

Act Name: _____

Date: _____

Key Ideas in this Toolkit

Treating your relationships with venues as a partnership, to make both businesses successful.

How to find and approach a venue for your gig.

Specific points to address when booking and performing live gigs.

Although some things will be the same for covers gigs, this toolkit specifically addresses originals gigs.

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Overview

It is really important for both venues and musicians to understand the constraints and challenges of the other.

Because every situation is unique, communication is the key to achieving this.

Venues need to be aware that running a business as a musician is a difficult road to hoe and at times it seems an impossible task. How can you make a living as a musician with seemingly so many obstacles to overcome??

Venues are not (or at least should not be) one of these obstacles and should be looked at as your allies.

The Venue's Point of View

It is important for musicians to realise even venues who support original music, for example: the Temple, The Kings Arms, Bar Bodega (Wellington), Indigo (Wellington), The Arc (Dunedin) are in the business of selling drinks and/or food and coffee.

This is how venues pay expenses and venue owners and managers earn a living. Even though all these venue owners and managers are passionate about NZ music, it is important for musicians to understand venues **must** turnover considerable amounts of money **just** to keep the venue operating.

This also means that venues' main focus is on the operation of the bar / restaurant / café, not unfortunately, **you**. Bear this in mind when communicating with venues:

- avoid peak times
- realise venues who focus on original music may have up to 60 performers each week, this means you should take the responsibility of communicating with the venue, and not rely on them to contact you

Contrary to (some) popular opinion venue owners do not make bucket loads of money at the expense of musicians. In fact most venue owners, do not earn what would even approach minimum wage, and generally work at least 60 hours per week, if not, more like 100.

If you cancel a gig at late notice, or do not promote a gig sufficiently, it doesn't mean the venue hasn't made any money, it means the venue has lost hundreds, or possibly thousands of dollars.

All the costs of running a venue need to be paid before such times as the venue owner can get paid. This includes:

Wages	Repairs & maintenance	Equipment hire
Rent	Rates	Eft-pos fees & rental
Electricity	Water rates	Glassware & crockery
Telephone	Legal fees	Body corporate
Advertising	Accountants fees	GST
Licenses	Cleaning materials	Tax
ACC levy		

to name just a few. These expenses will run into thousands of dollars each week.

These expenses remain much the same regardless of whether \$10 is taken over the bar or \$10,000.

If these expenses are not covered from bar takings the venue owner needs to find the money from somewhere else to make up any shortfall, this can be extremely difficult and stressful.

Not to mention, venue owners have, in most cases, well into a 6 digit figure invested into their businesses.

You may be surprised to know that what venues pay for their stock (generally food and alcohol) is only marginally (maybe 5%) less than what you would pay when you go to the bottle store or the supermarket.

Venues supporting original live music are working in a particularly difficult market (although fortunately an expanding market) with limited (if any) industry support and a public which is often not interested in and/or doesn't know about unknown acts.

Both venues and musicians have huge constraints to work within so it is essential for both to understand you are all on the same side and should be working in partnership towards making all of these businesses as successful as possible.

What Should You Expect From The Venue In This Partnership?

- Professional attitude and conduct
- Communication before, during and after your gig
- Staff and management who are supportive of your music
- For the venue to adhere to the conditions of the negotiated contract
- A “safe” environment (eg how does the venue deal with drunks, hecklers etc)
- Depending on the venue, a certain amount of promotion of your gig
- Equipment provided by the venue to be in good working order
- Good level of customer service. How the customers are treated by the venue will reflect on you as a band, and people won't enjoy their experience if the customer service is poor

Promotion That Would Generally Be Done By The Venue

Promotion done by the venue reaches the ears of the **general public only**. Venues can not specifically target **your** fans (unless you are famous), it's impossible.

- Gig guides
- Display of your gig posters and flyers at the venue
- Any mailing lists the venue has (although be sure to provide the venue with a well written press release and interesting photo that will enthruse audiences to come along)
- Any website the venue has
- Fielding telephone and email enquiries that come direct to the venue – again you need to provide them with information so the venue can get enthusiastic about getting people along to see you
- If you have industry or important people you want to invite, ask the venue if they could provide some free drinks. It is generally advantageous for the venue to have these people there as well

What Should The Venue Expect Of You - The Performer?

Communication

- Depending on how far out the gig has been booked, phone or email one month out and one week out to confirm your gig and any gig details (see booking form)
- If the venue is supplying the doorperson, advise them of any people on your guest list
- Be easy to communicate with during the gig period (soundcheck to load out). Bear in mind, the operation of the venue will be the main focus of the venue staff during this period
- Have one point of contact for the band ensure all band members have been communicated with by that contact person
- Refer to “Getting the Basics Together “Toolkit
- Always announce your last song so bar person / tech can cue house music (ideally provide bar person and door person with a setlist)
- It’s a good idea, but is rarely ever done, to phone, email or send a card, to thank the venue for the gig
- This is also an ideal time to ask for feedback on your gig. What was particularly good? What can you improve?
- Some venues will welcome feedback as well. What was particularly good? What can be improved?

Professional Attitude And Conduct On And Off Stage

- **Be on time!** Allow extra time for travelling, finding parking and for things to go wrong
- No consumption of drugs and at most moderate consumption of alcohol before or during the gig
- For all band members to adhere to the conditions of the negotiated contract
- Don’t go into staff only areas without permission particularly behind the bar
- At the very least, be polite to the customers. Refer to the Promoting Live Gigs Toolkit for how you should really treat the customers. These people are your road to success.
- It’s a venue, not a practise room. Soundcheck before the venue is open / or check when is the appropriate time to soundcheck. Don’t “practise” or allow anyone to “jam”. This is a gig!

Equipment

- Ensure all of your equipment works properly and you have things like spare strings and batteries
- Treat any equipment owned by the venue carefully and make sure it is returned and in good order

Your Show

- You are there to entertain the audience, you need to put all your performance skills into use to create a show that will make audience members want to come back to the venue again as well as come back to see you play again

Promotion Of Your Gig

Do you want to be a successful professional musician or do you just want to play music for the pleasure it gives you?

Anyone who runs a successful business needs to market their products and services effectively. So, if you do want to be a professional musician, you need to treat **all** of your gigs as your product and promote each and every gig extensively.

Refer to the Promoting Live Gigs Toolkit for what you **must** do, to promote your gig.

Supply a press kit to the venue.

Check with the venue, what details they would like on your posters and flyers.

If you just want to play music for the pleasure it gives you, that's perfectly valid, but don't expect to gig at a venue; stick to playing for your friends, at home, at parties and maybe open mic nights. It is hard to promote yourself with any gusto and enthusiasm if you are not particularly concerned with the outcome. ***Venues should not have to finance your hobby.***

People do not come to a gig that hasn't been promoted.

You may be happy to play to a small audience, but the venue stands to lose hundreds or even thousands of dollars if you don't do your job properly, and promote your gig.

How Do You Go About Finding a Venue for Your Gig or Tour?

- The Internet
 - Temple website www.temple.co.nz
 - Other NZ music websites (most have links from the Temple website)
 - Search engines
 - Email discussion groups
- Gig Guides
- Music Directories (NZ Music Services Directory / The Index)
- Word of Mouth (**Networking** is of all importance in this industry)
- Look at other musicians' tour schedules
- Visitors Centres
- Radio stations that are "hooked into" NZ music and their community eg the bnet and Access radio

How to Approach a Venue for a Gig

Identify the venues you would like to perform at.

Think about:

- Is your style of music suitable for the venue?
- What do you have to offer them?
- What can they offer you?

If possible, visit the venue before approaching them for a gig, so you can get a “feel” for how they operate. This is a key part of building a relationship with the venue.

Think well ahead, many venues book at least 3 months out, so book your gigs well in advance. This will show your professionalism.

Avoid, at all costs, approaching them during peak times and other times of pressure eg just before opening.

This is dependent on the venue, but generally avoid walking in and asking for a gig.

If phoning, the conversation should start something along the lines of:

- “Hi, this is Joe Bloggs from such and such band. Could you please tell me who handles your live music bookings?” Then ask if you could speak to that person. If they’re not there, then find out the best time and method of communication.
- When you do get to talk to them, ask, “Is this a convenient time for you?” If not, ask when is. Make sure you get back to them when you said you would.

Then be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What is your music like? You **MUST** be able to give a clear, concise description of your music. Make it sound interesting.
- What other gigs have you done?
- How will you promote the gig and how many people will come to see you play?

If requested be prepared to provide them with a press kit (see Getting the Basics Together Toolkit).

Go through all the items on the Booking Form included in this toolkit.

Building a Relationship with the Venue

This is an important part of getting live gigs, although often forgotten.

You should be at **minimum**, doing the following:

- Be in (reasonably) regular contact with them. Don't book the gig 3 months out and then turn up on the night.
 - If the gig was booked a number of months out you should be in contact with them on a monthly basis, providing them with the required promotional material eg press kits, posters etc at the appropriate time.
 - Always contact the venue a week before the gig to confirm all the details.
- Promote hard and do a great gig!
- Be professional.
- Phone, email, or send a card to thank them after the gig and ask for feedback.
- If you live in the city where the venue is, go there as a punter. Take your friends.
- Recommend the venue to other people, both as audience members and bands.
- Include the venue (check with them first) on your Industry Mailing List (see Promoting Live Gigs Toolkit).
- Go to any open mic nights the venue might have, preferably on a regular basis.

Cancellations

Never take canceling a gig lightly. It should only be done in very severe circumstances. This is because:

- You will lose your credibility
- The venue will lose credibility, if its been advertising a gig that doesn't happen
- The venue could suffer a huge financial loss.

To avoid canceling gigs:

- Before booking the gig:
 - If you are serious about your career as a musician, your gig should take priority over everything else in your life eg family problems, work problems, relationship problems, social engagements etc. If you're not prepared to be this committed to what you do, don't book gigs at venues
 - Make sure you are available and nothing is likely to "come up"
 - Make sure all your band members are available and know how important the gig is
- Avoid dangerous sports
- Look after your health
- Be properly prepared for the gig and do your planning properly.

If you do need to cancel a gig:

- Let the venue know as soon as you do. Don't leave it an hour, a day, or certainly a week
- Apologise profusely and tell them why you must cancel
- Offer to arrange a replacement act (if you've been doing your **networking** this should be easy)

Things That You Should Negotiate/Communicate With The Venue When You Book The Gig

It is recommended that you use a booking form / contract when dealing with venues:

- Particularly a venue you haven't dealt with before
- When you are touring you have a record of all relevant details for every gig

Included in these notes is a sample booking form that you can adjust for your own requirements. This covers all aspects of your gig that should be negotiated well ahead of time with the venue.

Sample Booking Form

Booking Form for [insert your band name and logo here]

Band (or performer) details:

Performance Name:

Musical Description: Interesting, succinct 3-5 word description of your music here

Contact Person: ONE contact person only

Postal address:

Day telephone:

Night telephone:

Mobile:

Fax: If applicable

Email:

URL:

Venue Details:

Contact Person:

Address (postal):

Address (physical):

Day telephone:

Night telephone:

Mobile:

Fax:

Email:

Best method and time for communications:

URL:

Venue capacity and layout:

Liquor Licensing requirements eg R18

Gig Details

Day and date of gig:

Start time of performance:

Finish Time of performance:

Breaks:

Other performances on the same day/night:

Soundcheck / load in time:

Money and Rider Details

Fee:

Venue Hire:

Door Deal:

Door charge amount:

% split

Who provides doorman:

Who pays doorman:

Who provides float:

Policy on people who are already in the bar and/or regulars:

Guest list:

Door requirements: eg Liquor license restrictions, dress code, CD sales, mailing list
etc

Presales:

Will there be presales? Where from (venue / ticketing agent / the band)? How do customers buy presold tickets?

Meals:

Drinks:

Accommodation:

Parking:

Equipment and Personnel

PA, equipment, lighting, stage details:

Sound engineer:

Backstage, security, equipment storage:

Promotion

Venue's promotion:

Band promotion:

No of posters required:

Venue requirements for posters eg logo, address, website etc

Date required by:

Press / media contacts:

Cancellation procedure

Other

Smoking policy:

Dress code:

Noise restrictions:

Requirements as to music to play before, during, and after the gig:

Other comments:

Eg if it is a café, what time are meal times etc

Signed for venue:

Signed for band:

Date

Date