

INSTRUCTIONS: Develop a marketing funnel strategy for the following hypothetical new artist: Marwood is a relatively new artist that is working on an initial EP, has some local following and local shows but no extensive touring, and expectations of an EP rollout within the next year. Marwood believes their live sound and experience is where they shine. They want to capture their growing following, capitalize on their strong live shows, and set the stage for a larger tour that can help Marwood expand their audience and also generate increased merchandise revenue.

***Preframe:** It's tricky to formulate a strategy with limited information on Marwood like the authenticity behind why he got started in music or the genre and/or style he plays. It also isn't clear whether Marwood is a girl, boy or part of a band – so for the sake of completing the assignment, I will go with Marwood is male.*

Marwood's Marketing Funnel:

Considering an Artist Plan That Tackles All Stages

Introduction

When exploring the marketing funnel strategy for hypothetical, new artist Marwood, I generally would focus on low-hanging fruit first with a bottom-up approach, meaning work on the people who are closest to monetization and how one can get them over that finish line. Also, what is the use of filling a pipeline if there is a leak? Think if we built our pyramids top to bottom – I imagine this would be a trickier endeavor. Get one's foundation solid and build off of that. Due to this

perspective, I plan a bit differently than others by bringing the Monetization side of the funnel into question first.

Monetization

I would explore what monetization ideas have been successful in the past for artists with a focus on increasing live show audiences and merchandise sales. The artists that come to mind – and nicely from this lesson – are Kid Rock as well as Macklemore and Ryan Lewis.

Kid Rock's strategy¹ included thinking like a fan by lowering the costs associated with ticket prices and concessions in order to fill more seats as well as increase the per person concession sales. The quantity would bring in more revenue in the end. Part of **Macklemore and Ryan Lewis' manager's strategy**² was picking smaller venues that sell out to psychologically give the sense of FOMO, high popularity and demand that would eventually fill larger stages/venues. Both these approaches seem to be a potentially good fit for Marwood as well.

Engagement

I believe in the 80/20 rule where 80% of your business comes from 20%³. And again, taking a bottom-up approach, I believe if one ultimately engages their current fans positively and frequently, they will help that artist tackle awareness through word-of-mouth. So that's why Engagement is the next part of the funnel I would explore.

¹TEDx Talks. (2014, July 24). *Think like a fan | Bob Moczydlowsky | TEDxHollywood* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPVTBZ5bKXM>

² Quillen, Zach. *n.a.* [Video]. Berklee Online. (n.d.). <https://bocce.online.berklee.edu/#/17501/OMBUS-240.03/17582/4/live-events-and-touring>

³ Tardi, C. (2023, December 19). *The 80-20 Rule (aka Pareto Principle): What It Is, How It Works*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/1/80-20-rule.asp>

While the music on the EP is not formally released yet, there are obviously songs being played at the live shows and if individuals are getting notified that he might play songs they have never heard from the upcoming EP, that could be a draw. Marwood might invite some of his core fans to create videos to a particular portion of an upcoming single in a **TikTok contest** with the winners being featured in a video screen behind him as he plays at the shows. Never underestimate the power of UGC content⁴.

Gamification is a great engagement tactic. While the Boards of Canada approach to their release was pretty successful⁵, a lot of this will come down to understanding Marwood's audiences' psychographics to what the clues are and how they should be delivered. But the reason I think this could also play well as a tactic for Marwood is his fans are probably mostly local. It's a lot more cost effective to hide clues nearby, and it creates a bond with others who recognize those places or live in the same area. These could be clues to themes of the upcoming songs he will be releasing. If tying back into live shows, maybe the hints are at the local venues when he is playing. This would give both new and potential fans another reason to come out to the shows, even if someone has seen him play before.⁶

Crowdfunding, similar to how Amanda Palmer has done in the past with Kickstarter⁷, might also be worth considering. I love ideas that serve dual purposes of monetization (i.e. gaining funds) but also finding a creative way to engage one's audience. The success will, again, be largely determined on psychographics and motivations of the audience base to understand what

⁴ Admin. (2021, September 23). *Musicians' Guide to making the most of user-generated content - Hypebot*. Hypebot. <https://www.hypebot.com/hypebot/2021/09/musicians-guide-to-making-the-most-of-user-generated-content.html>

⁵ *bocpages - the unofficial Boards of Canada fan wiki*. (n.d.). Bocpages - the Unofficial Boards of Canada Fan Wiki. https://bocpages.org/wiki/Tomorrow%27s_Harvest_Viral_Marketing_Campaign

⁶ This plays into the Re-Engagement section of this paper later.

⁷ *Engadget is part of the Yahoo family of brands*. (2019, December 13). <https://www.engadget.com/2019-12-13-amanda-palmer-patreon-kickstarter-social-media.html>

would be of value to them. Marwood may be given an option to participate in deciding the artwork or creative direction of the video that will go along with the EP, so both potential and current fans feel personally invested. Perhaps, they get a discount on (or early access to) the EP. But if we are keeping this in line with Marwood's strengths and goals, it would maybe make more sense to have discount tickets on live shows, a less expensive livestream option for those who can't attend on a date he is performing, or a discount on merchandise.

Acquisition

It is interesting how marketers separate the stages of Acquisition from Engagement. I break it out more like top-level engagement vs mid-funnel engagement. It's more the type of effort given and content you are considering that distinguish the two stages. For instance, at the top of the funnel, it may be more automated while mid-funnel, one might take the time to research someone and really personalize their outreach. At both stages, you are looking for a conversion – but acquisition is more the first capture of an email on conversion.

There's also a difference between trying to acquire a cold prospect proactively rather than trying to secure an email from someone who seems to have shown some interest on social or your website. A cold prospect often needs to be put through the Awareness stage first, while someone who has learned a bit more might truly be at an Acquisition stage. These nuances are important to understand.

It's also important we ensure Marwood has a **website** that is easy to navigate and updates frequently with content to keep people coming back for more, since his EP has not been released so he may not have much music to stream yet. If some of this content is free, you might be able to hook someone into filling out a newsletter to get more exclusive content.

Provide value first and give a sneak peak before going in for an ask. It's worth noting that a website can serve multiple stages of the funnel – because from an SEO standpoint, if someone is searching a particular keyword and a blog post you wrote comes up, this may be more brand awareness because they didn't know you existed before and then they start exploring more parts of your website.

Authenticity of Marwood's journey and brand identity in the **quality content** produced – whether directly on his website, social or another channel – is extremely important, because people can often see right through when someone isn't being authentic. As an example, if we look at some of Billie Eilish's behind-the-scenes footage⁸, one might notice that it's not overly glamorized – there's one scene where she literally is in a chair admitting she has done nothing that day except maybe take a shower and think about burritos. But one can bet that makes her more relatable to her fans.

Remember, just because one posts, doesn't mean people will come and this is where knowing the persona of your audience and potentially serving targeted ads comes in. If low ad spend, especially **retargeting ads** where someone has shown some behavioral interest – such as those who visited the website – as opposed to just demographic targeting may have greater impact. On the other side of the coin, some see ads as intrusive – if Marwood is a punk rocker, for instance, this approach may be frowned upon.

Rather than taking people directly to your website with ads, one may take someone to a **lead magnet** on a dedicated landing page. What this means is taking them to a less “hot” offer. It might be a bit much to ask someone to pay for a ticket to see me on tour, but they may be

⁸ Fuse. (2018, August 29). *From Soundcheck to Stage with Billie Eilish at Chicago's House of Blues | Fuse* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFAPdEMY1dg>

willing to provide an email to get something like a book on “how to maximize your concert season experiences on a budget” – which is not a bad idea for someone like Marwood who plays a lot of live shows and is trying to get more attendees at them.

Awareness

We already spoke to the power of superfans in driving awareness, but the **Press** can play a key role in awareness as we know and building up the interest that leads to consumption of content and eventually, acquisition. Maybe giving them an early exclusive listen to the songs on the EP and letting them interview you – as the Press always wants to be ahead of the curve and first to write on someone or some topic – could get the buzz going. It might even help to give them a free ticket to one of Marwood’s live shows since that is where he truly shines as the Press will want to see the best of the best from an artist.

Press doesn’t have to be traditional outlets; it can also be playlist curators who will want to know when the EP is dropping or blog writers in more niche music communities who are more well-respected. It’s important for us to understand where the audience consumes content – what outlets do they go for information – rather than trying to mass pitch. Where we might start is more grassroots with radio stations and outlets in Marwood’s own backyard. Drum up new awareness from locals who may not know about him and then determine which geos tend to most engage on the website – or eventually once the EP is released, stream Marwood’s music – so one might be able to expand press efforts in those areas.

Another thought is to think about **collaborations** with others (brands or other artists) who have a similar audience – now Marwood and the collaborator can both partake in eyeballs with each other’s audiences. And there is a sense of trust or confidence the listener/watching might have

thinking, “if Jame likes Marwood and I like Jame, then I may also like Marwood.” This exposure can mean more than coming from a far removed press outlet or some writer one has never heard of.

Finally, there are **display ads**, before we know enough to use retargeting. And once an email has been retrieved, that honestly is the most cost-effective way to engage with someone. So one might say, this is the best use case for ads so long as served up on sites Marwood’s audience frequents. Though it can be debated that multi-touch on various platforms along a journey that is not linear to keep Marwood top of mind, couldn’t hurt.

Re-Engagement

We can bring this full circle with a discussion of Re-Engagement. After monetization, then what? Although I covered many engagement opportunities that could resonate with various levels of potential fans -> super fans, it’s wise not to underestimate the power of the feedback loop – getting ideas from those being willing to contribute on how one should engage with their fans. We just ask as opposed to assuming what might resonate. These current fans become Marwood’s brand ambassadors.

If someone is a superfan, has attended your shows and bought merch, we want them to continue doing so. When they buy a ticket or purchase merchandise, you’re able to get an email to re-engage these individuals for future shows and purchases – so long as you ensure they know they are opting in beyond the initial purchase so they aren’t surprised. Now, you can find complementary items or serve up deals on frequently purchased items. This is what is known as **upsells or cross-sells**. Scenario 1: Fan bought a t-shirt, but maybe a jacket would go well with it if you showcase an image of someone wearing both in an email. Scenario 2: Fan buys a ticket

to see Marwood, but we ask them if they want a discount price on merchandise to wear to the show so they don't have to wait in line at the show.

In short, the lifetime value of current superfans is unmatched, so I'd be remiss to not mention.

Conclusion

A final point in regard to Marwood's funnel, it's important to understand dependencies and time commitments for each task one sets out to do as well as where one will get the most bang for their buck. This ensures that a team is able to work efficiently and effectively even with low bandwidth and spend. Not all content pieces, channels and audience types are created equal. Continuing to test, let the data drive, and optimize is important for ensuring we meet the changing needs of Marwood as he develops as an artist.