



## SUCCESS STORY #310:

# SUCCESS IS MUSIC TO THEIR EARS

**Small Business Development Center  
hosted by College of the Canyons**

Alberti Publishing • Santa Clarita, CA

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Los Angeles Regional Network



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### BEFORE:

Adam Bendorf and his wife, Anna, are experienced pianists and piano teachers, with degrees in piano from The Master's College and The University of Oregon, respectively. One day as Adam worked on designing his own music instruction book for students, the inspiration for a business was born: "I thought if I wanted this product, maybe others in our industry could use it as well." In spring 2008, Adam began working with SBDC Business Advisor Nina Grooms Lee to start Alberti Publishing, which creates and sells music education materials.

### BEST ADVICE:

"Adam is a natural entrepreneur with a passion for improving his industry," says Grooms Lee. She provided a template and guidance to help the Bendorfs write their business plan, helped them explore financing options (they ultimately used \$21,000 in credit cards to print their books and create their website), and assisted in pinpointing their target market and developing a marketing plan.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Planning is essential.** "Besides the marketing plan and the business plan," says Adam, "[Nina helped us] think through all of the details and the ramifications of financial decisions so we'd know where all of our money was going and make sure it would come back in one sense or another."
- **Target a specific customer base.** The Bendorfs originally planned to target all types of music teachers, but their advisor convinced them to narrow their niche to piano teachers. "We immediately saw a higher interest level and a better return on sales," Adam says. By marketing at piano teacher trade shows, they were able to turn 10 percent of attendees into buyers.
- **Leverage your advisors' expertise.** "I assumed the best approach to marketing was to go big, flashy and expensive," Adam recalls. "Nina pointed out that pretty much the opposite is true." Using a grass-roots approach, the Bendorfs generated buzz by targeting piano industry influencers through trade shows, e-mail marketing and social media. They also used press releases to generate publicity.

### AFTER:

Since Alberti Publishing launched in January 2009, sales for the business—which the Bendorfs run part-time while still teaching piano—have increased 50 percent. The business has been featured in the *San Fernando Valley Business Journal* and the trade publication *American Music Teacher*.

The Bendorfs just released the next book in their five-book series this past September. The next step: adding downloadable sheet music to their product line, which will require obtaining investors. Throughout the growth process, Adam plans to keep working with the SBDC.