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Building a Record Label Website in an Evolving Music Industry

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Abstract

The basis of my capstone project is to build a website for my record label Play-Yah Records. My major focus for the website is to find more options for monetization for the bands on the label. During the process I conducted research on NFT's, music licensing, website construction, logo design, and made-to-order merchandise. I am excited about what I have learned in this project and I can't wait to share it with you.

Keywords: Merchandise, Monetization, Vanguard, Record label, website, NFTs, merch,

Introduction to your Capstone Project

Section 1: Innovative Approach

I have been involved in the music industry for the last 20 years. During this time I have mostly worked as a creative (producer, audio engineer, touring musician). This creative perspective has led me on many adventures and has dominated my mindset for so long that I felt weak in other areas, i.e. business, finances, and education. Recognizing my weaknesses led me to enroll at Boise State to learn an integrative approach to solving my problems. Following the instruction I received in the past year I was able to approach this project with a different perspective.

My other perspective is from a business and monetization mindset which led to really good results. I started the project by researching music licensing and NFT's. It was extremely eye-opening to find different potential revenue streams and approach them with a creative mindset. The most effective revenue stream that I found is the made-to-order merchandise page. It was really fun working on logos and finding old t-shirt designs to bring back to life. I have already sold four items which is a major improvement from zero.

My project is how can I build a website for my record label that solves the problem of creating more income for the bands. I chose this capstone because my label has not had a website for the past 5 years. I wanted to combine my passion for music and my record label and integrate it with this capstone project. The stakeholders are the bands on the label, potential fans, myself and my partner. The impact this project has on my stakeholders is financial.

I have researched a lot of different YouTube channels about starting record labels from people of all different backgrounds and genres of music. YouTube turned out to be the most

current source of information and reviews. I also reached out to different friends in bands to see what they were looking for in a record label website. They had a lot of different perspectives on how you can market your music and some insightful ideas and approaches. One of the ideas I focused on was the made-to-order merchandise websites. I chose Teepublic after researching different reviews on YouTube. I have also received a lot of help from my girlfriend who is a professional graphic designer.

My first twenty hours of the project were dedicated to innovative research. One thing I learned is that creating NFTs for music is not prevalent yet (although close). A new NFT music site I am keeping an eye on is <https://www.melos.studio/>.

I also went through Google Scholar for my resources and I ran into some issues with the articles being dated. I didn't find anything post 2014; the music industry has changed so much since then. I finally ended up calling a couple of different music licensing companies. The first one was Taxi, and the second one was Music Gateway. I asked about umbrella deals with artists (deals that would cover every artist on the label) and they both told me they only represent individual artists. I realized that my best approach is to focus on my own music and learn more about the business process so I could pass this information on to my bands. I ended up signing up with a company called [Audio Socket](#) and I am waiting to hear if I am going to become one of their exclusive artists.

Section 2: Emotional Intelligence

While I was doing research, I realized that it was a great opportunity for me to learn how I could make my label more popular. I had to come to terms with my weaknesses and a lot of frustration when I couldn't get a music licensing agency to rep the whole label. It was also disappointing to learn that NFTs were not ready to be implemented in the industry.

I felt this frustration affected my enthusiasm for the project. Becoming more self-aware helped me to deal with the difficult emotions and stay positive. I started to look at this problem as a potential opportunity where I could help other musicians deal with the same feelings. I had to transition the project slightly and was able to implement a lot of good ideas into my site like made-to-order merchandise and monetized streaming links to YouTube and Spotify. Also, I am using myself as a guinea pig in dealing with licensing companies so I can help the bands on my label.

My proposal changed during the capstone project due to this self awareness. Looking back, I was trying to jam a circle into a square hole. I felt overwhelmed by the amount of time the research was taking and also that I had to learn new aspects of the business. But in the end, I was appreciative of learning new ways to make money in the music industry. It has been my passion for years and I have been lucky enough to make a living off of it. The major part of my frustration is due to learning how to manage my time while traveling and working from home.

Section 3: Creative Thinking

I was initially discouraged with my creative ideas and not finding the solutions I was hoping for, so I focused on work that I could accomplish and it turned out to be very productive. I started by focusing on tasks that I could accomplish like building the framework and securing the domain for the website (<https://www.playyahrecords.com/>) I also decided to go with a made-to-order merch site (<https://www.teepublic.com/user/play-yah-records>).

I ordered a sweatshirt and a few t-shirts to test out the merchandise before I published it on the site. The quality was nice and I thought the colors and designs came out really great. I also started working on band t-shirt logos that are not on the site. I have been in a lot of bands so I started uploading old logos and making t-shirts for the new logos. I also added the logo for one of my audio engineering client's record label, "Cha Cha Project Recordings."

I think my approach is unique because I am monetizing merchandise from past bands that I was a part of. I took advice from my partner, band members, colleagues, and my girlfriend, who helped me with the graphic design aspect. I completed a [branding](#) questionnaire that she gives her clients in order to come up with a unique brand identity. It helped create a professional website with branding that was memorable and cohesive. I normally would wait for ideas to spawn versus actively researching for inspiration. I found the [Pinterest boards](#) helped to get me focused and inspired about the project.

Section 4: Your Innovative Solution

The process involved a lot of research and forced me to learn about the design process. It exposed me to a new way of thinking about visual design and marketing. I have also set up an online store on Teepublic. I enjoyed making the designs and ordering the samples.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to pursue more information about music licensing companies. I made a submission for my own music to a site called Audio Socket. They offer two different deals, one is an exclusive deal where they find licensing opportunities and split the proceeds with you, 50/50. The other is a non-exclusive deal where the split is 75/25 (in their favor). I chose to submit for the exclusive deal because I think dealing with one company will be easier to stay organized and a 50/50 split is a better deal.

As part of the submission process, I had to post some of my new music on Soundcloud. It has been a long time since I have posted anything, and it felt good to share my music with others. I also make video art pieces to go with each song. I use a video mixer where I manipulate the color and the visuals. The mixer is circuit bent so it makes one of a kind patterns and alters the colors in a really cool way.

Currently the links for the songs are private but I have added them below to this project. Audiosocket will take up to 90 days to see if my music is worthy. If not, I will find another site.

[Zak Mouton - Hey Slydog](#)

[Zak Mouton ft. Maurice Smith & Tran Squared - If There is Love](#)

[Zak Mouton - What I need](#)

[Zak Mouton - Neon Wave](#)

My solution is innovative in that I am using myself as a guinea pig. I am learning so many new avenues and techniques to monetize my music and my art. It is eye opening to see how many opportunities there are for passive income using the music I've produced. I am really proud about the new knowledge I am acquiring. Originally I wanted to be a musician in a successful band. My passion for music has led me on a journey to become a studio engineer, producer, and a record label owner. I remember that when I first started, everything in music seemed like a puzzle.

I think pursuing the business side of music has led me to become more knowledgeable about all the different opportunities that are out there. I no longer feel intimidated by submitting my music and being judged because I realize it's all business and music is subjective. Not everyone will like what you create but you never know if they will like it unless you put it into the universe!

I think the biggest change I would implement in this capstone project would be to involve more people. I think a group effort would definitely enhance innovation. The research has been overwhelming at times. If I had a bigger budget I would have loved to hire a web designer to really enhance the website. I always imagined a pinball game interface for the label that you could actually play. If my efforts at monetization are successful I can afford to get one and put these ideas in place.

Section 5: Results

I think the biggest benefit to my stakeholders is that they will have a website that features their music with focused branding and opportunities for monetization. The site will give them something to show promoters, booking agents, fans, and venue owners. It will also offer fans an opportunity to purchase merchandise like t-shirts, hoodies, and coffee mugs. The site will have links to our social media and Spotify streams for the bands' music. It will also offer my partner and I income opportunities through merchandise sales and Spotify streams.

This project will have a positive impact on the stakeholders. In the past we did not have a great web presence even though we had a lot of good content. Fans now have a place to find out more about the label's music and the videos we have released. With a website, we now have a place to feature our music, videos, designs, and the ability to connect with fans.

I also did a lot of research on music licensing. I found some new sites for NFT's and will be ready for those opportunities as they get more developed in the future. I will continue to use myself as a guinea pig to learn more about the different and new monetization opportunities offered in the music industry.

Section 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, I chose the action project template because I wanted to combine my passion for my record label and make something that will be useful long after this class is over. I made a website for this project and did a lot of research as part of the integrative learning process. I learned about the music licensing process and the different companies that are involved as licensing agents. That led me to looking at how NFTs are a new way to monetize music and help emerging artists get their name out there. I also focused on learning about web

design on Squarespace, branding, and made to order merchandise sites like Teepublic. It was interesting to see all the different options musicians have to monetize their music and implement them into my website. In doing this project I realized how much work I could accomplish if I approach it in an integrative manner. I think the biggest challenge I overcame was emotional. During this project my initial ideas with NFT's and licensing were not possible and I got frustrated. Writing out my emotions in the emotional intelligence section of the project really helped me to turn my whole attitude around and focus on the work that I could accomplish, while appreciating the fact that I was learning about new ways to monetize in the music industry.

The other major obstacle I had to overcome was time management. During my capstone, I visited my 93 year old great aunt in North Carolina, was the best man in a wedding for my friend in Arkansas, started working on projects for the New York Times, and visited my parents in Louisiana. It has been a busy seven weeks and I am really proud of the work I accomplished while fulfilling all of these obligations.

I definitely think my stakeholders have benefited from this project. My business partner, bands on the label, and fans all have a website where they can connect, promote, and share. I hope they all feel part of the music community in Southern California when they visit the site.

Some skills I picked up in this project are web design, visual art creation, music licensing, teamwork, and project management. My girlfriend was a huge help as reaching out for help is not usually my strong point. She is amazing at branding and design and has really helped me create an identity for Play-Yah Records that I connect with. Without her on my team, the website would not have made it far past the wireframe stage. I feel that my overall skill as a record label owner has increased dramatically due to the new found knowledge I have collected during this

project. I think the step by step process I went through in the integrative learning process from BAS 492 into BAS 495 really helped with project management. I will implement these steps from now on when taking on major projects like this in the future.

I am happy to have a website that is functional and includes merchandising. I really like the design and I have gotten positive feedback so far.

www.playyahrecords.com

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[Audio Socket](#)

[Squarespace site builder](#)

[Taxi](#)

[Music Gateway](#)

[Melos Studio](#)