

Design Thinking in Music Related Instruction

Todd D. Gardner
Berklee College of Music

This paper was presented at the [2021 International Summit](#) of the
Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
May 17-18, 2021

<https://doi.org/10.25101/21.14>

View the Summit presentation at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2KNj5Mgfws>

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to make educators aware of design thinking and its potential use in music business related classrooms. Design thinking is usually defined as having five components: Empathy, Defining, Ideating, Prototyping, and Testing. Although design thinking is being used in academic institutions such as Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard, and Yale it still needs to be further adapted and applied in music and arts institutions. The foundation of design thinking is that it is a human-centered design process that enables students to better understand the emotional needs of the people whose issues or opportunities they are attempting to help or solve. This could be in the form of a musical composition, a music therapy app, a concert tour, a music-related device, or any related music or arts-related business or venture. Much of the design thinking process is conducted through interviews and interaction with potential communities and audiences. It also involves creating prototypes and testing your ideas with your community until you get a better iteration. Design thinking can be used with music students to show them how to innovate and collaborate. By identifying and discussing these five stages of design thinking, music business educators will be able to produce valuable student-driven results that carry through not only the educational stages of a musician's life but well beyond into careers and businesses that they will own and manage.

Keywords: design thinking, music business pedagogy, music business education, arts education



Todd D. Gardner, Associate Professor of Music Business/Management at the Berklee College of Music, teaches classes on tax, accounting, business startups, and start-up labs where design thinking is incorporated. He lectures regularly to the broader Berklee community on issues within the music industry including the Film Composition Senior Symposium, the Stan Getz Library Lecture Series, and other groups. His lectures cover business formation, tax, and the ability to critically and creatively think, problem-solve, communicate, and collaborate. He strives to have his students have the best possible experience at Berklee so they are prepared not only for business but for life. Todd is also the Faculty Advisor and Director of the print and online edition of *The Music Business Journal* and the podcast *Cut-Time*. He wrote an article for the December 2018 edition entitled “Tom Petty – Standing Ground.” He serves as Co-Chair of the Berklee Case Study Center which was founded in 2016 to provide support for writing, finding, and using case studies in the classroom so that students learn more about real-life situations regarding businesses, artists, managers, and more.



**MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

**PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
2021 INTERNATIONAL
SUMMIT

OF THE
MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT
INDUSTRY EDUCATORS
ASSOCIATION**

– MAY 17 & 18, 2021 –

Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
1900 Belmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37212 U.S.A.

www.meiea.org

© Copyright 2021 Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
All rights reserved