

Music Promotion: Art of Business?

While developing a business plan a thought crossed my mind, is the correct way of promoting a business simply to throw money into advertising and big corporate events or is the secret to a brilliant marketing plan more in the appearance of the business and could a small budget be as effective or even more effective than a large one. This essay is the beginning of my journey into the world of marketing, I will be looking at different techniques and so called rules of marketing and see if they apply to a creative industry such as running a studio in the same way they would any other business. Finally I will be looking at how the digital age has affected marketing and whether the changing in advertising to more of a viral source has also affected how music studios portray themselves to the public. I am hoping this essay will be the first stepping stone in comprising a good promotional plan to apply to my own business and the creation of a professional and ecstatically pleasing website.

When thinking about marketing and customer service the saying “the customer is always right” is something that should always be kept in mind but during investigating marketing I have discovered there are a few more principals that should be kept in mind. The first of these is the power of the “Brand”, the fact that “Until and unless you create brand awareness for your recording studio, you will remain a small time entrepreneur” (Rock, R. 2012). This means you have to create a good, sustainable image that people recognise and have a good feeling about to have a successful business. The second principal is “being open to feedback” (Rock, R. 2012) which is key to a successful business because there is always room for improvement in any business no matter what the size. The third marketing principal is to keep the marketing up to date and this can be done by “getting creative with your marketing” (Gaines, M. 2012). This is key because many businesses fail simply by not updating their promotional methods just thinking it has worked in the past it will work again isn’t good enough. The final principal I found on a rather interesting Blog containing great ideas for promotion in any business and it is updated every day making sure you keep fresh ideas in your mind. “The facilities at Disney world are clean. Its not a profit centre, of course. They don’t make them clean because they’re going to charge you to use them. They make them clean because if they didn’t, you would have a reason not to come” (Godin, S. 2012), this quote might be a bit out of the box but it is relevant to all business because its not always the ways you make profit that should have your full attention, you should keep a professional image and put some thought into some of the areas of your business you may not think about.

These marketing principals are key to the success of a business and are all-relevant to developing a recording studio promotional plan. In the development of my studio website I will be sure to create a strong brand, give people the opportunity to deliver feedback, attempt to think creatively about promotion and most important keep all aspects of the business professional and presentable.

As well as marketing principals I decided to look into a few marketing techniques that could apply to the music industry. I looked at three different techniques and the first of these techniques was to do deals or offers for recording. This may seem like quite a simple idea but if done incorrectly people could take advantage or they might get the wrong impression about the business. “If you’re having trouble getting folks to record with you, try offering them a free session” (gilder, J. 2009) however simply posting free sessions wouldn’t work because you would have to make the artists your giving it to feel special so they get a better experience of recording. Also this would have to be a selective process because you would want people recording who have a good sound so you can use there tracks as examples on the website and you would want them to be well connected so they inform other artists they know about there experience.

The second marketing method is to advertise in all the local business and promote the services to people who are in the industry. "You can talk to music stores in the area about pinning up a flyer or a poster on their walls" (Casey, S. 2011) This method would help promotion in the local area but would require a large visual effect on the flyers. However this is one method I have tried already and found that it wasn't very effective in shops and music businesses.

The third marketing method is to hold special events inside and outside of the studio to get the recording studio brand "out there". This can both be expensive and cheap, holding open days for the studio to let people take a tour can be effective and cheap. However approaching local bars and clubs wanting to sponsor a special event would get the brand out to a wider range over musical people. Also holding battle of the band type events means you can get a great band recording at your studio and their fan base interested in your recording studio.

With the creation of the Internet there are now a vast range of ways to marketing virally. There are three methods of viral marketing that I feel have relevance to the recording industry, the first of these methods is to create a large email database. This might be quite an obvious one but by simply going to events all around the local area and gathering email addresses is something that is time consuming but very cost effective. Also with a mailing list people can be kept informed of all the latest offers and would also help promote other areas of the business. "Email is one of the best ways to directly reach your fans, but sometimes it can be difficult to grow your subscriptions list" (Haverkamp, J. 2011).

The second method of viral marketing is possibly the most obvious, creating a website. "A website will get you noticed and you can have customers contact you by email or phone" (Casey, S. 2011) having a website can be costly when it's done right and is differently something that you can't scrimp on. Having a website is a must in business these days and is key to the success of a business that intends to meet clients nationwide. This method would also be reliant on a lot of visual work and art which I would be interested in for this project.

The third method of viral marketing is to set up pages on Facebook and other social media sites. These are a great source of free advertising, materials that have been used to set up a website can be applied to Facebook, Myspace and Twitter accounts. Also having a Twitter account will keep people up to date on what the studio is doing and can also offer direct advice to people looking for a music service. However sites such as Facebook are now beginning to charge business customers for the use of their site, stating that if you want to reach your clients you have to pay a fee. Comparing the viral promotional methods to the non viral methods I can see that for this particular project I should focus on mainly viral promotional methods because they are more cost effective and reach a national and even international audience.

During this essay I have looked at a wide range of methods and principals that will help towards this project. The methods I have looked at such as starting a mailing list and going to local events or even holding events are all methods that could be applied to a recording studio business. I feel that the best place for promotion of a recording studio would be mainly viral because it is the most cost effective method and has nationwide reach something a recording studio would benefit from. However some of the marketing methods I have looked at might not all seem relevant to the project I am undertaking however I feel that any marketing of a particular service to the public is relevant to my investigation. Returning back to the original question is music promotion an art or a business? I find this a difficult question to answer at this stage of my investigation, I feel with input from industry professionals into what has worked and what hasn't could give me a better understanding of which methods work best for a recording studio. With this knowledge I could then discover which methods are the best for promotion and assess them for their creativity and value.

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