



CARTEL MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA

An Artist Projects Biggest Obstacles.
What they are and how to overcome them.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the biggest challenges independent / developing acts are facing in this market. Being able to identify these obstacles and create structures to overcome them is vital for an artist to move into a sustainable career.

Please note: As all music projects are different, each project may encounter different (more specific) challenges. For the purpose of this article, we want to highlight the more 'major' challenges for an artist looking to develop sustainability over a longer period, based on what we encounter as an agency on a day to day basis. If you wish to talk about a challenge you are encountering that is not being covered in this article, please email us at: info@cartelmanagementaus.com

It's also 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 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.

In our previous article titled [Simplify Your Artist Project](#), our intention was to assist artists in creating processes for the two specific areas of growth, the **creative**, and the **communication of that creative to an audience** likely to care. By developing processes in those two areas artists are able to put emphasis on areas of the project they not only enjoy, but also prioritize areas that allow them to develop in key areas over a longer period. But even with all of the process and structure in the world, challenges are still very likely to occur, and it is our view that the great artists stand out from the mediocre by being able to understand, and address those challenges consistently.

"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 we have listed some broad challenges, mindsets and overall obstacles that stand in the way of an artist developing into a successful career + ways to combat them.

Access to resources:

In this age of ultimate access and convenience, there are very few resources that are unattainable for artists. The process to be able to create and share a good quality song has been simplified to the point where most independent acts can do it all from the comfort of a bedroom. We absolutely do not subscribe to the notion that artists don't have enough access to resources to be able to create + communicate their music, that is more of a mindset let down on the artist behalf than it is on what is actually attainable.

The one resource many artists struggle to come across (that is common) is access to money. Let's start

by addressing the elephant in the room that every independent artist will address at some point in their career when it comes to finances, loss. Most, if not all independent artists at some point have made a decision that would leave them out of pocket. This happens for a number of reasons, whether it be to grow an audience, a fantastic opportunity, or even a service that didn't quite work. It is incredibly difficult to make profit in any creative endeavor let alone create sustainability, so for the majority of independent artists, who pour thousands of their personal money into their artist project, loss is just a part of the game.

The trick as projects grow is to minimize loss by budgeting / understanding your expenses, and learning new skills that allow you to cut back (i.e not outsourcing mixing and learning to complete that task yourself).

For more information on understanding your finances please refer to our [Understanding Artist Finances article here](#).

Creating Balance (Life + Music):

Contrary to popular belief there is no one size fits all method to develop a sustainable career as an artist. Unlike most professions where individuals attend some form of schooling, gain accreditation and then step into a job that pays a wage, developing an artist project into a career has no real pathway and quite often depends on artists to put in a lot of resources before seeing any meaningful return. Balancing work, school, family & social commitments while developing an artist project can quite often take a toll on individuals as there is no set path or key metrics for success.

This topic generally comes under a lot of fire, thanks largely to the 'hustlers' and the 'motivation gurus' because the messages they discuss / share can come across as condescending and have very little context attached to it. The work until you drop methodology has been adopted by many and can often lead to issues like burn-out or people falling out of love with their processes & passions. On the complete other end of the spectrum, in the age of social media and ultimate convenience, the amount of distractions that are available to take up valuable time are everywhere. It's important to be clear that establishing a healthy balance between your life and your work to maximize your happiness should be of key importance. We have not, and will never say that your artist project should come at the expense of happiness, because that's the reason artists do what they do in the first place.

For more in depth information on developing balance between music and life, please refer to our [Creating Balance article here](#).

Expectation kills projects:

This one is really self explanatory.

If an artist is 'expecting' to develop just because their music is good in their eyes and does nothing to actively develop and put that music in front of an audience that is likely to care, the project simply will not grow. Artist's own expectations is the single most important challenge to overcome as a developing act. Whether it be expectations on a specific single, album, show or just on the project in general, not having expectations in check can (and has) ruined what could have been great artist careers.

Most, if not all independent artists have had the following experience. They finish a song, they really love what they have created, and their expectation after release is to immediately receive hundreds of millions of streams, tour the world and make millions of dollars - just because the music is 'good'. What actually happens when the song is released is very different. Generally, it will receive a fraction of the amount of streams artists expect. The release may achieve some good development in terms of awareness in

certain areas but will not reach the expectations set initially by the artist. A common artist response when this occurs, is to view the release as a failure.

In our experience, prior to, and after starting Cartel Management we have seen multiple artists continue the above cycle, over and over until unfortunately, they fall out of love with their own creative process. We are by no means saying that artists should not hold themselves in high regard or saying that it is impossible for music to be organically accepted, BUT the consistent 'perceived failure' is due to lack of execution on process and having too much value placed on the merit of any one song. This ultimately can (and does) result in artists stopping their projects and leaving music for good.

Developing a profitable artist project that allows you to live your passion and also support your way of life starts from you. There are many things to consider when building, number one, obviously is creating a back catalogue of music that you are proud enough to put out. Second to that, is creating a release plan with specific targeted goals aimed at garnering both interest / attention from a fanbase (community) and from operators in the music industry (managers / PR / label A&R's / blog writers / digital stores / distributors etc). Now just those two sentences above are inclusive of not only creating the music but utilising research, building and operating social media, navigating and understanding the roles of industry professionals etc etc etc, and that's all before even thinking about building a team.

Creating and putting together content, navigating industry and learning its nuances can be a difficult notion, but we urge all of you that struggle to get your head out of the studio, that the other parts of your artist brand are simply an opportunity to be creative in a new way. Developing content specific to your brand can be a fun part of the project and adds to the overall experience of the listener. In our discussions with artists we have found that it's always better to be frank with them when discussing their issues with social media in particular.

"I just don't like social media"

"I'm not good at that side of it"

"I want to let my music do the talking"

^ All excuses to inflate your ego / insecurities.

The above quotes do not take into account the fact that we all live in a saturated market of music releases, and to gain attention on your release you need to understand that the more you put into the creativity outside of the music the more chance of exposure and in turn opportunity for a career come. Artistry in the music industry comes from all different facets of the project, not just the music itself, and although it's the primary artform, if you are not creative / have a certain work ethic outside of the music creation, our view is that you are not an artist. You are just someone that creates music that no one will hear.