Module 5 - How To Operate Professional Recording Sessions Like A Pro From Top To Bottom

Overview

In my 19 years of being in the recording industry and my 11 years of running my own home studios as a recording engineer, it's safe to say that I've picked up a thing or two about how to run studio sessions correctly.

And if you've had the opportunity to work in professional studios before, you know that there are a ton of things to be educated on in this aspect of the business. There's much more to engineering than just firing up your gear and pressing record. Which for many

beginners is essentially all that they're doing. So in this module, we're going to cover all of the bases thoroughly to make sure you're completely up to speed on how to run your sessions like a pro!

Chapter 1 - Scheduling

So before we get more educated on how to run studio sessions, it's very important to first discuss scheduling and how it impacts your business. In theory, scheduling is a very simple concept. But we all know there are tons of people who are horrible at keeping to a schedule and unfortunately for those people, it can and will carry over into their business. For so many people, it's just not something that they feel needs to be taken seriously. But of course this shows a complete lack of professionalism and disregard for other peoples precious time. Clients want their valuable time to be respected at all times, otherwise they'll take their business to someone who does.

Now most of you will have smartphones with scheduling apps. But it's also a good idea to keep a written schedule in your studio as well so you can always see visually what your week is like. But luckily there's not too many things to adhere to when it comes to scheduling to keep your clients happy and coming back. And at the end of the day, there's really no excuse for scheduling to be an issue. And if you choose to use **Square** for your accounting, they have a built-in scheduling app that coordinates your payment system with your calendar and I highly recommend trying it out.

There are 3 simple tips that I've learned over the years that are guaranteed to keep clients coming and spreading the word about your studio:

1. **Work around your clients schedule -** Now of course this can't always be done, but you always need to make a strong effort to accommodate your clients recording times. As much of an inconvenience it might be to you to record someone on Saturday mornings because you like to play video games at that time, you have to understand that it's not about you. And this comes back to making your clients feel special. Half of my new clients come to me because their previous studio was never available to book them in. And not because they were too busy, but simply because they didn't want to work around someone else's schedule. And I guess this is fine if you don't want to earn money. But for those of you who have aspirations of a 5 to 6 figure studio, don't look at this as an inconvenience, but as an easy way to keep clients and make more money.

2. **Always say yes -** This is an extension of the last tip. And the busier you get, the more difficult it is to accommodate everybody's recording schedule. But I assure you that you'll never get busy enough for this to even be a factor if you don't always say yes to new clients. And I know that this can be difficult in practice but fortunately, most people will be

flexible with you and try to accommodate your schedule as well. But if a client always feels that you're willing to work with them when they need it, it goes a long way in their eyes and they will view you as reliable. And reliability means more referrals, and more referrals means more money!

3. **<u>Always keep to your schedule no matter what</u> -** If I'm completely honest, I've never fully understood why people are always late or can never keep to a schedule. And we all know tons of people like this and for some reason, they very rarely are able to make changes in this part of their lives. And what you do in your personal life is your business, but when it comes to your actual business, this is just professionalism basics. For so many people, they just don't realize how much business it actually costs them.

   Respecting your clients time is paramount to building a solid reputation and ultimately a solid client base. And to me, this is one of the easiest things you can do to grow your studio business. If you schedule a session, stick to that session and don't be late. It's literally that simple. And having the ability to do this consistently will earn you thousands more dollars without having to spend a dime on marketing. And the truth is that most clients will let things slide once or twice, so it's not the end of the world if an emergency comes up once in a while. But I promise you that if your clients don't feel properly accommodated, they'll find another studio where they do.

Chapter 2 - *The Importance Of Organization*

Organization is a topic that I constantly stress to my students simply because I believe organization to be the foundation of operating a successful business. And to this day, I have no idea why, but this is something that so many producers always struggle with. And even though they recognize this as something of extreme importance, especially when working with paying clients, it's just something that keeps getting away from them. But an organized person is generally going to be more professional in all areas of the business. And clients know this. As soon as a client sees that you're unorganized, they immediately start wondering if they can trust you with their music. Your level of organization directly represents how your entire business is run. Always remember that everything affects everything else. And being unorganized is guaranteed to affect every aspect of your business in a negative way.

And when I speak of organization, it doesn't mean you clean things up once a month. This is a day to day, week to week habit that you need to be on top of to not only keep your own sanity, but to make sure you're building a strong reputation within the community.

So what does organization mean in terms of running your studio?

There are 4 things that are paramount that we need to stay on top of when running a home studio:

1. Files
2. Sessions
3. Scheduling
4. Accounting

1. Files

Backing up files

The minute you open your doors for business, file organization immediately becomes a responsibility. A responsibility that needs to be taken extremely seriously. I can confidently say that every producer that I know has lost valuable files at some point. And whether they are their own files or someone else's files, it's always incredibly devastating. And I assure you that the fastest way to lose a client is by losing their music with no way of getting it back. But

as a studio owner, you now have the responsibility of your clients files until you hand them over at the end of the project. This means that you should have at least two backups of your files at all times, but I recommend having three if possible.

Keeping files and folders organized

The best habit you can have as a studio owner/producer is keeping your files and folders organized. Nothing is more cringy to me than seeing the desktop of a computer full of files scattered all over the place. And not only is it cringy, but to a client it is extremely scary. When clients record at a studio, they need to feel that their art is safe in your hands and that they can trust you with their files. And nothing is more embarrassing than not being able to locate a client's file when they are present. Believe it or not, this happens much more often than you might think. As easy as it is to keep files organized, producers and engineers lose them all of the time because of their neglect to keep things organized and flat out laziness. But in reality, effective file organization is extremely simple and fast and really just comes down to doing two things:

Number one is labeling - Label every file and folder correctly and develop a system that works for you. And making subfolders is key when organizing folders. Make sure you make as many subfolders as you need to give the easiest access to finding any folder you may need. Many new producers make the mistake of not creating enough sub folders and that's what can really get you into trouble when the projects start piling up.

Number two is consistency - It's such a headache and seemingly a massive waste of time when you try and organize your files every 6 months. And most of the time, the only reason you're even organizing your files is because you're forced to do it because of space issues on your hard drive. So develop the habit of putting all folders and files where they need to be immediately before, during or after every session and avoid any future drama. Doing this will ensure that your

desktop and hard drive never becomes a cluttered mess and also keeps you looking professional in front of your clients.

2. Sessions

Session organization all comes down to one word, and that's efficiency. As a studio owner, it's your responsibility to make sure that everything is ready to go before the client arrives. And the way to do this is by creating session templates and track presets. Now there are countless ways for us to organize sessions and generally overtime, we develop our own unique systems that work for us individually. What I'm saying is that you need to develop an efficient and effective system before you start working with paying clients. Of course this system can and will be tweaked and refined overtime but nevertheless, having a system is crucial in order to be able to run efficient sessions for your clients. One thing you can never do as an engineer or producer is waste your clients time and money because of your own negligence.
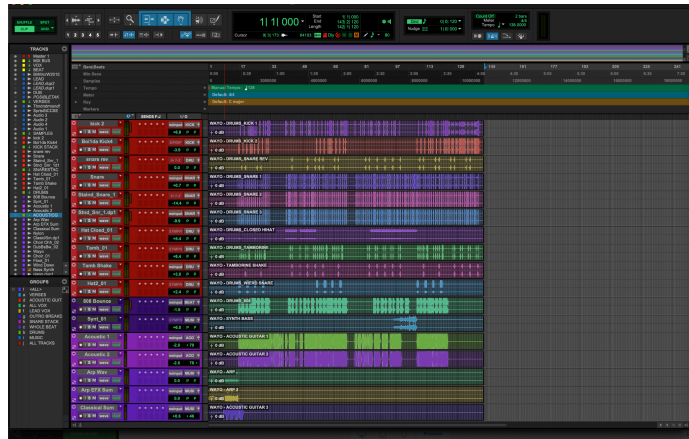
If you're really new to recording, keep in mind that all major recording software (DAWS) come stock with session templates and track presets to get you started while you start putting together your own systems. So start out with these until you are experienced enough to start developing your own.

Session organization also means that the artist or band needs are met before the session. Remember that it's your responsibility to communicate with clients beforehand to make sure you're ready to go the minute they arrive. And this could mean a number of different

things like researching recording techniques, setting up mics for the band, arranging the space, getting all of the inputs ready for instruments and drums, renting gear you may not have. All of these things are part of session organization that all studio's need to be aware of in order to best serve their clients.

Chapter 3 - *Establishing Studio Rules & A Studio Culture*

It's extremely important to establish your studio boundaries and rules right from the jump so clients know not to try and take advantage of you and your space. You need to decide what kind of culture you want your space to represent and establish rules and an environment that reflect that culture. Every studio is different and has its own unique vibe and energy. Some studio's are party studio's and allow drinking, smoking, and big crowds. While other studio's are very strict when it comes to those activities. Whatever you decide you want your studio culture to be, make sure you write it down and have it in plain view

of the clients and enforce them at all times. The culture of your studio is what attracts clients to your space and in many ways, it will depict your general clientele. And one studio culture isn't necessarily better than the other. Party studios or more serious studios can both generate good revenue. So make sure to give this some good thought.

Chapter 4 - Setting The Tone For A Successful Recording Session

Vibe is everything when entering a studio and all of your clients deserve the best experience possible that you're able to provide in order for them to have the best results. Over the years I've really excelled at developing this skill and making it an integral part of my studio culture. I take this aspect of the client experience extremely

seriously as it has a massive impact on the performance of the client. Because you always have to remember that a better performance means a better song. And a better song means a very happy client. Now if it's a new client, then you have a little bit of work to do as you have to get to know how they work and how to work with them. And if it's a regular client that you already have a relationship with, make sure you know their specific needs, likes and dislikes and cater to them every time. Every client is different and will require slightly different approaches. But there are some fundamental things that I do with my clients that work with almost everybody.

10 tips on how to set the tone for a great recording session?

1. **Communicate their likes and needs before the session** - Like the old saying goes, it's the little things that go a long way. You have no idea how special you can make a client feel by doing something as easy as this. And the more special you can make them feel, the less likely they will feel the need to try out the competition.
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2. **Have refreshments available** - Again, something so easy to do that goes a long way. Supplying bottled water, tea and coffee doesn't break the bank and really should be an essential service you offer at your studio. All artists need some kind of liquid when they're recording, so having it on deck for them makes them feel much more comfortable and appreciated.

3. **Make sure everything is set for them to record when they arrive** - This goes hand in hand with communicating their needs before the session. But even moreso, it shows them a high level of professionalism. When artists arrive for a session, they're on the clock so to speak. So you never want to have clients sitting there waiting for you while you set up for their session and waste their precious recording time and money. Granted, there will be times where sessions overlap and you won't have a ton of

time to reset and organize things. But this is something that needs to be considered during the scheduling stage. Especially if you're working with bands and bigger artists. They will expect things to be ready to go when they arrive.

4. **Play their song immediately after you exchange initial pleasantries so they can start vibing right away** - I find it to be really good practice to play whatever song they are working on after the initial pleasantries are over when clients arrive at the studio. This really helps the client get into the vibe and mood of recording. And I know this might sound obvious but I've seen many sessions where the producer is busy playing their latest music without the client even asking to hear it. Now this can be done after the session if there's time but it should never be done before the session if the request isn't made by the client. It's very unprofessional and should always be avoided.

5. **Always be positive and have good energy even if you're not having a good day** - This again is customer service 101. But it's still something that needs mentioning when you're running a studio. Nothing throws off the vibe of a session worse than a negative attitude. Especially when it has absolutely nothing to do with clients. Remember that it's your job to create a special vibe for the clients regardless of the day you may be having. Bad vibes affect performance and performance is everything during a recording.

6. **Have the lighting ambience set before they arrive** - If you use LED lights or some other type of special lighting, make sure to have it set when the clients arrive. Some artists are very keen on lighting and the energy they receive from different lighting ambiences so it's very important for them to feel that the moment they step foot into the recording space.

7. **Make them feel good about getting ready to record** - Now this is a tip that's kind of unique to my own personal philosophy about

recording. And the reason why it's important is because it's probably one of the strongest reasons why my clients enjoy working with me. If you can develop the ability to make your clients feel comfortable before they start recording, they'll perform better 100 percent of the time. And the better performance they have, the better the end product will be. So as engineers, we should always be doing everything in our power to make them feel good about recording. And you can do this by complimenting them about something, showing interest in their life or music and just showing genuine excitement towards recording their song.

8. **Try to curb any negativity, anxiety or nervousness that artists often have before their sessions** - If you notice that your client is in a negative mindset, anxious or extremely nervous about recording, most of this is because they're nervous about recording with you. So this responsibility often falls on the engineer or producer to help alleviate those feelings. Again, showing excitement about their music is a great start. Tell them that it's normal to feel nervous because even the most experienced artists get nervous when recording. You can let them practice without you being in the space until they feel comfortable. And another technique that I sometimes use as a last ditch effort, and that is giving them one shot of alcohol if they drink. But only one! This might seem like an obscure technique, but I've done it many times simply because it works 99 percent of the time. The one shot of alcohol tends to ease their anxiety and nervousness and allows them to get into a normal flow state. But remember, if you ever do need to resort to this technique, only give them one shot or it will definitely affect their performance in a negative way.

9. **Encourage them as much as possible** - Encouragement is always a great tactic to get good performances from clients. But getting irritated because they're not doing it right will never get a good result. The more irritated you become, the less confident

they become. Which eventually leads to complete discouragement to perform. Especially with artists that are new to recording because they just don't have enough experience to know how to get back on track when things aren't going well. A healthy dose of encouragement is one of the best ways to get them back on the right track. And a healthy dose of impatience is guaranteed to scare them away from you.

10.   **Ask them how their music career is going and see if you can help them with anything** - I touched on this one earlier in the book. Showing interest in your client's life and career makes them feel extremely special and will always get them excited to record more music and keep coming back. And if you take it a step further and you're able to help them with something they need, this really makes them feel special and in turn, they will love working with you. And most of the time, helping them involves you offering up your contacts and network. But I will say this. My motto is to only offer help to people who are trying to help themselves and deserve the help. I don't recommend extending your time or network to people who need things but aren't doing what they should be doing to progress their careers. This is a sure fire way to damage your reputation through recommendation. People who come across as needy tend to always disappoint in the end. So try to be aware of this distinction when you're offering to help.

Chapter 5 - How To Get The Best Performances From Your Artists

I touched on some great ideas on how to accomplish this in the previous chapter. But this is such a game changer in terms of achieving great results with your clients recordings. If you can add this skill to your repertoire and get really good at it, your clients will never want to work with anybody else. For most people, studio time is game time and they have to always be ready to put on their best performance. The problem is that many inexperienced artists don't know how to prepare themselves for this. But if you're able to have your clients leave the studio satisfied with their performance and they feel that you had a lot to do with that great performance, they will see you as a great producer and somewhat of a mentor figure that they can learn from. And if clients feel like they can learn a lot from you, they will always be more motivated to come back to you.

Chapter 6 - Working With First Time Clients

Like in any service business, nothing is more important than first impressions to your customers and clients. So whenever you're blessed with the opportunity to have a new client, you need to approach the entire interaction and session a little bit differently than with

clients you already have a relationship with. The most important thing to a first time recording client is trust! And there are many things that they need to trust about you in order for them to see you as someone they want to keep working with. They need to trust that you're reliable. They need to trust that you're competent and know what you're doing. But most importantly, they need to feel that they can trust you with their art. And the best way to do this is to be friendly, helpful, encouraging and most importantly, you must be patient with them. Patience goes a long way when recording and is the best trait you can have when building and establishing trust with your clients. No artists or musicians want to work with impatient engineers but sadly, I see it all of the time. Not only are they impatient, but they're rude as well. And this behavior is definitely not the way to a 5 figure studio but a quick way to an empty studio.

Another key factor to building trust with new clients is great communication. As you can see, communication keeps rearing its head over and over again in this book, but it's because it is that important to your success. If a client emails you with some notes they have for a project and you don't respond for 3 or 4 days, how confident will they be to continue working with you. Now some of your regular clients that you have a relationship with may let it slide if you're generally good with your communication with them. But first time clients have absolutely no reference point as to how reliable you are. Therefore will immediately deem you as unreliable and will quickly look for another studio to record.

The next important trait that first time clients will always look for is confidence. It's inevitable that you're going to get into technical situations where you don't know what to do and that's fine, because it's all a part of the learning process. But if you can maintain a certain level of confidence that you can get it done or meet their needs, they will view you as someone that they can trust. Confidence is essential to building trust with your clients. And to be a confident engineer or producer, only take on projects that you're comfortable doing with paying clients. And if you like, you can offer

your services for free when you're building skills in other areas of music production and working in different genres of music.

Chapter 7 - *Session Tips*

Now there are a million things to learn when it comes to recording and how to run sessions that can take years of experience, especially if you don't have a mentor to show you the ropes. So if you're new to recording and don't have a ton of experience working in the studio with other artists, then you're essentially going to be running your recording studio blindly. Just because you know how to use your DAW and have been recording your own music for a while does not make you a qualified engineer. Being a great engineer takes years of experience working with other artists and musicians and putting songs together. And for most of you, recording sessions will be your primary source of income with your studio in the beginning. So it's vital that you become as educated as possible on how to run studio sessions in the most efficient and effective ways. Because the manner in which you're able to run your sessions, will ultimately determine how many clients you're able to keep in the future.

So I want to share 20 simple and effective session tips that I've picked up over the last 19 years of recording that every aspiring studio operator needs to know. These tips are guaranteed to make you a great engineer/producer that clients will love to work with and ultimately keep them coming back and spreading the word

20 key Session Tips:

1. **Prepare for your artists in advance** - This has been discussed multiple times throughout the book in previous chapters.

2. **Always make templates and use presets** - This goes hand in hand with the previous tip. When you start getting more experience with recording, it's paramount that you start making recording templates in your daw to make everything nice and easy for every session. And it doesn't have to be anything crazy because they can always be tweaked and refined over time. But make sure you have something, even if it's just the stock templates and presets that come stock with your DAW. They're massive time savers and part of what engineers job is to do in the first place. The same goes for using track presets. And again, they don't have to be anything crazy when you're first getting started, but you need to have something made so you can make quick adjustments on the fly and be able to get a good sound fast.

3. **Keep everything** - Now different engineers have different philosophies when it comes to this one. But I personally believe it's good practice to keep more takes than you delete. Especially if you know that you'll be mixing the project. What might not make sense to keep at the time of the recording could pay massive dividends in the mixing process. This has happened to me hundreds of times where I wish I would have kept takes that I deleted. And trust me, it's always better to have more than less. And the main reason why a lot of engineers don't like keeping takes is because they don't want to clutter their session with what they deem to

be material that can't be used anyway. But this leads us directly to the next tip…

4. **Use playlists** - All major recording software has a feature that is referred to as playlists. And if you're currently not aware of what they are and you do a lot of recording, I would recommend that you stop reading right now and immediately research how to use playlists in your specific DAW and you can thank me later. Playlists allow you to record multiple takes within the same track and hide the takes that you're not using. Not only does this solve the cluttered session issue, but it also makes recording and comping your takes a breeze. With playlists, you can keep all of your takes without cluttering your sessions. Playlists also have many other great features but you can study them further on your own time because they all work a little bit differently from DAW to DAW.

5. **Label everything** - This goes back to what we have previously discussed about file organization.

6. **Backup everything after every session** - Remember, as a studio owner, you're now responsible for the storage of your clients work. So to prevent any potential disasters, get in the habit of backing up your sessions after everyday that you record. And at the minimum, you should be backing up your files every week that you have sessions.

7. **Provide beverages** - Like I mentioned earlier, this is a small expense for a big reward!

8. **Have a little bit of alcohol on hand** - Just one shot of alcohol can really help alleviate nervousness in a session. But I'll warn you that if you do ever try this method, that it has to be done with the utmost of discretion or things can get sloppy really fast and can ultimately ruin the recording.

9. **<u>Don't let people get too drunk and high</u>** - Now I don't have to tell you that a lot of artists love to get drunk and high when they record. But things can get out of control really fast if you don't put your foot down if you allow this in your studio. The reality is that most people perform worse when they're drunk and or high, and the recordings almost never turn out as they want it to. When people are drunk, they think everything sounds good and this is the problem. So as an engineer, the key is to stay in front of it and cut them off early. As much as they might not like you telling them what to do, you're actually protecting your reputation and theirs simultaneously. Drunk performances almost always translate to bad performances that need to be re-done at a later date. So it's important to reiterate this to them in times where you have to cut them off. Also, drunk people get extremely sloppy and will make a huge mess and can cause damage to the studio. All in all, there's just no good reason to allow people to go over the limits in the studio. And I want to mention one more thing on this topic. In my experience, there can be exceptions to the rule. I've come to find that there are a tiny fraction of people that can perform heavily under the influence and in some cases, they perform even better under the influence. But unfortunately, the only way to find this out is through trial and error. So I'll leave that up to you to figure out at your discretion.

10. **<u>Don't force it</u>** - It's inevitable that you're going to be involved in sessions where the artist just isn't having a good day at the office and is just not performing well. And with artists that you've worked with before, this is of course much easier to spot. But with new clients it can get a little bit tricky and you'll have to use your better judgment. But either way, if you find yourself to be in a position where you're recording the same line for an hour. Then there's no point in continuing wasting time and money. Cut the session short and let them come back to it with a fresh mind.

But for me personally, before I make the decision to cut my sessions short, there's another technique that I like to employ. And that's to continue on with a different section of the song that they may be more comfortable with to see if they're able to get back on track. Surprisingly this works more than you might think. And once they're no longer flustered and have their confidence back, you can go back to the section that was giving them problems and get it done properly.

11. **Don't rush it** - Now there's a big distinction between forcing things and rushing things and it's important to be clear on the difference. Rushing it means that you're not even trying to get the best takes possible. It means that you're trying to finish the recording as fast as possible. And this tends to happen most when the engineer or producer doesn't like the song or the artist and they want to get the session over with as soon as possible. But this is a huge mistake my friends. For one, you never know how a song is going to turn out when it's finished. You wouldn't believe how many times I wasn't into a song at the beginning of the recording process, and by the time it was mixed and mastered, it turned out to be a great song. Number 2, no one likes to feel rushed in anything we're doing in life. Especially when it comes to our art. If an artist feels like they are being rushed, they will quickly lose trust in you and will not come back to your studio. And number 3, rushing clients is very unprofessional and not what making music is all about. Now granted, sometimes the client's time might be running low on the session and they need to rush a bit if they want to get it done that day. But they can always come back. And this is what I recommend that you recommend to them if they're willing to pay a little bit more money for a much better end result.

12. **Stay off your phone** - It's so easy to surf around on your phone while you're recording someone, especially if you're not particularly interested in the song. I see it all the time and I must say that it drives me nuts just watching people do it.

Imagine how the artist feels seeing you on your phone every time they finish a take. Not engaged and not caring about their song. To them, this is a huge slap in the face and most people will take this as you not respecting them or their music. Yes, there will be times that you have to take important calls, but stop the session or let the artist practice while you take the call. But don't make taking a bunch of calls during your session a habit either. It completely disrupts the flow and is taken as disrespect. And if someone feels disrespected, they most likely want to come back to be disrespected some more.

13. **Encourage, encourage, encourage** - encouragement breeds confidence, confidence breeds creativity and flow, confidence, creativity and flow create exceptional performances, exceptional performances breed great music and great music breeds?

14. **Never record through speakers** - This is an amateur mistake I see almost all beginner engineers make over and over again and I must say that it drives me absolutely crazy. Now sometimes people genuinely forget to turn the speakers off which even seasoned engineers will do from time to time. Then there's the people that are so green that they don't even know they should be turning the speakers off while they're recording. Then there's the stubborn people who do it out of sheer neglect. You wouldn't believe how many recordings I've had given to me to mix with the speakers playing during the recording process that completely ruined the recording. To the point where I couldn't even mix them at all. And unfortunately there's no solution to this problem in post production which is why it's to be avoided at all costs. Always, always record in headphones. And to take it a step further, make sure they're full closed back headphones to minimize the amount of headphone bleed. Using the wrong kind of headphones can cause just as much damage as recording in speakers. So make sure to take this into consideration when you're shopping for headphones to record with.

15. **Don't allow many people in sessions that aren't involved in the project** - This is a great tip and one that will save you a ton of frustrations and problems. Depending on the size of your studio, this may not be an issue because you just don't have the space to house many bodies. But if you do have a larger space, there are a few reasons why you need to avoid this as much as possible with your studio. Number 1) everyone thinks they're expert on music and how it should sound even without having recorded a song a day in their life. Too many opinions coming from non professionals is never good at any point of the production process. It just slows things down and can even ruin the entire song (I've seen this happen many times). The more input you get from different people, the harder it is to come to agreements on production decisions. And just because the friends that your clients bring to the studio make music, doesn't mean they're input will serve their song any better. Especially if they aren't involved in the project on any level. Number 2) There are quite a few artists that see the studio as a place to hang out and party, and will bring friends with them to do just that. This normally results in causing major distractions and prevents any possibility of getting constructive work done. SImply because they aren't working and they just treat it as a party and can become very loud during the recordings. They will also make a mess and can ultimately damage things with absolutely no liability. Number 3) Unfortunately there are bad people out there that will steal your belongings. The less people that you don't know in your studio the better!

16. **No noisy clothing material or jewelry in the recording booth** - Try and be aware of noisy clothing or jewelry that clients may be wearing. Cause if it's not noticed in time, this can actually ruin the entire recording as it can be fixed during the mixing stage.

17. **Always record warm up takes and save them** - Over the years I've found it to be very good practice to always keep the record

button on when artists are warming up or doing practice takes. You never know what gold you might come across or what things that you can find that can be used later on in the production that wasn't initially created for the song.

18. **Take breaks** - This might seem obvious but time can fly when you're in a recording session. And most artists and musicians need time to recover and they also need time to give their ears a break. 20 minute breaks can go a long way in terms of longevity in a session, especially if it's a longer recording session to begin with. In my experience, most artists and musicians will not do anymore of their best work after about 4 hours of recording. Now this isn't a hard and fast rule and doesn't apply to everybody, but most people just aren't going to continue to perform well after 4 hours. And the amount of breaks you take will generally be dependent on the specific artist and individual. The more experience an artist or musician has, the longer they can go without breaks. But taking breaks should always be a part of the workflow in a recording session. Unless the artist is in a zone. When this happens, you should always milk the great performance as long as possible. This is where all the real magic can happen and how great songs are made.

19. **Try and set up your studio to where the engineer and artist or musician(s)can have eye contact with one another** - Having eye contact is essential for both the artist and the engineer throughout the recording process. Having eye contact is key for establishing that synergy that's so important between artist and engineer. For example, I personally have so much experience with recording that sometimes I don't even need to hear the take to know if it was performed well. All I have to do is watch the artist and I know if it was a great take or not. Also the artist is always looking to the engineer or producer for validation and vibe that just can't be accomplished if there's no eye contact. And it's so important for producers to have the ability to analyze body language during a recording. This helps them

determine how they need to dictate how they control the session and the artist. So for all of these important reasons, make sure that you try and set up your space to have eye contact with one another.

20. **Always have backup cables** - If you've been recording for even a small period of time, then you know that there can and always will be technical problems. Whether it's with the software or the gear, something always comes up. And becoming great at troubleshooting is essential to becoming a great engineer but it takes time. But there's a common problem that can arise at any time when recording and that's having a cable dying out on you in the middle of a session. And the last thing you want to do is cut a session short and reschedule just because you didn't have an extra cable lying around. This problem generally occurs most frequently when you buy cheap cables. Now I completely understand that expensive cables aren't usually in the budget when you're first getting setup, but you need to know that there's a price to pay for that. Cheap cables generally will only last a year or so, especially if you use them alot. And to be honest, I've found that you'll end up spending more money on a bunch of cheap cables over time than if you bite the bullet and get the good ones right from the beginning. But I'll leave that decision up to you. Regardless of what you do, try to have extras around at all times.

Chapter 8 - Delivering Rough Mixes

I hate to admit it, but this is something that I avoided doing for years completely unaware that it's your responsibility as an engineer to give your client some form of a rough mix after a recording session. And there are two ways to go about doing this. You can either mix a little bit as you go along in the recording. Or you take 20 to 30 minutes after the session to do so. Even if that means doing it on your own time. My early philosophy was that if there was no time after

the session for a quick mix, then I will send them a rough mix whenever I get to it. Even if that was a week or two later. I had no idea how important it was to the client and I had no idea that it was my responsibility as a studio owner to have it done. Now there are actually some exceptions to this rule. There will be circumstances where there just wasn't enough recorded to warrant a rough mix, or the client will just tell you that they don't want a rough mix and to send them a good mix when it's ready. But if you're a new studio owner, you need to know that it's your responsibility to deliver your clients a rough mix before they leave the studio.

And rough mixes don't always need to be pretty, but they do need to give your client some sort of decent product to leave their session with. Clients need to be able to reasonably evaluate their performance and that the song was done to their standards. And that's very difficult to do with a dry song that has no mixing done to it.

So what constitutes a rough mix?

- Basic equalization
- Compression
- Reverb
- Basic leveling and panning
- Basic editing
- Basic tuning
- Putting a limiter on the master

And even if you're still a beginner at mixing, these tasks don't require a ton of skill or knowledge to do quickly. This is another

reason why making recording templates and track presets is so valuable. It makes doing rough mixes a breeze as half of the work is already done for you.

Chapter 9 - Developing Recording Education

Most young people that set up home studio's are self taught and generally don't spend much time studying how to run a successful recording studio. Just because you're proficient in a DAW, make nice beats, a master of guitar or have been recording your own vocals, does not mean that you have the skills to operate a successful studio. Being a recording engineer involves years of training and therefore needs to be studied like you would any other skill. And this book should really be just the first step in your recording and studio business education. Take the time to study the recording arts and how to operate professional recording sessions. Do more research on how to run a successful studio.

Now there are thousands of recording techniques and teaching them is far beyond the scope of this particular book. But the more educated you are in this aspect of the business, the more clients you will attract on your way to 5 or even 6 figures.

Chapter 10 - Contracting Other Producers & Engineers To Work With You

So this topic usually comes up further along in the studio business journey but I feel it's necessary to at least make you aware of it now. As your business grows and you start getting more and more clients, naturally you might want to bring other people in to take on some of the workload. Especially if you're doing most of the mixing. When you have a lot of clients that need recording and mixing services all at the same time, it's almost impossible to keep up with the demand and eventually you'll have to bring in other talented engineers

and producers to help you out. So I want to offer up some advice for when your business does get to this stage.

The most important qualities to look for in an engineer:

- Reliability
- The ability to work well with all different types of people
- People who are passionate about the music creation process
- Talented
- People who have a willingness to learn
- People who will respect your space

If they don't meet these general criteria, they probably won't be good for your business and will end up chasing your clients away. Or, they'll demand that they only want to work with you, leaving you back to square one anyway. So make sure you take the time to carefully vet them and train them well to meet your standards.

Since I prefer to spend most of my time mixing, over the years I've had to hire many engineers and producers and I've had a few bad experiences. So that's why I had to develop this criteria to save me from hiring people that don't work for my business.

Another thing to mention is that I don't recommend hiring them as an employee if you do have a registered company. Of course, the business implications of having employees will vary depending on where you live, but where I live in Canada, there are far too many headaches that need to be dealt with on the back end of the business to make it worthwhile. It's much better to hire them as a contracted worker! It's essentially hassle free when it comes to the business side of things.