12 Ways To Build Your Web Site

by Lance Trebesch

There once was a day when the only way to promote your music was by going downtown, printing off 500 postcards, licking 500 stamps and peeling 500 labels. Now, in less than five minutes, artists can compose an email list of the 500 people and send it off with one click. Websites give people all over the world a central place to find band information. This was not possible a short while ago. With all the technology advances, artists must make the most of their resources and create a webpage that makes fans want to return to their site.

Show personality. A band's or group's website is their resource to show the world what they are all about. This is often the first place a potential fan will experience your band. Ask yourself, "What do I want them to know?" Insert an "about me" (or an "about us") section where you tell the band's story – how and why you formed, where you have been and your future plans. Also, add videos and photos of everything. Wherever the band goes, take pictures.

Capture the scenery, the venue and the people. Digital video and still cameras are inexpensive and anything you share with fans allows them to feel more connected with you.

Keep it simple. Site visitors should generally only have to click one or two times to find what they want from your home page. The fewer clicks they need to perform, the longer they will stay at your webpage. Site maps help visitors find what they are looking for by showing all your pages and how they connect, as well as help search engine spiders effectively understand and index your site. Also, do not overdo the flash animation. Flash can add to your site nicely, but you can easily go overboard with flash, so be aware.

Search Engine Spider – computer programs that crawl websites to check for updates, complexity and format (Search Engine News).

Make it easy. If you have blogs or articles on your site (which you should – hey, if you have someone who writes lyrics, permit them to write content for the site as well) allow the viewer to sign-up for an RSS feed that automatically informs them of updates to the content. Or, let them submit their email address to you to receive the updated content directly to their email. The simpler the email update or RSS feed is to sign-up for, the more likely the viewer will follow through with the process. Also, think about adding a search feature on your site so the viewer can simply type in what they are looking for within your site. The easier you make it for the user, the happier they will be.

• Allow for discussion. Have a chat room or forum on your site so fans will return to the site to discuss various topics. Your fans return to your site to interact with you, so promptly answer all questions they might post, and periodically join in on chat room discussions. Chat rooms are also a great way to get feedback about your music and site, so log all discussions and put a link on your homepage to a feedback form that fans can fill out.

Display contact information. Not only should your fans have an email address they can easy contact you at, but also

people seeking to book you should have the ability to contact you with ease. Nothing would turn off a booking agent more than difficulties trying to book you for a performance. Make sure these email addresses are for band-related topics only; displaying a personal email would be a BIG mistake. Also, write the address in context that fans/bookers can read but spam programs cannot, like band(at)bandsite(dot)com. Placing the contact information on your homepage in a key position will draw their eye to the information and make their life easier. (People tend to first notice content in the middle of the webpage, then the top and left sides of the page.)

Present your page at every occasion. When performing live, promptly display your webpage and blog website. Make sure fans know where to reach you online. In addition, allow them to sign-up for fan newsletters—collect as many email address as possible at these shows. Just one more fan is worth the effort. Word-of-mouth is the best form of marketing, so if you treat the one additional fan well, they will in turn promote your band to their friends.

Make band merchandise. Selling merchandise is one of the best and only ways to generate a profit within a band. One good online tactic is to create band shirts at Café Press and link to them to allow fans to buy the shirt you created from their site. Fans also love limited edition merchandise, so have a t-shirt available for a month only and sell them strictly at your live performances for that month.

Create a review page. When others say nice things about you, display it. If an online newspaper wrote a good review about the band, put a link to the article prompting others visiting your site to read the review. These reviews and testimonials create good PR for you. Because others are commenting about you, it shows first time visitors to your site that you are a known artist or band and they should listen to you. Remember to save a copy of the review as well, in case the online newspaper only runs the article for a limited time so you can directly post the review onto your site.

Put music on the site. Encourage file sharing of select songs and add music to the band's site. Follow these steps.

1. Find a computer with audio input capability and an easy to use audio encoding application. This is easy if your music is on CD, just rip it with iTunes or a similar application. If it is in some other analog or digital (mini-disc) format, it gets a little harder, but applications are freely available.

2. Then with MP3 file in hand, you can upload the file to your web site and link like you would link a web page or other media/image file.

3. From there, there are more complicated ways of doing it so it is more "presentable" with a nice embedded player, etc.

Post an event calendar. The webpage should display a neat calendar of upcoming show's location (city and state), time and venue. Fans use your site for a resource and need to be able to find this information quickly. Yahoo Groups allow fans to subscribe to your calendar and receive updates when you post a new event, which makes it extremely easy for your fans.

Sign-up for on-the-road content updates. There are many software programs, which allow you to update blogs via cell phone. This is a great technique because fans can get updates even when you do not have time to update your whole website. You can also take quick photos or video from your phone and send it to your account online.

By utilizing all these techniques on your site, the reach of your band online will greatly expand. Fans will return to your site for the latest updates on your band, booking agents will easily be able to contact you and labels will be able to see that you are serious about your music and the business. Online marketing is not just one easy-to-accomplish task. Rather, it is a series of equally important tasks that you must carry out on your road to success.