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When Doug Daniel graduated from UNC Chapel Hill in 1989, he told his parents he was going to make a living as a drummer. They had visions of their then-long-haired progeny taking up residence under their roof.

Guess what?

Daniel, 39, never moved back home. He spent the early '90s traveling the country playing music. In 2001, he opened his own business, which books musical acts for special events.

"When you find what you are passionate about and then you are able to find a niche, it is a perfect marriage. You have a hard time differentiating what you do for a living and (for) fun, which is awesome," said Daniel, president of Daniel Entertainment Group, situated in a loft in Charlotte's South End.

Daniel Entertainment handles the music for the Charlotte Panthers' home games and Food Lion's Speed Street, held uptown during May's race week. The company arranged the tunes at Neiman Marcus' store opening in September. Other clients: Charlotte Bobcats, Charlotte Knights and The Grove Park Inn in Asheville.

Before starting his business, Daniel worked for eight years at EastCoast Entertainment, a Richmond, Va., company he says is his biggest competitor.

Daniel says he and his six employees ask lots of questions about who will attend the event and what the organizers' expectations are rather than booking by date or price range. (Speaking of price tags, Daniel says current and established acts like Bon Jovi command \$3 million, while those who have gone a few years without hits or much notice - say Eddie Money - will take \$50,000.)

MoneyWise recently caught up with Daniel to ask him about making work fun and making money doing it. (Daniel Entertainment, its owner says, posted \$2 million in sales last year, up from \$250,000 in 2002, its first full year of business. First quarter sales this year rose 130 percent over those of the same period last year, he said.)

Questions and comments were edited for space and clarity.

What was the idea behind starting Daniel Entertainment?

To provide more choices and a higher level of customer service, including on-site supervision. We have many clients who need an entertainment partner to not only book the dates, but to

manage all the details. We ended up reversing the age-old booking agency model and act more as consultants for buyers instead of agents trying to fill dates.

How do events or event planners get the music wrong? What mistakes do they make?

They call my competition. Just kidding. If buyers (the clients) do get it wrong, it's because they don't give enough details. We work best as consultants when we find out everything about the event. Once we hear the whole story, we can make more targeted suggestions. The other thing that sometimes happens is that buyers book talent based mostly on their own likes and dislikes without considering the overall audience.

What is your advice to other would-be entrepreneurs looking to turn a personal interest or passion - like music for you - into a successful business?

Know your passion but then find a niche. Save your money, because it's hard to make a lot those first few years.

When is it a bad idea to try to turn something you enjoy doing into a business?

There has to be a need in your market for what you do. Your idea and passion alone are not enough. Be smart enough to identify the need, then go solve it. Write your mission statement and say it to yourself every night over and over.

What's the best piece of business advice you have ever received?

Someone told me that most businesses never grow to their full potential because the owner doesn't know how to get out of his own way. Once I relaxed things started to really happen.