

Artist Management: When?

I. Introduction

I am frequently asked by artists: "When should I have a manager?" My Zen-like response is often: "When it is time, the manager will appear." This answer is often insufficient to provide an artist with a sound basis upon which to answer this important question; consequently, I have developed a more Socratic method herein.

II. The Greatest

The greatest managers answer "yes" to the following questions (in no particular order):

1. Do they know the radio programmers in key markets for your type of music? Radio continues to be an important vehicle to propel careers. Managers can call stations personally or at least influence a record company on varying radio strategies.
2. Do they have a complimentary artist roster that can add leverage to your pursuits? The music business is a business of relationships. If your manager manages high profile acts that people want – they can wedge you into opportunities that might not otherwise be available. If one of their big acts is unavailable for something maybe they can slip you into that vacant spot.
3. Do they manage an artist that has sold platinum level status in Canada or the US? This is obviously not a definitive criteria but it is one more indicator that this manager has reached the brass ring in selling records. It is an impressive feat.
4. Do they manage an artist that has been nominated for a Juno and/or Grammy Award? Again, not a definitive criteria but rather another indicator of success.
5. Do they manage an internationally successful touring artist? Touring the international marketplace provides many challenges to the new, inexperienced manager (i.e. foreign withholding taxes; cartage; immigration; etc.).
6. Do they know the program director at MuchMusic, MTV or VH1? Video, especially in this country, is an important vehicle to launch careers. Your manager may not be able to call MuchMusic directly to force them to air your video but they can help your record label be persuasive in this regard.
7. Do they understand your type of music and/or your artistic vision? Your manager will be required to communicate and defend your vision on a daily basis. It is important that they can speak the language of the artist and the music industry executive.
8. Do they have time to focus on your career? You need phone calls returned. Ideally the

manager will have a sufficient support staff to supplement their efforts and handle day-to-day details of an artist's career.

9. Do they have a firm grasp of new technologies and their impact on the music business? This point cannot be underestimated. We are moving into a new age in the music business and those who adapt will survive and help their clients survive.

10. Do you like them? The management-artist relationship is like a marriage. You will be speaking to this person on a daily basis.

III. New Blood

Obviously, new managers start somewhere and some of this country's best managers do not answer "yes" to all of these questions yet. Great managers answer yes to all the following questions – these are some of the basics required.

1. Are they organized? Organization is key. Tracking timelines, keeping track of phone numbers, keeping track of money, studio/rehearsal set-up, artwork, flyers, etc. is important.
2. Are they hard working? New managers have to work twice as hard and will likely have to work another "day job" to supplement their management exploits. They must be steadily networking to develop contacts that would be helpful to the artist.
3. Are they intelligent? This is connected to the next point. Almost all successful managers share this quality and unfortunately it is hard to teach or acquire.
4. Are they good communicators? Managers have to communicate artistic and business concepts to you as well as other music industry players (i.e. agent, record label, other managers, publishers). E-mail and the written word is heavily relied upon by managers these days to control the workload.
5. Are they dedicated? Some new managers merely jump on for the ride. Will this manager be there in the good *and* bad times? The climb to success is often filled with stumbling blocks that require dedication to overcome.
6. Are they willing to work on a trial basis? No new manager should expect a signed contract with absolute, long-term binding commitments.

7. Are they able to do a better job than you? Often, new bands hold romantic visions of what a manager will do for them; often, they are disappointed. It isn't glamorous or "fun" to manage yourself but it provides a foundation for your future in the music business and often artists are the best candidates for the job in the early going.
8. Are they able to answer "yes" to the previous questions 7, 8, 9, 10? Some of the points outlined also apply for new managers.

IV. Conclusions

Every manager gets fired at one point or another. This is not an indicator of lack of ability necessarily; however, you may want to track down some of the manager's former clients to gain some insight into why they made a switch.

Great management can accelerate a career *almost* as much as a good song. Bad management can hinder an artist's prospects and, in some extreme cases, end a career. These questions provided herein are not conclusive by any means.

Be careful with your choice grasshopper.

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