

Introduction

How Do You and Your Child Define “Success”?

WE ARE LIVING IN A New Renaissance¹. In many respects, there has never been a better time for your child to pursue a career in music and entertainment. Largely due to developments in digital technology, the costs to create content (music recordings, music videos, independent films, etc.) have declined dramatically over the past decade. At the same time, and for similar reasons, access to the marketplace has never been easier. We regularly read and hear about numerous young artists like Justin Bieber who established a following on digital platforms such as YouTube and from there were able to launch a global, high-profile career.

The emerging digital entertainment universe has become a new place for recognition and discovery. Talent agencies, management and production companies, and record labels all track online content and trends in search of the next big thing. Like the GPS system in your car indicates, there is more than one route to arrive at your destination—your child’s success. As you embark on this journey, be mindful of potential opportunities to be explored down emerging new avenues.

There is no single definition of “success.” In the New Renaissance, the artist can define success subjectively on his or her own terms. He or she can pursue a career that is personally meaningful and satisfying, regardless of the financial rewards or industry-established benchmarks such as a Grammy Award, a Tony, or an Oscar. “Success” today is not uniform but comes in many shapes and sizes, so it is essential to carefully consider what success means to your child and to develop an appropriate success plan to achieve it.

How do you and your child define success? Take your time exploring this critical question. Once you and your child subjectively determine what “success” looks like, you can begin to chart a customized route to this unique destination. Your definition of success will shape virtually every decision you will encounter along the way, including your budget, timetable, representatives, where you live, and how and where your child will be educated.

Listen carefully to your child, and you will learn how to steer the career car in the right direction. A child's perspective can surprise you, too. I learned this lesson when my oldest child, Alex, declined to explore professional opportunities after his high school band won a national competition. He and his bandmates loved playing together and did not want anything to interfere with their experience. For my son and his bandmates, success meant recording their music and performing it on stage before their friends and fans.

From my personal family experience, I learned that not all currency is green. It turns out that the greatest reward is not always money but the rich experience gained through your child's creative pursuits. The prudent parent appreciates the value of the journey. The time spent on this trek will bond you with your child and teach him or her important lessons about life and the pursuit of creative fulfillment.

Enjoy the ride.

Go Look in a Mirror

Think of your child's career in entertainment as a car. No matter how talented, your child lacks sufficient judgment to responsibly drive the car alone on the road to success. He or she must therefore be securely fastened in the passenger seat, while you take the wheel. By following the road map you create, you will help your child achieve success by navigating the career car in a diligent direction. Mindful of the potential hazards on the prospective journey, it is your job to fasten your seatbelt, firmly grasp the steering wheel with both hands, and adeptly navigate the career car on the sometimes-treacherous path to your destination.

As the prudent parent, you must maintain a laser-like focus with both eyes on the road. You will be tempted by human nature and industry forces to speed the car past certain road signs. Putting the pedal to the

metal, however, can be perilous. There are numerous obstacles, many of which are difficult to anticipate. Should the career car go off the road for any reason, only you will be to blame. It is therefore crucial to be well-prepared for the journey you are about to take with your child.

Looking at yourself in a mirror encourages you, the prudent parent, to follow one of the key rules of driving: check and adjust your mirrors. Before any car trip, it is wise to make sure your view from behind the wheel is focused and unobstructed. This precaution gives you a handle on surrounding circumstances, allowing you to drive safely to your destination. Likewise, you, as the diligent conductor on your child's journey to success, must ensure that you have a clear view of the path you will follow, as well as an understanding of the responsibilities and other circumstances that a career in entertainment entails. How informed are you about the music and entertainment industry? Have you recruited experts to help guide you in areas in which you are not experienced? Have you defined "success" and created a customized business plan and budget? Do you know your state's requirements with respect to its labor laws and the financial aspects of your child's business engagements? Understanding these questions before you start will allow you to safely and cautiously navigate your child's career to the ultimate destination: show business success.

The mirror also reflects the significant role *you* play in this whole process. It forces you to come face-to-face with the reality of the circumstances surrounding the decision to embark on this journey. Regarding yourself in the mirror, you, the prudent parent, must come to terms with your child's objectives and motivations. How badly does your child desire a career? What is he or she willing to sacrifice? Do these concessions make sense to you? How invested are you in your child's career? What are you willing to sacrifice? Are you willing and able to finance your child's career? Are you willing to reduce your active personal involvement with your household responsibilities, your other children, and your marriage? It is OK if you are unable to answer these questions right away. Take your time to consider these questions honestly. A mirror never lies.

Once you have meaningfully examined yourself, tilt the mirror toward your child so that he or she, too, can thoughtfully explore and

understand his or her motivations in pursuing a show business career. Have your child consider what he or she is willing to do and willing to give up. Ask him or her to explain, "Why do you want to go into show business? Is it because you love performing? Is it because you want to look 'cool' to your friends or seek our (your parents') approval? Are you willing to put in a lot of time and effort and give up many of your other hobbies, interests, and free time to do it?" By making your child seriously think about and articulate the answers to these questions, you can better gauge whether your child is fully prepared and properly motivated to make this commitment.

These are but a few of the critical questions discussed within these pages. This book seeks to make you aware of both potential hazards and opportunities within the entertainment industry and keep you and your child from getting lost along the way. You may not be able to answer all of these questions during your initial self-examination. After reading this book, go back and ask yourselves those questions again. Hopefully, the lessons presented here will help clarify any uncertainties or reservations you may have and enable you, the prudent parent, to help your child reach his or her destination—a successful and constructive career.