

My Graduate Experience at Berklee College of Music

What have I learned from being a graduate student at Berklee College of Music? What has been my experience in the Global Entertainment and Music Business program (GEMB)? Am I closer to the goals established coming into Berklee? How has attending Berklee affected my present and future aspirations towards the Entertainment and Music Business? This reflection paper will explore all of this and more.

To be honest, I was living in a bit of a fairytale world coming into Berklee. I believed that anything was possible. All I had to do was show up and be persistent. After speaking with Scott Cohen, at Future Music Forum (FMF), at the start of the program, I began to realize that changing careers later in life is challenging. That to be successful, my strategy will have to be different than that of my younger peers.

Thankfully, GEMB has an incredible program director and a faculty of very supportive professors. I came into the program with little understanding of the entertainment business. I also thoroughly lacked basic business fundamentals. I did not have any sense of accounting, marketing, sales, and or product development. I was an operations guy, more specifically, an implementation project manager for technical products and service deliveries. Well, this is no longer the case. I am very much well versed in all of the areas of business. Also, I have acquired a sound understanding of the music business. Many thanks!

The program is very rigorous. I felt in over my head in terms of the amount of work and activities ahead of me. I did not think it was possible to learn so much in such a short amount of time. I was wrong. I am very thankful. We students at Berklee have so much access. Emilien has made sure that we are prepared and ready. We have received access to highly sought after industry professionals, in addition to receiving some of the most cutting edge industry knowledge. I have benefitted from every assignment and every interaction I have experienced while being at Berklee.

Thus begs the question, am I closer to the goals established coming into Berklee? I think so. I can say without question that I am a more valuable professional and have more to offer than before coming to Berklee. In an entrepreneurial capacity, I am more effectively engaging in business finance activities. I know how certain accounting practices can lead to financial risk for a company. I know what marketing is now and how to create and deploy a marketing plan. I understand the value of PR and advertisement and its connection to sales. I understand Intellectual property now and how it relates to intangible assets. You want me to develop a product idea and prototype, no problem. I know that the first step is to identify a problem to solve. Speaking 20 percent of the time and listen to 80 percent is a healthy strategy for networking and building meaningful relationships. It's helpful to focus on the long-term benefits of a relationship versus the short-term. The music business continues to evolve. At first, I thought that my path to success in the music industry would be to launch an independent record label with enhanced artist management services. Now, with my education at Berklee and understanding of the current landscape, I realize that managers and indie labels must offer more. Artists, now more than ever, are capable of doing it on their own. Skilled agile marketing that is driven by data; powerful asset building/leveraging capabilities; and strong business finance strategy are the gems and keys or to success.

How has attending Berklee affected my present and future aspirations towards the Entertainment and Music Business? I am not the pie-in-the-sky daydreamer I use to be. I am much more grounded and realistic. I know what I can do, how to do it, and the amount of work and commitment it will take to get there. I am six degrees of separation from people who love the music industry. I can create meaningful relationships with leaders in the music industry that are genuine.

The CE was an academic exercise for me. I learned a lot through the process. Most importantly, I realize that I need much more development in financial modeling, developing value propositions and game product design. I also need to find a business partner with game development skillset so that we together can build an MVP. My next step is to find this partner then apply to Y combinator.