



REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Creative Music Management



[DATE]

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A)

I have to admit, I consider myself the weakest link in the chain. Without a technical or musical background, I was afraid I would struggle to find any team that would want me for this project. I immediately contacted Helena and asked if she would like to work together, as we get along and understand and value each other's opinion. She then co-opted Chas and Karl, who both have quite a lot of experience between them. The first thing that came to mind after team members were decided was "what can each of us do?". Due to my background in Organisational Behaviour, I immediately joined the team with Belbin's (Belbin, n.d.) 9 Team Roles in mind, trying to figure out which of us can perform which role. I would like to think that in a real life industry situation, when you choose your team, you already know a fair bit about everybody's skills and what they thrive doing, and thus how you'd mesh together, so this is us doing this task on "hard mode".

Team members now decided, that concluded what Bruce Tuckman would consider the 'Forming' stage of our team work (Mindtools, n.d.). The next one, 'Storming', consisted of us meeting and discussing whose and which song to promote, and what each person should do. It was very much a brainstorming session. My team expressed horror towards the idea of dealing with the financial side of things, so I volunteered to do it. Not having a background in the music industry initially caused difficulties for me, as having not taken part in the processes required for the creation and promotion of a song, I had no idea of what is involved or the costs. This means I had to rely on second hand knowledge from both within my team and also my industry contacts.

We agreed very early that the £500 budget would not be anywhere near sufficient, and I started looking into various options to increase that budget by at least £1000, as Chas said that a decent budget for this sort of project would be at the very least £1500. Brand partnerships and other sponsorship options were my first thought but were dismissed quite early on due to the fact that the group is just starting, and securing such an agreement this early might not be feasible. Chas provided the song and information on the project, and as he is the one with firsthand knowledge of the project, the group members, and also the owner of the label, we decided that Chas would be in charge with Artist Management, Karl would do PR, Helena would deal with marketing, and I would deal with finance and funding. Thus commenced the 'Norming' stage. We were now a team with a clear goal and transparently divided tasks that was Performing well, with all of us checking in with each other on our progress and asking whether anybody was struggling. However, due to circumstances out of our control, we lost Karl, which brought us back to the 'Storming' stage, where we had to meet up, revise the work we've done so far, and look into what we should do about PR now that Karl was not in the team. This I believe actually helped the team in the long run, as in a real industry situation there would be occasions when somebody needs to drop out of the project and the team needs to be flexible and take on the extra bit of work, so I believe this event has helped us gain that experience.

During that second meeting, we discussed colour schemes for the artwork and I highlighted that to the untrained eye, it is not clear which is the group's name and which is the single name, so both Helena and Chas agreed that the artwork should include "New Single by..."

I then looked into the costs of things for which I had previously not had any use before, so I had to do a fair bit of research on what it is like to promote posts on Facebook or Instagram, how much a campaign costs, how is the best way to do this. I thus learnt of Hootsuite and that social media alone can be up to £1200 for a single.

B)

I believe that my knowledge of how digital technologies have affected creation and promotion of music, even with all I have learnt in the past few months, would just be the tip of a very big iceberg.

I was already aware of the fact that music creation used to be an extremely expensive process, because studio time was expensive and artists used to rely on being noticed by labels and having those labels invest in them before they even got to see the inside of a recording studio. Now, I have seen entire songs being written and recorded, in just a few hours, from the comfort of my partner's bedroom, using nothing but his voice, his synth and his PC. Anybody that was writing and recording music even as little as 20 or 30 years ago would have killed to have this luxury then.

In recent years, one of the things that artists and technology geeks have been focusing on have been the use of blockchain technology in music, with the goal of ensuring that music is added on databases that allow the copyright to be logged to the correct people from the very beginning and thus avoid possibly expensive lawsuits.

Moreover, many of these advancements mean more music enters the market than ever before, and that due to platforms such as YouTube and streaming services such as Spotify, artist might find that their music resonates with millions of people located all the way around the world. I remember that even as early as 2007, I heard a Romanian Art Rock band say that they actually have much larger crowds at concerts in many cities in Germany, Italy and Belgium than they have in Romania, and that was owed to the fact that Germans, Italians and Belgians were fond of the genre and very much enjoyed their music, so much so that the band decided to release their next 2 albums in English specifically to cater to that demographic.

Another big change is how social media has allowed us to connect with and to learn more about the people we admire. 10 years ago, I would have found it unimaginable to be able to interact with members of my favourite bands. It still felt surreal this summer when, upon hearing that Chevelle would no longer play Download Madrid in 2 days' time, the band itself replies to my Facebook post apologising and promising that they will do a full Europe tour when they release their new album in 2020. Now, many artists are not only very active on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, but they have adopted social media as the first place where information on new releases and upcoming tours is shared. Previously, fans would rely on band websites, word of mouth, and the odd poster/flier that just happened to catch their eye at precisely the right time. Now, loyal fans get emails and in some cases pre-sale codes.

Moreover, in what team development is concerned, I believe we are at a point in time where people can post an ad online and find exactly the sort of person they need, whereas 15-20 years ago one

would have had to rely on the best one out of whatever pool of candidates their newspaper ad had drawn, or, if they were lucky, on the word of whoever recommended a person to them. I also believe that managing teamwork would have also been very different in the past. Now, everybody is on Facebook and WhatsApp, both of which allow group texting. This ensures that team members are kept up to speed about all the various aspects of the project without needing to physically be in the same room every single time something is discussed, or having to make several calls to ensure everybody agrees with a proposed change. There is also software such as Google Sheets, Google Docs, and Trello, all of which allow teams to all see the schedule and the work they have to do, and they would get notified of any amendment made. Things such as the ability to share calendars would also be helpful. One doesn't need to actually be on site to know whether they can commit to a job on another location.

Technology would also make touring easier. Promoting music while on the go is time consuming, tiresome and stressful. Google Maps allows for the creation of more efficient routes, as it would advise of road closures or traffic on a specific route, and it would also ensure the chances of making a wrong turn and getting lost are significantly lowered.

Another recent and possibly threatening technology is AI. We have been shown numerous examples of how AI technology can be used to create music, videos, mash-ups, and even fully unique sound experiences that each user will be the only one to experience, only once. To some, AI threatens almost every role in the industry, from music creation to A&R.

All in all, all aspects of the music industry are, in some way or another, affected by technological upgrades. The important thing is to make sure that we use these technologies to help us make the overall music industry an even more interesting place to be.

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