Brick Road Music
B.I.S. Capstone Project
Ben Rode 3/23/15
INTRO / OVERVIEW

Brick Road Music is the combination of a lifelong dream and lifelong education. It is a website that allows live performance musicians and venues to find each other and book shows while encouraging fan interaction and promotion opportunities. Much like an Integrated Studies Degree the website uses three separate parties and allows them to work together to create a great experience. The key to the website is that each party has something the other party needs. Venues want the best artists to play their shows. Artists need fans to continue in their path to success, and fans want to find the best venues to watch their favorite bands. This is a concept Brick Road Music is making as the foundation to the site, as well as being one of the first if not the only organization to allow all parties to fully work together. BrickRoadMusic.com is a website that I believe if I implement my knowledge and skills correctly can be a major player in the live performance industry, and I will highlight many attributes to the site as my literature aspect of my Capstone Project.

The idea started when I was talking with a friend about how hard it was to convince venues to book my band. The problem was that venues had no way to know if a band was any good besides word of mouth and a recorded CD, which is still no indicator of live performance. The bands that booked the most shows were often the best sales people and not necessarily the best musicians. Booking agents are a solution to this problem but for a band to get a booking agent it needs considerable success already. To sum up the problem, booking agents were helping the bands that didn’t need help. My friend mentioned to me the site AirBnB, which is a website that allows people to offer their places for people to stay for a set price. He suggested that a similar platform might work for the music industry. After looking into the idea some more we knew we had to act.
Originally the site was going to start off much like AirBnB, in that it had two-way interaction. Venues would post their venue and show needs, and bands could apply for the show. The site would allow for both the venues and artists to post reviews on the other party after the show took place. After talking with a few venues and artists we realized that we were missing another crucial aspect. Fans drive the music scene. Without incorporating fans into the website we would miss out on 1/3rd of the music scene. Our solution was that not only would fans be allowed to log in via Facebook or create their own profile, but we would also allow venues the options to use promotions through our site. The new changes made it so when a fan logs in they will be able to see what shows are in their area and what promotions are being offered for the night, as well as being able to make reviews on recent shows they have attended.

The next step was finding the right company or person to design the website and make it look as professional as possible. We had already designed the basic functionality of the sight from the little computer skills we did possess, but decided to go with the company Studio Minted to make the site a professional product. Studio Minted quoted a price of just over $4,000, which beat many competitors price as well as offering every service we were looking for. In order to be able to make our immediate payments we were able to get an initial investment of $8,000 from some people we knew. Most of the layouts of the site are currently complete and the site will launch on February 21st for a beta test, and a month later for the entire public. The beta test will consist of 25 venues and 50 artists in the Denver and Los Angeles area. The idea behind the beta test was being able to make sure the site worked efficiently with a volume of traffic that would be manageable if any issues were to occur.

Several issues face the site today. An important step for the site will be to try and raise money in order to hire someone who can work full time maintenance on the site, which will be
especially necessary when the site faces higher amounts of traffic. Other issues include making sure to differentiate the site from existing competition as well as staying ahead of any sites that may copy the basic aspects of the site.

For the site to succeed, I realize several things need to take place. Capturing a large market share in the cities the site is focusing on will allow the site to continue to grow in new cities as well as keeping a steady flow of money into the site. To continue to grow, a lot of capitol will be needed. I want to avoid receiving too many loans, so the site will continue to look for angel investors while aiming to not give up more than a 15% stake in the company.

Many challenges still face the site and I look forward to apply all of the skills I learned while getting my BIS degree at Weber State University. The three subjects (Business, Sociology, and Criminal Justice) all have a different but important aspect that gave me important skills to help my chances of success with the website. While Business by name may sound like the most obvious area of emphasis to help run a website (company), Sociology and Criminal Justice allow for a unique perspective on many important issues that face Brick Road Music.

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN RELATION TO BRICK ROAD MUSIC**

Criminal Justice played a key role in making some important decisions on the site. One of the first issues encountered when designing the site was what payment system to use. There were a couple of determining factors when it came to what system the site would use for payments. The first factor was reliability; we wanted a system that would allow us to operate without the liability of any of the payments from venues to artists falling on our hands. The second deciding factor was price and the percentage taken from each transaction. With several
systems offering relatively cheap services I knew it was important to use a system that would keep financial information safe from anyone unauthorized to use that information. As a relatively new aspect of criminal justice, Internet crime and the speed at which information can spread around the world is something the site needs to be prepared to handle. When people pay for purchases online they enter important information that if fallen into the wrong hands could be devastating. We chose the payment system Stripe because it uses a very secure server that handles all of the information of those paying on the site. No current or future worker at Brick Road Music will have access to any of the payment information given on the site. This allows the users of the site the reliability of knowing a major company is in charge of all of the payments. If we had chosen a different option where the payment first went to our site, we would have all of the responsibility of keeping that information protected. That was not a responsibility that I was willing to take nor did the site have the resources.

With regards to user safety, another issue came up with shows being booked on the site being viewed by any person who logs onto the site. At first the purpose of this function was to add promotion of the shows as another advantage of the site. It soon became clear that private events such as weddings or house parties may very well be booked on the site and all of the information would be available to the public, jeopardizing not only the users privacy, but also possibly their safety. To fix this issue a function on the site was implemented that allows for the party hosting the show to list the event as a public or a private event. Public events would remain with the original intent of advertising the show, time, and address of the event. Private events would only give that information to the artists booked to perform at the event and would remain hidden from the public. This allows Brick Road Music to still act as a promotional tool without adding unwanted risks on any of the users.
Another issue regarding Criminal Justice facing the site would be any activity with signs of cyber stalking. This can occur on our site if someone using the site starts following an artist or venue for reasons other than entertainment, leaving the artist or venue feeling threatened in any way. To combat this problem a “block” feature will be implemented on the site that allows someone to block any certain person or group of people from seeing any of the users activities. The user will also have the option to report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior.

Awareness of user safety is something that is necessary not just from a business standpoint but also as a moral obligation to society. Studying Criminal Justice does not just allow someone to go into the field of Criminal Justice but allows people to make conscious decisions in making the world a safer place. Applying the knowledge and awareness from Criminal Justice to Brick Road Music is an essential to this business.

**SOCIOMETRY IN RELATION TO BRICKROADMUSIC**

The idea for a site that aims to take booking shows online was partly brought up from a sociological aspect. It’s been no secret that the world has been trending for every company to be connected by the Internet in one-way or another. Society has been relying increasingly on the Internet for every day purposes. Whether the task at hand be opening your garage door or planning a weeks long vacation, for almost any problem there is an app or a website to fix the problem. With that being said it was very difficult to find anything online that would assist artists to find a show, and a website that assisted venues to find artists essentially did not exist. If societal trends are any indicator for the live performance industry, the opportunities for Brick Road Music are great.
Studying Sociology did more than just help come up with the idea for Brick Road Music, it paved the way for many ideas that came along with the site. Similar to the Social Research class, I interviewed many venues around the Denver area to not just see what they thought of the site but also any problems they had that needed fixing. I figured if any reoccurring problems were something that the site could take on that it may end up being a win/win for the venues and for Brick Road Music. Many of the venues that I talked to really liked the site, but it was the fact that several of the venues kept mentioning that they wanted a way to promote shows instead of just relying on the bands or artists to bring in all of the fans. This is where the idea of having a feature on our site that would allow venues to put promotional deals on the site. The way this feature works is venues will have the option to put a promotional code up on the site for any of the shows they have booked. Fans can see what promotions are being offered at different venues and then receive the promotion code after they RSVP to the event. This simple solution is something that very easily could have been overlooked had the research on venues never been done. In the research methods class it was clear that while you can gain valuable information from surveys, just listening and asking specific questions to the target market could obtain some of the most valuable information. In the case for the Social Research class, the class was able to come up with some great ideas for at risk students at the Youth Impact center. For the case of Brick Road Music the site was able to create a new function that would assist venues in their sales. Sociology’s Organizational Theory relates to many aspects of running a business. One of the most prominent ideas would be Max Weber’s theory on hierarchical subordination. His idea of higher-level offices supervising lower offices is common practice in many modern day businesses and Brick Road Music will not be any different. In order to grow the website Brick
Road Music will rely on experienced sales people. These sales people will work for managers in each city, who will then report to the Chief Officers.

Karl Marx warned of Alienation that can be caused by workers not obtaining self worth from viewing work as a means of survival instead of externalizing themselves into the world. I want to do several things to avoid the feeling of Alienation for any future workers. First, Brick Road Music will only hire people that are passionate about live music. This will not only give workers a feeling of belonging into a community they are passionate about but should also make workers more motivated to succeed. Second, I believe that making sure workers get plenty of vacation time is necessary for people to be able to connect with the world, and not just focusing on work. Implementing both practices will result in a connected work environment hopefully filled with passion for the business.

Another aspect that Brick Road Music has taken from sociology is not just looking at past trends and how they have affected life currently, but also looking at current trends to see the future impacts on society. One technological social trend in specific is the current trend of society moving away from computers and laptops and more towards tablets and smart phones. This is why one of the next steps for the site will be to invest in a mobile app as soon as possible. Societal trends have shown that the trends relating to the Internet era are rapidly changing and it is on companies and individuals to keep up with these trends, and Brick Road Music releasing a mobile app would be one of the best ways to keep up with the changing times.
Brick Road Music is more than just a website, it’s a business. In order to be successful, all of the important aspects of business are going to have to be executed. While attending many of the business classes at Weber State a reoccurring theme seemed to keep grabbing my attention. Customer relations was a major point in several of my classes and although it may seem like an obvious part of business, it was pointed out several times that many companies fail to succeed because of poor customer relations. In my mind the goal of a product is to fill a need any potential market may need. The product however, is just the beginning of a relationship with that market. Following up with customers on any issues (good or bad) is an essential part of understanding that market. With great customer service the chances of a business succeeding are greatly improved.

Not every part of business is about the product or the service. Being prepared to handle daily transactions is necessary from an operational standpoint. This is why a recent addition has been added to the Brick Road Music team to focus on the accounting and financials aspect of the business. The new team member has two years experience working for an accounting firm and decided to work full time with us because he liked the idea so much. Having someone with an accounting and financial background with the site allows us to make smart financial decisions as well as making sure we know where all of the expenses are going. One thing I learned while taking accounting classes at Weber State was that nearly every action a business participates in needs to be recorded from a financial standpoint, and that I was clearly not ready to take on this task by myself. I now feel that the site is ready for many of the financial challenges that it may face.

Marketing is one of the biggest issues facing Brick Road Music at this moment. Now that the product is close to being completed and the site will be launched in roughly a month it is
important to gain the attention of venues and artists in our target areas. “Door to door” sales have already been a huge part of the marketing strategy by just walking around to each venue and asking if they would be interested in joining the site. For artists we have been sending out mass messages through email, Facebook, and any other musician platform (such as Reverbnation). While these strategies have been effective, a major issue is that the outreach is limited to a relatively small amount of our target market. Marketing classes offered several solutions to this problem the first being word of mouth. In regards to Brick Road Music our solution for word of mouth was to get in touch with many radio stations and see if they can offer any sort of partnerships with our site. While we have not secured any partnerships yet with any radio stations, several have expressed interest and want to meet again when the site gets launched. Another marketing strategy that has been effective with many other start ups has been to create a video that explains the product much like a commercial and send it through social media to as much of the target market as possible. As soon as we have risen enough money Brick Road Music will hire someone to make a professional video and use it as part of our mass marketing.

Another huge part of any Business is knowing how to distinguish your product and service from the competition. To fully explain some of our advantages from the competition I have added details featuring the products and services of Brick Road Music as well as a brief overview of the current competition, and compiled a S.W.O.T (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threats) analysis. I have also provided the slides of a working power point pitch deck (Appendix A) and an executive summary (Appendix B).
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

The main components of the project are as follows:

- **Main Page:** Users will see a split homepage, where they will either be directed towards finding venues or finding artists. On this page, we will highlight up and coming artists and venues, who have played/hosted the most shows through the site.

- **Artists:** Once artists choose a date and a city, they will see venues that are available to host an artist for that day. They will be able to browse these venues’ profiles (described below). The artist will be able to see an asking price, and can offer to play for a higher/lower price (ranging +/- $50-$100) depending on the reputation of the artist. Artists will be able to make a profile, which will include available dates, up to three songs composed/performed by the artist, a video of a live performance, reviews from venues and fans, and a maximum of 140 characters describing the artist.

- **Venues/Hosts:** Once venues/hosts choose a date and a city, they will be able to view artists who are available for that given day. Venues will be able to browse through these profiles, and offer a price to pay to artists. Venues will be able to make a profile, which will include a calendar (available dates on the calendar will be green, booked dates will be red), photos, and reviews from artists and fans regarding the venue. When venues sign in, they will be able to see messages and requests from artists for given dates.

- **Fans:** Once fans choose a date and a city, they will be able to see venues that are hosting artists, and will be able to browse through profiles of both artists and venues, where they can rate and review artists and venues. Fans will be able to sign up to be included on the mailing list, where they will be notified of shows in their area, as well as possible
discounts for entry to shows or even drinks at the shows. This functionality of the platform has yet to be built, and we hope to incorporate this feature once the website is content-rich.

**COMPETITION**

There are a wide variety of direct and indirect competitors in the live music booking space. Some of the closest in terms of quality and design include the following:

- **Gigmasters**: A site only for people looking to host one time events, and does not include bars. Artists cannot search for events to play.

- **Gigit**: Gigit is a booking platform more oriented towards event planners booking one-time shows, and artists do not need to sign up to be requested for a performance. There are no reviews, so building a reputation through the website is close to impossible.

- **Gig Salad**: A booking site that only allows for platforms and charges artists on a subscription basis, whereas we use a CPA business model for musicians. Also only shows videos on profiles, where we include audio files.

- **Gigtown**: Still in beta, this booking platform is attempting to become the "Uber" of live music booking. Their focus is simply on getting as many artists on board as possible, and do not focus on getting long term venues on as a booking management platform.

- **Music Managers**: Music managers usually charge anywhere from 15-20% commission for each booking, which is much more than the 8% commission we are proposing.

- **Sonicbids**: Primarily for festivals, and bands must pay monthly membership. In addition, every time an artist wishes to play for an event, they must pay money to bid for a spot at
an event; if anyone bids higher than them, the artist does not get a refund of their bid, which is a big loss for small/emerging artists.

**S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS**

**Strengths** - A comprehensive review system that focuses on all aspects of the live music scene working together. User experience promotes repeated use instead of one-time shows.

**Weaknesses** – A lack of financial backing forces slower expansion than the competition as well limited advertising. No major artists on our site to build reputation.

**Opportunities** - Expansion into every major U.S. City. Throwing major events to promote artists and venues on the site as well as the site.

**Threats** – Competitors taking a major share in the major music cities (L.A. New York, Nashville). Website hackers can potentially shut the whole website down.

**CONCLUSION**

Brick Road Music is a website that has the capabilities to pioneer a new aspect into the live performance industry. The different perspectives of Business, Criminal Justice, and Sociology allow myself preparation for many different challenges the website will face in order to be a successful Business. Criminal Justice allows Brick Road Music to focus on user safety as well as increasing the sites reliability. Sociology has paved the way to better understand many of the changing aspects of societies tech trends. Business is an obvious foundation to many of
the essentials in dealing with any financial decisions as well as marketing decisions necessary to succeed. Each field of study provides essential knowledge in any professional situation, but all three together were exactly what I needed and wanted to fulfill my dream.

APPENDIX A

Brick Road Music
A Simpler Approach To Booking Live Music.
Problem

Booking Great Talent is Hard

- Lack of Transparency
- Outdated booking process - email/cold calling
- Difficult to build reputation in music scene

Solution

A web platform that allows venues, artists and fans control of the shows:

**Venues**
Book artists and promote shows to fans

**Artists**
Discover upcoming shows and build reputation

**Fans**
Discover upcoming talent, venues, and promotions
Our Product

Easy To Use  Full Management Control

Business Model

We take a 10% commission +$3.75 from each party on each transaction.

Other Monetization Outlets:

● Advertising
● Subscription
● Live Event Production
● Direct Artist Management
Marketing and Sales

Business Development
- Account Executives
- Community Managers
- Scouts

Marketing
- SEO
- Music Blog Posts
- Sponsored Events
- Mobile App Partnerships

Competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GIGIT</th>
<th>Brick Road Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gig Salad</td>
<td>Gigtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gigmasters</td>
<td>Sonicbids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY</td>
<td>Artist Managers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affordability

Lifetime Value
Executive Summary

Brick Road Music will be a review-based online booking platform specializing in connecting live music venues with musicians seeking paid performance opportunities. The platform will offer an easy, streamlined way to build the reputation of performers and venues alike.

Brick Road Music is created as a California LLC based in Los Angeles County, currently owned by its principal operators. The initial workspaces are located in Los Angeles and Denver, both emerging markets in the tech industry and live music scene.

Within the U.S. major cities Brick Road Music intends to target, we will focus on small live music venues (approx. 300 capacity or less), as well as unsigned artists early in the stages of their career. One of Brick Road Music’s challenges will be establishing its platform as a legitimate option for funneling quality live entertainment in the eyes of live music venues.
Industry competition comes in many forms, both online and offline. The online competition includes the likes of GigIt, Gigmasters, Gig Salad, and Sonicbids, whereas artist managers are the main source of offline competition. Brick Road Music’s competitive advantage over companies such as these is that Brick Road Music provides a two-way review system, while also being the cheapest and most affordable option for artists and venues alike.

The company’s founders come from various backgrounds, including music, marketing and sales, and finance. While we are currently seeking a CTO to join our team, we are working with Studio Minted, a design agency based in Denver, to create a working platform in time for our expected launch date. Currently, we have 3 full-time partners working on Brick Road Music.