

## Real Stories of Young Entrepreneurs in Wisconsin

**Name:**

Luke Eisner

**Business Name:**

Luke Eisner DJ & Lighting, LLC

**What inspired you to start your business? Tell us about your inspiration, your idea and how it became a reality.**

Ever since I can remember I have had a love for music. Nothing in the world makes me happier or is more inspiring to me. I've always loved performing and entertaining people. In addition to my business, I am currently in a band, performing as a singer/songwriter. I love live music. I've always been a dreamer and I knew I wanted to start living my dreams young. There is something about the energy that really makes people happy, which is something I love seeing and being a part of.

I started in the DJ business when I was 13, working for my cousin Paul Hackbarth, who owns Sound By Design, the largest wedding DJ service in Wisconsin. I worked many weddings at Milwaukee's top venues including The Milwaukee Art Museum, Discovery World, The Grain Exchange and The Botanical Gardens. As much as I enjoyed learning by working weddings, it still wasn't exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to be playing more club-style music as more of a performer at school dances and parties.

Upon seeing my passion for music, my people skills, my understanding of the business and my desire to serve a different part of the market, my cousin encouraged me to start my own business. In 2010, I formed Luke Eisner DJ and Lighting, LLC. My goal is to use my passion and love for music to create an experience for audiences that they will never forget.

I had been able to save most of the money I had earned working in the wedding business and bought my first equipment set up which included a modest sound system and a few lights and began DJ-ing parties and small events. Since I began 2 years ago, I have taken most of the money I've earned and reinvested it in the business in the form of more sound equipment and lighting.

When I began, I would load my two speakers, amplifier and lights into the back of my parents car. Today, my equipment fills a 12 foot trailer, and I have a second trailer for a large portable stage that I use when I'm playing to audiences of 500 or more.

It is very satisfying that my job is something I am passionate about.

**Describe your product / service, purpose / goals, features / benefits, unique selling point.**

**Purpose:** As Luke Eisner DJ & Lighting LLC, it's not our show, it's the customer's show. I want to provide my customers with a service that exceeds their expectations. I try not to make the show about me, I try to make it a show that is completely different from other DJ's. It's all about the total experience. I pay more attention to the sound quality than most other DJ's. Most DJ's take weddings, parties, school dances, whatever jobs they can get, and pay very little attention to the sound quality that is specific to club-style DJing. This leads to disappointment from audiences that are expecting a club-style experience.

**Features:** My target audience is very fond of the low end of the sound spectrum. I deducted, from the subwoofers in cars to the huge headphones kids have, that they prefer a lot of bass. So this is what I have incorporated into my sound system. I have 5 subwoofers. My most powerful pair is two 21-inch speakers, powered by a 3600-watt amplifier each. These two subwoofers alone are enough to reproduce chestthumping bass equal to the systems used on small concert stages. Along with these I have plenty of other speakers and amplification to address the higher frequencies so the entire audio range is crystal clear. I fine-tune the sound with other outboard electronic

gear to make it not only a loud sound but also a very clear sound.

Unique Selling Points: To my target audience, sound is only half the experience. They expect a phenomenal light show. What I like to do is take this expectation and blow it out of the water. This gives my performance a signature feel. I like to provide lights that would never be expected and are as good as those you see at live concerts.

My lighting show consists of a club style mix of lasers as well as LED intelligent lighting that tracks the audio signal and reacts to each individual beat. Some of my lasers are so powerful that I have had to obtain a license with the FDA and a variance to operate Class B lasers in an indoor setting. I have also had to conduct safety training courses with my staff so they can operate the lasers as well. With the professional stage fogger the lights really pop, which always brings positive reactions from the audience and helps create the total atmosphere I am becoming known for.

Goals: I've always been a goal-orientated person, and thus far I have been able to achieve the goals I have set:

- 2010: My first goal was to start a company with my own money and I did.

February 2011: My second goal was to do a school dance, which I did 4 months after starting my business.

To see the investments I've made in equipment & lighting and the progress I've made in the staging of my show, I've compared the picture of my first school dance in 2010 to a recent performance (December 2012) at the same venue.

September 2011: My next goal was to do a high school Homecoming, which I did in less than one year. I was able to fill a four-basketball court gymnasium with lights and sound for a school with a student body of 1500.

November 2011: My next goal was to train a second crew to do events when we are double booked. I currently have a staff of 5 dedicated and talented employees who can interact with clients and put on a good show while I'm performing elsewhere.

I now have the staff and equipment to book two venues on the same evening, which helps me earn more money and get a better return on the investment I have in equipment

The most important thing that comes with my DJ package are the DJ themselves. I have always thought that the most vital thing to a successful event was the staff. It doesn't matter how many lights or how much sound you have, if the DJ is disrespectful, selfish, or nonpersonable, the entire event can fail as well as my reputation.

I am very proud to say I have chosen my staff from my closest friends that I have had my entire life. I can trust them, know they have good reputations, and I know exactly how hardworking they are. I try to make the staff feel like they are appreciated and respected because not only are they

my friends but they deserve to know how much I appreciate their hard work. In addition to paying them I often take them out to dinner or bowling after shows, and hold a staff party for them during the holidays. In addition I have created Special staff hoodies for them to give them a special sense of pride. We work in teams of two or three, a lead DJ and an assistant(s) who help rig both the sound and the lighting and is just as capable to run the show in case something happens to the lead DJ.

### **Tell us about yourself and how you make your business succeed.**

I work hard to build my brand and my company's reputation. I try to make it very classy and professional as well as cool and popular. I try to do this through marketing. I have developed several marketing tools to spread my brand and the feelings that I want associated with it.

First off I worked with a well-known local graphic designer to come up with a logo. Then I created a line of apparel to be marketed to girls only. I did this in order to boost the coolness factor of the brand. The shirts themselves were very designer. I put a picture of them on Facebook and within the week, I sold 53 of them.

The fact that only women wore them created much more attention for the brand among guys and girls. I have since come out with unisex hoodies, one displaying the original logo and a second design with a different graphic treatment of the brand name. Bands have many different designs for their tour t-shirts, that's where I got the idea.

I market myself with various promotions, one being a Sweet 16 direct mail offer that was 16% Off my regular price if booked by a certain date. This was mailed to the parents of 15 year olds from a variety of school districts. This was in order to get my name out to a variety of regions and social groups as well as to encourage more advanced bookings.

I have a promotion package that I mail to school districts that describes my services and I include an invitation to meet with them in person. I also have a Facebook page that I frequently update with event photos, videos, and merchandise. Finally I have created calling cards that I hand out at gigs when asked for.

I often underpriced my services to get a party or dance in a school district that I am currently not doing business in. This allows me to get exposure and build my reputation in the hopes of getting a larger event like a homecoming or prom within the district.

I am a 16-year-old junior at Greendale High School, holding a 4.0 grade point average every semester. I study guitar and piano and I'm an avid collector of music in all genres. I feel that one of my strengths is my ability to spot musical trends. This is part of what makes me good at what I do because it may be the first time my target audience hears a song which creates a new and desirable feeling for them.

I have demonstrated my commitment to success by forming an LLC. I am researching acquiring liability insurance, and have reinvested revenues back into the business to purchase more audio and lighting equipment as well as an expanded music library.

Late in 2011 I began to finance equipment purchases instead of paying out right for gear. I currently carry a debt of \$2,400, which I have on a two-year finance plan at 5% interest. This allows me to leverage my working capital.

I chose to use my name for my company due to my positive reputation in the community. In addition to my commitment to academics I have also pledged not to participate in drugs or alcohol. I am a representative for Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) where we go to middle schools and advocate abstinence from tobacco. I am also involved in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). I have won regional awards for speaking on the topic of business ethics.

I feel fortunate to have experienced some degree of success and want to use my business platform to give back to the community. I have DJ'd an event for homebound soldiers and donated my fee back to the cause. I have provided a performance worth \$250 to be auctioned off at a local charity event. I have volunteered my services free of charge to the Milwaukee Rescue Mission. I donated my services for a fundraising event for Sophia's Heart and for the Cronos Disease Foundation and most recently did a concert/fundraiser that earned over \$700 for the Greendale High School FBLA chapter.

Most importantly I have achieved success on my own. I have put many hours and personal resources into building this business. I am a people person, I love to entertain and make sure everyone is having a good time. I like to make them feel like their opinion is important so I lay out request cards, which I try to make sure to play if they are appropriate. I like to stay within the guidelines of the faculty and school administration as well as providing the students with music they enjoy...which can be a juggling act at times. I have contracts that I enter into with my clients and encourage them to make a list of wanted and unwanted songs so they can have a desirable music selection. I also carry a portable wifi hotspot to download requested songs the night of the event if need be.

**What are your future goals and vision for your business? How do you propose to develop your business?**

My future goals are to develop a larger marketing outreach, obtain bookings at larger venues, and increase company revenue. I plan to do this by:

a) Raising my performance fees to reflect the quality of the show that is being provided.

- b) Adding additional crews/equipment to be able to take multiple bookings on the same day
- c) Make my services available as a subcontractor, to a select group of other DJ companies that my be overbooked and need another crew to handle a booking.
- d) Market to a variety of clientele such as weddings, Bat and Bar Mitzvahs, corporate events, rave events, festivals, and local concerts.
- e) Increase my marketing to a variety of social media such as Twitter, Tumblr, and YouTube by working with a professional in these disciplines.
- f) Promote myself as an artist by posting and performing my own compositions and mixes
- g) Market to new school districts and counties
- h) Continue to be involved in giving back to the community and various causes and will continue to donate my time and service to new charities.