HOW TO

KICK START

YOUR MUSIC CAREER

The Guide from
MAJOR MIXING
Mixing and Mastering Studio

www.majormixing.com

About the book

Who is this book for and why do you need it?

This book is for beginners who are just starting their career in the music industry, as well as it is for artists who are in the middle of their path, but just somehow feel stuck and can't grow their career as quickly and efficiently as they would like to. We believe this book can serve you as a map that will guide you to success.

So, you are a musician, an artist who wants to conquer the world with your songs. However, the music world today is vast, about 50 000 songs are uploaded to Spotify every month, and this number is growing. Considering this huge competition, what are your chances to become famous?

Trying to survive in the music industry may be compared to the life of little sea turtle hatchlings. Statistics say that only 1 out of 1000 make it to adulthood in the ocean. Even fewer artists make it to success and become recognized at least a little.

The music industry is difficult to work in and a small number of musicians actually grow and become accomplished and successful, and can live off of their music or make a fortune with it.

So, how can one survive and become famous?

We were curious too. For more than 10 years we have been collaborating with thousands of various musicians, singers, producers, and record labels. We worked with successful artists and observed what they did to achieve fame. We also witnessed failures and shattered dreams many times.

We analyzed the traits that pertained to successful careers and saw that despite their differences they all have certain things in common. We keep witnessing similar steps that most often bring artists to success.

These are the steps we are talking about in this book, exactly the steps we would take if we decide to help promote an artist or create our music production brand.

This book is meant to be your guide in this music world, it's going to lay in front of you a step-by-step plan of everything you need to do in order to succeed. And then your part will be to just do it.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that you'll immediately become famous, moreover, we can not guarantee anything. There is still a lot that is unpredictable in the career of every musician. But we want to provide you with as much help as we can, so you too could fulfill this path of a famous and successful artist.

We have made this book as simple as we could, but also as condensed and meaningful as it was possible.

So why wait, let's begin, and see you at the top of the charts!

About the author

Max Rayden has been working in the music industry for more than a decade. Together with producer and audio engineer Ivan Ogloblin, he created Major Mixing, professional mixing and mastering services studio.

Major Mixing is performing analog and digital mixing and mastering including working with Dolby Atmos, music production, and all kinds of music editing.

Doing mixing and mastering for almost every genre and style, Max has had the opportunity to collaborate with thousands of various independent artists, their managers, and record labels.

The topic of how to kickstart an artist's career and how to get signed to a record label often comes up.

Through the years, the picture of what traits the successful singers have and what brings them record deals became clearer. He started to understand what ingredients produce a successful career for an artist, and what sabotages growth.

In this book, he shares with you this knowledge, accumulated through the years of working with artists, producers, and record labels.

Contents

Part 1 Music is business

Your brand is the single most important investment you can make in your business.
— Steve Forbes

First of all, let us state that working in the music industry has all the traits of any other business. It includes successful branding, marketing, research of demand, and other business approaches.

Similar to other ventures, in growing their career, artists create a brand, research the market, determine their niche and acknowledge the competition. Because artists satisfy people's needs in music similar to how other industries satisfy their needs in having houses, clothes, food, phones, and other things. And similar to other industries, the quality of an artist's product plays an important part in creating success.

The actions of successful artists now are not random and chaotic, on the contrary, they start their careers with thorough planning and creating business strategies. Only this way brings them some guarantees of success.

That's why in the following chapters we will discuss not only pure musical aspects of an artist's success but also a business part of it. Like a puzzle, the career of a successful artist is made from all these little musical and business pieces that fit perfectly together, and you can't miss any of them, otherwise, the picture will not be complete.

We'll discuss all of these pieces one by one, so keep reading, and see, maybe there are parts that you have overlooked and that's why the whole picture of your success in the music world is not perfect yet.

Part 2 Branding

In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.
— Coco Chanel

So, what is the first step in every artist's music career? It's simple. And probably you have already made this step - it's determining the genre. If you haven't done this yet, you'll have to do it now, right in the beginning, because your marketing and your style will depend on it.

Try to determine your genre as narrow as possible, defining sub-genre if

My genre:	

When an artist has determined the genre, they look at the other artists who work in it. You might already know them well, maybe you look up to some of them and have their posters on the wall. Or maybe you are not so sure and will need to use the internet a little to learn more. Every one of them has created their personal brand, and now we are about to look closer at how they did it.

Why is branding important?

Every famous artist now uses branding. Their style is recognizable, how they dress, how they act, how they look, how they talk, all of it is subject to certain unique traits developed on purpose, nothing is random. In music, branding is as important, or maybe even more important than for any other business.

When an artist has created a good personal brand, he or she is recognizable and usually is invited to interviews, TV shows, participates in advertisements, or promotes something. A well-created brand starts bringing money to the artist not only through music but through other advertising, marketing, and public events.

Of course, there are talented people who are naturally so unique and distinct in all that they do that it seems like branding came easy to them and they didn't put much work into creating it. This is probably true, but there are also others who weren't that lucky and had to work hard on creating their distinct and unique personal brand.

Whether it comes naturally to an artist or requires hard work, creating a personal brand is an inevitable part of developing a solid career in the music industry today.

To look at the examples, choose 3-4 artists of a similar genre as yours. Pay attention to their branding and try to describe it, what you like in it. You can use the following chart to help organize your thoughts.

To look at the examples, choose 3-4 artists of a similar genre as yours. Pay attention to their branding and try to describe it, what you like in it. You can use the following chart to help organize your thoughts.

For each of these artists, try to answer these questions:

What's unique in his/her look?	
What's unique in his/her behavior?	
What's unique in his/her music?	
How does their style reflect the genre they are working in?	

As we said earlier, now it's not enough to be a talented artist, all successful artists have their brand, their distinct style, and part of it you have already determined if you have filled in the chart above. Artists are recognizable from the way they walk, the way they talk, and how they interact with people.

At the beginning of their career, every artist determines their unique style and look and creates the brand. You need to do branding as well.

Artists develop their distinct style in everything:

- **Silhouette.** There is a saying that ideally, an artist's shadow should be recognizable. So, when you see the silhouette, you should be able to recognize the artist immediately.
- **Voice and singing style.** Each artist can have their own different voice and manner of singing. For a hip-hop artist or a rapper, it can be a unique style of rapping, a unique voice timbre.
- **Music and instruments.** An artist can choose to do arrangements differently than others.
- **Appearance.** An artist can look differently, wear certain clothes, in a certain unique way.
- **How each famous artist talks and behaves** in public is unique and recognizable.

Think about the future, imagine that you are already an accomplished artist. What does your style look like, your behavior? What is unique about you?

So, try to describe in at least three words or more each of the following:

Your unique look	
Your behavior, how you act in public	
What's unique in your music?	
Other unique branding features you want to develop	

This is only the beginning of your branding. Of course, it takes time and effort, quite possibly a stylist's help or collaboration with other professionals.

An artist has to think about everything for branding - their lifestyle, political views, social media pages, how to act during interviews, etc. This all should be full of originality and the artist's own style.

An original style will not only give an artist a good chance to be signed by a label but also will save him or her a lot of money. For example, if an artist records a song similar to those that already exist in the industry, they'll spend a lot of money on making the song, and then promoting it everywhere, but people simply won't notice it, because there is nothing new in it. Many artists fall into this trap, they create songs without their own unique traits, and no matter how hard they try to promote, they still can not achieve popularity.

Advertising and promotion can not substitute for an original style. No matter how much money is invested in advertising, it can not buy the genuine popularity that has grown on the basis of a unique style and new creative features.

An artist can not develop it all at once, but every journey starts with the first step, and this is the direction successful artists are taking.

Part 3 Research the market

Marketing is everything and everything is marketing.
— Regis McKenna

Research the market and put yourself in your audience's shoes.

Remember, your listeners will not react to your music as a mother welcomes her 3 year old's crayon drawing. They will not applaud it because it's yours, or because you have put so much effort into creating it. What are they waiting for?

The audience, listening to songs, is buying the atmosphere, emotions, and the world of the artist. The artist's music satisfies their needs in these things.

Every successful artist now knows their audience well, for whom he or she is creating the songs. Is it for young people or for old, for those who like active business life, for those who like meditation and calm music? Of course, every audience for every artist consists of different people, but there is still something common in them, and it's crucial for an artist to know more about the people he or she is working for and what they need.

Who likes to listen to your music? Think about them, become them for a moment. What do they lack? What do they need? What comforts them, inspires them, makes them happy?

Now, try to fill in this chart to learn more about your audience:

Describe the atmosphere your audience wants to experience	
Describe the emotions your audience wants to feel	
Describe the world your audience wants you to bring them into	

Now you know more of what your songs must convey, and what your style and your world must look like to match their needs.

Then return to the previous chapter and review your image. What can you add to your branding, once you have researched your audience?

Here we need to say that authenticity should by no means be neglected.

By branding and marketing, we don't mean creating some image with which you can not identify. It's always better to dig deep inside your heart and find the artist you are looking for, rather than to create one from scratch based on the demands of the market.

Successful artists use all these marketing laws to empower their authenticity, this is the goal of their branding work.

Part 4 Types of innovation

There are only two things in a business that make money – innovation and marketing, everything else is cost.
— Peter F. Drucker

The artist must bring something new with their work, something different from what we have already experienced. It should be different in a substantial way. One can not just add some stupid peculiarity or foolishness to the image and expect it to represent innovation.

How can artists create their unique and distinct style? There are three major ways to do so.

Way #1 - Improve

Create something similar to already popular material, but a bit different or a bit better.
To create something similar to an already existing and popular project is not plagiarism, it's a common practice in different industries, not only in music. It's usual to have two or three popular products in one market niche.

For musicians, we can trace this tendency from the classical old bands like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones who worked in the same niche, for the same audience. You may compare Panic! At The Disco and Fall Out Boy, Katy Perry and Taylor Swift, Nicki Minaj, and Cardi B to see that similarities don't stand in the way of popularity for both singers or bands.

Major record labels often use this rule to create and promote new artists. They can try and make a product similar to the one that has already conquered the market, and keeping in mind the resources big labels have, this strategy is quite feasible and safe for them. However, for an independent artist, copying someone famous, for example, Beyonce, and improving her style, is quite a challenging task. Challenging, but not impossible.

Way #2 - Innovate

Create something absolutely new within the modern tendencies and trends of the music industry. You need to be original and unexpected but within a safe zone of an already popular modern style. The artist needs to bring in absolutely new features, be distinct and recognizable. This is the most popular way and the most effective.

If a singer or songwriter chooses this path, it will not only help him or her to be signed by a label, but also in general, to start a career in the music industry and quickly move up. I'm sure you already have some of your favorite artists in mind who brought a new style to a popular genre and can tell exactly what their new unique features are. However, let's still see some more examples. Ok Go band and their creative video clips. Lady Gaga and her unique style. Slipknot with their masks and aggressive percussion. Marilyn Manson with his crazy makeup and contact lenses. David Guetta and his tempo and singing style. LMFAO with their image and interesting sound.

This list could be continued endlessly. Take everything you do, your appearance, everything that surrounds you, and think how it can be contributing to your style, to your uniqueness. The more of these new unique details you bring in, the better the results will be.

A good set of perfect unique features by which you will be recognized is the most important thing. It is the crown jewel all the labels are looking for. Such artists will be able to get a record deal easier and quicker.

Way #3 - Revolutionize.

Here we are talking about creating something absolutely new that will completely change the way the music industry is developing.

This way is unpredictable and risky, but if it works, it will bring the most profit, popularity, and a skyrocketing career. Of course, big labels are looking for this kind of artist, but they understand that those musicians are a rare phenomenon.

These are artists who change the musical paradigm, change the style. Their appearance can't be planned, it happens uncontrolled and is unpredictable.

Take, for example, Nirvana. Kurt brought in a completely new sound and style. Another example from our days is Billie Eilish, with also a strikingly unique way of singing, arrangement, and song lyrics.

The music paradigms have always been changing, new styles emerging and rising to the top, and others gradually losing their popularity. The cause and the basis of these changes are the people, the needs of the audience, changing times, political and social conditions. But of course, there always is this one artist who first introduces this new tendency.

This approach holds a big risk that can stand in the way. For example, you have invented a completely new style of song and want to bring it to the world. How do you know if the people are going to like it? It could happen that you are ahead of your time, and your new type of music has a chance to become popular only in the future, not now. It could also happen that the big audience will not need your new style of music at all, and no amount of marketing will help.

So, as we see, way #3 is unpredictable and risky, however, in the case of success, it's the most rewarding one.

By the way, these three types of innovation development can be used not only by musicians. Any creative activity like, for example, art, movies, or literature is subject to these rules. In every area of our lives like marketing, social media, or design we can use these 3 rules of innovation to succeed.

Which type of innovation is yours?	

Part 5 Productivity

No masterpiece was ever created by a lazy artist.
—Salvador Dalí

There is a popular misconception that record labels are looking for an artist with one huge hit. And that you need to put all your money and efforts into creating this super-hit that will get you signed and will make you famous at the same time. This strategy used to work in the past but is not working now.

In our world of unstoppable information flow, one song can not stay on top and bring the artist fame for a long time. It used to be true 30 or even 20 years ago when one hit could support the singer's popularity for a year or more. And he or she could do many successful tours and people would come because this one main song was remembered and loved. One of the last examples of this type of long-living hits is "Gangnam Style" by a South Korean artist PSY, released in 2012. After that, the strategy stopped working. Now any hit can only remain popular for a month or two, for example, "Bad Guy" by Billie Eilish.

Famous artists nowadays are consistent in producing new material. To grow your career successfully, you should be able to quickly produce new songs, social media posts, interviews, vlogs, YouTube posts, etc.

Answer these questions for yourself:

Are you ready to be productive?	
Have you been productive so far?	
If not, what strategy are you going to use to become a truly productive artist?	

Part 6 Content plan

No masterpiece was ever created by a lazy artist.
—Salvador Dalí

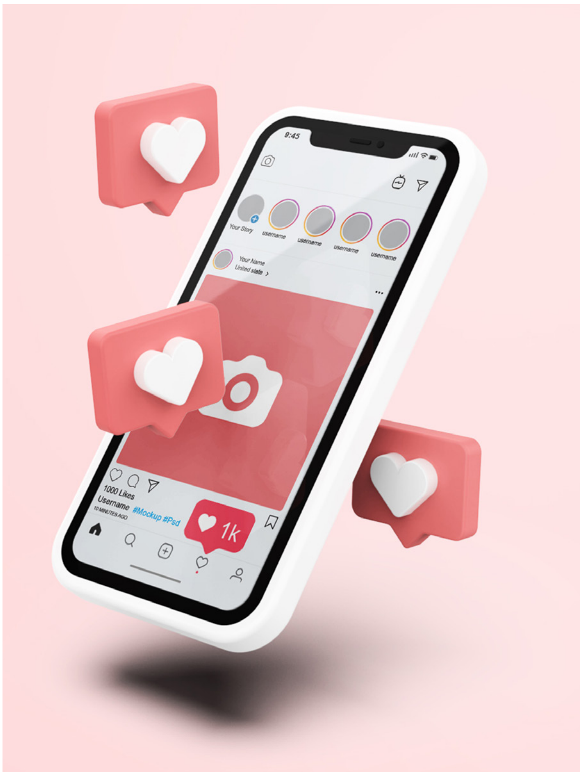
If you have completed all the previous steps successfully, have determined your branding strategy, marketing strategy, genre and innovation type, and if you are committed to being productive and work hard for your success, it's great news. It means you are ready to start working on your project. You have to be very motivated and self-confident, but if you have completed all the previous steps, you are ahead of many others and already have a good chance to succeed.

Let us repeat one more time, though, that without all the preparations which we have described earlier, you are not ready for this step to start yet. If only one step has been missed, for example, you are not productive, not motivated, don't know exactly how you are different, you haven't determined your style, or other, your project is not ready for launch. Similar to if any part of an iPhone does not work, if it had a low-resolution camera, or a glitchy memory, you wouldn't buy it. It's the same in music, all the parts of preparations have to be completed and then you can start and release your project.

The next thing you absolutely need to do is to set your content plan that includes the content description, what platform you are posting it, how often/when you are posting it. This part is also crucial for starting your career and in this chapter we'll explain how to do it.

How many posts and what posts?

Generally, the concept for the years 2022-2023 is the more content, the better. The more you post and appear on social media, the more effective your project is. But don't forget that we aren't talking about low-quality, quickly-made content. Ideally, all you create should be of the highest quality possible.



To understand exactly what your content plan should look like, do your research. Choose a successful artist of your genre and style. Then looking through this artist's activity for the past year or two, you can determine the outline. You'll see how many music videos the artist has released, how many instagram stories and posts a week he or she makes, how many posts and on what platforms. You'll see the posts' topics, what kind of posts has he or she made. You don't need much time for this research, just one day should be enough to have a pretty good idea about your content plan, it must be similar to what you discovered.

Our own research shows that a good artist releases 2-3 music videos a year, about 5 songs a year, and an album once in two years. At one of musical conferences Lady Gaga's manager mentioned that an artist must release one piece of content every day. Of course it doesn't mean a new song. It can be a blog or instagram post, TikTok video, interview, or anything. Look, for example, at Billie Eilish's YouTube channel in 2021, there is one piece of content for every day there. It can be an interview, rehearsal, making of ..., behind the scenes, any kind of video.

How to post on multiple mediums

An important trend to pay attention to is that artists usually prioritize one of the platforms. Some artists work more on TikTok, some post more on instagram, some love twitter. You have to choose the platform that works better for you. You will promote this account and have the maximum number of followers there. For example, you can choose YouTube as your main channel, and introduce all kinds of content there like announcements, songs, blogs, interviews, behind the scenes, remakes, etc.

For other platforms, which are not your main channel, you can create posts cutting parts from your main channel's content. This way, for example, if YouTube is your main channel, you can make instagram, TikTok, and facebook posts out of pictures and clips made from your YouTube videos. This method gives an effective content management scheme.

How to organize your content plan

Obviously, you don't need to make all the posts beforehand, you just plan them.

For making a content plan, you need to specify the following:

- **What kind of content you are going to do, like a song, a video, an interview, or other**
- **For some pieces you can already state the future topic e.g. the making of a certain song, answering fans' questions, Christmas special post, and so on**
- **On what medium you are planning to release it**
- **How many times a week/a month/a year or when exactly is it going to be released**

Your content plan will look like a calendar where for certain dates, or maybe for each day, a post will be planned. It must give you a good idea when and how many posts you'll make, and what posts you will make. You'll also determine how many songs and music videos you are going to release, and when.

What your perfect content plan will look like is up to you. It can be done simply on paper, or in google sheets, or using any application or calendar.

Part 7 Financial side

Music is spiritual. The music business is not.
—Van Morrison

At this step, you need to determine the budget of your venture. There is a rule that in music 20 percent of the money goes to creating the content while the other 80 percent is spent on marketing.

What do we mean by marketing?

You'll need to spend money on marketing, meaning, you'll need to buy advertisements, you'll need to promote!

You need to advertise every piece of content you share. Make it sponsored content, put it to playlists on streaming platforms, and so on. Promote your instagram posts, your facebook posts, and make YouTube advertisements of your videos.

Do everything you can to grow your audience. However, marketing trends change from year to year, so you need to check what marketing strategy, what kind of promotions most popular artists within your genre are using right now. Then adopt the strategy for yourself.

Raising your popularity with concerts

Growing your audience using concerts is a great marketing tool for a musician. The first group of fans you gather will often be from festivals and concerts. Growing your popularity will make a great help for further funding.

To start doing concerts you first need to record about 10 songs. After that, for 3-6 months you can do concerts everywhere using these songs, meeting new people, and getting followers. Certainly, you'll have to invest some money into the shows. You might need some of the following to make your concert impressive:

- **musicians,**
- **dancers,**
- **costumes,**
- **equipement,**
- **stage decorations,**
- **products for promotion**

You may want to invest some money in the things you need to design great performances that will impress and engage the audience. Concerts will ensure a good start. After a few months of touring, you can do crowdfunding or look for investors and get to the next level of your venture.

The followers you will have gathered, the songs that have become much-less popular, and your experience will make great proof of your reliability for the future investors.

How much money exactly?

At first we calculate how much money we need for the content of 12-18 months. So we plan how many songs we are going to record, maybe around 10. An average price of creating a song from the beginning and up to mixing and mastering is about $2,000, so for 10 songs you would need $20 000. Of course the amount depends on the country, your ability to record, mix and master yourself. It can depend on how many specialists you need to hire to produce a song.

Also you'll need to do professional music videos, for example, three of them. Making such a video costs, on average, $20 000. So, you will need $60 000 for the music videos. Again, the price depends highly on your creative resources. You might be able to shoot an outstanding video for a much lower price, and it might become crazy popular.

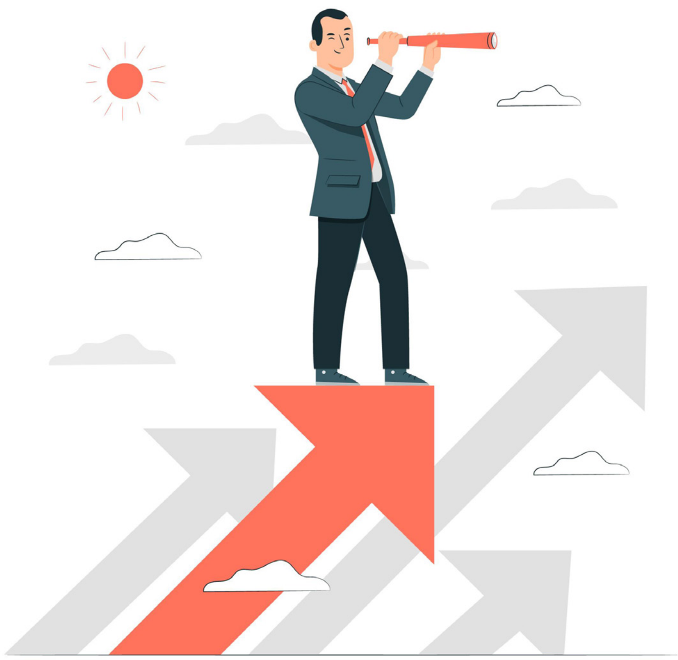
But let's talk about the standard industry case when you hire professionals to do the shooting and editing for you. Total price for the videos for a year then will be around $60,000 and around $20,000 for songs. Which gives us the total of $80 000.

Now, $80 000 is the money you need for the main content, and it's only 20% of the needed budget, remember, we talked about the other 80% that will be needed for the marketing of your content. So, as you see, the total budget for the first 12-18 month to kickstart your career is about $400,000. This money you'll need to make a good quick start of your music business.

Some of our readers will argue right now that $400k is too much money. We totally agree that for people who are just starting their way in the music business that amount of money can seem unreal. But you have to understand one thing. We are not talking about a couple-thousand-YouTube-views career. We are talking about a multi-million or a billion dollar career. And this is what a career in the music industry means. To start this career and to have a strong chance to get it, you will be prepared to invest, as you would do in any other business. If you wanted to open a cafe, for example, you would need money, at least to buy all the appliances, hire staff, and rent a place.

The music industry isn't different from any other business, whether you like it or not. Keep reading, though. Very soon, in the next chapter to be exact, we'll outline the proven strategies artists use to find the investors.

Can I succeed without investing?



Theoretically, you can start without money, you can even start your music career without proper planning. But in this case, you need to be a very rare genius. And most importantly, your networking skills must be outstanding, because the essence of this business is growing popularity and working with public opinion.

To understand the competition, just think that tens of thousands of songs are uploaded every day to Spotify. And from this number only one or two will become popular. So the chance is 1 to 50,000. As you understand, to win this kind of competition is extremely hard, and without a budget, honestly, you don't stand a chance. We don't want to scare you, we just want you to be prepared and act wisely, so you can reap the popularity you deserve.

On the other hand, when you have done all the needed research and preparations which we have described earlier, your chances will be quite high. How popular you will become in a year, is impossible to predict, because thousands of factors will play their part in the creation of your success. However, if you follow your content plan and invest enough money in marketing, you have a good chance to build a decent career in the music business.

Part 8 Where to get the money

"Given a 10% chance of a 100 times payoff, you should take that bet every time. But you're still going to be wrong nine times out of 10."
—Jeff Bezos

Starting in the music industry is a venture, it's not a guaranteed success. Consequently, it's not advised to take out a loan and get in huge debt in order to receive the needed amount of money for starting your music career.

There are many other ways besides getting in debt, to receive the needed investment and be safe no matter how quickly you are able to make money with your music. At the same time, there is no doubt that you have high chances to succeed if you developed your concept and planned everything as we discussed in the previous chapters. But you have to understand that there are still no guarantees, and sometimes things happen, even not caused by the artist, that may hinder the success. We don't want you to risk losing everything. So we advise you to act cautiously.

The ways of funding

Let's discuss the three most popular ways you can obtain the money for starting your music career. We are sure there are many other options, but we'll focus here on these three, and will advise you to use particularly one of them, as our ten-year experience tells us that this way is the best and the most beneficial for the artist. So keep reading to find out how you can fund your project.

The three main ways of funding your project are:

- **Networking and finding investors.** The first way is networking. In many countries, not only in the US, with networking you can find people willing to invest enough money in the artist, in order to receive part of the income (40-50%) afterwards.
- **Crowdfunding.** With the help of a campaign on Kickstarter, Indiegogo, or similar platforms you can raise some money.

- **Sign a contract with a record label.** This is probably the first thing that comes to mind, but ironically, nowadays it is the last thing you want to do in the beginning of your career.
- **FFF round.** Funding by your friends, family and “fools”. This way of funding is often used in the early stages of a startup.

Let us look closely at each of these opportunities.

Crowdfunding

Start a campaign on Kickstarter, Indiegogo, or similar platforms to raise the money for your project.

However, to get a successful campaign and collect enough funds on those platforms, you’ll need to advertise your campaign. It means that you need to invest some money into a crowdfunding campaign to receive enough support.

There are numerous nuances in working with kickstarter and other similar services which a novice wouldn’t know. And if you are not a specialist in holding such campaigns, you will probably receive much less money from it than you need. However, there are marketologists who specialize in crowdfunding, you’ll need to hire one of them to help your campaign bring the desired result.

Generally, you will need at least $2,000 to invest into a campaign, because you will need to promote it. You’ll use advertisements, newsletters, shoot a video for a YouTube advertisement and promote your campaign in other ways to make the crowdfunding work.

Ideally, when you start a Kickstarter campaign, you need to have an audience already. So, crowdfunding for a beginner artist can also be used in steps. You use a small amount of money first, do a small project, and gather a small audience. Promote yourself as you can, gather as many followers as possible, it will definitely help raising the money afterwards. Then having this audience and some money, you do crowdfunding, and the audience definitely helps it to be more successful.

As we mentioned earlier, it is highly recommended that you hire a professional person to manage your crowdfunding campaign to make it a success. And if the campaign doesn’t generate enough money, these funds can still be used to create more songs and content, gather more audience, and do crowdfunding again.

Getting signed by a label

This is the most popular, and the worst in our opinion, way of getting the money to start a career in the music industry.

Most musicians try to get signed. However, nowadays, labels most often don't fund the artist as the artist expects them to. They mostly support the legal side of the venture, help release your songs on streaming platforms, and do a little promotion. But usually these days they don't invest money in the artist and don't do the needed marketing. Unfortunately, there are many examples, when artists, having signed the label contract, regret it afterwards, but can't break the contract. And sometimes these deals are for ten or more years.

Signing a deal with a label works best when you are already a famous artist. Then you have a chance to sign a contract with a huge label, and you get to choose the terms of the contract. In this case, the big label will help the artist to jump from great to even greater popularity.

Though the competition of getting signed by a label is extremely high, labels don't usually work well with the artists who are just beginning their careers.

Our experience tells us that the best way to get money at the beginning is not by getting signed or doing crowdfunding, it is by finding investors.

The FFF financing

One quite common way of raising money, no matter how simple it may sound, is based on friends and family. This way is called the FFF funding, which stands for "friends, family and fools". Fools here mean individual investors who would make the investment with a substantial amount of risk involved in the venture hoping for an impressive potential growth of the startup.

There are music industry stars who started with the help of their family and friends. Huge percentage of startups use this way of funding in the beginning to start growing, and a lot of corporations would never make it without the FFF round in the beginning.
FFF funding is beneficial in many ways. You involve people who trust in you and want to support you, and you do not need to repay immediately if something goes wrong. This is a relatively safe way of funding and is highly advised to use in the beginning of a startup.

Finding investors

How to search for investors and find them? Though it may seem unreal to you, during our work in the music industry we have seen many success stories and know that networking always brings good results.

Networking

So, where to look? The answer is - everywhere. You need to search for investors wherever you can. Knock on every door, tell everybody. The only thing you shouldn't do while searching for the investors is sit and do nothing.

Make connections inside the music industry circles. Great decision will be to attend all kinds of meetings, places, and events where the potential investors and people working in the music business go. This could be exhibitions, shows, and music business conferences. You can find the location of some of these events on the internet. Your potential investors may be there or you may meet people there who will lead you to your future business partners.

Visit big recording studios, meet people there, tell them about yourself, your plans, and your search for investors. This strategy to tell everyone about your startup may seem too bold and impolite to some people, but it's exactly the winning strategy. Not many people are brave enough to actually go out and reach out to people on a daily basis, that's why there are so few artists who enjoy success. If you are bold enough and persistent enough, you have all the chances to find your investors.

Go to big cities with a developed music industry. No matter how huge the metropolis is, people in the music business circles know each other and if you meet enough people there and make yourself known, soon enough almost everyone in the group will at least have heard about you. Your presence in the music circles is priceless and will lead you to your investors.

You can also start with your relatives and friends. Explain to them that you have a business idea, you have the concept, the plan for it, and ask them to help you find a business partner. This way, if you are active and persevering, your network will grow and quite soon you will be able to find the person you need.

It may be useful to have a small video about your project to show to people, and use it as an advertisement on YouTube and social networks.

Networking works. We have seen many examples of successful networking. Artists and music producers who persistently arrange meetings with people in the music industry, and make new friends constantly, very soon they reach the popularity they were looking for.

When you ask and search for investors, you will soon find the people who will be interested in working with you. It's not just an encouragement, we know that if an artist searches actively for investors, the artist usually finds them, and the opportunities start to pop up.

Because as you are searching for the investors, at the same time investors are searching for you. They are looking for projects they can invest in and receive income, they need you as much as you need them.

Meet more and more people and tell people that you have your music business project ready, and you are seeking an investor. And pretty soon the opportunities will start showing up, and you need to be ready and prepared for that.

Finding investors

The first thing to remember when you have found a potential investor and prepare for the first meeting is that you are seeking a business partner.

So, when you meet with this person for the first time, ask all the questions you want the answers to and learn all you need about this person. What you have to figure out is, if you can do business with this person or not. By no means are you supposed to take the first offer you get from anybody. This is your future business partner, most probably, you will divide the money you make 50/50, so look closely.

You have to understand what kind of person it is. Your first meeting should not be so much about the agreement conditions nor about signing any documents. It should be about what kind of person this is. This person must be reliable, must be your type of person, your guy. Your future investor must be the person you are likely to be friends with, the person you can talk to, the person you'd have a barbeque with.

When you sign the contract, this will be your business partner, you will meet often and communicate often for the next couple of years or more. You will have to go through your glorious moments and through unsuccessful moments together, and this should be the person with whom you can go through the unsuccessful parts of your career without any extra problems. Show the investor everything you prepared in your project concept and content plan that we discussed in the previous chapters. If all this is created thoughtfully, it will not be difficult to persuade an investor to trust in you.

Additionally, it would be great if your investor has experience in the music industry or in starting a business in general. In this case, he or she will be able to help you with music business questions or in general with the legal and financial part of the project. And in case you have not been in the music business yourself, your partner's experience

Signing the deal

And at last, when you have finally made the decision to make a deal with this person, hire a good lawyer and go over every letter of the contract with them. You need to be sure that all the details are covered in the contract. It should cover all the royalties questions, who owns the songs, what rights do each side have, what is the exit strategy if the project doesn't work, etc. Everything should be stated explicitly on paper before you embark on the journey.

Accept no handshake deals. There are tons of examples when within a year after starting working on a music project, people change. They change their opinion, they change their behavior, they suddenly stop respecting the handshake deals you have made. The business can go too bad or too good, and either way, you don't want to find out that your partner has changed their mind on some details of your agreement.

Every tiny detail should be written down, signed, and have legal power.

Part 9 Building a team

«The best teamwork comes from men who are working independently toward one goal in unison.»
– James Cash Penney

Once you get your funding, you will need people in your team who will help you work effectively and quickly move towards your goal. The most important members of your future team will be your manager and music producer.

Artist manager

First in the team you need an artist manager. Your manager will take the load of organization and planning off your shoulders freeing your time for creating and performing.

Artist manager responsibilities will include:

- **Scheduling meetings and activities**
- **Organizing tours and concerts**
- **Communication with potential investors and media**
- **Working with artist's image**
- **Working with marketing and promotion**

Of course, at the beginning of your journey you'll probably do the manager's work yourself, but as you get funded you have the money and the need to streamline your working process, so you'll find the person who will direct and organize your way.

First thing that you need to pay attention to here is experience and skills. An artist's manager must be professional, an "A" player. Choosing a manager is not a question of comradery, your good friend or relative, no matter how much you trust this person and want to work together, will not fit for this role. It should be an experienced artist manager who knows all the details of the job and the industry.

It would be great if the manager will work for a certain percent of the revenue, or even better, percent of your profit. Making safer deals, where the manager's payment depends on how much you earn, you will decrease your burn rate and get more time before you run out of money.

Generally, all the contracts you can have where you pay people some percent of your income are more preferable than a fixed payment, because it lowers your financial risks.

Ideally, not only the manager, but every member of your team should be an "A" player. Let us stop for a moment and talk about what we mean by an "A" player, because you need to know what kind of people to look for.

The qualities of an "A" player

Probably, the term "A" player is as widely used as it is widely interpreted. What do you mean by "A" player? Is it the top employee in the field, the most expensive and famous? Or is it a workaholic and perfectionist, who is constantly striving to be acknowledged as the best in the company? Apparently, it's a bit different. An "A" player is usually a self-built specialist, who has a mindset and talent of a winner.

Let's look at some qualities of this person

- **Highly talented in their field**
- **Takes responsibility for their role and delivers the best results**
- **Creative and innovative, might make mistakes but never repeats them again**
- **Wants to learn and grow, and to do it on your team**
- **Has vision of what direction to go and believes in the success of the startup**

In other words, "A" players are developed individuals who have all it takes to be the best. They take responsibility, and enjoy improving their skills and growing. They are talented, have vision to set the right goal, and at the same time, discipline and perseverance to achieve it. They are also trustworthy. They must believe in your project and be willing to grow together and win together.

When you are gathering your team, keep your eyes open for these people. They may not be the best specialists available, might not have the best education or skills, and, surprisingly, they often are not the most expensive.

Hire them and make sure they like the conditions and the reward, and are comfortable within the team. Build your team with "A" players. They are unstoppable in moving forward, because they are built this way, and this quality will drive your startup to success.

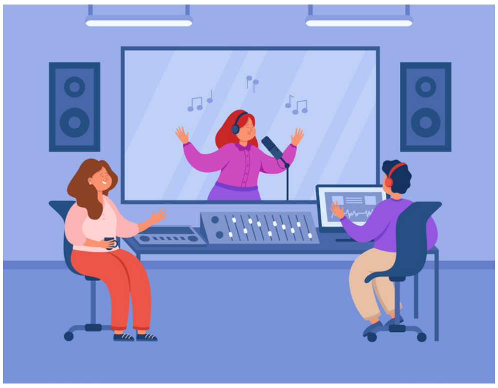
Sound producer

The next person on your team must be a sound producer. We work with many successful artists and every one of them work together with a talented sound producer. This person will shape the music for you and as you understand this is the core part of your career.

What qualities to look for in a sound producer

First of all, search for a talented person. Look for uniqueness, innovative approach to arrangement. Look for something new and extremely interesting. This person must be able to create something surprisingly distinctive. In this case, you together will be able to develop an innovative project which will attract the interest of the public.

How to treat your sound producer



When you get lucky and find a genius producer, you need to create all the conditions for this person to be completely devoted to your project. And, of course, it's mostly the financial side of the deal. Pay higher than the market price. Make sure your producer has enough money to dive into the creative process, do only your work and not be distracted by side projects.

Make a creative reward plan. You may agree that you pay more for every next arrangement or idea he or she creates. Share the royalties with your producer. Do all it takes to make this person comfortable in working only on your project and be highly interested in your success.

An artist manager and a sound producer are the key players and you should never save money on them. Spend as much as needed but these people should be the best professionals you can find in order to bring your career up as quickly as possible.

Other team members

With time, and as you become a richer and more developed artist, your team may get more and more members. You'll probably have a photo/video specialist, content manager, and other people working hard for your success.

You may also have audio engineers in your team who will perform mixing and mastering for you. However, mixing and mastering are usually ordered. You'll have your favorite mixing and mastering engineer or studio you'll work with and they will master your songs and albums.

There are studios who offer high-quality services of audio engineers, and our company is proud to be one of them.

Major Mixing is an online mixing and mastering studio. Our engineers have been in the music industry business for a decade and know all the details on how to make a top-chart sound. We have worked with thousands of artists creating perfect sound for their songs helping them to become more successful. You can easily contact us for mixing and mastering and this will save you time and effort of finding your audio engineer. Our prices are flexible and based on many years of work we can say that you'll like how your mixes and master records will sound.

Having solved your search for a mixing and mastering engineer, let's now go to the next chapter of our book, that will tell you about how to promote your songs.

Part 10 Release and marketing

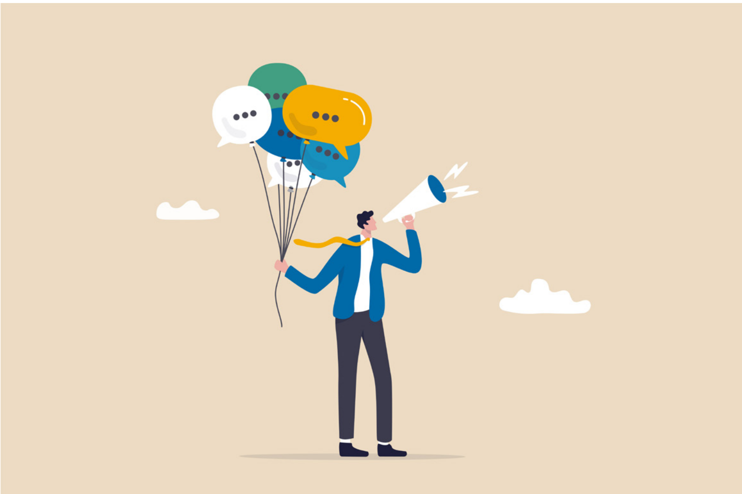
"Stopping advertising to save money is
like stopping your watch to save time."
– Henry Ford

At this step you have already found the money, created a small team, and you deliver the content as planned. Now the time has come for release. As we mentioned earlier, 80% of the work and the budget goes on marketing. So how exactly does it work?

You can choose one of two ways. The first way is to do marketing yourself, but you need to learn some marketing techniques and it would take a lot of your time.

In short, you'll need to advertise and promote every step of your content. So you advertise the coming premiere of your new song, finally release the song, then advertise it, if there is a music video, you advertise it. You make sure your song is added to the radio stations rotations, you put it to playlists on the streaming platforms, send your video to TV stations, and so on.

The main life hack of advertising online. When you work with any platform, the main life hack is to learn the rules first. Answer the questions: How does the platform's advertising algorithm work these days? What content does this algorithm promote the most? What content gets popular on this platform? Don't fight with a platform or social network trying to sponsor the content that doesn't get popular there, and that the algorithms of this platform don't prefer. You need to "swim with the current" of each particular platform, and then your content and your advertisements are going to be the most effective.



As you see, doing marketing and advertising correctly means a lot of work, which also requires a lot of knowledge. From our experience we know that it is much better and efficient to find a good PR agency that will perform all the advertising for you. These agencies have proven and working marketing plans, which will make sure that the actions they take to promote your content will have the expected result. Their services are not too expensive, but at the same time they are very effective.

The marketing tendencies change for instance because certain rules of showing and tracking advertisements change on different social media platforms. This causes the traffic to rapidly move from one platform to another, the more favorable one at the time. It changes so rapidly sometimes that, for example, in two months from now the best marketing algorithm for music will be completely different. But PR agencies will know that, that's why we advise you to use them.

However, working with a PR agency, you or your manager still need to understand the basis of how this area of marketing works. As the algorithm is constantly changing, it can not be described precisely in this book. At the same time, the main steps you or your PR agency will use will probably be the following.

Marketing your songs includes the following parts:

Advertise before the release. Before releasing a song you do previews, stories, posts. All your posts talk about the release. All those posts should be promoted with paid ads.

Promote the released song. Once you release the song, you also promote it. It can be YouTube, Facebook, TikTok ads, and others.

Playlists. The song must be put into good playlists on iTunes or Spotify.

Radio rotation. Your music must appear on the radio. It's not as important right now as it used to be, but it's still needed anyways.

Your music on TV. Your music video, if you have created it for the song, also must be promoted with paid ads. If you have released a music video, contact local TV stations and try to put the video on TV.

Media and press. The next step is to promote your songs and music videos on all possible media. Contact blogs, magazines, and other media. They can make a post or an article about you as a new artist, review your new song, post an interview, or do any kind of publication about you. This way you do outreach marketing or influencer marketing and promote yourself and your songs.

All this promotion you do for your coming track, you make a lot of content, promote this content, then you release your song and the music video and again promote it, advertise it as much as you can, and then the cycle repeats with the next song.

Concerts, concerts, and more concerts. At the same time, whenever you can, and most importantly after the releases, you should do concerts and online events. Go live on YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok. But most importantly, do concerts. As we already mentioned, concerts do wonders in creating followers and fans, and growing in popularity. Always make sure you fill all your free time with concerts.

This strategy is quite effective, but as we said, it is much better done with a PR agency. You make the content, create songs and the PR agency will advertise it where it is needed. The PR agency also may create content parts for you, and check and improve your content plan. The agency will send the advertisements to all the media, put your songs on playlists, and do outreach marketing.

A good PR agency will do it better and quicker not only because they are professional marketologists, but also because they already have all the needed network and contacts inside different media. They can immediately contact the right people to place your videos and songs in the media, publish articles about your work and do other advertisements.

At the same time, your manager will organize concerts and you do tours increasing the number of your fans and people who like your work.

The first year you will just be working on your popularity. Very few people would want to interview you, you will not be invited, reached, or called. But this is the time when you prepare the basis for the future, where journalists will try to contact you, you'll hear your name in the media often, people will talk about you, write about you, promote your content without you even knowing. You'll be asked to perform at concerts and take part in events and shows.

But the first year, or if you are lucky the first 6 months, you will be reaching out and promoting your content as much as possible to kickstart your music career. After that it will get the needed momentum and will be driving itself forward.

However, when people start reaching you and you'll start seeing your popularity grow, it's not the time to stop promoting. Absolutely, you'll still continue creating a content plan and following it, advertising and so on. However, when you become popular the marketing strategy may be changed. And with every day and every cycle your music becomes better, your marketing gets better, and your music videos, and your concerts become more professional and impressive. And this is how you become a star.

Conclusion

We described in this book simple but essential steps that can help you kickstart a career as an artist. The steps and conditions described in this book are enough to make a good start in the music industry and have decent success. Of course, there are thousands of other factors that will affect your popularity, including your talent, timing, and sheer luck. But if you diligently follow all the steps described in this book, you will succeed. During our work in the music industry, and this is more than a 10 year timespan, we haven't seen a single case where an artist would complete all these steps and fail.

What you can alter, however, is the budget. The numbers we gave here are average, you may be able to gather more money or have to start working with a smaller budget. So what it can affect is the quality of the content. You can do some of the work yourself, shoot or edit your music video, for example, cut the budget for certain steps. This is all possible and allowed. You may need more time to achieve your goals then, compared to the artist who can use all the money in the world, but you will be going towards your goals.

What you absolutely can not do is skip one or two steps and expect that it's ok. Each part of the music career plan described here is important and leaving out even one of these steps can significantly sabotage your progress.

Another thing that you can not do is lack consistency in your work. Many artists like to procrastinate, record a song once and then disappear for a long time not posting any media content, releasing nothing, and after a while they get in the mood of creating and start doing something. This is not going to work. Only consistency and determination, following the plan and completing every step will be rewarding in this business. Your talent and inspiration is one thing, but, as we have already said, the music industry isn't different from any other business, it requires planning and hard work.

The first year is the hardest, because you'll have to start all the creative and marketing processes, follow the plan and it'll seem crazy hard at times. But later, when your popularity has already reached a certain level, when your team is built and is working well together, then your career will grow more easily. Creative and business ideas will emerge inside the team, offers will come from the outside, the process will go on partly by itself. Then you will know that you have started your music business successfully. Difficulties will emerge on every level of your career, of course, but those will be other difficulties.

Now you are at the beginning of your journey. We can not guarantee anything. However, if you are determined to build your career as an artist, and are willing to follow the algorithm described in this book step by step without leaving out anything, then you have what it takes. Think well before starting, and if you have made a firm decision then start working.

We wish you all the success in the world and see you at the tops of the charts!