

Greg Chako Statement About Work in Arts Management and in the Arts and Culture Sector

My entrepreneurial success began 45 years ago in Cincinnati, Ohio; lacking parental permission to teach guitar in my home, I proposed a deal with our church: in exchange for the free use of one of their rooms, I would pay them a “commission” for each lesson taught. Not only did that exhibit problem solving, but it was also an example of risk-management (paying only a percentage of earnings and no rent). That innate passion for music and the entrepreneurial spirit that I exhibited as a youngster was the basis for all the entrepreneurial projects that were to follow as I grew up.

In 1984, while working as a chef in Amherst, Massachusetts, I offered the General Manager of the country inn where I cooked a “free trial” night of jazz in their lounge on one of my nights off from the kitchen. I approached this opportunity to play music with fervor and earned a steady two-night a week paid gig there. I promoted it successfully in media forums, wrote all my own press releases, and made calls to garner advertisements and human-interest stories about me. Guests where I played began asking me to organize music for outside functions, and this led to my moving out of the kitchen and into a fulltime music profession. I started the Chako Productions brand, an entertainment promotion business.

That same year, I wrote a successful grant application to the Massachusetts State Council for the Arts to sponsor a concert series I devised. The grant funded 50% for the concert program I arranged, and the remaining 50% was acquired from local businesses that I sourced and whose support I procured. The concert series featured six weekly performances by famous African American jazz musicians from the New York and New England area, accompanied by me on guitar. Only months later, I singlehandedly founded, organized and promoted a Not-for-Profit jazz society. I wrote the by-laws and assembled a Board of Directors. I launched its inception with an outdoor music festival, securing the venue, the food and beverage outlets, the performance roster, the equipment rental, and media coverage for the event.

I moved to my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio in 1985, and after “sitting in” on guitar with friends one night, the club owner asked me if I would like to play there again - I said yes – and we met about it the next morning. I came prepared with a portable typewriter and, on-the-spot with him, composed an agency contract for me to book all their music. I stayed there for two years and managed shows with local and international acts. I created innovative marketing “events” for the club and had placemats with the monthly music schedules printed on them for each seat; I started a mailing list and designed company stationery with matching business logo, cards, letterhead, and envelopes. I gained sales experience in the late 1980s when I was a New York State licensed industrial real estate broker. I set a company earnings record and established strategic liaisons with the local community and government. In Hong Kong, from 1992 to 1994, I recorded and produced my first CD, and registered Chako Productions as a sole proprietorship that organized ongoing events for premier clients like Swire Group, Hong Kong Land and Property Company, and The Mandarin Oriental, among many others. I was dubbed a “Jazz Prophet” by the Hong Kong press.

Moving to Singapore in 1994, I incorporated my company as Chako Productions Pte. Ltd. As its CEO, I managed a full-time artist roster of 30+ for long-term engagements I contracted. I taught music lessons; firmly established my recording artist career (releasing 10 CDs to-date and handing all the musical *and* business aspects of each); and reported annual company turnover in excess of

one million Singapore dollars. I developed a loyal base of corporate (Singapore Airlines, Coca-Cola, Citibank), government (US Navy, American Embassy, Singapore Ministry of the Arts) and individual customers. As I grew my corporation into one of the regional “players” of the entertainment industry, I was also performing on guitar regularly (often 12 jobs a week) in a variety of formats (soloist, trio, septet) and genres (classical, jazz, Latin, pop). I booked all kinds of entertainment, from an Indonesian Gamelan troupe with ethnic dance to a classical string quartet; or from a Middle Eastern belly dancer with a flaming sword swallower to a strolling solo saxophonist playing all requests. My music productions included TV appearances in Singapore, China, and Japan, among multiple videos *and* a full-length documentary movie. The Singapore Business Times interviewed me about my IT (business website) innovations. I have never been one who would be forever satisfied just to settle for a steady gig in a congenial setting; I have always had more ambitious plans. In 2008, my professor and evaluator for an independent study course in *Entrepreneurship*, Ian F. Jacobs, said, “*He [Greg] has started several business ventures, each one successful yet each one more so than the previous. He understands how to navigate all aspects of entrepreneurship.*” Indeed, what began for me over 30 years ago from teaching private guitar lessons in a hometown church as a teenager had grown into a full-fledged arts management business, the success of which demanded I hone a variety of skills that I believe your chosen candidate requires, among them: leadership, management, finance, staffing, sales, promotion, and teaching.

I have embraced cultural diversity wholeheartedly my whole life. My personal interests and my graduate school research centers on culture; I have lived and worked in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and Japan; My work and management experience involved collaboration with people from many different countries and cultures, and my company regularly booked a wide variety of ethnic and folk acts; My music is multi-cultural in style, and my bands have included both men *and* women, British, Australian, Japanese, Indian, Singaporean, Euro-Asian, Brazilian, Mexican, Malaysian, and Filipino musicians, in addition to Americans. Ian F. Jacobs, who also taught the *Managing Cultural Diversity in the Workplace* course I took as an undergrad said, “*Greg does not just “know” about cultural diversity, he has lived it!*”