

GAURAV VAZ

Artist Management

101

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

From being a software engineer to becoming the artist manager of Raghu Dixit, Gaurav has tried to keep his work experience as varied as possible!

He kick-started his career as a bass guitarist for 'The Raghu Dixit Project' in late 2006 and has played for over a thousand shows in 25 different countries across the world, ever since. As of early 2010, he started managing the band and has watched the band grow from small beginnings in Bangalore to being known as a 'Cultural Export' of India and has been undoubtedly renowned as one of best bands in the India.

Having been an active part of the Indian indie music scene for the last 10 years, he is well acquainted with the local music industry, the artists and the people that make things happen. He is well versed with the Indie music industry in Bangalore and most of India, and has been active in conceptualizing and creating interesting products and events that is concerned with Indian Indie music. He often conducts music business workshops and discussions around the current state and the future of the Indian music industry. He is the co-founder of RadioVeRVe, the erstwhile Internet radio station that primarily promotes and plays Indian Indie music. He has also been working on various projects on online radio and artist promotion space.

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01

WHO IS AN ARTIST MANAGER?

Through this lesson, you will be introduced to the world of 'artist management'. Learn about the roles of an artist manager which are vital in taking the career of the artist forward.



Overview of Artist Management

To become a successful artist manager, you need to manage a successful artist. However, no successful artist is looking for a manager. How do you approach an artist? The trick lies in being an exciting person yourself. You can reach out to the artist and demonstrate your ability in taking his career forward. An artist may or may not have the ambition to carry out the business side of music. However, as an artist manager, you should be able to market and position your artist as a brand.

Roles of an Artist Manager

The leading role of an artist manager is to ensure that the artist focusses on the creative aspect of things. Allow the artist to create a new piece of music. Then, you need to take his music and market it to the world. Remember, the artist makes the music, and you do the business. Art and creativity do not have any fixed price like other commodities. You're responsible for getting the best deal for your artist. You need to build the right team around the artist, including tour managers, booking agents and promoters. You're also responsible for the critical decisions that the artist makes in his/her career. Coordinate with record labels and make sure that the artist's music is recorded, distributed and promoted.

01 WHO IS AN ARTIST MANAGER?



Draft marketing and touring strategies and hence develop the artist's brand. Most importantly, you should manage the finances of your artist and recover payments for shows. Artist manager needs to be social media savvy and promote the artist's work.

Knowledge and experience of the industry plays a critical role in becoming an Artist Manager. You must stay updated with the latest trends in the industry. Spend a lot of time maintaining relationships with various people in the industry and use these contacts to source work for your artist.



02

ROLES ONE CAN PLAY IN MUSIC BUSINESS

There is a common misconception that one has to be a rockstar to be a part of the music industry. In this lesson, you'll learn about the various other roles you can play to support an artist.



You can be an artist, or you can work with an artist. An artist is the heart of the music industry, and an artist manager comes next to the artist. He gives career advice, makes sure that his artist gets new projects, and primarily manages the artist's career over a long term. There're a group of people who work in specific departments and coordinate with an artist manager. They include tour managers, promoters, sound engineers, event managers and so on.

Tour Manager

A tour manager is a person who helps in organizing an agency for a schedule of appearances of an artist or a band at different venues. A tour manager proposes the budget for the tour by collecting information about the potential ticket income for each show and calculating the expenses involved in accommodation, transportation, videography, lighting equipment and rehearsals.

Sound Engineer

A sound engineer helps in producing a record or a performance. He's also in charge of editing and modulating soundtracks. Sound engineers work on the technical aspect of recording, such as the placement of microphones, the setting of levels and so on. Sound engineers also set up sound checks and do live sound mixing using a mixing console for music concerts and other such events.



Light Designer

Light designers are in charge of creating a light design that will properly showcase the artists on stage. Light designers do not always manage the lights during the show. Instead, they draft the cue sheet that an electrician should follow during a show. They work with a lot of professionals such as interior designers, architects and engineers.

Event manager

An event manager is a person who plans and executes the event. An event manager is in charge of the creative, technical, and logistical elements of the show. He is responsible for the overall event design, audiovisual production, script writing, logistics, budgeting, and client service.

Other roles

There are so many different roles you can play in the music business. You don't necessarily need to be a person playing the guitar or singing a song on stage. You need to put yourself out there and explore all these other roles involved in the music industry which can range from being an artist to making sure the artist's career is thriving.



03

SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE AN ARTIST MANAGER

An artist manager is not a specialist. However, he should know everything that concerns the artist. In this lesson, you will learn the skills required to become an artist manager.



You, as an artist manager, are required to be a generalist. From organizing a show to planning out a recording session, each role of an artist manager requires an entirely different skill set. It's up to you to make sure that all projects run smoothly; meeting all the deadlines. It's essential for a manager to remain focused on the bigger picture and the end goal. Here are a few skills that are required to be an artist manager.

Multitasking

You should be ready to switch your role at the drop of a hat! You might be on stage dealing with technical equipment and get a call about a new opportunity for the artist. If your artist is throwing a tantrum, you need to look for ways to deal with the situation while simultaneously ensuring that show goes on smoothly. You also need to be aware about hotel and flight bookings. All of this comes together to make an exciting day for an artist manager. Interestingly, no two days are the same as an artist manager. If you have a show, there are a full set of responsibilities on that day. If you have planned a recording session, then the roles differ. You need to chase different deadlines and concentrate on multiple projects at the same time!



People skills

Strong people skills imply that you can consume information, clarify misunderstandings and convince people well. You need to be careful with your words and speak with confidence and conviction. As an artist manager, you will spend most of your day dealing with music producers, promoters, sponsors and other people in the business, so having good people skills plays a significant role in being an artist manager. Having the ability to resolve disputes and conflict amongst people and colleagues is also an important professional skill. You'll have to be persistent when people don't return your calls, be comfortable with approaching new people and having a conversation with them.

Knowledge of the Music Industry

You'll gain knowledge through your career about the various aspects of the music industry. You can start researching about music and take online classes to have a strong foothold when you become an artist manager. You should have enough knowledge about the music business to find interesting opportunities for your artist. You also need to understand the essentials of the music industry and understand the roles of the different people involved. Learn about labels, promoters, PR companies, agents and so on. You need to learn and understand the basics before taking up this job.



Having an entrepreneurial mindset

It is essential for you to be ambitious and have an entrepreneurial mindset. The artist might be creating the music, but you need to spearhead the business and take his/her music everywhere you go. Developing an entrepreneurial mindset is the first step towards success. People with this particular mindset are often drawn to great opportunities.



04

HOW TO GET STARTED?

It is crucial to have an ear for good music. Through this lesson, you will learn the art of appreciating music, the key role of internships and finding the right artists to manage.



Appreciate & Seek Music

To get started as an artist manager, you need to love and appreciate music. You should continuously stay in the presence of musicians. You need to find opportunities that put you around music and musicians. Look for venues where these artists hang around. Join Facebook groups and online forums where these artists continuously post and update people about their lives. You can also attend artist meet-ups and conferences that allow you to interact with the artist personally. Attend local shows. When you watch any performance, try to meet the artist backstage and give him your card. Go with the mindset to find something that resonates with you. It's essential to research the music you want to enter and identify the key artists/influencers.

Find the Right Artist

You need to like the artist and the music that they create. The music should resonate with your taste. You cannot manage an artist or anyone in the creative space if you do not like the person and their work. Do not settle for any artist just for the sake of becoming a manager. It is the manager's passion for the artist and his music that drives the artist or band's career. Seek and experience new music.



Seek internships

You need to go out seeking internships in music production companies through the people you know. Find venues where musicians meet and write to the manager; they'll be happy to write back to you. The music industry is relatively small, and it is easy to figure out the right people. When you meet musicians, ask intelligent questions. You need to figure out the gap that you can fill in a musician's life and try to explain it to them in a transparent way.



05

MUSIC INDUSTRY IN INDIA Vs WEST

“Music has branched itself to all parts of the world. In this lesson, learn more about the differences between the music industries in India vs. in the West.”



Music Industry in the West

The music industry in the West runs primarily on the sale of the tickets. When Coldplay began their journey, they used to book a space that could fill only 100 people. Over time, as their fame grew, they now sell out 40,000 tickets for a 3-night performance in New York City. Coldplay has set touring standards and a team as big as the artists do. They have their distributor, promoter and machinery.

In the west, tickets are sold for a particular event in which a musician or a band performs. Artists have a systematic path to success in the music industry. They perform to an audience of 100 and then 500, followed by booking an auditorium and then a stadium!

The people here aren't familiar with the term "Sponsorship". Sponsorship is considered to be an optional luxury as opposed to a necessity in India.



Music Industry in India

Contrastingly, the musicians in India depend mostly on sponsorships for their events and performances. They depend on corporate sponsorship and brand sponsorship.

In India, artists wait for the event managers to call them. The musician fits into the event along with a variety of other performances. If there is an annual corporate event or a college festival or a private event, then, the artist is a part of the show along with a line-up of other artists. The idea of putting together and conceptualizing shows and tours that run on ticket sales become bizarre. You begin to realize how the business model is different here in India. In India, you need to reach out to brands and sponsors, try to fit your needs as well as the needs of the sponsor and try to meet them both. This affects the business when an Indian musician performs in the west or when an artist from the West comes back to India.



06

NEGOTIATING CONTRACTS AND DEALS

Negotiation is an integral part of artist management. In this lesson, you will learn the art of negotiation for live performances and the risks involved in it.





Safeguarding the Artists' interests

As an Artist Manager, you need to protect the interests of your artist. You need to sit with them and draft a list of non-negotiables. The artist may not be willing to sing a particular genre of music or may have a fixed time slot. You need to reason it out with him and ensure that the non-negotiables are acceptable. Make sure that your artist's interests are safeguarded, keeping in mind that the artist isn't being too unreasonable. You need to strike a sure balance between the artist's benefits and his money-making opportunities.

Cover Basic Expenses

Moreover, you need to try to minimise each expense . Many things need to be taken care of by the promoters such as hotel accommodation and air transport. It is bit unfair if an experienced artist is expected to crash on a friend's couch. Again, it does not make sense to perform at a show in Mumbai for just 1 hour after having a to and fro journey of 48 hours from Bangalore. You need to push for air travel allowances to make it a comfortable journey for the artist.



Importance of Landed Deal

If you're good at multitasking, you can perform all these jobs on your own. You can negotiate one fixed or flat fee and get everything covered within it. Then, the promoters do not have to worry about the flight timings and hotel bookings. This is called a "landed deal" in the music industry and is a method followed by people all around the world. Once, Gaurav Vaz had verbally agreed to three different promoters. He had worked out a master plan and asked for a one-way airplane trip. The promoter at Delhi eventually backed out, and Gaurav received neither the money for the flight nor for the performance that was supposed to be held.

You need to learn from your experiences. Make a list of the promoters whom you can trust. Over a period of time, you will be able to set boundaries for yourself and the artist.

Invoicing & Receipt of Payment

One of the common problems faced by an artist manager is the invoicing and the receipt of payment. Many artists demand a substantial amount of money as an advance payment. You should keep your dates open. Close your dates only when the advance payment is received. You should refuse all forms of verbal agreement and have the communication through emails, if not a full-fledged contract. Gaurav always insists on receiving a hundred percent of the payment in advance.



There're many cases where the other person has a genuine reason as to why they can't pay you at that moment. This is where your people skills come into the play; if it's a legitimate reason, then give them an extension, else, you can take legal action to receive your money.



07

MUSIC AS A STARTUP

Being an artist is not just a hobby, it is a career in itself. In this lesson, you will learn how to treat your music business as a start-up.



Challenges of Running a Music Business

Only one out of ten startups is successful. Similarly, only one out of ten musicians becomes a brand. The success of a music business is associated to a combination of luck, skill, people and the market's demand. Treat your band as a start-up. Invest in it, assemble a team, market and promote it. Deliver the best music to your target audience. This will help your artist's music business grow as a brand. There is a common misconception that the creative art business is by definition "creative." Your job as an Artist Manager is to go out and make this business successful. If you want to make a career in the music business, you will have to handle business issues with the same energy and creativity that you bring into making the music. Every penny your artist makes from music videos of new songs contribute to your success.

Case Study of the Raghu Dixit Project

When Gaurav Vaz started working as an artist manager of Raghu Dixit, the band was popular only among a small audience in Bangalore. The goal was to take the artist to the next level. As of 2018, Raghu has performed in 30 different countries with over 1000+ shows to his name. Over the span of last ten years, the line-up has drastically changed. There have been about 40 various band members and have been open to collaborations. Indie Pop Music was at its peak in 2006 and 2007 and would be played in a loop on MTV and Channel V. Unfortunately, this fever soon died, as they moved on to reality shows. They missed their ticket to Bollywood and the online video streaming market as well. However, they were able to build a cult following across the world that they can bank on now.



08

IS VOCATIONAL TRAINING NECESSARY?

Can you be trained to become an
artist manager? Find the answer
to this question in this lesson.





Develop the Right Skills

You can't specifically train to become an artist manager. However, you can master a few skills to be good artist manager. You can develop your people skills by writing blogs, attending public speaking classes, listening to podcasts and so on. This in turn, generates a feeling of comfort while dealing with different types of people you'd meet along the way. You can take online classes on Finance or intern at a Sound Production Company to learn the basics behind what goes on stage, and how is it set up. You may need to learn social media marketing and oversee the management of social media profiles. In general, you need to learn marketing skills.

Importance of Online Courses

In 2015, Gaurav undertook an online course created by Dan Ariely. He learnt about the irrationality of people. A common perception exists that prices that are cost-effective and deliver the best value for money are the products that sell. This is far from truth. Gaurav was able to double his revenue in 2 years from the knowledge he gathered from the online course. He learnt how to price his artist interestingly and simple other tips and tricks. Online courses are fundamental, even though they are not entirely related to artist management. They still bring a considerable amount of value by teaching essential concepts. As an artist manager, you need to be a generalist. You should know each and everything about the music industry. With time, you can eventually hope to be a specialist.



09

IS IT A VIABLE CAREER OPTION?

With all this knowledge that you received from the previous lessons, you finally begin to question yourself whether this is a viable career option or not. In this lesson, you shall seek answers to those questions and learn about the earnings of an artist manager.



The story of Gaurav Vaz

Gaurav started his career as a software engineer. He probably would have relocated to the United States to fulfill his IT dreams, but things took a drastic turn. He started with zero experience in artist management but has now grown to manage one of India's biggest contemporary folk bands, The Raghu Dixit Project.

How much money can you earn?

An average IT Job in India makes an average of Rs. 30,000 – 50,000. An artist manager can make the same earnings if the artist makes Rs 5,00,000, provided that the artist manager gets a commission of 10-15% of the artist's income.

The amount of money you earn varies according to the type of shows that are conducted. In a bar, an artist can make anywhere between 15K – 30K every month. If someone is an experienced artist, then he/she can earn three times the amount they got when they started. As the artist grows and becomes more popular, the artist manager could be making a couple of lakhs per month. Prominent musicians make around 1 – 1.5 Cr per show and you can get 15% of it. An artist manager can earn through live performances, brand endorsement, content creation, appearances etc. 90% of the industries revenue comes from live performances. Nowadays, video content creation has become a vital part of success of a growing artist/band and helps in promoting them in different parts of the world. This, in turn, increases the earnings of the artist manager. Remember, as long as your artist makes money; you will make money.



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