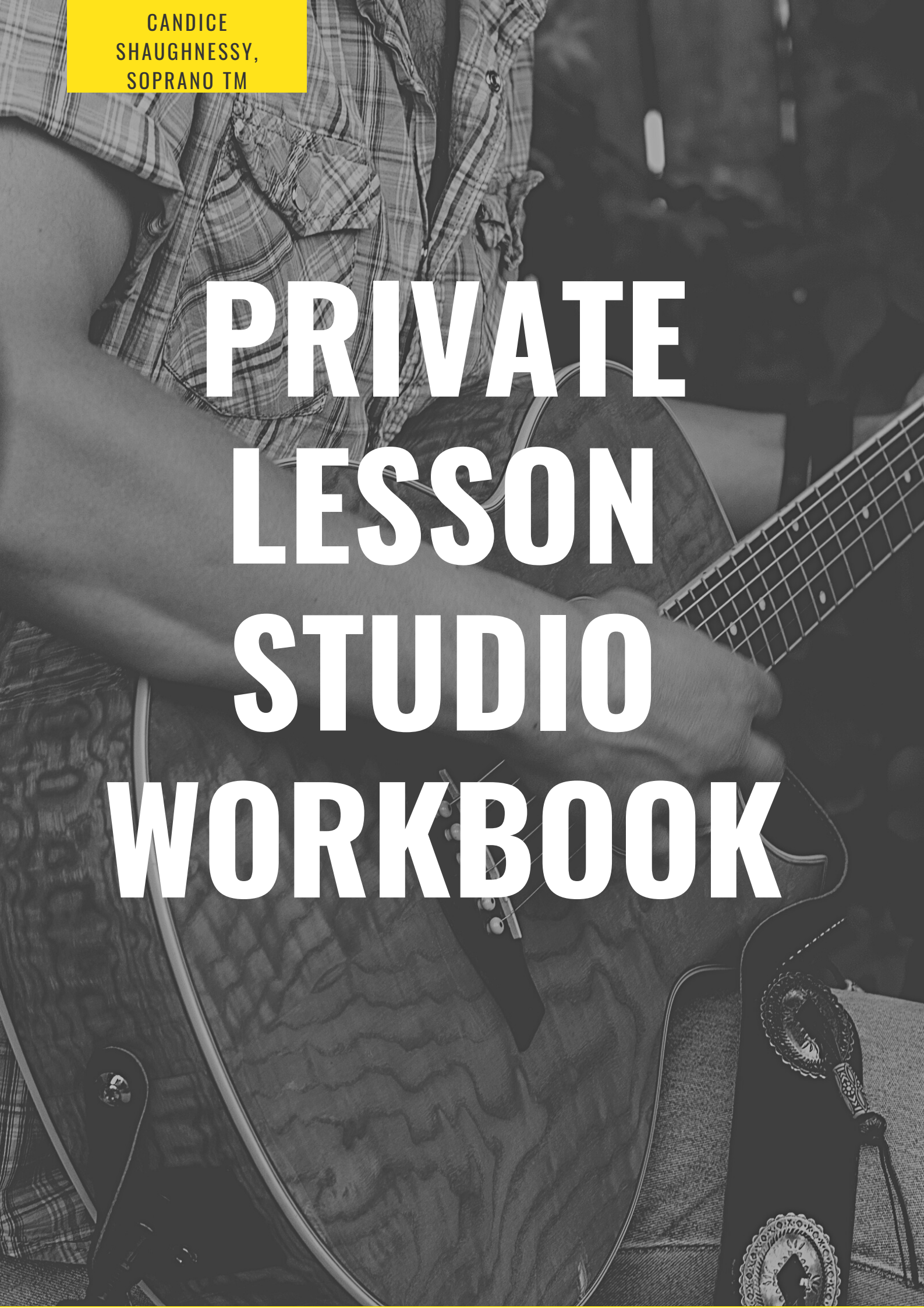



CANDICE
SHAUGHNESSY,
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PRIVATE LESSON STUDIO WORKBOOK






THE COMPLETE HOW-TO GUIDE FOR BUILDING A PRIVATE LESSON STUDIO



Welcome to my workbook on building a private lesson studio! In this workbook, we will discuss all of the finer points of becoming a private lesson teacher with a thriving business. Now that you have chosen to be a private lesson teacher, you are a small business owner. This workbook will take you through everything from your mission and purpose, to time management, to contracts. We will discuss how to keep yourself together as a musician as well as how to market yourself as a private lesson teacher, and much more.

PURPOSE



Why do you want to teach private lessons? Now, if the answer is to make money, that is not a good reason to teach lessons and people will see right through it. Why did you choose to teach private lessons? Be as specific as possible.

Do not think about this too much, merely brainstorm this. We will get more specific later.

Write your answer here:



A decorative background with a teal color scheme. It features several white musical notes and a treble clef scattered around the page. The notes are stylized with small white star-like accents. The treble clef is positioned at the top center and bottom right. The overall design is clean and modern, suitable for a music-related educational or professional document.

MISSION STATEMENTS

Now that you have a reason for building your studio, it's time to write mission statements. Why do you want to do this? What are your big goals?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____.


PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

A philosophy is simply what you believe about music and about the education of music. Let's break this down into a few "I believe" statements.


1. I believe _____
2. I believe _____
3. I believe _____
4. I believe _____
5. I believe _____






CREATE AN INCOME PLAN




Create an income plan. This does not need to be anything elaborate or fancy. It merely has to be something that is a point of reference. The operative word in this section is want. This is about the ideal, not the reality. Remember, since you are doing this self-employed, $\frac{1}{3}$ of this income is going to taxes. You can create a simple income plan using the formula below.



1. How much do you want to make annually between all of the things you do? \$_____
 2. How much of that is taken care of by another job? \$_____
 3. Subtract the total income you want to make from the income you make with the other job. Write that number here \$_____
 4. How many weeks of vacation do you want in a year? Write that number here: _____
 5. There are around 52 full weeks in a year. Take the number above and subtract it from 52. Write the number of working weeks you want a year here: _____
 6. Take the number from step 3 and divide it by the number in step 5. This should give you your target weekly income from teaching \$_____
 7. How many hours do you want to work per week? Write that number here _____
 8. Take the amount from step 6 and divide it by the ideal number of hours working every week in step 7. This will give you your ideal hourly pay: \$_____
- 
- 
- 





AREAS OF FOCUS



What can I teach? The operative word here is CAN. I'm a vocalist, but I have made most of my money from beginner piano lessons. The answer to this question will vastly depend on where you are in your career.

If you are just starting a career, you may have to teach multiple instruments to build a reputation and make a decent amount of money. As time goes on, you can give away some students (maybe even to older clients who want to build their own studios).


However, if you are financially strapped, it is best to start with more options rather than less. What musical subjects do you feel confident teaching (even very beginner levels)?

- 
- 
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
- 







PRICING




One of the most common questions I get on this subject is, how much do I charge? Pricing is very dependent on your needs and location. Use your needs as the first gage. This is why we calculate your ideal hourly pay first. After that, you can compare your pricing with the market. Your pricing does not have to match the market, but it should not be outrageous for the market.



Do some research on five local music teachers in your area. List their prices below:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
- 




Choose your price based on a combination of a close price to your hourly goal and what is reasonable for the area. When in doubt, go for the higher price.

Write it here: \$ _____






TAXES





As a private lesson teacher, you are now a small business owner. This means that you need to file your taxes as such. If you are short on money I highly recommend Quickbooks Self-Employed and TurboTax. That way you can track all of your business expenses and income. Then you can transfer it all to Turbo Tax. The step by step nature of Turbo Tax makes this very easy.



MATERIALS

What do I need? Do I need a piano? Do I use a particular lesson book series? These are important questions. If you do have a lesson book series, I suggest sending a link to the series and having the parents or student buy it themselves. It saves you time and the stress of buying the books yourself. Make a list of the materials you will need to teach your lessons:




- _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- 





LOCATION

What space do you have to teach? This is sometimes not in your control, but I really believe it is worth some time to consider what the pros and cons are of different locations.



Lessons in your home

Pros:

- Convenient for you.
- It is easy for you to take a lot of students.
- You control the space.

Cons:

- It can be a hassle for the student to get to your home.
- Your students are in your personal space.

Lessons in your students' homes

Pros:

- It is very convenient for the parents.
- The student has a certain level of comfort since they are at home.

Cons:



- Traveling to students in varied areas can be stressful.
- You do not know what kind of piano the parents may/may not have.

Lessons in a studio space

Pros:



- The student often takes the lesson more seriously, because it is being held in a space that is specifically for music.
- The space often has a good, tuned piano and is a soundproofed room.

Cons:


- Studios have a rental cost, which means that either you or the student has to spend more money for the space.
 - You can not control the organization level of the studio's administration.
- 
- 




MARKETING





Marketing a private lesson business is surprisingly easy. It may take you awhile to get your first few students, but once you have a loyal group of students, there will be a snowball effect. I'm often asked about websites, Facebook pages, Thumbtack, and other ways to market yourself online. Those things are all good, but at the end of the day, your BEST marketing is word of mouth. It is the oldest form of marketing and it is the best form of marketing.



I suggest using your communities to help build your studio. Often, school music teachers are the best option for this. Send them a simple email or drop off some business cards.



Another great option is to ask to take overflow from established private lesson teachers in the area. Sometimes they have waiting lists. They often do not have room for more students. If they do want the students, but can't take them right now, offer to make an arrangement where you take the student until a spot opens in their studio. Even though they are not your student for the long term, your name will now be known in their circle and this builds your reputation in the community.



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HOW TO GET A STUDENT STARTED:


The most important thing to do when a student or parent contacts you about lessons is to be punctual, straightforward, and consistent in responding. Do not let an email from a prospect sit in your inbox for more than 24 hours. Set up a time to discuss things over the phone or in person. In addition, if you are full and can not take any more students, say so immediately and refer them to a colleague looking to grow their studio.

The most important piece of information I want to stress in this section is this: Have a conversation with the parent or student before they officially sign up for lessons.



Remember, you are a small business owner. It is your job to determine whether or not this person is the right fit for you. What are some things that are non-negotiable for you in a student-teacher relationship?

Write them here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____




Do not ignore red flags. If a student or parent says something that seems off, inquire more. Trust your gut on this one. Sometimes students come to you from teachers who didn't work for them. Ask them why that teacher did not work for them. Get as much specific information as possible.




At the end of the day, it is better to figure out if a student is not right for you before starting lessons rather than to try to drop them after you have taught them for a while.

In addition to gathering information about the needs of the student, here are some examples of other things you should discuss in this phone call:



- Books required
- How you structure your lessons
- Your teaching philosophy
- What you expect of the student
- Your suggestions for lesson length




The last thing you should discuss on this phone call is pricing. Be straightforward and honest about your pricing. Quote your price. The reason I ask you to choose a higher price to start is because you can then bring it down if the student has financial issues. It is much easier to quote a high price and bring it down than to quote a low price and have to raise it later.

Finally, write them a contract. Contract templates are available at www.candiceshaughnessy.com/resources.






TEACHING TECHNIQUES




Teaching techniques differ greatly due to age and the way the student learns. Generally speaking, the younger the student is, the more structure they need in their lesson. In addition, the younger the student, the more external motivation the student needs.




For those of you who are just starting your studio, it is worth your time to try teaching many different age groups. Over time, you will figure out which age groups you personally teach best.

Lesson lengths will be very different for children versus adults. Adults can do any length of lesson. For children, especially those under the age of 10, 30 minute lessons are ideal. Some very focused students can do 45 minutes. Extending the length of the lesson varies greatly from student to student.




After teaching for awhile, you will figure out your ideal market. This is a mixture of what you enjoy teaching the most and who hires you the most often. Eventually, this will make marketing easier for you.

Target ideal market: _____




Practicing is also something that needs more extrinsic motivation for young students as opposed to older students. I am a fan of a student keeping an assignment notebook. Write down their assignment in the notebook weekly so they know what they are supposed to be practicing and so the parents know what they need to be practicing. This also works well for older students.






PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES



Often parents will ask about student recitals. This is a great way to engage the community and give your students the experience of performing for others. Consider the following for recital planning:

- Venue
- Time
- Location
- Post-Recital Reception
- Collaborative Pianist (if needed)

If you have to rent a space, hire a pianist, and provide reception treats, consider charging a nominal recital participation fee. In my experience, this offsets a good bit of cost for the teacher and is usually not a huge hardship for the parents or students.




In addition, stay as informed as you can about opportunities in the community. Children's choirs, theater groups, pageants, etc. These are great ways to get your students more involved in making music in their communities.






PRIVATE LESSON TEACHER SELF-CARE




As a private lesson teacher, you have a lot of influence over your students. This is something I have never taken lightly. It is very easy to get so into teaching that performing goes on the backburner. Teaching is steady, stable money, but it does take a lot of work, time, and dedication. Burnout is really common amongst private lesson teachers. Here are a few tips to prevent burnout:



Carve out time to perform, practice and study for yourself. At the end of the day, it is your responsibility to live what you teach. If you are not living what you teach, then your teaching will suffer. Make every effort to keep music alive for yourself.



Block your time and stick to it. Time management is something we all work towards bettering in our lives. Remember, private lesson teaching is a job, not total time sacrifice. Because musicians are often big-hearted, empathetic people, they will often give too generously of their time. This is a great thing, but it can also lead to burnout. You need to have boundaries around your time.



Get used to the word “no”. If you say yes to something you are inevitably saying no to something else. Take time to really think about what is important to you, and prioritize your time, effort, energy and money in that direction.





ONE MORE THING TO CONSIDER:

I know what some of you are thinking:

“I need money now! What about working for private lesson companies that hire out teachers?”

I have worked for many of these companies. In my experience they are usually not worth it. First, they usually have a clause in your contract where you cannot keep any of your students if you leave the company. Second, they usually massively underpay you so they can take a larger chunk of pay. Often they pay you on a 1099 which means that your taxes are not taken out. So at the end of the day, you are not making very much money at all for a service that you have spent a lot of time, effort, and energy to get educated in.

A FINAL THOUGHT:

At the end of the day, you are the boss. Whatever feels right to you is the thing that you should do to help your business move forward.

For more information on private lesson teaching and moving yourself forward as an entrepreneurial musician, visit www.candiceshaughnessy.com.

HAPPY TEACHING!

