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Online Music Marketing: Math or Myth?

By Scott G (The G-Man)

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Making money from music online: NARIP and the Hype Council help the record industry face the facts and expose the fiction - a report by The G-Man.

The numbers are supposed to be big in online marketing, but are they? Clearly, we need someone with 'Net experience to set a few things straight. Scott Meldrum is a businessperson and musician with a dry wit and a background in bulk mail. Oops, excuse me, direct response advertising. He's also the man called on by major labels when they want to brand an artist and reach millions of fans via the Internet.

Beginning with Papa Roach in 1998 and continuing with such platinum-selling artists as Avril Lavigne, Dido and Jennifer Lopez, Meldrum's Long Beach-based firm, Hype Council, is one of the prime marketing weapons utilized by the world's largest entertainment companies.

Taking center stage for a Monday evening presentation by NARIP (National Association of Record Industry Professionals) at the Beverly Garland Hotel in Los Angeles, Meldrum began with some facts about the Internet. Does that sound a bit dull? It wasn't. His presentation quickly revealed things about the 'Net that should be known by every marketer (that's you, if you or your artists are selling music online).

THE GLOBAL AUDIENCE FOR MUSIC.

Most Internet users (nearly a majority of them) are between the ages of 30 and 49, far older than many in the audience thought. And for those of us who thought that the USA had the highest percentage of Internet users, it was a surprise to learn that we're only sixth. (Of course, in raw numbers of users, the USA has by far the most people.)

Fully 40% of the USA's 177 million 'Net users go online for music. Look at it another way: if you put your music on the Internet, you have a potential audience of some 70 million. And with total Internet users currently at 404 million, that translates into a worldwide potential audience of 161 million people.

Online Music Marketing: Math or Myth?

The problem is: how to reach them. They are wildly segmented in terms of music genre; they only want to be contacted under certain sets of circumstances; and they need to have a safe, secure, and easy way to make purchases.

Fortunately, "The Internet is still a new medium," Meldrum asserts, "and there are tremendous opportunities for people in the business of selling music."

Some of those opportunities are being wasted, however, through poor Web site design. Meldrum revealed the biggest errors made in creating or maintaining a Web site. . .

TOP 5 MISTAKES OF WEBSITES:

1. Mistaking creativity for functionality. "Don't try to put everything on your front page. Organization is the key. Lead your fans to the most important things." That's what menus are for, so don't hide them. "How many times have you gone to a site that looks interesting, but you have no clue how to navigate it? People don't have time to waste figuring it out. Make it easy for them."

2. Burying the offer. "Links to buy the CD should be available at almost every page on your Website. Many Websites challenge, almost dare visitors to find the product, let alone buy it."

3. Ignoring fans. "Many artist Websites have a registration feature, but it is not prominently displayed. When you are not selling albums at your Website, you need to be collecting email registrations." This builds a fan base where you can sell an album now and more in the future.

4. Not giving fans what they want. "Make your music accessible. Offer a few full streams of your songs. Make a download available in exchange for an email registration. You will win more fans and sell more CDs giving your music away than you will by not letting your potential fans really listen before they buy."

5. Failing to design with bandwidth in mind. "Ever been to a Website and forgot why you were there before the page fully loaded? Getting people to your site is hard enough. Losing them because they got tired of waiting for your page to load is a waste of everyone's time and energy."

CONSIDER OTHER OPTIONS:

Websites are a necessity, but don't overlook other ways of reaching out to potential fans on the Internet. Banners can be bought or traded. Emails can be sent (be mindful of the CAN-SPAM law; see below for link). Marketing can be done on search engines. You can join or participate in message boards and blogs (web logs). And the latest advancement in music marketing involves social networks such as MySpace.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Meldrum had many specific suggestions for attendees, including:

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- * use Google for research
- * check out MySpace.com
- * target your audience
- * simplify your Website
- * give away some songs
- * interact with your audience often

"You can send emails in text or HTML format. With HTML (hyper text markup language), you can include pictures and graphics. They look nice, but we get twice the 'open rate' with text emails."

THE BOTTOM LINE ON WEBSITES:

"To your online fans, you are your Website. If they love it, they will love you, and will be eager to follow your careers. Take all the great things about you, your talent and your message, and translate to HTML. Keep it simple, easy-to-navigate and informative, and you will have a highly-effective marketing channel for your music."

Sources for more info:

<http://www.narip.com>

<http://www.hypcouncil.com>

<http://www.scottmeldrum.com>

<http://www.spamlaws.com/federal/108s877.html>

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/wmt5/viral-principles.htm>

<http://marketingterms.com/dictionary/blog/>

<http://www.google.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/thegman>

Scott G records as The G-Man and you'll find his work on iTunes, at <http://www.delvianrecords.com> and <http://www.gmanmusic.com>

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Owner of G-Man Music & Radical Radio, where he makes commercials, Scott G is a recording artist, member of NARAS (the Grammy people), board member of NARIP (National Assn. of Record Industry Professionals), and a writer for the Immedia Wire Service.

The 10 Myths of Successful Selling

By John Mitchell

The 10 Myths of Successful Selling by John Mitchell

Myth #1 You should close early and often

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Myth #2 Sell features to get a higher price

Myth #3 There's no methodology to selling – it's pure art

Myth #4 Objections are a sign of customer interest

Myth #5 Open questions are better than closed questions

Myth #6 You can't teach a person to sell

Myth #7 You have to understand the difference between wants and needs

Myth #8 Great products sell themselves

Myth #9 Making a benefit statement is the best way to open a sales call

Myth #10 All customers make up their minds in the first 4 minutes

Want to know more? Read the full Myths each month at our website www.inclusic.com – just go to articles & news!

John Mitchell is President and CEO of Inclusive, a company providing sales and marketing outsourcing in the UK and USA. He was a top performer in IBM sales for 5 consecutive years; Chief Marketing Officer of a Fortune 500 company; and CEO of a NASDAQ listed consulting company. John has written for the London Economist and has been guest lecturer at NYU, London Business School and Swiss Banking School.



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