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Introduction

Having been involved as a professional in the music industry for the last twenty-nine years, my skills have been developed through experience in a variety of roles and career paths. I began my career as an artist and performer under contract with independent UK Record Label Ninja Tune Records, followed by over sixteen commercial global releases to date.

I was employed in the role of Record Label Manager for an American Record Label for four years, managing a team of eight staff members and involved in sixteen album and single release campaigns. This included releases by major artists such as Marvin Gaye and a compilation album series that I produced and sold in excess of two hundred thousand CD copies worldwide. I acted as Recording Supervisor for Soul Funk/Disco band Heatwave for their live concert at the Greek Theatre in Hollywood in 1996, which was later released on CD album.

In 2000, I established my own Music Production and Recording Studio and Record Label. Twelve years later, I set up a Music Publishing company. As a Record Label, I have set up and run over twenty single and album release campaigns, sometimes with a team and often alone. I have established long-term working relationships with music creators and industry personnel and my clients often hire me to record, mix and master new works.

Since starting my career in music, I have always strived to move any projects that I have worked on forward until they are a success. This has often meant finding solutions to problems, creating strategies to climb over barriers and resolving people problems.

My Personal Suggestions For The “CherryShoes” Single Campaign

In late March 2018, a group was formed between Temuulen Khorloo, Erzsebet Hehn and myself. The group was formed to create and work on a campaign for a Trip-Hop / Pop band called CherryShoes. A series of face-to-face meetings, emails and Facebook Messenger group chats took place between the group and band members between April and May 2018.

When I approached this task, I advised the other members of the group about my previous experience and my ability to complete any of the areas that needed to be covered to a professional standard. I suggested that the group follow my lead so that we would be able to complete all of the assets to a high standard within the deadline.

I was initially elected as the person responsible for marketing and promotion, due to my previous experience. As the budget provided was quite limited, I suggested a D2F strategy that has been successful for many independent music marketers and is cost effective. The group agreed this would be the best solution for the budget and requested I lead the direction with this.

At this stage, all members of the group and band were assessing how we would best work together, the individual professional strengths each member has and who would be responsible for each task.

I suggested that we could take on some of the roles ourselves to save time and costs, including:

- a) Mixing and Mastering – I have a professional recording studio running Pro-Tools, Cubase, Logic and Reason audio software packages. I have thirty-six years experience in recording and mixing and fourteen years experience in audio mastering. I have run a commercial operation since 1992, having worked on genres including Pop, Dance, Hip-Hop, Grime, Reggae, R&B and numerous other types of music.
- b) Video Production – I suggested that we should film and photograph the band using our mobile phones performing their song in and around Tileyard Studios, including other old streets in Central London that has a classic look. My reasoning is that I have seen some great, professional-looking videos on Youtube created by new, young video producers who are being creative with new technology to make these achievements. I have experience in film editing using film software sequencing programs such as Final Cut Pro, HitFilm and the Crazy Talk animation program. I also suggested that we could film an interview with the band in the Tileyard Café to provide new content, then splice and intertwine this with excerpts from the music video to create a preview video.
- c) Single Cover Design – I have twenty-three years experience using Adobe Photoshop and have designed a wealth of commercially released CD and Digital Download cover designs. I suggested that I could draft some designs to save on costs.
- d) Remix – I offered to personally undertake the production of a remix for the single.

From a professional perspective, I am eager to progress on tasks in a timely and cost-effective manner. This means that; if I cannot afford a professional specialist to undertake a task on my behalf, I work creatively to complete the task myself in order to move past the barrier.

I made a suggestion to the band that before the campaign start, they should film some rehearsal sessions and short videos to share on their Facebook Artist Page. This would ensure interactivity with the current fans, preparing them for the forthcoming Single Campaign. I also suggested they update their entire social network Artist Pages.

My Individual Involvement In The Group Portfolio

I used Facebook Business Manager to research Audience Insights to find a relevant target audience for the campaign to direct the advertising towards. I used a strategy presented in guidebook *“How To Find Your Fan Base – Facebook Cheatsheet”* written and published by marketing company Indepreneur, LLC (2017), to create a Facebook advertising campaign which can efficiently deliver the advertisement for the band’s new single to a targeted audience.

Our target is to obtain the mailing list information of one thousand purchasing fans and subscribers. Facebook Audience Insights is a great tool for creating a very defined audience in preparation for an advertising campaign.

In their book “The Future Of Music”, Authors David Kusek and Gerd Leonhard discuss the effectiveness of Direct-To-Fan marketing to a niche audience:

“Niche marketing allows labels to focus their efforts and approach on a smaller number of fans, and lets them hone their marketing messages to address the needs of a defined group of people.” (Kusek & Leonhard, 2005)

I created a Sales Landing Page and two Digital Download cover designs using Adobe Photoshop design software. Using photographs taken from the photography session and artistically effected adaptations made by Erzsebut Hehn, I developed these into the designs aforementioned. In each design, I have tried to maintain an air of ‘mystique’ to the band, a keyword the Lead Singer has often mentioned in previous meetings. I adapted and enhanced the logo from the basic design Erzsebut had sourced by adding effects and designing additional parts.

I produced a short music preview video using a software program called HitFilm to edit the video and add effects. I feel that we could have produced more video clips independently and used App’s and Programs such as Glitch and HitFilm to create a more professional look. The standard of quality provided by HD Mobile Phone Cameras in the current day is of a professional level and using creativity and additional tools can enable us to produce all of the video content we need without needing to outsource.

Group Dynamics

I assessed our group strengths and weaknesses early on and became aware that I was the only member with former professional experience in the areas requested of the task. The other two members have very little or no former experience.

An initial problem I found within the group dynamic was that, whilst one group member was happy to take advice and direction, the other group member was quite headstrong, opinionated and less experienced. This has proved disruptive to the flow of progression, with unrealistic decisions being followed, wasting a great amount of time for our campaign. My approach is to find quick solutions to tasks and effective, realistic resolutions to move quickly onto the next stage.

I also felt that due to the timeframe we were working on and the limited budget, some unrealistic decisions were being made regarding:

- (i) The time it would take to plan and execute a professional make-up and photography session.
- (ii) Planning and producing a professional broadcast quality video.
- (iii) The planning, writing and production of a remix.
- (iv) Outsourcing work critical to the success of the campaign to unreliable or untested individuals.
- (v) Budgeting costs.

I made suggestions on how to strategically create and gather the media assets, however, my advice was often not taken. I could foresee there might be issues regarding meeting our deadline, so I began to work on two single cover designs and created a preview video in case there were any issues.

On the Sonicbids website blog, Journalist Satori Ananda highlights the importance of using individual skills of team members:

“We all have limitations, but we strengthen our limitations when we partner with people who are skilled in a specific area.” (Ananda, 2014)

Band/Group Dynamics

Whilst there has been a very good relationship between the group and the band, there have been some key areas that have contributed to delays. The band members live in Brighton, which means they only visit London on days when they are studying. This created issues regarding scheduling face-to-face meetings, however, we are in regular contact using Skype group chats.

The group have taken into consideration that the two band members have assessment deadlines themselves to complete. Erzsebet offered them to stay at her home whilst we work on the campaign to ensure we can progress without any further delays, however, they have not accepted her offer to date.

The band took on the responsibility of delivering the final audio masters and stems for remixing. I had previously indicated in a team meeting that the campaign is reliant on having the completed media files in our possession before we can create video and design elements. To date, there has been no delivery of the final audio master files or the acapella stems, delaying the completion of the remix.

The band also wants a full production broadcast video, which has increased the cost of our budget and further delays in collating the assets. The video recording session is booked and being filmed in Brighton on the 18th May 2018. A resolve would have been to self-produce a series of videos recorded in HD quality from our Samsung and iPhone Mobile Cameras for use on the band's social media sites. This could include interviews with the band, behind-the-scenes rehearsals and other media that would be of interest to current and new fans and subscribers.

The Impact Of Digital Technologies On The Creation Of Original Popular Music

The impact of digital technologies regarding the creation and promotion of original popular music has, over the last thirty years, escalated at an alarming speed and has been the cause of mass disruption to the music industry.

With regards to digital recording, it has enabled a more cost-effective and efficient way to record optimum quality audio files and the capabilities for a recording studio to be built within a home. The quality and variations of music sequencing and recording software in addition to audio effect plug-ins. They provide a level of master recording quality to be attained that, two decades earlier, could only be gained by hiring large, expensive commercial recording studios. This saves music creators time and money, plus provides flexibility to become more creative to develop their art. Whereby previously, they were once restricted by costs and budget. The ability to reduce songs to small digital MP3 files and email or stream them is fast, effective and has saved extensive former postage costs. However, this has been disruptive to the commercial recording studio sector, with many closing down and losing their businesses over the past two decades as more music creators opted for home studios.

The Impact Of Digital Technologies On The Distribution And Supply Chain Of Original Popular Music

The impact that digital technologies have had on the distribution and supply chain of the music industry has also been one of disruption. Major Record Labels, Music

Publishers, Distributors and Merchandisers are losing their grip on their markets. Independent Record Labels and Artists are choosing new Internet marketing, promotion and distribution technologies to compete against Major-Label product releases. This has eradicated the need for Major-owned company investment. Discussing the fusion of new Internet Marketing Technologies with the Independent music sector, Journalist Cherie Hu says on the Forbes Magazine website:

“Emerging record labels are recognizing these new players and capitalizing on their strengths: giving fans more say in the recording process, building friendlier artist contracts through strategic partnerships, aligning artist incentives with those of startups and diversifying revenue beyond recorded music. By thinking and acting more entrepreneurially, they are paving a more sustainable and relevant future for themselves.” (Hu, 2016)

However, the disruption in this area has also led to the devaluing of music as a commercial product and the music industry is in a constant battle to eradicate piracy and drive up the value of music streaming.

The Impact Of Digital Technologies In Relation To Team Development On Creative Industry Projects

The impact of digital technologies has changed team development on creative industry projects, disrupting the traditional music industry model. Many of the original music company executives have left the industry altogether, unable to evolve with the new modernised music business structure. However, those who have adapted themselves to work alongside new digital technology companies and developers find modern-day solutions to the music industry model.

The connectivity between the artist, record label and a consumer has been elevated with the use of Internet technology. The ability to use software applications, computer programs and mobile devices has enabled the creative development and production workflow to rapidly move forward. International communication has evolved, enabling group and video chats on applications such as Facebook Messenger and Whats App.

The software has developed whereby the capabilities of Graphic Design and Video Production Programs and Mobile applications make it possible to create professional designs and broadcast standard music videos independently. Marketing and promotion software development are constantly finding new ways to adapt and overcome its market. Adapting this to a music business model opens up immense capabilities to reach global audiences.

The music industry is evolving quickly alongside new digital and Internet technologies, making it an exciting marketplace to be involved in.

Conclusion

Shortly prior to the assessment deadline, I was requested by the group members to become the Project Leader. I accepted the role, however, I did find it disappointing that this request was made only after campaign deadlines started to fall behind. I am also disappointed that I offered suggestions to help complete tasks on numerous occasions based on experience, only for the advice to be disregarded and the task inevitably not going to plan. Only then have I been requested to take over the role or asked advice on how to rectify a problem that has been created.

In his book “Artist Management For The Music Business”, Author Paul Allen reflects on the importance of remaining realistic and flexible, when he states:

“The business of managing an artist in the competitive world of the music business means developing strategic plans in an effort to control as much of the artist’s developing career as possible. This means the manager must be realistic in what they feel they will be able to control, but it also means they must be flexible enough in their encounters with reality to adjust to the circumstances.” (Allen, 2007)

On final reflection, there needs to be a clear structure of roles from the beginning of the campaign. A Project Leader should have been allocated from the start of the campaign with the group members agreeing on the goals beforehand, and then follow the direction of the leader to achieve those goals.

A tip provided by website Mindtools.com puts into perspective the importance of minimising risks as early as possible:

“ Tip: When you don’t identify and reduce risks at the beginning of a project, they can often become issues later on. Make sure you understand your risks early. Learn from previous projects, and benefit from the team’s past experiences. This way, you’ll have fewer issues to manage as you move forward.” (Mind Tools Content Team, 2016)

Personally, I could have led more by example rather than discussing the best methods to use alone. In future, I will actually produce examples to show to group members to back up the strategies I am putting forward to reduce any indecisions, confusion or misunderstanding and allow the campaign to progress more efficiently.

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