



# OFF THE RECORD

## How to Market and Promote Yourself as an Artist

By Michael Lambert  
and Nick Roberts

in association with **THE SKINNY**



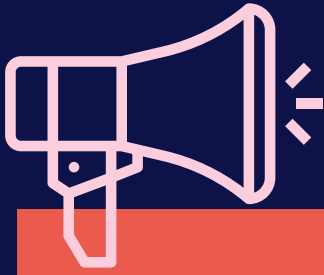
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When it comes to promoting your music, there have never been more avenues available. That also means there are endless platforms, services and tools to master and keep on top of! It can be daunting, even for the most seasoned of marketing professionals, and can seem like you will only succeed with the help of a major label and bucket loads of cash.

However, some of the best artist campaigns achieve amazing results with nothing but a strong creative idea, a heap of hard work and just enough organisation to keep things on track.

It is important to remember that none of this can be done quickly and promotion is always most successful when undertaken consistently over a long period of time – it's a marathon not a sprint, so set yourself small goals and work towards the bigger picture. Lots of little wins will eventually gather momentum and you will start seeing the results of your hard work.

The best starting point is to serve the fans you already have. Make sure they know what you're up to and keep them engaged so they tell their friends.

This guide focuses on the basics: the things we do for every campaign we work on and stuff you can easily do for yourself with the help of some free online tools, a load of your spare time and a little bit of patience.



# Before We Get Started...

We're going to cover a lot of the nuts and bolts of music marketing throughout this guide, pointing you in the direction of useful online tools. But beside all that, it's important to think about what you're trying to promote and how you want your message to be received.

A campaign will stand or fall by the strength and quality of the creativity and how effectively it's communicated, so here are some key things to consider:

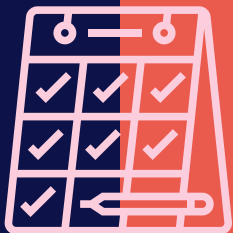


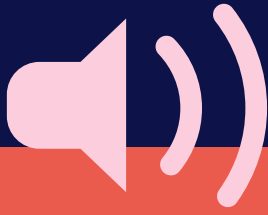
- **Creativity** – It has to start with a good idea. Create a world around whatever it is you're promoting and capture the imagination of your potential fans.

- **Narrative** – Try to put your finger on what sets you apart from the others and lean into it. If you have a story to tell, people will want to hear it.



- **Consistency** – Create a through-line to your promotional campaign. Use the same fonts, colour schemes and imagery to reinforce your message. If you can build and develop an overall creative idea, even better. This will help people become familiar with your brand.





- **Find your voice** – It can take some time but if you add personality and consistency to your online tone of voice, it will help people connect with you.

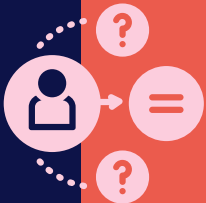


- **Take your time** – Don't expect things to happen overnight. You should build things slowly over a long period of time to have success, so be patient and celebrate every new fan you win over.



- **Repeat yourself** – There's a lot going on out there and people need reminding, so find different ways to say the same thing over and over again.

- **Build a community** – Try to engage with fans and connect on a personal level. Respond to comments, reply to DMs and put in as much as you take out, it will pay off in the long run.



- **Test, adapt, respond** – There's no right and wrong way to do it. Try things out and tweak your plans as you go.

- **Be ready to react** – If something positive happens (radio, TV etc), be ready to pounce on it so you can make the most of the opportunity.



# Social Media



Social media is your shop window to the world. As such, it's important to keep it clear, engaging and welcoming to those that you want to come in and be part of your journey.

It's incredibly important that your social media works for you in the most basic ways: ensure that anyone landing on your pages can listen to your music, see a live video and find your contact information without having to search for ages. Keep in mind that potential fans have a short attention span and you've got to use the time they're looking at your profile wisely to make sure they follow you and keep coming back.

One of the best ways to approach social media is by looking at artists who you align yourself with and are a fan of. What are they posting that makes you engage? More often than not you will find it is something you can do that doesn't rely on a huge budget. A self-recorded video of you performing a song, a post about other music you're loving or a behind-the-scenes look at your practice room are all things artists do whether they're selling out arenas or just getting started.

# Social Media Top Tips



- **Focus on what you're good at** – If you're great at Instagram but not at Twitter, own that platform and just share important messaging across others.
- **Have obvious links** – Ensure your music, recent videos and contact details are in a clear position on your profile.
- **Plan out key posts** – If you've got a big announcement for a new release, merch drop or tour dates, plan content around this. It might be helpful to create a basic social planner or calendar.
- **Be engaging with your content** – Don't post the same things over and over, but take note of what gets the best engagement (video, image, selfie, live shot?) and use that in the future. Go over your writing until you reach a tone of voice you're happy with and don't be scared to have fun with it!
- **Reply** – People sending you messages or commenting on posts are super-fans in the making. Leaving them hanging might put them off, whereas engaging with them will make them more likely to share your content and tell other people about you. This is your word-of-mouth marketing in action.
- **Optimise your graphics and images** – Sprout Social have created this handy guide that is regularly updated with all the specs. You can use a free service like Canva to create great-looking graphics.

# Website



You might feel that a dotcom website can seem a little out of date or redundant when you already have a host of social media profiles crammed with top-quality content but we think they're super important.

A good, basic website provides the perfect centre-point for your online presence. It allows you to have full control over how your project is presented online and gives you endless possibilities. Think of your site as your online anchor – the one-stop-shop for fans of your music to get all the latest information and content in one easy-to-find place.

## Website Top Tips

- Services like [Squarespace](#) and [Wix](#) allow you to build a stylish site with zero design or coding skills. [Wordpress](#) is also a good option, but requires a touch more coding ability.
- **A few key pages** are good to focus on to keep it easy to navigate.
- **Provide links out** to all your social platforms so people can connect with you.
- **Add a mailing list widget** to collect email addresses from people who want to stay in touch.
- **Embed a widget** from [Songkick](#) or [Bands in Town](#) to list your live and online shows.
- **Embed at least one video** on your front page so people can immediately check out your music and visuals.

# Mailing Lists



Like websites, using email to promote your music might seem old-school but it is still one of the most effective and easy ways to reach your fans. While social media platforms are making it harder to get your posts in front of your audience, a well-crafted email will reach each and every one of your subscribers – so they're well worth investing some time in.

## Mailing List Top Tips

- **Check out services** such as [Mailchimp](#) and [Mailerlite](#) which both offer free versions of their service below a certain subscriber threshold.
- **Collect email addresses by adding a sign-up widget** to your website, add a sign-up link on your socials and Linktree (more on this coming up), encourage people to subscribe through posts on your socials and don't forget to put a pen and paper sign-up sheet on your merch table at gigs. If you sell merch and tickets online, make sure you add an opt-in tick box so you can add the data to your mailing list.
- **Create a template** to allow you to re-use the same layout each time without having to create it from scratch. It also keeps it consistent for your fans, so they get familiar with your brand.
- **Think about the design and layout** as a nice-looking, clear email is much more likely to be read than something cluttered.
- **Always send a test email to yourself first** so you can check the spelling, dates, times and links.
- **Use the list sensibly**, just for key information and updates. Don't overuse it.



# Different Links: Short, Bio, Smart and Pre-Save

## Short Links

A short link makes your giant link smaller and neater for posting online. Using a short link service such as [SmartURL](#) or [bit.ly](#) also allows you to track how many people have clicked your link, where they came from, what type of device they used etc. These analytics can tell you a lot about your fans and help you refine how you communicate with them.

## Bio Links

How many times have you had to change out the pesky link in your Instagram bio each time you have something new to promote? There are some services making it easier to present multiple links at the same time. [Linktree](#) allows you to create a landing page with links to your site, socials, stream profiles or anywhere else you'd like to take your fans, you can also customise it with your own colour scheme. [FeatureFM](#) and [Linkfire](#) offer similar services.

## Release Smart Links

A smart link is similar to a bio link but is focused around one musical release. Services like [SmartURL](#), [FeatureFM](#) and [Linkfire](#) allow you to create one link that opens a landing page, pointing people to all the services and stores where they can stream and buy your music. This means you can post one customised link, giving fans the choice of where they want to be taken. You can brand the landing page to match your artwork and embed a YouTube video or streaming player. Smart links also allow you to track where fans are coming from and which services they're listening to you on, which is all handy information for targeting your future promotion.

# Different Links: Short, Bio, Smart and Pre-Save

## Pre-Save Links

Get your fans amped up about your release in advance by creating a pre-save campaign. This allows people to opt in to have your latest release added to their streaming library on release day without having to remember to do it manually. Pre-saves are also great as they give people the option to follow you on the chosen service and allow them to opt in to your email list too.

On Spotify, this helps to ensure your track drops into your fans' Discover Weekly playlist on release week and helps show streaming platforms that you have an engaged fanbase which can help get you on their curated editorial playlists too.

## Link Top Tips



- **Try to find one service that works for you and stick to it** as having various links scattered across multiple services will become hard to manage. The more you keep your data all in one place, the more effective it will be for you.
- **Use the analytics** to keep an eye on how your links are performing and tweak your overall plans accordingly.
- **List all the key services in your release smart links** and keep it in mind that different fans will use different platforms, so make it easy for them to listen.
- **Build excitement around pre-saves** by running competitions for fans who pre-save and sign up to your mailing list.

# Spotify Marketing Tools

## Spotify For Artists

Spotify has a website and mobile app exclusively for artists and their teams to make the most of their profiles. You can update your image, add a bio, add your social links, update your artist pick and add an artist fundraising pick. By using Spotify For Artists you'll also get a blue tick and access to lots of useful insights about your music. You can submit new releases for playlist consideration too.



## Spotify Codes

Spotify has a site where you can generate QR-like scannable codes that direct people to your content on the platform. They're great for adding to flyers, posters, merch and just about anything. Be sure to print one out and test it before you send away for 10,000 copies. We learned the hard way...



## Spotify Promo Cards

The latest promo tool launched by Spotify is promo cards, allowing you to make personalised assets to share on your socials for your profile, albums, singles and some editorial playlists too.



# Analytics



It is important to keep an eye on how you are doing and use the information freely available to you to tweak and optimise your social media posts and content.

You can learn a lot about your audience through the following tools:

## **Google Analytics**

Google Analytics lets you add a code to your website to track your visitors, see which pages they are visiting and how much time they are spending on your website.

## **Social Media Analytics**

Each of the social platforms have their own insights and analytics tools. They're good for understanding what type of content works best for you, what time of day you get the most interactions, as well as giving you useful demographic data.

## **Email Insights**

The email services mentioned earlier (Mailchimp and Mailerlite) give you some juicy stats on how your emails are performing. They tell you who has opened your emails, who hasn't, how many times they've been opened and who clicked where. They also let you know where in the world your fans are opening your emails the most. All this info can help you adapt your mailers to get the most out of them.

## **Streaming Service Tools**

All the main streaming services have their own analytics platforms that give you an insight as to how your music is doing, telling you where your listeners are and what playlists you are on.

## **Soundcharts and Chartmetric**

There are some great services, including Soundcharts and Chartmetric, which collect all your streaming and social data in one place. They help you keep track of playlist adds you're picking up, which charts you're smashing, radio spins you're picking and your social media performance. They both offer basic free versions as well as (quite pricey) premium options.

# Key Take-Home Messages

- **Make the most of the audience you have.**
- **Organise all the data you already have access to.**
- **Use social media to drive people to your owned platforms (like your website).**
- **Find a tone of voice and be consistent with it.**
- **Get the framework of your audience worked out.**
- **Get creative, try things, have fun!**

# Useful Tools



We've talked about a lot of different tools and services throughout this guide and there are even more brilliant services that can help you spread the word. Here are some of our favourites:

## DSP Artist Platforms & Tools

[Spotify For Artists](#)  
[Apple Music For Artists](#)  
[Amazon Music For Artists](#)  
[Deezer Backstage](#)  
[Spotify Codes](#)  
[Spotify Promo Cards](#)

## Streaming Data



### Tools

[Soundcharts](#)  
[Chartmetric](#)  
[Songstats](#)

## Smartlink Services

[Linkfire](#)  
[Linktree](#)  
[Feature FM](#)  
[SmartURL](#)  
[Show.co](#)  
[Amplify](#)

## Mailing List Platforms

[Mailchimp](#)  
[Mailerlite](#)



## Online Store Platforms

[Music Glue](#)  
[Shopify](#)  
[Bandcamp](#)  
[Big Cartel](#)

## Concert Listing Tools

[Bands in Town](#)  
[Songkick](#)

## Creative Tools

[Canva](#)  
[PicMonkey](#)



# OFF THE RECORD

## Michael Lambert - A Modern Way Management

A Modern Way represents a range of artists including Idlewild, Fatherson, Zoe Graham and Tom Joshua, as well as operating an independent record label. Michael is also a director of Wide Events CIC which runs the annual Wide Days music industry convention.

## Nick Roberts - Aimless Play

Aimless Play is a campaign management and marketing agency that works directly with artists, labels and management companies to make the most of their music. Previously a festival promoter, Nick has almost a decades worth of experience promoting great music to UK audiences.



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