

## Wheeling And Dealing With Industry Professionals

By Gian Fiero

At some point every ambitious music artist will have to deal with an industry professional. It may be a booking agent who thinks that you have what it takes to sell out a venue, a manager who expresses interest in helping you achieve success, or an attorney who will negotiate that long sought-after record deal for you. When the time does come for you to establish these crucial relationships, you will be able to navigate your way through them with greater results if you observe these fundamental dos and don't s.

First the Dos:

**\* DO check into our backgrounds for credibility before dealing with us.**

With the ease and access of various search engines on the Internet such as Google, it literally takes just a couple of minutes to get information on someone. Your background check should also include past clients or associates that can vouch for them. Legitimate professionals love to have their backgrounds checked into. It gives you the opportunity to gain a deeper appreciation and value for the services we provide. A proper background check in conjunction with time spent together, affords artists the opportunity to know who is representing them, and the professional the chance to know who they are representing.

**\* DO have a full and complete understanding of what our jobs are.**

Your knowledge of what various professionals do should not be limited to how our help relates to your success. There are many people and factors that will determine the extent (or limit) of your success in the music industry; know what they are before you assume that the professional you are working with has super powers to make you an overnight success.

**\* DO know what we have to gain from our involvement with you.**

This is perhaps the most difficult step in this list for many music artists because it forces them to look at things from two perspectives that they are not very comfortable with: a business perspective and the perspective of someone else. Ask yourself when dealing with any industry professional, on any level, this one question: Why should they help you? If your answer has something to do with money (or the potential thereof), then you will always be partially correct.

Now the Don'ts:

**\* DON'T assume that every industry professional wants to hear your music.**

When we have chance encounters with you on the street, at conventions, seminars, or parties, what we want is motivation to find a business reason to listen to your music. You can accomplish this by telling us more about the (success) story that you are building for yourself, rather than how great or unique (you think) you are.

**\* DON'T underestimate our creative sensibilities.**

Most industry professionals come from creative backgrounds. Many of us sing, play, and perform. Because of this, we are intimately aware of what it takes to make a quality song, or give an outstanding performance.

**\* DON'T let your mouth be your greatest sales tool - unless you are using it to sing.**

Your talent, songs, fan base, promotional materials, and sales are the ONLY things that will provide us with business reasons to work with you. This is critically important because many industry professionals are merely performing a service for someone else, and we rely on these tools to build interest and support for you from the key allies and decision makers in the communities that we belong to.

At the end of the day, it really does come down to having mutual respect and value for what each party brings to the table. Take the time to assess what your business needs are before approaching professionals, and be receptive to guidance when you receive it. After all, your success is our success, and we are in the business of helping you achieve that success.

Gian Fiero is a seasoned educator, speaker and consultant with a focus on business development and music/entertainment industry operations. He currently teaches at San Francisco State University where he conducts courses on Music Industry Career Planning and Publicity/Public Relations. His affiliations include National Association Of Record Industry Professionals (associate director); CLA (speaker); West Coast Songwriters (consultant); The Muse's Muse (producer of the Muse's Muse Awards); and SBA (business advisor).

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