ca/>

Chris Brogan

<https://chrisbrogan.com/>

My 3 Words for 2018

<https://chrisbrogan.com/3words2018/>

068 – How to Become a More Confident Musician & Living the Entrepreneurial Life – with Christopher Sutton of Musical U

Musical U

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/musicalu>

Do You Talk Funny?: 7 Comedy Habits to Become a Better (and Funnier) Public Speaker by David Nihill
<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/talkfunny>

I Will Teach You To Be Rich: No Guilt. No Excuses. No B.S. Just a 6-Week Program That Works by Ramit Sethi

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/teachyourich>

066 – Managing Your Money as a Musician

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/managemoney>

The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It by Michael E. Gerber

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/emythrevisited>

Virtual Freedom: How to Work with Virtual Staff to Buy More Time, Become More Productive, and Build Your Dream Business by Chris Ducker

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/virtualfreedom>

21 Ways I've Made Money in the Music Industry

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/mademoney>

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And, as always, I’d like to thank *you*, the reader, whoever you may be – fan, follower, friend, family member, sibling, parent or even stranger. This would not be possible without you.

Let's Stay in Touch

If you'd like to find out more about what I've shared with you in this book, head on over to:

MusicEntrepreneurHQ.com

From blog posts to podcasts to videos, there's so much for you to learn and discover that will help you on your journey as a music entrepreneur.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this book, feel free to email me at david@dawcast.com. I'd love to hear from you.

I look forward to connecting with you on social media as well:

Facebook: facebook.com/davidandrewwiebe

Twitter: @davidawiebe

Instagram: @davidandrewwiebe

Medium: @davidawiebe

May this book bless you on your musical journey.

Also by David Andrew Wiebe

The New Music Industry: Adapting, Growing, and
Thriving in The Information Age

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/ebook>

How to Record, Promote & Sell Your New Music
Release – Single, EP or Album
(co-authored with Goemon5)

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/album>

The Essential Guide to Music Entrepreneurship:
2018 Edition

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/essential>

The Essential Guide to Creative Entrepreneurship:
Making and Selling Your Neon Yellow Tiger

<http://www.musicentrepreneurhq.com/creative>

The Music of David Andrew Wiebe

Shipwrecked... My Sentiments (2006)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/shipwrecked>

Fragments (2016)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/fragments>

Don't Wait Too Long (2016)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/wait>

Hope (2016)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/hope>

Waves (2017)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/waves>

Your Eyes Give It Away (2017)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/eyes>

Christmas Surf (2017)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/surf>

Fire Your God (2018)

<http://www.davidandrewwiebe.com/fire>

