

Four Ways to Attract More Music Fans Faster

Free marketing tips from Bob Baker and TheBuzzFactor.com

Attracting more fans. Admit it, that's what music marketing is all about – getting more people to come to your shows and buy your CDs. And hopefully, getting a lot more people to do those things.

Marketing can help you reach thousands of music fans.

Marketing also confuses a lot of musicians.

Songwriters and musicians the world over know they need to promote themselves. But many don't know where to start.

Why else do you work so hard to travel and play as many places as you can? For what other reason do you meticulously write and record songs? I don't believe the reason is so you can practice and keep up your chops in obscurity. It's not because you want to impress influential managers or A&R people. You work hard because you know you have something of value to offer ... and you want to reach as many people as possible with your music.

Marketing is the thing that helps you reach that goal. But marketing is also a subject that confuses a lot of musicians. Songwriters and band members the world over know they need to promote themselves. But many don't know where to start, much less know how to continue effectively.

Does this describe you? Do you ever feel like you're spinning your wheels, not sure exactly what you should be doing next to market yourself? If so, this would be a good time to cover some basic marketing concepts for independent musicians.

The VFW Hall Principle

Let's say you went to an average U.S. city (such as Kansas City or Denver) and

you rounded up 1,000 people and gathered them in a giant VFW hall. These 1,000 folks would be randomly chosen and made up of people from all ages, genders and backgrounds. Next, you'd distribute information about your act to these people and play tracks from your new CD for them.

After this direct exposure, what are the chances that one person out of those thousand would be attracted to your music and identity enough to buy your CD or come to your next show? Most musicians, regardless of what style they play, should feel pretty confident about being able to win over at least one new fan from this group of 1,000. That's a one-tenth of one percent conversion rate.

Now let's multiply that formula by the entire U.S. population of 285 million people. One-tenth of one percent would be 285,000 people. Mind-boggling, isn't it? That would be enough fans to make you a bonafide star.

Next, switch gears and consider how major labels market themselves. They select and promote acts that they feel have the potential to appeal to 10 or more of those same 1,000 people. Then the labels spend millions of dollars in what I call shotgun advertising. They spray their marketing message over a targeted chunk of the population (which often amounts to many millions of people), knowing well that only a small percentage will be interested enough to respond and become fans. Sometimes, this widespread tactic works well enough

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to sell lots of CDs and concert tickets – but it's very expensive.

As an independent artist, you can't afford that type of marketing campaign. But you know those potential fans are out there, and you know that you can be successful by connecting with far fewer people than a major label requires. It's just that your ideal fans haven't found out about you yet – and you're not quite sure how to find them.

What's a frustrated musician to do?

The answer: You must find creative, low-cost ways to go directly to those one-in-a-thousand fans. Don't waste your time and money promoting yourself to people who will most likely never embrace your music.

Here are four steps to take to reach new fans:

1. Define Your Distinct Musical Identity

You must have a firm grasp on what your music is about. And you must be able to define it clearly and quickly. What are your strongest musical traits? What sets you apart from other acts? What attitude or social statement do you make? Being a generic rock, pop or hip-hop act won't cut it. Dig deeper and discover your unique identity. When you do finally reach some of those rare potential fans, don't lose them by not being clear about who you are.

2. Describe Your Ideal Fan

Once you have a handle on who you are musically, it's time to paint a clear picture of your ideal fan. Can you articulate how your fans dress, where they work, what TV shows they watch, what they do for fun and who their favorite cultural

heroes are? Observe the types of people who come to see you perform and note what they have in common? Knowing precisely who your fans are will dictate what avenues you use to reach them and how you communicate your message once you do reach them.

3. List Ways to Get Access to Your Fans

Once you know exactly what type of music fan you're going after, start making a list of the various resources these specific people are attracted to. What magazines and newspapers do they read? Where do they hang out? What radio stations do they listen to? What retail outlets do they frequent? What web sites do they surf to? What e-mail newsletters do they subscribe to? For example, if your fans are mostly Harley riders, go to a search engine like Google and start entering keywords related to motorcycles. Evaluate the search results and compile a list of the many good sources you uncover.

4. Promote Your Music Through Targeted Channels

Armed with this targeted list of contacts, get busy! Send e-mail press releases to niche media outlets. Contact the webmasters and editors of appropriate publications. Post messages in specialized forums. Visit and interact via the web sites of similar-sounding bands. Contact organizations and charities related to your musical niche.

In short, go to where your ideal fans are. And market yourself through these outlets relentlessly. Why waste time and money trying to promote to everyone ... when you can save money and be far more effective by going directly to those valuable one-in-a-thousand fans?