



How To Become A Full Time Artist.

What to think about when creating a sustainable artist project.

Often the thought of doing something you love full time, can pass by as nothing more than a dream, but what if it wasn't? What if you could actually create sustainable income and a rewarding career out of your artist project? Although it's difficult, it is certainly not impossible to create sustainability through music. The purpose of this article is to shed light on what artists should think about when creating an eventual full time career out of their artist project.

Let us start as we always do by stating, that if you are an artist that just wants to just create music with no expectation of growth, then this is probably not the article for you. This article is meant for artists that wish to create a sustainable career from music.

It's important to note that creating a career out of anything requires a certain kind of mindset. Viewing an artist project as a job sets a tone, not only for artists to keep themselves accountable to certain tasks. Viewing an artform as a career is often a bitter pill for artists to swallow, as creativity is derived to depict freedom in its purest form, more often than not, creatives cannot cross this mindset barrier as they feel it limits their imagination. In reality though, not being able to curate a career mindset is a direct result of a lack of motivation to grow other areas of the project that are deemed 'difficult' including administration tasks, emails, financial, ABN and business set-ups etc.

"If you are an artist that wants to create longevity in your project, you will have to dedicate time to other things rather than just creating music." - Anthony Agostino (Cartel Management Australia)

Below are some areas we suggest for artist's begin thinking about in order to create sustainability for their project.

DON'T SPEND MONEY YOU DON'T HAVE TO:

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.

PROCESSES ARE EVERYTHING:

Any job on earth requires process, for example, if we take it out of the music industry and look at a big fast food chain like McDonalds. Process ensures that when a customer goes to McDonalds, they receive meals that are always the same in terms of size, consistency, ingredients and are given to the customer as efficiently as possible. Diving deeper into that, if someone were to make use of the drive through and place an order, that order would then go onto an online docket and follow strict processes to get that meal made and delivered to the customer as they drive to the next window.

Creating a sustainable artist brand is no different to the above. There is the creative process, which is where the majority of artists spend their time focusing on creating the actual product. Creating demos, writing, producing, recording, mixing, mastering and the creation of any assets. The creative process can often get dissected by artists and consistently streamlined and focused on which is a fantastic way to continue growing in that area.

The other process, which artists often do not consider as a process as much as they do a chore, is the process of getting their product (the music) to an audience who would actually care and consecutively, getting it to industry & media that will share the music to a wider audience. These are the processes that we operate in daily, creating DSP (Spotify, Apple YouTube etc) strategies, generating radio awareness, understanding social media platforms and having strategies to reach audiences.

Both of the above processes, broadly, are the basis of creating a sustainable artist project - as one focuses on the product (music), and the other focuses on getting that product to an audience & industry that will like it (awareness). Gaining maximum awareness of the music, consistently over time, increases the likelihood of the artist creating a position of sustainability. Whether it be through high streaming to leverage more performances, or media 3rd party endorsement to help benign discussions with managers, labels etc.

UNDERSTAND & LEVERAGE YOUR STRENGTHS (SONGWRITING / PRODUCTION / PERFORMANCE):

Everyone has different strengths & weaknesses and understanding how to double down and leverage on strengths can be potentially a good way to earn a more stable income.

Some examples of this are:

- if your strength is in production, there may be room to produce for artists that aren't so strong for a negotiated fee, or potentially creating things like beat / sample packs to sell via websites like Splice.
- If your songwriting / vocal work is your strength, creating toplines for other artists for a negotiated fee.
- If you have a loyal fanbase and want to lean into the fashion world, creating and selling merchandise when there is demand.

CREATE & UNDERSTAND INCOME STREAMS:

In a perfect world, artists would earn adequate money from streaming & performance, but in reality, artists earn very little from both at the grassroots level. When it comes to royalties, artists receive roughly between \$0.003 and \$0.0084 distribution royalties per stream on average in Australia through Spotify alone. They also receive mechanical royalties through APRA / AMCOS (AUS only) which doesn't equate to much more than what they are earning through distribution.

We could go down a whole rabbit hole and write about licencing, publishing and master rights but that is a topic for

another article. For those of you who would like more concrete information about royalties, public performance and anything else to do with royalty payments please visit the APRA /AMCOS FAQ page [here](#)

On the other end of the spectrum touring incurs a lot of risk prior to seeing profit. More often than not, artists will have to go out of pocket on expenses like: venue hire, front of house, band, equipment hire, flights, accommodation etc. all prior to the show before the final tickets have sold. Then after the show, your booking agent fee, management fee etc. all cut into the profit you make from the ticket sales of the show depending on the deal, leaving the artist with whatever is left. Once artists hit a certain level of awareness and have high demand to perform live, then touring is a fantastic money making opportunity but the demand must come first.

With the above in mind, artists usually begin to think about other income streams (listed above) to help them create more financial stability, while being able to reinvest back into the project when necessary.

DELEGATE - BUILD THE RIGHT TEAM WHO HAVE EXPERTISE IN THEIR AREAS:

We have written a lot in the past, about artists building the right team around them which support the overall growth of the project. For those reading who are thinking about expanding their project please refer to our [Right Time To Get A Manager Article](#).

For the purpose of this article in particular, our intention in talking to artists about building their team is purely based on the merit of expertise. Let's be honest, most, if not all artists are not publicity agents, they are not marketing managers, they are not distributors or publishers but often have to understand very general processes in order to grow. It is very important for us to note that artists need to have a solid understanding of certain roles prior to building their team, as it allows them to keep their team members accountable to their roles. Delegating roles should not be done at the conception stage of a project, if the artist has no experience in any roles at all. Creating a team around an artist should only occur when an artist has hit a wall of resources available to them and needs assistance to grow more than they have. The experts that artists outsource or bring on internally, need to have a higher expertise in whatever area they work in in order to make it beneficial for the artist.

The road to building sustainability as an artist is hard, there are multiple roads to growth. Our advice to artists is to always lean back into the process and continue to streamline through consistent releases. You are in control of consistency and you are in control of what processes you use to gain awareness for the music and your project.