

Ten ways to get to a Music Publisher (by Brent Baxter)

It's hard to get to get a music publisher's time and attention. There are many reasons for this. Today, I want to share some pathways to a publisher.

1. The unsolicited request.

This is the only easy path on the list- and it's the one I don't really recommend. This is where you just put in a cold call or email to a publisher and ask for a meeting. It has a very low success rate (you're lucky to get a response at all), and there are better strategies available.

2. The professional recommendation.

Publishers listen to those in their peer group. If you can get recommended by another publisher, an A&R rep, a professional songwriter, etc., it will go a long way toward getting you in the room. Your best bet for a recommendation from an industry pro is making a fan of someone at NSAI, Global Songwriters Connection (GSC), or another songwriting organization.

3. The personal relationship.

Do you have a relative or friend anywhere in the music biz? Leverage your personal contacts. It isn't cheating- nobody gets here alone.

4. The business relationship.

When I first got to Nashville, I got a part-time job at a publishing company. As I got to know our administrative clients- patiently, over time- I was able to approach them about listening to my songs.

5. The PRO recommendation.

A PRO is a Performing Rights Organization. In the US, we have ASCAP, SESAC, and BMI. Each PRO has writers reps who spend part of their time meeting with writers. If, over the course of several meetings, you can make a rep a believer in your music, they might book you up with some publishers. They can't do that for everyone, so don't expect it. Every time they recommend a writer, they risk some of their professional credibility.

6. The Pitch-To-Publisher event.

Organizations like NSAI and GSC have events where their members can play one (I repeat- one) song for a Music Row publisher. If you or your song knock their socks off, it might open a door. You don't always have to be in Nashville to participate in these events, so check their websites for details.

www.nashvillesongwriters.com

www.globalsongwriters.com

7. The staffwriter cowrite.

It's not easy to get a cowrite with a pro writer, obviously. However, if you write a killer song with a staffwriter, their publisher is likely to ask who you are. If they love what you write with their writer, they will probably be open to hearing more of your stuff.

8. The industry function.

If you meet a publisher out at a writers' night, workshop, etc., be patient. Don't get all excited and shove a CD in his face or beg her for a meeting. Try to connect in a real way on a personal level. Make a connection, not just a contact. There are a lot of crazies out there, and a publisher will usually need to sniff you out a few times before they're up for a meeting.

9. The major cut.

I wasn't getting much publisher love till I got (and owned the publishing on) my Alan Jackson cut. Suddenly, I had a skeleton key to just about every publisher's door on Music Row.

10. The artist buzz.

The value of the writer/artist has skyrocketed over the past few years. If you're getting buzz around town as a potential artist, that goes a long way toward getting a publisher's attention. Even if you aren't a great writer, they know they can always hook you up with great writers.

I know at this point, you might be more frustrated than you were five minutes ago. But nobody said this was easy. I just don't know of any path to a publisher that is quick and easy (outside of dumb luck). And luck is not a strategy. However, like they say, "The harder I work, the luckier I get."

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