

How to Call Attention to Your Music

by Derek Sivers

This is my best advice for my fellow musicians, about how to call attention to your music. My advice here is a combination of my advice from my own experience, and my advice from watching the experiences of other successful musicians. I never intended to sell my advice. I just want musicians to succeed.

So - feel free to pass this around to anyone. Email it to your friends. Paste it into your blog or bulletin board.

Be Considerate: Think of everything from their point of view

Constantly ask, What do they really want?

Reach them like you would want to be reached

They know nothing about you. Don't assume anything.

Read about new music. Use the tricks that worked on you.

Constantly ask, What do they really want?

Want to know the basic rule of marketing and promoting your music?

Constantly ask, “What do they really want?” (with “they” being anyone you are trying to reach)

Think hard, and don't take this one lightly.

Thinking of everything from the other person's point of view is one of the best things you can do in life. If done right, it will elevate you into the clouds along with a few select immortal beings.

Every time you lift up the phone. Every time you write an email. Every time you send out a presskit.

Think why people in the music industry are REALLY working this job. Try to imagine them as just a well-meaning human being who is probably overworked, looking for a little happiness in the world, and likes music (or the music world itself) enough to do what they do, even though they could be doing something else.

Think what their email “IN” box must look like, and how it would be unwise for you to send them an email with the subject of “hey” followed by a 7-page email detailing your wishes for success.

Think what people are REALLY looking for when they go out to a club to hear music. For some people, it's just a way to be seen to increase their popularity. For some, they're searching for some music that does something completely original and mind-blowing. Some are looking for total visual entertainment.

Nobody owes you their attention. Not your audience. Not a person you happened to call or email. Not even the music industry.

Let go of your ego entirely. **Think of everything from their point of view.** Be their dream come true. Do what they really want.



Reach them like you would want to be reached

Reach people like you would want to be reached.

Would you rather have someone call you up in a dry business monotone, and start speaking a script like a telemarketer?

Or would you rather have someone be a cool person, a real person?

When you contact people, no matter how it's done (phone, email, mail, face-to-face) - show a little spunk. Stand apart from the crowd.

If it sounds like they have a moment and aren't in a major rush, entertain them a bit. Ask about their day and expect a real answer. Talk about something non-business for a minute or two.

Or - if they sound hectic, skip the “how are you”, skip the long introduction, ask your damn question and move out of the way.

This means **you must know your exact question before you contact them**, just in case that ultra-quick situation is needed.

Reach them like you would want to be reached. Imagine what kind of phone call or email YOU would like to get.

If you're contacting fans, imagine what kind of flyer they would like to get in their mailbox. Something dull and “just the facts” - or something a little twisted, creative, funny, entertaining and unique? Something corporate, or something artistic?

This is a creative decision on your part. **Every contact with the people around your music (fans and industry) is an extension of your art.** If you make depressing, morose, acoustic music, maybe you should send your fans a dark brown-and-black little understated flyer that's depressing just to look at. Set the tone. Pull in those people who love that kind of thing. Proudly alienate those that don't.

If you're an in-your-face, tattooed, country-metal-speedpunk band, have the guts to call a potential booking agent and scream, “Listen you crazy dirtbag! I'm going to explode! Ah! Aaaaaaah!!!” If they like that introduction, you've found a good match.

Be different. (Even if it's just in your remarkable efficiency.)

Everyone wants a little change in their day.



They know nothing about you. Don't assume anything.

People will always and forever ask you, “What kind of music do you do?”

Musicians often say, “All styles, really.”

If the stranger you said that to happens to be a fan of African music, watch out! You better combine the polyrhythmic drumming of West Africa with the rich vocal harmonies of South Africa, with the microtonal reeds of Northeast Africa. And if they have any awareness of the rest of the world, then your CD better combine rage-rap, country linedancing, Chinese opera, ambient techno trance, Hungarian folk songs, and the free jazz of Ornette Coleman. (Hey - you said “all styles” didn't you?)

This example is extreme, but constantly remember: **people know nothing about you, or your background, or where you're coming from.** If you say you sound “totally unique” - then you better not have any chords, drums, guitars, words, or any sounds that have ever been made in the history of music.

When you speak to the world, you are speaking to strangers from all kinds of backgrounds and tastes.

Open your mind. Realize you don't sound like all styles, and you're not totally 100% unique.

Do them a favor. Don't assume anything. Say what it is you sound like. Narrow it down a bit.

If you do this in a creative way, (“We sound like the Incredible Hulk having sex.”) - you can intrigue people and make them want your CD, or want to come to your next show. Whereas if you had said, “Everything” - then you didn't make a fan.



Read about new music. Use the tricks that worked on you.

Go get a music magazine that writes about new music.

You'll read about (and see pictures of) dozens of artists who you've never heard of before.

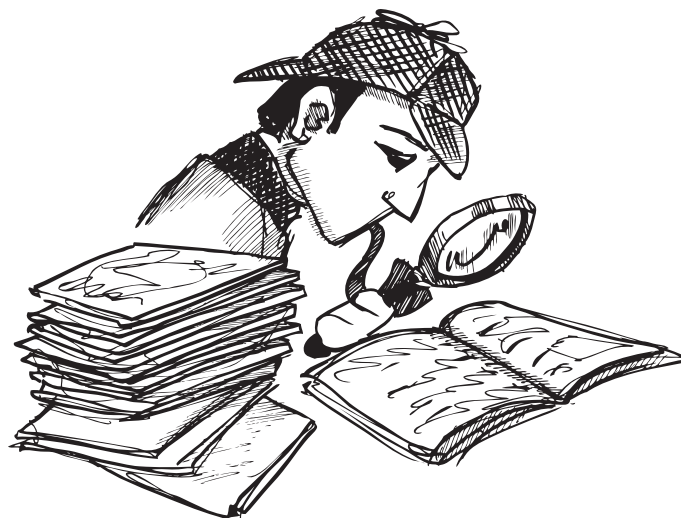
Out of that whole magazine, only one or two will really catch your attention.

WHY?

I don't have the answer. Only you do. Ask yourself why a certain headline or photo or article caught your attention.

(Was it something about the opening sentence? Was it a curious tidbit about the background of the singer? What was it exactly that intrigued you?)

Analyze that. Use that. Adapt those techniques to try writing a headline or article about your music.



Have the confidence to target

If you don't say what you sound like, you won't make any fans

Proudly exclude some people

The Most Expensive Vodka

If you target sharp enough, you will own your niche

Bad Targeting Example: progressive rocker targetting teenybopper

If you don't say what you sound like, you won't make any fans

A person asks you, “What kind of music do you do?”

Musicians say, “All styles. Everything.”

That person then asks, “So who do you sound like?”

Musicians say, “Nobody. We're totally unique. Like nothing you've ever heard before.”

What does that person do?

Nothing.

They might make a vague promise to check you out sometime.

Then they walk on, and forget about you!

Why???

You didn't arouse their curiosity! You violated a HUGE rule of self-promotion! Bad bad bad!

What if you had said, “It's 70's porno-funk music being played by men from Mars.”

Or... “This CD is a delicate little kiss on your earlobe from a pink-winged pixie.”

Or... “It's deep-dancing reggae that magically places palm trees and sand wherever it is played, and grooves so deep it makes all non-dancers get drunk on imaginary island air, and dance in the sand.”

Any one of these, and you've got their interest.

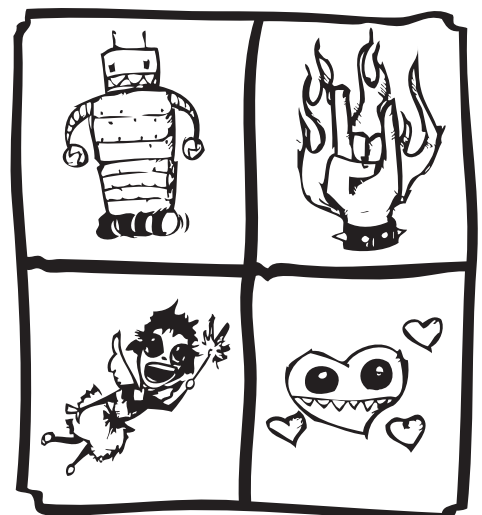
Get yourself a magic key phrase that describes what you sound like. Try out a few different ones, until you see which one always gets the best reaction from strangers. Use it. Have it ready at a moment's notice.

It doesn't have to narrow what you do at all. Any of those three examples I use above could sound like anything.

And that's just the point - **if you have a magic phrase that describes your music in curious but vague terms, you can make total strangers start wondering about you.**

But whatever you do, stay away from the words “everything”, “nothing”, “all styles”, and “totally unique”.

Say something!



Proudly exclude some people

Proudly say what you're NOT: "If you like Celine Dion, you'll hate us." ...and people who hate Celine Dion will love you, or at least give you a chance.

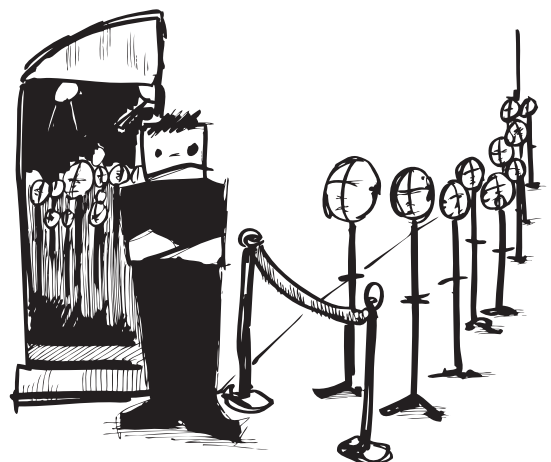
You can't please everyone in this world. Recklessly exclude people.

Almost like you're the doorman at an exclusive club that plays only your music. Maybe you wouldn't let in anyone wearing a suit. Maybe you wouldn't let in anyone without a suit!

But **know who you are, and have the confidence that somewhere out there, there's a little niche of people that would like your kind of music.** They may only be 1% of the population. But 1% of the world is 65 million people!

Loudly leave out 99% of the world. When someone in your target 1% hears you excluding the part of the population they already feel alienated from, they'll be drawn to you.

Write down a list of artists who you don't like, and whose fans probably wouldn't like you. Use that.



The Most Expensive Vodka

There is a vodka company that advertises itself as The Most Expensive Vodka You Can Buy.

I'll bet they're very successful with it. It's almost a dare. (And it proudly excludes people!)

Other companies are all trying to find ways to be the cheapest, and someone had the guts to decide that they were going to do exactly the opposite of everyone else.

There are some people who read the Billboard charts, and try to imitate the current trends and styles.

I suggest, even as an experiment, strongly declaring that you are something totally UN-trendy - the opposite from what everyone else wants or is trying to be.

Perhaps you could advertise your live show as, "The most boring concert you'll ever see."

Perhaps you want to call your music, "The most un-catchy, difficult to remember, un-danceable music you've ever heard."

Or tell the music industry, "This music has no hit potential whatsoever."

I'll bet you get their attention.

It's almost a dare.



If you target sharp enough, you will own your niche

Let's say you've decided that your style of music should be proudly called “powerpop”.

If you say, “We're powerpop!” in the very first sentence or paragraph all of your marketing.

If your email address is “powerpop@yahoo.com”

If your album title is “Powerpop Drip and Drop”

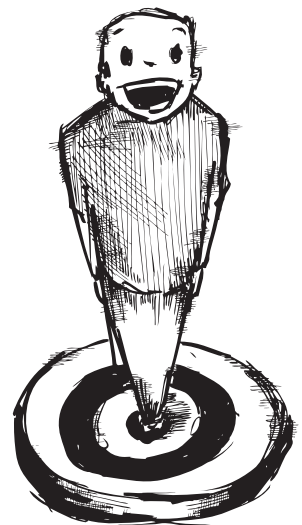
If the license plate on your band van is “POWRPOP”

Well then... when someone comes into my record store and says they like powerpop, guess who I'm going to tell them to buy?

Have the confidence to find your niche, define who you are, then declare it again and again and again and again.

If you do it persistently enough, you will OWN that niche. People will not be able to imagine that niche without you.

(You can try to make your own, if you're brave. You might be “the best techno-opera artist in the world”.)



Bad Targeting Example: progressive rocker targeting teenybopper

On CD Baby, there is a great musician who made an amazing heavy-progressive-metal record.

When we had a “search keywords” section, asking for three artists he sounds like, he wrote, “britney spears, ricky martin, jennifer lopez, backstreet boys, mp3, sex, free”

What the hell was he thinking? He just wanted to turn up in people's search engines, at any cost.

But for what? And who?

Did he really want a Britney Spears fan to get “tricked” into finding his dark-progressive-metal record? Would that 13-year-old girl actually spend the 25 minutes to download his 10 minute epic, “Confusing Mysteries of Hell”? If she did, would she buy his CD?

I suggested he instead **have the confidence to target the REAL fans of his music.**

He put three semi-obscure progressive artists into his search engine description instead, and guess what?

He's selling more CDs than ever! He found his true fans.



Grab people's attention, senses and emotions

Touch as many of their senses as you can

Never use corporate-speak

Leave 'em wanting more

Touch as many of their senses as you can

The more senses you touch in someone, the more they'll remember you.

BEST: a live show, with you sweating right on top of someone, the PA system pounding their chest, the smell of the smoky club, the flashing lights and live-in-person performance.

WORST: an email. a single web page. a review in a magazine with no photo.

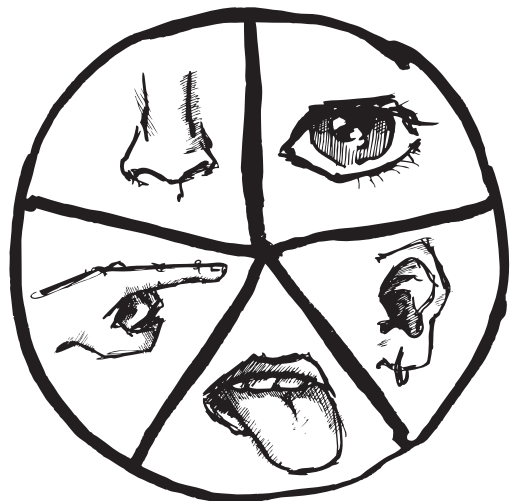
(Let's say that "emotions" are one of the senses.)

Whenever possible, try to reach as many senses as possible. Have an amazing photo of yourself or your band, and convince every reviewer to put that photo next to the review of your album.

Send videos with your presskit. Play live shows often. Understand the power of radio to make people hear your music instead of just hearing about it.

Get onto any TV shows you can. Scent your album with patchouli oil. Make your songs and productions truly emotional instead of merely catchy.

(Touching their emotions is like touching their body. If you do it, you'll be remembered.)



Never use corporate-speak

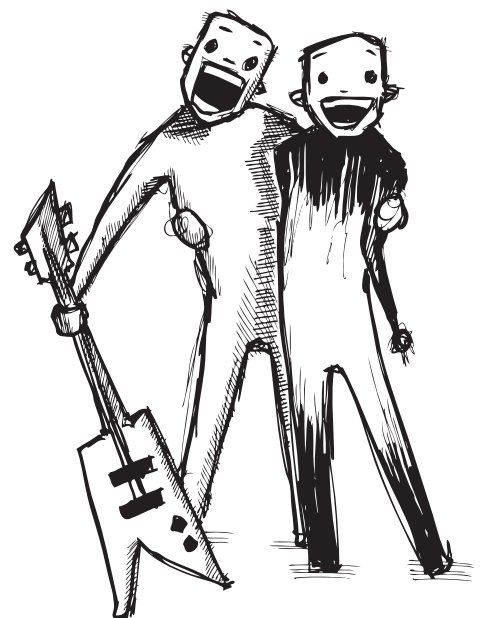
Don't try to sound pro or use industry catch phrases.

Would you do that to a friend?

Your fans are your friends. Speak to them like real people.

Write every letter or email as if it were to a good friend. From you to your best friend Beth.

Even if it's going out to 10,000 people.



Leave 'em wanting more

What's more appealing?

Someone holding a carrot in front of your face, then pull it back towards them slowly?

Or someone shoving 50 carrots in your mouth?

Brian Eno (my favorite theorist) says the best thing you can do is to **bring people to the point where they start searching**.

Not so plain or obvious that there's nothing left to the imagination. No so cryptic that they give up.

Give people just enough to pull them in, but make them want more. Make them go searching for clues, or details, or explanations, or “more of what you just gave me.”



All the world's a stage. What character are you?

Imagine a play with 1000 actors on stage

Be an extreme version of yourself

Even conservative legends were extreme

Well-Rounded Doesn't Cut

Imagine a play with 1000 actors on stage

Imagine you're in the audience of a play. Big theater. Opera house.

Imagine there are one thousand actors on stage.

Which ones would stand out? Which ones would you remember?

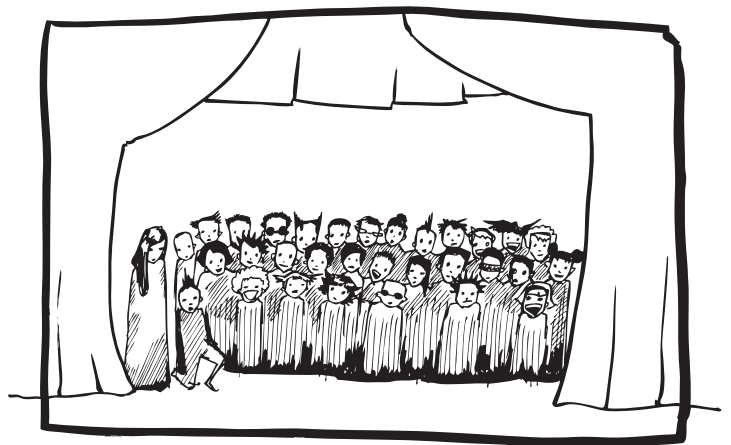
It's not always going to be the loudest or most hyperactive.

Maybe you'd be drawn into the misty-blue woman with the long black hair in the deep blue cape with half her face hidden, standing silently at the edge of the stage.

Now you, as a musician, are one of the actors on that overcrowded stage.

Would you stand out? Would people remember you? **Are you being strong enough version of YOU, so that people who DO want who YOU are can find you in the crowd?**

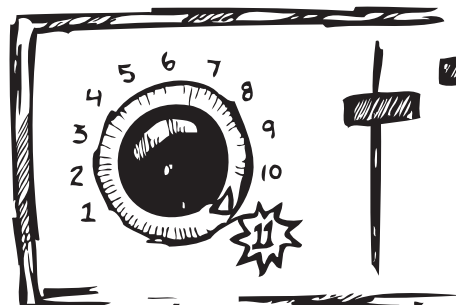
(P.S. The most memorable actor on stage might be the one that gets off the stage, walks up to your seat, and gives you a kiss.)



Be an extreme version of yourself

Define yourself.
Show your weirdness.
Bring out all your quirks.

Your public persona, the image you show to the world, should be an extreme version of yourself.



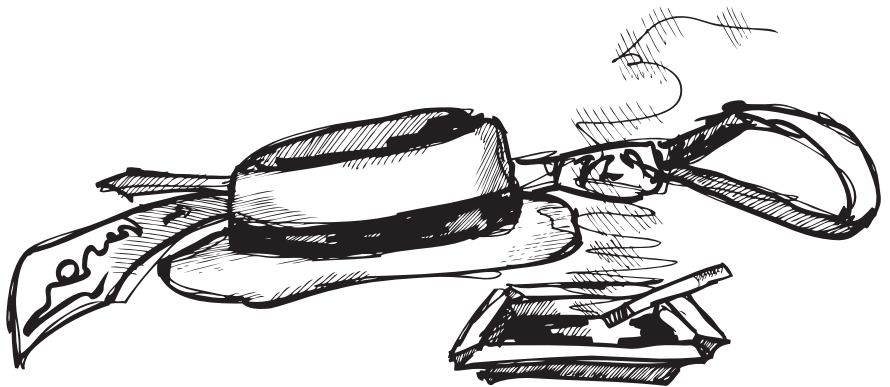
Even conservative legends were extreme

Think of the legendary performers in that conservative style. (The ones even your grandmother could like.)

Frank Sinatra. Charlie Chaplin. Liberace. Liza Minelli. Barbara Streisand.

Even the most conservative “legendary” performers were rather extreme characters.

Don't be afraid to be as extreme as you can imagine. Being in the spotlight is the excuse. You can get away with anything, all in the name of entertainment.



Well-Rounded Doesn't Cut

Imagine the world's attention as a big foggy cloud. So thick you could cut it with a knife.

You want to cut through that foggy cloud, to call attention to your music.

Only problem is, **if you're well-rounded, you can't cut through anything**. You need to be sharp as a knife. Sharply defined.

Example: Your name is Mary and you put out an album called “My Songs”, and the cover is a picture of your face. The music is good quality, songs about your life, and when people ask what kind of music you do, you say “Oh, everything. All styles.”. You send the album out to be reviewed and nothing much happens. Doors aren't opening.

Imagine instead: Your name is Mary and you write 9 songs about food. You put out an album called “Sushi, Souffle, and Seven Other Songs about Food”. Maybe you recorded your vocals in the kitchen. Maybe you quit cooking school to be a musician. Yes it's a silly example, you see how this would be MUCH easier to promote.

You may be thinking, “But I have so much to offer the world, I can't just limit myself like that!” If you want to increase your chances of the world hearing your music at all, though, strongly consider stretching-out your musical offerings to the world, and keeping each album focused clearly on one aspect of your music.

Notice the long careers of David Bowie, Madonna, Miles Davis, Paul Simon, and Elvis Costello to name a few. Each went through sharply-defined phases, treating each album as a project with a defined mission.

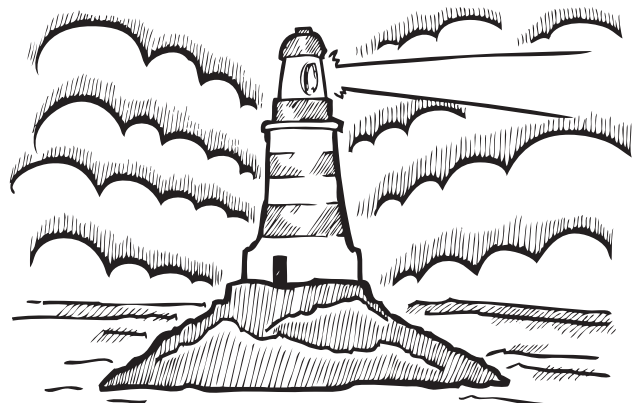
Here's some top-sellers at CD Baby:

Eileen Quinn. She's a full-time sailor. She writes songs about sailing. That's it. Five albums of them. And sailors LOVE it. She gets written-up in sailing magazines all the time.

Rondellus. Sabbatum. A traditional medieval music group from Estonia doing an album of Black Sabbath songs played on medieval instruments and sung in Latin.

4th25. American soldiers in Iraq wrote and recorded an album in their barracks on a cheap computer with a \$100 mic, about what it's like to be over there at war.

Each of these albums got a LOT of press and a lot of sales, because they were sharply-defined, newsworthy, interesting to write about, easy to tell friends about.



Think test marketing - proof of success

Test. Improve. Perfect. Announce.

A good biz plan wins no matter what happens

Was 10%, now 90%

DIY = Decide It Yourself

This is only a test. See what happens.

Business is Creative

Captain T

Test. Improve. Perfect. Announce.

In this indie music world, the best thing you can do is think in terms of “Test Marketing.”

This is what food companies do before they release a new product. They release it just in Denver (for example), and see what people think of it there. They get feedback. They try a different name. They try an improved flavor, based on complaints or compliments. They try a different ad campaign. They see what works. Constantly improving.

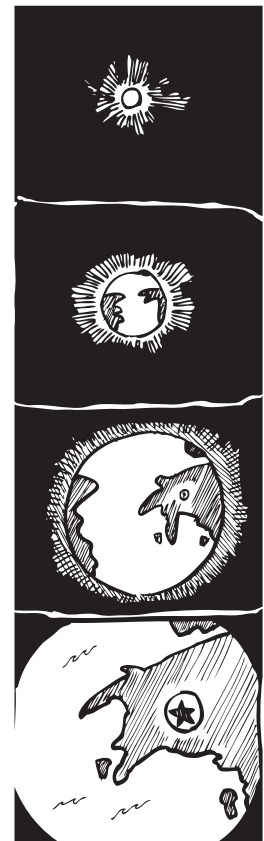
When it's a huge success in Denver, they know they're on to something good. They can now release it in Portland, Dallas, and Pittsburgh. Do the same thing.

When everyone seems to like it, they get the financial backing to “roll it out” and confidently spend a ton of money to distribute it around the whole country, or the whole world. The people investing money into it are confident, because it was a huge success in all the test markets.

Think of what you're doing with your music as test marketing.

When you're a huge success on a lower level, or in a small area, THEN you can go to the big companies and ask for financial or resource help to “roll it out” to the country or world.

Then they'll feel confident that their big money is being well invested.



A good biz plan wins no matter what happens

In doing this test marketing you should make a plan that will make you **a success even if nobody comes along with their magic wand.**

Start now. Don't wait for a “deal”.

Don't just record a “demo” that is meant only for record companies.

You have all the resources you need to make a finished CD that thousands of people would want to buy. If you need more money, get it from anyone except a record company.

And if, as you're following your great business plan, selling hundreds, then thousands of CDs, selling out small, then larger venues, getting on the cover of magazines... you'll be doing so well that you won't need a record deal.

And if a record deal IS offered to you, you'll be in the fine position of **taking it or leaving it.** There's nothing more attractive to an investor than someone who doesn't need their money. Someone who's going to be successful whether they're involved or not.

Make the kind of business plan that will get you to a good sustainable level of success, even without a big record deal. That way you'll win no matter what happens.



Was 10%, now 90%

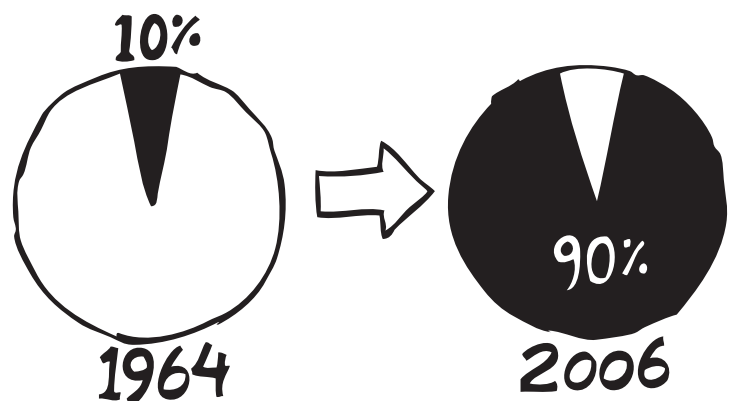
It used to be that, as a musician, only 10% of your career was up to you. “Getting discovered” was about all you could do. A few gatekeepers controlled ALL outlets. You had to impress one of these magic few people to be allowed to present your music to the world. (Even then, they assigned you a manager, stylist, producer, band, etc.)

As of the last few years, now **90% of your career is up to you**. You have all the tools to make it happen.

Record labels aren't guessing anymore. They're only signing artists that have made a success on their own. As Alan Elliott says, “A record label used to be able to look at a tree and say, 'That would make a great table.' Now all they can do is take a finished table and sell it at Wal-Mart.”

You have to make a great recording, a great show, a great image. You have to come up with a plan and make it happen, too. You have to make thousands of people want your music so much they pay good money for it. You have to make things happen on your own. Even if a record label puts it in the stores for you, it's still up to your own hard work to go make people buy it.

The only thing stopping you from great success is yourself. This is both scary and exciting. At least you're in control.



DIY = Decide It Yourself

You may have heard of “D.I.Y.” which stands for “Do It Yourself”.

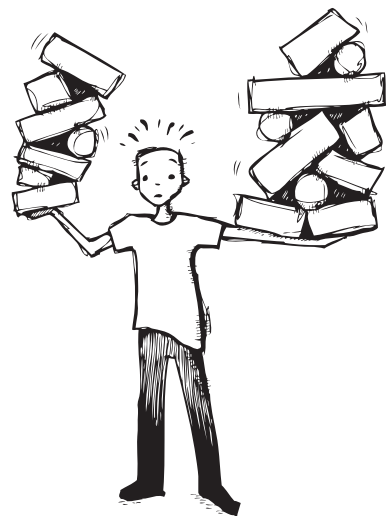
I think many musicians have accidentally interpreted this as “Do It ALL Yourself”.

Instead, I suggest you think of D.I.Y. as “Decide It Yourself”.

You should NOT be the only one making your website, engineering your recordings, designing your artwork, promoting your shows, booking the gigs, and all that other stuff. Trying to do it ALL yourself will be a disaster once you have anything happening.

Instead, just be the one in control, making the decisions, but find people to help you. Find someone who gets excited about making your website. Find someone who gets excited about engineering your recordings. Someone who loves designing artwork. Someone who's great at promoting shows.

Yes, it's hard to find these people. But it's harder to watch your career crawl instead of run, because you're trying to do it all yourself.



This is only a test. See what happens.

Growing up in America in the 1970's, the TV or radio would often turn into a long warning BEEEEEP. At the end, an announcer would say, "This is a test. This is only a test."

Remember that phrase when pursuing your career.

It often feels like everything is so serious - that if you make one mistake, it will all end in disaster. But really everything you do is just a test: an experiment to "see what happens".

My favorite times in life have often started with a "see what happens" spirit.

Let's see what happens if I run my vocals through my guitar pedals.

See what happens if I invite that famous producer out to lunch.

See what happens if I call that radio station to ask their advice.

There is no failure. There can't be, if your only mission was to "see what happens".

This is a test. This is only a test. There is no downside. Try everything.



Business is Creative

Do not turn off your creativity when doing business.

Business is as creative as music.

I see so many musicians who are wildly creative when writing, playing, performing, and recording. But as soon as it's time to make some money, they clam up, get stiff, and lose all of their confidence.

They pick up a book that tells them exactly how to make a press kit, exactly how to send a letter, exactly what to say when making a call. They do everything exactly as told.

To understand how silly this is, imagine a business-person who has worked in an office for 20 years that starts doing music at the age of 50. They're scared and new so they try to do everything right. They play the “right” chords, the “safe” lyrics, and everything is boring and stiff. They are making music only like the book told them to do. They take no chances.

That's how musicians look, getting into business. They turn off their creativity and **try to do everything “safe”**. **But that's the worst thing you can do.**

Loosen up. Get confident, creative, playful, experimental. Break the rules. Do exactly what you're not supposed to.

Think of how comfortable you are on your instrument. Riffing. Improvising. Playing. Having fun with it.

Now **be that comfortable in your approach to business, promotion, marketing. Riff. Improvise. Play. Have fun with it.**

Do with your business what you would tell a new, stiff, scared musician to do with their instrument.



Captain T

I told you that **your marketing should be an extension of your art**, so here's a real-world example:

Back in 1997, when “The X Files” was still on the air, a friend of mine who called himself Captain T put out a record called US Aliens that was all about conspiracy theories, Area 51, alien cover-ups, and the Incredible Hulk. It was intentionally funny, but he would stay in character and play it straight : a guy who was trying to tell the world, through music, about the aliens and conspiracies.

He wanted to send his album to college radio stations, but couldn't afford to hire a real radio promoter. When we decided to do it ourselves, I was about to do things in a very normal way, but I thought I should take my own advice, and make his marketing an extension of his art, his image, his message.

(Also, I was thinking about that kid in the college radio station that gets 20 CDs a day, all exactly the same, in boring envelopes. I wanted to make his week.)

So - we bought 500 black envelopes, 500 sheets of brown oatmeal paper, 500 alien head stickers, and the best part : 500 huge stickers that said “CONFIDENTIAL MAIL - DO NOT OPEN FOR ANY REASON”.

We did a mail-merge to the 500 program directors at 500 college radio stations, so that each one got a personalized letter that said this:

Dear __name__,

You don't know me, but I live in the bushes behind your station.

I have been here for 12 years and your station has saved my life many times over.

The music that you play has kept me going through my darkest of days and for this I owe you everything.

In this spirit, I must tell you that a man named Captain T found me in the gutter yesterday, and he taught me about what is really going on with the government and what really happened down there in Area 51. This man has a message that you have to get out to the world, because people need to know the TRUTH!

Signed,

Man in the bushes, looking through your window right now

We took each letter out to the backyard and literally rubbed it in dirt, crumpled it into a little tiny ball, then flattened it out a little bit, put the CD inside, sealed it into a black envelope, put the alien head sticker on it, covered it with the huge sticker that said “CONFIDENTIAL MAIL - DO NOT OPEN FOR ANY REASON”, and mailed them out to each station.

We laughed for hours while doing it.

Now, imagine you're that kid working at the radio station, getting 20 CDs a day with normal boring packages, saying “Please play my record!” Then you get this scary black mess of a package that says “DO NOT OPEN”, and when opened is covered in dirt and says, “You don't know me, but I live in the bushes behind your station.

375 of the radio stations played it.

Every now and then, my friend Captain T gets approached by someone that used to work at a college radio station back in 1997. They tell him they still remember it, because it was the coolest package they ever got.



The Power of People

Someone you know

Be a friend, not a mosquito

Persistence is Polite

Stay in close touch with hundreds of people

Get used to the idea of database and quantity

Database tips

Meet three new people every week

Always think how you can help someone

Get personal

Don't be afraid to ask for favors

Small gifts go a long way

Life is like High School

Shining example: Rayko

Make these habits, and they won't seem hard

More thoughts about people

Someone you know

Everything great that happens in your career always starts with someone you know.

Don't think that the big opportunities are somewhere else.

You don't need to surf the 'net. Your next big break will not come from a some mysterious technology, or discovery of new information.

Your next big break will come from someone you know.

Go **know** people.



Be a friend, not a mosquito

When you see a room full of people, make sure you are not thinking like a mosquito, looking at them as something to suck dry, to get what you want and move on.

It's important to meet people, but more important to really get to know them. Ask questions. Listen. Make a point of **discovering what you can do for them.**

The best opportunities will come from real friends, not “contacts”. Be a good friend. Relax. Don't be a mosquito.



Persistence is Polite

As teenagers, we painfully learned that if you call someone and they don't call you back, they're just not into you. If you keep calling, you must be a total loser.

But in the business world, **it's the opposite: persistence is polite, and if you don't keep calling, you must be a loser.**

Imagine this:

- * You call me, and get my voicemail. You leave a message.
- * You don't know that I hardly ever listen to voicemail.
- * A few days later you call again, but I'm out, so you leave a message with a real person in my office.
- * I see a message on my desk that you called, and I mean to call you, but I get distracted.
- * My desk fills up with other stuff, and buries the little message, so I forget.
- * You email me to let me know you've been trying to reach me, but your email arrives just as I'm leaving for a conference for 5 days.
- * When I return from the conference, I've got 1000 emails in my IN box.
- * You call again, talk to someone in my office, and tell them to tell me it's important, that you've left messages with no reply.
- * They come knock on my office door to tell me you're on the phone.
- * I finally pick up the phone and say, "Hi! Sorry I was hard to reach."

At this point, I am sincerely glad that you had the manners to keep trying, because I really did want to talk to you.

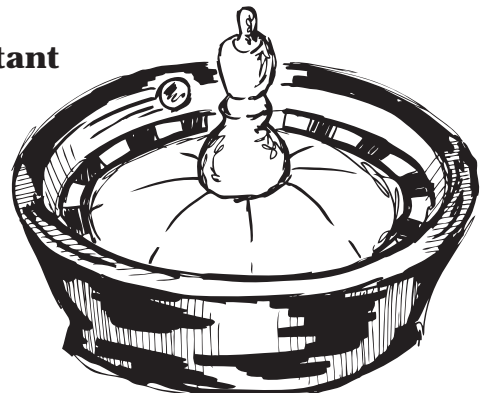
Imagine this, instead:

- * You call me, and get my voicemail. You leave a message.
- * I get busy with other things, and forget to call you back.
- * You silently rage for years, thinking I'm an asshole, thinking I hate you, so you hate me, too.

Calling once, and never again like that, is rude and inconsiderate.

In this business, you have to **prove that something is important to you** by being persistent. If you mail someone a package, and don't follow-up until you reach them, it means you didn't care.

Persistence is polite and considerate, because it shows that you understand how busy people can get. It also shows how much you care.



Stay in close touch with hundreds of people

It's a shame when you get lost in a project, or go out on a tour, or get stuck in a demanding relationship, and find out that all of your old contacts have dried up.

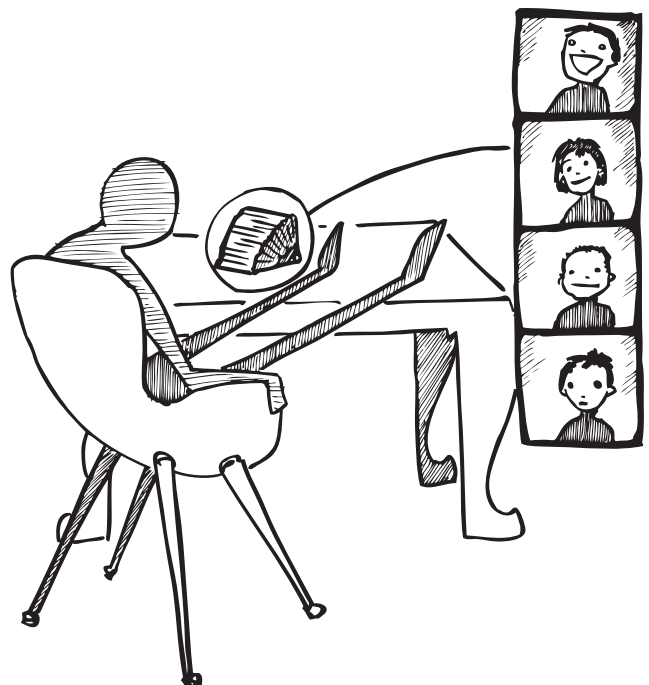
You go to call a booking agent you used to see weekly, and she says, "I'm sorry - I don't really remember you. You're going to have to remind me..."

A successful publicist advises that you secretly give everyone in your phonebook an A, B, C, D, or F. That's your **A-list** (call every 3 weeks), **B-list**, (every 5 weeks), **C-list** (every few months), **D-list** (twice a year), and **Friends**.

There are a few people in my life that would have disappeared long ago if they hadn't been so persistent in calling me every month, or insisting on a face-to-face a couple times a year.

Go through your database, and call those people just to say, "Hi." Or - even better - know their interests and life (from memory or perhaps from your notes) - and call them with some news that's of interest to them, even if it's of no other interest to you.

In other words, don't **only** call to say "How are you?" when it's always going to end with "So - can you come to my gig tomorrow night?" Call unselfishly. Call with some news that will make them happy. Keep in touch to make both of your lives better.



Get used to the idea of database and quantity

If you want any level of success beyond the admiration of friends and family, you have to **get used to the idea of dealing with great numbers of people.**

One good review means almost nothing. Getting airplay on one radio station is not enough.

You need to stay in close touch with hundreds, and soon, thousands of people. Whether fans, music biz, or the endless characters you're going to encounter around the world on your way to the top, **you're going to need to keep track of them all.**

You're going to need a database. A “contact manager”. A fancy term for an address book. An amazing tool with endless memory to help our artistic, creative, musical brains which are often lost in space and notoriously flaky.

It takes a discipline and orderliness you may not be used to, but comes in SO handy when you need to contact that graphic designer who introduced himself to you once after a gig in St. Louis a year and a half ago. Or to be able, in 5 seconds, to find the 6 drummers you know in Southern California.

Get used to this concept, and we'll go into detail on the next page.



Database tips

Pick a program. If you travel a lot, and have a laptop, get a program that runs on your laptop. If you don't have a laptop, and often use other people's computers, use one of the many websites that let you track your contacts online. If you need to do business away from a computer, completely, use a smart phone.

Make sure it has keywords, notes, and hopefully a conversation history. This is the difference between an address book and a contact-manager. A good contact manager will let you keep track of past phone calls, emails, conversations, including a date. You may hear from someone after two years of not speaking, and be able to pull up your notes and remind yourself what happened last time you spoke.

Try to find one with reminders. It is SO nice to punch a future date into your computer, and tell it to remind you to do something on that date.

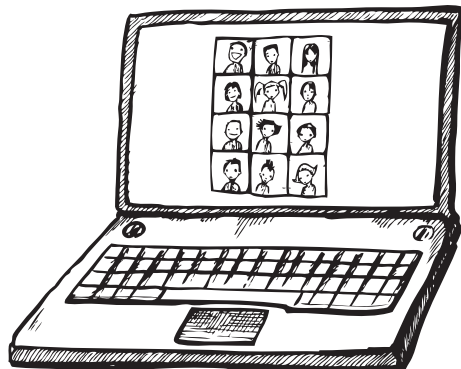
Whichever one you choose, know it well. Spend a few hours really getting to know it. Then it will be effortless for years to come.

Keywords: Multiple keywords are the most important thing in your database. Every person in your address book should have a few words attached to their record like “**drums, webdesign, percussion**” or “**agent, clubowner, songwriter**”. Some people will only have one word there, some will have a list of the 25 instruments they can play. This comes in the most handy when you need to find “drums” in Texas, or you're trying to remember the full name of that webdesigner named “Dave”.

Notes: You need a big text area next to their contact info, where you can type anything you want. Type notes from your conversations. Cut-and-paste emails they've sent you.

Mail-merge: Mail-merge is what they call it when you write a form letter, and it puts the person's name in each letter, sending it separately, instead of sending everyone something that says “Dear Music Industry Professional” or “Hey everyone!”. You can even use these on a small level. Sometimes you need to email ten guitarists to see who wants a gig. Mail-merge would let you easily personalize those ten emails.

What program? I don't know. I used to recommend some, but times change so fast, new things coming out every month, old things disappearing, so instead you're just going to have to find one yourself.



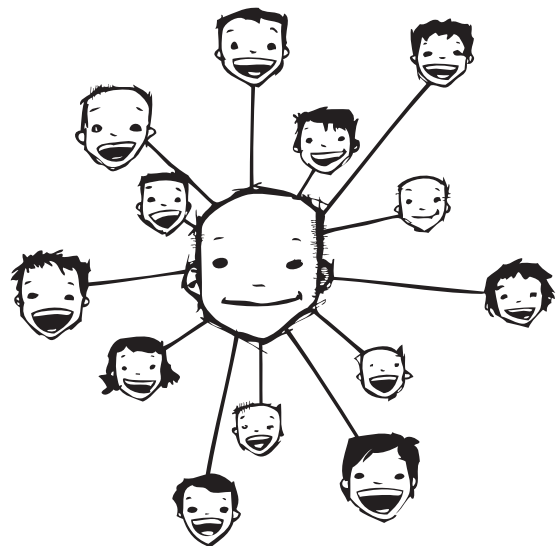
Meet three new people every week

One of the best books about the music business was called “Making It in the New Music Business” by James Riordan.

He suggested that, as an aspiring musician (or producer/agent/writer/etc.) - you make a point to **meet three new people in the music industry every week**. (And, as he says, not just burned-out guitarists.)

Imagine that! Three new people every single week - people that could actually help your career! In a year from now you'll have relationships with over 150 new people that are potential “lottery tickets” - and hopefully the interest is mutual. (Meaning - always keep in mind how YOU can help someone, not just how they can help you.)

The thing is, you have to *develop* these relationships. Put them on your A, B, or C list. Stay in touch. Go beyond the introduction, and really get to know these people, what they're looking for in business and life, what they're interested in, and how you can help them.



Always think how you can help someone

As you're meeting all of these people in your life and career, **always keep in mind how you can help someone**. You should practically meditate on it before contacting them.

There must be someone you know that is exactly what they're looking for. There must be some resource you've got that would really make their day. Some favor you can do.

An article you read in this morning's paper might be of particular interest to someone you met last summer. Cut it out and mail it to them. A film/TV music supervisor might mention she's getting married and is looking for a reggae band. You don't do reggae, but with your database you can help her find a great band that does.

Maybe you spent 3 months shopping for a laptop. Maybe a booking agent you met today mentioned that he's looking for a new laptop. Send him a fax or email with all the best info you found.

Give give give, and sometimes you will receive.



Get personal

Some people, out of the thousands I know, actually contact me on a regular basis. I consider them friends.

But some of those always stick with a strict business “script” when they call: “Hi I'm calling to check in to see how sales are doing, if you need more inventory, how things are going.”

Others seem to have the gift of smalltalk. I don't know how they do it, but soon we're talking about my girlfriend, their dogs, about yoga, high school, Japan, and something that happened on the way to work today.

Now - **when an opportunity comes up to help someone** - (say, a Film/TV person I know calls up and asks “who's good in that standard rock genre?”) - **guess who comes to mind first?**

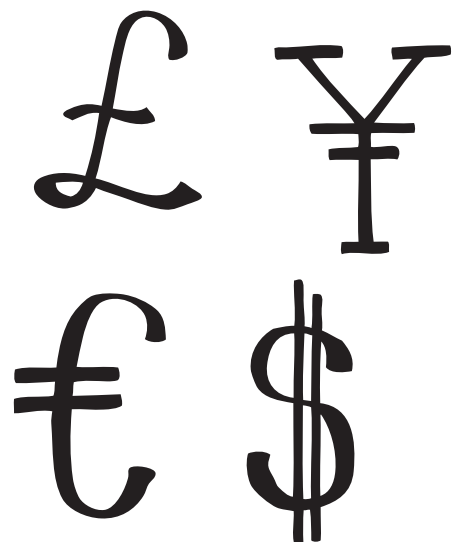
The person who hasn't departed from the standard business call, or the person who went beyond?

Be a real person. Be a friend.

Don't always be selling yourself. You'll be like that annoying uncle who shows up at the family reunion to try to sell everyone on life insurance.

Have the confidence to know that being a cool person, being a friend, will sell you more than being a pushy salesperson.

People do business with people they like. With their friends, whenever possible.



Don't be afraid to ask for favors

Don't be afraid to ask for favors.

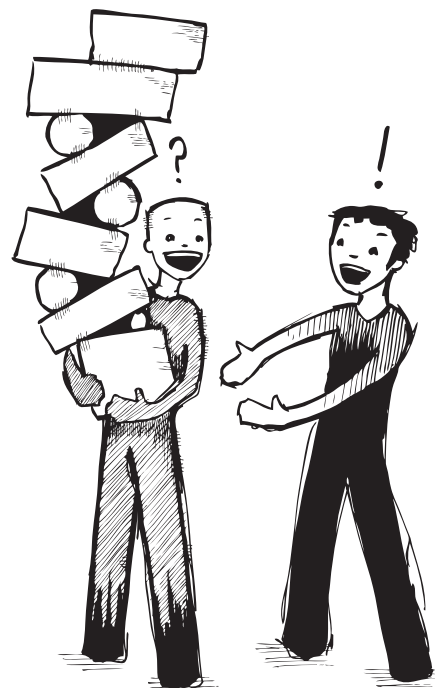
Some people LIKE doing favors.

It's like asking for directions in New York City. People's egos get stroked when they know the answer to something you're asking. They'll gladly answer to show off their knowledge.

One bold musician I know called me up one day and said, “I'm coming to New York in 2 months. Can you give me a list of all the important contacts you think I should meet?” What guts! But I laughed, and did a search in my database, emailing him a list of 40 people he should call, and mention my name.

Sometimes you need to find something specific: a video director for cheap, a PA system you can borrow for a month, a free rehearsal studio. Call up everyone you know and ask! This network of friends you are creating will have everything you want in life.

Some rare and lucky folks (perhaps on your “band mailing list”) have time on their hands and would rather help you do something, than sit at home in front of the TV another night. Need help doing flyers? Help getting equipment to a show? Go ahead and ask!



Small gifts go a long way

10 years ago, I worked at Warner/Chappell Music Publishing. Being the largest music publisher in the world, I dealt with thousands of songwriters. Most of them I can't remember their names.

Three times, and only three times, I got a surprise gift from a songwriter.

James Mastro, a great songwriter from Hoboken, got me a cool little “Mother Mary” keychain when he was touring in Spain.

Gerry DeVeaux, a successful R&B / dance songwriter, got me some funky plastic fish with lights inside, like Christmas ornaments, when he went to the Bahamas.

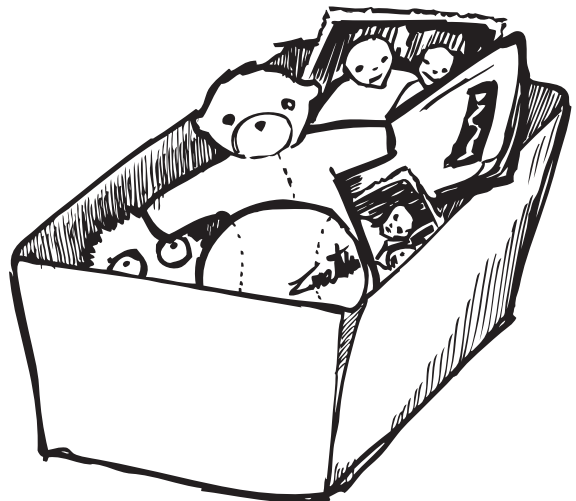
And Jane Kelly Williams got me a red sweatshirt from the Gap, for helping her out with a demo session. I was thrilled.

Can you believe I remember these details 10 years later? Believe it!

A little gift you might give to someone, as you climb the ladder of success, may go a long long way, and mean a lot to someone down the road.

If any of the three people above called me today to ask a favor, you can be sure I'd stop what I was doing to help them out.

Be generous. It will be returned. As you stay in the music biz, you're going to see the same faces for years to come.



Life is like High School

Last week a musician wrote an email to the effect of, “I've been working hard - why isn't it paying off?”

Keep this in mind: life is like high school.

When you're in high school, it's ALL about popularity, clicks, being cool, what you wear, what parties you're at, etc.

When you go to college, the focus shifts to academic achievement.

Many people get out of college thinking the world will be like that. “The harder you work, the more you will be rewarded.” But it's not.

Life is like high school. It's all about who you know, how socially charming you are, what scene you're in, what you wear, what parties you're at, flirting, and being cool.

But you can make this work in your favor.

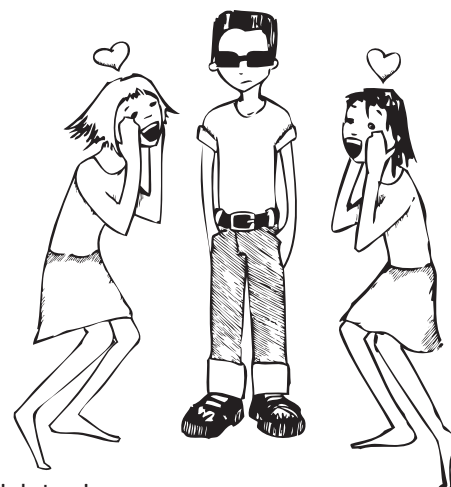
When I think about every big leap that happened in my career, it was always because of “someone I knew.” Always friends of friends. People in some position of power who I kept in touch with, did favors for, and got the same in return.

Go meet 3 people each week you think could help your career. Be a good friend. Make it mutually beneficial, not some suck-up relationship. There's always some resource you have that can totally help out someone who may be “above” you on the ladder. Invite a NEW friend to a party or show you know about.

For years I was booked solid, touring the college market, making way too much money, not because I'm GOOD, but because we made a FUN, ENTERTAINING, “COOL” show. We won the popularity contest.

I think it's possible to approach the music business as if you were a new kid going to a new high school, and wanted to be the most popular kid in class. Sounds shallow, but it works.

Ask Andy Warhol, or someone like Miles Davis - who made great music but knew how to play his image : to be cool.



Shining example: Rayko

At a music conference in Las Vegas, summer 1999. Hundreds of artists there but one made the biggest impression on me. I noticed her first because she's gorgeous, but the other stuff quickly made that unimportant - and there's an inspiring lesson in here.

Her name is Rayko. Japanese musician from L.A.

She was going up to every single person at the conference introducing herself, getting into great conversations, finding out what everyone does, taking notes. Every time someone handed her a business card, she grabbed her pen and wrote down notes about that person on the back, to help her remember.

She probably befriended hundreds of people in 3 days, including me.

Whenever she has a show on the road, she goes in the day before to do countless meet-and-greet interviews, in-store appearances, flyer-promotion, and every other promotion tool you've ever heard of. She gets right into the crowd after every show to sell CDs and sign up hundreds of people to the mailing list.

She answers every fan letter with a hand-written letter. She immediately sends a thank-you card to every biz contact she meets.

And all the while, she's constantly practicing and writing and recording new music.

I was on the receiving end of this when, the very first day back from the conference, she called me in New York to sign up to CD Baby. Maybe she called 200 people that day, but she knows how to make you feel like you're the most important one. (2 days later her whole package with CDs, shirts, videos, and purple handwritten letter were at my door.)

I've heard this same skill is behind the success stories of Garth Brooks, Madonna, and Bill Clinton, too. Meeting everyone. Remembering everyone's name. Developing relationships. Following up and constantly keeping in touch. Treating everyone special.

Who knows if this is just part of her personality, or if it's a trait she developed because her career is THAT important to her.

If you care about your music, and you really REALLY want - in your heart and bones - to become incredibly successful at it, you're going to have to go meet tons of people and “plug away” with tireless drive, and joyful determination every waking moment.

Meet every person you can and treat them the way you'd love to be treated.

And still somehow balance this with making the best music you can and constantly improving your musical skills.



Make these habits, and they won't seem hard

All of these suggestions may sound exhausting to you.

But keep that database at your fingertips. Get used to taking 1 minute after a conversation to take some notes about it. Give some of these ideas a try.

You can probably tell, by reading this, that if you were to actually DO all of these things mentioned, you'd be much more successful than you are now. The gates of life would swing wide open.

Hard to start, but easy to continue.

Incredibly powerful when done every day. (Like a little river made the Grand Canyon.)

Make these habits, and they won't seem hard.



More thoughts about people

Give away lots of CDs. But do NOT just toss them away. Make every one count!

Get volunteer friends/ bandmembers/ fans to help call or email and track the results of as many of these as possible.

Go ahead and ask for favors - be a little bit of a pest. Ask each mag what they'd want to put you on the cover. Take notes of each conversation.

Keep everyone happy. Don't lose touch. Ask for references. Ask if there's anyone else they know that can help you. Then contact all THOSE people, and keep doing it.

It's a LOT of emailing and calling. But it means EVERYTHING. (As long as you superhumanly balance this with making new music and writing great songs.)

I think KEEPING IN TOUCH is THE single most important thing. Here's why:

Whenever I'm talking to someone in the "industry" or have the opportunity to help promote a CD Baby member, I often find myself hooking up the person who I just got off the phone with. (You know - "Oh I was just talking with Scott from the band called the Rosenbergs, you should talk to them - he's home right now, and just told me how well their tour is going!")

On the flip side, there are 60 people a week or so who submit their CD to CD Baby, I put it in the store, I email them but they never reply, I send them checks for CDs sold but never hear from them.

I often wonder who these people are that just let a potential fruitful relationship just disappear into anonymity.

(Do I sell a band called Conundrum? Umm.. let me check the database. Well it says here I do. I don't know them, though.) And CD Baby is just ONE company!

Imagine if you actually stayed "close" with 100 little companies! Or 1000!! You'd have people in all corners of the industry everywhere constantly recommending you, referring you, hooking you up with opportunities, promoting you, etc. You'd be very successful, very soon.

When you're on tour, look up all the people who you've sent CDs to in that area. Meet with them. Sleep at their house.

Ask everyone's advice. Pick everyone's brain. Hear their thoughts & point of view. Remember it.

Oh, send them a present every now and then. Chad the Dungeon Bunny sent me a bag of Baby Ruths. Guess who comes to mind first now when people are asking for his kind of music??

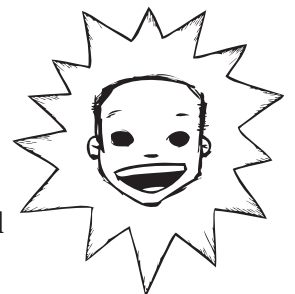
God now that I think of it I probably remember every little present anyone has ever given me in my 10 years being in the music biz. I can count them one hand. It's such a rare wonderful surprise.

On the flip side, I made a friend for life at the top ranks of BMI because I showed up to his office with a pizza for our meeting. (Luckily he was hungry and never forgot it.)

Radio stations are just people.
Magazines are just people.
Websites are just people.
Record companies are just people.

People like to work with their FRIENDS whenever possible. Be a good friend. Be a real person, not a slick schmoozer. If you're acting TOO professional in all this "keeping in touch" then it just sounds fake and will be forgotten.

Oh, and try to sense when they don't like you. Sometimes they just don't like your music, and aren't willing to help. Don't take it personally. Mark it in your database and move on to the next.



The Power of Words

Why words matter more than ever

A short description - 10 seconds or less

How to describe your music

Hillbilly Flamenco

Tell people why they should care

Blah blah blah... What NOT to say

Think like a person or poet, not a musician

Have fun - do NOT be corporate

Or you can not talk at all

Why words matter more than ever

On the radio, your music speaks for itself. People hear your music and decide if they like it. No words were needed to describe it.

In concert, your music speaks for itself. Watching you perform, people appreciate your style as an artist. No words necessary.

But on the internet, and in print, and in conversation, words matter a LOT.

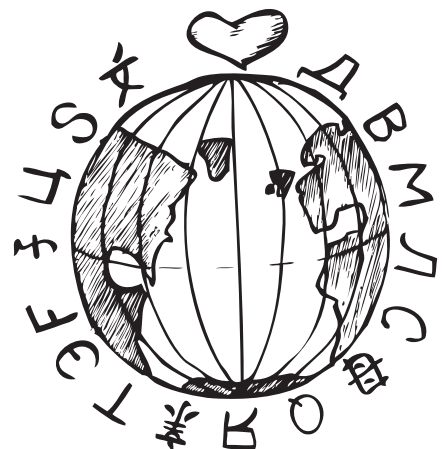
When people have not yet heard your music, your **words describing your music** have to be SO good that it makes people go to the trouble of hearing your music.

Online, the words need to **make them go click the links** to hear it (and buy it).

In print-media, the words need to **make them put down the magazine** and go find a way to hear you.

In conversation, the words need to **make them remember** enough to go hear you later.

It's a BIG job, but since **these are the ways you're going to call attention to your music** (until you're on every radio/TV outlet in the world), you need to **learn how to describe your music**. It's not that hard, and it's VERY important.



A short description - 10 seconds or less

Did you ever see the movie “The Player”?

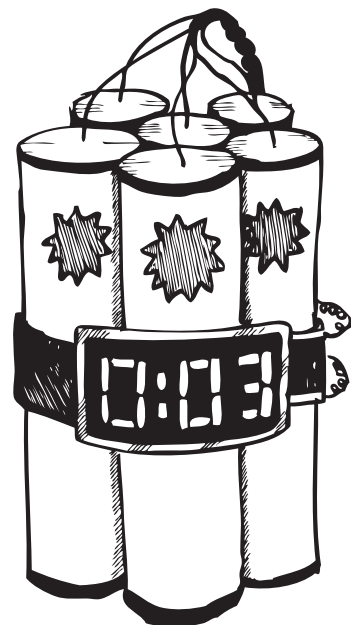
Hundreds of screenwriters in Hollywood are pitching their movie ideas to the studio executive. Each one has about 5 seconds to impress him. The ONE sentence they use to describe their story decides whether the studio will read it or not.

You need to come up with one good sentence to describe your music. It has one goal : **MAKE PEOPLE CURIOUS.**

It should not try to describe every note of music you'll ever make. It should not try to justify your existence on Earth. It only has to **describe your music just-enough to make people curious to hear it.**

I described my band as “a cross between James Brown and the Beatles”. Of course not everything I did sounded exactly like that, but that phrase was just-enough to make hundreds of people want to hear more. I would see it work, every day, as I told it to people. You'd watch their eyes look up, **watch their face change as they tried to imagine** a cross between James Brown and the Beatles. Then they'd say, “Wow - I have to hear this!”. And that's all I wanted.

The shorter, the better. Give them one good sentence (a few good words), and stop talking. Let them imagine the rest.



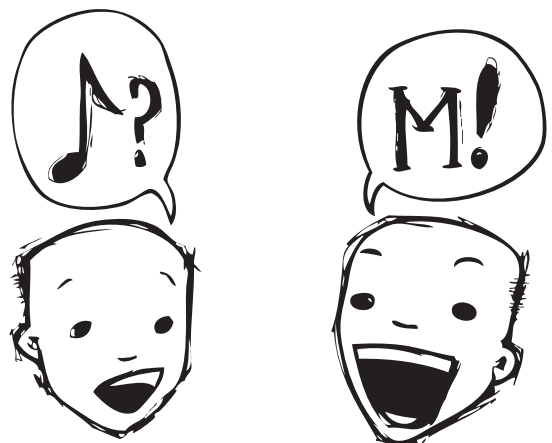
How to describe your music

How do you come up with one good phrase to describe your music? Here are some ideas:

- * Email everyone you know (especially your fans), saying you're trying to come up with a single phrase to describe your music, and ask their help. Maybe make it a contest.
- * Notice what's most unique about you. Do your songs have a recurring theme? Unusual instrumentation?
- * Find a few 14-year-old kids, and treat them to pizza if they'll sit and listen to a few songs, and describe it for you while waiting for the pizza to arrive.
- * Read a music magazine that's describing other people's music you've never heard before. Notice which phrases make YOU curious to hear more.
- * Offer to pay a music writer to help you. This is what they do for a living.

When you've got one you like, start trying it out on people. Watch their face. See if it lights-up. See if they get curious.

When you've got a great one, you'll know it. Use it for years and years.



Hillbilly Flamenco

Two words, to describe your music, can change your career.

David Feder and his band Salagua-Azul always wanted to get into big music festivals. They had been performing for years, and doing OK, but the agents that book music festivals would never give them a chance.

At a show, a drunk fan said, inbetween songs, “You know what? You guys are HILLBILLY FLAMENCO!” The crowd laughed, and so did the band. They joked about it again on stage that night, and again on the drive home.

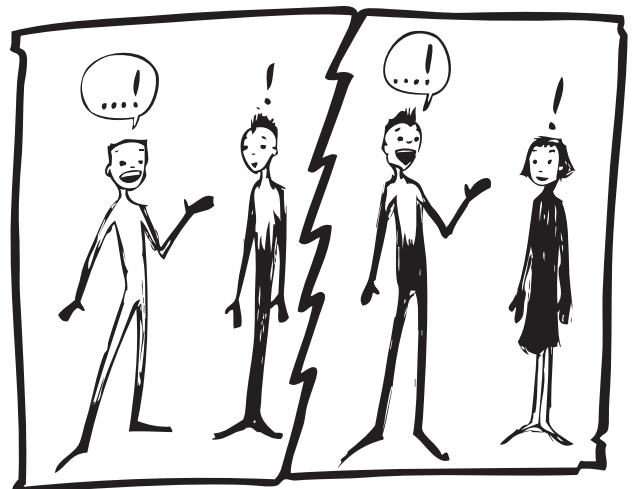
The next day they started to notice that they all **STILL** remembered those two words, “hillbilly flamenco”. It was funny, but described their music well. The crowd liked it. They decided to use it more often.

They started telling the audience, each time they played, “If you are wondering what kind of music this is, this is hillbilly flamenco!” And the end of the show, they'd ask the audience, “And when you tell your friends what kind of music you heard tonight, what kind of music is it?” The crowd would say, “HILLBILLY FLAMENCO!”

And believe it or not... it worked! People started telling their friends about this band, because it was so easy (and fun) to describe.

And then, one day, they were talking to one of those booking agents who books festivals, and told him, “This music is perfect for your festivals. This is hillbilly flamenco!” The booking agent laughed and said, “Ok - I've GOT to hear this!”

Now David Feder and his band are playing the festivals they always dreamed of. He told me his career took a definite turn the day they started using those two words to describe their music.



Tell people why they should care

When asked, most musicians say, “We don't sound like anyone.” Or when asked what kind of music they play, say, “You can't describe it. Just check it out.”

That's a **lazy, inconsiderate, stupid mistake**.

Think of it from the other person's point of view: Imagine you saw someone with a business card that said, “President - Some Company, Inc.” You say, “What kind of business do you do?” - and they say, “Oh, I don't know. It's not like anything. I can't describe it. You'll just have to check it out! We're about 20 minutes down that road, and we're only open next Thursday from 11 to 12 at night.”

Would you really get in your car and spend a Thursday night to check it out, if **they couldn't even tell you WHY you should? No!**

You have to convince people! Grab their curiosity. Describe what you actually do, in an interesting way.

Make the wheels in their head turn. Make them taste it, hear it, see it, want it.

Anyone who asks what kind of music you do is giving you a chance to impress them. Take the opportunity.



Blah blah blah... What NOT to say

At CD Baby we ask musicians to give a one-sentence description of their style. You'd be surprised how many artists say, "A sound like no other. A hot new artist for the new millennium. A band you're sure to enjoy!"

Imagine if a business-owner told you about his company, "We're a top-notch 9-person company. We believe in service, quality, and dependability. This is a business you're sure to enjoy!"

Would you remember that 1 minute later or give a damn what that business did?

Nope. They lost you.

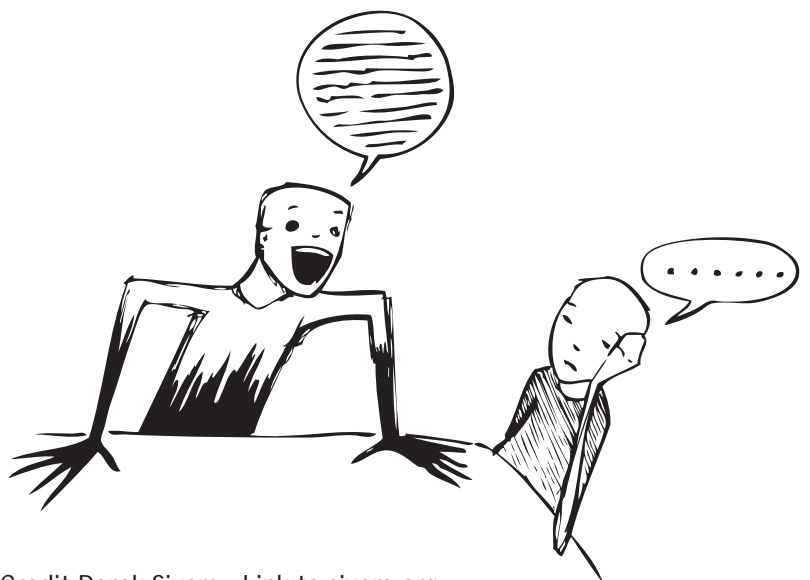
Think how many people you're losing when you describe your music in a boring, or generic way.

When writing their description, musicians often say "The members grew up in Boston and met in high school. After the bassist left to pursue another career, they found a replacement who has solidified the lineup as it stands today. They regularly play the local club scene."

Imagine a computer store saying, "Our VP of finance graduated from Penn State. We found our office manager through an employment agency. After our initial marketing director left, we solidified our lineup as it stands today."

WHY SHOULD I CARE?!?

Get out of your own skin, and describe things in a way that's interesting to other people, not just yourself.



Think like a person or poet, not a musician

When describing your music, PLEASE don't be a musician.

Don't say, "Wonderful harmonies and intricate arrangements. A tight rhythm section and introspective lyrics!"

Real people don't even understand what that means. That's musician speak.

Think what an office-worker would say to a friend about your music: "It's cute! They have this song that has a little "hoop-hoop!" at the beginning, with that baby voice. It's kinda funky! And he's got this sexy bedroom voice. Cool video."

Think what one teenager down at the mall would say to another, when describing what they love about your CD: "Dude - it's like if Korn hadn't wimped out. It's like Busta Rhymes went metal, but they're from Mars or somethin. It's slammin. And you gotta see that picture on the inside cover!"

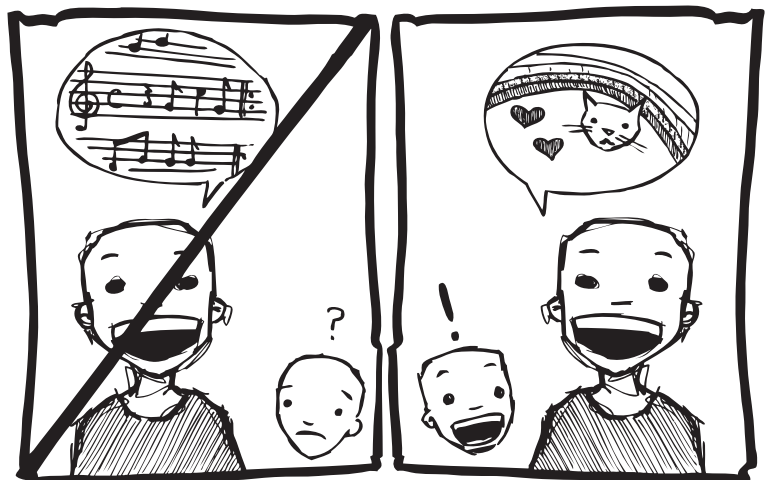
Real people often compare an artist to other famous artists. Real people talk about the overall "vibe" or sound of something.

Real people DON'T talk about "insightful lyrics" and "wonderful harmonies" and "tight musicianship". That's musician-speak.

Play your music for some non-musicians, and ask them what they'd say to a friend about it.

Avoid musician-terms, and learn to **describe your music in ways that reach normal people's emotion and imagination**, and your music itself will be that much more likely to reach and touch people.

Your descriptions of your music should be almost as exciting (or touching, or sad, or shocking) as the music itself.



Have fun - do NOT be corporate

Never use corporate marketing-speak.

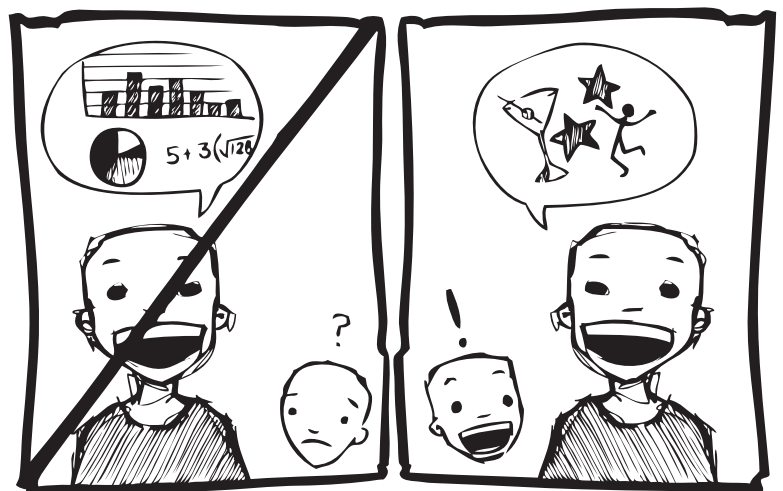
Be weird.

Be a real person.

Sound like one person speaking to one person.

This is a big reason why it's COOL to be indie instead of corporate.

Real people respond better to the weird fun stuff.



Or you can not talk at all

Words got you down? Nothing new to say?

Spend some money on a great photographer.

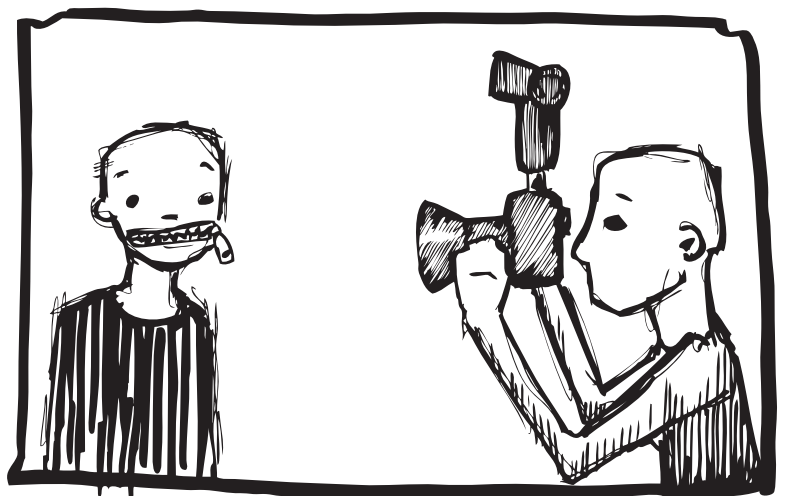
Calvin Klein showed you don't have to talk and talk and talk.

But if you don't, it's ALL up to the image.

Unless you're in heavy rotation on every radio station, it's not very easy for people to hear your music without trying. They have to go seek you out, and make an effort to go hear you.

Music is like perfume. You have to convince and persuade people, with your words and images, to take that initiative, to make an effort, to hear your music.

If you try to just “let the music speak for itself” most people will never hear you.



Tools and Skills

Know the important skills

Promo box on your desktop

Your Interactive Website

Know the important skills

Like proper manners, or knowing how to drive, here are some things in the online world you just need to know:

1. EMAIL

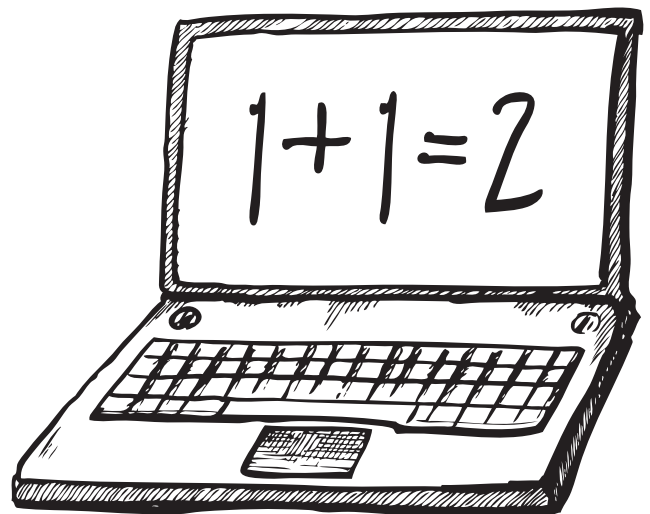
- Have a good signature file that tells who you are, how to find you, and entices people to click through to your web address. All in 4 lines or less.
- How to make good subject headers. So when your email is one of 500 in an "IN" box, it will say exactly what is contained inside, from the other person's point of view.
- How to quote someone's email message back to them. Or not.
- How to subscribe to, post messages to, and unsubscribe from to a mailing list.
- Manners. Spelling. Punctuation. How to turn off your caps lock key, and not use 25 exclamation points in a row.
- How to communicate personality through these typewriter keys.
- Separate sentences into paragraphs. Reading a computer screen is different from reading a book. There's no paper to waste - leave plenty of space.

2. DATABASE SKILLS

- Know how to work your "address book" program. How to find people, sort, print, add, remove, change, and do bigger find commands (how to find all guitarists in the 818 area code)
- Keep it nice and clean and updated. Keep street address separated from the city, state, zip, country. Don't be sloppy in these early stages.
- Assume you ARE going to get more popular and soon your little address book will need to sort thousands of people.
- If you get really fancy, track each contact you have with someone: each call, email, visit. It comes in handy when someone from a year ago calls you up saying, "It's George! Remember?"

3 . WEB SKILLS

- Know how to make an MP3, and how to upload it to a website.
- Sort your bookmarks/favorites into categories/folders so you can find things later.



Promo box on your desktop

The self-promoting musician of the past needed to always have a presskit (with CD and photo) nearby and ready to send.

The modern self-promoting musician needs to keep a “PROMO BOX” folder on the desktop of your computer.

It will take you just one hour to put together, and you'll be able to use it again and again and again:

Make a folder on your desktop called “promo box” and put these things inside for quick easy access:

1. At least one full-length MP3 file of a track from your CD. Encoded at the standard 128k bitrate. Give it a nice long name, without spaces, so that if anyone runs across it on the web they know who it is. (Example: RACHAEL_SAGE-sistersong.mp3) Preferably have 3-5 songs from your CD encoded here, ready to go.

2. An entertaining bio written four times, in four different lengths.

- Long long version (over 3 paragraphs. 1-2 pages. exhaustive and rarely used.)
- Medium long version (2 - 4 entertaining and important paragraphs. the top end of what people will sit and read on the web.)
- Short version (1 killer paragraph)
- One-liner (1 killer sentence)

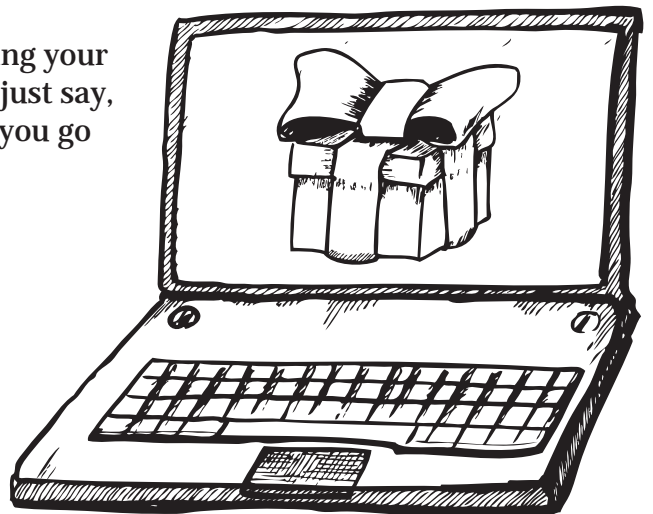
3. Quotes from reviews:

- one big text file with every review you've ever gotten, all typed out and credited
- one text file with just the best short quotes from these reviews

4. Graphics, with a few different sizes of each:

- artist photos (studio shot, live shot, up close, far away)
- album cover graphic (big version, small version)
- your logo, if you have one

IF YOU DO THIS, JUST ONCE, then the job of uploading your information to another website will be painless. You'll just say, “da-da-da! all done!” and let your MP3s upload while you go make dinner.



Your Interactive Website

Your website can be your best tool, if you make it communicate with your fans and potential fans, TWO-WAY.

Your website should get people involved, make them want to introduce themselves, ask questions, shout out.

YOUR WEBSITE SHOULD:

1. Get their email address! Interact! Make an easy fill-out form. (hint: try a fun question like “who are you?” or “do you know your own name?”)
2. Encourage them to buy your CD, constantly. It's a great way to start a relationship.
3. Show what's unique about you. Image, quirks, colors, moods.
4. Make the sound clips easy to get to, not buried under layers
5. Answer the obvious questions: who are you, what do you look like, let me hear the music
6. Acknowledge them! Have their pictures on your site. Answer their questions on your site. Show them they ARE a part of your life.

And make sure you have your own domain name.



Big Strategies

Call the destination, and ask for directions

Put your fans to work

Make your success a we or us. Include everyone.

Photos of your audience on your website

Go where the filters are

Assume the basic sale, and go for quantity

Have someone work the inside of the industry

Be a novice marketer, not an expert

Extreme results = extreme actions

Stay In Over Your Head

If this is draining your energy, please stop!

Call the destination, and ask for directions

Work backwards.

Define your goal (your final destination) - then contact someone who's there, and ask how to get there.

If you want to be in Rolling Stone magazine, pick up the phone, call their main office in New York City, and when the receptionist answers, say “Editorial, please.” Ask someone in the editorial department which publicists they recommend. Then call each publicist, and try to get their attention. (Hint: Don't waste Rolling Stone's time asking for the publicist's phone number. You can find it elsewhere. Get off the phone as soon as possible.)

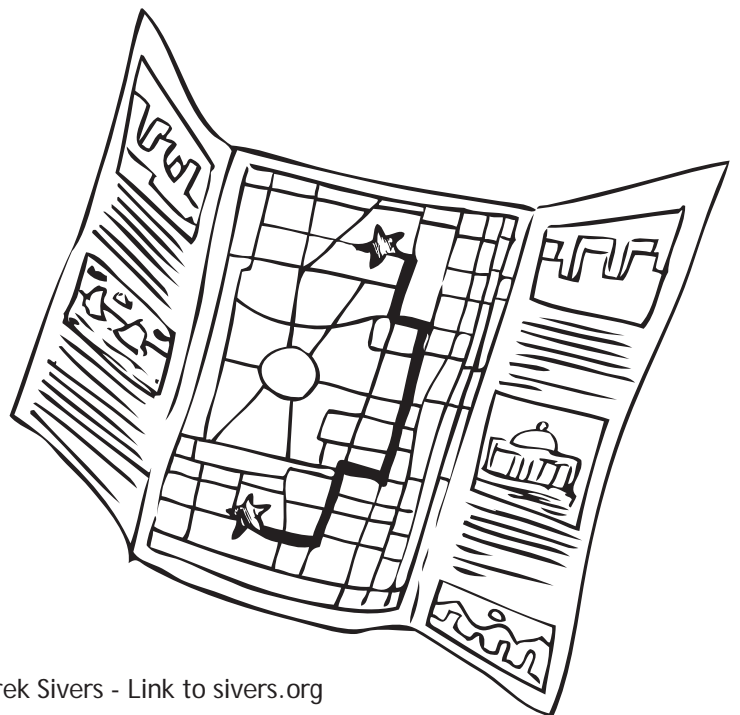
If you want to play at the biggest club in town, bring a nice box of fancy German cookies to the club booker, and ask for just 5 minutes of their advice. Ask them what criteria must be met in order for them to take a chance on an act. Ask what booking agents they recommend, or if they recommend using one at all. Again, keep your meeting as short as possible. Get the crucial info, then leave them alone. (Until you're back, headlining their club one day!)

I know an artist manager of a small unsigned act, who over the course of a year, met with the managers of U2, REM, and other top acts. She asked them for their advice, coming from the top, and got great suggestions that she's used with big results.

In other words:

Call the destination, and ask for directions.

You'll get there much faster than just blindly walking out your front door, hoping you arrive someday.



Put your fans to work

You know those loyal few people who are in the front row every time you perform?

You know those people that sat down to write you an email to say how much they love your music?

You know that guy that said, “Hey if you ever need anything - just ask!”

Put them to work!

Often, people who reach out like that are looking for a connection in this world. Looking for a higher cause. They want to feel they have some other purpose than their stupid accounting job.

You may be the best thing in their life.

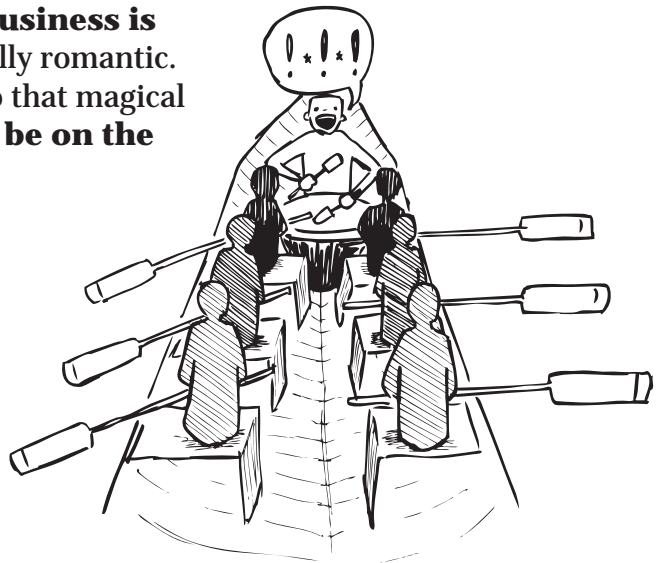
You can break someone out of their drab life as an assistant sales rep for a manufacturing company. You might be the coolest thing that ever happened to a teenager going through an unpopular phase. You can give them a mission!

If they're a fan of your music, invite them over for pizza to spend a night doing a mailing to colleges. Go hit the town together, putting concert flyers on telephone poles. Have them drive a van full of friends to your gig an hour away. Have the guts to ask that “email fan” if she'd be into going through the Indie Contact Bible and sending your presskit to 20 magazines a week.

Soon you can send them out on their own, to spread the gospel message of your amazing music, one promo project at a time. Eventually, as you grow, these people can be the head of “street teams” of 20 people in a city that go promote you like mad each time you have a concert or a new CD.

Those of us busy busy people may think, “How could ANYone do this boring work?” But there are plenty of people out there with time on their hands that want to spend it on something besides TV.

Don't forget that **to most people, the music business is pure magic**. It's glitter and fame and fantastically romantic. Working with you might be the closest they get to that magical world of music. **Give someone the chance to be on the inside circle. Put 'em to work.**



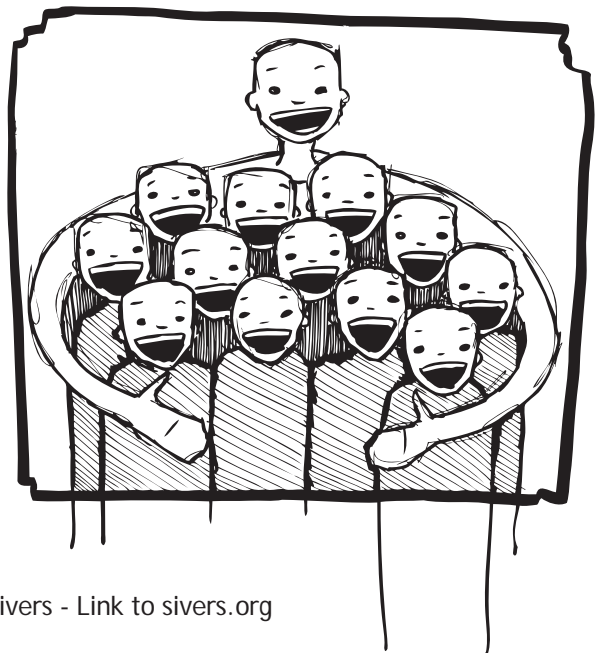
Make your success a we or us. Include everyone.

If you're putting your fans to work, let them know they're on the "inside family" now. That if you hit it big, THEY hit it big.

No need to make specific promises. It's a feeling more than a contract.

Same with your casual fans and email list. Make them part of an exclusive club. Bring them inside.

Everybody wants to be able to say they hung out with _____(your name here)_____ when she was just playing little clubs in her hometown, and now look at her!



Photos of your audience on your website

Secret trick to get people in the audience to sign your mailing list AND be part of your inside club.

At every show you do, from now on, bring a camera and a notebook.

About halfway through your show, when everyone is having fun, **take pictures of the audience, from the stage**. Tell them to smile, make a face, hold up their beer, whatever.

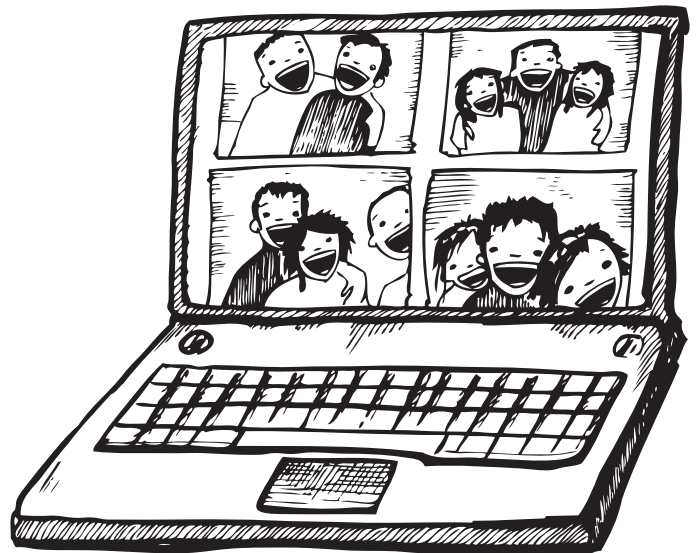
Afterwards, pass around the notebook and say, "Please write down your email address in this notebook, and in a few days, I'll email you, telling you where you can see YOUR goofy picture on my website."

At the end of the night, before bed, write up a journal/diary/memoir of that show. Scan and upload all their pictures onto a page of your website. Dedicate a page of your site about that show, with the diary, photos, and a little link on that page that says, "If you were at this show, please introduce yourself!" - so people can contact you.

Email everyone that was there that night. Of course EVERYone will go look at your site. How could they not? **People are infinitely more interested in themselves than they are in you.**

Stay in touch with them all!

The other hidden idea in this is to make every show a Real Event. A Big Deal. Something worth documenting. This will get you out of the habit of thinking of it as "just another gig." Because for many of your fans, it's not. It's the most fun they've had all month.



Go where the filters are

Have you been filtered? If not, you should start now.

With the internet, there are more “media outlets” than anyone can digest. People in the music biz get piles of CDs in the mail everyday from amateurs. Many of them are crap.

You need to go through filters. Places that reject many, only letting the best of the best pass through.

As long as you're good (really good) - what you want are MORE filters! More obstacles... More hurdles...

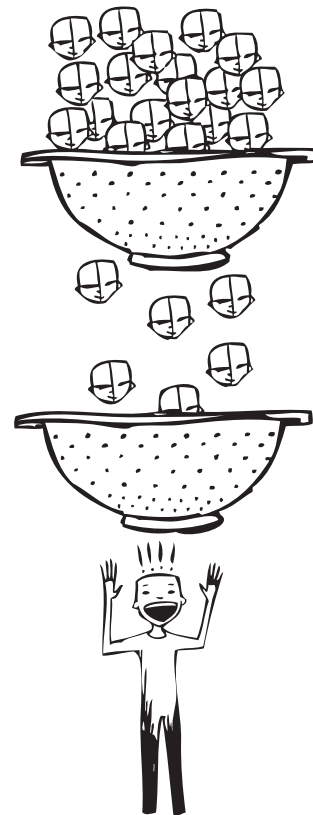
Because these things weed out the “bad” music. Or the music that isn't ready. Or the people that weren't dedicated.

I worked at Warner Brothers for 3 years. I learned why they never accept unsolicited demos: It helps weed out the people that didn't do enough research to know they have to go meet managers or lawyers or Jimmy Iovine's chauffeur FIRST in order to get to the “big boys.” (Deal with the 'gatekeepers' to get to the mansion.)

If you really believe in your music, have the confidence to **put yourself into those places where MOST people get rejected.** (radio, magazines, big venues, agents, managers, record labels, promoters...)

Because each gate you get through puts you in finer company.
 (“the best of the best”)

And you'll find many more opportunities open to you once you've earned your way through a few gates.



Assume the basic sale, and go for quantity

My first job ever was telemarketing: renewing people's subscriptions to Time magazine. We worked on commission.

When I started, I used to meekly ask, “Um. Hello. Your subscription is coming up for renewal. I'm wondering if, maybe, perhaps, you might want to renew it again this year?”

After three weeks, they were going to fire me, because I was doing terribly. But the manager (Denise Koss) thought I was cute so she let me listen in to the top salesman on the floor. Here's how his calls would go. Pay attention to the difference in approach.

“Hi there this is George Amos from Time Magazine, and I'm calling to renew your subscription today. I notice you've been wasting money by renewing only one year at a time, \$54/year, and I hate to see you waste money like that, so let's get you in for a three-year subscription, bringing your price down to only \$25/year. That way, as the price of that one-year renewal keeps going up each year, it won't matter to you, because you were smart and got in at the half-price rate for three years. Now are you still at ____ (their address) ____?”

Now if they complained about the price of a three-year subscription, he'd say, “Ok I can tell you'd rather just do it for a two-year subscription, then.” If they complained about that, he'd say, “Alright - we'll do just a one-year renewal.”

It was amazing that almost every phone call he made renewed, whereas I would call 200 people and none of them would renew. After listening in to a few of his calls, though, I tried it myself, and became the top salesman on the floor. It's easy. Just get into the right mindset. You'd be surprised what a huge difference it makes.

A band on CD Baby called Celldweller did this wonderfully. When their new album came out, they emailed their fans and said, “Our new album is out tomorrow, and nobody anywhere has it yet. If you buy only one, the price is \$12. But if you buy more than one, the price is only \$9 each. So buy 10. It will cost you \$90, but you'll be able to sell them to your friends for \$12 each and make a profit.”

What's amazing is **most of them did!** Most who didn't buy 10 would **apologize** at the end of the order form, saying, “Sorry I don't have \$90 now, but I'll buy 5 copies today and come back for 5 more soon.”

They sold 3000 CDs in no time at all.



Have someone work the inside of the industry

I prefer to ignore the music industry. Maybe that's why you don't see me on the cover of Rolling Stone.

One of my only regrets about my own band was that we toured and got great reviews, toured and got lots of airplay, toured and booked some great-paying gigs. BUT... nobody was working the inside of the music business.

Nobody was connecting with the “gatekeepers” to bring us to the next level. We just kept doing the same gigs.

Maybe you're happy on the outside of the biz. (I know I am.)

But if you want to tour with major-label artists, be on the cover of national magazines, be in good rotation on the biggest radio stations in town, or get onto MTV, you're going to have to have someone working the inside of the biz.

Someone who loves it. Someone who is loved by it. Someone persuasive who gets things done 10 times faster than you ever could. Someone who's excited enough about it, that they would never be discouraged.

Like your love of making music. You wouldn't just “stop” making music because you didn't get a record deal would you? Then you need to find someone who's equally passionate about the business side of music, and particularly the business side of YOUR music.

It IS possible. There are lots of people in this world.



Be a novice marketer, not an expert

Get to the point of being a novice marketer/promoter/agent. Then hand it to an expert.

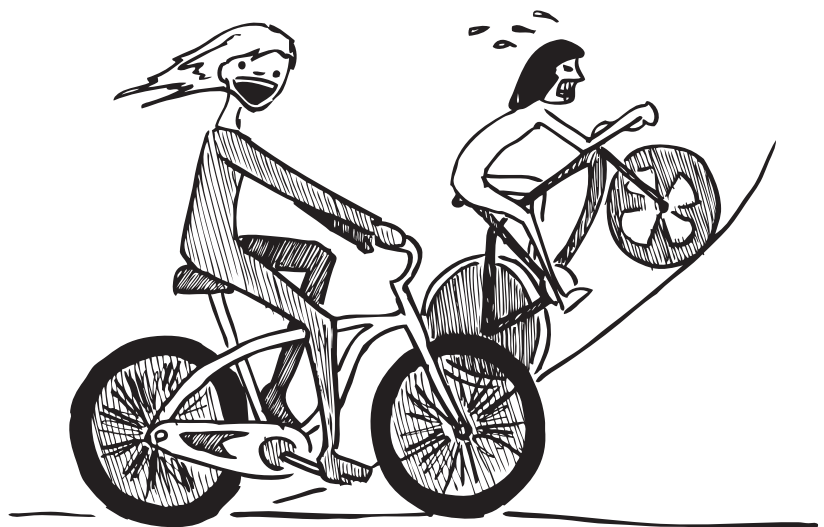
Moby, the famous techno artist, says the main reason for his success was that he found experts to do what they're best at, instead of trying to do it himself.

(Paraphrased:) “Instead of trying to be a booking agent, publicist, label, and manager, I put my initial energy into finding and impressing the best agent, publicist, label, and manager. And I just kept making lots of the best music I could.”

If you sense you are becoming an expert, figure out what your real passions in life are and act accordingly.

Maybe you're a better publicist than bassist. Maybe you're a better bassist than publicist.

Maybe it's time to admit your weakness as a booking agent, and hand it off to someone else.
Maybe it's time to admit your genius as a booking agent, and commit to it full-time.



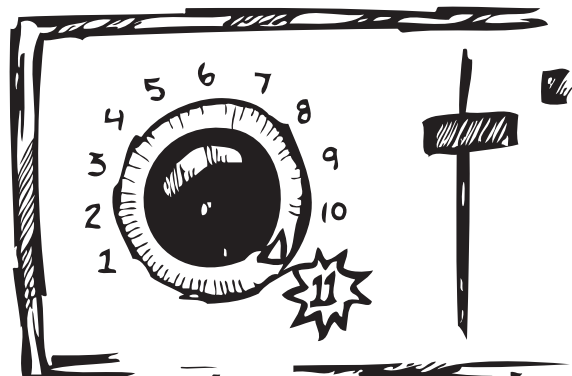
Extreme results = extreme actions

You don't get extreme talent, fame, or success without extreme actions.

Be less leisurely.

Throw yourself into this entirely.

Find what you love and let it kill you.



Stay In Over Your Head

Stay in over your head.

Whatever you're doing in your life right now, if it's become a routine, it's time to move on to something new and scary.

Abraham Maslow wrote, “Life is an ongoing process of choosing between safety (out of fear and need for defense) and risk (for the sake of progress and growth): **Make the growth choice a dozen times a day.**”

Whatever scares you, go do it.



If this is draining your energy, please stop!

“Whatever scares you, go do it.” <-- one of my favorite slogans

If something scares you in an excited way, (something that *gives* you energy) - that's a good sign.

BUT IF SOMETHING IS MAKING YOU MISERABLE AND DRAINING YOUR ENERGY, PLEASE STOP.

Life is telling you that is not the path for you.

QUICK EXAMPLE: Biggest mistake I ever made in my life:

My band was doing well. A well-meaning lawyer that I trusted told me that I should start a record label. “Find and sign 3 other artists. Do for them what you did for your band. Then sell the whole label for a million bucks!!”

I walked out of his office with slumped shoulders, miserable, saying, “yeah... I guess he's right...”

With a long face, I plopped in a chair back home and thought, “Oh man... do I really have to do this?” But because I trusted him, I spent 2 years of my life trying!

It wasn't what came natural to me, and so of course it was a failure, AND since I had spent so much time on it, the thing that I WAS good at (making music) was being ignored!!

I wish I would have paid attention to my lack of enthusiasm and stuck with the things that excited me.

Please don't make the same mistake.

If anything I'm talking about here makes you tired instead of wired, just don't do it! Stick with what excites you. That's where you'll find your success.

