



 **cdbaby™** Presents

# MARKETING YOUR MUSIC 101

*Essential Tips for Cutting Through the Noise*

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## Essential Tips for Cutting Through the Noise

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Marketing is the art of telling your story to the right people at the right time, and telling it well — so they'll feel like they want to be a part of that story too.

Good music marketing is **NOT**:

- Frequent-but-unrelated social-media blasts
- One-off promo stunts
- Desperate pleas for fan interaction

In this guide, we'll touch upon what good marketing **IS**. This will not be a deep-dive into particular strategies, technical skills, or platform-specific advice. We think it's more important to outline the broader marketing concepts and how they apply to **YOU** and **YOUR MUSIC**. Once you've mastered that, you can succeed in **ANY** context where you're communicating with an audience.

### Get major label marketing tools — for **FREE**.

You now have access to the same music marketing systems used by big labels and major artists.

With Show.co you can:

- Build your Spotify following
- Boost streams and video views
- Run audio ads on Spotify
- Place banner ads on the most influential music websites
- Grow your email list
- And much more

**Build your audience today!**

# Branding: It's Knowing Your Story and Telling It Well.

When it comes to music, there are literally millions of alternatives out there for consumers – and a lot of it is quality stuff – so you need to make a positive impression or emotional appeal before potential fans hear a single measure of your music. For today's independent artist, a good musical story (and how well it's told) can mean the difference between obscurity and stardom.

Feeling some pressure? Remember, you don't have to tell your whole story all at once. Novels unfold over several hundred pages. As a musician, every action you take is a chance to further your story and make additional connections – every show you play, every video you make, every new release, email you send, pic you post to Instagram. But still, it's important to have a good grasp on the highlights of your musical story before you begin marketing. No one is going to click “subscribe” or “play” or “purchase” if something about your branding doesn't resonate with them first.

## So, what IS your story?

In order to effectively communicate your story, you have to know what it is first. Is it your biography? Your musical achievements? Your struggles and triumphs? A description of your sound and style? Your fashion?

It can be all of these things and more. But most importantly:

### 1. YOUR STORY SHOULD BE FOCUSED

Your story won't reveal all of the beauty and complexity of you as a person or as an artist. That'd take too long to tell. Instead, concentrate on the three things you most want to convey about your life and music.

### 2. YOUR STORY SHOULD BE AUTHENTIC

Don't pretend to be something you're not, unless that persona is crucial to your music. Your audience (and the media) will see through it.

### 3. YOUR STORY SHOULD BE UNIQUE

What makes you different is your most valuable branding asset. What sets you apart from other artists? What aspect of your life will connect on an emotional level with listeners? THAT detail is what fans will be drawn to, what music critics will write about, and what should be supercharged at the center of your story.

## Still having trouble finding the heart of your story?

Think about your musical inspirations, career highlights, the origins of your lyrics, technical innovations in your music, personal revelations that inform your career, anything funny or gimmicky about your music, band drama, themes that run throughout your songs, horror stories from touring, or the things you're proudest and most ashamed of in life.

Anything strike you as memorable or noteworthy? That's the beginning of your story right there!

*Need more help uncovering YOUR story?*

*Listen to [The DIY Musician Podcast, Episode #175: "The Authentic Artist Branding Bootcamp."](#)*

## Setting Clear Marketing Goals

Before someone builds a skyscraper, there's a blueprint. Before there's a blueprint, there's a goal.

Set a goal, and get specific – for instance:

- Double my YouTube subscribers in 6 months
- Get my newest song added to 20 playlists in one month
- Use my email list to sell 100 merch items in 7 days

Once you know the goal and the timeframe, you can work backwards in your planning. Which activities will help you achieve your goal, and which are distractions? What tools or platforms are appropriate for the messaging and audience?

There are endless distractions and lots of busy-work in your musical life. With a clear goal you'll be a prioritization master!

## No More One-Offs. Build Upwards.

With limited time and resources, each effort should build upon the last. You should also try to find multiple uses for single efforts. Instead of hopping from task to task, see how you can connect the dots in a way that works towards your stated goal.

For instance, before you go live on Facebook, do you have a clear call-to-action you can deliver to viewers? Is there something you can plan for the live-stream that could be repurposed later as shorter video content on Instagram or YouTube, building awareness for the longer Facebook Live video? How about spreading the word for your live stream via your email list – either before you go live, afterwards, or both?

Suddenly one activity is feeding other channels, and all the messaging swirls around getting viewers to the full live video – where they'll hear and see that main call-to-action (which should relate to your stated marketing goal, of course).

## Be Relevant – Use Smart Audience Targeting.

People often need to hear about something a handful of times (or more) before they are compelled to act. At the same time, we get bombarded with so much messaging each day that we're accustomed to just tuning things out.

That means:

- 1. YOU CAN'T BE AFRAID OF REPETITION** — You might feel like you're sounding the same trumpet over and over again, driving your fans crazy, but in reality, that's probably just about the time they're finally paying attention.
- 2. YOU SHOULD FIND DIFFERENT PACKAGES FOR THE SAME MESSAGE** — There are a lot of ways to frame a subject. If you can find 5 or 6 creative ways to express your message, you won't feel **AS** repetitive, and you'll also increase your chances of connecting with your audience, since different people respond to different approaches.
- 3. YOU NEED TO TARGET THE RIGHT COLD AUDIENCES** — “Cold” audiences are people who've never heard of you. They don't care. And why should they? Your job as a marketer is to match the appropriate message with the appropriate audience so that a percentage of them **WILL** care. This means you need to have a good sense of not only who **YOU** are, but who **THEY** are too.
- 4. YOU NEED TO SEGMENT YOUR WARM AUDIENCE** — Segmentation is the process of breaking your fanbase (your “warm” audience) into smaller groups based on their interests and actions. If you're marketing your newest CD, there's no sense trying to

reach fans who've already purchased that album. For one, it's a waste of money if you're doing paid ads. Second, they MIGHT get annoyed because they've already taken the action and you haven't taken the time to notice.

5. **FAILURE IS BAKED INTO THE EQUATION** — You need to get used to the idea that when you “market” your music to a group of strangers, a few will love it, a few will hate it, and a lot of people will remain indifferent. That's fine. It's the same for megastars. For all their millions of fans, they have tens or even hundreds of millions of people who couldn't care less. Marketing is all about finding YOUR fans amongst the crowd, speaking directly to them in a way that's interesting and authentic, and making sure you keep them in your orbit long-term.

For more information about sequential messaging and audience segmentation, go [HERE](#).

## Your Fans are on a Journey. You're the Guide.

The things that endear strangers to your music make up what many marketers call ‘the fan journey.’

This journey is comprised of a lot of the elements we've already talked about:

smart and relevant messaging, how your branding makes a person feel about themselves, and how deeply your music resonates.

Just remember that what leads someone on the path from stranger to casual listener, and from casual listener to fan, is as much about **THEM** as it is about **YOU**.

Always keep in mind how the choices you make in your music career will become a part of **THEIR** experience.

## Data is About Decisions

Marketing your music requires creativity and instinct, to be sure; those are necessary starting points. But you need something else to guide your decisions: **actual data**.

How, when, and where did your marketing efforts succeed or fail? How are you even measuring success or failure in the first place? What tweaks could be made to improve things?

You don't need to dive into the numbers for hours on end, but it's good to have a gauge to measure whether or not your instincts are on-point.

## Some analytics dashboards that are worth checking on a weekly basis:

- Facebook Insights
- Facebook Ads Manager
- Spotify for Artists
- Apple Music for Artists
- CD Baby Trending Reports
- Google Analytics
- Pandora AMP / Next Big Sound
- Analytics from your email service (like Mailchimp)

For more details, check out ["10 data points for musicians."](#)

## Keep the Conversation Going (for Less \$), by Owning Your Fan Relationships

If you're attempting to take your fans on a journey, it means you need to be in frequent communication with them. You don't want to have to PAY to reach them every time. You also don't want to leave it to chance (or an algorithm) that they see your messaging.

That means you should own your communication with them. How?

### Build Your Email List

Despite the huge popularity of social media, **E-MAIL** is still the most effective form of online marketing.

Crazy, but true. Whenever you encourage fans to purchase your music, watch a YouTube video, or leave a positive review, you're going to get better results from a well-written email than from a series of tweets or Facebook posts – partially because only a small percentage of your followers on social media will see those posts, but also because studies show fans are far more likely to take action based on an email. After all, these are the same people who trusted you with their email address in the first place. Email is direct, personal, and (relatively) distraction-free.

## “Pixel” Your Artist Website

Your web presence is a big part of telling your story. For some artists, their story exists entirely online.

And when it comes to establishing your web presence, your website is just as important as any social media platform, because your own website gives you:

- Control over the design and vibe
- A distraction-free place where you control the content and experience
- The ability to capture emails
- Dynamic retargeting data

That last one is important. When you install retargeting/remarketing code (such as the Facebook pixel) on your website, you can then track fan activity and advertise to those people with the knowledge that they've already engaged with certain content, music, or merch on your website.

Remember the segmentation and targeting mentioned above? This is one important way to do just that.

For more on retargeting/remarketing and Facebook pixels, go [HERE](#).

## Don't Overcommit on Social Media!

Music marketing gurus like to repeat the mantra “be everywhere.” Well, they're wrong.

It's easy to dive into the deep end of social media; it's harder to swim back out. If you're trying to balance practices, touring, recording, and marketing, don't get carried away. You'll drive yourself crazy and do a bad



job at social media while you're at it. Instead, pick one. It's better to use one social-media platform well than to juggle three poorly.

When your music career has advanced to the place where you really SHOULD “be everywhere,” you'll also be in a position to enlist some help with your online marketing.

Curious **WHICH** social platform is best for you? Go [HERE](#).

## Approaching the Music Media

Positive media attention, playlist placements, and radio play can help you extend the reach of your music, but they're far from requirements in this age of social ad platforms. You have the ability to find new fans on your own, without gatekeepers and middlemen. So if PR and playlist/radio promotion aren't in the cards, either for money or time reasons, don't fret.

But if you do want to get some good press quotes, playlist placements, or radio play for your music, here are a few quick pointers:

### Who Might Be Interested in Covering Your Story, Playing Your Music, or Writing a Review?

Be realistic. Don't focus on Rolling Stone or official Spotify playlists. Build your resumé by starting small. You'll have an easier time getting attention from:

- Local newspapers and weeklies
- Local cultural or art magazines
- Local TV news or news magazines
- Independently curated playlists (based on genre or mood)
- Community, college, and online radio

- Independent genre or subject-based podcasts
- Music blogs
- and More

## How Do You Go About Contacting the Media?

It's simpler than you might think. There are five basic rules for independent music PR:

### 1. CONTACT THE CORRECT PERSON

Make sure you have the right name and email/ mailing address for relevant program directors, podcast hosts, music editors, etc. Do some Google sleuthing. For playlist curators, it might require cross-referencing info in Spotify with social profiles on Twitter or Facebook.

### 2. KEEP YOUR PITCH SHORT AND SWEET

As they say, “don't bore us; get to the chorus!” Communicate in the first few sentences who you are and why they might be interested in your music. Follow up with a paragraph that contains supporting details, links to your music and supplementary information (online press release), and then sign off.

### 3. BE POLITE, NEVER PUSHY

If you rub someone the wrong way, they're not going to help you. It's common sense. If they respond and say “no thank you,” stay calm and try not to take it personally. They may just have too much on their plate right now.

### 4. FOLLOW UP

If you don't hear back from them after a week or so, go ahead and send another email asking if they've had a chance to check out your music. You know that old saying about the squeaky wheel getting the grease!

### 5. DELIVER

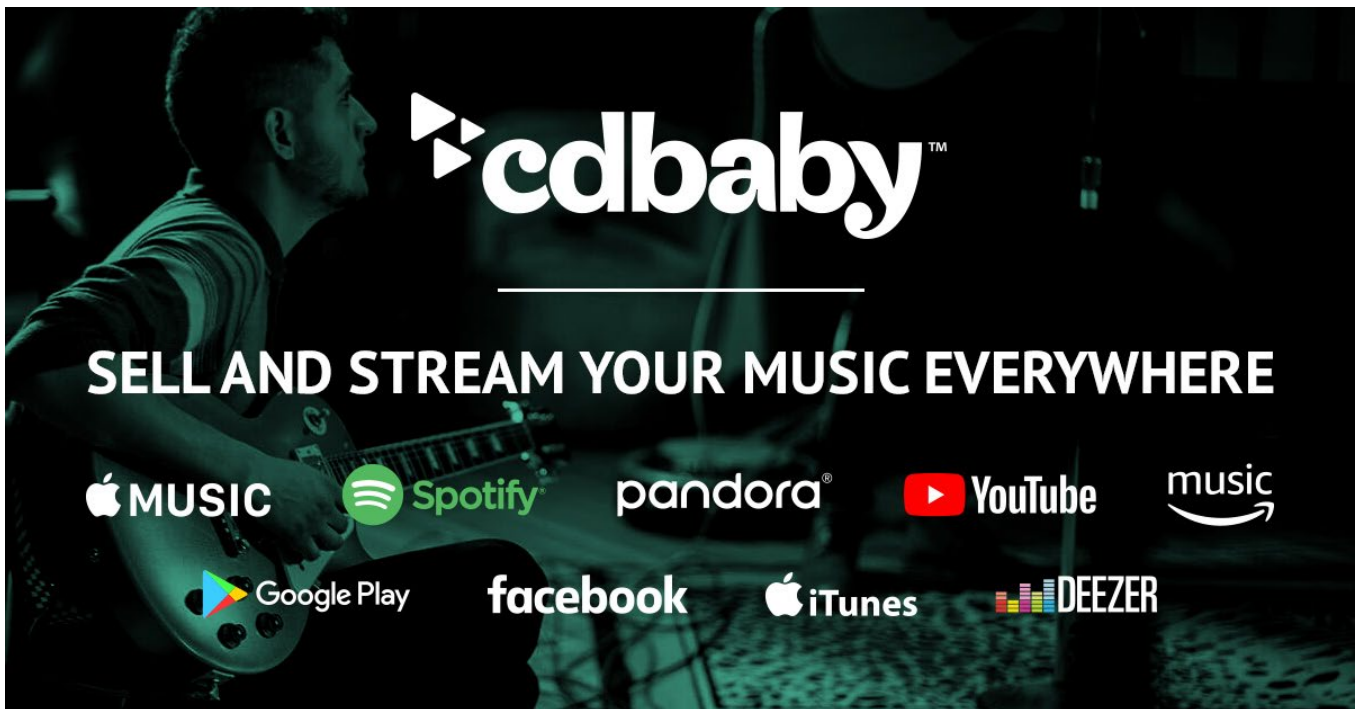
If someone writes you back with interview questions, a request for additional MP3s or photos, or wants you to appear on-air, be sure to respond to them ASAP with a gracious “hell yes” – and then rock it!

*Having trouble getting press? That might not be a problem. [HERE'S WHY.](#)*

## You're Ready to Tell Your Musical Story to the World.

Hopefully this guide has given you a framework from which to start marketing your music to new fans. For more advice on social media marketing, PR for musicians, and independent music distribution, check out CD Baby's [DIY Musician Blog](#) – updated weekly with tips from the experts.

[Reach the whole world with your music!](#)  
[Get your songs on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon, and more.](#)



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