

PURSUITS

Mix Master Manager

The executives who moonlight after hours as DJs

Monday through Friday, Nicholas Maddix spends his days running Anagram Technologies, the software company he founded almost 20 years ago. He wears collars and khakis and chunky glasses. He is soft-spoken and meticulous. But come night, the 46-year-old is unbuttoned and stationed behind a set of turntables, playing jungle raves and warehouse fêtes across the globe, with only his thick-rimmed glasses linking his two disparate selves.

As a kid growing up in Framingham, Massachusetts, Maddix played the saxophone and guitar. During his twenties, when he spent upward of 60 hours a week composing code, he found himself mixing music to unwind. The deep bass beats would defuse the stress and rigidity of deadlines, customer demands, and algorithms, while the search for the next segue superseded all the thoughts that otherwise bounced around in his head. “It wasn’t goal oriented at first,” he says. “It was just producing some beauty in the moment.” Still, within a few years of learning to make his own tunes, Maddix

went from playing at friends’ parties and a local Boston bar to being invited to international festivals and opening for his idol, Mark Farina, in New York City. And when his early sets were met with indifference, he only worked harder to produce something listeners could lose themselves in. “When I connect with the crowd, there’s

a recognition that there’s something really special going on,” he says.

DJing and running a business surprisingly balanced one another out, says Maddix. The two have created a flow, a sense of equanimity within his life. He is not the only executive to find this sort of liberation in the hours after the sun

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Nicholas Maddix.
Below: David “D-Sol” Solomon.

sets on their white-collar jobs. David Solomon, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs, made headlines several years ago when he was spotted spinning tracks at a party in the Bahamas. Since then, he has gone on to release a number of bangers under the alias D-Sol and this summer joined the lineup at Lollapalooza, an annual music festival in Chicago that draws top talent. Elon Musk dabbles in DJing, with his track “Don’t Doubt ur Vibe” garnering 3.75 million plays on SoundCloud, while Evan Spiegel, CEO of Snap, and Artūras Karnišovas, executive vice president of the Chicago Bulls, are well-known connoisseurs of EDM (for those not familiar with rave culture,

EDM stands for *electronic dance music*).

But unlike Maddix, many business leaders overlook the intersection between music and management, says Mike Morrison, founder of RapidBI, an organizational-effectiveness consulting firm. Successful DJs must constantly observe the audience and adapt their performances according to the unique vibe of each venue, crowd, and occasion. Similarly, Morrison explains, the most effective managers are regularly engaging with and listening to their employees and customers to gain real-time feedback. “Any leader who’s only doing a temperature check every quarter is missing out on three months of life,” he says.

A new trend is emerging among consultants and professors to harness the power of harmony in corporate settings. A new course at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business uses music to teach leadership skills. The class requires students to hone their listening abilities and expand beyond their comfort zones by physically learning to play musical instruments. “It’s all through the lens of leadership as a performance art,” executive coach Stephen Kohler told reporters after leading a jam session with MBA students. “This whole idea is that we as leaders can look at leadership not in the old, dry, textbook way but as a creative, experiential activity.”

THE ART OF

Transitioning Seasons

Just as leaves lose their color and animals prepare for hibernation, we humans too are affected by the changing of seasons. Though it may be a lost art these days, living in harmony with the natural world is simple, requiring little more than observation and intention.

- 1 Adhere to circadian rhythms.** Limit artificial light. Eat, exercise, and work with the sun. Rest in the darkness. Sleep more.
- 2 Shift to warm, nurturing foods.** Shop seasonal produce, swap smoothies for stews, and incorporate more spice.
- 3 Energy decreases in the winter—so do less.** Heat the body with extra baths and get blood flowing with leisurely walks when the sun is high.
- 4 Winter is a time of reflection and renewal.** Just as the trees drop their leaves, let go of what is no longer serving you. Embrace the stillness.

