

CONFIDENT  
DRUMMER

# Drumming Career Tips and Inspiration

How to  
Effectively  
Manage your Career  
as a Drummer

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# **Confident Drummer**

Free Resources

**Drumming Career Tips & Inspiration**

Confident Drummer Series

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# How to Effectively Manage your Career as a Drummer

We are so lucky to play this amazing instrument! To make the most of this privilege we can learn some new ways to handle and optimize all the things that happen before and after playing.

I'd like to summarize in a few pages what I've figured out during many years of trial and error, attempts and personal experiences in the field.

And also my understanding of how to make things happen in this business.

By the way, the ideas we are going to discuss are extremely important even if we want to make music just for fun and for the joy of it.

The only requirement is a burning passion for drumming.

Let's get started by keeping in mind that nothing is impossible in life, and whatever a man can do, another man can do.

Really, that's how things actually are, everything else is just our thoughts, self-doubt and insecurities that come up and limit us for no reason.

So, we simply have a few steps that separate us from our goal. To cover all of them we need to take action in a specific direction.

Unfortunately, unlike in other professions, there is no predetermined path that takes us from school to the stage.

It's a complex process that takes years of disciplined effort.

We must take responsibility, design a strategy and make adjustments by paying attention to what is giving us results.

Also today competition is really strong even in the world of music, and it's clear that there are more good drummers around than music situations available.

So we can't afford to waste any chance.

Yet, if you know what you are doing, there are amazing gigs waiting for you out there.

Let's keep in mind that, no matter how tough it may seem to be today, the world is full of opportunities, situations, money, and there will always be room for one more great drummer.

Also, there will always be top acts in need for great players.

Now, the first step towards achieving anything, is figuring out exactly what it is that we want to make happen, when we want it, and why, in great detail.

Just taking care of this step would be more than enough to stay focused and make great music while being fulfilled with our playing.

Think about it, if we don't know what we want, how are we ever going to get it?

If we don't know when, how are we going to keep track of our progress and know that we are going in the right direction?

If we don't know why, how can we stay motivated and determined when things get tough?

That's why I recommend cultivating a clear mental picture of what being a drummer means to us, and exactly how we see ourselves making music in the future.

The first thing we need to realize is that being a drummer might mean many different things.

Do you want to be in a band and tour and make records with it? Would you like to pursue a career as an independent player who does sessions?

Do you need to express your creative side and experiment with new ways of making music with like-minded musicians?

Or maybe you'd love to be a clinician who travels around the world and reaches thousands of drummers with his empowering vision and philosophy?

Would you like to play local clubs with your jazz quartet? Do you want to teach?

Do you want to specialize in one style of music or be a seasoned pro who can handle any music genre?

Would you like to start a YouTube Channel as an artist or educator?

Obviously, the possibilities are endless, and obviously none of them excludes any other.

We can make music in many of these ways simultaneously if we choose to.

But, it is critical that instead of saying, very vaguely 'I want to be the best I can', we are a lot more specific and start thinking about the details: 'Within the next 5 years I want to study with that master, I want to be playing in that kind of band, I want to be teaching to at least 20 students, I want to improve these 3 areas of my drumming, I want to record 3 albums'.

See the difference?

It's the power of setting goals. Short, medium, and long term goals that reflect who we are.

To put it simply we could say that all we need to succeed is to decide what we want, figure out the price, and then pay it.

Obviously, the more effort we have invested, the more prepared we are, the more we can provide high standards in different professional situations. And so the more options we have.

As a matter of fact, my personal approach to making music and possibly making a living with it, is based on great preparation, versatility and flexibility, so that my musical experience is never linked to a single situation or outcome, and I can count on a number of things going on simultaneously, instead.

With this strategy the chances of having great results, either as professionals or as passionate amateurs, will be automatically much higher.

All of this with the very interesting side effect of automatically building a network that may lead to cool and unexpected new situations.

Also the reason why we do what we decide that we want to do is very important.

We have to check with our values and keep our actions aligned with them.

Without getting too philosophical, I'd like to suggest that if our goals are based on noble values, on love for music, and on our strong character, we are going to move toward them almost effortlessly.

And we are going to be pretty sure that we will reach them, fully satisfied about our musical endeavours.

Character is destiny.

It's important to point out that when setting any goal, there are 3 basic ideas we shouldn't overlook: it should be a mature objective (I want to play on TV so that my friends can see me...), it should be possible (I'm going to make \$1000 a show within 6 months from now) and, it should at least in part adapt to the surrounding environment (I only exclusively want to play with my experimental trio...).

Then, regarding this last point, what if the place where we live doesn't offer much from a musical standpoint?

Well, the tough answer is that we should consider leaving and moving to a place where what we want to achieve is more likely to happen.

There are two keys to any success: first we need to be in places where what we want to do is already happening.

And then we need to be around the people who are already doing it (as we are going to see in a minute).

As soon as we understand what making music means to us and what might be suitable for us and our drumming vision, we can move on and examine a number of aspects that, if we are talented and dedicated musicians, will allow us to make a living with this wonderful form of art.

We are going to talk about them separately:

- Preparation and formative years.
- Experience.
- Human relationships.
- Using the Internet the smart way.
- Your network.

## PREPARATION AND FORMATIVE YEARS:

We can't afford to get started without a solid foundation based on work ethics.

Forget about the notion of talent and luck, at least temporarily, and get down to work.

Today the technical standard on the drums is really high, nobody can count just on talent and pretend that practicing is not that important.

By all means always trust your innate ability, but also nurture it through a disciplined and persistent research and study.

Use your ears and figure out what needs to be improved, find a teacher or some kind of mentor (even a few virtual ones, online etc.) and do what needs to be done.

Keep in mind that there's no finish line, and a great way grow and sound beautiful is to have a constant desire to get better and seek to reach the next level, for the sake of enhanced musical expression.

Choose schools and environments where there are people who are already good at what you want to do.

As we already said, one of the best ways to reach any result is to have a reference group that can guide you and show you the best way to go where you want to go.

Also, you've probably heard that in order to master anything we need at least 10.000 hours of practice.

I did the math for you: with one hour a day and it will take you 27 years

to become a great drummer, with 3 hours a day it will take 9 years.  
Practice 8 hours a day and you'll sound great in only 3 years.

I'm only going to add that in my opinion, in order to sound fantastic on the drums the hours required are at least 20.000.

Think about it, it's the hours, not the years you've been playing.

## EXPERIENCE:

No matter what we are learning, there comes a day when we go from the practice room to the stage, and that day is typically a pretty tough one.  
Why?

The thing is that there are aspects of playing the drums that we won't be aware of until we are right there, live, on stage, doing it!

Playing with other people, being on a stage, knowing you are being recorded, and so on, means dealing with hundreds of little adjustments that you can't understand unless you have experienced these situations many times.

The more experience you gather in every possible musical context, the more you will figure out things that simply are not written in any book or can't be taught by any teacher.

The more you will grow as a musician. Exponentially.

Each experience counts and is valuable. Then, overtime, you can become more and more selective about the quality of the situations you are in, based also on your preferences.

I've had periods when I played in 10 bands at the same time. After many years when nearly everything was good enough, I became gradually more selective, until I defined my personal basic rule to decide whether or not considering joining a project: either I am learning something and there's art in it, or I am making some money, otherwise I'm not interested.



Please note that, although this process took me almost 20 years and I'm a professional drummer, I'm always looking for new things that can make me grow and I'm still open to making music for the sake of it.

Learning and growing as a musician, to me, is even more valuable than money.

## HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS:

If you are irresponsible, unreliable or arrogant, you are going to have a hard time in the music business, no matter how good you are (and let me add... it serves you right...).

I always say that playing the drums is art as soon as we count off the song, but, until then and as soon as we get off stage, it's a job like anything else, and it should be treated that way.

Being on time, flexible, adaptable, authentic, social, nice, even funny if you will, are the cornerstones on which to base all your musical endeavours.

And these are things that will likely separate you from most drummers.

Human beings are emotional creatures, and we want to be around people who make us feel good.

Then, if on top of all this you can actually play, you are all set ;-).

If you tend to have a hidden agenda or to take advantage of situations and others, the day you pay for your unethical behaviours always comes. It's just a matter of time.

Your reputation is one of your greatest assets as a musician.

Making music means interacting with other people, socializing, creating human relationships and friendships, and therefore requires at least some

degree of social skills – and honesty.

Knowing how to make yourself stand out without looking arrogant, being able to get along with others, understanding other people's point of view, are all things that can make your professional life easier while also making it a lot more satisfying.

All musicians, all people involved in the process of making music, are just regular human beings.

They have a private life, they have stuff going on all the time, responsibilities, families, problems.

Just knowing and understanding this will make your interactions much more authentic – though professional when necessary - and will naturally make you develop deeper relationships with the people you meet.

Learn to respect others' opinions, points of view, even criticism toward you.

Let them respect you while not coming across as overly assertive, deal with conflict as a mature person by clarifying situations as soon as they arise, and develop transparent relationships with everybody.

## USING THE INTERNET THE SMART WAY:

I'm not going to talk about the web because we need help in this area... but because we need to slow down a little bit with all this virtual life.

We are all masters in front of a computer screen: social networks, websites, videos, pictures, incredible profiles, all kinds of stuff.

And I'm the first one to do it, I have to admit, because all these things do work.

But, let me tell you, if you focus just on the Internet and on creating a perfect online image of yourself as a drummer, while neglecting everything else, you are taking a huge risk.

The web is great because it allows us to project an image of who we are and what we do, it's a place where we can put audio and video material about us, and it helps building our network.

Creating a credible online presence is an important part of being a professional musician.

But it's not where your best chances come from. Nobody has ever seen an ad that read 'Drummer wanted for pro gig, paid rehearsals, recording sessions and touring'.

If you seek to meet new people, and have lots of new opportunities, then it's important to take advantage of this resource while at the same time increasing the number of musicians you work with in person.

Take care of your social profiles, then let them go and let them work for you, while you focus on cultivating real relationships.

However let me clarify: there's another side of the coin. The web has created incredible new opportunities for all creative people, because it allows you to instantly reach everyone on the planet for free.

So, if you are a creator, and you have amazing ideas, there's never been in human history a better time to share what you have to say with millions of people.

Today you can start a YouTube channel, a profile on some crowdfunding platform, publish any kind of digital content, and have a blast and make a living with that.

My point is: it's one of the most amazing opportunities that are out there now, but be aware of two downsides.

First of all, competition is crazy, because it's extended to the entire planet.

You could start publishing amazing content and go nowhere, for no reason.

Just because it gets lost in the billions of pages and files available online.

Second, we need to wake up and realize that virtuality is alienating. We have evolved to interact with people in front of us, not on a screen.

In the long run, this tends to lead to avoidance or real human interactions, and to your actual opportunities getting more and more limited.

Have you noticed that you like a lot more the online content with people that talk, that interact, that get as close as possible to real, within the confines of the digital realm? It's because that's how we function.

Of course we all see the few ones that made it big online, and think we want that too. And I'm totally with you, I run a Drum Portal!  
The crucial distinction is that I don't exclusively focus on that.

So use the Internet, wisely, in a balanced way, just don't get lost in it. Make it a spice that you add to your career, don't make it the main course.

The best way to use the web is creating value for others, and then forgetting about it. Not trying to get attention.

Value as a drummer can be in the form of education, art, entertainment, emotions, advice, music, videos.  
You can be as creative as you want.

Of course, the exception to this reasoning is that, since one of the ways to get results in life is to focus on just one thing, you may have such a clear and compelling vision about the way you are gonna make it big online, that for you that's the right thing to do.

If that's your situation, it's going to be a great strategy to let go of everything else, so that your energies are very focused.

In which case, go for it!

What's a lot wiser for most of us is to invest a good deal of our energies in growing our experience in the field and increasing the amount of people that know who we are, in person.

You may not make it as big, but it's a much more realistic way to approach things - and it leads to more fulfilling experiences.

In fact I believe that the most important factor, which has always made the most difference if you want to be a full time drummer, is:

## YOUR NETWORK:

Yes! Your network, that is, the people you know. There's nothing wrong with someone recommending you for a job.

If your name is mentioned because you are really good, then you are happy, the person who's getting to know you is happy, the person who recommended you is happy.

That's just perfect! It can happen at different levels: another musician, a sound engineer, a producer, a roadie, all kinds of people you may have impressed with your talent.

So you see how important it is to always be flawless as far as behaving correctly with other people, and of course always staying focused on sounding your best, as you never know who is listening.

Anyway, a really smart approach is to consistently set aside a certain amount of time to work on expanding your network.

Which will grow exponentially, as each contact can result in a lot more people knowing us, in kind of a domino effect.

I have a good friend who is a guitarist and is great at this stuff. He is the kind of person that always picks up the phone and calls the people he wants to connect with. Producers, musicians he admires, people in the music industry he would like to work with.

No emails, no friend requests/follow/subscribe on a social network, he just calls, 'May I talk to ...' whoever...

Then he introduces himself, and he goes 'Let's have lunch together sometime!'

Of course he knows what he's doing, he doesn't come across as a psycho, he goes like 'Hi, I appreciate your work, I've done some work like this and that, why don't we have a nice conversation about music while having

lunch together sometime”, something very laid-back along these lines.

A little while ago, after one of those meetings with a producer he ended up working with a big pop act and touring with this name artist.

Do you think he could ever get this far by sending a YouTube link like ‘These are my vids, please watch them and let me know what you think’??

And he is a great musician, but by changing his approach, everything changes.

That’s what people still love to do, to interact with others in person, see your face, form an impression of you based on how you carry yourself, and not just a video on YouTube.

So that they can know they can trust you.

The way to do this, is to just focus on giving, not on trying to get something... which works as a great general rule of course, in any human interaction.

For instance, have you noticed how some unknown players hire top names to work on their projects?

That’s a great example of this approach. They don’t contact them like, please notice how good I am... They go, ‘Hey, I want the best on my record, so I’d love to hire you for this session’.

Then, if you are really great, they will remember you.

Personally, in the last 10 years, I think 95% of all the situations that turned into paying gigs came from somebody that knew me from a previous gig and remembered me when they were in need of a drummer.

Just 3 simple rules: find the right people, develop relationships with them + keep in touch, and give value to them.

Let’s not forget 2 great examples of what I was saying before about the importance of being around people that already do what you want to do, and in the place where that is already happening: Matt Flynn and Tyler

Zarzeka, two great drummers, were touring as drum techs for the bands they ended up playing with!

So, to sum it up, keep in mind that in order to achieve any goal, and therefore even any goal in music, there are 3 rules:

1- Know exactly what you want - Then be ready to pay the price.

2- Use the best strategy - And, as we have already said, what's the best strategy, the one that has more chances of working out? The one used by whoever has already reached the results you are looking for.

3- Never give up, stay determined, positive and focused, even when you go through the toughest times - And the best way to keep up the motivation, long term, is to have goals aligned to who you are, which give you a strong why.

All right, I hope you've found some valid information in this booklet, and that you've found a little inspiration to go make something happen real soon.

I'm aware there is no single guaranteed way to get from point A to point B. These ideas are just a compilation of things I've seen working the most, overtime.

I also like the fact that, in my opinion, they are aligned to a desire to make music with love, heart, passion and authenticity.

Nonetheless I invite you to evaluate all you've just read with your own mind and find what works for you, so that you can make the most out of your career.

I wish you all the best in drumming!