

BRIAN HOOD

Keys To A **SIX FIGURE** HOME STUDIO

Transition From Hobbyist to Full Time Home Studio
and Finally GTFO of Your Parent's Basement



Intro

Nod your head in agreement any of if this describes you:

- **You've spent more money on your home studio gear than you've actually made from it**
- **You feel like you're a long way off from making a full-time income from your home studios**
- **Your studio is still in mom's basement**
- **You hate your "real job", and would rather stay home to record bands full time**
- **You have no real idea of how to transition your studio from a passion-driven hobby to full time career.**

If you are anything like 95%+ of the home studio population, then you should basically be head banging right now.

If not, then congratulations on your success! You can take me out to a fancy dinner and lavish me with gifts next time I'm in your city. Be my sugar daddy.

In this action-packed ebook, **I'm going to teach you what it takes to "make it" in this increasingly crowded home studio world.** These chapters will explain the "big wins" you need if you want *any* chance of separating yourself from the ever-growing pack of "bedroom warriors".

Where To Start?

It starts with **you**.

Period.

I'm sorry to be cheesy, but it's true. **NOTHING ELSE IN THIS ARTICLE MATTERS** if ***you*** don't put in the work.

You have to educate yourself.

- This takes a shitload of time (and sometimes money).

You have to find your own unique value proposition.

- This is the basic foundation of every single successful business (more on that later).

You have to be willing to make sacrifices in other parts of your life and/or career.

- Think you can binge-watch 8 episodes of your favorite show on Netflix every night? Nope!

You have to **hustle**.

If **you** aren't willing to do these things, just remember that there are *plenty* of people that will.

These other **hustlers** will take advantage of your apathetic attitude by crushing you with their (metaphorical) ass cheeks, in what can only be known henceforth as "The Hustler's Ass-Clap of Infinite Power"TM.

Chapter 1: Hustling

"Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle."

Before I move on, I present to you a fantastic definition of what "hustling" *should* mean to you ([originally posted here](#)).

Posted by [Mike Fishbein](#), Founder of Startup College [stpcollege.com](#)

Part-charisma, part-sales, part-hard work; hustle is hard to define, but when you see it you know it.

*The hustler has something to prove. The layman gets handed opportunities, the hustler takes them. The layman **waits**, the hustler **asks**.*

*The layman **"should,"** the hustler **already did**.*

Pushing himself as hard as he does, and moving as fast as he does, the hustler inevitably faces failure or [rejection](#). The hustler is unblemished by failure- it only makes him stronger for the next time around.

*He understands that **he can't succeed if he doesn't go for it**. The hustler has ambitious goals and a big vision.*

*Confident? Of course. Arrogant? No way - the hustler knows there's always someone somewhere better than him at something. **The hustler is never satisfied**, and always has more to accomplish - his extreme competitiveness prevents him from getting complacent.*

Not "above" any task, the hustler will always roll up his sleeves and do [whatever needs to get done](#).

***What he lacks in business acumen he makes up for with pure drive**. The layman wears a tie, the hustler wears a sweatband.*

*While he may be rough around the edges now, the hustler is **always growing, learning, and improving**. While the layman is sleeping, the hustler is...well, hustling.*

The scrappy hustlers of today, will become the CEOs, Directors of Business Development, and Venture Capitalists of tomorrow.

With an innate sixth sense for identifying great people and opportunities, the hustler is always in the right place at the right time.

So when you hear the word "hustle", try to think of it like this...



and not like this...



Chapter 2: Your Value Proposition

It all starts here. Let's break it down to the bare-balls-basics.

A **value proposition** is a promise of **value to be delivered**. It's the primary reason a prospect should buy from you. The **value proposition** explains how your product/service **solves customer's problems** or **delivers specific benefit**.

You have a home studio. A band is looking to record somewhere. Why would they choose you?

The basics of it is this:

The band's "**problem**" is that they can't record their own music (which, btw, this is quickly changing). Your "**value proposition**" (aka solution) is that you can deliver a (hopefully) high quality recording to them.

That's just the surface, though. It goes **much** deeper than that.

Defining The Problem

I said the band's problem is they can't record their own music, but let's dig a bit deeper here.

Why does the band want to record their music?

Everyone's goals are different, but generally most "serious" bands want to gain fans, play shows, and maybe even make some money (haha...).

Some bands might have a mid-term goal of either getting signed, finding a manager, or getting "on the road". Ultimately, though, the band may just want to become famous in some way (or at least known/respected within their genre).

This is the end-goal that ultimately *motivates bands to spend money* on a high quality recording.

Solving The Problem

So the **value** you can deliver is a "**good recording**" that fits the band's vision and **ultimately facilitates their end-goal**. If you've been recording bands for more than a week, then there's no need to explain how complex this task can be. **This "good recording" is one of the main things that separates a *hobbyist* from a *full-time pro***. This isn't the only factor,

however.

When it comes to a home studio, your value proposition can come in a number of different ways. The next chapter covers each one in more detail, but essentially everything boils down to **differentiating yourself** in one of many different ways.

Chapter 3: Find Your Own Sound

So you purchased all this gear, you're an independent type of person, and you're eager and willing to put in the work. That's great!

Unfortunately **that's not enough** these days.

You have to set yourself apart from everyone else. You have to *rise above the noise in this crowded market*. You have to be the *best* at what you're doing.

The good news? There are several ways to do this.

The bad news? They're all really, **REALLY** hard to do well.

To be honest, the bulk of this topic is out of the scope of a text-based eBook. The only thing I can do is make you aware of **what** you need to do. I can't give you specific instructions on **how** to do these things, because it's different for every person, genre, and situation.

Most bands have a very specific artistic vision about how they want their LP/EP to sound. It's up to you (and anyone else contributing to the recording) to take that vague vision, and shape it into what the band wants/needs.

I'll start with the most obvious way to differentiate yourself. This is by contributing your own *unique* sound to a finished product, and can be a combination of these things:

1. The Way You Process and Shape Each Element of Your Mix

The first few guys that come to mind when it comes to this is **David Bendeth, Kurt Ballou, Andy Sneap, and Chris Lord-Alge**. These are the guys whose work I can recognize the instant I hear it; even if I've never heard of the band before.

If you've never heard of these guys, they're some of the top producers/mixers in the rock/metal genres. There are probably 4 or 5 top guys that produce/mix/master the majority of top bands in whatever genre you produce/listen to.

Ideally **you want to have such a unique sound that others are able to recognize your work just by listening**.

This is the route I've chosen for my career**. If you keep up with [my blog](#), then you saw I stopped recording bands to shift my focus on mixing and mastering exclusively.

This is because my "*unique value proposition*" is "*my sound*" when I mix and master songs. I try to find a good blend somewhere between "polished" and "disgustingly heavy". Easier said than done, but it's worked for me.

Some guys like to be on the "raw" side of things (Kurt), while others prefer the "polished" sound (CLA). Just about any combination of things can work, as long as you put your own spin on it.

**** (Side Note: I'm in no way saying I'm anywhere near the level of these other guys)**

2. Production Techniques That Are Unique to You

This is what a lot of talented producers have gravitated towards, and something I've personally always struggled with. A great example of this would be the FX and soundscapes Kellen McGregor adds to the Memphis May Fire songs. These are the little details that add up and can push a song over the hump from "good" to "great".

For example:

[Here is a clip from the album Memphis May Fire released in 2015](#) (mixed/mastered by yours truly).

[Here is that same clip with the fx/soundscape/midi production solo'd](#)

[Now here is the clip with the FX muted](#)

I know the majority of producers aren't in the heavy music genre, but this should still give you an idea of how much post production can affect the final product in **any** genre.

Another example would be the post production FX that Joey Sturgis popularized between 2010 and 2013. It's a bit overplayed by nearly every producer in this genre now, but at the time he was doing cool new shit in the metal/hardcore genre.

The difficult part of this is keeping yourself from just mimicking the sounds of other pioneers. If you're using stock Vengeance and Massive patches to create all of your sounds, chances are you're just going to sound like every other "producer".

3. Songwriting and Song Arrangement

Some producers have *avery* heavy hand in the songwriting process with the bands they produce. I've seen producers that have basically written entire albums for bands.

Producers can sometimes get work solely based on the great chemistry they have when writing with bands. If you can contribute in this way, you'll rarely have gaps in your calendar.

Another added benefit is the additional points you can negotiate within a deal, which can lead to passive income in the future. This is more advanced, and not being discussed here because I honestly don't have much experience with this.

4. Creating unique textures in songs

This one is a lot more vague, but the producer that comes to mind here is Matt Goldman. He always picks interesting instruments and tones with the bands he produces.

He adds cool things like old-school electric pianos or layered/panned drums (overheads recording two separate drum takes, then panning each drummer left and right 100%). His mixes are always solid, but more importantly the songs also tend to have a variety of "texture" to them. It's no surprise he has so many successful records under his belt.

Another word sometimes used to describe this hard-to-describe thing is "vibe". Whatever you call it, the important thing is to experiment with instruments and tones that are outside of the "normal" realm of sounds one might be used to hearing in your genre.

Other Ways To Differentiate

Your recordings aren't the only way to differentiate yourself from competitors. There are plenty of other ways that are less vague and more easily attainable for the new guys.

1. Pricing

In a perfect world, lowering your price isn't something you rely on heavily to get work, but this is absolutely a contributing factor.

If you're able to compete with the quality of a commercial studio in your area, but you charge half the price, then that in and of itself is a differentiator.

Cheap (and sometimes free) work is a great way to get your portfolio started, **but always make sure you follow supply and demand of your time**. If you're not getting enough work, keep lowering your prices. If you're taking on more work than you can handle, *then keep increasing your pricing until it levels out!* It's a constant balancing act that should hopefully trend upward over the long run.

Always charge what you're worth, but make sure you are *realistic* about it. If you offer a similar end product as a competing studio, but charge twice as much, then good luck finding a consistent supply of bands to work with you!

2. Provide Lodging For Artists

This has been a huge one for me over the years. **Many labels provide a lodging budget to bands**. If you can provide lodging, that's a *win-win scenario*. It's easier for the band recording with you, it's easier for the label to coordinate, and it means more \$\$\$ in your pocket.

This even applies for bands with no lodging budget. I've provided free lodging to bands for two main reasons.

1. It can be a great way to keep your schedule full. Lodging can be a make-or-break situation for out-of-state bands, and I'd usually rather comp the lodging than to lose the work.
2. I can write off the comped lodging on my taxes (plus any associated cleaning fees after their stay). Be sure to talk to your CPA about this, and don't take my word for it.

3. Be Likable

This seriously goes a long way when working with bands. You think bands are going to recommend your studio to others if they don't like you as a person? HAHA!

Look at it from their perspective. These bands are stuck with you in a small studio for weeks at a time. Even if you provide them with a great recording, you're still going to have trouble getting bands to come back for their next record if they don't like **you** as a person.

A great sign that you meshed well with the band is when you're hugging the band members "goodbye" after a month in the studio. This, surprisingly, happened more often than not with the bands I recorded over the years.

One key thing to be careful about here is making sure you don't "bend the rules" in order to be likable. **Never** let bands take advantage of you, and **never** be afraid of being assertive when necessary. **You can do more harm than good if you let bands walk all over you.**

On the flip-side, there is a **huge** difference between being assertive, and being literally Hitler (I'm literally being figurative here, guys). Find the nice balance between strict rules, and a fun atmosphere.

Allowing bands bring food into the control room while you're mixing? This could be bad, but it's probably not the end of the world as long as you explain to the bands that food should never come near valuable items. Snorting blow off the console? Nah, probably best to draw the line somewhere around there.

4. Be Funny

This goes along with the "likeability" factor. If you can put out great sounding recordings **and** have the bands rolling around on the floor laughing every day, then you'll have no problem getting them to come back for their next record.

Repeat clients = an ever-increasing client base, which = an ever-increasing income. This is one of the biggest keys to keeping your schedule full throughout the years!

5. Have a Badass Location

This isn't *quite* as important as some of these other aspects, but it's worth mentioning. If your studio is in a highly desirable city, then it can help draw bands to you.

Who *wouldn't* want to record at a studio located in downtown Nashville, TN if all lodging was provided? (It's certainly helped me over the years)

6. Buy Awesome Gear

Again, this isn't *as* important these days, but if your studio is full of expensive/impressive gear, that alone sets you apart from other home studios. Some people are just "gear nerds", and this includes some band members. If you can appeal to their gear fetish, then you'll stand out to them.

I've even heard of people owning [big, expensive consoles](#), just for the sake of impressing bands.

I personally have mixed emotions about this method. Either way, just be sure you know how to take advantage of all that awesome gear. Otherwise, your money is better spent on your facilities, education, hookers, and blow.

7. Have Awesome Facilities

Your home studio doesn't necessarily have to be equal to [Oceanway Studio](#), but it really doesn't take much these days to put together a tidy little package.

A little interior decoration, comfortable furniture, and a clean studio goes a long way. Craigslist is your friend here. Keep in mind that your own situation may require more drastic measures in order to achieve a semi-professional recording setup.

This will ultimately come down to your own specific situation and goals. Trying to record guitars, bass, and vocals in your bedroom? Trying to lodge 5 band members in your 1 bedroom apartment? Good luck with that!

On the other hand, if you're just doing mixing and mastering, then working out of your bedroom won't have as many limitations.

If you don't have the proper space to achieve your goals, then it could be time for a drastic change. That change will always come down to how serious you take this, how much money you have, and how much you're willing to sacrifice.

I worked out of my parents basement for my first year. Even though it was a cramped rectangle room with low ceilings, I still recorded drums, vocals, guitars, and bass in there. I also mixed and mastered all of the projects **and** provided lodging for all of the bands I recorded (when necessary). It wasn't pretty or professional, but I made it work.

After a year of that I saved enough money to rent my first building, which was a live/work building in Lacey's Spring, Alabama. It had enough space for a large control room, **huge** live room (1200 sq ft), 2 bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and living room. My landlord even installed the window

between the control room and live room.

That first building, as well as the one in downtown Nashville that I currently live/work, were both found on Craigslist. If you're trying to keep expenses at a minimum, I would absolutely recommend doing whatever you can to find a building that you can live in **and** work in.

8. Have An Awesome Cat

This seems to work for my boy [Sam Pura](#) from [The Panda Studios](#). (well...that, and his incredible facilities, copious amount of gear, attention to detail, and likability factor. But **mainly** the cat).

9. Be Attractive. Don't Be Unattractive.

This is more of a joke than anything, but [this seems to actually matter to some degree](#). Whether or not you'd consider yourself attractive, I'd definitely suggest making sure you don't dress like a slob. [The way you dress can have a huge psychological impact on the way people perceive you](#).

You don't necessarily have to go out and buy a bunch of [Don Draper suits](#). Just study up on basic fashion advice that fits your personal age, style, and preference. Look for good deals on clothes, and donate all your old, gross, baggy clothes to goodwill.

Mix and Match

Take a good look at yourself to determine where your strengths lie.

Are you more of a songwriter? Are you more interested in playing with guitar pedals, amp tones, and weird compressor settings to achieve "interesting textures" on your songs? Would you rather spend hours coming up with unique FX and soundscapes that make your bands stand out?

Figure out which of these differentiators works best for you. Combining as many of these as possible creates a **very** appealing package when bands are looking for a recording studio/producer/mixing engineer/cuddle buddy.

Keep in mind that **no one** has mastered every single one of these differentiators I mentioned. Everyone has their *strengths* and *weaknesses*. As you grow as a producer/human being, part of your success will come from having the self-awareness to understand what you suck at. The sooner you discover your shortcomings, the better.

Once you've determined your weaknesses, it's important to **build relationships with people who excel where you fail**.

Are you great with bands, but suck at mixing? Form a business relationship with a talented, socially awkward mixing engineer that sucks at dealing with other humans. If you can counter each other's weaknesses, **everybody wins**.

It's up to you to find your true calling with this. Once you get this part down (and don't kid yourself, **this is the hardest part**), then everything else should fall into place!

A Warning: Artistic Vision VS Professional Expectation

While doing whatever you can to differentiate yourself from competitors, there are still **basic concepts** in the recording industry that "the world" will always associate with sounding "professional". This goes for songwriting, producing, editing, mixing, and pretty much every other aspect of a finished album that a band releases.

A simple example of this would be the kick and snare drum always being panned to the center in a rock or metal mix. While panning a snare 100% right and kick 100% left would **definitely** be "unique", trying to change certain things just for the sake of changing them is a recipe for disaster.

Some factors will obviously change over time as pioneers push the industry, but generally these changes are *slow and rare*. Just look at the Contemporary Christian Music Industry or Country Music Industry over the past few years. Things have changed in these industries, but most changes have been **very** gradual.

The key is to balance the "professional expectations" of consumers (aka: fans) with your own unique artistic vision as a producer\mixer\songwriter\etc.

Too far in the realm of "professional expectation," and you can get a sterile, generic, cookie-cutter song/mix that the fans ignore.

Too far in the realm of "artistic vision," and you can get a bewildering mess of a "song" that ends up alienating fans.

There are obviously exceptions for each of the two extremes, but they're rare.

If you can find that *perfect balance* of the two, you'll be able to release something that the fans want and expect, while progressing the band's sound in a unique way.

A Side Note About Integrity

Some of you guys may have a combination of the differentiating factors above, or you may just have one.

No matter what your differentiators are, **the most important thing is maintaining integrity**.

This includes work ethic, interactions with bands, doing what you say, communicating with bands, not ripping people off, and just generally **not being a sack of shit**.

I know a couple of talented producers that don't have two pennies to rub together, all because they ruined their own reputations. They constantly lie to bands, rip people off, and con people into working with them. They may be able squeeze money out of a few bands here or there, but eventually karma will come back to ruin them.

Don't go for the "quick buck" if it risks ruining your reputation. **I CANNOT STRESS THIS ENOUGH.**

FUCKING BE COOL, AND DON'T SUCK.

Chapter 4: Where Do I find Bands To Work With?

This is the number 1 question I get from people. Unfortunately **there is no magic bullet for this.**

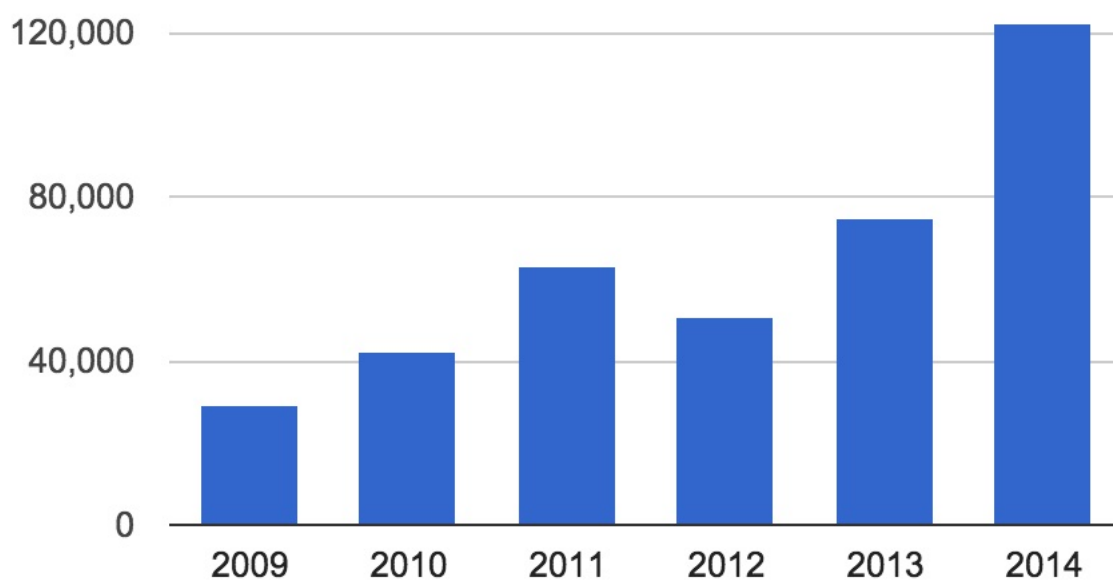
Assuming you have experience, and you've put in the hours of hustle that it takes to get over that initial hurdle of differentiating yourself, now you have to keep bands coming through your door. This is not easy.

Week after week, month after month, year after year... it takes **a lot** of bands to create a full time income. As with most freelancers, *you pretty much always have the feeling that you're 6 months away from the end of your career.*

Even with a full time income, it took me 3 to 4 years to create any sense of *stability* at my studio. To this day, I still have an income that fluctuates wildly.

For example, in 2015 the difference between my lowest and highest months of income was 2680%. In other words, my highest month of income was 26.8 times the amount of my lowest month. How's that for instability?

The important part is that year after year, your income should be trending upward.



456 Recordings Year By Year Income

I started in 2009 with an income of right around \$29,000. By year 6, [it was right at \\$122,000](#). At the time I'm writing this chapter, it's nearing the end of 2015. My income by the end of the year should be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$140,000.

This upward trend is a great sign of a healthy business, and it helps me stay calm when I have a string of extremely low income months.

Despite 2015 being the most profitable of my 7 years in business, the month of March was my worst month ever (I made a whopping \$1,200). This terrible month was less than my first month ever in business (\$1900 in January of 2009, if you were wondering).

To counter my worst month of all time in March of 2015, I ended up having my best month of all time in October 2015 (\$32,120)

So keep these numbers in mind next time you have an abysmal month. Drastic fluctuations are normal for freelancers, and **you have to budget for this when you finally transition to a full time career.** I personally try to keep at least 6-12 months of living expenses in a savings account, just to be safe (thanks Dave Ramsey).

That one emergency fund has kept my stress level to a minimum any time an unexpected expense occurs or I have an unusually bad string of low-income months.

You're Not Going To Start At The Top

My #1 source of finding bands from year one has **always** been via *word of mouth*. If you do an incredible job with one band, and you're priced appropriately for the quality of work you provide, then **you will absolutely get more bands.** Period.

With that in mind, I didn't really achieve what I would consider a full time income (~\$50,000) until my third year. This is because you're not going to get anywhere in your career by recording "local bands" for the rest of your life.

That may sound a bit hypocritical, coming from me. If you read my blog, you may remember that [I made 90% of my income from unsigned bands in 2014](#). What you have to understand is that **the 90% of my income** I made from unsigned artists in 2014 **would have never happened without the small percentage of successful signed bands I've worked with over the years.**

Those signed bands are what I call your "anchor bands", which are crucial to your success.

Keep in mind that you have to "scale up" your bands. No producer starts out working with major label artists. Most of the successful guys I know started at the bottom, just like you and me.

As you put in the time and "pay your dues", you'll start getting better and better at your job. As you refine yourself in your profession, you'll naturally start working with more talented bands.

Eventually you'll start landing projects with smaller indie labels. If you "kill it" with those first few projects, you'll start building solid relationships with labels and managers. **This is a great thing, and it's the key to breaking out of the "local band" world.**

Those labels and managers are the guys that have the ability to send you the "next big thing".

One thing to note is that you'll almost *never* get one of their "A List" artists in the beginning. They'll

keep sending you their “up-and-comers”, which is quite alright because those bands have a huge potential to grow.

Once you’ve proven yourself, labels and managers *might* start sending you larger bands. I say “might”, because a lot of larger bands already have producers that they’ve worked with since the beginning.

Bands Will Grow With You

This is the key to the majority of successful producers.

They recorded one of those "up-and-comer" bands, and slowly but surely, that band starts gaining traction. As the band grows, so does your career.

If a band "blows up" and becomes an “A List” artist, then you've essentially hit the jackpot. You can now ride the coattails of that band's success...for a while.

Just don't grow complacent! If you want to grow your studio to a truly stable full-time income, then you have to *keep hustling*.

The great news is that you should have no shortage of bands contacting you for work. Every time you work with a band that has **any** amount of success, they’ll bring 10 more bands for you to work with. From there, it’s just **a chain reaction that sets off a growth cycle in your business.**

Online

Forums

I’ve found thousands of dollars of work through [one single forum](#) over the past 7 years. In my earlier years I picked up simple editing work on the side.

I’ve even won mixing\mastering jobs for EPs and LPs on some of the frequent “mixing contest” threads. These threads are where bands post the raw tracks along with total budgets, then producers submit mixes of one song. The producers then listen through the submissions, and pick their favorite mix. Whoever they picked wins the mixing job for the rest of the songs, along with whatever the budget is.

This can be a great way to start getting projects for your portfolio.

Clearly not everyone who reads this book are going to be in the heavy music genre, but there are

similar forums for just about every single niche that exists. I encourage you to become an active member of whatever forum fits your ideal genre. You can learn a lot, and you can make a decent chunk of change in the process.

SoundBetter.com

I signed up for this site years ago, but never really used it to its full extent. It's basically craigslist for recording studio projects, where producers can sign up and browse mixing/producing/mastering/editing jobs posted by bands or other producers.

Unfortunately I don't know the ins and outs of using this site, but if there's even the slightest chance you could make money on there, it's my obligation to mention it.

Sign up, play around, and figure out the key to monetizing that site. Once you've done that, write a guest article on what you did, and I'll post it on my blog (giving you full credit).

Advertising and Networking

You're not going to "network" your way into a full time home studio, and you're not going to advertise your studio somewhere and *magically* get a full time stream of clients.

Yes those two things can possibly help (especially once you've already established your name), but this will just land you sporadic work at best. I will always encourage people to network as a way to make friends within the industry, but don't expect this to be your magic bullet to propelling your career.

Networking

The positives of networking can be immense, but not because of what you think. You're not going to land a steady flow of clients by "networking" constantly (although you can definitely land your first "anchor band" this way).

If your studio is new and you're having trouble finding some good artists to get things started, networking can be great. [I wrote an entire two part article for people getting started.](#)

Just keep in mind people can spot someone with an agenda a mile away, and no one wants to talk to you if all you want is their money.

Aside from networking to gain clients, there is **so much more to be gained**.

The key to networking correctly is by forming **actual relationships** with people (particularly people within the recording studio world). Surrounding yourself with likeminded and successful people is one of the most beneficial things you can do for your career. This will allow you to meet people going through the same struggles as you, and learn from people who have already been

through the issues you're dealing with now.

One of my favorite quotes is by a guy name Jim Rohn.

“You are the average of your five closest friends.”

I'm paraphrasing a bit, but you get the idea. Let that quote sink in for a second. Who do you hang around the most? Are they aligned with your goals and aspirations? Are they on an upward trajectory, or a downward spiral?

If none of your friends are doing what you want to do, it may be time branch out a bit. Look for other producers that are in the same position as you. Better yet, find a mentor.

If you can eventually find a mentor to take you under his wing, it can speed up your progress drastically. This should be someone who's business is where you want to be in 3 to 7 years.

Just don't expect something for nothing! If someone is willing to meet with you occasionally to let you pick their brain, at the very least offer to pay for their meal or coffee. Relationships should never be one sided, and even though your mentor can probably afford his own meal, it's the gesture of goodwill that counts.

Advertising

I'm not convinced that there's any real way to advertise your studio that's going to be cost-effective. The only exception I can think of is free advertisement like Craigslist, although I'm not sure if that's going to bring in the tier of clients you'd want to focus on.

It's been my experience that there should be no need to advertise, as long as you're doing everything else correctly. **Word of mouth clients and repeat clients should be your main source of income**, and if that's not the case, no amount of advertisement is going to save your studio.

If your studio is struggling to make money, and you're thinking of paying to advertise, I'd highly suggest going over the other chapters in this book to figure out what you could be doing wrong to cause this. There is a deeper issue here that needs to be solved before resorting to paid advertisement.

Side note: If you or someone you know has figured out a cost-effective, consistent form of advertisement that brings quality bands into their studio, please let me know! I'll be sure to update this eBook.

Chapter 5: How To Position Your Home Studio

So you've managed to differentiate yourself from your competitors (or at the very least, the other studios in your immediate area). Now you have to **make sure potential clients can clearly and quickly see your value.**

This comes down to how you "position" yourself in the market. This part, in my opinion, is one of the easiest things to do, yet it's somehow one of the most neglected aspects.

What Is "Positioning"?

Positioning is the wide range of factors that make up the image in your potential customer's head when they think of your studio. These include (but are definitely not limited to) **pricing, packaging, product quality, social proof, and overall professionalism.**

It is ***the perception your studio has in the target customer's mind when they think of you.*** Get this part right, and you'd never hear a band complain about your prices again.

Let's break down each of these separate factors.

Pricing: Although I don't recommend publicly advertising your pricing (I cover why later), it definitely affects your position in a customer's mind. An oversimplification of this would basically be "higher price means higher perceived positioning", but this clearly isn't the case in all situations. Really think through your pricing, and make sure it's in line with how you position your studio. If you take the proper steps to get the rest of your positioning in line, you should be able to charge a premium over someone who has neglected this.

Packaging: This is the visual aspect of how you portray yourself and your studio. This includes your website, the photos on your website, the presentation of your portfolio, your social media presence, and more. This can also include your studio facilities, assuming bands are coming to you to record (as opposed to a mastering house, where bands don't typically come to you). I'm going to cover packaging more in depth later on, because this is an extremely important aspect that is utterly neglected by almost all DIY home studios.

Product Quality: This is the music you include in your portfolio. Is it your strongest work? Does it display your talents and differentiating factors correctly? Is it relevant to the type of projects you're trying to attract to your studio? Will these songs make other bands want to record at your studio? Are the bands in your portfolio actually talented? All of these factors are important when deciding which songs to feature.

Social Proof: This is usually just the "boost" in "legitimacy" you get from working with larger bands. The larger the bands featured on your portfolio, the more social proof you have to the bands of similar genre. This can also come from having a large social media following (e.g. lots of "likes" on your studio's facebook or "followers" on instagram\twitter).

Professionalism: This is how you come across through your actions on social media, reputation amongst bands, and packaging (aka website). Does your website say "Powered By Squarespace" at the bottom? Were the studio photos on your website taken in portrait mode with an iPhone? Do you just retweet Jaden Smith and cat memes all day, every day? If so, then *you're doing a disservice to your business*. You're coming across as an amateur, and you're going to continue to get amateur bands in your studio.

Chapter 6: Communication With Artists

Follow Up and Follow Through

One of the single most expensive mistakes I've ever made in my career was actually something I **didn't** do.

I didn't follow up.

It's so simple, and somehow so neglected by the majority of home studios (or freelancers in general). I'd quote a band \$10,000 for a project, and **never** hear from them. I'd **never** follow up, and I'd **never** win the project.

\$10,000 in lost income that I could have gotten had I simply followed up.

Looking back, I now know how utterly idiotic that was. Now, aided by systems and software, I **follow up every single quote that I send out** at least 3-4 times before counting the project as "lost."

I've had several projects that took 6 to 8 total follow-ups spanning an 8 month period before I ultimately ended up "winning" the project. These are projects worth **thousands of dollars**, and I would have most likely **lost** them had I not been so persistent about following up.

Organize and Systemize

Without a system in place, you'll most likely fail to stay consistent with this. You may follow up a few projects, but eventually some will fall through the cracks.

Here is how I handle things...

I've mentioned this on my blog before, but I use a CRM (Customer Relationship Management software) called [Close.io](https://close.io) to keep track of ALL quotes and projects. It's not cheap, but I've used it to land thousands of dollars worth of projects that I wouldn't have otherwise gotten. This **more** than justifies the \$700+ per year price tag that comes with it.

You don't have to be *this* serious about it, and you don't have to spend that much money on software, but find some **automated system** that helps you consistently follow up with **all** the quotes you send out.

The best thing to do here is **assume that you are too stupid/busy to keep track of this**

yourself.

When a quote request comes in, here is my usual system:

- **I reply with a price based on the project needs (My quotes are all copy/paste emails where I fill in the blank with the pricing/details. This saves a LOT of time).**
- **I create an "opportunity" within Close.io, which is where the software helps me track projects I've won and lost. This usually includes a % of confidence I have about "winning" the project.**
- **I set a follow up reminder for 1-2 weeks ahead. This depends on the timeline for the project. If it's a project for 6-8 months from now, I may set the follow up date a little later. If the project is only a month away, I may follow up after a couple of days.**
- **Assuming the band never replies (which is where I would normally give up and lose the project), I now follow up once the reminder hits my inbox.**

I keep this part super simple and straightforward:

Hey (name)!

Just checking in to make sure you guys got my last email. Let me know if you have any questions!

Sometimes they simply missed your email. Even if they did see your quote email, this follow up usually spurs some sort of reply.

- **If I send a quote and the first follow up, and still haven't gotten a reply, it's time for follow up #2. This is also a simple email sent 1-3 weeks after follow up #1.**

Hello again (name),

Just checking in with my semi-weekly follow up! If you guys have moved on with someone else on this project, let me know and I'll go ahead and mark this project as "lost" in my system.

If you need any more info from me, let me know!

- **After this, I set a reminder for one final follow-up 1-4 weeks ahead of time. If they haven't replied by now, chances are they aren't going to be working with you on this project. It's always a good idea to send one final follow up before writing off the band.**

Hey (name),

Just wanted to send one final follow up before marking this project as "lost". If you guys would like to work with me on this, just let me know!

The great thing about the CRM I use is that it shows me if and when the band has been opening my follow up emails. If they've opened every single email, but haven't replied to any of them, I can simply mark the project as "lost", and move on.

Be sure to stay on top of the projects where the band has replied to your follow ups, but eventually

goes silent. These are usually the bands that are "on the fence" about who they're going to work with, and staying in the top of their inbox (and their minds) can be the difference between winning and losing a project.

If you're constantly answering their questions and staying in touch, chances are they're going to choose you when it comes time to make a decision. Staying in touch comes off as "being invested" in the project, and that is a great thing for the potential clients to see. It also shows a level of professionalism that virtually no other studio or producer shows.

Cover All Your Bases

Clarification is key when sending your pricing quote. Let the band know exactly what **is** and **is not** included in the price. Here is a typical quote message I'd send out for a mixing project (minus the bold, italics, numbers, and underlined words).

Pricing for mixing\mastering on this project would be a flat \$1,000,000,000(1). This price includes(2*) **reamping (if needed), drum resampling (if needed), mixing, mastering, and 3 rounds of revisions.***

This price **doesn't include**(3*) **basic editing, additional production, or additional FX, which should be completed by the tracking engineer(guitar editing, drum editing, vocal editing, pitch correction, etc).**

If needed, I do offer those services at an extra charge (4).*

I schedule mixing projects just like I do for bands that are tracking here, so a 50% **non refundable deposit** is required to book the mixing dates on my calendar(5*), and the remaining balance is due on the first scheduled day of mixing (6*).

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns(7*)!

thanks!

In this **one** message, I'm letting them know these things:

- 1 *. The price of the project
- 2 *. What **is** included with that price
- 3 *. What **is not** included with that price
- 4 *. What other services I can provide (at an extra cost: this is important to mention ahead of time)
- 5 *. What steps need to be taken to set everything in stone
- 6 *. When the remaining balance is due
- 7 *. I'm encouraging them to ask more questions, if they have them

This insures there are no surprises down the road. If something **does** come up, you have this email to refer back to.

A common objection for me is when a band is hesitant to send the remaining balance **before** I've started mixing.

When this happens, I simply refer back to the initial quote email that I sent them that says "*the remaining balance is due on the first scheduled day of mixing*", and there's usually no issue from there.

Once you win the project and the band sends their deposit, it's important to *maintain communication* so they're confident they've chosen the right person to work with. Absolutely **no one** wants their producer to "go dark" once they've sent in their deposit. This is a red flag to most bands.

Let them know **what** dates they've booked on your calendar, let them know **when** to expect to hear from you again, and **follow through** by contacting them on that date.

Chapter 7: Your Website

First of all, **you absolutely need a website**. Having **only** a Facebook page for your studio is *not* good enough.

This is a **crucial** part of *packaging* and *position* your studio. Look at 98% of people doing this full time, and you'll find their website.

[Here's Mine](#)

This doesn't have to be fancy, and you don't have to spend a ton of money on this. Mine was made by a friend for free. There are even cheap "do it yourself" template options out there that will work perfectly fine. Just make sure the website builder's branding is removed.

No "powered by Wordpress" or "Wix" or "Squarespace". Those are all great options for your site, but leaving their branding on your website cheapens your own brand.

You want to make it as "pro" as possible, which isn't *that* hard these days.

Here the main components you want to focus on:

1. Domain Name

Make sure you get "yourstudioname.com" for your URL (or YourPersonalName.com, if that's what you want to go by).

No "wordpress.456recordings.com" or worse, "tumblr.456recordings.com".

If you *have* to get another TLD besides ".com", be sure to go with ".io" (which stands for "input/output"), or one of the trendy new ones like ".music" or ".studio".

Whatever you do, stay away from the archaic ".net" TLD, unless you want to look like a dinosaur.

2. Logo/Design

When in doubt, keep it simple. A sleek, modern, one-page template and a simple logo is enough to come across as a professional. I've suggested to friends of mine to just use a [Squarespace "band" template](#), and change it around to fit their needs. Just be sure to have professional photography for a template like that.

3. Portfolio

This is pretty much the most important part of your website. Pick your absolute **best** 4 to 8 songs to showcase in your portfolio (no more and no less). Make sure it covers all of the styles and genres **that you do best and want to focus on**. If you can, showcase the songs that fit the niche you're trying to dominate, because those are the bands you have the highest chance of working with.

Remember, the riches are in the niches.

Your best work needs to be the centerpiece, so if possible, put this on your main landing page.
Don't just bury the music player 5 pages deep into your website.

4. Quote Request Form

This is the *other* "most important" part of your website, although this part won't matter if your portfolio of music sucks.

This should be a button in a **prominent position** that says "request a quote" and it should be located "[above the fold](#)" on your website. This basically just means it should be one of the first things someone should see when coming to your website.

Here is what information needs to be collected on your quote form:

1. Band Name
2. Person's Name (so you can address the person by name, and not just call him "dude")
3. Email Address
4. Link to band's website, facebook, dropbox, or youtube. Basically anywhere to hear their music.
5. Required services (song writing, mixing, mastering, tracking, lodging, editing, etc.)
6. **Budget**

If you're wondering why I made number 6 bold, this is why:

Adding a "budget" field has directly increased my income by at least 20%, and given me the confidence to raise prices consistently.

Why?

When you know a band's budget, you have a better idea of what you should be charging. If bands are constantly coming to you with \$10,000 budgets, and you've been quoting half that amount for projects, then you're selling yourself short by leaving money on the table.

On the other side of things, if bands are coming to you with \$5,000 budgets, and you've been quoting \$10,000 for projects, then you've just figured out why you're not winning any projects.

5. Photos

If you are bringing bands into your studio, this part is very important. **If you want to come off as professional as possible, then get professional photos.**

Be sure to clean, organize, and decorate your studio before the photographer comes. *This should be the best your studio has ever looked.* Spend money on extra decor and get a girl to help decorate, if needed. Don't let your studio look like a sad, barren bachelor pad.

The better your facilities look, the easier it is to position yourself as a "premium" service.

Here are some examples of how much photography and your facilities can influence the overall positioning of your studio.

[Exhibit A](#)

[Exhibit B](#)

[Exhibit C](#)

Which one of those would you pay the most for, and why?

Exhibit A is clearly the loser here. Terrible photography, cheap gear, bad vibe, and cramped/cluttered space all combine into an unappealing package.

Exhibit B is **much** better. I love this example because it's really nothing fancy. It's a step above your average home studio, but not unrealistic for most full time producers.

Exhibit C is the best of the bunch. Best photography, facilities, and vibe. If I were to guess, I'd say this studio brings in the most money, although there is no guarantee.

Side note: make sure your photo resolution is better than these examples.

6. Bio\Discography

This part isn't important until you've worked with some notable artists. Once you have some bigger bands under your belt, this is the part where you start adding "social proof" by your impressive list of past work. **This can be the difference between charging \$300 per song and charging \$3000 per song.**

Do not underestimate the “wow factor” of an “A-List” artist on your roster. Just be sure to properly credit yourself. For example, don't add “Metallica” to your discography if all you did was clean toilets as an intern during their time in the studio. What you **can** do is add your internship under Bob Rock to your bio.

Epilogue

My goal here is to make sure you stand out as the best option to a band looking to record. Bands nearly always take multiple studios\producers into consideration before making a final decision. If you differentiate yourself from other producers, nail your positioning, and properly communicate, **you will start landing more work.**

For more content about the business side of running a successful home studio, be sure to follow [The Six Figure Home Studio](http://www.TheSixFigureHomeStudio.com) (www.TheSixFigureHomeStudio.com). This blog is the original source of this free ebook.

Additional Resources

- [From Shit To Gold: A No Bullshit, Step By Step Guide To Mixing Heavy Music](#)
- For those of you that are new to the home studio world, check out [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of [The Absolute Beginner's Roadmap To A Successful Home Studio](#)
- SoundBetter.com: Craigslist for recording studio projects
- [Andy Sneap Forum](#): The forum I've been a member on for 7+ years.