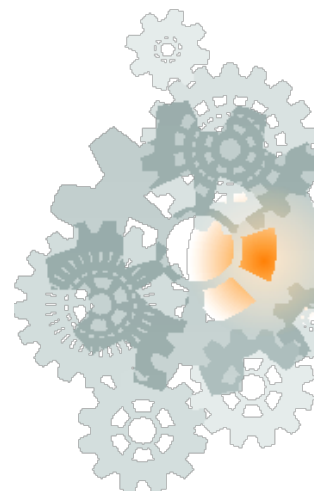




CREATING A MARKETING PLAN: FOR THE ARTIST

by Lorena Kelly for SaskMusic

Why create a marketing plan?

The first thing you need to do is think about why you are creating a marketing plan. There are a number of reasons you might require one, but the main ones typically relevant to **artists** are:

- To lay out your goals in a way that motivates you to achieve them, and helps you see a clearer path to getting there;
- To bring your team members - which could include fellow band members, managers, and others who will be assisting you - into the process with a common vision;
- To present a well-thought-out case to potential investors or funding agencies.

Usually when you're talking about marketing, you're talking about ways to let people know about your music, so that they will want to come see your shows, stream your music, buy an album or support you in other ways. Maybe you teach guitar lessons and want to attract new students. Maybe you write songs and are looking for artists to pitch them to. Bottom line is, you a) want to make money from your music, so that you can afford to make more music and/or b) You don't care about making money and you don't plan to support yourself through music - you just want people to hear it. Either way, you need to market it. The artists who consciously avoid marketing and self-promotion and still find success are the exception - not the rule.

The best result you can get from doing an awesome job of marketing yourself, is the freedom to do EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO DO with your music.

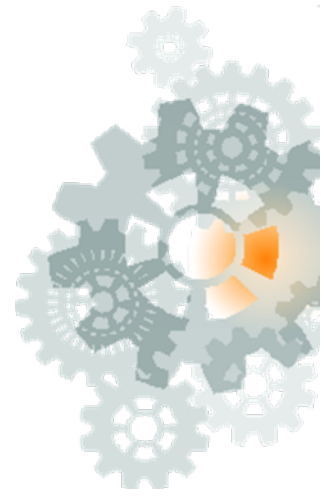
This document will hopefully get you thinking about different strategies you might want to try (or not), as applicable to your own individual career. The first point is the most important one - knowing what you want to achieve! Every individual artist's situation is unique to them; your goals are your own. You can pick and choose which things you feel are important to you as an artist, relevant to your genre or ideals, and which will help you connect with your fans in the most effective way for you. Not everything noted in this sketch will be relevant to you, and that's okay! It's here to get you thinking about options. Knowing what's not right for you is as important as knowing what is.

There are many models for creating marketing plans and this is only one approach. Make sure you are writing one which best reflects you as an artist and your music. There is no 'one size fits all' marketing plan; the most effective one is tailored to you, by you.

CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

Your music is unique to you. The ways in which you choose to present yourself to the world - most importantly, to your fans - become your marketing, and are integral to running your career as a business. Your marketing plan can be motivated by a desire to generate income from your art. Or not. But it should definitely reflect your ideals and your creativity in complement to your music. **Your marketing plan will bring together your music, the face you present to the world (your 'brand'), and concrete plans in a way that will drive your success.**

(Note: "Songwriter" or "freelance musician" can be interchanged with artist, if that's what you do!)



PRO TIP: ASSUME THEY KNOW NOTHING

Write your plan as if the reader has never heard your music and has no idea who you are or what you've accomplished so far (in fact, write as if they're not even familiar with the *genre*). This is especially important when submitting for the purposes of a funding application.

Getting Started

Every element of your plan, and your plan as a whole, should answer the following 7 questions throughout.

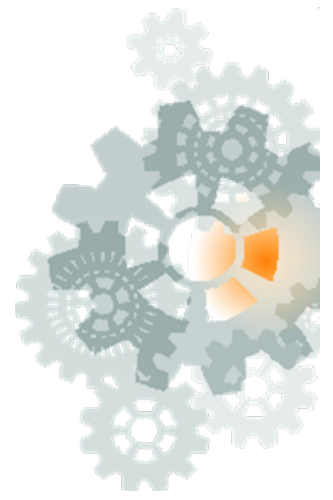
1. **Who:** Who is the plan about - artist/musician/songwriter/other team members? Who are the consumers/fans of your music? Which radio stations and media outlets will be interested in your music? Which music industry professionals might be intrigued or become future team members? For outsourced work or freelance players, who will you hire?
2. **What:** What are your goals? (more on that below!)
3. **When:** Include timelines for your goals and when you will do action items. In the first draft, you might not have specific dates, but you'll want to include relative times e.g. "2 months before album release date: first single to radio;" "6 months before album release: nail down choice of graphic designer for album art."
4. **Where:** Where will recording sessions happen? Where will videos be shot? Where are tours planned?
5. **Why:** For each goal, state a Why. Don't assume it's obvious. Your reasons for doing a recording are different than the next artist's. e.g. why are you doing a single instead of an EP? an EP as opposed to a full-length album? a series of iPhone live performance videos rather than a glossy high-budget shoot? If you're doing a for-the-door tour and expect to take a loss, explain why - for example, to break into a new region, and that you'll also be doing media interviews and networking as you go.
6. **How:** If not already answered, be sure to explain how you will accomplish a goal. How will you get people to pay attention to your new video release? Details.
7. **How Much:** For any out-sourced work, such as hiring a radio tracker or graphic designer, know approximately what it'll cost. For funding applications, you'll need to get accurate and up-to-date quotes to support your budget.

Actions

- ❑ Sometimes it's easiest to just start writing! Grab a notebook and **start jotting down everything you hope to achieve in the next one year, two years, five years.** You can think big at this point. Where would you like to be at the end of those periods? What milestones would you like to have achieved if everything goes perfectly? Attach specific numbers/targets where you can (or want to). At this point, you're just brainstorming - it's not written in stone. Go for it. Go big if you want to. Include as many "in between" steps as you can (if you haven't done a regional tour yet, include that as a goal before doing a national tour.) This can include action-oriented goals - for example
 - Release a full-length album with 10-12 tracks in the pop genre. Make sure it's available on all major distribution channels as well as having it available in vinyl for side-of-stage sales. Album release date is in 8 months. Hope to sell 500 units within the first 8 months.
 - Distribute 2-5 singles to commercial radio and promote them fully with the help of a radio tracker. Goal for 2nd single is top 50 on Canadian airplay charts.
 - Release a professional music video and hit 25,000 YouTube views
 - Be nominated for a Western Canadian Music Award
 - Secure showcase spots at Departure Toronto, BreakOut West and NXNE
 - Solicit management
 - Immediately after album release do a 3-week Eastern Canada tour
 - Expand band from 3 piece to 4 piece
- And it can (should) at this point also include general and creative goals, such as
- Increase by revenue from music by 20% in the next year
 - Spend more time on songwriting by setting aside weekly time in my calendar
 - Develop relationships with co-writing partners
 - Work on stage presence and redevelop our cover song setlists

Don't worry about length at this point. Editing can come later as you define your goals and choose or discard priorities and activities.

- ❑ Divide your goals into main sections based on timing. Which can be started immediately, and which are longer-term?
- ❑ Start educating yourself on individual elements of the plan and getting quotes for items in your short-term list.
 - e.g. If you know you'll want to release your album to college radio, but aren't sure how to do that, do your homework and/or make an appointment with a mentor. Find out what costs are involved.
 - Determine which elements you're capable of doing yourself, which ones a band member could take on, and which need to be hired out. e.g. are you a professional graphic designer?
 - Get quotes on items you know you'll need help with, and/or start making connections in the music community to find good team members.
- ❑ Don't overlook opportunities to network and learn at music industry conferences, workshops, and through your local industry associations!

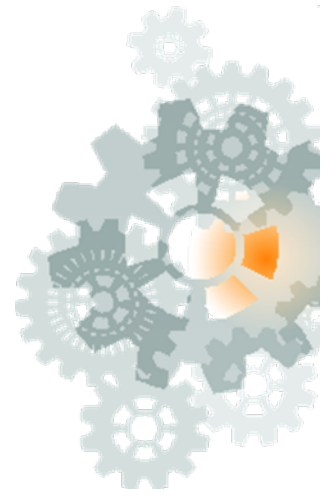


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- ☐ Once you have your first draft written, get input from your team members, industry association or other mentors.
- ☐ Polish off your final version. (Remember, it's a living document so the 'final' will only be final until you edit and revise – your career will constantly evolve.)

PRO TIP: IT'S ALIVE!

Your plan should always be changing as you accomplish some goals, and add new ones. Revisit your plan regularly to make sure you're on track and that it reflects where you are! Keeping it up to date is also handy so you're ready to submit for funding opportunities quickly, if you wish.



Crucial Elements

Every artist is different. However, these are generally the things that I'd expect to see addressed in an artist's plan. Not all are applicable to everyone - i.e. you may not be a live performer; you may be a songwriter who doesn't release albums but instead pitches. We'll get into each of these in detail below.

- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Bio
- ☐ Your fans/target audience
- ☐ Recordings
- ☐ Performing / tour plans
- ☐ Radio and/or video elements
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Traditional media
- ☐ Branding/Merchandise
- ☐ Your team
- ☐ Other considerations
- ☐ Defined goals

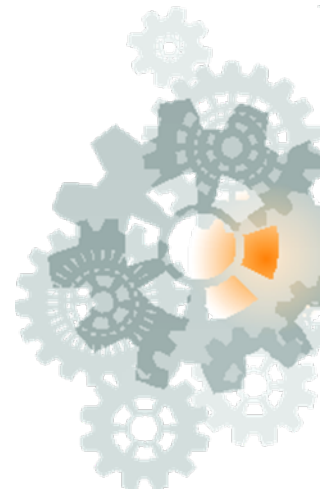
PRO TIP: ONE VERSION DOESN'T FIT ALL

As you're working on your overall marketing plan, remember you don't have to use the whole thing all the time. If you're working on a funding application for a full-length recording, you might edit down or pull out sections that aren't relevant to that application, while fleshing out other parts. Intend on tailoring your plan a little to the audience/use, just as you would your resume for a job application.

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Detailed Thinking

Now that you have your brainstormed areas, get into the nitty gritty details. The following points are just to get you thinking about other things you may have missed. *Not all of these are needed or relevant for everyone, of course.*



1. Introduction

- ☐ A paragraph or two that neatly describes you, for example what you'd give to an emcee announcing the artist at a major show.
- ☐ If the plan is being given to a funder/investor, here is where you'd describe what you're applying for funding for.
- ☐ Be sure to actually state what type of music you do. Make up your own complicated explanation if you like but do say it. If you can't explain it, how can you market it effectively?

PRO TIP: IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Your marketing plan should be a reflection of you - your goals, attitude and music.

2. Artist Bio

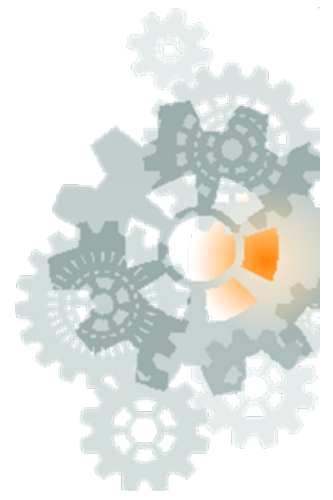
- ☐ Get into the details now. Add some history for context. If a band, talk about the members and what strength each brings. Keep the non-music-related-factoids out, unless they are relevant to the band's direction/influences/kooky costume choices. If you have a great backstory about the bass player taking lessons from a grand master in Chicago that then informed a key part of the band's trademark sound, include it!
- ☐ List key past successes and milestones that have been reached. (But - longer explanations can be left for later sections - e.g. if you're talking about radio chart numbers for each past single, leave that for the radio section.)
- ☐ Get the reader excited about the project/the band, where you have already been, and where you're going.
- ☐ If it's a new band/project, you could talk a bit about each individual player/their accomplishments.
- ☐ You could include one or two critic/review quotes here.
- ☐ A biography should be constantly updated to reflect the current work and accomplishments of the artist. This is an essential tool to have available for media, those who would book the band, and other professionals.
- ☐ Don't embellish; it's really easy to fact-check. And please, don't say your sound is 'so unique it cannot be described.' This wording has been used by so many bands it has become a nothing-term.

3. Description of your fans/target audience

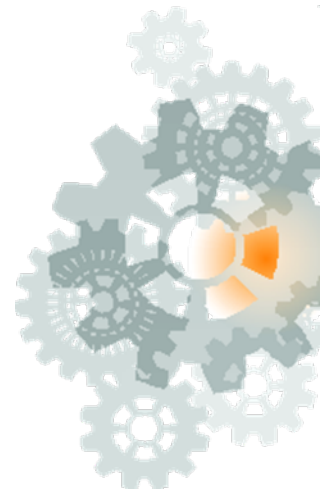
- ☐ Do NOT overlook this section! **Knowing your audience is one of the most convincing elements of your plan and key to its success.**
- ☐ Your audience isn't 'everyone' - so who are they? Stating your fans are "9 to 90 years" results in eye-rolls from juries. You cannot market effectively to that wide of a demographic - chances are, the majority of your fans are in a more narrow range. Take notice of who comes to your shows. Failing that, look in the mirror: most often our fans relate to ourselves. This is fundamentally important because it can influence every other aspect of your marketing plan. With a limited budget and resources, this forces you to think about the best ways to get your music to the people who are most likely to dig it.
- ☐ What is their gender breakdown, age, and social makeup? (You might get some help with that by looking at your social media pages or streaming analytics).
- ☐ Lifestyle marketing: Essentially, it's about fitting seamlessly into the lives and value systems of your fans. What other things do your fans typically like to do? What other artists do they listen to? How do they support music financially or consume it (Live shows? Physical albums? Digital streams? T shirts?)
- ☐ How big is your audience currently? How do they discover new music? Don't just guess - research and ask your fans. What other kinds of events do they attend - theatre? Monster truck rallies? Where else do they shop and could you work with those retail outlets to promote yourself?
- ☐ Where do they live? Have you reached audiences outside your home region and if so how, and/or how do you know about them? If you feel your music "would do well in Germany," what evidence do you have to support that?
- ☐ I encourage you to get creative with your marketing. The more you can **customize the experience for your fan**, the more successful you are likely to be. That idea should carry forward to everything you do.
 - What kind of venues do your fans like to go to? When you are booking your band, book into places where fans of your type of music are likely to go. Don't try to cram yourself into the wrong style of venue just because you can talk the booker into thinking that your metal band could play an acoustic, low-volume gig in a coffee shop. It won't be a gig you enjoy playing, and you probably won't pick up any new fans.
 - If your fans don't buy vinyl records, don't make them. Put your album up on streaming. If they like to buy vinyl, make vinyl. If they like to buy T-shirts, make t-shirts. Give your fans what they want! Because:

PRO TIP: FANS ARE THE REASON FOR 90% OF YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS

Why 90% ? I'm allowing the other 10% for vanity - maybe a little part of you just wants to see your name in the paper. Part of your marketing may not be motivated purely by a desire to get your music to the fans (and BTW, fans also = income).



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- You want to make it EASY for your fans to find out when you are playing. How they can buy tickets. How can they get a copy of your album. Do you sell T-shirts in their size.
 - Why do you want to get a song on the radio? So someone out there can hear it, fall in love with the song, buy your album or come and see your show. Want to hear more from you.
 - Why do you want to get people talking about you on TikTok? So more potential fans will hear about you, word of mouth will grow, you can get more people out to see your show.
 - The reason you're trying to get media to talk about you, is to GET MORE FANS and have more people hear your music. If you're trying to get an agent or a manager or a publicist, it's because they can help you (hopefully) GET MORE FANS.
 - Again, more fans might equal more money, sure, but it's also understood that most artists want to move people emotionally, and get their music heard. Marketing will get your music heard by more people.
- ❑ Fan lists: Still relevant. Possibly even more so now as few bands are using them - it's easy to stand out. Some bands just put out a notebook at the door of the club, at the merch table, and mention it from the stage. It is VERY important for a number of reasons.
- Which are you more likely to pay attention to: a personal email that comes to you from a band that you have recently become a fan of, or one of the 50 Facebook event invites you got this week? Do both. It is ridiculous how much better direct, personal marketing works for actually connecting with your fans.
 - Don't rely on any free site where you don't own your own data (looking at you, Instagram and Facebook etc) to collect and manage your fanbase for you. There is a reason it is free. Keep track of your fanbase in a system that YOU have control of outside of any "free" system - e.g. a spreadsheet or paid mail program - or at least have a backup. Then once you get people's emails, actually stay in touch. Even if it means sending a "hey! We're writing new songs" email every few months.
 - If someone is willing to invest the time and money to come over to your merch table and purchase something, it means they felt strongly enough about the performance to do so. (Or...you just have really cool merch.) Every merch table customer is a valuable potential fan. Do not squander this connection.
- ❑ To summarize: **Track who your fans are and stay connected with them.**

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4. Recordings

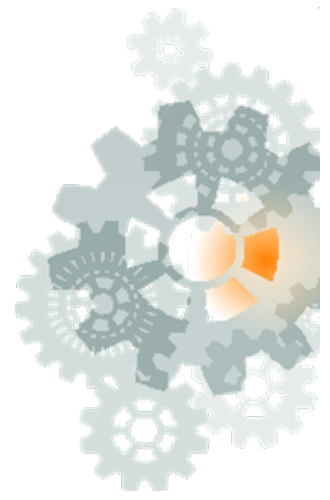
Always produce the best quality you can. If that means you can only record 2 songs, record 2 songs. Don't ever release something you aren't proud of.

- ☐ Recording history/discography and future release plans, including info on how well previous releases did for you (sales/reviews/etc.). If you haven't recorded yet, but sang on someone else's album for example, include that - it's studio experience.
- ☐ If you in the midst of planning a new album/single/EP (also if applying for funding for recordings), this section will be more substantial - you'll want to include information on session musicians, engineer and producer/studio, songs to be recorded, who the songwriters are. Careful selection of these team members is obviously important from the creative standpoint, but it can also impact the success of a funding submission.
- ☐ Why you are choosing to release it in that length (single vs album for example)? What formats will it be released on – digital only, vinyl, USB?
- ☐ Is there a theme to the project? Musically, what will it encompass?
- ☐ **WHY NOW:** explain this relation to your overall career plans. Is there demand for your music?
- ☐ Distribution/Retail: How will the recording get to the end listener? What aggregator will you be using to supply it to digital sites; are there physical retail considerations - especially re. lifestyle marketing tie-ins; and (for established artists) are you working with a recognized distributor i.e. under Universal Music?
- ☐ Don't overlook the need to allow significant time for **pre-release marketing**. It is extremely common for an artist to be entirely focused on the creative side of the process, complete the album, but then have to hold back the release date while they get caught up on marketing plans! Just a few things to consider on this:
 - Pre-sales to your fanbase/GoFundMe type options/fundraising shows/contesting
 - Allowing time for it to be populated into Apple Music and other digital aggregators
 - Pre-release singles/videos
 - Pre-release provision to media for reviews/exclusive debuts
 - Release party planning
 - Touring/showcasing in support of the release

5. Performing

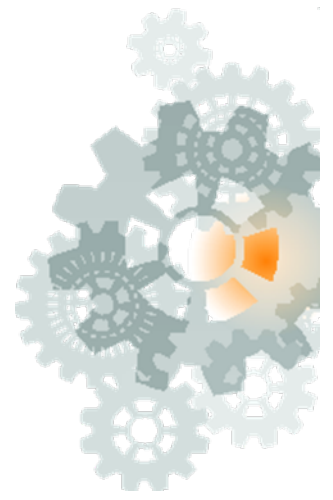
Put on a weak show, and the rest of your marketing will become irrelevant. Whether there are 2 people or 2000 in the audience, the level of show you deliver should be consistent. You will hear this story many times because it's true: you never know who those 2 people in the audience are. Bring your best show regardless of the number of people in the seats.

- ☐ Touring history and future plans. You don't have to list every gig ever done, but your reader should get a sense of how accomplished a performer you are/aren't. It may be a selection of key gigs that you've played. It should also give a sense of what your typical performance is like - 4 piece rock band? 3 piece acoustic folk trio? 8-piece with horn section?
- ☐ Not every artist performs. However, if you're in a genre that is typically built on live performance (i.e. rock), and you don't perform live or have any desire to, there is going to be a disconnect on how to market yourself.



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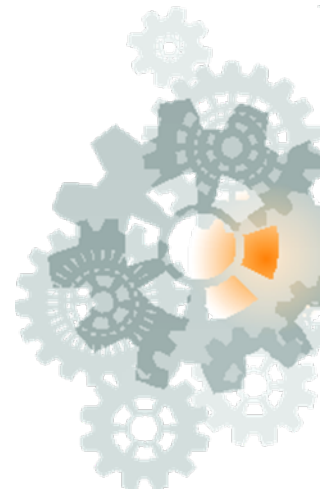
- ❑ If you are unwilling or unable to tour, even for periods, don't over-explain. You don't have to state that your boss won't give you time off. Talk about what you can do, or are doing instead. You might be focusing on recording or songwriting for a while.
- ❑ Give a sense of what types of venues you currently play, and average capacities. These can run a broad range.
- ❑ Looking ahead, what markets do you hope to expand into? Are you seeking better-paying gigs, more festivals, more showcases? Your marketing plan should include elements that will lead to these goals happening. For example, maybe you need a great live performance video, or to be attending more conferences to network with buyers. Maybe you just need to remember to promote your website while you're on stage, and solicit recommendations from happy bookers.
- ❑ When you're talking about expanding markets, it's helpful to explain "why this market", as opposed to "because it's there." Is there a great scene for your type of music in city X? Explain this.
- ❑ Look at where your peers are touring. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, at least to get initial ideas for places to play.
- ❑ What exactly are you doing to promote your shows/tours, both in advance and while on tour? If you're submitting for a tour grant, indicate your promotional plans for each city/stop on your tour.
- ❑ During your shows, make sure you mention your band name **OFTEN**. This is your prime opportunity to get your name in people's heads. Hang signage if that works for you. They need to go home remembering you, and if you're an original band, remembering the names of a couple songs you did. Best case is you have people on social media **DURING** your show talking about how great you are.
- ❑ Don't miss the opportunity to give your fans something to take home. While they are in the moment, while they are out having fun and enjoying themselves, is the best time to offer your merch. Don't be embarrassed about saying you have stuff for sale. But also don't use the guilt card. e.g. Buy a T-shirt so we have gas money to get home. Be proud of what you have to offer. Make it **EASY** for fans to buy something. That means you may have to work a merch table or sign autographs instead of heading straight off to visit with your friends after your set.
- ❑ If you are planning to tour internationally, do you understand key factors such as where visas are required, travel costs, and venue types? In many cases, international buyers will look at what you've done in your own region/country to see that you know how to cover your home territory, before being interested in you.
- ❑ Are you sharing bills with any other artists? How do they fit with your strategy/will their fans complement yours?



PRO TIP: SKIP THE NEGATIVES

Things don't always work out. But avoid being extremely negative about your past experiences or laying blame. Rather than "the producer on our first album sucked," focus on the fact that the band has grown musically, has new ideas to share, and is much tighter now heading into album #2.

If you're unable to tour very far from home, talk about what you can do instead of your limitations. Can you do shows within a days' drive? Do condensed tours? Engage with your fans through live videos on social media instead?



6. Radio and/or video

- ☐ Previous release history and future plans. Highlight any successes and be as precise as possible. “This single reached #50” does not mean anything without the exact chart name.
- ☐ Single releases to radio and music videos often go together, so if that’s your plan, talk about the strategy for them. Are you doing pre-album-release singles? Short teaser videos before the release date?
- ☐ Are you submitting material to commercial, or college/non-mainstream radio? Neither? Know where you fit and talk about the logistics - when and how you’re sending, if there’s going to be a tracker, publicist, timeline of singles. Be aggressive but realistic with your goals. Solicit advice on this!
- ☐ If you are not doing a formal “hard” release to commercial or college, are you planning to do some “soft” releases by strategically promoting certain singles on your social media and to your fan lists? Whichever way you choose to go, your socials should work in concert with your releases - make sure they’re current with what your current single is, and that you’re promoting it there too.
- ☐ Media promotional tours? These can be hugely effective for mainstream genres.
- ☐ Videos are one of the primary ways fans discover new music, driven by interactions with social media. A well-done video can bring new eyes to the band and strengthen a fan’s connection. But make sure it’s well done - a video with crappy audio will do nothing to further your cause.
- ☐ If you have definite ideas/storyboards for videos, include them - the more unique the better. This section could include planning for social media-only videos.

PRO TIP: VAGUENESS = FAIL

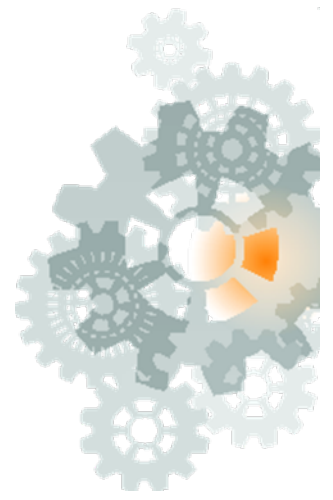
It indicates that maybe you don’t know anything about the subject, and that can do more harm than good. For example, “We’re going to apply for showcases” without listing which ones you’re thinking of. Getting specific indicates you’ve done some checking, asked around, and/or know which ones would be a great fit for you/are reasonable to shoot for.

7. Social Media and websites

- ☐ How’s your social media presence? If you do it exceptionally well, talk it up and include numbers. If you’re not on ANY social channels, this could raise a red flag with readers, as we are in a highly connected age – and it can be highly effective for artists! There are few genres that could successfully argue that their fanbase does not utilize socials for music discovery at all.
- ☐ **Whatever level you’re at, plan to get better at it.** Tools such as Instagram and TikTok can be a pain, but at least offer some great analytic information that can help you reach your potential listeners more easily.
- ☐ Socials are also one of the marketing areas where you can really let your personality and creativity shine through. It’s a great way to let your fans really feel connected to you, and you can possibly convert them from ‘casual’ to ‘superfans.’ Your unique and artistic ideas can really be a bonus!

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- ❑ Give a LOT of thought to how you want to present yourself on your artist pages vs your personal pages. Do you want to be extremely political, and support the causes you align with - or keep that for your private channels? Do you want fans to get to know your family/relationships, what your house looks like, your pets? How punk rock do you really wanna get? Decide what you want to share as an artist, and what is personal; write yourself a little set of guidelines, and refer to them if you're ever unsure if you should post that questionable video. (This is especially helpful if it's a band where different members are posting.)
- ❑ Traditional websites: Are they necessary? Opinions are mixed, but the industry is trending back to the idea that you do need one central location where people (fans, industry, media) can find everything they need. They shouldn't have to go to 3 different social media sites to gather it, and not everyone is active on all social media platforms either. A .com is accessible to all and serve as your main landing place. It shouldn't be difficult for media to obtain a press photo to accompany an interview, or for a fan to find out where to purchase your album. There are plenty of free options available - no excuses. Google almost always ranks the official page (.com, .ca etc.) first in their search results. That's a hint.
- ❑ **Above all, keep any socials and pages that you have, UPDATED.** If you have an Instagram profile and it does not promote the tour you are on right now, you are doing it wrong. Media and industry look to socials to see how active you are, how good you are at promoting your shows, etc. Stale dated sites will give the impression that you are not currently active, i.e. not looking for shows or publicity.

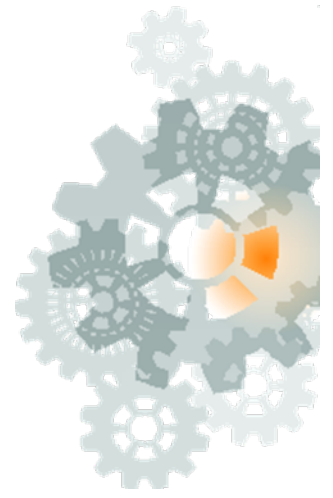


8. Press

- ❑ This section can talk about formal plans for announcements to the press. If you're doing a commercial release or major tour, you'll probably want to let the press - whether local, national or international - know about it. Are you doing it yourself? Hiring a publicist?
- ❑ It can also include your plans to reach out to non-mainstream radio, print and TV. What alternative media might you contact, such as genre-specific blogs, publications, satellite radio channels, etc.? This list is so genre-driven that you'll likely need to develop your own list - starting with the blogs and sources you visit yourself!
- ❑ Press kits/electronic press kits (EPKs) are not just used by the press. They are used by festivals & bookers, industry, juries and anyone else who needs access to a quick bio for a stage introduction, a printed festival program, an article or blog and more. Keep them up to date - nothing more frustrating for the media than grabbing a bio that hasn't been updated in a year and doesn't even mention your newest release. Include information about your current kit - do you have professional photos available? You can host your EPK on your own website, on a cloud server such as DropBox or Box, or on another artist host site.
- ❑ Press clippings/highlights, positive quotes from buyers, etc.

9. Merch/Branding

From the start, you need to decide what you are marketing. If you're a band, that means deciding what kind of image, sound, attitude/persona you want to put out there to the world. You DO want to have some consistency. This is not to prevent you from being unique, different, quirky, and constantly changing and growing. Your brand should be consistent across your website design, show posters, t-shirts, album covers, etc. Your look should be consistent with your sound.



Name any of the biggest bands on the planet right now, and you probably have an instant expectation of what you'd hear/see/experience if you were to attend one of their concerts, simply by name. (Slipknot. Foo Fighters. Taylor Swift. Adele.) Like them or not, you probably associate certain things with that artist.

- ❑ From the day you start marketing your band, you are starting to build this expectation within your fanbase. What do you want it to be? Make it that.
- ❑ A professional photo is essential. You will rarely get press coverage if you don't have one. People listen with their eyes, and with so much marketing done online, it is expected that you will have photos for any online pages. Very few bands can get away with simply using a logo or artwork instead of a band photo.
 - The best photos capture the essence of the band, and let you know what kind of artist it is without even hearing the music. From a technical point of view, get a selection of pictures - some horizontal, some vertical. For bands, get at least one tight shot so even in a small reproduction such as a newspaper article or online thumbnail, the whole band can be included.
- ❑ Merch could include any number of things. It doesn't have to just be t-shirts, hats, hoodies, albums. Think outside the box. You can put a band logo/name on just about anything, so think about items your fans could use or would like, whether that's a water bottle or a pack of gum or a candle or iPhone case. Start with a few unique items and see what sells. Refer to your fan profile from above and cater your merch to them.
 - Set prices carefully. Do your research so you aren't pricing items way out of line, and create pieces at various price points, from \$5 up to \$50. Established bands with hardcore fans will be able to sell more expensive pieces at shows.
 - Merch can also include promo pieces that you give away for free – for example handouts at conferences.
- ❑ Paper promotions include things like physical posters, flyers, stickers, and other tangible printed items. You can hang them around town, hand them out at shows, stick them on cars in parking lots, etc. To a degree it depends on what type of artist you are, and how you access your fans, to determine whether paper promotions are a good investment for you. But it's surprising how many people still hear about shows in this way. Plus, if done well, they contribute to the image and attitude of the band.

CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

10. Team

You might not think of this as marketing, but the **relationships** you develop with people in the media such as those at newspapers, television stations and radio, as well as all the other industry personnel along the way right from your poster printer to the guys who books you at the club to record labels to other bands that you share a show with - are critically important. Having a reputation for being professional and easy to work with goes a LONG, long way.

- ☐ Your team members are those who help you achieve your goals such as publicist, manager, graphic designer, etc. Especially in the early stages, various duties might be delegated within your band. Include bios/credentials of any key team members - the more important their role, the more you need to include their bio.
- ☐ If you are including info on prospective team members, such as a radio tracker, it should be after having a tentative commitment from them (at the very least). Don't include someone you haven't spoken to concretely yet.

11. Other Considerations

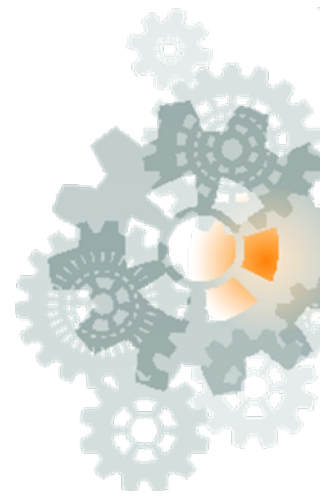
Other items you may wish to include in a marketing plan:

- ☐ Charitable activities: If you work with a specific organization, event or cause, donating profits, performing or other activities, mention that.
- ☐ Songwriter activities: For many, songwriting is a key/sole component of their activities, so don't overlook this in your plan. If songwriting is your primary activity to market, many of the above points will apply, but also remember to include:
 - Pitching material to other artists - ways that you are pursuing this, successes/accolades/placements both for cuts and sync, and future plans.
 - Co-writing activities and future plans to expand your co-writing circle.
 - Networking efforts such as conference attendance in pursuit of opportunities.
 - Any publisher affiliations.
- ☐ Sponsors/Investors: Highlight if any are involved in the project (including indie labels or private individuals). You don't need to get into the details of how much money they've put in, but explain the nature of their involvement. For a grant application, this section might also include what the funders will receive for recognition.

11. Defined Goals

Wherever possible, state your goal (or a target range) in numbers - e.g. "increase followers by 10% in the next 6 months," "sell 250 vinyl units," "post 2-5x per week on our socials."

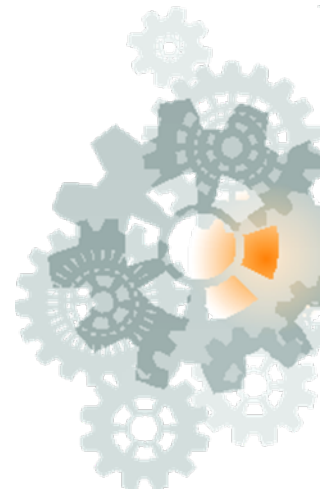
- ☐ Break your goals into timelines of 6 months, 1 year, 2 years (and onward, if you wish)
- ☐ A detailed timeline for the upcoming year (could be table format) should be included, which incorporates all your planned activities. Then reference back to it in your written sections above. If you're applying for funding, you'll need a detailed timeline specific to the grant activity you're applying for - e.g. pre-



CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

recording, recording, mastering and release timeline for an album grant; tour booking, advancing and gig dates for a tour grant.

- ❑ Be optimistic, but also realistic in your goal setting. Consider where you are starting from and where you want to end up, and if you're a new artist, don't stress by comparing yourself to someone who's been around 10 years. It's okay to shoot for the stars, but plan for reasonable and steady growth.



Example of a short-term timeline

When	Who	What	Deadline	Goal
Now	Band	Rehearse songs for album	June 30/26	Perfect 15 songs so we can choose 10 to record
Now	Producer & band	Figure out which session players we'll need	June 30/26	Budget is 3 x 3 sessions max
Now	Josh	Booking September tour to AB-BC	July 15/26	10 shows over 14 days with net of \$2500
3-6 mo	Josh	Advance shows	Aug 20/26	Fully confirmed
3-6 mo	Publicist	Press release and media interview bookings	Aug 1-15/26	3 on-airs, one feature print, 2 online blog features
3-6 mo	Band	Tour	Sept 2-16, 26	Tour completed, 150 new followers each on Instagram and TikTok, shot live video of show

How much research do I need to do?

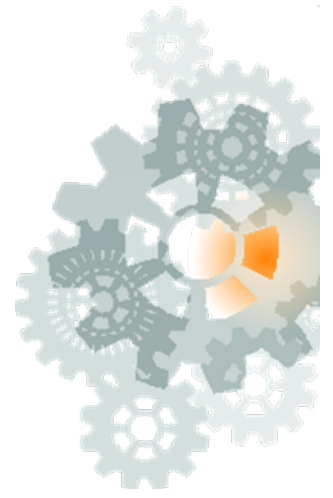
You could read a whole lot of studies, quote numbers from major media sources, poll your fans, and run statistical analysis; or, pull numbers out of thin air. It's probably good if you strike a balance. You can look at your own social analytics for starters - see whether your fans are mostly in Canada or elsewhere and get specific learning where they seem to be located. Check if your fanbase went up following a great show. (If not: why not? Learn from it.) And so on.

The important thing is that you do **become an expert in your own music, your own fans, and your own genre**. You should know, before spending thousands on a radio tracker, if your production is up to broadcast standards. Or if it's worthwhile to travel 1000 miles to play one show in a city you've never played before. It's a lot of work to do this, yes, but it could save you a lot of time, hassle, and money, if you are able to market in a focused way to the right fans/potential fans, rather than casting a huge net in a random direction. You will feel better if you have more input/numbers than a guess, and potential funders will definitely feel better.

PRO TIP: BE UNIQUE/CREATIVE BUT LOGICAL

The best marketing plans give you a sense that the artist has really thought carefully about their music and how to present it to the world. They incorporate elements that are unique to them: from the types of items they sell as merch, to how funny they are on social media, to whether they're going to be pressing vinyl or not. If you have some great ideas that you think will work for your marketing, include them!

But refer back to that 'not everything for everybody' point. Not all artists belong on mainstream radio (or college radio), not all artists need to be on Instagram, not all songwriters need to perform live. If it's not a fit for you, don't include it in your marketing plan.



Final Draft: Proof it.

- ☐ Check and re-check spelling and grammar.
- ☐ Generally, they're written in third person format, but at least be consistent.
- ☐ Rewrite any paragraphs that seem overly negative or defeatist.
- ☐ A little redundancy is okay, but look for areas where you can reduce the length and "refer to page 3."
- ☐ Is it specific and focused? Does it include the expected impacts and results you hope to achieve?
- ☐ Have someone read it and offer feedback - a mentor, SaskMusic, an artist who's slightly more established than you.
- ☐ Have you addressed the main sections laid out here - the ones that are applicable to you? Are there any unanswered questions for the reader? If not, you're done!
- ☐ Revisit it and update regularly!

GOOD LUCK!