

EMPIRE ARTIST MANAGEMENT RE-BRAND AND CAMPAIGN

Empire Artist Management is a music company based in London, which manages artists, songwriters and producers. It has represented global superstars Lily Allen and Natasha Bedingfield, as well as award-winning writers and producers like Fraser T Smith and Paul Epworth. At the turn of the century, Empire was one of the leading management companies in the music industry. However, in recent years competitors like Tap Music and Modest! Management have established themselves as the best in the business, leaving Empire in their wake. While its competitors represent a great variety of talent, Empire's artist roster is growing increasingly smaller, primarily focusing on commercial pop and rap. While these genres are currently the most popular, the majority of Empire's clients has a small following, not generating much revenue for the company. Empire's brand further lacks cohesiveness across social platforms, creating confusion over its name, ethos and image. Since visuals tend to be one of the first things people notice about a brand, it is important that they be consistent and representative of Empire's values. Although the company mainly manages artists who create commercial music, in his book *The Longer Long Tail* (2009) Chris Anderson suggests how the mass market is shifting into a mass of niches. By diversifying and expanding its artist roster, Empire could reach a larger audience, profiting not only from commercial music, but also from the increased demand for music beyond the hits. Additionally, by repositioning digital assets, modifying its tone of voice and messaging to include its core values, Empire will be able to reach and communicate with its target market more effectively. Thus, a re-brand and campaign are necessary to reposition Empire as one of the leading artist management companies in the music industry.

1. STRATEGY

As a music management company, Empire should convey a sense of innovation and foresight, however its current image does not reflect its core values. For instance, though its website dedicates a page to current talent, it dedicates even more space to its past clients – an interesting choice, which none of Empire's competitors have made. On one hand, this showcases a history of managing successful artists, suggesting experience and conveying credibility. On the other, it portrays Empire as nostalgic and attached to the past, contradicting the very idea of an artist management company (Passman, 2019, p. 32) – unless, of course, it specializes in managing catalogue music. Any artist or brand would be lucky to partner with Empire, so it is important that when people encounter it for the first time, they are instantly aware of what it has to offer: trustworthy and experienced managers connected with top brands, labels and musicians. While the public's awareness will probably never be as high for a management company as it is for a record label (e.g. instantly associating soul music with Motown), by increasing brand awareness Empire can become a staple management company that appeals to its target market, and connects with some music-loving members of the public as well. Thus, following Bob Baker's (2013, p. 17) three steps of music marketing, the strategy behind Empire's re-brand and campaign includes creating brand awareness, building relationships, and generating revenue. With a more cohesive branding spanning across different platforms, Empire will

be able to cut through and reposition itself as a key management company within the business.

2. CAMPAIGN

Following Hoyle's (2002) suggestion of targeting a specific market in a limited amount of time, I have planned a 7-month campaign to carry out the aforementioned strategy. During the first 3 months – in the pre-production phase – Empire will be rebranded to improve cohesiveness and searchability. This initial period also includes repositioning its digital assets, which will feature consistent brand descriptors, heightened activity and engagement with followers to ensure that the company gains momentum in today's saturated market (Baker, 2013; Godin, 2008). Search engines are one of the main ways of generating traffic to a website (Hoyle, 2002, p. 67), so Empire's will be redesigned and renamed to improve consistency and SEO. Currently, users may be confused when searching for the music company online, as it refers to itself as both 'Empire Artist Management' and 'Empire Management', and the first results that appear for the latter are American real estate agencies. Since "20 percent of Web users completely give up when unable to find what they are looking for" (Hoyle, 2002, p. 67), it is important that Empire appears first on search engines, and that its name is consistent across different social platforms.

The second part of the campaign – the production phase – will begin in month 4 by focusing on Empire's artists and staff. It will carry out on Instagram and TikTok, featuring headshot videos of Empire's current talent and managers as they introduce themselves to the public and share exclusive, behind-the-scenes content. Showcasing their character and personalities will set a strong foundation for the company, since transparency and authenticity are the pillars for any successful brand (Godin, 2008, p. 104). Additionally, emerging artists looking for representation will be able to get a better sense about whether the company and its managers could be a good fit for them, playing evermore so into the narrative of Empire being an open, honest and trustworthy company.

The third and last part of the campaign will feature a 2-month-long contest on TikTok, aimed at discovering new talent to add to the roster. The competition will target both tastemakers (i.e. journalists, influencers, etc.) and unsigned artists, and will be promoted both physically and digitally, creating hype and raising brand awareness (Hoyle, 2002). The last part of the contest, in the seventh month of the campaign, will feature a gig crawl around London, where Empire's current artists will be performing and the contest winner will be announced. Overall, this campaign aims to provide Empire with the necessary momentum to take on its competitors and establish itself as the powerful music management company that it is.

3. RE-BRAND

3.1 NAME, LOGO AND FONT

Currently, the name 'Empire Artist Management' raises confusion among people not involved in the music industry, as they may find themselves wondering what kind of artists the company manages. Hence, I decided to rename the company Empire Music Management, to improve searchability and avoid any type of confusion surrounding its name.

Although Empire's logo and font do not reflect its values or mood, the fact that it has plagiarized Rolex's logo displays a lack of uniqueness and causes for a loss in credibility. While Rolex's logo perfectly captures its conservative, elegant, exclusive values and

products, these simply do not match those of Empire. Music management revolves around innovation, risk-taking and a constant search for who the next big artist might be (Passman, 2019); so, I redesigned the logo to feature more round-looking, sans serif fonts, reflecting that same sense of modernity and freshness (Garfield, 2012). In a study conducted for the 2011 International Conference on Social Science and Humanity, Chai-Lee Goi and Mei-The Goi (2011, p. 447) suggest that rebrands should allow for some sense of consistency, appearing recognizable and familiar to the public. Indeed, in situations where a firmly established brand is “simply outdated or needs to be refreshed [...], tweaking is required, rather than a full-blown rebrand”. Hence, the black colour remains for consistency in the transition between Empire’s old and new logo, a colour choice inspired by Tap Music and YMU Group’s use of simple, professional, black-and-white logos. Additionally, for the logo to be even more recognizable, I maintained its original crown symbol, though personalized it for Empire with a modern, fresh twist.

To differentiate the brand’s logo from other music companies, I chose to highlight the word ‘Empire’ by having it tower over the words ‘Music Management’ with a large, tall font reminiscent of the imposing skyline in New York – which is where the company was originally founded. Finally, the brand’s secondary font, named Rafale, is light, modern and easy to read. Each letter is split up by a thin line, supporting Empire’s trustworthy and transparent ethos (Wang, Gao, Lian, 2020).

3.2 MESSAGING

Following Baker (2013), it is important that Empire’s company descriptor remains tight and consistent to be able to market its message clearly and concisely. Although the biography on its website was already very good, it still lacked a Brand Identity Statement, which is important when targeting press and potential clients (Baker, 2013, p. 36). Therefore, I simply edited Empire’s current brand descriptor to incorporate a list of core values, objectives and partners (i.e. charities and advocacy groups) that are in line with its ethics. In addition, I was inspired by YMU Group to create a chart that illustrates Empire’s core values and mission statement. It communicates to potential clients and partners in a clear, concise way that Empire is an innovative, trustworthy company looking to create meaningful change. Empire’s messaging also lacks consistency between different social platforms. For instance, while the biography on its website highlights past accomplishments and includes a compelling mission statement, it simply reads ‘since ‘89’ on platforms like Instagram and Twitter. As Godin (2015, p. 17) suggests, while a brand descriptor saying ‘Established since’ used to represent importance, it now presents a liability. Indeed, older companies like Jack Daniels feature ‘est. since’ on their logo to celebrate tradition; however forward-looking and innovative companies like Google and Apple do not. Thus, although it is important to celebrate Empire’s past, it should not be highlighted as the focal point of the brand, overshadowing its forward-looking perspective. Hoyle (2002, p. 62) further suggests that using language which speaks to the “everyperson” not only increases engagement, but helps build stronger relationships with people. Empire should therefore also consider changing its tone from formal and distant to more friendly and conversational, since colloquial language is becoming increasingly common, especially in the creative industries.

3.3 WEBSITE

Currently, Empire’s website is quite bland and unengaging, featuring mostly monochromatic grey and white colours. However, Empire is an exciting, dynamic company that manages the artists of today and tomorrow, so it is important that its website reflects

Empire's progressive mood. Therefore, I redesigned the website by introducing black as the main colour – which conveys professionalism and power – and added a pop of colour in the sidebar to reflect the company's sense of innovation and modernity (St. Clair, 2017). Godin (2006, p. 18) also argues that adding an element of permission improves every marketing campaign. Hence, by adding an element of permission marketing in the form of a newsletter, Empire will be able to stay relevant to its target audience and keep it engaged (Baker, p. 57).

Another reason why the current website is not engaging is because it lacks artist biographies. While a handful of clients does have short descriptors, most of the artists' pages only feature their name and profession. For example, James Newman's page displays his name, the title "Songwriter. Brit Award Winner / Grammy-nominee" and just a couple of video links to songs he has written. As Passman (2019, p. 32) argues, part of a manager's job is to hype up her clients to anyone she meets; so, it is important that her website does so as well. Accordingly, Empire will update its artist biographies by providing information regarding its clients' personal and professional backgrounds, accolades, and partnerships. These descriptors should highlight the artists' strengths, using quotes from positive reviews or respected figures within the industry to support them (Baker, 2013, p. 145). Additionally, Baker (p. 41) suggests that the first, most important question people ask when encountering new music is, "What kind of music is this?". So, first and foremost, Empire's artist biographies must define what genres are specific to each client. Also, as mentioned previously, the tone of voice should be conversational and accessible to build closer relationships with users (Hoyle, 2002). While researching competitors' websites, Maverick Management's particularly stood out with its excellent design. It is direct, accessible, professional and simple, yet provides exhaustive information on both the company and its clients. The website also includes a space dedicated to charities and advocacy groups that Maverick has partnered with, portraying the company as ethical, altruistic, and philanthropic. Empire should also partner up with charities that reflect its values to exude a heightened sense of trust and selflessness with its clients and potential partners. For all of these reasons, I suggest Empire hire 970, the same design studio that powers Maverick's page, to redo its website.

2.1 DIGITAL ASSETS

Because social media is currently at the forefront of how companies operate and market their goods and services (Brown, 2015), Empire's socials require repositioning. To increase brand awareness and better reach Empire's target market, it is important that its socials are consistent and coherent across different platforms (Macarthy, 2015). Although Empire is relatively active on Instagram, it rarely uses Twitter, LinkedIn or any other social media platforms. Macarthy would argue that it is better to focus on fewer social networks to excel in, rather than being "mediocre" in many. However, by using LinkedIn and Twitter, as well as creating pages on Facebook and YouTube, Empire will be able to find and reach more of its target market. For instance, since Facebook and YouTube are the most popular social networking and video-sharing sites in the world, Empire's target audience will almost certainly be there (Macarthy, 2015, p. 31, 129). Macarthy also reports that Twitter users are 64% more likely to purchase from businesses they follow on the site. Therefore, since both Twitter and LinkedIn are used by countless brands to interact with consumers, they will be able to facilitate communication between Empire and its audience, improving engagement and brand awareness.

To increase its presence on digital streaming platforms (DSPs), Empire will also feature a company playlist on Spotify, which will include songs by both current and past clients. Since Spotify is the most used streaming service (2021), featuring Empire's playlist on the

platform will enable it to reach a bigger audience and make it easier for followers to connect with the brand and its artists (Godin, 2008, p. 103). Between tracks, the playlist will include 10-second clips of artists revealing the meaning behind their songs. This will help to increase engagement, since videos have become the most popular and interactive form of online communication. Additionally, the only artist I am aware of that has used this strategy is Dua Lipa in a Spotify-exclusive Deluxe version of her 2020 album *Future Nostalgia*. Therefore, since it is one of few brands to have ever used such a strategy, the rarity of this type of interactive playlist will come across as fresh and impactful, not only increasing engagement, but also raising brand awareness. Following Hoyle's (2002, p. 42) definition of promotion as the "stirring up of interest in [an] enterprise", Empire will promote its brand by creating stickers that advertise its playlist. The stickers will feature Empire's logo and a Spotify QR code to make the playlist easier to access, and will be shared around Tileyard in London. This will enable the company to reach a large percentage of its target market, since Tileyard is host to the largest independent music community in Europe.

2.2 CONTEST

The last part of the campaign involves a contest aimed at finding a new artist to add to Empire's roster, to begin diversifying and expanding it. Artists will be able to enter the competition by sharing a 20-second video of themselves performing original work followed by the hashtag #EmpireMusicManagementContest on TikTok. In a 2020 interview with Music Business Worldwide, Ole Obermann – TikTok's Global Head of Music – pointed out how, unlike any other social networking sites, TikTok's unusual algorithm allows users to have an equal chance of trending on the platform as someone with a lot of history, democratically paving the way for new artists. TikTok is therefore the perfect platform for this contest, as it allows Empire to engage with members of its target market while increasing brand awareness. Although this competition might seem like a risky bet at first glance, it presents a win-win situation for both Empire and the winning artist. It is a winning strategy for discovering lots of very talented artists online, who are waiting to be discovered and that can add value to the company's roster. The competition will be promoted via physical and digital advertising, to increase reach and encourage both London-based and international artists to apply (Hoyle, 2002, pp. 43-60). The contest will conclude with a gig crawl around London, where Empire's clients will perform and the winner will be announced. Targeting music journalists and tastemakers, the event will take place over five locations in London, offering free drinks offered by a partnering event sponsor (what better way to get people to attend an event?) and musical performances. By gathering stickers from four out of the five locations, individuals will be able to access the last pub for free. This is where the winner will be announced and perform, so a good turnout is to be expected. Since a great way to get press is to be the first to do something, this contest will not only invite journalists to write about it, but it will also create hype around Empire and increase brand awareness, which in turn will attract new customers and clients.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through an effective re-brand and campaign, Empire will be able to cut through and reposition itself as one of the leading artist management companies in today's music industry. By blending different marketing approaches, including Long Tail and Permission Marketing, Empire will reach new clients and customers, creating more meaningful relationships and improving engagement with its target audience. Additionally,

by celebrating its past and investing in future artists, Empire will become more profitable by catering to the growing demand of niche music, as well as its current, commercially-oriented artists. Overall, through more cohesive, clear and compelling branding, Empire will successfully carry out Baker's three steps of music marketing by creating greater brand awareness, building stronger relationships, and generating more revenue. This will provide Empire with the necessary momentum to take on its competitors and re-establish itself as a key music company in the business.

REFERENCE LIST

Allen, Paul. (2015) *Artist Management for the Music Business*. 3rd ed. Oxfordshire: Focal Press.

Anderson, Chris. (2009) *The Longer Long Tail*. London: Random House Business Books.

Baker, Bob. (2013) *Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook: 201 Self-Promotion Ideas for Songwriters, Musicians and Bands on a Budget*. St. Louis: Spotlight Publications.

Brown, M. J. (2015) *Social Media Marketing: How to Build and Execute Your Own Social Media Strategy*. 2nd ed. United Kingdom: CreateSpace.

Empire Artist Management. (2021) Available at: <http://www.empire-management.co.uk> (Accessed: 25 March 2021).

Empire Management. (2021) [Instagram] Available at: https://www.instagram.com/empire_mgmt/?hl=en (Accessed: 24 March 2021).

Empire Management (2021) [Twitter] Available at: <https://twitter.com/empiremgmt?lang=en> (Accessed: 24 March 2021).

Garfield, Simon. (2012) *Just My Type: A Book About Fonts*. New York: Gotham Books.

Godin, Seth. (2006) *Permission Marketing*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Godin, Seth. (2008) *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*. London: Penguin Group.

Goi, Chai-Lee and Goi, Mei-Teh. (2011) 'Review on Models and Reasons of Rebranding', *International Conference on Social Science and Humanity*. Singapore, 2011. Available at <http://www.ipedr.com/vol5/no2/99-H10243.pdf> (Accessed: 19 April 2021).

Hoyle, Leonard H. (2002) *Event Marketing: How to Successfully Promote Events, Festivals, Conventions, and Expositions*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Ingham, Tim. (2020) 'We're Starting to See a Generation of Artists Born and Raised on TikTok'. Available at: <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/were-starting-to-see-a-generation-of-artists-born-and-raised-on-tiktok/> (Accessed: 19 April 2021).

Macarthy, Andrew. (2015) *500 Social Media Marketing Tips: Essential Advice, Hints and Strategy for Business: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and More!* United Kingdom: CreateSpace.

Maverick Management. (2021) Available at <https://maverick.com> (Accessed 3 April 2021).

Passman, Donald S. (2019) *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*. 10th ed. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Spotify (2021). *Company Info*. Available at: <https://newsroom.spotify.com/company-info/> (Accessed: 20 April 2021).

Spotify (2021). *Spotify*. Available at: <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/companies/spotify/> (Accessed: 18 April 2021).

St. Clair, Kassia. (2017) *The Secret Lives of Colour*. London: Coronet

Tuten, Tracy L. and Solomon, Michael R. (2017) *Social Media Marketing*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc.

Wang, Zihui. Gao, Yue and Lian, Zhouhui. (2020) 'Attribute2Font', *ACM Transactions on Graphics*, 39 (4), pp. 69:1-69:15. DOI: [10.1145/3386569.3392456](https://doi.org/10.1145/3386569.3392456) (Accessed: 20 April 2021).