



## **Developing Your Artist Project In 2022.**

*Everything you should consider to grow your project.*

It's no secret that 2020 / 2021 fundamentally changed the way not only artists develop, but also the way that audiences consume music. Considering each artist's vision for their respective projects are different, there is no one specific resource for an artist to develop into a career. If the last 24 months have taught us anything, it is that this industry can change at the drop of a hat, and artists need to learn to swim with the current rather than against it.

Before we get started and as always, if you are interested in developing tools to grow into a full time career as an artist this article is for you, if you just want to make music to express only, and have no intention of growing it into a sustainable project, then this is probably not for you.

There is so much to consider when growing an artist project into a sustainable position, outside of the creation of quality music. Growing an engaged audience base, networking among industry and media, understanding and implementing distribution, royalties and publishing are just a small number of institutions that artists need to wrap their heads around. Even for artists who have a solidified team around them that may undertake the above tasks - it still serves in the artist's best interests to have at least a base understanding of all of the parts of the industry they inhabit. By doing this, it allows the artist to best navigate and communicate their vision while also being able to streamline their finances to ensure maximum sustainability.

We have listed some things below that we believe artists should consider / make contingencies for when trying to develop brand sustainability in 2022.

### **Understand your strengths and weaknesses (What can you learn, what will you need to outsource):**

With the accessibility of becoming an artist in this market, also comes the notion of an artist having to be a 'jack of all trades'. While this may be true in some cases, most of the time all independent artists need to have a basic understanding of topics (marketing, PR, mixing, mastering, accounting etc).

Depending on where you're at in terms of knowledge and finances there absolutely is a place for outsourcing services that you are not overly inspired by OR do not wish to dive fully into. Keeping in mind that as long as you have a basic knowledge of that topic, you can then keep the outsourced team member accountable to their role.

Building a team is so important in the long run. Having people that are passionate about specific areas of artist development allows the artist to focus on what they are passionate about, which, 9 times out of 10 is the creation and the performance side of their project. It is however important for artists to understand that they drive the project. No one in the artist team cares about the project as much as the artist, so it is important for the artist to understand they have the adequate knowledge to keep their project moving in a forward direction.

### **Financially streamlining (Budgeting):**

Budgeting and financially streamlining a creative endeavor is a hard process. For a lot of artists and operators (ourselves included) it can sometimes take away from the more creative aspects of the project. The reality is that, if you want to create a career out of your project, then you need to treat it like a business. Without financial streamlining, you are at risk of not carving full time work out of your project.

Look at your artist project overall, assess all of the areas you spend money / look at all of the areas where you make money.

It is quite difficult to go into major detail as every artist project is different, but the best way to create financial sustainability for artist projects generally comes down to understanding your strengths and weaknesses. Outsource (pay) for what you struggle with, + double down and create process on the things you can manage to do yourself.

Making money at all, let alone profit, isn't easy as an independent artist. When shifting the artist mindset into creating a career, the first thing we would challenge you to think about is to cut off any unnecessary spending. For example, if an independent artist who has had no experience doing their own publicity and had no real connection with the media or within the industry, our advice would be to grow that themselves (for free) over multiple releases, prior to investing in a PR company. That will do a few things, 1. It gives the artist the opportunity to learn and experience the best practices of PR in the industry, 2. It gives the artist the opportunity to create and sustain relationships over a long period of time with industry, rather than having to rely on someone you pay, 3rd it is free, and only requires investment of time.

As the project begins to grow and has more income to re-invest back into the project, things like publicity are certainly a smart thing to invest into, but at least the artist will have a solid understanding of what that PR professional is doing and the artist will be able to keep them accountable to their focus. It also allows artists not to leverage all their budget on PR too early.

### **Be a sponge (You MUST adapt):**

It seems in every article we stress the importance of process. Creating measurable actions that allow you to consistently grow in all areas of the project.

Gaining a solid understanding of what is working and what isn't is a vital tool in order to grow, and also to ensure that you are not wasting time on tasks that don't work any more. For example, in the last 18 months there has been a monumental shift within the industry; media placement is not as important as it once was, and audience engagement is more important. Understanding that is step 1, step 2, is to ensure that you / your team have the appropriate actions in place to adapt to that change consistently enough to still manage brand growth..

### **Spread yourself across multiple platforms (The world is digital, stop complaining and get amongst it):**

There is no point complaining about algorithms anymore, we live in a digital world and it's not going away. You can play as many live shows as you want, but until you understand that the bulk of your audience will invest in you in an online setting your project will likely stagnate.

Different platforms do suit different artists yes, but, it's still important to note that artists should be active on ANY platform their audience frequents. Gaining an understanding of how that specific audience utilizes that specific platform is vital also, as it allows the artist to ensure their content is reaching and creating a

meaningful impact on their audience.

Things to consider for each platform:

- What content are my intended audience relating / engaging with on x platform?
- What is my intended audience thinking about when they are using x platform?
- How can I best engage with my intended audience using this specific social medium?

### **Audience First:**

*“Platforms like Tiktok, Twitch, Instagram and Youtube are more conducive to audience growth than a blog write up or one-off radio spins. Artists need to take control of everything in their development arsenal, instead of expecting growth from publicity only.”* - Christina Rinaldi (Owner / Artist Development at CMA)

Artists need to become acutely aware that it is their responsibility to get their music in front of an audience that will support them. The subjective nature of music often leaves artists feeling deflated because they feel the music is not being received in line with their own (often unrealistic) expectations. The role of an artist / artist team in promotion is to understand the audience they are trying to reach and be able to create content specific to that audience, making it easily digestible on the platforms that the audience is using. Doing that consistently, over multiple releases allows the artist to build rapport with their audience and that's when meaningful sustainability for an artist project can really begin.

Outside of posting content that engages a specific audience, artists need to actively seek new audiences. As mentioned above, we are currently in the most saturated music market there has ever been, every second person you come into contact with is either an artist, or somehow involved with an artist project.

### **Lists, lists, lists and more lists:**

All artists want to reach the right people and have them feel something or resonate with their artform in some way. Before releasing any kind of music, we have some homework for you. Develop industry contact lists of those who will best fit your genre / style / narrative, and continually add to that list as you grow throughout the industry. This is one of the single, most powerful things you can do in the backend of your brand. For us, creating these lists are essential for our entire business and are an important building block for independent artists.

- Youtube channels w/ high subscriber rate and following.
- Relevant Tik Tok users with an engaged following likely to like / use your music
- Relevant Twitch users with an engaged following likely to like / use your music
- Relevant Discord users with an engaged following likely to like / use your music
- Relevant Reddit users with an engaged following likely to like / use your music
- Independent playlist curators (Spotify / Apple Music / YouTube / Tidal / Amazon)
- Online magazines
- Radio presenters
- Other artists (both at your development level and bigger)
- Booking agents
- Artist managers
- Promoters

If you're now asking the question, *“How do I find these contacts?”* The answer is pretty simple. RESEARCH. Take one hour out of your studio time every day and research all of the above. Consider this an admin role that needs to be done every day / every week.

The reality is, the music industry is ever evolving, with technological advancements such as NFT's, the Meta verse etc all coming together the future really does look bright for the independent artists of the world, but you have to put in the time to have proper understanding.

Do not be "that guy" that is romantic about a platform, or a task that is currently working, because what works today might not work tomorrow. Processes will always need to be streamlined and in our experience as an artist, and managers, the ability to adapt and remain consistent is what will sort the serious artists from the pretenders in 2022 + beyond.