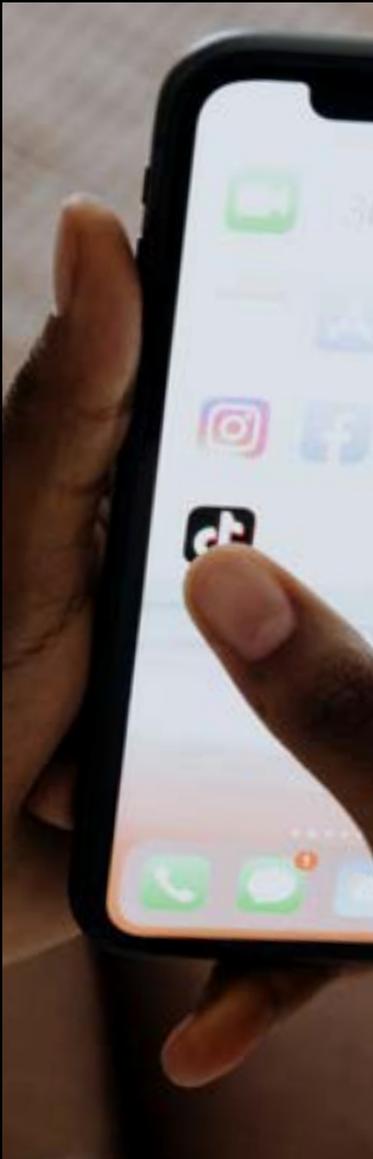


MUSIC MARKETING GUIDE FOR 2026



INTRODUCTION

According to the [2025 IFPI report](#), record labels invested a total of \$8.1 billion in A&R and marketing in the global music industry – nearly a third of their revenue in 2023. That's because marketing is an integral part of a successful music career and it's more important than ever for artists looking to stand out in today's saturated market.

But you don't need major label money to effectively market your music. With the right combination of social media, live performance, streaming platform tools, and guerilla tactics, you can find your audience and build a community around your music.

At its best, your marketing is an organic extension of your music, providing more ways for fans to access your artwork through storytelling and creative content. Marketing is also about building fan relationships by telling the right story, to the right people, at the right time. And that resonance is incredibly rewarding when you've found ways to turn first-time listeners into die-hard fans.

In this guide, we'll provide you with an introduction to music marketing in 2026. We'll explore the approaches, considerations, strategies and tactics you'll need to give your music the spotlight it deserves. From assessing your artist brand to launching tactics that will help you reach your goals, read on for a comprehensive guide to music marketing.



PART 1: BUILDING A FOUNDATION

Let's start by laying the groundwork for your strategy. We'll explain what marketing is (and isn't), then discuss how to build a brand, set goals, and get to know your audience so you have a strong foundation to build on.

WHAT IS MUSIC MARKETING?

Music marketing is a strategic and long-term process, wherein an artist employs a strategy to promote their music, grow their audience, and reach their career goals over time. This requires developing an artist brand and story and sharing it across channels to build a fanbase. Music marketing is much more all-encompassing than music promotion, which is a series of tactics intended to drive certain actions around your music.

MUSIC MARKETING IS:

- ✓ Telling your story with clarity and consistency across formats
- ✓ Reaching the right people at the right time, not just more people at any time
- ✓ Creating a journey for fans to follow, from first-time listeners to die-hard fans

MARKETING IS NOT:

- ✗ Posting without strategy just to "stay active"
- ✗ One-off stunts with no follow-up
- ✗ Promotion over community-building

PART 1: BUILDING A FOUNDATION

HOW DO I BUILD AN ARTIST BRAND?

The anchor of your music marketing is your artist brand. When a new fan discovers your music, they'll get to know you further through extensions of your brand – your bio, interviews, social media presence, merch designs, overall aesthetic, and so on. Marketing is about building relationships and your brand is a central point of reference.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ARTIST BRANDING →

DEFINE CLEAR, MEASURABLE GOALS

FOR YOUR ARTIST CAREER

With a strong artist brand in place, next define your goals. What are you hoping to accomplish by marketing your music?

A vague goal like “grow my audience” is too broad and lacks metrics to define success.

Follow the SMART framework to ensure your goals are practical and impactful:

S Specific	What exactly do you want to achieve?
M Measurable	How will you track it?
A Achievable	Is it realistic based on your resources?
R Relevant	Does it support your music career?
T Time-bound	What's your deadline?

SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- "Gain 500 TikTok followers in 60 days"
- "Get added to 15 user-generated Spotify playlists"
- "Sell 25 shirts from my Bandcamp in 30 days"



PART 1: BUILDING A FOUNDATION

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Once you have your goals, consider your audience. Who will you be marketing your music to?

Emerging artists often try to market their music to everyone. Marketing at this stage can feel like shouting into a void as your engagement and conversion rates will suffer from a lack of targeting. That's why it's crucial to know your fans and channel that knowledge into your approach.

ANALYZE WHO YOUR FANS ARE:

What online platforms are they most active on?

How did they discover your music and stay engaged?

What kind of content resonates most with them?

What other artists do they listen to?



Emerging artists should start experimenting with promotion and take detailed notes about what's working. If you're playing your first show, take note of who attends and what tactics led to ticket sales. If you're posting about an upcoming release, identify what content formats and messaging resonated most. No matter the size of your fanbase, be observant and channel insights into action.

10 WAYS TO FIND YOUR FANS →

PART 2: PLANNING A STRATEGY

With a strong foundation in place, you can begin planning your strategy to accomplish your goals. In this section, you'll learn how to evaluate different marketing channels, plan campaigns, optimize for conversions, and track your progress.

CHOOSE YOUR CHANNELS

First, choose which channels and platforms you want to market your music through. Consider what platforms play well to your strengths. What kind of content feels authentic to you?

	Best for long-form content like music videos, vlogs, and live performances. Also supports short-form content via YouTube Shorts.
	Ideal for visually driven content, including photos, Reels (short-form videos), Stories, and live streams. Great for dynamic brand building across content formats.
	Designed for short-form, trend-based video content. Great for reaching new audiences quickly and encouraging engagement through challenges or sounds.
	Best for real-time updates, quick thoughts, text-based content, and fan engagement through polls and replies.

These are just a few of the top social media platforms to get you started. There's a platform out there for everyone! Remember, it's best to be consistently active on one or two, rather than inconsistent and spread thin across many.

PART 2: PLANNING A STRATEGY

PLAN, DON'T JUST POST: MARKETING

CAMPAIGNS THAT BUILD

Once you've chosen your platforms, it's time to plan your content campaigns. Here are some resources that can help:



**PLAN A SOCIAL
MEDIA CAMPAIGN** →



**PLAN A MUSIC
RELEASE CAMPAIGN** →



**CREATE AN EPK &
PITCH THE PRESS** →

Ensure your marketing efforts serve your music by planning content around your calendar of releases, tours, merch drops, and more. Alongside campaigns for music releases or tours, consider other tactics you need to thread through to reach your goals.

You may need to line up resources and tools to help you execute on your strategy. Consider whether you might need any of the following:

- A photographer
- An email management platform and/or website platform
- A video editor or audio engineer
- A merch seller, designer, and printer
- An artist manager to help you balance marketing with other aspects of your career

PART 2: PLANNING A STRATEGY

STAY AUTHENTIC AND MARKET TO SERVE

YOUR CAREER, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND

When content creation starts to feel like a slog, it's often because it's not aligning with your activities as an artist. Fortunately, there are ways you can organically promote yourself and execute a marketing strategy without straying too far from your typical to-do's as an artist.

Consider some of the ideas below.

Document studio time:

Great pictures and short-form content can come from idle time in the studio. Film your bandmate tracking a part, interview your singer, capture b-roll, and more.

Network with press:

Stay up to date on music news and find some voices in the press who resonate with you. If an article clicks, reach out to the journalist and build a relationship. It will come in handy when you have a release ready.

Send song sketches, demos, and alternative versions to fans:

Workshopping a tune or landed on a new demo? Your fans might love hearing a song in the works or an alternative version of a previously released track.

Play live:

There's no replacement for performing live. Concerts win you fans and keep your music top of mind. Bonus points for capturing soundboard audio and filming sets.

Build community:

Many artists make the mistake of focusing their marketing solely around self-promotion. Instead, look outwards to your local or online music scene and show support for others. That can organically spark curiosity in your own music and lead to rewarding relationships.

PART 2: PLANNING A STRATEGY

CREATE A MARKETING FUNNEL THAT CONVERTS NEW LISTENERS INTO FANS

Once you have a content plan, it's important to optimize it for converting your audience. You don't want to launch a campaign and execute a bunch of tactics without a clear vision of how you'll reach new audiences, convert them into fans, and retain them for the long run.

LEARN HOW TO BUILD A FAN FUNNEL →



PART 2: PLANNING A STRATEGY

WHAT METRICS SHOULD I TRACK?

Take a data-informed approach to your marketing to measure progress against goals and save yourself time and guesswork on strategic decisions.

Here are some other key metrics you should consider tracking on email, socials, and streaming platforms. For a deeper dive on music metrics you should measure, read our guide [here](#).

EMAIL

- Email list growth over time: Understanding the growth of your email audience can help you identify what events drive signups
- Open and click rates: Identify whether your content is resonating at the subject line and copy levels
- Unsubscribes: How many fans have unsubscribed from your emails? Are certain sends diminishing interest?

STREAMING

- Monthly listeners: How many fans listen to your music on a monthly basis?
- Streams by song: What are your most and least popular songs?
- Playlist placements: What songs are being playlisted and where?

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Follower count: Is content helping grow your following?
- Impressions: How many people is your content reaching?
- Engagement: Is your content resonating with the audience it reaches?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT KEY METRICS](#) →

PART 3: LAUNCHING YOUR STRATEGY

Once you have your strategy, it's time to put it in action! There's no better way to test your new strategy than by marketing a new release.

MARKETING WHEN YOU'RE NOT RELEASING MUSIC

You might be reading this at a time when you're not planning a release. For a lot of artists, marketing during this time can be difficult. But it's crucial to maintain momentum and nurture your fanbase so that they're already engaged when it comes time to market your next "big thing." Here are a few approaches you can take.

LIFESTYLE

Share relatable, day-to-day moments. Post about a new skill you're learning, an idea you're exploring, a recent trip, or something you're creatively workshoping. This kind of content feels especially refreshing for fans between release cycles.

CREATIVE

Stay visible with lighter drops like b-sides, alternate versions, remixes, or covers. Spontaneous releases keep fans engaged and build momentum without the pressure of a full campaign.

COMMUNITY

Promote others as much as yourself. Show up at shows, repost fellow artists, and seek out collaborations — staying active in your scene strengthens your audience and your career.

CONCLUSION

THINK LONG GAME

Congratulations! You're ready to start planning and executing a professional music marketing strategy. As you go, keep your long-term vision front and center. Define what success truly means to you, focus on the channels and content that fuel your creativity, and avoid spreading yourself thin. Consistency beats perfection. Steady output builds trust with your fans, signals momentum to algorithms, and keeps your marketing moving forward. And don't forget to learn as you go. Track your results and identify what strategies resonate with your fans. Empowering yourself to make smarter, time-saving marketing decisions frees you up to focus on your music.

Ready to put what you learned into practice? Start your next release with CD Baby and turn your marketing goals into real momentum for your music.



GET STARTED 