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Aspiring educator juggles passions for technology, work, music

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Special to this section

What do you do when you're a twenty-something who's disenchanted with the world of corporate sales? You chase your dreams, that's what. All of them. At the same time. At least that's what Michael Mayrath decided to do, and it seems to be working out just fine.

Mayrath grew up watching his father run an accounting firm in Dallas. Ideas of independence and self-reliance took root at a very early age.

"I remember seeing my last name on letter-head and the office door. That level of autonomy just seemed natural to me — it didn't dawn on me that not all children grew up seeing their names on the office door and believing that they had the power to be their own boss one day," he recalls.

Later, after graduating from the University of Texas, Mayrath decided to take advantage of his freedom and move to Australia for one year. The experience only deepened his independence.

When he returned to Austin to take a position

in sales with a large corporation, Mayrath soon discovered that the need for autonomy was incompatible with his current job.

"The cubicles and endless layers of supervisors and directors were just too much for me," he says. "It made no sense — when I suggested change or offered up new ideas it took months and months before they were implemented. And by that time, my initial idea had been changed into some mutation that didn't function as I had intended."

So he reevaluated everything. He decided to follow his passions, which would mean learning to live with an eternally cramped schedule.

Mayrath took a new and demanding position as director of sales and marketing for TradeMark Media, a local Web development company. He went back to school, pursuing a doctorate in Educational Psychology from UT. In case two full-time careers weren't enough, he kept his position as drummer in the band Shawn Nelson and the Ramblers.

Mayrath knew that he'd eventually need to

hone in on one passion. For him, it's education.

He has already begun an educational non-profit called EducateAustin.org. He envisions the site as a clearinghouse for information on best practices for educators, parents, and caregivers, as well as a foundation for organizing research into the newly evolving field of education and technology.

"Technology has made it possible to educate using all of the senses, engaging children of every learning style more intuitively," says Mayrath. "I want to be a part of it — to educate the minds of our newest generations in ways that truly help them to increase their potential."

So, while Mayrath's day planner may look like a color-coded bingo card to the rest of the world, his balancing act has made him a happy man.

"I can't imagine how I would pull this off without the cooperation of the people in my life," he says. "TradeMark has been unbelievable in their flexibility, as has the band. And although I collapse into bed each night, I can't help but feel lucky to be able to work toward my own goals each day."



Photo by Walter Brewer

Michael Mayrath balances work and school while running a non-profit business and playing in a band.