

8 Ways  
I



in Music &

3 Ways  
NOT

to Follow  
in My Footsteps

An E-book  
by Steve Grossman

# 8 Reasons I **FAILED** in Music and 3 Ways **NOT** to Follow in My Footsteps

by Steve Grossman - author of Why I FAILED in the Music Business and  
How NOT to Follow in My Footsteps

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for downloading my free e-book, 8 Reasons I FAILED in Music and 3 Ways to NOT Follow in My Footsteps. It is a book version of my “Why I FAILED” Seminar I’ve given countless times to people just like you: players, singers, songwriters and artists who want to make a living in music. It is designed to challenge your current perceptions and replace them with an understanding of the most useful, and necessary, information from the “Real World” of business that you’ll need to build a success-full long-term music career.

## **Backstory**

You can read the full story on [whyifailed.com](http://whyifailed.com), but as a set-up for this e-book, here’s a quick version of Why I FAILED.

I spent 20 years as a professional musician and I had a really good run. I played drums on countless tours and recording projects, saw a bunch of the world and even won an Academy of Country Music Award and a Grammy.

What I didn’t do was build a long-term career, so in 2001 I left “The Arts” and took an entry level position in a big company. Over the next nine years I received 8 promotions and nearly tripled my salary and learned why I had failed in the music business.

And so I wrote a book about what I had learned about my own failure and the skills, principles and information I was taught that helped me succeed. The very same things you need to succeed too.

## **Two Disclaimers**

- You may not think you’re failing and maybe you’re not. But I know you’re not moving ahead as fast as you’d like, as fast as you’re able, or (my biggest fear) in the right direction.
- Excuse me if this book seems direct and harsh at times. Please remember I was just like you once. I know it might hurt but I’m doing what I wish someone had done for me: telling you the truth. You’re welcome.

Although I have to admit that even if someone HAD told me the truth, I’m not sure I would’ve listened because I was blinded by my reliance on talent. Just like you.

## **Section 1 - The 8 Reasons I Failed in Music**

### **Reason 1: I Thought Talent was Enough**

From the time I was two, which was when my parents spotted my musical talent and bought me a drum, I was told that talent was all that mattered. Maybe not directly, but the message was clear: I had musical talent, I had better put it to good use. I also clearly understood that talent would lead to a successful career in the music business.

In other words, I was just like you: totally focused and reliant on my talents.

#### **Talent Makes You Blind**

The problem with this belief in and reliance on talent is that it makes you blind to “life’s feedback” about you, your skills, abilities and career.

So when you don’t get a gig it never crosses your mind to consider:

- Was I as prepared as I could’ve been? Musically? Otherwise?
- How did I handle myself in the audition? Was I friendly? Did I clearly communicate my answers to their questions? What was behind the questions they asked me? What were they looking for musically? Non-musically?
- How ‘bout all the other interactions with the band and/or management? Was I a professional in everything I did and said?
- Did they understand how I could help them accomplish their goals? Do I even know what their goals are?
- Do I agree with their goals? Would us working together help them AND me?
- Was this the right gig for me? Was I the right player for them? Why or why not?
- Should I follow-up and ask for referrals and recommendations? Why or why not?

#### **Talent Isn’t Enough**

I’m not saying talent isn’t important, it is. I’m not saying you don’t have to be talented to succeed in music, you do. What I am saying is talent is not enough.

- There’s more to a career in music than showing up and performing well. Anybody can do that and everybody does. So why should anyone hire you?
- And don’t say because you’re good: once you reach a certain level in the world of music, everyone’s great. Even the “lowest levels” of professional music has scary good talent.

Drop the belief that you will succeed because you’re talented. You won’t.

## **Reason 2: I Thought I Had Enough Talent**

For the same reasons I said earlier - friends, family, etc. - I also thought I had enough talent to succeed. And while this sounds just like reason #1, it's not. It's also a more dangerous belief because it's so...personal.

While believing talent is enough makes you blind to learning about everything it does take to succeed, believing you have enough talent leads to a hard and bitter heart towards the realities of the music business and your place in it.

### **The Music Business**

If you want to play music, play music, but if you want to make a living in music you have to understand that you are pursuing a career in an industry that is every bit as much of a business as what Henry Ford started a century ago.

If you get nothing else from this book, please understand that the more you grasp this fact the more success you'll find. Yes, music is an art form of expression, but it is also a business and THIS IS NOT A BAD THING!

It's actually a really good thing because it means you can get paid to do what you love to do. Nice.

Just remember that business is business and the more you know about it the more success you'll find.

### **Your Place in Music**

Also remember that you are not what you do and what you do doesn't make you who you are.

Yeah, I know you've spent your whole life playing music, everything you do is music, everyone calls you a musician. You probably feel that you'd even DIE without music, right?

I don't expect you to change your mind at the moment, but let me suggest that you are more than a musician. Let me suggest that your worth as a human being is not tied to your ability to sing, write songs or play a hot solo on your guitar. You are worth more than that.

You also want more than that.

### **A Life**

As long as you believe you have enough talent you will be drawn into the never ending struggle to prove just how much talent you have. And trust me, it will be a never ending struggle that will keep you from recognizing that what you truly desire is to live a life worth living.

### **Reason 3: The Company I Kept**

When I was pursuing my career in music I hung out with people just like me: talented players, singers, songwriters and aspiring artists.

People just like me: musicians who didn't have a clue what it took to succeed in music other than to be talented players, singers, songwriters and aspiring artists.

#### **Experience**

One of the reasons I failed in the music business was that I hung out with people who had zero experience in how to succeed in the music business. They were a terrible source for career advice because none of them had been a success.

Now, I'm not suggesting you dump your friends. I'm suggesting you recognize that they are not your best source for career advice for the simple fact that they don't know any more than you do.

### **Reason 4: How I Kept My Company**

If it's true that I was pursuing a career in an industry that is every bit as much of a business as what Henry Ford started a century ago, then it's also true that I was a small business. At least I should've been.

Henry Ford had a great product. I had a great product too.

Henry Ford had a plan. I didn't.

Henry Ford had processes. I didn't.

Henry Ford had a mission. I didn't.

Henry Ford marketed well. I didn't.

Henry Ford understood business. I didn't.

Henry Ford had a team of experts. I didn't.

Henry Ford understood his customers. I didn't.

Henry Ford was a success.

I failed in the music business because of how I failed to keep my company.

### **Reason 5: My Attitude**

When I was a musician, what little plan I had was to earn a living as a drummer. I wanted to provide for myself and my family by doing the thing I loved doing.

And that's what I did: I made a living as a drummer. And that was the problem.

## **Making a Living**

It was a problem because “making a living as a drummer” is a terrible goal. It can’t be defined. How much is a living? What kind of drummer? Without a clear definition of what I wanted exactly, I took every bit of work I could find. This meant that I was the “any drummer” - the guy that could play any kind of music well and would say yes to any kind of work.

It was also a lie. I didn’t just want to make a living as a drummer, I wanted to be hog-nasty rich and travel the world, play on projects with the best artists in the world and be known as one of the best recording and live drummers of our time. I also wanted to own exotic sports cars and have homes in different countries.

## **My Attitude**

Because I had a “goal” that was both hard to define and a lie, I failed. It’s a wonder I worked at all.

## **Reason 6 - I Was Dreaming**

### **My Ideal**

I imagined my phone ringing and being asked to play on a master recording session for one of the top acts in Nashville. I’d arrive, adjust my equipment and prepare for a day of creativity.

At 10:00, the other players, the producer and I would listen to the first song sung and played by the artist in the control room. Then we’d discuss various ideas before going out to our instruments where we’d experiment with various killer ideas for an hour or two until we created the “perfect track” that combined the best ideas of these world class musicians into a magical platform for the artist to shine.

### **The Reality (as witnessed by me as a guest at a session)**

After everyone arrived and adjusted their equipment for the day, they all gathered in the control room to listen to the first song.

The engineer hit play and everyone listened to a demo of the song that was pretty good (Note: all demo recordings at the time were cut by people like me: “B and C” level players with less experience that were hired for a third of the cost to record in low budget studios all over town).

Everyone agreed on the key, went to their instruments and played exactly what was on the demo. Then the solos were added. They were working on the 2nd song 30 minutes later.

### **Bursts of Creativity**

I’m not saying there aren’t moments of creativity and “creating the perfect track,” there are. My point here is that not only did I not know how to succeed in music, I didn’t know much about the industry in which I was hoping to succeed.

Which brings me to reason number 7:

### **Reason 7 - I Was Hoping**

Simply put: my belief that talent was enough and that I had enough talent gave me hope that I'd succeed.

What more could I possibly need?

### **Reason 8 - I Wanted to be a STAR!**

I said earlier that I wanted to be hog-nasty rich and travel the world, play on projects with the best artists in the world and be known as one of the best recording and live drummers of our time. I also wanted to own exotic sports cars and have homes in different countries.

But even that was a lie.

Because I believed talent was enough, that I had enough talent and that I was a musician (as opposed to a person who played music) I got caught up in being a star. I didn't believe I was the best in the world or that I'd ever be the most famous drummer that ever lived, but I DID believe that I had to get to "the top."

In the process, I missed the fact that what I wanted - truly wanted - was to have enough money to live nicely, have a great family, nice friends, have time to enjoy them and hopefully travel the world some (a Porsche would be nice too).

In other words, I wanted a life. A life that had nothing to do with music, at least not directly.

### **Recap - My 8 Reasons**

1. I thought talent was enough
2. I thought I had enough talent
3. The company I kept
4. How I kept my company
5. My attitude
6. I was dreaming
7. I was hoping
8. I wanted to be star



## **Section 2 - 3 Ways NOT to Follow in My Footsteps**

### **How Not to 1 - Your What and Why**

I believe it's critically important that you be able to thoroughly explain what it is you want to do and why in less than a minute each.

#### **Thoroughly**

Thoroughly means completely, but it also means clearly and definitively. It's not enough to say write songs. Thoroughly and clearly means you want to write hit country/pop songs. This tells us you want to write catchy, popular songs that will be smash hits as opposed to more thought-provoking country/pop songs that would probably not make it to number one (Note: neither of these is good or bad. My point here is that they are different goals that must be explained).

#### **Explain**

Yes, I mean explain. Out loud. You may not tell everyone every last detail, but you better be able to say it boldly and confidently to at least yourself!

#### **What you want to do and why**

What is it you want to do with your life? Wanting to write hit country/pop songs is nice, but tell us more. "I want to make my living by writing and co-writing 50 to 100 country/pop songs per year with the goal of having 1 to 3 number 1 hits each year."

Nice.

And why do you want to do this? Why is this important to you? What do you hope to earn or get out of this besides a big paycheck? At least determine what you'll do with the big paycheck. It's even better if your "why" is bigger than you - like starting a charity, buying your mom a house, or whatever.

#### **Less than a minute each.**

Work at these so you can thoroughly explain them in less than a minute. I don't mean every detail, but enough that people will understand what you want to do and if they want to work with you.

Which brings me to:

#### **Why This Is Critically Important**

Why is it critically important that you can thoroughly explain what it is you want to do and why in less than a minute each? Three reasons:

1. You'll be asked: You know this of course, but I'm telling you to be ready the next time it happens. You may not always talk about your why, and I actually recommend you be careful about sharing too many personal details, but you will ALWAYS be asked what you want to do. Be ready because:
2. You'll get what you answer and how you answer:
  - a. What you answer: Most people are asking because they either (a) want to help and/or (b) want to know if you can help them. Your thorough and clear reply will let them know the answer to those questions. If you are a "Yes!" to either a or b, they will call you.
  - b. How you answer: If you answer timidly no one will believe you. If you say it proudly and boldly like YOU believe it, they will believe it too.
3. For YOU! The biggest reason is for you to know the answer to the questions of what and why so you can stay clearly focused at all times.

### **How Not to 2 - You are the CEO of You, Inc.**

#### **A Business within an Industry**

The more you learn about business and learn to do things that businesses do, the more success you'll have in music. Not only will you better organize your own activities, you'll understand how your business can and should interact with all the other businesses that make up "the industry."

To get the ball rolling, allow me to congratulate you on your ownership of your very own business: You, Inc. What does that mean? Well:

You, Inc. needs a mission

You, Inc. needs a board of directors.

You, Inc. needs a product/service.

You, Inc. needs goals.

You, Inc. needs a business plan.

You, Inc. needs a marketing strategy.

You, Inc. needs customers.

You, Inc. needs a sales team.

You, Inc. needs capital.

You, Inc. needs to be profitable.

You, Inc. needs a building.

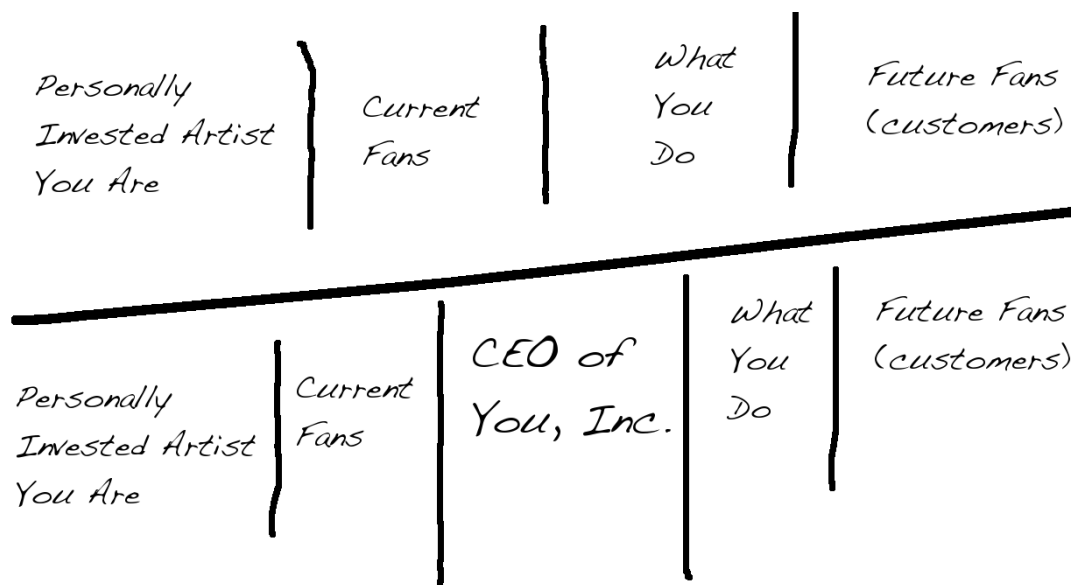
You, Inc. needs a nap....

Is this exhausting? Sure. Can you do it? Yes, just become CEO.

### CEO of You, Inc.

The single most important advice I can give you about running your business is to develop the mindset of a CEO. And the first and generally only thing on the mind of any good CEO is the health of the business, something especially critical for musicians.

I'll use this illustration to explain what I mean:



On the top part of this chart, you see what your perspective of your career looks like today. Left to right we have:

- The Personally Invested Artist You Are - this is the you that loves your music because it's the expression of your deepest self, right?
- Current Fans - these are the people who love your music - family, friends, etc. They also love you, because they have gotten to know you since discovering your music. They've become friends or at least good acquaintances. So, they ALSO love your music because it's the expression of your deepest self. *Note: If you're a sideman musician, background singer, or songwriter, this applies to customers too - the people that currently hire you to do work.*
- What You Do - this, of course, is your music. Your art, craft, expression, whatever.
- Future Fans - these are ALL the people in the world who don't yet know your music or you. These people are your target market if you want to grow your business.

## **The Problem**

The problem with the top part of the chart is the position of The Personally Invested Artist You Are. Namely, that you are right next to your Current Fans and they cannot be trusted. I'm not saying they're liars, I'm saying that they know and love YOU and therefore cannot offer objective opinions about your music.

And the only way you'll ever attract Future Fans is with an objective opinion of your music.

The only way to beat this is to put yourself outside of your Current Fans and get closer to your Future Fans. In other words, become the person who sits in the middle: the CEO.

## **Bottom Part of the Chart**

Put yourself in the middle seat and develop the mindset of a CEO. These questions will help:

- What makes the artist in my company different from all the other artists out there? Do people know about those differences?
- What makes the artist in my company attractive - in all ways - to current fans/customers? Why do they like the person?
- Why do the current fans/customers like about the music? Are there other fans/customers who might like the same things?
- How do I get the music in front of those specific people?

See what I mean? I hope so, because what you're beginning to do is think about the most important thing you'll ever do: Marketing.

## **How Not to 3 - My 4 Simple Rules of Marketing**

Don't be put off by the term Marketing, like I say in my book:

“If you've ever discussed your opinions with someone, you have marketed. If you've ever captured the attention of a someone special, you have marketed. If you've ever gotten a date with that someone special, you've marketed and sold. If you married that someone special, you're a professional!”

I know marketing can seem like too big a topic for a musician like you, so I've developed my 4 Simple Rules of Marketing:

1. Marketing is more than a message
2. Marketing is always about the customer
3. You are never NOT marketing

4. If you market well, sales will happen

### **More than a message**

The first rule is that true marketing is more than a message like McDonald's "I'm Loving It" or BMW's "The Ultimate Driving Machine."

True marketing begins with a complete understanding of a prospective customer (a person in the market), through every aspect of product/service design and delivery, all the way to the follow-up with the customer - "I hope you enjoyed your \_\_\_\_\_."

Notice it begins and ends with the customer

### **ALWAYS about the customer**

True marketing is always about the customer and here's what I mean for musicians using myself as an example:

- Who are the people that would like my style of drumming?
- Do they need what I can offer them? Why?
- Where are those people and how can I meet them or communicate with them?
- Would would I tell them about myself and what I do?
- Why would they buy from me?
- Why wouldn't they, and how can I change their mind?
- How will I know I'm doing a good job for them?
- How could I follow-up to make sure?

That's just a partial list, but I hope it gives you the idea of what I mean by Marketing and the fact that it always has to be about the customer.

### **You are never NOT marketing**

If there's one of my 4 Rules that's more important than the other 3, it's this one: you are never not marketing. What do I mean by this? Well, exactly what it says.

You will be judged by everything you do and say, everything you post online, every outfit you wear, person you hang with and gig you take.

Two Disclaimers:

- I am NOT saying to dump your friends or become overly paranoid.

- I am NOT saying to “sell out” and become something you’re not so you can succeed.

In fact, I am saying the opposite of both of them: I am saying to be 100% true to who you are, who you want to be, where you want to be and what you want to do 100% of the time. This is the fastest and most sure way to move your career forward because not only do people judge, they decide whether to work with you based on those judgements.

“People judge, give them something to judge correctly.” - TV host Jeannie Mai

Which means:

### **If you market well, sales will happen**

If you:

- Act like the real you.
- Act like the person you want to be.
- Act like the people you want to work with.
- Are seen in the places you want to be seen (and not where you shouldn’t be seen).
- With people who are like the real you and the person you want to be.
- Play/sing/write the music you want to play/sing/write (and not EVERYTHING unless you want to play/sing/write everything)

People just like you will meet you, “get” you, like you and hire you AND you’ll be happy and fulfilled because you’ll be, you.

### **Be You**

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” – Howard Thurman

I hope you’ll do exactly that.

I hope you’ll take the lessons in this e-book and apply them to your career but never lose site of the fact that being you is the biggest asset you have to give the world. If you’ll take the time to consider what makes you you, and which people need and want people like you, you’ll make everyone involved very happy and build yourself a success-full life.

Live fully alive.

## **To Learn More**

To learn more about these and other topics that are key to your success in music, please visit [whyifailed.com](http://whyifailed.com). You'll find my blog, a growing list of resources like this and information about my Coaching programs and workshops available in person and online. You'll also find information about my book, Why I FAILED in the Music Business and How NOT to Follow in My Footsteps.

**As a special thank you, please use the following codes for 10% discounts on the purchase of the book.**

**Print Version - 10% discount code through [CreateSpace webstore](#) - PCWNW6D7**

**E-book Version - 10% discount code through [Smashwords webstore](#) - TX55H**

I hope you enjoyed 8 Reasons I Failed in Music and 3 Ways to NOT to Follow in My Footsteps. I welcome your feedback and the opportunity to connect through e-mail or anywhere we both "live" online.

[stevegrossmanonline@gmail.com](mailto:stevegrossmanonline@gmail.com)

Thank you, Steve