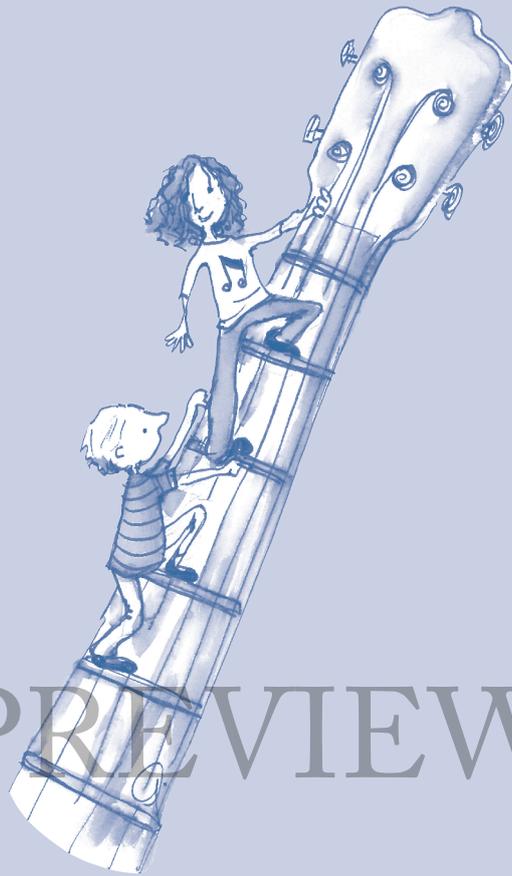


# The Business



PREVIEW

## of being a Community Musician

MARK JACKSON AND JANE JELBART

# THE BUSINESS OF BEING A COMMUNITY MUSICIAN

September 14, 2017 at 11:04 PM

*Hey guys, with you on your concept of wealth. Interesting that the topic of the dreaded \$ has come up a bit recently, and I meant to say to you a few weeks back – I hope you guys never feel embarrassed by what you're charging us punters – a) it's cheap as chips, and b) I'm pretty sure all the groups you nurture (and bully/tease/try to learn 'em) want you to be successful and be able to enjoy the lifestyle you do. We certainly don't want you to be forced to give it up and become an accountant or something (no offence to accountants, I'm sure there are some lovely ones). In summary – the value you give us is far more than the few \$ we give to you. Please don't underestimate your value to the community, or agonise over taking modest bit of filthy lucre from us. Uke on!*

PREVIEW *Anonymous*

*The Business  
of being a  
Community Musician*

PREVIEW

MARK JACKSON AND JANE JELBART

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#### THE GENUINE MESSAGE

This book has been nurtured by 8+ years of direct ukulele teaching and leadership experience; 100s of hours of cogitation, reflection, writing and editing; and many dollars spent in support, relief teachers, editing, osteopathic treatments and artwork. Please respect our right to earn a living helping others help others make music.

#### THE LEGALESE

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Business of Being a Community Musician* owes a similar debt of gratitude to the same people we acknowledged in the Ukestration Manual. However a few deserve special thanks for this volume.

Once again, Danielle Scott has been there for us for a long time, as a sounding board, offering creative and professional advice and experiencing first hand our business strengths and our foibles. We will miss her.

Robert Watson - who suggested that what we had with initial drafts was TWO books, and subsequently was the first to read the book and give it back to us in two parts.

We thank the Australian Government and the NEIS personnel and trainers who set Mark on the initial path to being a proper business.

Our fellow community music business people (and aspirants) world-wide with whom we have had useful conversations.

The ukestrans who made this business possible, some of whom have even provided business advice.

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Who is this manual for? .....	2
1.2 Being a business or being business-like .....	2
1.3 Diverse income streams .....	3
1.4 Is this a hobby, a job or a business? .....	3
1.5 Value yourself as a community musician; sell yourself .....	5
1.6 Make a business plan.....	6
1.7 Your mission statement (should you choose to accept it) .....	6
<b>Chapter 2: The Unique Selling Point (USP)</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 The Ukestra Method using Ukestration .....	9
2.2 The importance of venue and our social approach to music.....	10
<b>Chapter 3: Reality check - the numbers needed to stay in business</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 How much administration is involved? .....	13
3.2 Setting the personal teaching rate .....	15
3.3 Pricing – how much we charge .....	15
3.4 The statistics that keep us working and creatively engaged.....	17
3.5 The Uketen, our prepay system.....	18
3.6 Other pricing considerations .....	19
3.7 Critical mass.....	20
<b>Chapter 4: Specific administration tools</b> .....	<b>22</b>
4.1 Xero.....	22
4.2 Dropbox .....	23
4.3 The Ukestras database .....	23
4.4 MailChimp .....	24
4.5 Wordpress .....	24

<b>Chapter 5: Staffing</b> .....	25
<b>Chapter 6: Advertising and marketing</b> .....	28
6.1 Our marketing successes (and not so successes) .....	29
6.2 Other marketing initiatives we have used.....	36
<b>Chapter 7: Additional income streams</b> .....	37
7.2 Private tuition.....	37
7.2 School ukulele groups .....	38
7.3 Other musician projects (aka maintaining your creative mojo)....	38
7.4 Hospitals .....	39
7.5 Paid ukestra gigs.....	39
7.6 More possible income streams.....	40
<b>Chapter 8: Compliance Issues and Professional Development</b> .....	43
8.1 Copyright and licensing .....	43
8.2 Workplace Health and Safety.....	44
8.3 Public Liability insurance (PLI).....	45
8.4 Professional Development.....	46
<b>Chapter 9: Conclusion</b> .....	47
Are you ready to be a community Musician? An Essentials checklist:.....	49
<b>References</b> .....	51

# Chapter 1



## INTRODUCTION

This manual is for people who want to make a living, or run a small business, as a community musician. We have had some success in this endeavour and wish to share our experiences and knowledge in the hope that others may also spread the joy of community music in a sustainable fashion. Mark has supported himself with a full-time income for the last eight years, and Jane joined the business six years ago when it could support two full-time incomes. We work in our community, as musicians, but also nationally and internationally.

*The Ukestration Manual* is a mandatory pre-requisite for reading this book. There we describe our philosophy and teaching approach which underpins everything detailed in this book. As described in the introduction of *The Ukestration Manual*, the three essentials of the Ukestra Method are music-making, community and sustainability. Maybe it is restating the bleeding obvious, but we rely upon the income generated from our community music business not only to sustain us, but to maintain sustainability of this community, and our service to that community.



## 1.1 Who is this manual for?

We envisage that three different types of people might benefit from reading this manual:

1. A community-oriented person who enjoys playing music and would like to earn an income from community music. Practice and commitment to the art of music-making with the ukulele (including singing) is also required.
2. An experienced musician who enjoys conveying musical knowledge in a relaxed and empathetic way to novice musicians. Someone who wants a stable core business to supplement the (frequently) poverty level wages of being a performer, and who wants to build a fan base. Effectively this could be seen as 'value-adding' to their chosen profession.
3. A volunteer or unpaid leader of a ukulele group who does not need the income because they are sustained by another job, a retirement income or a supportive partner. This manual aims to provide some tools to help keep the group viable and active without burning out the leader.

## 1.2 Being a business or being business-like

From the beginning it was our overt intention to establish The Sum of the Parts (music) as a business. That is, we sought to generate a sustainable and liveable income. In doing so we joined a long statistical line-up of new businesses that are destined for failure. Luckily for us we have been on the successful side of the roughly 50% of businesses that survive their first five years.

We cannot guarantee a sure-fire method of replicating our financial sustainability. Success relies upon a whole bunch of coalescing good fortunes, the existence of empty niches, and various factors that ultimately come down to timing, location and personality. As a business, running a ukestra is not as precise as teaching a fifteen year old about how and when to flip a burger.



If you wish to **create an income-earning business** then you will need to collect and draw upon a myriad of relevant resources. You need to write a comprehensive business plan and many agencies such as accountants, business advisers or government agencies will help set you on that path. This manual is not a business plan, but it is one of your key resources to develop one!

If being financially viable **is not a key concern**, then perhaps this manual will help you reflect upon what it means to be professional and more sustainable as a not-for-profit business or community organisation.

### 1.3 Diverse income streams

We have written this manual based upon the assumption of running four weekly ukestras in your community. However, as a community musician you will need numerous strings to your bow to make a viable living. The ‘numbers for staying in business’ (Chapter 3) shows that four ukestras alone do not make for financial wealth. For us in early 2018, our eight ukestras (and two choirs) provide us with our most significant, reliable and regular income streams. However, we have other income streams including ukulele educational book sales, recreational music in hospitals, performing income and one-off ukulele workshop income.

Other income strategies might include: teaching children in groups within and outside of schools, teaching individual lessons, doing gigs, weddings, and group music therapy in health institutions. Particularly at the outset, this diversity of income sources is a key to income stability, and to maintain a diverse and viable creative life.

### 1.4 Is this a hobby, a job or a business?

Which of the following best describes your goal when considering creating a sustainable community music organisation? Do you want to:

- a) Play the ukulele and earn some money; or
- b) Earn money playing the ukulele with people who are beginner and novice musicians, and hence travel a longer journey with them as you help them develop their skills?

What motivates you to do this? Is it *really* your passion?

