



Q&A with Don Hunter, Co-Founder and President of Acceptd, Inc. Connecting Young Artists with Global Arts Organizations



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Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO: Mr. Hunter, what is the concept behind Acceptd?

Mr. Hunter: Our mission is to connect young artists with opportunities. We work with 500 global arts organizations and have helped them connect with

over a quarter million artists and more every day. We do that through customized online application and audition technology, digital marketing and recruitment services for organizations and memberships to help artists find their best fit.

CEOCFO: What is the competitive landscape?

Mr. Hunter: When we created this business in 2011, we set out to streamline an antiquated process of auditioning students in the performing arts. Higher education arts programs were mainly doing live, in-person auditions and some were starting to do digital auditions via mailed cds, YouTube, and a scattering of different subpar methods. My business partner and I knew we could bring excellence to an outdated process and better connect artists and arts organizations. To date, we are the only arts-focused business offering comprehensive application, audition, recruitment and marketing solutions to our partners.

CEOCFO: What is your business model?

Mr. Hunter: Acceptd offers a variety of cost-effective solutions that help organizations reach the perfect artists. Our digital audition platform is provided for free to our partnering organizations, and we charge a nominal application fee to the applying artists (compared to the high costs of shipping materials or traveling for a live audition). Our customized, ROI-driven marketing and recruitment services are available on a monthly subscription basis.

CEOCFO: Do you find that schools have been looking for a better way and are they surprised when they find out you have one for them?

Mr. Hunter: Absolutely—one thing I love about the arts community is that they are constantly iterating and looking for ways to best serve their students. All the program directors I talk to have visions around where they want their programs to go and how they can best help artists as they pursue their passion. Our goal is to learn more about their goals and find ways to help achieve them. Most of the time we can tailor our solutions and partner with organizations and artists to run after their dreams. In the rare instances where our solutions are not the perfect fit, we're able to connect them with someone in our network that has the right answers.

CEOCFO: I see that you offer your clients one-on-one training. How do you work with your clients?

Mr. Hunter: One-on-one training and personalization is the crux of our business. We do not believe in cookie-cutter solutions and consider ourselves a partner with individual organizations as opposed to a vendor. For instance, with our

customized application and audition technology we do not always simply transcribe a client's current application, but rather, we consult with them, given our industry expertise, on how to frame their questions and categories to ensure maximum completion rate. For our marketing and recruitment services, Acceptd partners with clients to find out their tailored needs and works collectively alongside them to make sure their goals are achieved.

CEO CFO: *Are there certain types of artists or categories that are getting more attention? Are there areas that applicants or schools are not taking advantage?*

Mr. Hunter: There are great opportunities that exist for all types of artists and creatives that want to pursue their craft. Typically, arts organizations have specific areas that they want to recruit for, be it to balance their instruments in an upcoming class or find that perfect thespian for their upcoming performance series. We do identify recruitment trends as we hear similar needs across our hundreds of partnering organizations. One existing need for example is design technology and stage management in theatre programs. It's fun to work with organizations to recruit artists for that area and it's also exciting to work on the other side of that equation to educate our young artist members on the opportunities, scholarships and careers that exist in that area of study.

CEO CFO: *What has changed in your approach over time as people have started to use what you have developed? What have you learned?*

Mr. Hunter: One of our main keys to success with Acceptd has been listening to the needs of our artists and partnering organizations. I often think companies in their infancy create solutions and try to debut them to a market only to find out that they missed the mark. We have consistently taken the approach of listening to the needs of our customers and creating solutions that directly address them. We continue with that in mind, however now that we work with over 500 organizations and 250,000 artists, we have the opportunity to be more predictive and proactive in solutions to solve underlying pain points.

"My business partner and I knew we could bring excellence to an outdated process and better connect artists and arts organizations." - Don Hunter

CEO CFO: *How are schools using the marketing portion of what you have available?*

Mr. Hunter: Traditional higher education arts marketing consisted of advertising in magazines that would set in guidance counselors' offices, which our partners knew was outdated and unmeasurable. We recognized that we had an opportunity to introduce targeted digital marketing given the results of our own efforts to our artist member base. Since we have build up a trusting audience of over a quarter million artists, we have the demographics that our partners are trying to reach and can connect them with a very targeted approach. For example, if a program is looking for seventeen year old oboe players in California, we can curate our artist member base to find matching prospects, and use that information to find lookalikes and define custom audiences for that specific arts organization. Having a direct relationship with young artists is an advantage that no other digital agency can offer, and our results speak for themselves.

CEO CFO: *How do you get messaging out to the audience of artists?*

Mr. Hunter: We have a proven approach that we call the 4 R's: Reach, Retarget, Recruit and Results. We connect our partnering organizations with targeted artists through email, texts, onsite advertising, social media marketing and retargeting efforts. It also helps to have a world class marketing team that's experienced in search engine optimization, online advertising, social media, email marketing, and analytics.

CEO CFO: *How is business at Acceptd?*

Mr. Hunter: We are blessed with a thriving business and it has been great to grow with the arts community. When we first started Acceptd, we could not have imagined growing into the world's largest arts marketplace and serving our partners with all of the different solutions that we now offer. We will continue to listen to artists and arts organizations and serve our clients with excellence.