

# Entrepreneurship and Education

## The Power of IP

Music has power. It can alter the mood with a change of tempo or key. It connects those who feel lonely. It provides an outlet for those who are overwhelmed. It draws us in and captivates us. This is why so many creators, including Amanda Colleen Williams, are compelled to enter the music industry.

Amanda was born in East Tennessee and into the music business. Her dad, Kim, was a construction worker disabled by an industrial fire. As part of his recovery, Kim moved his family to Nashville, where he pursued songwriting. He composed hit songs for Joe Diffie, Sammy Kershaw, Reba McEntire, Clay Walker, Kenny Chesney, Brooks & Dunn, Rascal Flatts, and Randy Travis. Kim also co-authored several hits with Garth Brooks, including “Papa Loved Mama” and “Ain’t Goin’ Down (‘Til the Sun Comes Up).” He won ASCAP’s Country Songwriter of the Year in 1994 and the Country Music Association’s Song of the Year for 2003 and was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2012.

Amanda spent time in the studio as a kid, observing and learning all the roles, etiquette, and opportunities. She started learning to sing demos at age 9 and acted as her father’s creative director for a time.

“My dad told me early on, ‘If you can do anything else and be happy, do something else,’” Amanda recalls. In fact, she began learning both coding and piano at age 5. As she grew older, she studied archaeology, found mentors through the Small Business Administration Service Corps, and worked at a variety of jobs, including in sales, for a college registrar, and as an executive assistant. Although she still uses several of the skills that she learned from each of those experiences, Amanda ultimately just couldn’t stay away from music.

She graduated from Berklee College of Music in 1999 and followed in her dad’s footsteps in more ways than one. Amanda is an 18 times multi-platinum awarded songwriter, and her co-writing credits include “She’s Tired of Boys” and “Beer Run” with Garth Brooks.

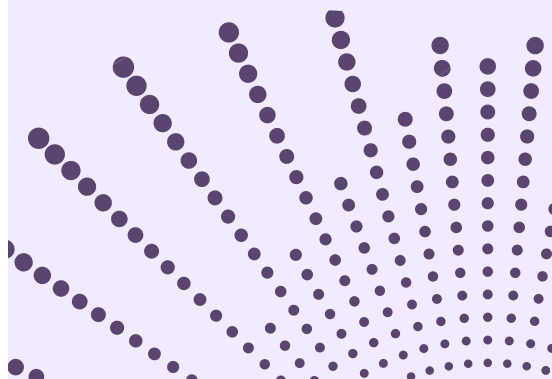
But she certainly wasn’t about to stop at composing. In addition to recording and publishing deals with various companies over the years, including



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—Amanda Colleen Williams



Sony, Amanda owns three LLCs. Hillbilly Culture is her enhanced music publishing company, Songpreneurs houses her educational endeavors, and Hillbilly Cache is a private event space.

Amanda's intellectual property (IP) portfolio has grown to include copyrights for her music and lesson plans, as well as Tennessee service marks and trademarks related to her companies. She's also worked on legacy projects, writing biographies or ghostwriting autobiographies. However, it took her some time to reach this point.

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Amanda has since been recognized as a non-attorney IP expert through the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the Department of Commerce. She also has a proprietary team building and IP education system called *Ready, Set, Write™*, which she uses in corporations, K-12 schools, and U.S. embassies around the world including Romania, Kiev, and South America. This program is designed to help people quickly understand the value of IP by actively creating it.

"I branched out into teaching because my business mission is not to trick people into something but to empower them to understand what they're doing and to create. It's super rewarding to have the opportunity to serve in this way."

*Ready, Set, Write™* certainly employs the power of music. Not only does it encourage creativity and educate attendees about IP, the program helps at-risk youth and children develop healthy coping mechanisms.

"You ask yourself a question. You riddle yourself the answer with pen and paper. And in the process, you learn more than you thought you knew. Therein lies the essence of entrepreneurship as an arts entrepreneur. You solve a problem for yourself. Often, those problems are loneliness, depression, anger, frustration, fear, dejection, or shame. You have the opportunity to solve that problem through healthy self-expression. The *Ready, Set, Write* program actually started for this purpose. We worked with children in state custody who were in lockdown situations, and we received notes after the fact saying that several attendees had replaced self-harming actions with writing."

Amanda also worked with the Department of State to build a pilot program called *Arts Envoy IPR*, which is designed to provide education, training, and opportunities for arts diplomacy in response to the U.S. Trade Representative's annual Special 301 Report. Moreover, two of her workbooks were entered into the Jamaican National Library. These educational programs and resources are a point of great pride for Amanda.

"The copyright bundle leads to the royalty streams—not just for songwriters but for any creative professional. Many people actually don't know where their money comes from. In IP-intensive fields, you're really in charge of your own destiny, so specialized knowledge is essential. It's also very liberating because an essential part of being free as a business is having the ability to monetize one's own work—in other words, not being asked to give one's commodity for less than it cost to make it. As an arts entrepreneur, if you have a little specialized knowledge, you can be as creative with your business model as you are with your artistry."

However, the music industry is not without its challenges. Digital piracy and the devaluation of creative content continue to pose significant threats. "Education is key. You can't take a society of people who think that art and music are free and expect them to get anything out of IP." The United Kingdom and other countries employ consumer IP education programs and resources, and they have seen positive results.

"IP is protected from the moment its fixed to a tangible medium. Registration is important, but people forget they've already done the IP part. That's the part you get good at and then figure out how to make a living from it. You make a living from it because you're the only one who can do it. You're the only one who can do it because you have the rights to copy, in every way you can copy. It's that simple. Whether you're a big name that everybody knows or a small name, IP is valuable. I protect mine. I respect yours. You protect yours. You respect mine. We'll protect each other. That's how it works. Listen to the people who make their living from what they're protecting. They know what they're talking about."

Without IP, creators like Amanda could not earn a living. This is why she is driven to educate everyone she can. IP enables creators to develop the music that powers our lives.

