

# Players: 10 Tips for Scoring the BIG Gig

**O**ne of the chief reasons so many musicians fail in this business is that they don't understand how to present and market themselves effectively. For independent musicians especially, marketing is crucial to your success. Zoro would know. He didn't make it to the top by staying in the shadows. For three decades, Z has made the world his stage. Now, the Minister of Groove shares what you must know to score your own big gig.

**1 Showcase.** The easiest way to get hired in our electronic era is by showcasing your talents on the internet. Post videos of yourself performing on your own website, YouTube, Vimeo, etc. I know a few big-name artists who flew in musicians to audition after viewing them online, so I know for certain this is a proven strategy. You also should have DVDs and CDs with your best performances readily available, since not everyone is on the e-train.

**2 Promote.** One of the main purposes of promotion is to increase awareness of you as a player to other potential employers—producers, recording artists, musical directors and other musicians. Throughout my career, I made sure I always had business cards on me and handed them to every prospect I met. Many financially lucrative opportunities came to me as a result of something as simple as handing out a professional-looking business card. I also utilize Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and recommend you do the same since they are such powerful tools.

**3 Materialize.** The word "materialize" means to appear or become present. Most everyone in the entertainment industry makes himself present with a media kit of some kind. Having a media kit gave me an edge early on, because it provided a way for me to be remembered among the scores of musicians who would try out for a big gig. Your first media kit doesn't have to be anything fancy. Get a glossy black folder, staple a business card on it and throw in a one-page resume, photo and a one-page bio that directs readers to online sites where your performances are posted.

**4 Cultivate.** It's imperative that you cultivate your on-stage and off-stage image. How you conduct yourself is a huge part of selling yourself. The thing that helped me stand out the most was being reliable, professional and making myself as easy to work with as possible. I literally built a solid 30-year career from that simple, yet powerful, strategy.

**5 Network.** Every break you get will be through personal relationships you develop over time. All of my breaks came as a result of friends or teachers who recommended me for gigs. If you want to succeed, you should be consistently expanding your list of new contacts and maintaining contact with old ones. Just as it is with a multi-level company, you need to have a long list of customers under your down line to help market you and your product if you expect your numbers to increase.

**6 Educate.** You can never afford to stop learning. I have had to continually learn new techniques, styles, grooves and technology to stay in the game. Along with all the musical demands, I also have had to immerse myself in the latest marketing technology to remain relevant and at the forefront of an ever-changing industry.

**7 Produce.** The best marketing efforts won't mean squat unless you can show potential employers you are able to produce the service requested. My first big gig opportunity came as a result of being recommended by my drum teacher, who happened to be Ralph Johnson (Earth, Wind & Fire). Ralph was playing with EWF lead vocalist Philip Bailey and was unable to make some of the gigs. I studied and practiced diligently; as a result, Ralph sent me in as his sub. I went from obscurity to the big time, just like



that. The best publicity of all for a sideman is playing behind a big-name artist because live shows, television appearances and hit recordings will publicly highlight your playing. Publicity like this will open a plethora of other opportunities as well as a bit of notoriety.

**8 Diversify.** The key to surviving in this industry is to develop other streams of revenue. You can do this in numerous ways, depending on your natural talents and interests. Teaching is always a great source of income for many freelance musicians and has been for me. Making use of my gifts and talents, I have diversified with such endeavors as motivational speaking, consulting, authoring books, creating DVDs and developing signature lines of equipment with instrument manufacturers. For you, it might be songwriting, publishing, arranging and producing, playing steady club and corporate gigs, managing a rehearsal studio or working at a music store.

**9 Socialize.** Get out of the practice room and meet up with people in your community who are not musicians. A well-rounded musician with varied interests brings more to the stage. And you never know who knows whom. I spent countless hours just hanging out with people in an effort to broaden my horizons; great career opportunities often came from the most unlikely people.

**10 Become.** Let's not forget that life is a two-way street. If you help a few people get what they want, no doubt you will run into others who will help you get what you want. Choose to become a bridge to and for others. I have spent much time during my career helping others live out their dreams. In turn, fate had a way of providing noble people who did the same for me. No one really makes it on his or her own.

Remember, your marketing must serve a purpose. I never pursued any kind of marketing or publicity until I thought it was warranted. Until that time, all my efforts were spent developing into a credible musician and forging strong relationships that would later lead to divine opportunities. You would be well served to do the same.

**miniBIO:** Zoro has sat on the drummer's throne commanding some of the most famous stages in rock and R&B music. Known as the Minister of Groove, Z has toured and recorded with Lenny Kravitz, Bobby Brown and Vanessa Paradis, to name a few. An award-winning, internationally renowned drummer, educator, motivational speaker and author, his new book, *The Big Gig: Big-Picture Thinking For Success*, is an intriguing and comprehensive insider's guide for independent musicians who want to break into the highly competitive music industry. Visit [thebiggigbook.com](http://thebiggigbook.com); [zorothedrummer.com](http://zorothedrummer.com). 