

CHAPTER 2 - SEVEN KEYS TO EMPOWERMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

Artistic ability, business acumen, proper spirit, and a non-profit entity to handle all the details can provide the ideal foundation for successful business. But just as a basketball team composed of extraordinary players will not necessarily produce a championship, these elements alone will not result in success without some governing concepts to tie it all together and develop it properly.

So in this chapter we're going to delve into seven key elements that are fundamental to career development and opportunity, especially for those to whom artistic integrity and personal dignity are of major importance.

These keys are:

- I Partnership**
- II Planning**
- III Entrepreneurship**
- IV Continuity**
- V Objectivity**
- VI Confrontation**
- VII Barter**

Let's examine them individually while keeping in mind that there's a certain degree of crossover in each area.

I Partnership

Partnership is a fundamental component not only for the best use of this book, but also in every aspect of good ethical business. The key to this book and that fact is this:

Every single relationship you have or will have in this business is a partnership.

Partnership is too often perceived to mean the mutual ownership of some entity or concept. With you as the numerator and the total number of "partners" as the denominator, the percentage of your ownership of the partnership entity is derived. That's as misleading as defining music as just a succession of tones.

The Fine Arts establishment has turned the word into a New Age cliché. Everything's a partnership – Communities in Partnership; Educational Partners; Partnering of Resources and so on. Partnership has become little more than *making appearances* of mutual effort just to get past the first stage of a funding process. But in my experience, these relationships often tend to be calculated and artificial in their true essence.

Partnership is simply the coming together of two or more parties for mutually beneficial purposes. This doesn't mean that a partnership can't benefit one party more than another, nor does it mean that it will always be equitable. That's entirely based on the combination of personal integrity, clear definition and sensible expectation that goes into it. If you keep that understanding in the boilerplate of your business

sensibility, you'll have clearer and more successful relationships with your own team of professionals and musicians, as well as with promoters, clubowners, record execs and the various other individuals who can affect your economic and emotional well-being.

Words like synergy, unity and teamwork represent valuable concepts because the power of more than one person working together toward a common goal is a most positive resource, exponential in its potential. Conflict, misunderstanding, dissatisfaction and suspicion can only serve as negatives, creating stunted growth at best, and more often, inertia or destruction.

You've chosen the world of art over banking, construction, medicine, police work, forestry, criminality or various other pursuits, not for its ease or guarantee of fame and fortune, but for its edifying, life-affirming, aesthetic, communicative and/or spiritual purposes. Why would you want business relationships to be defined on any less positive terms?

In essence, *all* business relationships are partnerships of one sort or the other. Artist/manager; leader/sideman; organization/artistic director are all partnerships that are somewhat obvious in concept. But even the relationship between a clubowner and an artist performing there for one night is a partnership. As long as you understand that the essence of partnership is two or more parties coming together for a mutually beneficial purpose.

Unfortunately the jazz world is rife with a common problem that besets all business in America – the need for one party to get over on the other. Earlier I mentioned the late, great and legendary sports agent Bob Woolf's philosophy – if he wasn't taking the needs and expectations of the team into consideration, he wasn't doing the proper job for his own client. With this enlightened viewpoint, he negotiated contracts for many of the biggest names in sports, most of whom maintained long-term relationships with their respective teams, often lasting well beyond the ends of their playing careers.

In Outward Visions' booking and management activities, we always embraced a similar attitude to Mr. Woolf's. We've always stated two axioms in our business approach: "Whatever makes sense" and "Whatever the market will bear." It has always made sense to me to make sure that we did not overtax any market in terms of our artists, often despite some of our artists' objections to that philosophy.

In 1977, a now prominent arts presenter booked the Art Ensemble of Chicago for their first major concert. Sensing both the proper spirit of partnership and a sound basis for his future plans, we agreed to give him our best possible price, with a clear understanding that the fees would grow as his organization did. The AEC was presented by this organization more than 10 times over the next 15 years, and at our asking price each time from the third concert on.

Isn't it preferable to charge \$4000 and allow the promoter to make a grand, knowing that he'll want to bring the artist back again (and maybe many times) rather than charging \$6000 with him losing a grand and never dealing with the artist again? That seems as logical to me as deciding whether to hit yourself in the head with a hammer. But for too many artists and their reps, getting the most money possible is the prime directive.

Early in my career, I attempted to work with a legendary musician who said he'd rather have one gig for \$15,000 than ten for \$7500. While his view is more extreme than most, it's certainly not an aberration. The focus on the amount of money is too often the primary, if not the *only* measurement of effective management. This causes both artists and representatives to make far too many serious errors of judgment, especially in terms of their own working relationship.

Artists often jump from a dependable and committed agent to another if they think the new one can get them more or higher paying dates. Agents regularly ignore highly bookable but lower earning artists to focus on a "hotter" name or a prospective "star." The result is that both sides don't really trust each other. The agent feels that he or she has to produce the big numbers or the artist may jump. The artists feel that they have to earn big fees to keep the agent's attention; and the idea of *building something together* goes out the window.

Partnership is the imperative. Not a 50/50 split or equal shares or some other formally acceptable partnership in the legal sense, but rather a simple *what's good for you will be good for me* concept of partnership.

The same spirit can exist within an ensemble. A sideman who knows the leader cares about his or her well-being will likely be more flexible on fees, dates and a degree of commitment. A leader who feels the sideman is truly committed to the group is more likely to be generous toward that individual. It's simple common sense.

The purest form of ensemble partnership is the co-led group, and in its most extreme form, the cooperative. This subject requires a more comprehensive examination than is appropriate in this chapter and will be covered in the next chapter, *Musicians Working Together*.

The bottom line here is that nobody wants to be perceived as just a functionary or a dollar sign. Even the most cold-blooded folks need some form of humanistic interaction in their endeavors. And in jazz, an art form that is *so* personal and communicative, it's even more important. Great music can only be made within an environment of partnership, regardless how powerful the leader's artistic vision may be. Good business can only occur under similar circumstances.