



Stop Expecting Work For Free - How To Distinguish Good Companies To Work With.

Music is your passion, it might be the reason that you get out of bed in the morning, or it might be something you do to flex your creative muscles. No matter whether your passion for music and being an artist is a lifetime commitment or a hobby, it is a difficult industry to crack and navigate nonetheless. Developing an artist project is something that takes time (potentially an unhealthy obsession) and often is quite expensive, depending on what you're prioritising as an artist.

As we do with all of our articles we must make note of the fact that every artist's experience, development and goals are all different. The purpose of this article is to help artists that wish to create a career out of music, learn to prioritise where they invest money to grow the project.

Before we get into the thick of it we want to be very clear that artists & label services such as- publicity, photography, design, marketing, mixing & mastering etc. are not free services offered to artists. Most of these businesses (ourselves included) operate as not just a hobby, but as a career with which we support ourselves.

As an artist it is really important for you to understand that if you wish to operate with these types of businesses with the goal of furthering your artist project, that you will incur a cost for the service. Just like paying a mechanic to service your car, paying for an artist service is an investment in the betterment of your brand. The first step in this process is understanding what you need in order to grow and what areas of growth you cannot do alone. From there you are able to prioritise where to best invest your money. Please note that if you do not have access to the money with which to invest in services like this, that is ok, but we would advise you to spend some time researching best practices and build up those skills yourself first.

What we absolutely urge you **not** to do is try and haggle the price of a service down to fit your own budget because that is what 'you' think that service is worth. Remember, that understanding areas of improvement and addressing those problems falls squarely on your shoulders, and inflating your ego to negotiate an unrealistic price point for an industry professional makes you appear unprofessional and uninformed. The service needs to see value to want to work with you as they are investing time into your project. Services (again ourselves included) are generally more than happy to set up payment plans to make things more affordable for artists as they do understand that more often than not, there is not a lot of money being generated by artists and therefore re-invested back into their projects.

Now let's address the elephant on the page of all the artists saying "I worked with X company and they screwed me" or "How do I know if this service is legitimate?" We don't argue that unfortunately there are people out there that do take advantage of an artist's passion, but we can talk to you about some signs you can look for in determining whether a specific company is legitimate.

1. Is there email a generic copy and paste:

We all receive emails that are quite clearly blasted out to thousands of people and hoping for anyone to take the bait. It is pretty easy to spot the insincere emails. To work out the legitimacy of a company contacting you, look for personal context in their email, for example:

- Do they use your name?

- Do they point out anything specific about your brand?
- Are they reaching out to actually benefit your brand or to sell you something?

Generally if the answer is YES to all three of those questions and you feel like they have taken time to actually find some context on you as an artist, then you could discuss things further with no obligation.

2. Do your research on a website / social media check:

Has this company worked with any artists you know of? Check not only their Instagram, but their Facebook / LinkedIn / Website, hunt out any testimonials you can find from artists that have worked with them before. If you cannot find their social media / website we would advise you not to go down this path as there is no evidence to show they are a legitimate service. The more research you are able to do into a service, the easier it will be to decipher the legitimate from the not.

3. Always ask for more information & communicate:

Most services have a document that clearly states their intention as well as a list of services. Ask for this information and if you are unsure of anything, just ask! There are no silly questions, particularly when you are encountering a service for the first time. The 'service document' that offers clear decisive information about what the company does is important for you to understand how and why you should work with them. Again, if this is information that they are not disclosing with you or are unwilling to reply to your questions, then we would advise you to not go with that service.

Saying yes to an illegitimate service is completely in your control and the above are all ways to discern the good from the bad. All in all, most services do have artists' best interests at heart and it is just about you choosing a company that fits the values of your artist vision.

Once you develop a team around you that enhances the areas which you are not skilled in, you can then determine new growth areas and continue building. Prioritizing what's important early in your development and working with people who have the skills to implement actions towards your goals. Ask questions and learn their processes. Keep them accountable and allow them the access to help you grow because that's what you are ultimately paying for.