

Everything We Needed to Know About Business We Learned Playing Music

From the Band Room to the Boardroom,
Business Leaders Advocating Music Education
as an Instrument of Their Success

CRAIG M. CORTELLO

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We Learned Playing Music**

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Craig M. Cortello

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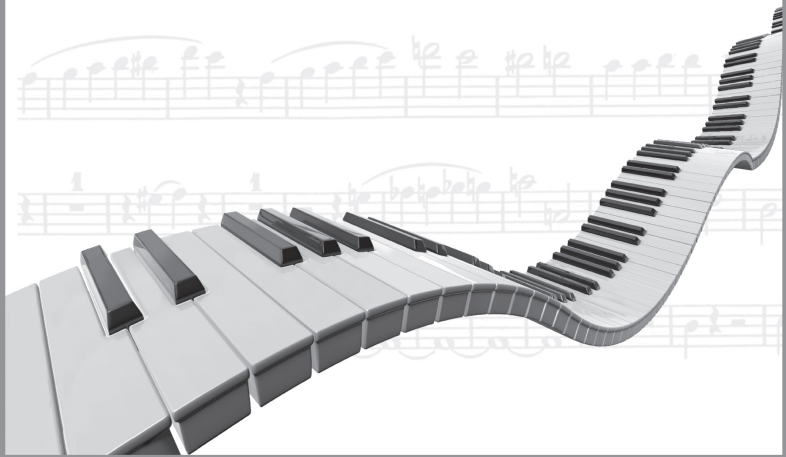
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SECTION I

The Business Profiles

*Conventional Business
Professionals with Unconventional
Brilliance Resonating from Their
Music Backgrounds*





Dean Deyo, CEO & Drummer
Retired Division President & CEO,
Time Warner Corporation
President, Memphis Music Foundation
Drummer, The Legends of Rock

“The absolute terror of freshman in college for 90 percent of the population is public speaking. I never understood it because I had already been on a stage in front of thousands of people, and it was no big deal. For me communication, presence, poise, and confidence are all things that any good business person has to have.”

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“You’ve got to get to the point where you can make a presentation in a small room or make a presentation at a big gathering. Those performance skills that a musician would learn really translate well.”

Dean Deyo had a successful career with Time Warner, serving most of his more than 25-year tenure based in Memphis as CEO & President of their Mid-South Division. After retiring and filling his time with various volunteer initiatives, the local economic development community tapped him to head up the Memphis Music Foundation. The foundation is sponsored by 22 of the largest corporations in Memphis, a list that includes FedEx, International Paper, AutoZone, and Pinnacle Airlines.

He is uniquely qualified to tackle this new challenge at the foundation, an organization that seeks ways to assist musicians in all aspects of the music business in order to drive the potential of music as an economic development force in the Memphis area. In addition to his corporate conquests, Dean is an accomplished drummer who paid his way through college playing music for the university circuit across the Midwest in the late 60s and early 70s. During that time, Dean and his band mates were called on to open for such well-known recording acts as Three Dog Night, Frankie Valli, The Buckingham, and Question Mark and the Mysterians.

Dean grew up in the Chicago area. Like many other people, his earliest recollection of music was at the family piano. “We had a piano in our living room, and we had a tradition. Every Christmas Eve my grandmother, who lived with us, would sit at the piano and pound out the Christmas carols. We would all stand behind her and sing,” he said.

Dean was required to take piano lessons, but decided an accordion would be easier to carry with him to school. “I decided quickly that pianos were fine, but accordions were cool. I had this red pearl accordion that was just gorgeous,” he recalled.

In 1964 when Dean was 14 years old, his world forever changed. “It [the emergence of the Beatles] was out of the blue. It was just amazing. I can remember buying that first record, sitting there all night long and trying to figure out the song on the accordion. It took about three months of playing Beatles songs on the accordion before I figured out that there was no future in rock accordion,” Dean realized.

If the emergence of the Beatles was influential, there was another particularly memorable musical moment that Dean experienced. He attended a concert that was every bit as vivid as the first time he walked up the catwalk at Wrigley Field.

“I can close my eyes and see every piece of it,” he recalled. “I was in high school and I walked into the Aragon ballroom in Chicago. I took the train downtown. It was an old theater. I remember coming up the stairs, coming into the auditorium, the lights, this big velvet green curtain, and Jimi Hendrix pouring lighter fluid on his guitar and lighting it on fire. I can just see that in my eye. That was one of the first big concerts I had been to, and I remember walking away from that and going, ‘Oh, my God. That was unbelievable. I want to do something like that.’”

“I had some friends, and they had formed a little combo and had everything except a drummer. I said, ‘Well that’s me.’ I always

worked – I was a paperboy, a soda jerk, so I had money coming in. There was a drum set that I found at a pawn shop,” he recalled fondly. “I went down to my dad and said, ‘I’ve got enough money saved up, would you drive me to downtown Chicago, so I could buy my first drum set?’

“Music actually had some influence on where I went to college,” Dean said. “We were playing pretty well in high school with a group of guys, and we were pretty much the same age. We left Northern Illinois University (NIU) every Friday afternoon after the last class. We played Friday and Saturday and were back on campus Sunday night raring to go.”

Though Dean and his band achieved enough success to finance his college expenses, the nature of the music industry began to change as Dean began to pursue a career outside of music and settle down with his family.

“In college, every college campus had a ballroom,” said Dean. “Some fraternity or sorority would rent the ballroom every weekend for a dance, and that’s what we played. And it was great. When that kind of fizzled, we became a bar band. And we weren’t a great bar band. Then disco hit, and that absolutely killed things. We weren’t even close to that.”

By then Dean was married, working in the cable industry in Rockford, IL. He still played in a little band. “We had a three bedroom apartment and my drums took up one of the rooms,” he recalled. “I came home from work one night and my wife said, ‘Honey, I found someone who wants to buy your drums.’ We sold them for \$250. I wish I had those drums today.”

He didn’t play again for 30 years. With a poignant gesture, Dean’s wife set him back on the path to music after his retirement from Time Warner. “The year I retired from Time Warner, my wife bought me a drum set for Christmas, unbeknownst to me, because she had remembered selling them 30 years earlier.”

He now plays in a band called the Legends of Rock with other boomers who have rekindled their love for classic rock.

“We’re an unusual band,” Dean explained. “We only want to play twice a month. Anything more is work. We ended up with six people who were just like us – had played in the old days, had all toured and recorded, some fairly famous. One was a doctor, one was a banker, one guy runs an audio company, and one lady writes commercials for radio.

“We play galas and corporate events,” he added. “All we play is classic rock from 1965-72. We really enjoy it. It’s sort of come full circle.”

It is my observation that children exposed to music and the arts are much more advanced in their ability to be flexible and to adapt. What struck me about Dean’s attitude toward working for a company like Time Warner during a period of rapid change was how he embraced that change rather than resisted it.

“For me, that [the evolving nature of the industry] was the only reason I was able to do the job for over 20 years,” said Dean when I hinted that he must have seen incredible changes in the communications industry during his career. “Every six months we wanted to be something else. First we were a cable company. Then it was high speed data. Then we wanted to be a phone company. Then every six months we had something new we invented – analog to digital, pay-per-view, premium, OnDemand. It was always something new. That’s the only reason I was able to do it that long.”

Dean thrived in an atmosphere where others might have crumbled.

He also expressed the importance of presence, poise, and the ability to speak to audiences as a prerequisite for success – all traits and abilities that came relatively easily to him after performing in front of audiences during his music career.

“The absolute terror of freshman in college for 90 percent of the population is public speaking. I never understood it because I had already been on a stage in front of thousands of people, and it was no big deal. For me communication, presence, poise, and confidence are all things that any good business person has to have. You’ve got to get to the point where you can make a presentation in a small room or make a presentation at a big gathering. Those performance skills that a musician would learn really translate well.”

Despite the fact that artists are not known for their ability to use “left-brain” (logical, analytical) skills, Dean was quick to point out that music requires a certain structure that is sometimes overlooked when assessing the positive influence of music on a child’s development.

“Much of the stuff that I did in business, there was a model or a structure to it – sort of like songwriting,” he explained. “When you’re writing a song, there’s a structure – an intro, a verse and a chorus, a bridge – and it has to be three minutes and fourteen seconds long if you want it on radio. If I was doing a PowerPoint or if you’re building a resume, there is a structure that you have to follow.”

There’s also a work ethic lesson derived from his music experience that stayed with Dean throughout his career. “A good musician who is learning has to rehearse,” he said. “They learn the value of practice.”

Dean expressed the value of building relationships with other creative people at a young age and simply having something positive to funnel his energy. “Everybody in their adolescence needs something that they can grip on to,” he said. “These were the people that I met with afternoons after school rehearsing. These were the people I spent my time with. These are the guys I hung with and became my friends. The same was true in college.

“It’s friendships, but you learn teamwork,” he added. “You are who you hang with. The good news is that musicians, regardless of some of the images they have occasionally, are generally a really good group of people. They have good ideas. They’re creative. It certainly helped my development.”

It only seems fitting that Dean now finds himself running a music foundation that requires him to draw upon both his business acumen and his understanding and love of music.

“It’s [the funding of the music foundation] a realization from the business community of Memphis that music is important,” he said with pride. “Every city today in order to attract the knowledge worker has to be a vibrant city. Nothing creates that vibe better than music. We are an economic development agency, and we are here to reinvigorate the music industry of Memphis.” The Foundation provides business resources for local musicians such as computer access, training software, and databases of music industry resources, all free of charge.

Dean relishes his new role as President of the Memphis Music Foundation, indicating that it’s one that he would probably have taken on for free, but he gets paid to do it. “I didn’t see how life could be any better than that,” he added.



Genevieve Thiers, CEO & Opera Singer
Founder/CEO Sittercity.com, America's
Leading Online Caregiver Matching Service
Executive Director, OperaModa
(Modern Opera Done Artistically)
Opera Singer

"Singers have to by nature sell themselves. They have to pre-package, market and sell themselves like a product. Naturally, every singer has all the skills to be an entrepreneur. When you're an entrepreneur, you see a niche and an opportunity in everything."

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"Once you learn to channel energy and direct power when you're in front of people and you're singing, it's something you never forget."

Genevieve Thiers is the founder and CEO of Sittercity.com, America's leading online babysitting service. A babysitter herself, Thiers pitched Sittercity to Boston investors in 2001 and was told, "We don't fund babysitting clubs." Undaunted, she begged her father for \$120 to buy the Sittercity.com domain and distributed 20,000 flyers throughout the city of Boston on foot, recruiting babysitters from local colleges while working a full time job at IBM and singing opera at night.

Five years later, Sittercity.com now has more than 500,000 users nationally including hundreds of thousands of sitters, and serves a huge cross-section of American parents with its online database. Genevieve was recognized by President Bush at the White House as the Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur Champion of the Year for 2006, and she has done hundreds of appearances as a childcare expert on TV, radio, and in print outlets including multiple appearances on the *Today Show*, *Martha Stewart Living Radio*, the *CBS Early Show*, CNN, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Redbook*, *Parents*, *Parenting*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Working Mother*.

The eldest of seven kids, Genevieve credits that experience for fostering her resourceful and creative nature. “We became extremely creative I think just to get attention,” she chuckled. “It’s been my biggest asset in business frankly.”

At age 11 she began training in opera. Since then, babysitting and singing seem to have been the two constants throughout her life. She continued those passions while studying opera at Boston College, where she sang the lead for many of the shows and babysat to subsidize college expenses.

A twist of fate and of timing changed the course of her life. When she graduated from college, she wanted to pursue a Masters degree in opera. The female operatic voice generally matures at about the age of 30, so she needed to find something to keep her busy for a few years.

“I was staring out my window trying to figure out what I was going to do when I graduated, and I saw this nine-month pregnant mother walking up the steps from BC’s lower campus to its upper campus posting flyers for a babysitter,” she recalled whimsically. I said, “That’s interesting. That’s something I can do in my free time. Why don’t we take the model of an online dating service and apply it to child care?”

“When you’re an entrepreneur, you see a niche and an opportunity in everything,” she added.

Genevieve did eventually go back to get her Masters degree in opera from Northwestern, which she completed in 2004. Faced with the challenge of running a flourishing organization while pursuing a singing career, she once again summoned that entrepreneurial spirit and started her own non-profit opera company, OperaMODA (Modern Opera Done Artistically).

“When I graduated in 2004 I had this kind of dilemma where I thought, ‘Okay, well I can’t do what normal opera singers do,’

which is go city by city all across the country and audition for apprenticeship programs,” she said. “In fact I tried it. I made it to five cities, and then I missed a plane. I was sitting in the airport trying to figure out how I was going to handle this. I thought, ‘The only thing to do is to start the opera company.’ That’s where OperaMODA came from, which is the opera non-profit that I run.”

Genevieve has found that pursuing careers in music and in business simultaneously can be beneficial. “I can sometimes use one thing to leverage against the other,” she explained. “So when things get really difficult in the opera world, I’ll turn to work and really push that forward. And then the other way around. If work is getting really, really difficult, I’ll go sing for a while, and it all gets a little easier. It’s a leverage game. But if you use it right, you can make it easier.”

Of course, there are only 24 hours in a day, and even someone with the passion and enthusiasm of Genevieve has limitations. She indicated that in 2004 she nearly drove herself to exhaustion. “I was singing lead in the show, producing the entire show, running Sittercity, and flying all over the country for that,” she recalled. She learned that delegating many of the tasks associated with running the opera non-profit allowed her to find a more reasonable balance.

Genevieve recalled a few significant events that crystallized her enchantment with music. When she was eight years old, her aunt gave her a *Phantom of the Opera* tape. Genevieve says that she would sit in her room for hours playing the tape over and over, eventually learning the entire opera by heart. She would sing the entire show, excluding the male parts.

“Around the age of eleven, my mom put my sister and me in the local church,” she added. “It was about a 2,000 person church, quite a large church. When we sang in front of the church it was the biggest occasion I’d ever sung in front of anyone. We really

didn't have any idea what we were doing...we'd just throw all kinds of stuff in if we thought it would be interesting. We got this huge standing ovation. People didn't know what to make of it. They just thought it was the weirdest thing they'd ever seen. But apparently they thought it was cute or good or something. That kind of infected me. All performers have a moment like that, and they're off and running from there."

Genevieve also recalled an influential music teacher that helped her hone her skills, Mr. David Hall from Philadelphia, a high school music teacher. "He knew my family with seven kids had absolutely no money to speak of, so basically he taught me for free for four years of high school," she said. "He was the first person to take me under his wing."

"He was very patient," she said, revealing the essential characteristic that defined his excellence as a teacher. "When you first start singing, you don't know what you're doing. I was going in there trying to mimic Mariah Carey, and he said, 'Oh my gosh, you're hurting my ears, and that's not how you sing.' He pushed us just the right amount. He was firm when he needed to be."

I found it interesting in my research that people who had achieved so much success in business continued to essentially define themselves as musicians.

"First and foremost, I define myself as an opera singer," she revealed. "Entrepreneur is essentially a musical term. [Centuries ago] It was the name that was applied to a musical producer. The two of them are very linked. I wouldn't be anything like the way I am if I wasn't singing."

She added, "There's something really amazing about standing in front of an audience. You're giving them the song, and they give you a lot of energy back. Everybody's attention just focuses and sharpens. It's just this amazing moment. You're in front of

everybody, but it's an incredibly private moment, too. There's a power that comes from that."

She went on to explain that once you learn to channel energy and direct power when you're in front of people and you're singing, it's something you never forget. You end up leading just because you're used to that energy transfer that comes from that sort of thing.

"You can't be a singer unless you are a leader," she said. "I've sung in front of audiences of 50, and I've sung in front of audiences of 15,000. You walk out in front of them and you have no choice. You must be the focal point of attention. You are going to lead them."

The early rejection that Genevieve experienced pitching Sittercity to investors didn't faze her. Once again, her musical training helped her to prepare for that rejection.

"In opera you have to have such a tough skin, because you go to one audition and they say you're amazing, and you go to a second and they'll tell you you're horrible," she said. "The problem is that your voice is inextricably linked to you. It is a horribly emotional thing.

"You end up with skin so thick that nothing scares you," she added. "You'll just walk up to anyone or start anything or make any phone call or go in front of anybody because you've got that strength behind you. You've been through the wash. It's really awful sometimes when it happens, but it makes you so much stronger."

That ability to dismiss rejection translates into salesmanship, according to Genevieve. "Singers have to by nature sell themselves," she concluded. "They have to pre-package, market and sell themselves like a product. Naturally, every singer has all the skills to be an entrepreneur. They've done it with themselves

and their voice already. It's just expanding it out to a different product."

Genevieve echoed the comments of others regarding the discipline required to develop your musical abilities, and the application of that ability in business endeavors.

"Right now things are very intense with the company, because we are looking into a number of things that will really skyrocket our growth," she noted. "The rigorous discipline that you come up with in any kind of musician atmosphere translates very, very well into the real world."

Genevieve believes that music and the arts have the ability to reach students in a more profound manner than most any other subjects. "You can teach math, you can teach history, and you can teach engineering," she said. "They're going to learn a skill, and they're going to be able to utilize that skill at some point in their lives. But there are very few things that are transformative. When you're looking at academic subjects, they touch the mind. With singing and music, it touches souls. It's a completely different kind of communication. I do hate when somebody underestimates [the arts]."

Finally, Genevieve gave her perspective on her capacity for creativity, essentially an outcome of necessity, repetition, and desire.

"The only way to exercise creativity is to have so many challenges thrown at you that you have to work your way around them," she explained. "I realized how fast you get at problem solving when you're an executive of a web 2.0 company that's hurtling along at the speed of light. It [creativity] is like a muscle. You do have to exercise it. But the only way to exercise it is to make your self do something challenging. You have to want it."