



Updated by Julie Desjarlais on December 7, 2006. For any questions or comments, please contact Julie at julie@saskmusic.org.

Creating a Successful Marketing Plan (for the Artist)

We created this for those of you who are trying to put together a marketing plan and aren't sure what you should include. There are several models for creating marketing plans and this is only one possible model. Make sure that you are writing a marketing plan which best reflects you as an artist and your music. Too many people make the mistake the writing a cookie-cutter marketing plan, which often doesn't really support the artist or the project and is often easily identified as a cookie-cutter marketing plan.

Just a reminder: Your business is your music, your band and all of the promotion and marketing that you do for yourself so that you are successful.

Before You Start Writing:

- Think about whom you will be presenting this marketing plan to – this drives length, content, level of detail, structure, and explanation needed. Remember the marketing plan is one component of the business plan.
- Think about what you are hoping to achieve with this marketing plan
- Research all elements of the plan and start building your relationships
- Write the marketing plan yourself
- Develop an outline of key sections (see below for suggested key sections)
- Gain feedback from friends, family, acquaintances, and SaskMusic before you submit.
- Music marketing plans tend to incorporate more than the standard business marketing plan. They tend to have a little more than a standard marketing plan and a little less than a standard business plan. You may choose to go ahead and write the full business plan, and just cut and paste what you need when requested for a marketing plan.

What Should You Be Thinking About?

1. Executive Summary – only necessary for marketing plans longer than 5 pages
 - Although at the beginning of your actual marketing plan, the Executive Summary is always written last!
 - It is normally 10% in size of your marketing plan or one page
 - It should introduce the band, describe the project briefly, tell the reader what your overall goals are, and highlight the key points of each section in the marketing plan.
2. Introduction
 - Briefly introduce the band/artist – it should be a mini bio
 - Briefly introduce the project if this business plan is being submitted for a specific project
 - In some instances, this area is also used to tell the reader what you want from them and why they should give it to you.

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3. Music Industry Overview

- This is really only necessary when you are seeking funding or an investment from someone who has no or very little knowledge of the music industry.
- If you wish to include something like this for a person in the music industry, it should be brief and just establish that you do understand the part of the music industry that you are involved in.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs

4. Strengths/Past Successes

- Let the reader know what the strong points about the band/artists are.
- This also gives you a chance to list key successes and milestones that you have already surpassed.
- You definitely want the reader to be excited about the project, the band and where you have already been.
- This gives you a chance to show your track record – you could show past sales, successful tours, key gigs, awards and honours, etc
- The other option is to highlight previous successes and strengths under each section.
- Suggested format: Chart

5. Your Audience

- Knowing your audience is one of the most important parts of any artist's marketing plan. Those who really know their audience well, really stand out above other marketing/business plans. And given the changes in the industry, knowing your audience seems to be the key ingredient to success.
- Your audience isn't everyone – you should be taking notice of who comes to your shows. What is the gender breakdown, age, income levels (optional)? And, please keep in mind that demographics aren't nearly as important as what you know about your customer's lifestyle (demographics alone are so general that they won't tell you much about your audience). See the section "Lifestyle Marketing" for a more detailed explanation. What other artists do they listen to? How do they purchase CDs? From where? How big is your audience? How do they listen to music? How do they discover new music? Don't just guess – research and ask your fans. What other events do they attend? Where else do they shop and could you work with those retail outlets to promote yourself? Are they internet savvy? Etc.
- Where do they live (i.e. on the West Coast, in Europe, in Toronto, etc)?
- Suggested format: Charts for statistics and Paragraphs for details

6. Life Style Marketing

- Music industry professionals and artists are starting to dedicate more time to this concept. Essentially, it's about fitting seamlessly into the lives and value systems of your fans.
- This is fundamentally important because it can affect every other aspect of your marketing plan. Given your budget and limited resources, this forces you to think about the best marketing options to get the message to your potential customers.
- So, what have you done or what are you doing to understand your fans and their lifestyle preferences? This forms the basis of everything else in this section. This will help you decide strategies in distribution, media, fan base development, touring, company partnerships, corporate partnerships, etc.

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7. Graphics and Branding (Optional)

- Some groups spend a lot of time developing a specific logo, font, writing style, colour schemes, etc. This is all a part of branding. If you are working with other bands, retail outlets or supporters to build a particular image, then that should be discussed as well.
- If a logo and branding is important to your group, then you may want to include your logo and an explanation around your use of this logo as well as the branding concepts that you are using. This has to do with the 30-second pitch...can you sell your band and image in 30 seconds.
- You could also submit the graphics and logo as part of an appendix (an addition to the marketing plan, normally at the back) and just let your audience know in the marketing plan that they can see the graphics and logo in the appendix.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs and graphics

8. Press Kit

- What does your press package include?
- Is there anything different about your press kit (outside of the standard press kit)?
- What is the press kit going to be used for? – Details not necessary as a press kit is the standard tool of the trade
- As importantly, how will this press kit be distributed – through your web site, external web sites such as Sonic Bids or as a standard paper press kit?
- Are you producing an EPK (Electronic Press Kit)? Details of the production company, storyboards, concepts and content that is going to be presented could be included.
- Option: Attach a press kit or EPK as an appendix if it's not already required with the application.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs

9. Pre-release Promotions (Optional)

- Artists may decide to include this under a different topic such as media relations, or fan base management.
- Have you created a pre-order list for the CD?
- What are you doing in terms of viral marketing? How are you encouraging fans and potential fans to check out the new music and buy the new CD?
- What radio stations will you contact to make them aware of the upcoming recording project? Are there TV. or print interviews that you have lined up?
- What web sites, BLOGS, and other online medias are you using to hype up the new release?
- Are there any special events or gigs that are you using as a pre-release promotional event? Are there any conferences that you are planning to attend to hype up the project?
- Are you doing direct emails or web site press releases to your fan base to get them pumped up?
- Have you already identified the key player(s) doing the work?
- Suggested Format: Paragraphs/Charts

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10. CD Release Party

- When and where will the CD release party be held – this should be confirmed or very close to confirmed (at least the venue)? Are there going to be multiple release parties? Why did you choose these locations? Remember people may not know why Regina, SK is the best place for you to release your CD – you must explain that!
- Are there any unique pricing schemes that you are using? For Example, a CD may cost \$15.00 and cover may cost \$5.00. But if someone purchases both, they get both for \$18.00 and if they purchase before the event, they get both for \$15.00?
- Are there any retail outlets where people can pre-purchase tickets for the show? Where can people buy tickets ahead of time or can they even buy tickets ahead of time? What about online options?
- Are there any events leading up to the CD release party that you are using to promote the upcoming release and ticket sales to that event?
- Are there any contests that you have set up? For example, could you get a sponsor to cover dinner at a local restaurant, and then throw in an artist prize package and free cover to the event? Be creative! This would allow you to go to the radio stations with a contest that they could promote which could also lead to increased coverage.
- What radio, TV, online and print mediums are you using to promote the event and how will they be most effective?
- Are you postering? Are you using handbills?
- Do you have street teams in place (see Fan Base Development for a more detailed description)?
- Are there contests that you can set up for your web site and/or email base for your fans? What are you doing to promote the show to your fan base? Can you provide a discount on the CD for the first 25 guests?
- Are you going to have any other musical guests at this event? Why did you choose those artists and what is the benefit to having these guests there?
- As appendices, you could include any press releases that you are going to use, promotional materials to fans, details on prize packages you are putting together, bios on guest performers, etc.
- Have you already identified the key player(s) doing the work?
- Suggested format: combination of charts and paragraphs

11. Touring Plans

- A word of caution: A lot of artists think that it's good enough to say we are going to tour Saskatchewan, then Western Canada and then Eastern Canada because there are a lot of venues to play. This is **not good** enough! Sorry.
- A lot of research must go into developing your touring plans.
- First, a history on where the band has played in the past should be included because it shows that you have an established relationship with certain venues and a history of touring. You could include a detailed list of show dates and a timeline in the appendices. You need to establish yourself as a touring artist. If you have an extensive touring schedule, you could also list a select group of key performances, venues, and festivals. If you haven't done a lot of touring, that's okay but you better get ready to work your butt off on the next part of this section!

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- People want to know two things: 1) You have a solid touring history so you can get the live shows or 2) You have a tour already confirmed. If you don't have a solid touring history, then you need a tour strategy where the tour is almost confirmed. What I mean by that is that you have called the Pyramid in Winnipeg, sent them a press package and that they have stated that they would be interested in hiring you once the new release is done. It would be even better if you could get some letters of intent/support to include in an appendix. At the very least, you should know contact names and specific locations.
- You should be able to show that you have identified venues which embrace your style of music...don't get into the game of listing any and every venue that you can think of. You can include these identified venues but try to keep it in a chart form that's concise and please, please indicate if you have established a relationship with them.
- Are you working with a booker/agent?
- I will say it again – you need prove that you have a relationship with the venue and that touring is a reality – otherwise, your touring plans become “too airy.”
- You should show explain where you plan to start touring and what your plan for expanding your touring base is. Basically, do you plan to start in Saskatchewan, expand to the prairie provinces and then go east? Or, are you starting in Saskatchewan and Alberta and moving down into the Northern United States. You need to show why you have chosen the geographic strategy that you have. I.E. there is a strong Christian market in the lower mainland and that is why you are touring to Saskatchewan, and Lower mainland, BC.
- If you are planning to tour internationally, do you understand the rules, restrictions, regulations and benefits to traveling to a particular country?
- Are you touring with any other artists? How do they fit with your strategy? Is it a shared bill? Are you headlining? Are you opening for a well-established act?
- How are you getting the promotion done for the tour in each area? Are you posterizing? Using Handbills? Are you using street teams?
- You can include your media relations (see section below) for the tour in this section or cover that in the media relations section below.
- Appendix: Tour details if your touring section is becoming extremely long. Bios for the artists that you are working with?
- Have you identified the key player(s)?
- Suggested format: Charts and paragraphs

12. Media Strategy

- Do you understand the radio stations that you are targeting? Caution: Do not just include a list of radio stations...if you still want to do that, then it should be referenced to in an appendix. More importantly, do you understand the play formats and needs of those radio stations?
- What are your press release and promotional plans for radio? Do you have a database? Are there contests or promotional giveaways for the radio dj's or their audiences?
- Are there any special events that you can team up with a radio station on?
- Have you received any support already for the single or know that there are radio stations who are interested in promoting a single once you are done? Those letters of intent/emails should be included in an appendix.
- Are you able to secure an on-air interview for the promotion of the single or any tour dates that you may have in that area?
- Do you have a radio tracker? How will you keep track of your success?
- What have been your past successes with radio, if any?

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- What alternative radio formats are you accessing – internet, satellite, and podcasting? How are you targeting these radio formats, and what is your previous success with these channels?
- What are your plans for any television media? Are you doing a video? Are there interviews/live performances that you have lined up? Again, get those letters of intent or interest in there! Do you have an understanding of which TV? programs are supporting local live performances and have you started conversations with them? Why did you choose the programs that you chose? This is important for lesser-known programs because you need to show why they are a good fit.
- What are your plans for print media? Who are the newspapers, periodicals and interviewers that you are targeting? Are there any interesting stories or promotional ideas that you are using for the print media? Have you received any confirmed support letters and are there significant relationships from the past, which will serve to benefit you? Why did you choose newspapers, periodicals or magazines that you chose? This is important if you are dealing with lesser-known publications and need to spell out the benefits for your reader.
- What online medias are you making use of – BLOG sites, community sites, e-zines, podcasts? For example, newmusiccanada.com or pitchforkmedia.com. Make sure you show the benefit of working with this company.
- Appendix: background information on any lesser known TV, print, or online medias. This way, you don't make this section too large. If not already included in the press kit, a selection of key press coverage.
- Suggested format: Combination of charts, graphs and paragraphs

13. Fan Base Development

- In today's industry, a fan base is considered the most important element to the success of an artist and the interest that the general industry will take. Remember...the fan is your customer and the customer is everything.
- Do you have an email list or mailing list to keep in contact with your fans? Do you have a database that allows you to target by region?
- How do you get news out to them about your career?
- What services do you offer on your web site? I.e. message boards, a daily artist journal, contests/promotions, updated news section, an up-to-date myspace site.
- Is there an email address or some kind of customer service measure so that fans can get their questions/concerns addressed?
- Have you been able to make use of key fans to head up street teams in certain areas? Street teams do a great job of postering, promoting the show, word-of-mouth marketing, etc. Street teams can become a critical part of any artist's marketing plan. You should expand on your street team strategy – where are they located, what do they do, and what strategies do you have in place to reward street team members. This is as much a strategy as anything else.
- Do you offer a newsletter or discounts on merchandise or a fan party?
- Caution on all of these things: You should **not** offer everything! You need to offer what is going to work best for your fan base.
- Are you able to conduct online surveys or in-venue surveys? What have you learned from those surveys (just a synopsis, not details – save that for an appendix).
- Basically, how do you get your fans to feel as though they have enough of a connection to you to buy your CDs and go to your shows? Community and connection are critical. Don't breeze by this important part of your marketing plan.

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- This is where the power of viral marketing, word-of-mouth, and fan empowerment really starts to shine through. At the time of writing this document, these were the most powerful tools for any artist. What strategies are you using to foster and encourage these tools and your fan base to spread the word about you and your music?
- Appendix: Samples of your fan base development tools (Optional – i.e. surveys, newsletters, postcards, press releases), survey result details
- Suggested format: Paragraphs, charts and graphs

14. Web site/Technology

- Some of this information may have already been covered in other areas of your business plan – that's fine.
- A web site is becoming a key strategy point for a lot of independent artists.
- What sections are you offering on the web site and what is the benefit? Is there an electronic press kit area with your bio and photos, gig listing history and contact information? Do you have separate areas for the industry professionals and the general public?
- What do you offer in your fan base development area? Should be brief if already covered above or you can just reference to the above section.
- Do you have a general news area? Is there a section for people to sample your music? Is there an area for people to email you, do you offer a link to join and email list? Do you have a general info area that provides a bio/history on the band, band photos, tour dates, etc? Your internet presence is as much about creating a community as your live performances are...and web sites often have to meet the needs of several different "audiences."
- Is your genre/audience well-suited to a web site? Will the talent buyers you need to work with enjoy moving around this site?
- Is there an e-commerce area? Are you selling CDs through your site? How will that process work and who is going to manage it?
- How are you promoting the web site and how does that fit into the rest of your strategy? Will you have any contests/promotions for the general public on the web site? What are your online sources to promote the web site? Are there key links, partnerships, and/or sponsors that will be attached to the web site.
- Appendix: If you want to include samples of the web site, please only reference and include in an appendix.
- Suggested Format: Paragraphs and Charts

15. Distribution/Retail Strategy

- How are your CDs and merchandise getting to the end consumer?
- If you have already covered e-commerce on the web site and touring sales, then just mention it briefly.
- If you plan to get your album distributed or into the stores, then you need to show that you have made the contacts and done the research,
- It isn't enough to say you are going to try and get a distribution deal. It's very hard work to get distributed and that indicates you haven't done your homework. You should be able to identify distribution companies that would work well and show that you have established a relationship with them. You must be able to show you have generated some interest in your project.

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- As far as retail goes, you should be able to identify independent stores that will take product (if you do not have a distributor or distribution deal). It's important to identify those retail outlets that will support your project and it's even better if you have started discussions with them. If you are using lesser-known retail stores, you may want to describe the store if your reader may be unfamiliar with them. The question you need to sufficiently answer is how are people going to buy your CD? So, what happens if there is no distribution deal?
- What retail options are you offering? Bricks-and-mortar, ecommerce, digital download...and then there are formats – CDs, USB Drives, DVDs, Vinyl, singles, MP3s, etc.
- Identify any promotional activities that you have planned for the retail stores that you are working with and if the retail store is not a standard music store, make sure that you identify the fit with that company.
- This tends to play heavily into lifestyle marketing if you are using stores that fit more with customer lifestyle (a local clothing shop) as opposed to standard retail stores. And further, promotion strategies should be discussed for all retail options. Most important is the marketing strategy behind it that you are using to get people to take home your music.
- Further to this point, as the CD becomes less and less of a revenue source (and more of a marketing tool), cross-selling and up-selling become important considerations. Artists have done this through a variety of strategies – tour packages, artist gear packages, CD/ticket combos, etc.
- Appendix: Any letters of intent or interest
- Suggested Format: Combination of charts and paragraphs

16. Additional Merchandise (Optional)

- Are you selling other merchandise besides the recording project? I.e. T-shirts, hats, tank tops, etc.
- Are you selling previously released CDs – Basically, how else are you making money?
- You should be able to justify the reason to get additional merchandise (i.e. there is a demand from your fan base and it will sell well) and the price that you are charging.
- A lot of artists do not spend enough time understanding their costs and pricing.
- I saw a great marketing plan that included graphics of the merchandise to be printed. You could submit that in an appendix.
- Suggested format: Charts for the list of merchandise items. Paragraphs for introduction and justification.

17. Special Events (Optional)

- If you are performing at any special events or working for any special causes (i.e. working for a charitable event or performing at a unique opportunity), you may want to list it. Working with a charity or for a cause is also some really positive good will. Being presented a unique performance opportunity shows that the community is interested in you and that you are able to give back to the community.
- Appendix: You may want to include further information about the event, opportunity or cause.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs

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18. Partnerships with Other Artists (Optional)

- Some artists may be working closely with other artists/bands to cut costs, cross promote, etc. This section should be the place where you highlight those relationships and the benefits that you will receive by it. A community that supports one another can be a really strong selling point.
- Appendix: You could include bios of the other artists if they are a key component to your operations.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs

19. Video Production (Optional)

- Video production really has a timeline and marketing plan all unto itself.
- You should introduce the production company, producer, and any other key players.
- You can put the concept in this area to give you reader a better idea of the finished product and which single the video is supporting.
- You should indicate what media companies have expressed interest in promoting a video from you – if you have no interest right now, why go through the expenditures of creating a video that will become dated?
- You should be justifying why you have chosen to spend money on a video – does it make sense with the rest of your business plan.
- What promotional plans do you have in place for the video once it is completed?
- Are you making any use of special, well-known guests or have a unique spin on the video?
- You should indicate if there are additional investors supporting this video or how you plan to finance it.
- A time line can be included – just a basic one to determine when production, editing and release will occur.
- This section may also include “videos” that can be used for other options – live performance video to help secure additional festival spots, and promo on other mediums such as myspace, youtube, your personal web site, etc, which may not be nearly as costly as videos for commercial release.
- Appendix: You could also include a detailed timeline as an appendix. Any letters of support for the video as well as a letter of intent from the production company, producer and investors can be included. Storyboards may also be included in the appendix.
- Suggested format: Combination of charts and paragraphs

20. Songwriting (Optional)

- For some artists, songwriting is a key component of their activities and should be highlighted in the business plan. There are a lot of industry professionals who place a higher value on an artist that can write their own really good songs.
- You should indicate whether the songs written will be used strictly by you or whether you will be pitching these songs to other artists.
- If you are planning to pitch songs to other artists, you need to show a well-developed strategy for tackling that. Are you planning to solicit a publishing company? If so, you should be able to show that you have researched who you are going to target and that you will be making a contact. A letter of interest from a publisher can definitely strengthen your business plan. Again, the reader wants to ensure that you have done your homework. Are you planning to promote your songs directly to other artists in your community and what is your strategy for doing that?

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- If you have no publisher, then you should indicate who will be taking care of your publishing and how that will be managed internally.
- If you are working with a lesser-known publishing company, then you should provide some background information on the success of this publishing company. You also have the option of giving a quick introduction to the company and providing a longer background in an appendix.
- On this point, if your plans are to focus on film, television, and video game placement, you should provide a strategy on how you are going to target those markets, previous placements and successes, etc, if you do not have a publisher in place.
- Appendix: Any letters of interest or intent from publishers or artists should be put in the appendix.
- Suggested format: Paragraphs

21. Sponsors/Investors (Optional)

- Most investors would like to know if there are other sponsors and investors involved in the project. They seem to feel more assured if there are other investors involved. This also gives you a chance to highlight any sponsorship deals that you have been able to secure.
- You don't need to get into the details of how much investors have put in (this will show up in your financial statements) but you should list them.
- Parts of this section may also show up in your life style marketing, as may be the case with some sponsorship deals.
- Appendix: Any sponsor or investor letters of support. You may also wish to provide background information on your sponsors and investors which should be referenced in the business plan.
- Suggested format: Charts

22. Challenges

- You can address any challenges or questions that the reader may have outstanding if you haven't already done so under each individual section.
- The challenge with this particular section is to make sure that you don't cause great concern in your reader. So, you should show how you are working to address and solve those particular problems and challenges, or how you are neutralizing them.
- From an internal point of view, it can challenge you to really look at your plan and see what is feasible and what isn't, and that is an important exercise to go through. Whether you necessarily share this section with your reader or not, depends on your reader.
- Suggested format: Charts

23. Goals

- Indicate your goals for the next 6 months, 1 year, 3 years and five years.
- For each goal, you should be stating what you want to achieve, when you want to achieve and how you will measure your success.
- This is a great tool for you as well to see if you are on track.
- A detailed timeline should also be included in the appendix. Make sure you reference to it in the business plan. The best format for this is a calendar or a chart where you can plot all your dates and what you need to have achieved by then.

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24. Conclusions

- Your conclusion should summarize the band, the project, your request, and why this is a successful project and your reader should invest in it.
- Suggested length: ½ half page to a full page.
- Suggested format: Paragraph

25. Appendices

- All your appendices come at the end of the document,
- They can be used to provide supplemental information but the marketing plan should be able to stand alone.
- They take care of the nice to know but not the necessary to know.
- They should be neat, professional and well-organized.

Just some final thoughts:

- Make sure the marketing plan is professional and the tone is professional
- Try to be positive and upbeat
- Always be honest and show how you arrived to your conclusions
- Always check spelling and grammar
- Get someone to read it over and provide feedback
- Always use third person, never first person (I, we)
- Cut and paste to customize marketing plans for the different funders and investors.
- Please remember that you do not need to include all of the sections outlined in this document. It was created to cover a variety of genres, situations and career levels. Choose sections and develop your marketing plan to fit your needs.

Good luck!