

Reflective Summary

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Abstract

This essay focuses on the process of creating, marketing and releasing a single release as part of a team of three including, Samantha Hannah, Zoe Bastin and myself. This group was designated by the Tileyard Education team. In this essay I will touch on the collaborative and management process including marketing, contract consideration and budgeting for a commercial release.

1. Reflective Summary

It is important to ensure that a reflective process of learning remains focussed on a critical aspect of self-analysis so as to ensure that there is a clear marked improvement in how a project is undertaken each time it is undertaken. Acknowledging areas of improvement or further learning is important and by following a systematic approach to the process a measured change can be observed.

The process that the team undertook learnt itself well to learning cycle processes such as that developed by Gibbs in 1998. (Cambridge Assessment International Education , 2021). This six-stage approach is certainly reflected in how the team worked through the steps in building this project.

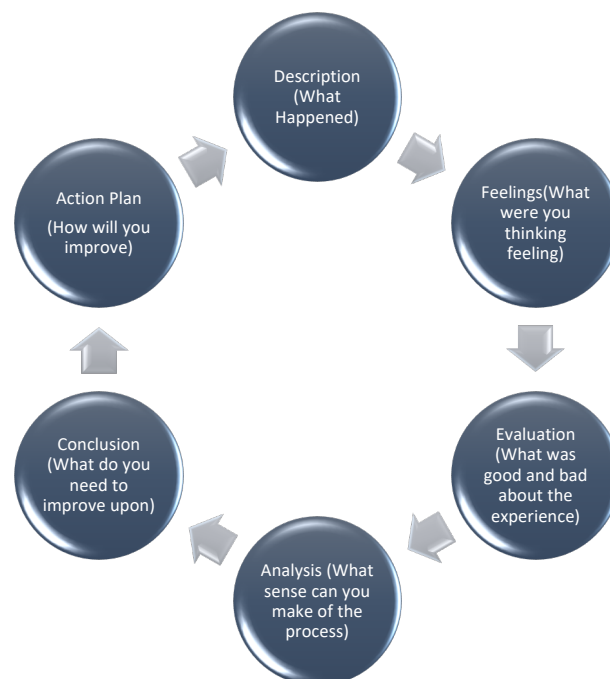


Figure 1: Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Throughout the meetings, discussions and creative process we had the opportunity to reflect and learn from one another. As our project went through the various cycles illustrated above

we had the opportunity to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses in practice and this ultimately helped the team work more effectively.

2. The Assignment

The assignment was for a team to develop an original artist campaign to include the recording, planning and digital release of a single and associated media. As a group we decided to work with Samantha Hannah's band JollyRoger, a unique sounding Pirate Punk band whose original songs are a cross between sea-shanty, folk and punk music. For the remix we identified a member of the Tileyard community; Iain Sumner who developed a break beat version of the song.

Our team were allocated the name One Bad Apple by Tileyard Education, and we decided that we would release the song independently through JollyRoger's existing routes as they are an established band with an existing following.

Initial discussions with Samantha and Zoe lead us very quickly to decide upon working with Samantha's band and their latest release "Aboard", an energetic mix of punk music and the more traditional Cornish sea shanty sound. The idea was that the current trend for Sea Shanties would be a good thing to capitalise upon and to create a mix with a break-beat sound would appeal to a wider demographic and predominantly the skater community which we understand is a popular scene in Cornwall. As the conversation progressed over the weeks it became clear that we needed to narrow our focus in one area and to ensure that the main message of the release was predominantly focussed on a remix. We therefore moved away from focusing on the skater community and moved to developing the existing fanbase more and to focus on driving sound into the break beat sound for the purpose of this single remix.

2.1. First Steps – Team Management

Within the One Bad Apple team we did not allocate a project manager or specific lead. This I believe was partly due to the fact that before our first meeting we did not know each other and therefore, did not have a perception of each others strengths, weaknesses or experiences. However, when we first met in our initial Zoom introductory meeting, we took the opportunity to introduce ourselves and provide some background history as to who we were and what we felt our strengths and weaknesses might be within the team.

As the team settled into a routine and started to meet regularly, we naturally fell into our roles which were largely driven by the tasks we set ourselves. My role was more focussed on looking at the business-related elements, Zoe in the marketing aspect and Samantha and Iain in the creative aspect of the song itself, artwork and merchandise.

As a team we would meet on a weekly basis arranging Zoom meetings as required. One of our key meetings was with Iain Sumner who we appointed to work on the remix of the song. He had provided a working copy of the track and continued to refine the sound based on our feedback.

As the project progressed, it became clear that as a group we had a lot of ideas that would potentially take us into many directions that would potentially dilute the message and therefore, not appeal to any one of our target audiences sufficiently. Zoe was particularly strong in helping the team focus on our main demographic and ensure the messaging was consistent.

2.2. Task Delegation

During one of the Zoom calls it was suggested that we use a Google Drive to save our information to and Samantha provided access to her JollyRoger page to facilitate this process. It was then decided that we use a project management system and Asana was selected, this allowed us to use a work flow tracking system and keep up to date with the work we were collectively working on in order that we remained focussed on deadlines etc.

3. Contract

As a team we discussed the need for drafting a contract for the remix and artwork for the release. It was decided amongst the team that we should formally record the fact that Iain Sumner had negotiated a royalty of 15% for the remix of the song. For this I used a draft contract that I had used in a previous course with Berklee Online and adjusted the document to reflect UK law and wording. After making these adjustments I uploaded the document into the Google Drive for comment from my team. In addition, a preliminary contract was put into place for the use and creation of the artwork used for the video, merchandise and promotional materials.

4. Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy and concept played a dominant role in the group discussion and decision making process. We felt that for the purposes of this exercise the marketing strategy was key to ensure that we promoted the song to the right audience. It should be acknowledged that the song itself and the band JollyRoger have a unique style with an established listener base and therefore, Samantha felt strongly that she did not want to damage the perception of the band by changing the sound and image to such a degree that we might alienate the existing fanbase whilst being cognisant of the fact that the aim of our project was to create a remix and promote the song in such a way that would grow and promote the band further. We therefore needed to be careful not to impact the image of the band for the purposes of this exercise.

There was considerable debate in regard to ideas and tactics that we could use in the execution of the strategy. Guerrilla Marketing is a style of marketing that first used by Jay Conrad Levinson in his book *Guerrilla Advertising* in 1984 and was inspired by the unpredictable and sporadic approach taken in Guerrilla Warfare.

These tactics translate from warfare to marketing in such ways as ambushes, attacks and elements of surprise. For example, flash mobs provide a good example of Guerrilla Advertising and Marketing and were a particularly popular method of promotion used over the past 10 years or so. These tactics can prove to be relatively cheap and easy to execute. In Levinson's book *Guerrilla Marketing* Levinson states:

"Traditional marketing has always maintained that to market properly, you must invest money. Guerrilla Marketing maintains that if you want to invest money you can, but you

don't have to if you are willing to invest time, energy, imagination and information" (Levinson, 2007)

One of the ideas the team initially investigated was the possibility of re-creating the Tik Tok video created in late 2020 by Nathan Apodaca, (YouTube, 2020) who had uploaded a video of himself longboarding, drinking cranberry juice and lip-syncing to the Fleetwood Mac song "Dreams". According to Insider.com, the video clip received approximately 35.5 million views and received over 6.3 million likes on the platform. (Haasch, 2020) We had the idea of having a member of the band longboarding in the same way as the original clip but lip syncing to "Aboard". However, it was felt that after re-considering the connection to the skater community that this idea would not be relevant in the overall scheme. Other ideas we explored were skateboarding and techboarding (small skateboards that are used to play tricks using hands) competitions as a way of promoting the single amongst the wider demographic. We had also looked at a potential partnership with a local skateboarding park as well as making an exclusive JollyRoger skateboard.

Following on from the initial Tik Tok idea we also considered producing a Tik Tok campaign whereby a user would produce a video whereby they would initially appear wearing their own clothes, they would then hold up their hand with the song title written on their hand and when they removed their hand they would appear in pirate clothes with the song playing in the video. The idea would be the winner of the competition would win an exclusive merchandising package.

Whilst this phase of the project produced a lot of ideas for potential ways of bridging the gap between JollyRoger's existing fanbase and the skater community, it became apparent that we could not "Back two horses" and that we needed to focus on the strengths of the band and their existing fanbase and that the break-beat remix version of the song was the area that we wanted to develop further.

One of the benefits of working with a song from within the team is that we were fortunate enough to have a considerable knowledge and understanding of the JollyRoger's fanbase as well as having the ability to build our own marketing material thus saving money within our very limited budget.

With the ongoing COVID pandemic, live music launch events are still unable to take place and therefore, we felt that this gave us an opportunity to place the main focus of our budget into the investment in distribution and the types of merchandising that would bring the two genres of break-beat music and sea-shanties together. By making adaptations to the band's existing logo of an octopus and changing it slightly to have the octopus playing a set of DJ decks along with wearing a facemask, we felt we had created something that was unique to the song without being too derivative from the band's original image.

We also looked at social media platforms such as Instagram and thought about methods we could use to promote the band and the song through this medium. After considering several ideas such as a Pirate Name Generator and a "What Pirate Are You?" filter that could randomly select a different pirate filter for the user, we settled on a single filter that would add a pirate flag to the users video.

With the benefit of more time and a greater budget, the team would have liked to have developed these ideas further, but the example given in the portfolio provides an illustration of the possibilities of using these types of media to 'gamify' the experience and immersive aspect of the campaign. It felt that this approach would amplify the niche aspect of the song and the style of music whilst making the experience fun.

During the process we also considered how placing social media posts in accordance with when we believed there would be most activity and that it was deemed that social activity would be more prevalent in the evening and half way throughout the day and therefore our activity would be focussed on these peak times. (Tamble, 2021) In addition, we budgeted for allowing Instagram and Facebook posts to be 'boosted' to gain greater activity and felt the extra investment in the budget would be a useful commitment to increase traffic and activity.

5. Budgeting

In terms of Iain Sumner's contribution to the track and his considerable impact to the overall song it was agreed that Iain would receive a royalty of 15% for the Remix version of 'Aboard' and therefore it was our conclusion that this would relate to the royalty for the song and not any related profits in relation to merchandising.

The main budget itself was built up by myself in consultation with the team and was mainly focussed on looking at the cost of merchandising and our predicted revenues of sales based on previous experience from Samantha in what her expectations would usually be for a release. One of the challenges we faced was in regard to estimated streams from the song on Spotify and eventually we decided to put in an estimated sum of £50 profit over the first three month period of the release of the song. If we estimated 0.0032 per stream it would mean that the song would need to be streamed approximately 62,500 times per annum in order to achieve £54 approximately over a three month period. On average JollyRoger's streams are a lot more modest with the average stream being on average 1,000 streams with two tracks reaching 20,000 listeners. However, our view is that with the marketing campaign and increased activity in social media such as the Instagram filter we may be able to grow this demographic further. We would also be looking to Iain Sumner to promote the track through his own social media platforms.

6. Conclusion

This process has been a challenging one, not only in the fact that we have had to work in a disparate manner, but the fact that COVID-19 has driven a lot of the discussions and decision making process. Picking up on the points covered in Gibbs learning cycle shown at the beginning of this essay there are a number of observations which can be summarised by following this cycle:

As a team we built a marketing and single release strategy for the song Aboard and it's Remix. By breaking down the task into its component parts we were able to build a strategy utilising some of the skills and tools gained through the modules in the Music Landscape aspect of the MA Course.

In terms of how I contributed and fitted with the team it was difficult to feel as though I was able to make a complete contribution to the subject. Partly due to the fact that Zoe and Samantha are both more emersed in the music industry as a whole at present. However, I felt I could contribute some of my experience and knowledge certainly in terms of building the contract and helping steer the overall idea of how we could build a strategy for the song release as a whole.

Overall, the experience was positive. I enjoyed working with my team and we were supportive of each other and respected each others strengths and weaknesses. However, I think a little more organisation and focus from the whole team would have driven more effective results.

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