

ASK THESE NINE QUESTIONS TO ENSURE A GREAT MUSIC LICENSING PARTNERSHIP (by Andy Lykens)

When evaluating the business decision of choosing between a non-exclusive or exclusive deal to represent your compositions for placement in film, tv, and advertising, I've had a number of folks reach out and ask a little more info.

The great thing is, you can tweak or even use the same questions with ANY music business deal you are considering. Every case is unique and therefore, the goal should be to get as much information as possible. In that interest, I've created a list of questions that could help you spark intelligent conversations aimed to drive responses that will give you real metrics with which to you can better inform your decision-making.

While you certainly could email the following questions I would instead advise that you pick up the phone or meet in person, and have these ready to ask when it comes time to learn more about the company looking to represent your music. You will learn a lot more by speaking to someone in person than you will by reading their emailed response (if you get one).

1) Approximately how much synch revenue did they generate last year before royalties?

They're unlikely to disclose this information, so to follow-up to this question ask....

Can I see a rate card or can you ballpark what you charge for the following usages of music similar to mine?

National TV promo

National TV in-program

National commercial

Film Trailer (Worldwide)

In-Film Use (Worldwide)

2) Do they have a reel or 1-sheet that I can see?

This will give you a good idea of what their promotional materials look like, and also let you gage how much work they've done (ie: their reel shouldn't just have placements from 1 show, or from many shows that are no longer on-air).

3) Do they take the publisher's share of the performance royalty? Is this negotiable?

Most places will probably take the publisher's share but some will let you negotiate how much. Always ask!

4) Can you give me a rough range of how many placements you land each month? year?

They should be able to tell you exactly how many they get to be honest, and it should be a point of pride. If they're new to the game they obviously won't have that many.

5) Roughly how many ad agency music briefs do they get per month?

Anywhere between 5 and 15 would be reasonable. You may want to follow up by asking which agencies they have the best relationships with.

6) Who are their go-to TV and Film Trailer editors or houses?

This should get them talking about specific clients they have just to lend some credibility. If you're talking to someone who isn't on their sales staff, you may want to request she find out for you.

7) What are current film or TV projects for which they have been solicited for music by music supervisors?

Do some research on Variety or IMDB before your meeting and make sure you know upcoming film or TV shows in production so you can gauge the validity of this answer. You might even have the name of the music supervisor on a given project in your back pocket so you can say something like "Oh, so you know _____ " should they bring it up.

8) What channels of marketing do they use to outreach to their client-base.

Generally, they should be doing email, phone calls, and in-person meetings. Some places will also do physical mailers and trade shows. You can also ask if they have a dedicated sales staff.

9) Can you send me an example of any marketing material you send out to your clients?

This lets you see the quality of their marketing material. The impression it leaves on you is likely to be similar to the impression it leaves on their clients.

Hopefully these questions will act as an excellent springboard for more in-depth investigation and help you better decide what kind of pro-active music licensing a potential business partner is able to execute. If you like this article, get more info on how to get your music licensed and published by subscribing to my newsletter.

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