

MA International Music Marketing
Module: Foundation in International Music Marketing Term 1: Essay
- Portfolio Good Soldier
“The Rebrand of Good Soldier”
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Introduction

My career as a singer-songwriter leads me to the investigation of the music industry business.

I believe that a good team can help artists to succeed in what is their main goal: being heard and sharing their messages, their feelings with their audience.

Over time I have given more and more value to collaboration, to being part of a group that believes in your art.

My choice to work on the rebrand of Good Soldier is closely linked to my personal experience in the music industry.

An independent music company can support the authenticity of artists and let them feel free of expressing themselves through their music. The artists should feel welcomed in a community that can help them in all the most important aspects of their career.

This essay will first examine the current brand of Good Soldier.

It will then propose a rebrand with the implementation of core values that this company could empower and it will suggest new assets to deploy.

The Brand

Good Soldier is a London based independent music company which is representing artists such as Freya Ridings, Birdy, The 1975, Gavin James, Love Fame Tragedy, Biffy Clyro, Larkins, Jack Cullen.

It was originally established as a music publisher by Christian Tattersfield in 2003, previously the CEO of Warner Music UK (*Music Business Worldwide*).

In 2014 the company also started an independent recording label, Good Soldier Records.

The revenue streams which interest Good Soldier are mechanical and performance royalties, as well as promoting shows, sales and streaming, publishing and licensing (*Duncan, 2020*).

The artists of the roster are diverse in genre: indie/alternative, pop, afro-pop, dance/electronic are the main ones. (*Good Soldier Website*)

When I first started my research on Good Soldier, I observed how essential the information I could find online was.

The website only shows the roster of the artists and the contacts.

I found it very interesting that the way the website is built allows the artists to sit at the forefront of the site. However I noticed that the core values of the company were not mentioned at all.

Values play a fundamental role in the development of a brand.

Before analyzing the values of Good Soldier, I took a step back and thought about the definition of brand.

“A brand is a product or service that delivers a consistent and distinctive benefit to a customer” (McKinnon, 2019).

Good Soldier, as a service, has as its main purpose to produce, publish and promote the music that artists within the company create.

In a city like London, where the competition is very high both for those who want to make music and for those who want to promote it, the first impact is

crucial. That is why nowadays every company knows that having an excellent brand strategy is the key to stand out from the crowd.

Adopting a strategy that works means reordering thoughts, finding a frame that embraces them and making sure that the company can deliver the point of the offered service. *(McKinnon, 2019)*

The brand strategy is the DNA of an organization. Building a brand DNA means building a personality. It means that your product or service is recognised because it has a strong vision. *(Von Furstenberg - Masterclass)*

Reputation is part of the brand experience. Thanks to it, the company can monitor the efficiency of its services.

I found an article about the acquisition of Good Soldier by Downtown Music Publishing. In the article Roberto Neri - Executive Vice President and Head of European Business Development for Downtown Music Holdings - shared his opinion about Good Soldier.

In the article he showed his enthusiasm to add the artist roster of Good Soldier to the one of Downtown Music. He explained that thanks to the ethos that Christian Tattersfield adopted in his company, an incredible artist roster was established, full of talented people with various musical genres and styles. *(Stassen, 2020)*

Once I had analyzed the reputation of Good Soldier, I wanted to find out more about this ethos that Roberto Neri was talking about.

Unfortunately, the information online led to a generic description of the company itself and I could not find anything more than a few sentences about what Good Soldier is.

Therefore part of my job was to go deeper and understand which values can represent at best this independent music company.

My rebranding work started with a SWOT analysis, very useful to have a brand overview. *(See figure 1).*

My main goal was to turn the weaknesses I discovered into strengths, creating new opportunities for the company to be distinctive.

The lack of well defined core values and an unclear information about the company's services make the rebranding campaign worth taking place.

The identity of a company is the set of values to which the company is connected.

It can be expressed through colors, fonts, presence on social media and the website appearance (*Branding 101*, 2018).

Good Soldier is presented with a minimalist aesthetic, with an alternation of black and white and a very geometric font. The logo, which is the manifestation of brand experience and brand identity, is minimal and essential, but it presents interesting elements.

From a quick analysis of the competitors in the Tileyard Community, I noticed that black and white are recurrent colors in several logos, such as Ultra Records and Big Indie. Another consideration is that the Good Soldier logo and the Big Indie one have similarities: both feature a geometric sign above a symbol.

Big Indie chose a feather, Good Soldier a bird. The representation of this bird has spread wings. In many cultures the bird is a symbol of freedom, strength and wisdom. The geometric sign above the bird, however, seems to restrain the bird from taking flight.

Rebranding the Logo

As Napoleon Bonaparte used to say, a good drawing is worth a thousand words.

I focused on how to communicate this sense of freedom through the representation of a bird in flight. The geometric element within the original logo has been incorporated by the new logo I created. The rebranded logo looks like a stylised bird with open wings (*Figure 2*).

This choice to support the freedom of expression of the artist followed a quick analysis of the target of Good Soldier.

The main target to consider is the new artists who want to join the company. Therefore, I expect the target to be split equally between male and female, aged between 20 and 35 years old, with an interest in having a career in the music industry and with a music genre similar to the current artist's roster.

After rebranding the logo, I wanted the choice of this symbol - a flying bird - to be relevant for the music industry and in particular for the brand itself.

An independent music company, with a limited number of artists to follow, can help artists grow and develop their own musical identity. A company like Good Soldier can certainly guide the artist in the development process of the artistic career.

This is one of the reasons why I thought it would be motivating to connect the symbol of the bird to a brand proposition.

The brand proposition is a set of words carefully chosen to describe the brand (*McKinnon, 2019*). These words must be clear, must motivate those who read them and, above all, they must be honest.

The brand proposition is the best way to deliver the main values of the company to the internal audience, to the team that is working inside the company (*McKinnon, 2019*).

I thought in this particular case I would like the brand proposition to potentially match with the slogan of the label.

While I was rebranding the logo, there was an urgent need to add a brand proposition, a slogan, to which people, inside and outside the company, could straight away connect to.

I thought that the best way to express the concept of a free bird and link it to the service that the company offers, was the set of these words:

We help artists to spread their wings.

The slogan will appear in a new page section, which I decided to add to collect more information about the company: "about".

A brief description of the service which Good Soldier offers is also included in this new page section.

The sentence I chose is short and goes straight to the point: Good Soldier is a London based independent music company.

It might seem pedantic, but I believe that being clear about the service offered is the key to attracting new customers.

The “about” page section leaves room for something else equally significant: the core values of the company.

Implementing the values

Brand values are describing the character, the personality of an organization. Thanks to them, the customers know how the company behaves, the tone it uses in communications, and how it presents itself to the world.

At this point in my research, I moved my focus from the logo of the company to its name.

There are three types of brand names (*McKinnon, 2019*) :

1. Transactional, which is a type of name based on the product or service;
2. Traditional, which might be the name of the founder of the company;
3. Transformational, which is the type of name that evokes something commonly known or tries to capture the values of the brand.

The latter perfectly matches with the name of the company I chose.

It is instinctive to think about a good soldier of the military.

Out of curiosity, I went to read the values that a good soldier must have, and after visiting the British Army website, I noticed that most of those values communicated by the army are, in my opinion, what any company in the music field should adopt.

I took inspiration from the army values and I associated them to a completely different world: the music industry.

Courage, discipline, respect, integrity, loyalty and professionalism (*British Army Website*) can easily describe the essence of an independent music company.

The core values will also appear in the “about” page section, together with the slogan and a brief description of the company.

The professionalism of the company can finally be rooted out from the aesthetic, which I believe can be fresher and braver.

New colors for a new identity

The color palette is essential to create a mood that is consistent with the identity of a brand.

I chose vibrant and bright colors as a manifestation of personal expression, of freedom.

I wanted the artists to feel safe, to be surrounded by an environment where your music is heard, understood and not standardized.

I chose a light yellow to represent the main color of the new brand.

Yellow is connected to logic. Its brilliance leads to avoiding overthinking and focusing more.

When you are dealing with problem solving, being surrounded by the color yellow is constructive, as the brain is releasing more serotonin in your body, which is also called the “feel-good hormone” (*Ford, 2021*)

The power of this color is to bring happiness, positivity and optimism without encouraging daydreaming. It is useful to direct thoughts and make decisions in a short time. Perfect to choose from various options when you are facing a difficult situation to analyze (*Yellow Color Psychology, Symbolism and Meaning*).

In the music industry field it is always beneficial to convey serenity and optimism.

During their career, artists will always have to deal with some stressful situations, and the peace, energy and confidence that this color creates, stimulates the artists to not give up.

Color psychology marks a very significant process for my project, because it is the basis of a new and more fresh brand identity.

The color I chose for the background of the logo is Blue Lagoon.

The Blue Lagoon is a type of cyan. Cyan is usually associated with concentration, focus, and clarity of thought. It is a color halfway between green and blue, and often connected to insight and rational thinking. The presence of green, however, makes it warmer, and balances the blue, which is usually a color less connected to concreteness and practical thoughts. (*Arteqo Consulting*).

I was convinced by the uniqueness of this color, not overused in websites and therefore very distinctive.

As previously mentioned, the identity of a brand is the set of all the visual elements that can create a brand experience.

After talking about the color palette, I would like to dwell on the font choice.

The font name is Libre Franklin Black. Its roundness creates a nice contrast with the geometrical aspect of the new logo. It also has the same impact when the font itself is hollowed.

After making those visual decisions, I decided to create a draft of the website's new aesthetic.

The homepage of the current website is very aseptic. You can see a white background, with the Good Soldier logo in the center and the minimal font applied to the record label name (*Good Soldier Website*).

Doing some research, I could see that the last re-branding of the website was done in 2019 by Tristan Palmer Studio. I was very impressed with the description of the website creator. He explains how the new digital home was designed to showcase the roster of artists (*Palmer, 2019*).

The artist, therefore, is the focus, is at the forefront of the site.

This description immediately made me imagine a new opening page.

If artists are the focus of Good Soldier, why not choose some artist pictures to add to the homepage?

Therefore, I checked again the artists that the company is stressing in the social media descriptions, and matching them with the new color palette.

I then created a mood-board, with the photos chosen for the homepage.

The pictures of Freya Ridings, Birdy and Sway Dasafo seemed to blend very nicely with the new aesthetic and colors.

The “artists”, “contacts” and “about” pages followed the ideas previously exposed. They display the new predominant colors.

The artist page now shows the pictures of the artists with their original colors.

In the original site the photos of the artists are in black and white and take color when selected. This type of presentation of the artists is very recurrent, an example is one of the competitors mentioned before: Ultra Records.

I thought it might be more consistent with the new aesthetic to leave the original colors of the pictures, which go very well with the color palette. In addition, this choice leads to a differentiation with the competitors of Good Soldier.

Social Medias

Social platforms say a lot about how a brand identity is managed and perceived.

Good Soldier’s instagram page is administered considerably, putting the artist at the center and promoting the new music released by the artist's roster.

What I would like to focus on right now is how to obtain more visibility. The goal I chose for Good Soldier’s social media - including twitter and facebook - is an organic increase of followers.

I have set some goals that a social media manager will try to achieve over a period of time of about six months.

I determined the company would need a temporary external social media manager, to take care of the social platforms more consistently.

The increment of organic followers will lead to more engagement - and therefore likes - on posts. Since the posts are dedicated to new releases, what I hope is that the company will get more visibility through the artist's successes.

I also added Spotify on my social media strategy because I am confident it will help Good Soldier's profile to obtain a boost of listeners on the playlists created by the company and it will surely benefit the artists too.

A way to get Spotify displayed is to create highlights on Instagram, where the company can promote its Spotify playlists.

Since creating highlights is still part of my strategy, I thought it would be interesting to have a division between publishing, records and legacy, so as to remain consistent with the website, which presents this distinction in the artists page.

The evidence of the evolution, the successes and the new releases of the artist's roster makes it easier for people to check the professionalism of the company.

Another focus of attention that could be included among the highlights is the live performance.

Now that the Covid situation is under control, live performances are back to represent a very strong way to promote artists. Therefore, I thought it could have been a good idea to have the live section in the highlights, to recommend to Good Soldier Instagram followers the upcoming gigs, and to show the past performances.

The frequency of posts will be evaluated by the social media manager who will work on the six-month campaign. I decided to include a draft of the types of posts to be published. I created a weekly plan which will be better

structured by the person in charge. My idea is to ensure that the interest from followers - both those already part of the community and those that will be obtained thanks to the social campaign - remains alive and can be consistent. This new instagram highlight will also leave room for the promotion of live events organized by the company.

Live Event

After attending Autonomy's 15th Birthday party, I realized how useful it would be for Good Soldier to organize an event. An independent music company artist-centred could really benefit from a live performance event.

For artists who are looking for a label or a publishing company, seeing some of the artists performing live, creates interest and showcases the company's capabilities.

I thought Good Soldier might ask some of the artists in the roster to be on stage and after the performance to spend a few words about the company.

Since part of my rebranding campaign was adding the core values of the company, it would be nice if the artists would confirm their positive experience with the company, to show sincere gratitude for the team that has supported them so far.

To encourage the participation of the artists to perform, I would dedicate a space for artists' merchandising. It would benefit the artist as well as the company and it would provide more visibility.

The venue I chose is called "Amazing Grace" and it is located in central London. The cost of the venue during the weekend is usually around 8,000 pounds for the entire venue (*Tag Venue*).

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Figure 1

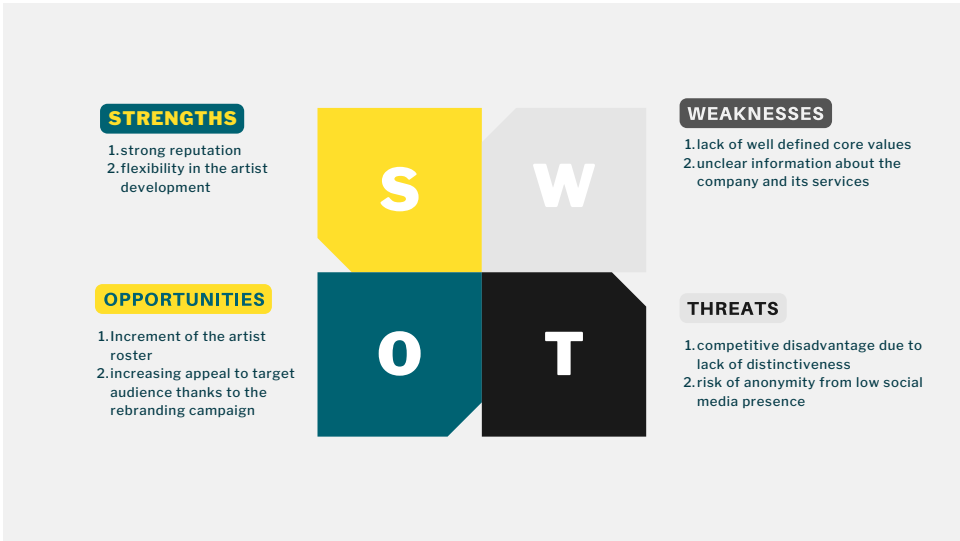


Figure 2

