

THE BUSINESS OF ART AND CRAFT

EDD BRANSON

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First Edition

This book is dedicated to every artist in Eswatini who holds a dream of breaking records and sharing their talent with the world. May it be a guide for every creative from the Kingdom, a blueprint to build not just a career, but a lasting legacy.

I prepared this book as a tool to help the creative in Eswatini grow to the next level.

This book is in honour of iNgwenyama ,The King His Royal Highness King Mswati III, his love for emaSwati , their culture music, art and theatre. The King has been the biggest supporter of the Arts and Creative economy. The King challenged Eswatini Artists to sharpen their talents to meet and compete at the global stage.

Special mention and thank you to Eswatini's Deputy Prime Minister, The Honourable Thulisile Dladla, whose office put together the first Disability Arts Festival where we will be launching this book. Thank you for your efforts, service and dedication to the people of Eswatini and Africa at large.

We are inspired by your efforts and this book comes as a result of this inspirational work you are doing. We are working to ensure that this book is available in Braille and as an audiobook so that it is accessible to everyone. The book will be available for free to every creative in Eswatini. This is my small contribution towards uplifting the creative industry in Eswatini and Africa as a whole.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Deputy Prime Minister and The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for welcoming us to participate in the Disability Arts Festival.

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CHAPTER 1

BE THE BEST SELLER, NOT JUST BEST TALENT

iNgwenyama His Majesty The King said inspirational words at the 2025 iNgwenyama Cup prize presentation where he said “Not long from now, the kingdom will be launching a huge project which is the International Convention Centre, which embodies a theatre in it, which I would love to pass through our local entertainers to develop their skills to match pound for pound that grand stage in order for you to perform on that grand stage. I had the opportunity to see what is obtained in that grand stage and I would love for all entertainers to prepare themselves for their performances in that grand stage”.

His Majesty mentioned that it was very beautiful seeing other countries being proud of their own and wished this for every liSwati.” I, therefore, urge you to grow and cultivate your culture so that when you go out of this kingdom, you proudly showcase this very culture. Other countries have developed their culture into theatre and I employ the nation to come up with brilliant ideas on how we can do the same and promote the culture into Theatre at large,” he said.

The King said God gave emaSwati a unique and beautiful tradition which the country has the responsibility to understand the legacy in order to leave it for future generations.

His Majesty The King was challenging emaSwati artists to go out there and conquer the world and become the best in the creative space because they already have a unique key selling point which is the culture and tradition.

Why should you as a Swati artist be concerned about the global stage ? The answer is in the financial figures and value of the creative economy.

Did you know that music, art, and entertainment constitute a **\$3 trillion industry as of 2025?** This is not just a number it's a testament to the immense potential embedded in the creative

sectors. Therefore you are in the right industry, an important industry and your dreams of becoming a big superstar matter , they are valid.

You're reading this because you want to understand how to claim your share of these trillions, you want to learn how to participate profitably in the arts and entertainment sectors.

The world is beginning to sit up and take notice of the incredible talent flowing from the Kingdom of Eswatini. Artists like Sands have captivated audiences with songs like the iconic "Tigi," while Uncle Waffles has taken the global stage by storm, proving that Swati talent has no limits. Comedians like Gedlembane and Smallz are building passionate followings, using their unique voices to inspire a new wave of entertainers. This is a testament to the immense potential within the Eswatini arts and entertainment sector. I mention these just to show you that it is possible to make to the global stage from Eswatini.

In 2025, the global entertainment and media (E&M) industry is expected to generate approximately \$3.5 trillion in revenue, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.7% until 2029. This growth is driven by increased advertising spend, live events, and the booming video games sector. What does this mean for you as a Swati artist? It means that the world is ready to spend money on your art and craft, which leaves you with the challenge of mastering the business and sales side of the game.

If you are in the music industry then you would be pleased to note that the Global Music Industry is a booming industry. The global recorded music revenues are expected to reach \$29.6 billion, marking a tenth consecutive year of growth. This growth is driven by streaming platforms, vinyl resurgence, and live performances.

If you are in the film industry or comedy like Gedlembane then you will be pleased to note that the Global Film Industry and Global box office revenues are projected to surpass \$34 billion, fueled by a rebound in film production and audience return to theaters.

The Global Visual Arts Market is always doing well for the visual artist who also wants to participate in that niche. Sales in the global art market are estimated at \$67.8 billion, driven by strong

demand in lower-priced segments and a recovery in the high-end market.

I raise these figures not to entice you but to help you understand that music, art and entertainment are a valuable industry that is capable of sustaining your livelihood and changing your economic fortunes. Back in the day music or entertainment was seen as a hobby, something that you did for entertainment, jest. African society frowned upon the industry and there was a misconception that it was for those who were not educated and had failed to find something better to do with their lives.

Today entertainers like Black Coffee are buying private jets something that doctors and accountants rarely do. The entertainment industry has evolved. It is now a full time job with programs being taught at University to help the creative improve talent.

The first point that every creative must understand is that: ***your talent is valuable, but knowing how to translate your work into money is critical. Every song, film, painting, or performance is a product with immense market value.*** As we've seen with the global success of Uncle Waffles and the national phenomenon of Sands' "Tigi," your art can transcend borders.

The creative sector is an important part of the economy and if you are in this sector your work matters, your ideas, your talent, your passion are important to the economy. Never let anyone make you feel like you are chasing an unimportant venture. The creative economy is creating jobs globally from musicians and producers to event planners, filmmakers, and comedians.

The creative economy is boosting tourism consider major cultural events like the MTN Bushfire Festival and the Reed Dance that attract thousands, generating revenue for a wide range of local businesses. These are just a few examples that prove the importance of entertainment and the creative economy in Eswatini and you are a part of this important sector as such you need to play your part diligently because the Kingdom of Eswatini is relying on you and your talent to shine globally.

The global success of artists like Uncle Waffles and Sands are a powerful of cultural export, putting Eswatini on the world stage. You are the next big artist and creative from Eswatini to go global and hopefully while mastering your talent you will learn how to sell your talent and become the best selling artist from Eswatini.

Your concept is a key selling point. People buy the story behind the song, the story behind the painting , the story behind the poem and its important to master concepts that attract money.

Your concept could a play a pivotal role in advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and global organisations will pay for that. As a creative, this knowledge is your secret weapon. There are organizations, agencies, and donors who are actively looking to fund projects aligned with these global goals. ***By creating art that addresses these issues, you strengthen your value proposition and open doors to incredible opportunities.***

Key SDGs influenced by the creative industries include:

SDG 4: Quality Education - Promote inclusive and equitable education through creative learning resources.

SDG 5: Gender Equality - Empower women and girls through powerful representation and storytelling.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth - Generate employment opportunities within the creative economy.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities - Amplify marginalized voices and foster inclusivity.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities - Enhance cultural heritage and urban development through art.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions - Advocate for peace, justice, and strong institutions through impactful narratives.

These sectors not only drive economic growth but also contribute to social change and community development, and many entities are willing to fund anything that makes a meaningful change in the world. Focusing on topics that matter will add value to your talent

and it will open international doors. PJ Powers the singer mastered the art of leveraging on global topics such as peace, unity and making a difference. These helped her secure major corporate sponsorship deals.

This brings me to a point that might be controversial but is deeply true and the title of this chapter:

BE THE BEST SELLER, NOT JUST THE BEST TALENT. Your music must be the best selling music something that everyone can listen to and want to be associated with regardless of race, religion or creed.

Success in the creative industries is not solely determined by talent but by strategic business acumen. Consider the examples of Jay-Z and Drake who are probably some of the most famous artists in the world today:

Jay-Z: While not the most technically skilled rapper, Jay-Z's entrepreneurial ventures, including Roc Nation and investments in various industries, have positioned him as one of the wealthiest figures in music. His talent opened the door, his ability to sell gave him a seat at the table and his business acumen got him to own the room in which the table is placed.

Drake: Drake is not the best at what he does, he was destroyed by Kendrick Lamar in their previous battle but Drake knows how to sell and how to stay relevant in the market. Drake's mastery in brand building, strategic collaborations, and leveraging streaming platforms has cemented his status as a global music icon. Drake is talented but he has managed to stay relevant longer than most because of his ability to market , brand and sell himself well in the season. A wise man cuts his cloth according to the season. You cant wear a leather jacket in the blazing hot October sun of Southern Africa , neither can you wear flip flops and a vest in the December winter snow of the USA.

The success of Jay Z and Drake demonstrate the importance of understanding the business side of the arts, including branding, marketing, and audience engagement.

What makes you wealthy is not being the best writer or best singer but *being the best selling author or the best selling musician is the game changer*. That is why I emphasize that make it your mission and goal to be BE THE BEST SELLER, NOT JUST BEST TALENT. If you can be the best talent and best seller then it would be a double blessing.

While aiming to be the best global seller we need to conquer the African market first as African creatives. When you make music in Eswatini remember that Eswatini has an estimated population of 1.26 million people with an estimated GDP of \$5.48 billion in nominal terms and \$16.32 billion in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms.

While Africa's total GDP is projected to be around \$2.8 trillion with a population of 1.55 billion people. You would need 159 Eswatinis to match the total population of Africa. Africa is bigger than Matsapha, it is bigger than Joburg and definitely bigger than the entire SADC region, therefore when you make your music or art remember that your audience is bigger than your community. However, before you learn to walk you must learn to crawl. Your community must uplift so that you're able to move to the next level.

For African creatives, it's essential to comprehend and navigate the local ecosystem before aiming for global recognition. The journey of Burna Boy exemplifies this approach:

Burna Boy: Initially gaining popularity in Nigeria, Burna Boy focused on building a strong local fan base. His strategic collaborations and performances across Africa laid the foundation for his international success, culminating in sold-out shows worldwide.

Understanding the nuances of the African market, including cultural preferences, distribution channels, and audience behavior, is crucial for sustainable growth and global expansion. When you learn to sell your music to your friends and neighbourhood move on to the next challenge, learn to sell to the entire city, after conquering a city conquer the country then move on to neighbouring countries.

Success is a process not an event and you cannot skip stages of this process. Look at Uncle Waffles, born Lungelihle Zwane, went from being a relatively unknown DJ to a global sensation almost overnight. A video of her dancing to an amapiano set went viral, catching the eye of millions—even Drake. This single moment on social media catapulted her into the international spotlight, leading to sold-out shows worldwide and major festival gigs like Coachella. Her journey is a perfect example of how one authentic moment can turn you into a global phenomenon.

Learn to sell your talent and craft and the world will definitely buy it. Where do you learn how to sell ? You learn within your community, your city, your neighbourhood, they are your first stage, your first audience your first loyal fan base.

CHAPTER 2

START WITH THE END IN MIND

Imagine getting on a plane and you are the pilot, you have no idea where you are going, no idea of the route you must take, no plan nothing. Well, some artists just wake up and decide I want to sing or I want to be a comedian or an actor and that's it. No plan, no destination just a pilot in a plane with nothing to guide.

This, you see, is where we must introduce a fundamental shift in perspective. Before you pick up another brush, strike another chord, or write another line of dialogue, I want you to sit down and indulge in a little daydream—a most powerful and essential exercise. I want you to imagine a world where money, time, and resources are no object whatsoever. A world free of those tiresome, nagging limitations that so often tether us to the mundane.

Now, with this beautiful, unfettered vision in mind, ask yourself a single, profound question: **What is the one thing I would accomplish?**

Don't be shy. Go on, dream big. Is it a grand exhibition at the Guggenheim? A symphony performed by the London Philharmonic? Perhaps you dream of directing a film that becomes a cultural touchstone, or writing a novel that changes lives. Maybe it's not fame at all, but a beautiful, sustainable workshop where you create with absolute freedom and share your craft with a devoted community. Whatever it is, that is your North Star. That is your magnificent, audacious goal. It is the end game.

Once you have that glorious picture firmly in your mind's eye, a curious and rather wonderful thing happens. You are no longer lost in the woods; you are standing at the summit, looking down at the winding path that leads to where you are right now. The task then becomes one of reverse engineering.

You begin to work backwards, mapping out the steps. The journey from A to Z seems insurmountable, but the journey from Z to Y, and from Y to X, and so on, becomes entirely manageable.

So, how do you get from here to there? The answer lies in practical, actionable goals. If your end game is a solo exhibition, what's the step before that? Perhaps it's having a body of work ready. And what's the step before that? Finding a gallery that aligns with your style. Before that? Getting noticed by a curator. And before that? Building a strong online portfolio.

This is the very essence of strategy. It is about breaking down that monumental dream into a series of smaller, achievable tasks. Each one becomes a stepping stone, a mini-victory that propels you forward. It transforms the overwhelming from "How do I become a world-renowned artist?" to the very practical "What is the next step I can take this month, this week, or even today, to move closer to my ultimate goal?"

So, put down your tools for a moment. Close your eyes. Start with the end in mind. Your creative life, my friends, is far too valuable to leave to chance.

I have developed a tool that could help you in setting your path and marking the route to your destination. This is the EDD BRANSON tool. Its simple and easy to use , ladies and gentlemen I present to you the EDD BRANSON model for goal setting and problem-solving:

E - Examine

The first step is to Examine your situation without judgment. Where are you right now? What is the current reality of your business, project, or life? Be honest about what's working and what isn't. Just as a farmer examines the soil before planting, you must understand your starting point.

D - Define

Next, Define your ultimate goal. This is your "end in mind." What do you want to achieve? Be as specific as possible. Instead of saying, "I want to be a successful artist," define it as, "I want to sell 10 paintings this year." Instead of "I want a better business," say, "I

want to increase my revenue by 20% in the next six months." Your goal should be as clear as a village elder's directions.

D - Discover

Now, Discover the challenges. What are the obstacles standing between you and your defined goal? Are they a lack of resources, competition, limited knowledge, or even self-doubt? What are the roadblocks on your journey? Identifying these challenges is like finding the stubborn rocks in the field before you can plant your seeds.

B - Brainstorm

This is the creative part. Brainstorm solutions to overcome those obstacles. Think outside the box. If you lack funding, can you find a local investor or start a crowdfunding campaign? If you lack skills, can you find a mentor or take an online course? No idea is too small or too silly at this stage.

R - Research

Once you have your ideas, Research them. Find out what others have done. Look for case studies, successful examples, and best practices. If you want to start a fashion line, research other local designers who have succeeded. See what worked for them and what didn't. Knowledge is power, and research is how you get it.

A - Action

This is where you get to work. Action is about creating a practical plan. Break down your big goal into small, manageable steps. If your goal is to sell 10 paintings, your first action step might be to create a social media page for your art, and the next is to take professional photos of your work. Each step should be clear, with a deadline.

N - Nurture

Nurture your plan and yourself. Don't just set it and forget it. Regularly review your progress. Celebrate small victories, and learn from setbacks. A plant needs constant care to grow, and so

does your plan. Stay motivated, be kind to yourself, and remember why you started in the first place.

S - Sustain

The final step is to Sustain your effort. Continue to implement your action plan and make adjustments as needed. The journey to success is not a sprint, but a marathon. Keep pushing forward, and your progress will become a powerful force that sustains itself, like a river flowing to the sea.

O - Overcome

Finally, you will Overcome. By following these steps, you will not only achieve your goals but also build the resilience and skills needed to tackle any challenge that comes your way. This final step is the reward for all your hard work and commitment.

N - Next

What's Next? Once you've achieved one goal, it's time to set another. The journey of growth is continuous. Apply the EDD BRANSON model to your next dream and keep moving forward.

When you are done with this you will have an idea of what you are dealing with. What needs to be done , how will it be done and in the end what you have is a beautiful way forward. Then your next question or excuse will be ; but I don't have the money or resources where will I get them ? Let me share a few tricks and ideas with you.

Chapter 3

NO MONEY, NO PROBLEM; JUST SHOE STRING IT

After setting the vision you might fall into the trap of saying "If only I had the money, I'd..." well let me stop right there. Don't be like the ones who fail because they believe that money is the seed of all success. I'm here to tell you that the true seed of success is a different kind of currency entirely. It's the currency of **ingenuity**, of **effort**, and of **relentless hustle**. We're not talking about a lack of resources being a problem, but rather a powerful, creative challenge.

The important part is taking the little you have and making it do big things, just like a great cook can make a magnificent meal out of a few humble ingredients.

Do you know that there are several examples of people who started off without money and they 'shoe-stringed' it until they became successful. They might not be from Sidwashini or Mbangeni but the rules apply even to you in Eswatini.

Wizkid's story is one of relentless perseverance. Born Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun in the Surulere area of Lagos, he grew up in a large family with twelve siblings and was not from a wealthy background. He started his musical journey at the age of 11, going by the name "Lil Prinz." His most famous struggle was the time he spent sleeping outside a recording studio for a long time, hoping to get an opportunity to prove himself. His hit song "Ojuelegba" is a direct and poignant recount of his time struggling in that area, highlighting his journey from poverty and obscurity to global stardom. His story shows that dedication and a powerful personal narrative can be more valuable than money or connections.

Let's look at the legendary giants among us, the ones who didn't wait for a record deal or a TV show to anoint them. **Oskido**, for instance. He didn't start with a big fat pile of cash, he didn't have any connections or big label hook up in a fancy office; he started by selling sausages outside a club then he went on to become a Dj at the very same club. He moved from there and he started selling his music from the trunk of his car on the streets.

Oskido wasn't making uses ,he wasn't waiting for a donor or resources to be available for him to fulfill his dream, no. He was using a simple, powerful idea: **do the best you can with what you have**. Today Oskido stands tall as a giant in the African music industry.

Oskido observed that you need to go to where the people are and give them something they can't refuse. He saw a need and he filled it with hustle, not with cash.

50 Cent in New York did the same thing with his mixtapes. He didn't have a label; he had a plan and a burning desire. He put his music out on the streets, building a following brick by brick, not dollar by dollar.

So, let's talk about how you can shoe-string your way to success. Why is it called a shoe string budget you might ask, well ; a shoestring (or shoelace) is a very thin, common, and inexpensive item. To be "on a shoestring" means that your resources are as thin and minimal as a shoelace. Therefore with no money to spare, can start your own empire on a shoe string budget.

Your lack of a budget is not a weakness; it's a superpower that forces you to be agile and creative. Think of yourself as a guerrilla marketer, using surprise and strategy to win the war for attention.

Collaborate, Don't Compete: Find another artist, musician, or content creator who is at a similar level to you. Do a joint project. A musician can create a song for a creator's video. A poet can perform at a local artist's exhibition. It's an exchange of audiences and a doubling of reach, and it costs nothing but time and goodwill. If the person you collaborate with has 49 followers and you have 50 followers you could both gain new followers.

Become a Community Hub: Create a weekly live stream or a short video series where you talk about topics relevant to your craft and your community. If you're a comedian, talk about funny things happening in your neighborhood or an event everyone is buzzing about. You become the go-to source for entertainment or information. Give the people what they want and get them talking about you and get them talking and engaging with you.

Harness Local Media: Every town, every city has a community radio station, a small newspaper, or a blog. These outlets are always looking for local stories. Offer to be a guest, perform live, or share your story. They get content, and you get free publicity. If you need help reaching out to the media or getting yourself known then email me and my team we will definitely make a plan for you for free email : eddbransonpublishers@gmail.com.

Master the Art of the Free Show: Find local markets, community centers, or even busy street corners. With permission, of course, perform your craft. It's a chance to practice, get direct feedback, and build a crowd. That crowd then becomes your first and most loyal fans. Zahara from South Africa did this and she was noticed.

Tell Your Story: People connect with people, not just with products. Use your social media to tell your story. Talk about your process, your struggles, and your triumphs. Your journey is your most powerful marketing tool, and it's free. Don't fake it on social media , be authentic , be pure and genuine you will see people showering you with love and support.

Playboi Carti became popular by defying the norms of the music industry. He proved that an artist could succeed by creating an immersive world and a unique aesthetic, rather than just relying on traditional radio hits and heavy media promotion.

Now, let's talk about a device that's in almost everyone's pocket—the phone. In Africa, many people spend more time on their phones, and specifically on WhatsApp, than they do watching TV or listening to the radio. With over **400 million active users in Africa alone**, WhatsApp is not just a messaging app; it's the new town square.

So, how do you use this incredible and simple daily tool to grow your brand?

Create a Channel or a group: This is your own personal radio station. Create a list of all your contacts and, on a regular basis, send out your latest work—a new song, a short skit, a photo of your latest art piece. It goes directly to their phones, bypassing the algorithms of other platforms. Allow those participating to also invite others and share to their own contacts. Get attention ,give people a reason to flood your channel and group. Get people's

attention, show your struggle , tell your story , sell your journey and people will have a reason to follow.

The Status Story: Your WhatsApp status is like a mini-documentary about your life. Use it to post short snippets of your work in progress, behind-the-scenes moments, or to announce a new project. It's an easy, non-intrusive way to keep your audience engaged.

Engage with Groups: Find groups related to your interests and become a valuable member. Don't just spam; share relevant information, offer advice, and occasionally, with permission, share your work.

Cashing In: Making Your Following Your Currency

Your followers are not just numbers; they are your wealth. They are your cash cow. Look at **Moshe Ndiki**, the beloved South African TV personality. He didn't start on a big stage; he used social media to share his authentic, hilarious personality. People connected with him, and soon brands noticed. His followers became his bargaining chip, his currency. Fergurson Films gave him a shot and today he is a big name in the South African media space

Another prominent example is Nigeria's **Mark Angel**. Before he became a household name, he was a struggling comedian and filmmaker. He found his breakout moment on YouTube with his comedy skits, which often featured his younger niece, Emmanuella, and her cousin, "Aunty" Success." The skits' simple, relatable humor and Mark Angel's focus on showcasing his Port Harcourt neighborhood resonated with a massive audience.

His YouTube channel was the first African comedy channel to reach a million subscribers, which gave him a powerful platform. This digital fame led to a successful career that includes major brand ambassadorships, and his young star Emmanuella even landed a role in a Disney feature film, demonstrating the power of their online following

Then there's **Podcast and Chill with MacG**. They defied the norms of traditional media by creating their own space. They started with a simple idea and a desire to speak freely. Now, with over **1 million**

subscribers, their audience is so large and so loyal that brands pay them millions to simply be a part of their conversation. Their following which they call the Chills is their entire business model.

You see, the model is simple:

Build a Loyal Following: Give people value for free. Entertain them, inspire them, or teach them.

Understand Your Value: Once you have an audience that listens, you have influence.

Monetize Your Influence: This is where you find ways to turn that influence into money. It could be through brand deals, merchandise sales, or direct support from your fans.

You don't need a fat wallet to start. You just need a great idea, the courage to act, and the willingness to hustle. Because remember, your greatest asset isn't what you have in the bank; it's what you have in your head and in your heart. Now, go on and get to work. There is really no room for excuses if your dream is important to you and you put the effort then everything else will align in your favour. Consistency and persistence are the mother and father of luck.

Chapter 4

THE ART OF DEAL MAKING

In the previous chapter we touched on how to grow a following and become relevant without money. It was about starting somewhere. In this chapter we get deeper into the world of deal making in the entertainment industry. In the creative industries, we often speak of talent, vision, and passion as the holy trinity of success. This is a lovely, romantic notion, but it's also a colossal lie. It's the equivalent of a Victorian poet telling you the path to true love is found by chasing butterflies through a meadow.

The hard, unromantic truth is that the creative industries are a business, and if you don't have capital, you must wield an equally powerful, and far more subtle, weapon: negotiation. This chapter is not about finding your muse; it's about making your muse profitable. We are going to delve into the dark, delightful, and deliciously cynical world of deal-making. Because while money talks, an expertly crafted value proposition whispers to a very specific part of the human brain.

The most important phrase that you need to master is the VALUE PROPOSITION. Forget the jargon. A value proposition is not a mission statement; it's a statement of perceived, disproportionate gain. It's the moment you make the other person realize that doing a deal with you is an act of pure, unadulterated self-interest on their part. It's not about what you want; it's about what you give.

In the creative sphere, the value proposition is rarely about a tangible asset. It's not about the album, the script, or the stand-up special. It's about the emotional real estate you are creating. A record label isn't buying an album; they are buying the narrative of a new sound, the potential for a fanbase that feels something deeply, the social currency that comes from being on the cutting edge. An agent isn't signing a script; they are signing the feeling of being the one who "discovered" the next big thing.

To create a compelling value proposition, you must first do what no creative ever wants to do: stop thinking about yourself. Start thinking about the other side of the table. What do they truly want? Is it money? Is it prestige? Is it to feel relevant? Is it to solve a

problem? Your value proposition is the precise, elegant solution to their unstated desires. It must be so simple, so elegant, and so compelling that they feel they are the clever one for having thought of it. Your value proposition is not a "take it or leave it" offer; it's a gift wrapped in their own hopes and dreams.

The Value Proposition is your best friend if you don't have money but have a product to market or sell. Value Proposition tells the other person that you are valuable and it gives them a reason to work with you even though you don't have the money. Once you understand the value you bring to the table you will need an elevator pitch to present your value proposition in the short space of time.

The elevator pitch is not about pitching a project; it's about pitching yourself and the exquisite opportunity you represent. It's a short, powerful, and utterly memorable distillation of your value proposition. Its purpose is not to close a deal—that's a fantasy. Its purpose is to open a door. It should be a mental hook that a busy executive or producer can't get out of their head.

Why should you always have an elevator pitch? Because you are in a constant state of marketing. A chance encounter in a coffee shop, a brief exchange at a party, a moment in a crowded hallway—these are not interruptions; they are opportunities. The elevator pitch is your creative passport, always ready. It must be so concise that you could deliver it while holding your breath, and so interesting that the listener wants to hear you breathe again. It's an art form of omission. You leave just enough out to create a delicious, tantalizing curiosity. It's the difference between a list of facts and a perfectly-told anecdote.

Deals have a good side and a bad side. This is where the romance of creativity collides with the reality of commerce. Whether you are a musician, comedian, or actor, your deal is a map of future relationships, and a good map also shows you the treacherous territory.

Understanding Deals: The creative industry is littered with "standard" deals that are anything but. The moment someone tells you, "This is our standard contract," a little alarm should go off in your head. Every deal is a negotiation, and every clause is a variable. Do you truly understand the difference between gross

and net? Have you considered the long tail? What are the reversion rights? Is there a morals clause? You must be able to translate legalese into plain English and back again. If you can't, find someone who can.

Structuring Deals: Don't just accept a deal; structure it. Your power in a negotiation is directly proportional to your ability to walk away. And your ability to walk away is directly proportional to your number of options. Consider non-traditional deal structures. For a musician, maybe a streaming deal with a lower upfront payment but a higher percentage of the royalties is better. For a comedian, perhaps a partnership with a platform that offers a larger audience reach is more valuable than a one-off special. Creativity is not just about your art; it's about creatively structuring your business.

Reading the Red Flags: The red flags are often disguised as compliments or grand promises. "We believe in you so much, we're just going to need a small percentage of your future earnings from everything." "We want to give you total creative freedom, which is why we won't put anything in writing yet." The biggest red flag is always the same: when a deal seems too good to be true. It's a cliché for a reason. Other red flags include a lack of clear communication, the constant shifting of goalposts, and a reluctance to bring lawyers or business managers into the conversation.

Let's dissect a famous, and frankly, infuriating, example of a deal that was a failure of structure, not a failure of talent. In the 1990s, the girl group TLC was a global phenomenon. They sold over 10 million copies of their album *CrazySexyCool* and won two Grammys, and yet, at the height of their success, they filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

The music industry, at the time, was built on a model that can only be described as financial alchemy for the record label. TLC's contract stipulated that they would receive a paltry 56 cents for every album sold—a sum that they then had to split three ways. But that wasn't the cunning part. This 56 cents was not a payment; it was a repayment. The record label's "advance" for recording, touring, and promotion was a loan that the artists had to "recoup" from their own share of the sales. This is a crucial distinction. The label's investment was not a risk; it was an interest-free loan to the artist.

The more successful TLC became, the deeper into debt they sank. Why? Because every hit music video, every marketing campaign, every single that went to radio—all of it was an expense charged back to the artists' account. The system was rigged. The label made millions on album sales, but the artists themselves were in a constant state of a negative balance, a financial purgatory from which they could not escape. The red flag here was not a single line in a contract, but the very DNA of the deal itself. It was a partnership where only one party was positioned to win.

Trust No One, Always Hedge Your Bets: In the creative industry, you are surrounded by people who will tell you they are family. This is a tactical maneuver designed to make you feel guilty for asking for a fair deal. A professional relationship is not a family; it's a partnership. And good partnerships are built on clear contracts, not on warm feelings. Trust is a lovely concept, but in business, it's a luxury you cannot afford. Always have a Plan B. A backup project, a side hustle, an alternative distribution channel. This is your hedge. Because when you can walk away, you have all the power in the negotiation. And in the creative industries, power is the only thing that truly lasts.

CHAPTER 5

STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS

We've established that the creative genius is not an island; it is an archipelago of interconnected business ventures. We see Black Coffee or Yemi Alade performing on stage and some of us assume that it is a one man act, what we don't see is an army behind the artist. Like any great empire, an artist requires a civil service, a cabinet, and an army to protect the creative from itself and the outside world. The artist who believes their only job is to create is the same artist who will one day discover they are financially solvent only in their imagination. The real job is to be the CEO of your own brand.

You cannot do this alone you are not a super hero who is good at everything. You need a team, but not just a collection of friends and family. You need a highly specialized crew, each with a specific and ruthless purpose. Think of it as a corporate board for your creative soul.

1. The Manager: The Chief of Staff. Your manager is your most important professional relationship. They are the architect of your career, the filter between you and the world. Their job is to manage your vision, your schedule, your business opportunities, and your relationships. A good manager says no to things so that you can say yes to the right things. They should be a strategist, not a fan. Their role is to turn your creative work into a tangible business model. But you also need to guard and keep a close eye on your manager and how they move. Poor management will ruin things for you, you end up double booked, being late for gigs, over promising and under delivering be careful of things like that they exist and they will make you look bad.

2. The Lawyer: The Guardian of the Gate. Your lawyer is not a luxury; they are a necessity. You need an attorney who is a specialist in the entertainment industry, not the one who handled your uncle's divorce. Their job is to read every contract, explain every clause, and protect you from the hidden traps we discussed in the last chapter. They are a professional pessimist who should be paid to find the worst-case scenario in every deal.

3. The Agent: The Deal Hunter. The agent is the specialist who finds you the work. In music, a booking agent gets you gigs and tours. In acting, an agent gets you auditions and roles. Their purpose is transactional and direct. While your manager guides your career, your agent goes out and finds the opportunities to enact that plan. They are paid on commission, which is a perfect incentive for them to work hard for you.

4. The Publicist: The Narrative Architect. Your publicist is in the business of reputation. They manage how the world sees you. In an age where a single tweet can ruin a career, a good publicist is more valuable than gold. They craft your story, handle the press, and manage crises. They are the ones who get your name in the right headlines, and more importantly, keep it out of the wrong ones.

5. The Business Manager/Accountant: The Financial Sentinel. This person manages all your money. They handle bills, taxes, payroll, and your investments. They are the most crucial line of defense against financial ruin. Never, under any circumstances, should your business manager and your creative manager be the same person. This is where your system of checks and balances begins.

Your Role as the Creative: The CEO Your job is to be the visionary, the talent, and the product. But it is also to be the CEO of your own business. This means you must have a fundamental understanding of how your team operates and how your money moves. You must ask questions, demand transparency, and understand the terms of every single contract you sign. Ignorance is not bliss; it's a direct path to betrayal and bankruptcy.

To avoid being "screwed over," you must:

- **Demand Transparency:** You should have a clear, regular line of sight into all your finances. Monthly or quarterly reports from your business manager are non-negotiable.
- **Enforce Checks and Balances:** Never allow one person or firm to have unilateral control over all aspects of your career and finances. A good manager and a good business manager will operate separately and audit each other's work.
- **Hire an Auditor:** Bring in a third-party accountant annually to audit your books. It is a small price to pay for peace of mind.

The Crew That Got It Right: Jay-Z and Roc Nation Jay-Z is a masterful example of a creative who became the ultimate CEO of his own brand. Rather than just signing to a record label and a management company, he built his own. Roc Nation is not just a label; it's a full-service entertainment company that includes management, music publishing, touring, and a sports division. By taking ownership of the infrastructure, Jay-Z gained total control over his value chain. He became the architect of his career, not just the employee of someone else's. His team works for him, not the other way around. This model of vertical integration is the gold standard for long-term success in the creative industries.

The Crew That Got It Wrong: Toni Braxton Toni Braxton is an example of immense talent that was systematically failed by her business structure. Despite selling tens of millions of records, she famously filed for bankruptcy not once, but twice. Her first major deal with LaFace Records, like so many contracts of the era, was built on a model of "recoupable advances" that left her with virtually no income. The money she earned from selling her multi-platinum album, *Secrets*, was immediately used to pay back the costs of recording and production. The artist was left with nothing. This was compounded by a manager who allegedly made a side deal with the label, a classic red flag. Braxton was a victim of a system built to extract, rather than build, and of a team that did not prioritize her financial well-being above their own. Her story is a stark reminder that a team's failure is not always malicious; it is often a matter of misaligned incentives and a lack of proper oversight.

The ultimate measure of a great team is not how much money you make, but how much money you keep. Your creative genius is the most valuable asset you have. Building the right structure around it is the only way to ensure it lasts.

CHAPTER 6

COLLABORATIONS

This chapter is about forging alliances with other kingdoms. For the creative without capital, collaboration is not just a pleasant opportunity to make art with friends; it is a form of economic warfare. It is the tactical deployment of someone else's resources, network, and brand equity to serve your own strategic ends. In an attention economy where the most valuable currency is trust and awareness, collaboration is a non-linear way to acquire both. It is, in essence, the ultimate marketing hack.

The word collaboration is thrown around a lot but do we understand what is a Collaboration?

Let's dispense with the romantic notion of "two artists coming together." A collaboration is a strategic alignment of two or more independent value propositions. It's a temporary merger for a specific, often unspoken, goal. The most successful collaborations are not born from a shared artistic vision, but from a shared understanding of what each party can get from the other. It's the moment you stop asking, "What can we make together?" and start asking, "What can we build together?"

There are a few key forms of collaboration a creative must master:

Artist-to-Artist: The most common form. A rapper featuring on a pop song, a visual artist designing an album cover, a writer co-authoring a script. The goal here is audience crossover. It's a low-cost way to be introduced to a new demographic that already trusts someone else's taste.

Artist-to-Brand: This is where the creative's value proposition is monetized beyond their art. A musician becomes the face of a clothing brand, a comedian creates a series of sponsored social media posts, or an actor endorses a product. This is a direct exchange of brand equity for financial gain and access to a massive marketing budget you don't have.

Artist-to-Platform: This is a strategic partnership with a distribution channel. Think of a musician doing an exclusive deal with a streaming service or a comedian releasing a special on a specific platform. The platform gets exclusive content to attract and retain subscribers, and you get unprecedented access to their user base. It is a mutually beneficial act of desperation.

The time to collaborate is not when you're feeling lonely or uninspired. The time to collaborate is when it serves a clear, quantifiable purpose.

To Acquire an Audience: You are a jazz musician with a small but dedicated following. You collaborate with a well-known lo-fi hip-hop producer. Suddenly, his audience is exposed to your sound. You are borrowing his credibility to expand your reach.

To Build Credibility: You are a young writer trying to break into a saturated genre. You manage to get a well-respected veteran to write the forward for your book. That association immediately signals to gatekeepers that you are worthy of their time. It's a form of intellectual brand endorsement.

To Diversify Your Skills: An actor collaborates on a short film not for the money, but to gain experience in directing, a strategic move to reposition their career.

The key ingredients for a successful collaboration are not a shared playlist or a love of the same films or just vibes. They are:

Brand Alignment: Do your values, aesthetics, and audience demographics align? A collaboration between a heavy metal band and a children's television show is a tactical misstep. The goal is to create a seamless, believable union.

A Complementary Value Proposition: What does the other party have that you need, and what do you have that they need? It's a trade. Be explicit about what you bring to the table.

Clear Expectations: This is the most important part. Get it in writing. Never enter into a deal that is not captured on paper and if you do not understand the terms get a law student if you cant afford a lawyer or visit an NGO that deals in legal issues they will help you

understand the agreement or even asking ChatGPT. Don't be like Zahara or Nomcebo Zikode it will end up costing you a lot.

The Pan-African Playbook: In the African creative landscape, collaboration is not just a tool; it's the very lifeblood of the industry's growth. The continent's music, film, and art scenes are not monolithic. They are a mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, and sounds. For an artist without a massive marketing budget, a strategic collaboration is a low-cost, high-impact way to conquer new territory. An artist from Nigeria collaborating with an artist from South Africa isn't just a musical fusion; it's a direct-to-consumer invasion of a new market. You are, in effect, piggybacking on their entire distribution network and local cultural relevance. It's a beautifully simple form of globalization from the ground up.

The Wizkid and Drake Alliance : Before he became a global superstar, Wizkid was a titan of Afrobeats. But he was still, for the most part, a continental force. The collaboration on the song "One Dance" with Drake was a masterclass in strategic alliance. It wasn't just about sharing a song; it was about the transference of credibility. Drake, a global tastemaker, essentially endorsed Wizkid to his millions of fans. For Drake, it was a move to tap into the burgeoning Afrobeats sound and its audience. For Wizkid, it was an instant passport to the global mainstream. The collaboration was the single biggest accelerant to Wizkid's international career, proving that the right alliance can do more for your brand in five minutes than a decade of hard work. The deal, of course, was all in writing.

Naledi Aphiwe and Chris Brown: The viral video of Aphiwe singing a short, acapella clip from a previous song was picked up by Chris Brown, who then used her vocal snippet as the chorus for his track "Naked." This wasn't a traditional, negotiated feature; it was a more organic, strategic co-sign that served the same purpose. For Naledi Aphiwe, it was a massive and instantaneous act of audience acquisition, borrowing Chris Brown's global credibility to be introduced to millions of new listeners. It shows that in the digital age, a collaboration can be a simple, non-linear act of brand alignment that delivers immense, disproportionate gain for the creative without an established global reach. However Naledi Aphiwe doesn't seem to have a growth and expansion plan nor a

strategic management team to help ride the wave and global recognition.

Beware of the Unwritten Agreement: In countless instances across the continent, an emerging artist will collaborate with a local producer who creates an undeniable hit. There is an unspoken agreement of brotherhood and shared success. The song takes off, and the artist becomes a star. But because there was no written agreement, no clear split on publishing, no outline of who owns the intellectual property, the producer is left behind. They get a one-time fee, perhaps, but miss out on the long-term royalties from streaming and licensing. The artist, now a star, moves on, leaving the producer to watch their creation generate millions for someone else. This is a classic example of an emotional contract, a "we're friends, we'll figure it out," that becomes a strategic and financial disaster.

A collaboration is a deal, and it should be treated as such. Never, ever, rely on a verbal agreement. The moment someone says, "We'll just figure it out later," is the exact moment you need to get a lawyer involved.

The Agreement: This must be a simple, written document. It doesn't need to be a formal contract, but it needs to outline the following:

The Terms: What is being created? Who is doing what? What is the timeline?

The Split: How are revenues, royalties, and fees being divided? Be specific, and make sure it is auditable.

The IP: Who owns the intellectual property? Does it belong to one of you, or is it jointly owned? Who has the right to use the work in the future?

The Credit: How will credit be given? This can be just as valuable as the financial split.

Protecting yourself is about avoiding the traps we've already discussed. Be ruthless about saying "no" to collaborations that do not align with your vision. Your brand is your most valuable asset, and every collaboration you engage in is a vote of confidence in someone else. If the brand alignment is off, it dilutes your own equity. Saying no is not an act of arrogance; it is an act of strategic self-preservation. When saying no, be clear and polite. You don't need to burn a bridge, you just need to prevent the wrong kind of traffic from using it.

CHAPTER 7

THE DARK SIDE OF THE INDUSTRY

The creative industry is beautiful from the outside , I would liken it to a well kept garden, colourful and glamorous but there are serpents in the Garden and you need to be ready with tools to help you with navigating the Dark Side of Fame.

Ah, success. A magnificent, if rather flighty, bird that, once it decides to roost upon your shoulder, brings with it not merely the sweet song of public adoration but also a rather formidable collection of winged predators and insidious parasites. We have spoken of the art of the deal and the necessity of a formidable inner circle, but it would be a tragic and lamentable oversight to neglect a conversation about the darker forces at play. For the moment a creative achieves a certain luminosity, a whole ecosystem of opportunists, charlatans, and genuine dangers emerges from the gloom.

The Betrayal of the Contract: Pardon me if I sound like a weary old cynic, but one simply cannot overstate the profound and often ruinous power of a badly drawn or, worse, misunderstood contract. It is the very first and most enduring of the perils. Consider, if you will, the truly heartbreaking case of the late, great Zahara. A voice of such sublime and rustic purity that it seemed to emerge directly from the very soul of the Eastern Cape.

Alas, her immense talent was matched only by her tragic naivety in the realm of business. She signed agreements that, by all accounts, placed her at a significant and sustained disadvantage, leading to battles over royalties and a sense of being perpetually short-changed. It is no great psychological leap to imagine how such a perpetual state of financial and creative betrayal could lead to the downward spiral she experienced, culminating in alcohol abuse and a general air of recklessness. A most distressing tale that teaches us a simple, brutal lesson: talent is your gift, but the contract is your prison.

The same, in a more contemporary guise, can be seen in the lamentable saga of Nomcebo Zikode and the song that became a global anthem of the pandemic, "Jerusalema." Here was a piece of music, a prayer, almost, that unified the world in a moment of unparalleled human stress. And yet, the very moment it became an enormous success, the courts were called upon to decide who owned what.

The unfortunate truth is that, despite her divine contribution, the lack of a clear, legally binding agreement before the song's ascent left her in a position where she had to fight for what was rightfully hers. Her reported losses in these court battles serve as a stark and sobering reminder that a handshake, no matter how heartfelt, and a hit song, no matter how monumental, are no substitutes for a properly signed, sealed, and delivered document.

The very air you breathe as a successful creative becomes thick with temptation. It's a curious sort of inverse proportionality: the higher your star rises, the more accessible the vices become. The drug dealer who wouldn't have given you the time of day a year ago will now happily deliver an entire menu of synthetic escape right to your door.

When success hits the vultures circle. Some, you see, wish to be seen in your company, to feel a vicarious sense of power. Others, in a more sinister fashion, seek to exploit your vulnerability, to get you hooked so you become a reliable, long-term source of revenue, or worse, so they may use your public appearances and tours as a means of trafficking their wares. It is a trap that has claimed countless brilliant minds across the world.

Alas, the African creative scene is no stranger to this particular brand of heartbreak. The stories of artists who fell into this abyss are numerous. Thankfully, some, like the rapper Kabelo have survived and fought strongly against drugs or alcohol. Kabelo wrote a book about his journey and it is important that a creative learns from the mistakes of others.

I am inspired by the stories of comedians Nina Hastie and Trevor Gumbi, have found their way out and spoken openly about their struggles. They have been open about the pain they have had to deal with and demons they had to slay in the battlefield. You as an intelligent artist or creative you avoid the path that leads you into

fight with demons. ABSTAIN FROM DRUGS by all means possible please. They will drain your money, your health and wellness.

While others made it out and fought successfully against drugs, alcohol and intoxicating substances others were not so fortunate. Lundi Tyamara a powerful gospel musician passed on at the age of 38 and drugs had a role and hand in this untimely passing. Brenda Fassie among many others did not make it out alive immense talent whose flame was snuffed out far too soon, lost to a combination of celebrity and a lack of proper emotional and physical defences.

But what if the most dangerous drug is not a chemical compound but the very attention you receive? Both the great Black Coffee and Jay-Z have spoken with wisdom on this very matter. Fame in itself is also a drug that you need to keep an eye on.

On his 2006 album, Kingdom Come, Jay-Z delivered one of his most direct statements on the topic in the song "Lost One". He said "Except that fame is the worst drug known to man. It's stronger than heroin. When you could look in the mirror like, 'Here I am,' and still not see what you've become. I know I'm guilty of it, too, but not like them".

During his appearance on the South African podcast Podcast and Chill with MacG, DJ Black Coffee described fame as a disease and a drug. He emphasized that managing fame is difficult and that seeking therapy is essential for dealing with its impact.

Both Jay Z and Black Coffee seem to have understood that the roar of the crowd, the millions of likes on social media, the unending stream of fawning praise—this is a genuine narcotic. It provides a rush, a sense of validation, that nothing else can replicate. But like any addiction, it leaves you with a gnawing need for more, an inability to find contentment in quiet moments, and a desperate fear of its withdrawal.

I have also had a first hand experience with the vices that come with fame, money and power. I had to lean on faith, spirituality, the gym and yes there is no shame in having a therapist that you talk to regularly.

Managing fame requires a profound act of self-preservation. This is where a professional therapist becomes not a sign of weakness, but a tool of immense strategic strength. It is a non-negotiable part of the successful creative's life. You must learn to guard your mind, to shield your soul, and to defend your inner peace with the ferocity of a warrior protecting a treasure.

For the vultures, both human and digital, are always circling. They smell success, and they will descend the very moment you show a hint of weakness.

One other important tip that I need to share with you is that you should always keep your private life private, for social media is the cruellest of double-edged swords. One day, it crowns you a king; the next, it calls for your beheading. Your pain becomes clickbait, your mistakes are amplified, and your life becomes a public-domain soap opera where everyone gets to have an opinion, but you lose all control of the narrative. This affects you and your loved ones. If you do not control this part your mental health will always be under attack, your dignity will always be under the microscope.

Finally, a word on the commodification of the self. The notion that "sex sells" has been the siren song of countless careers. It's an undeniable truth, of course. A flash of skin, a suggestive dance, an image engineered for shock value can, indeed, capture attention swiftly and effectively. But while a momentary flash can generate a blaze of publicity, it is often a fire that burns itself out and, in the process, alienates you from more serious, long-term opportunities. The brand that seeks to associate itself with decorum will look elsewhere for its brand ambassadors, regardless of how many followers you might have. Sex may sell, but discipline, my dear friend, builds a dynasty.

And as for the scandals themselves... well, let us simply say that they are a truly ruinous business. The very names Bill Cosby, R. Kelly, and Bricks now stand not for creative genius but for the monumental, catastrophic ruin that a sexual scandal can wreak upon a career and a life. When such a thing rears its head, the only appropriate response is not to argue, not to justify, but to run, run with all your might. Your brand, your reputation, and your very freedom may well depend upon it. The cost of such a scandal is incalculable and unforgiving.

CHAPTER 8

SOCIAL MEDIA A DANGEROUS JUNGLE

The last topic before we talk about money is social media. In this chapter we now confront the modern creative's true battleground: social media. This is not a stage. Nor is it a marketplace. It is a rainforest — teeming, predatory, unpredictable. As in the Serengeti, one cannot simply wander in and expect order. To thrive here requires cunning, delegation, and above all, a refusal to confuse the ecosystem's demands with your own purpose.

You will hear it endlessly: be authentic. Post your meals, your heartbreak, your routines. Share your life, unfiltered, and the world will “connect” with you. This is, frankly, suicidal advice.

The creative life is a delicate and often messy affair, and the digital world is a place where every slip is magnified and every stumble dissected. Authenticity online is rarely authenticity at all. It is staged vulnerability masquerading as truth. Nobody wakes up flawless; nobody lives the drama-free life they present. And yet, once you step onto that treadmill, the mob will always demand more.

Consider the tragic case of the late Zahara, a singer whose voice once carried the promise of a continent. Her music was extraordinary. Yet gossip blogs and Twitter mobs feasted on her struggles, drowning her artistry in noise. Authenticity did not bring her closer to her audience; it turned her into prey. Her life became less about her sublime music and more about tabloid headlines.

And it is not just the famous. Take “Blessing,” a 19-year-old TikTok comedian from Abuja. Her sketches are sharp, funny, full of local slang. But what brought her the most “engagement” wasn't her jokes — it was a video where she accidentally revealed too much about her home life. Overnight, the comments shifted from laughter to speculation: Who is she dating? Where does she live? Her art was no longer the focus. The mob wanted her life.

The Like button is not applause. It is a lever in a slot machine. We must understand that social media operates on the psychology of gambling. The unpredictability of reward — the thrill of not knowing when the next like, share, or retweet will come — is the most addictive pattern ever discovered. A young Afrobeats producer in Accra told me that he spends less time mixing tracks than brainstorming TikTok challenges. “The song only matters if the dance goes viral,” he admitted. The algorithm, not the artistry, decides success. The tragedy is that he knows this, but cannot resist it. The bell rings, the dopamine hits, and the compass shifts from originality to metrics.

This is not unique to Africa, of course. But the difference here is sharper: many young creatives do not yet have the infrastructure (agents, managers, labels) to shield them. They are raw, alone, feeding the machine with their sanity.

In this chaos, the bravest act is not to lean in, but to step back. Trevor Noah is the obvious example. His rise from Soweto stages to The Daily Show was not managed from his bedroom with a ring light. He had a team. People who knew when to push, when to shield, when to let a storm blow over. Without them, every offhand joke from his early sets would have been dug up, dissected, weaponized.

But even at a smaller scale, delegation matters. I know of a Ghanaian fashion designer, Ama, who was drowning in DMs. Customers, trolls, fake “collaboration offers” — all flooding her inbox. She was spending more time firefighting than designing. The solution was simple: she asked her cousin, a communications student, to run her socials. Within weeks, Ama was back to sketching dresses, while her cousin dealt with the trolls and queries. Ama calls her cousin “my human shield.” A publicist or media manager is not a luxury. They are armour. They filter what you see, buffer your emotions, and preserve your focus.

Of course, not everyone has a cousin studying communications or the funds for a publicist.

Enter AI: the tireless, emotionally neutral intern. In Nairobi, a small YouTuber named Daniel runs a channel about urban life and Kenyan food. He doesn't have staff. What he does have is ChatGPT and a scheduling tool. AI drafts his video descriptions, suggests keywords, and even creates rough scripts that he then improvises around. It doesn't make him less creative; it makes him more so, because he spends less time wrestling with metadata and more time filming. This is the future: not artists replaced by machines, but artists supported by them. The donkey work is outsourced to something that does not care about dopamine hits, trolls, or trends.

Now, a warning. Do not Google yourself. Do not check the comments. Do not, under any circumstances, fall into the black hole of "seeing what people are saying." The Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie avoids comment sections entirely. She knows they are toxic. She is right. The praise inflates you, the criticism wounds you, and both distort your sense of self. A small Ugandan poet I met online made this mistake. After her poem went semi-viral, she spent days refreshing, reading every comment. Some praised her; others called her derivative. She became paralysed, unable to write again for months. The work that should have nourished her instead starved her. A publicist — or even a trusted friend — can do this job for you. They can bring you the signals that matter (a publisher is interested, an editor wants to feature you) and discard the rest. It is not cowardice. It is survival.

Now we reach the heart of the matter: privacy. In an age where people Instagram their breakfast and livestream their weddings, privacy is no longer ordinary. It is rare. It is valuable. It is, in fact, a luxury good. Burna Boy is a master of this. His music and persona are larger than life, but his private life remains firmly his own. He gives you the spectacle, but not the intimacy. Contrast this with artists who surrender every detail of their lives. For them, the audience becomes invasive — dissecting relationships, hunting for scandal, turning private moments into public entertainment.

And this is not just about stars. Remember Blessing, the Abuja TikToker? Once her personal life leaked, she could never reclaim it. Privacy, once lost, cannot be repossessed. Your life is not content. Your children are not engagement assets. Your heartbreak is not

collateral for clicks. Guard your private self with the same ferocity with which you guard your bank details.

And so, the paradox emerges: the best way to win at social media may be to play it less. To delegate, automate, and disengage strategically. To treat it as plumbing — something that should work reliably in the background, not a thing you obsess over daily. For your legacy will not be built on your most viral tweet or your most shared TikTok. It will be built on the work itself. The novel, the painting, the song. The artefact that endures. Everything else is noise.

CHAPTER 9

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Listen up, because what I'm about to tell you is going to save you more pain than any savvy contract lawyer ever could. I've seen it time and time again: a dazzling talent, a mind full of brilliance, a voice that could move mountains, and a wallet that's an empty echo chamber. The world has sold you a lie, a beautiful, soul-crushing myth: the myth of the romantic, financially-ignorant artist. You see it in movies, hear it in songs, and read it in biographies. The hero, so consumed by their craft, is too ethereal to deal with something as vulgar as money. Don't be that superstar who doesn't pay attention to the money.

The truth is, money is not a mystery. It's a tool. And if you don't pick it up, someone else will—and they will use it against you. Your talent, your fame, your genius... none of it will protect you from a single, simple, arithmetic fact: if you spend more than you earn, you are broke. And if you make a fortune and don't know how to keep it, you're a fool with a fleeting shine. You can have a million fans, but if you have zero in the bank, you have zero.

MacG is my favorite example when it comes to spending. You won't see him in a fancy multi million rand vehicle, he minds his money and doesn't spend to fit society's version of what a superstar should wear, drive, eat or drink.

This chapter is about getting radical, about changing your mindset, and about understanding that a brilliant creative is nothing without a fierce, disciplined financial mind. It's about building a fortress around your future.

The very first step is to demystify money. Stop treating it like a foreign language. Get angry about your ignorance. Because the moment you don't know where your money is going, someone else does—your manager, your record label, your tax authority, the bank. It's time to take up financial literacy like it's a second instrument. Don't just noodle with it; master it.

You need to know how to read a balance sheet, understand a profit and loss statement, and dissect a royalty report. These are not boring documents for corporate suits; they are the maps to your treasure. If your team hands you a report and you simply nod and say "looks good," you've already lost. You're giving away your power. You are saying, "I trust you to manage my entire financial life while I sit here and look pretty." That's not trust; it's negligence.

Find a simple financial literacy course. There are countless free resources online, from YouTube channels to simple budgeting apps. Learn what an asset is and what a liability is. Understand the difference between gross income and net income. This isn't optional. It's the bedrock upon which your career is built.

Let me give you a reality check. The single most ruthless, efficient, and unforgiving debt collector on the face of the planet is your government's tax authority. They do not care that you're an artist. They do not care that your album went triple platinum. They do not care that you're a national treasure. They only care about one thing: what you owe them. And they will come for it, with interest, with penalties, and with the full, unblinking force of the law.

Take the case of South African powerhouse MaMkhize (Shawn Mkhize). She built an empire, a high-flying lifestyle, and a very public persona. But she, or her businesses, had a rather massive and sustained disagreement with the taxman. The result? Her assets were frozen. The taxman came knocking on her door, not for a conversation, but to collect. Her beloved football team, Royal AM, was auctioned off, well, sort of as the club was unable to be sold as a going concern, SARS proceeded with auctioning off individual assets, including luxury cars owned by Shawn Mkhize and the team bus, in an effort to recover the outstanding tax debt. Ten of 14 cars linked to Mkhize and the club were sold for R8.2 million. This wasn't a cautionary tale for a business mogul; it's a cautionary tale for every creative who thinks they can outrun their financial responsibilities.

You cannot run from your taxes. They are not a suggestion; they are a law. You must, from the very first rand or naira you earn, set aside money for taxes. Get an accountant. A good one. Someone who speaks the language of the taxman and who will not let you

fall into this trap. A small fee for an accountant is a tiny fraction of the pain of losing everything you've built.

The biggest lie in the creative industry is that your talent is your only asset. It isn't. Your brand is. Your hustle is. Your network is. And if all of your income comes from one place—your music, your acting, your art—you are one bad record deal, one cancelled show, or one creative block away from financial ruin. The smart ones, the ones who build legacies, understand this. They are not just artists; they are entrepreneurs.

Look at Jay-Z. The man is a business empire. His initial success came from hip-hop, but he didn't stop there. He built a clothing line (Rocawear), a record label (Roc-A-Fella), a streaming service (Tidal), and invested in everything from alcohol brands to tech startups. His genius was not just in his rhymes but in his ability to leverage his brand, his influence, and his intellectual capital to build multiple streams of income. Today, if his record sales dropped to zero, he'd still be one of the richest men on the planet.

And then there's 50 Cent. The man is a hustler, a survivor, and a brilliant strategist. He rose to fame as a rapper, but he didn't just spend his money on chains and cars. He invested it. He famously bought a minority stake in Vitamin water and sold it for over \$100 million. He parlayed his fame into a film and television production career, creating massive hits like the show *Power*. He understood that the real power is not just in having one hit song, but in building a machine that produces revenue long after the applause fades.

Your art is your primary business, but it cannot be your only business. As soon as you have some capital, think about what other ventures you can start. Can you sell merchandise? Can you start a small business? Can you invest in real estate? You must build a financial ecosystem around your creative one.

When the money starts coming in, the first instinct for many is to spend it. A new car. A new house. A bigger entourage. All of that is a liability, not an asset. A car depreciates, and a bigger house comes with a bigger mortgage and higher bills. The only thing you're doing is going into more debt to look rich.

The wise path, the path of the champion, is to invest. You need to take a portion of every paycheck and put it somewhere that it can grow. I'm not talking about get-rich-quick schemes. I'm talking about slow, steady, consistent growth. Start with a simple retirement fund. Invest in a diversified portfolio of mutual funds. Hire a financial advisor you trust—someone who has a fiduciary duty to you, not to their own commission.

Every rand you invest today is a seed you plant for tomorrow. That seed will grow into a tree that provides shade and fruit for your old age. Don't be the artist who spent everything and has to ask for donations at the end of their life.

I've seen it countless times, and it is a truly heartbreaking thing to witness. A creative, a person who once graced stages and sold out arenas, is now online begging for donations to pay for a medical bill. Or worse, their family is begging for money to give them a proper funeral. This is not how it should be.

Your medical aid cover is not a luxury; it is a life raft. A serious illness can wipe out a lifetime of savings in a matter of months. A good medical aid plan means you can focus on healing, not on a crushing financial burden. A funeral policy isn't for you; it's an act of love for your family. It ensures that when you're gone, your loved ones are not burdened with the cost of burying you. These things may seem like small monthly payments now, but they are a form of insurance against catastrophe.

No matter how bright your star shines, dark days will always come. An accident, an illness, a market downturn, a personal crisis. These things don't care about your fame or your talent. And when the dark days do come, you need to have a safety net. You need to have built a financial fortress that can withstand the storm.

In the end, it all comes down to a simple principle: you must be the CEO of your own life. You are the final authority. You are the one who is responsible. Mind your numbers, mind your bills, and never, ever, let someone else be the sole guardian of your finances. You must know, at all times, how much you have, how much you owe, and where every single cent is going.

The creative life is a beautiful journey, but it is not a fairy tale. It requires discipline, grit, and a sharp mind for the things that others find boring. Build your art with passion, but build your life with a calculator and a spreadsheet. Your legacy is not just the art you create; it's the life you build. And you build it with wisdom, with discipline, and with a healthy respect for the gospel of the greenback.

CHAPTER 10

BUILD AN EMPIRE WITH PURPOSE

Alright, so you've got the contract decoded. You've assembled your crew. You've mastered the art of the alliance and learned to read the game for what it is. You've looked into the dark side and you're still standing. You even figured out how to use the social media jungle without getting eaten alive. You've learned the gospel of the greenback, because you can't be an artist in a cage. You've got all the pieces.

Now, let's talk about the final act.

This isn't about just getting a check. This isn't about a viral moment. That stuff is cheap. That's the hustle for the next hit. The real work is about building a dynasty. A legacy that lasts longer than the applause. This final chapter is the blueprint for that.

I told you before: the solo artist is a myth. No king stands alone. You found your crew, but the real test isn't in the good times. It's when a contract goes sideways, when the fame gets too hot, when the road is calling you to a place you don't want to be. Your team has to be more than just people on your payroll; they have to be your fortress. They're the ones who will protect your vision when the vultures start circling.

I've seen artists blow up, get blinded by the light, and fire the very people who were with them from the beginning. They get a new manager who talks a big game, promising more, and they end up with less. A real team is your counsel. They're the ones who will tell you the hard truth when everyone else is telling you what you want to hear. Trust isn't given; it's earned over years of shared battles. Protect that inner circle like it's the vault.

I've been in rooms where they call it "collaboration," but it's really a tactical play. You're not just making art with someone. You're exchanging audiences. You're trading brand equity. You're leveraging their reach to get to a place you couldn't get to on your own. JAY Z's first album, Reasonable Doubt, was about telling the truth. But he knew to get to the masses, he had to build alliances.

He worked with people who had something he didn't yet have—a bigger platform, a different sound.

Remember that. Don't be too proud to collaborate. But don't be so hungry that you get eaten. A partnership is a contract, and the best deals are when both sides leave feeling like they won. Keep your mind on the business, but when the business is done, you can build a friendship. You need to keep those lines from blurring, because when money and emotions get tangled, somebody always gets screwed.

The hardest part of the game isn't the hustle; it's the quiet after the hit. The fame is a drug, and it's a powerful one. It gives you a feeling of invincibility, makes you think you can walk on water. I've seen some of the greatest minds crumble under the pressure. The late nights, the parties, the hangers-on—that stuff will drain you. You get so high on the applause that you forget how to just breathe.

Look, you don't need to put on a mask. But you don't need to show the world your scars either. Your private life is your sanctuary. It's where you go to recharge. Social media can tell a great story, but it's a dangerous game of pretend. Protect your peace. Protect your inner circle. And don't ever think that the applause is more important than your mental health.

The greatest hustlers I know are the ones who can walk away from the table. They're the ones who know how to protect their mind, how to say no, and how to stay grounded in the eye of the storm.

I said it before: money is a tool. And the most dangerous tool in the world is one you don't know how to use. Your talent, that's the seed. But financial literacy, that's the soil you plant it in. You can have the best seed in the world, but if the soil is dirt, nothing grows.

You gotta diversify. Don't be a one-trick pony. Don't put all your hope on one record deal or one film role. Build a brand. Create multiple sources of income. The money you earn today is your capital for tomorrow. It's not for flashy cars or empty mansions. It's for building the machine, the engine that will run long after your voice is gone.

I'm talking about real estate. I'm talking about investments. I'm talking about having an accountant on speed dial. This isn't a lesson you learn when you're broke; it's a lesson you learn so you never have to be.

The stage is temporary. The applause is temporary. The fame is temporary. What's left when it all fades is the work you created and the life you built.

Don't get it twisted. This is a game, and you gotta play to win. But the real prize isn't the number of awards on your shelf. The real prize is the freedom to do what you want, when you want, with the people you love. That's the ultimate hustle. That's the masterpiece.

Your life is the final piece of art. Build it with discipline, with wisdom, and with a vision that extends far beyond the next gig. You came this far for a reason. Don't just make a name for yourself. Build a dynasty.

I've seen it all, from the euphoria of a sold-out show to the quiet devastation of a life unmanaged. The creative journey isn't just a hustle; it's a marathon of the mind. The contracts, the crews, the financial plans—they aren't burdens. They are the tools you use to build the life that makes your art possible. Remember, talent is given, but wisdom is earned. Guard your peace, trust your gut, and let your work be a testament to your discipline, not just your genius. Now go, build your dynasty.

I will be here cheering you on and if you ever need my help or support or maybe you just need to chat and exchange ideas you can always email me eddbransonpublishers@gmail.com

7 Things Every Creative Needs to Win on a Global Stage

1. Skill That Speaks for Itself

- * Practice until your work feels effortless.
- * Learn from the best, then bend the rules your way.

2. A Voice No One Can Copy

- * Be original, not trendy.
- * Tell stories that only you can tell — they'll travel farther than style alone.

3. Global Vision

- * Pay attention to cultures, movements, and ideas beyond your own bubble.
- * Adapt fast — what's hot today is gone tomorrow.

4. Thick Skin, Strong Habits

- * Rejection and failure are fuel.
- * Show up daily — creativity is a muscle, not a mood.

5. Be Seen, Be Found

- * Share your work boldly, online and offline.
- * Collaborate across borders; your next breakthrough may come from another scene.

6. Think Like an Artist–Entrepreneur

- * Know how to price, protect, and promote your craft.
- * Build not just fans, but a lasting ecosystem around your work.

7. Protect Your Spark

- * Guard your energy, health, and joy — they're your real resources.
- * Find mentors, peers, and communities that lift you higher.