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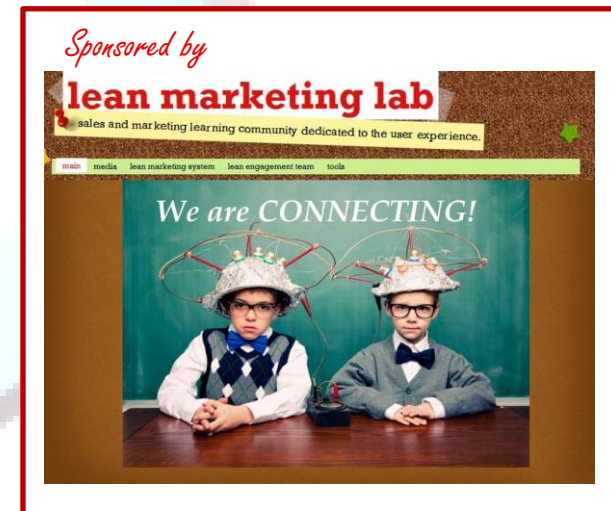
*Implementing Lean Marketing Systems*



## Can Studying Music help your Lean Enterprise?

Guest was John Lawrence Woodall

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A native of Berkeley California, composer John Lawrence Woodall, began playing piano at age 5 and started writing music by age ten, During High School in Australia John attended the Academy of Guitar and the N.S.W. Conservatory of Music. Although the focus of the time was rock and jazz, John's deep love of Russian classical music introduced him to the possibilities of music and picture. Through High School in Boston John attended classes at Berkeley School of Music honing his skills as a string arranger and orchestrator. In 1983, he met legendary Producer/Engineer Jim Gaines and joined his production team at the Record Plant that created a dozen platinum albums and a handful of Grammys. In 1987, John received the Excellence in Composition and Songwriting award from Yamaha Music. John has scored two Emmy award winning shows, received the Ace and Gold awards for his work on children's shows such as Baru Bay with Bob Weir.



About [Composers and Schools in Concert](#): CSIC is a nonprofit organization who partners with professional composers and youth music programs (grades 9-12) to offer innovative music education through composer workshops and commissions.

John Lawrence Woodall can be found at [Powerof2Music](#)

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## Transcription of Podcast

Joe: Welcome, everyone. This is Joe Dager, host of the Business901 podcast. With me today is John Lawrence Woodall. John is a music composer who has contributed original soundtracks to the national television, film, multimedia, and advertising industry since 1989. His background from the Conservatory of Music and elements of rock and hip-hop combine to produce evocative score that has turned his company, Powerof2 Music, into a multi award-winning music production company.

John, I would like to welcome you. Could you update us with what you are working on and a little more background about yourself?

John: Well, hi, Joe. Thanks so much for having me today. I really appreciate it.

My background, I attended the Academy of Guitar and the Conservatory of Music, and at the prodding basically of my best friend's mother who, as we were growing up, played us all the Russian master music, the Prokofievs and Tchaikovskys and the Rachmaninoffs, and you know, just as a young child, I just fell in love with that. I attended the Academy of Guitar and the Conservatory of Music.

As I grew older, I started writing music at about the age of 10. I've been playing piano, guitar and cello since age 5. I started in my teens through the Conservatory people to see the power of picture and music, film and music, and

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I took a course at the Berklee School of Music in Boston in my last year of high school on string arranging and eventually met a person who asked me if I could write a score. I said yes, and so I started writing score, and I haven't looked back. That's a long time now.

I've worked on all sorts of things over these last few years. A lot, I can talk about, some I can't because I've ghosted for other people on mainstream television. I've done shows, like 'I Love the 80s', 'I Love the 90s', 'Abducted', 'True Crime', 'Manhunt', 'Ghost Hunters', 'Command Decision', 'iDetective'. At the moment, I'm working with a young screenwriter, who's written a sci-fi screenplay. He was brought to me through friends, and I've since become good friends with Michael. It's a sci-fi action-adventure, back through time on parallel worlds and universes. It's very cool. So, that's what I'm doing at the moment is writing music for that.

Joe: I don't think that many people know how deeply rooted mathematics is with music. Pythagoras was a musician first, and then he gave birth to math through geometry and algebra, and there are definitely relationships between music and mathematics when we go back. Do you have some thoughts on that?

John: No doubt that they are interwoven. They're not even related; they are interwoven. They're inseparable. If you take it by a basic level, music is divided into different meters, 4/4, 3/4, three beats to a bar, 5/8, five beats to a bar, et cetera, and then each particular note can be extended with a dot that can be

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made into triplets. They can form cascades of mathematical numbers, much the same way that these calculus formulas form together. You can't have one without the other.

Joe: In my world, which is Lean and Six Sigma, we're deeply rooted in statistics and math, and you could say then that process improvement and music are not so distant cousins.

John: They are very close. Yeah.

Joe: I see some of the terminology that may apply when you're composing. Is there a flowchart that you follow or something when you're composing?

John: This is a complex question, Joe. And it gets complex in the different contexts, and the contexts would be this. What am I composing for? Am I a songwriter and I'm writing for a market? Am I a serious music writer? You know, Mozart, and writing for a let's say a serious music medium where I am writing a piece of music to evoke a picture and a feeling in your imagination. Or am I a composer working on a film where the pictures given, and then I work within a given set of rules, albeit bendable rules, to produce a score that evokes what you are already seeing in the picture? So there are three different contexts on that.

Joe: And within three contexts, is it a separate process for each of them?

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John: Very different processes, and also there are very different mindsets. Let's just take the last two. With a classical composer, let's say, or a serious music composer, I'm taking what I'm feeling or a subject and translating it into music notes and doing that through the process of my imagination and what I believe, think, or feel would work or would create that image in your mind.

If I'm a film composer and I'm working with images, it's very different. Like if it's a bad-guy chase scene, for example, there are very specific rules that happen around that. Tempo, it has to be a certain tempo or above. We're talking 132 beats a minute or above. All of us, whether it's you, me, the general public, we all have been pre-programmed for a long time now. If it is a chase scene and there are bad guys, I'm going to do it at a high tempo because that gives you the feeling of action, and I'm usually going to do it in a minor key. A lot of times, it's going to be E minor because E minor speaks bad guys coming in. It was even parodied by the great Gary Larson in 'The Far Side'. There are different mindsets. One, I'm allowed to flow, to create a picture that I'm seeing. The other one is I'm working with an inner structure within a construct, and I have to satisfy that construct ahead of my own desires, wants or needs. The construct of the film says that I must complement that scene. If I go against it, people will look, and they'll know instantly something's wrong.

Joe: So, this is a very iterative process, and I don't know if you're familiar with Dr. Deming and PDCA or PDSA, that's a plan, do, study, adjust, and it's a repetitive cycle. Is that how music is written?



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John: gain, we'll go back to a context, and something that I can speak of is television and film. It's very much what you just said. In every TV show, there's a set of music cues that must happen, and that's in every show, there's always a set up cue, setting you up, creating a musical bed that's not too fast, not too slow, but it's setting you up for then what would be called the preparation scene. The preparation is right before the action is going to happen. Then, some sort of action is going to happen, whether it is drama, false starts, the guy opens the door, and the pigeon flies away. Also, what we call billboards. Like, there might be a pre-scene. They call it an opening. In opening credits, for example, in the Bond movies, Bond movies have usually two to three-minute opening film that has nothing to do with the actual movie, but it's just some action that gets you to the billboard, which we also call title sequence.

So, it's very formulaic, it's very much planned. I will look at the show; I will look at a script; I will plan keys and the tempos out ahead of time. I will adjust them, usually just the tempos, through the natural rhythm of the footage. I will sit there and adjust to that in case my cue is too fast for it or too slow for it. But other than that, I can pretty much plan out the whole process, even if I don't have footage to look at. A lot of times, I'll get some footage and a black hole. Just a piece of black with what they call a straightener, a white line running across the bottom. So it may be six or seven seconds because they haven't finished working or shooting a particular scene. So what I do there is I get the script. Each line of the script is about four and half seconds. It varies, but that's

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how it works out. So, I can time my cues very accurately within a few frames. Literally, preplan, pre-rhythm organize and key-organize because it's nice when you do a show that as the show rises, the key rises. You don't just want to do everything in the key of C. You'd put everyone to sleep. I might start in the key of C, and then the bad guy – for the set up, I might do an E minor. The bad guy's in E minor, and if there's some sort of a love scene, I can get to the keys that we're all pre-programmed into recognizing as such. Carl Stalling, Ray Scott, these were people that worked for Disney back in the 1940s and 1950s that built the cartoons. These were the guys who took all the classic music and turned it into cartoon music, and this was the beginning of preprogramming us all to respond. When you hear a beautiful piece, The Morn of the Dawn of the Fawn, as we like to call it, that's basically the sheepdog and the wolf guarding the sheep, that cartoon, that whole opening which said, morning, it's a beautiful day and hoping. When you see something like that, it doesn't matter what it looks like outside, you will treat it as feeling inside of you.

Joe: What you just basically described was flow, wasn't it? This is just how it flows through the whole process.

John: Yes. What I do is I look at the whole show, the whole episode. Let's say it's an hour show, which is about 50 minutes of actual footage. I look at the flow from beginning to end, and then I'll break it down into what we call the parts. Part one is really the build; part two is really the set up and the preparation; part three is the action, and part four is the resolve. They still all need to build; they still need

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everything that I have mentioned before, and that have certain rhythms and certain keys that will just trigger your mind into knowing that, yes, this is correct. Believe me, if I did a chase scene at a 100 bpm in B flat, in a major key, you'd be looking at me like what's wrong with this picture, and you would know. Even if you had no idea, you would know there was something wrong. So, yes, you have to look at the flow of the entire show, and then each particular act.

Joe: I want to jump to composing a piece of music. I think it's more of a system-type thinking approach that you've got this grand idea, and you look at this big picture, but then you've got to start writing this single note to start out with something. It's like you're starting with this big blank piece of paper to create this system. How does that process work? I mean, when you start with that piece, you have a theme I would assume, but could you kind of walk me through that a little?

John: I want to quote the late, great Jerry Goldsmith. I went to one of his lectures; I went to several of them, but I went to this particular one. I was completely blown away to hear him say, 'I might spend the first 2 days of my 20-day budget just to find the right tempo, how fast or how slow this is.' I couldn't believe that when I first heard that, because I would just think, boom, I could just go to something, but he was so right in the subtleties, tempo and speed and what they do to a body and what they evoke.

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If I'm sitting here, which I do at times, and say, well, I've got this idea – well, let's be real, I'm working on an idea now and that is I have written so much action, all this sort of music, and minor and I've done a lot of songwriting, but now what I'm going to do is I'm writing a sacred piece of music. What I call 'sacred' music, and that could be anything from Mozart to some sort of nice music, let's say.

The process that is in my mind is this, and that's that I have this feeling of it. I have no idea how to start it, and I have no idea how to end it. I've got some good middle ideas in my head, thinking of the flow from the beginning to the end. I do know that it has to start out a certain way and that I need to set the scene even though it is a piece of music, sacred music. It's only to set you up, the listener up, and I'm not sure how that's going to happen. In my mind right now, I'm thinking it's going to be haunting, beautiful, a little bit listless, romantic and a little bit dark. So, I might hear and throw away 99 ideas before I reach one. I might even throw that away later if I hate it and hope that maybe it will stimulate something else.

As I sit here with those words in my mind, I can start playing, and while I might play a bunch of junk or inappropriate or whatever, especially if I'm frustrated, I might just play something completely different. Eventually, I'm going to hit upon a phrase or a melody that strikes me as the right one, or at least indicative of what I am trying to say. And so from there I'll build, and it is a very much build, reconstruct, build, reconstruct. I may find that I've written, let's say the piece

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has ten sections. Of the seven sections that I have written right now, I may put them together and realize later that I hate section three and four. I would remove it and leave holes, and then come back to those and try to finish it and sometimes work from beginning to end, meaning I can take it from note one to the very last note.

But as I said, usually a composer, like myself, I want to make a distinction between – there're several different types of composers, but a composer like myself, as I said, I can see something in my mind. If I can feel it, it might be even better, in my mind from beginning to end, but I start in the middle, I may work any which way.

Some of the other types of composers – a long-time business partner, Buddy Hendrickson, who was for a long time a session drummer in Los Angeles, played with everybody on tons of people's records, he's a brilliant composer. Because he's a percussionist, he sees things in rhythm. I'm a string guy. I have a degree in string arranging, horns. I think in different sorts of rhythm. I think moving the piece of music through brass and strings, and he thinks moving the piece of music through drums, and because he's playing, you know, because he's piano playing, or because he's string playing of some sort. Buddy, for example, he would go from beginning to end. Now, he didn't have any notes; he had the rhythm of the entire let's say the 50 minute piece, from beginning to end. This is what I want; this is how I want this thing to go.

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There is what I call the bottom end composers, the trombone players, the Rick Walshes, the Don Davis'. Don Davis did 'The Matrix'. These are brass players who think of a score through power, subtlety and power, and where are my power spots in the score? So, they may line up the entire 30 minutes of. I need to hit it here, here, here, it needs to be subtle and beautiful like that. Then, they'll start writing around that. So, again, I can only talk about my own process of being around these people.

Joe: What you're saying to me is that you compose by the tools that you use. Is that a fair way to say that?

John: That is a fair way to say that, yes. I compose by how I was educated. John Williams, for example, and a lot of violinists, are absolutely fabulous composers. Complex – they grow up learning; their scores are endlessly complex. Like, I'm always challenged to write what we call three-part harmony, that's three melodies going at once, whereas John Williams will commonly write four. Because of his background, he grew up; his father was a drummer. Then Ray Scott created the music for all those varying melodies that you hear. You know; I mean, insanely good.

For guys like that and guys like Don Davis, John Debney, they've grown up with their parents in the orchestra, and since young children have played specific instruments that enable them to write the type of score that's possible within them. You will often get hired; I will be hired by people because they simply

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wanted a string guy in there and not a brass guy or a percussion guy. Vice-versa, I will lose scores, lose jobs from people saying, well; we really wanted someone who does that.

For me, I grew up with strings – pianos, guitars, cellos. And my business partner wrote very differently growing up. He has masters, and he's a percussionist and drummer, and yet the people like Rick Walsh, and Rick has worked on everything from Indiana Jones; you just look at this fellow's resume, and it's impressive. He's a trombone player, so again, the power angle.

We all tend to compose with how we are comfortable. For a string player, for example, a brass player won't know all the different articulations. He might know them in theory, like, I know most of the orchestra in theory, but I don't play those instruments, so I don't know. We compose with the tools that we have usually from the backgrounds where we're from.

Joe: Is a composer sort of like the engineer in a company, the guy, who's a little more recluse, a little more in the background, and just likes to make stuff? Is he a maker, and likes the elements of it? Is that the typical personality?

John: If it's not when you begin, it will be when you end. It parts in two ways and that's that I've spent the last 25 years sitting in a dark room with mood lighting, surrounded by electronics that look like the Starship Enterprise, writing music basically from 10:00 to midnight, six days a week. You have 42 minutes – if

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you're a major composer, like myself, doing television; you have 40 to 42 minutes of music to write every six days. It can be very stressful, very stressful. You will end up sitting in your darkroom and being a recluse. I am not that by nature, but I am that by trade.

Joe: When you have that block, do you use tricks like writers use where you just work against a limit or you just start writing fast and continuous and not worry about what you're doing? Do you use similar type tricks?

John: There are some tricks to use, and all of them can be dangerous. So usually for me, if I'm lucky enough to have received the entire episode or the entire movie, in other words, the movie is pretty much finished, 80% edited, let's say, before I start scoring it, then I will just move on. I will just say, look, at the 10-minute mark, I don't know what I'm going to do with this cue. Let's move on to minute 13. I'll move on and then leave all the hard stuff for the end, which is not fun. But hopefully, during that time as I'm moving on, I'm getting more and more of an idea about what should go in that gap, usually because what's preceded it and postceded it. In other words, if there's music later that I've got, you know, here's a really nice theme, this really relates to what's happening earlier. And you may not see it until later. You can look at a scene and not know what to do with it, and then later there might be a small piece of the story that relates and you realize they have the same semantic treatment, albeit done in completely different ways.



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The other way you can do it and I have done this, is I will temp it. I will sit there with notes or whatever I can get my hands on that's usually no one else's stuff, like, you know, what we call public domain classical music. I'll just play some classical music, just do the things randomly, just scan until something feels right. It's different for different people. For me, it's not that I'm looking to find the notes. I'm looking to find the feeling that works, the tempo and the key, and once things happen, then okay, I can beat my head against the wall for a while and usually come up with something right. Not always. I've been cold before, on a few occasions. It doesn't happen often. But it does happen that the tune was completely wrong. Maybe I didn't go against type, you know, maybe he's a bad guy but he's got a good heart, and I just made him a bad guy in the music.

Against those blocks, there're several tools. You can omit and move on and come back; you can temp it with classical music, or you can temp it with a similar scene from a completely different movie and just see what they did and all three work. My personal favorite is to move on and come back, trying not to ever really listen to what someone else did in a scene. You do this in your study, not while I'm scoring it. I would have already done this for weeks in my preparation for doing the movie. In my prep for the movie, I'll watch maybe a dozen movies.

Joe: I think when people first think about writers, they think they just sit and write down and do a little of editing. They don't really realize that it's 25% writing, 75% editing. Is music similar?

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John: Again back to the context. If I'm just writing a serious piece of music, then yes, it's very similar. I'll sit here and write for days. I'll record everything, as well as, I go, and I'll just come back. While none or very little of the actual recording will end up in the finished piece, I can edit something together for myself, look at that, I can make a little picture, like a three or five-minute picture for myself, and boy; I some really good ideas, and go back and flesh those things out.

With episodic television, not so much. Again, it's more formulaic, as I said. No matter what the scene is, I know there's a certain tempo, and I know it has a certain key that I can play with a little, but they're there. Their formulas are long written.

Joe: When you take the music, and you start writing, do you just play out every note, let's say on a piano, that you're sitting there making your adjustments, do you have to hear it all, or are you actually writing notes sometimes?

John: I'm old school, so I actually can write. I will do both. I will sit with a pencil and manuscript and write. I will write from my head because I can hear it, and I've been doing this long enough where I can just write a piece. Then, I'll play it and maybe I'll make some adjustments to it like that. But the best way of doing something, actually, I shouldn't say the best. My preference is to sit down with pencil and paper and sketch an entire act down. So an entire 13 minutes. You don't have the time to do it in 2D to just write it this way and then go back and edit. There's no time because you inevitably have to do it all. Just rerecord it,

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and there's the time. It's all real time. If you've got a six-day budget, you can't waste two days doing that. You just don't have it.

Joe: If someone wants to get into composing, what advice would you give them? Is there a certain type of individual who fits that mode?

John: I'm going to answer that question, but I'm going to back up just a bit. As you know, I'm a board member of a non-profit called Composers and Schools in Concert. We provide grants for composers to go into a school, into a high school, and write a piece of music for their school band or orchestra, classical or jazz or contemporary. We don't do songwriting at this point because the accreditation process just basically states classical or jazz. So we provide composers; we go into a school; we write a piece of music for the school and the school band plays it. We videotape that, and we're trying to get those things into television. We've provided what's called a score library. We've created this – Lisa Oman, the chair, the head of the board of Composers and Schools, had this fabulous idea of creating a score library, and that is after you've written a piece of music for the school, we post the actual score online, and it's available to every music educator in the United States.

So, it's very, very incredible what we're doing, and this segues into this part of it, and that's that when we're working with these kids, and these kids are 15 through 18 years old, you can tell – well, you can never tell who is going to go into composing. There are a few that you see they have the gift; they have the

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love, the passion. And the next part of it is like you said, what would it take to get into composing? Well, it would take the passion and love for it, but also the skills. I mean; you've got to be; I don't know how to say it. You've got to be a badass to do what I do. That is – and I don't mean that from an ego point of view at all, because there's always someone better – but it's that I've got to know my instrument and my theory, but I've also got to know your instrument and your theory, whether you can play those notes in that succession or not, whether they're in your range, out of your range. Can you play this double note? Can you play this chord? I have to know basically about 50 instruments, intimately.

If you want to get into composing, while that's an interesting case, you should have a good knowledge of the orchestra, whether you're an electronic composer or not. Do everything from, and work with all sorts of people from electronic as a pure classical music to contemporary music, you should have a good knowledge of all that. Without it, you'll be lost, especially if you have success like I've had or like what happened to me at a young age; I was thrown on the scoring stage in my twenties. I was frightened. I was around people that really knew what the heck they were doing and had been doing this forever. I hadn't. This was my first time. I was intimidated by the actual orchestra, like, look at this young guy, oh my God, now we've got a schmuck up here trying to conduct us. I had the people in the orchestra stop the entire session, in the middle of it, stop, and then go, excuse me, did you really mean this to be a dotted note or a tied note? I'm like; I want to kill you right now. That just cost me about \$1,200 for that to stop.

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A good knowledge of every instrument and a very good knowledge of theory and this is just my opinion, but usually brass players make the best composers.

Joe: Could you tell me the website to get a hold of the non-profit, and then your website?

John: Yes. Composers and Schools in Concert is [www.composersandschools.com](http://www.composersandschools.com). You can also find us on Facebook. You can find me on [www.powerof2music.com](http://www.powerof2music.com).

Joe: I'd like to thank you very much, John. I appreciate it. The podcast will be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 blog site. I want to thank you once again, John. I appreciate it.

John: Thank you so much, Joe, for having me on. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you, and I want to wish you all the best and much success.

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Joseph T. Dager

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Phone: 260-918-0438

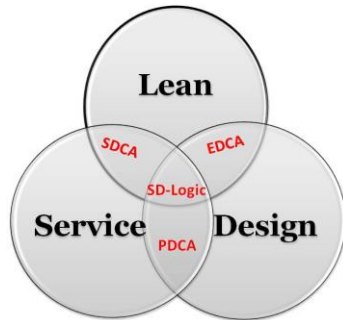
Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: [jtdager@business901.com](mailto:jtdager@business901.com)

Website: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)



Joe Dager is president of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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