

Act Name: _____

Date: _____

Key Ideas in this Toolkit

- Promoting live gigs
- Building up a live following
- Taking advantage of all live gigs

NB: This toolkit does not cover the broader subject of marketing, branding and positioning although will touch on it.

Exercise:

Keep a note of every person who you speak to one day. How many were there?

Every single one of these people is a potential new fan!

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Musicians Career Development Programme Promoting Live Gigs Toolkit

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Overview

Your return on investment into promoting your gigs will be:

- More money from door sales, CD sales and merchandise sales
- Future gigs at that venue
- Other venues **inviting** you to play as opposed to you having to sell yourself to them
- More fans
- More personal and professionalism satisfaction
- Likelihood of media coverage
- More likelihood of being picked up by a record company, if that's one of your goals
- Higher profile performances

It doesn't matter how good you are, or how much of a kick arse gig you just did – if no-one is there to see you it

- hasn't done you any good (except for the experience gained)
- hasn't done the venue any good. It is an unfortunate fact that unless the venue turns over money, they cannot survive – in words of one syllable, you will not have a stage to play on!!!!

If you can get a good base of people at a gig, it will draw people in off the street. Once they can see its "happening" they just rock 'n roll in off the street. Very few people will come into an empty bar.

There are some very simple and cost effective ways of promoting your gigs:

Never half pie promote a gig. **Always** include all the tools in this kit.

Getting Yourself In The Right Headspace

If you have any “head” issues about self promotion, you will need to address them. Try:

- Affirmations
- Talking to other musicians who seem to have accomplished the self-promotion head-space.
- Focussing on your long term vision (see Goal Setting and Time Management Toolkit)
- Don't give yourself a hard time
- Ask for support from family and friends
- Surround yourself with positive people that have a “can-do” attitude. Lose any losers in your life.
- Give yourself rewards when you do something difficult

Do something EVERY day that will build up your live following.

Figure out how to describe your music. Use interesting words. Keep it brief.

EVERY person is important. Treat people as such (except the weirdoes). Adding one person to your list of contacts is a huge achievement and recognise it as such.

Realise that there will probably be the occasional gig that you do, that despite doing everything right, that has a poor turnout. This is the nature of the beast, DON'T convince yourself that promo is not worthwhile, congratulate yourself for doing a good job on promo, figure out what you could have done better and move on.

Make Every Show “Worth” Going To See.

All the promotion in the world WILL NOT work unless your “product” is worthwhile.

It doesn't matter if you are playing to one fan or a stadium, make your show a must-see.

Have a mull on this. What makes an audience member come back? There isn't one simple answer to this. But there are tons of ways to ensure people will want to see you play again and again.

Keeping people coming back again and again is not just about the music. It's about creating an experience for them, that they want to repeat.

Start by thinking about what makes YOU want to go and see a live show.

The Basics

- Make sure you are well practised and all your equipment sounds good
- Have spare strings, batteries etc
- Have a “plan” of how to deal with a broken string, technical difficulties etc eg ask the venue to put the house music on, have a song the band can play without the guitarist etc
- Soundcheck. Play at an appropriate volume
- Start on time
- Turn up and stay, sober and straight
- Thank people
- Never apologise
- Make the transition between songs smooth
- Ask the venue if you can provide your own pre-show, break and after-show music. Think about what music will create the right vibe

Audience Communication On Stage

- Work on your intros and outros
- Think of ways to involve your audience
- **Always** make sure **everyone** in the audience knows who you are. This can be achieved by:
 - Having a backdrop
 - Saying who you are several times during your performance. At minimum introduce yourself near the beginning of your set and at the end of your set
 - Having a support person hand out flyers for your next gig/s while you are playing
 - Asking the venue if you can put flyers on the tables. You may like to invest in some stands that you can put your flyers in
 - What else?
- Let your audience know when and where you are playing next
- Invite the audience several times to join your mailing list
- Let the audience know several times if you have CDs and other merchandise available

Keep It New And Exciting.

- Include new songs
- Think carefully about your set structure. For most people, write a set list
- You may need to be flexible on your set list though. Learn to read your audience and play what is going to work
- Give away free stickers, pencils, tapes, buttons, and compliments
- Have an onstage competition to win a CD (or tee-shirt etc)
- You are there to entertain, this will happen naturally if you are **having fun!!**
- What else?

Audience Communication Off Stage

Building up a live following is all about building relationships with your fans and potential fans.

So. You've just played your first ever gig, you had a blast and you feel great. A complete stranger comes up to you at the bar and congratulates you on your performance. What do you do?

- Communicate!
- Thank them right back. They came to watch you, they stayed for the duration, and they had the courage to step out of their world into yours and put themselves out on a limb.
- Find out their name and invite them to your next gig
- Ask them about themselves. At the very least this will make them feel important, and they will want to come and see you again and tell their friends. At best, they might be a want to sign you to a multi-million dollar deal
- Introduce them to any other fans who are around – that will give them another reason to turn up to your next show
- Add them to your mailing list

This is a really important part of building a live following. No band starts out with 100,000 fans unless they have a 12 part television series behind them.

- Make part of your live ritual a 'meet and greet' session at the end of every show
 - INVITE people to stay around after your gig and have a drink /coffee with you (as an added bonus, audience members will often want to buy you a drink!)
 - If you find this hard – set yourself little goals. Eg at the end of this gig I will introduce myself to 2 people. Step it up each time
- Remember people's names. If you are bad with names, invest in some memory training
- When people turn up who have been to gigs before, or that you have invited, acknowledge them and if possible have a chat. People like to go places where they know other people, they will feel important, because they know YOU. You are the star of the evening, because you are the performer.

Live Performance Is Visual As Well As Aural

- How can you make your live show more exciting to watch?
- Develop a stage persona. Keep it consistent with your style of music. Think about:
 - Stagewear, hair, makeup
 - Your manner
 - Your actions
 - What you say
 - How is your energy / stage presence?
- Consider gimmicks
- Lighting
- Stage "dressing"
- Even consider decorating the venue.
- What else?

The Kiss Story

There was a band in the early 70's, who'd been trying to make it for years. They had the songs, they were good live, but just couldn't get a break.

One day they decided to pool all their money and do one last big show. They booked a venue, one that they had no hope of ever filling, and organised a huge PA and lighting. They bought themselves some outrageous outfits and sussed out some scary make-up.

Then they put all their efforts into promoting the gig themselves. Before long a buzz was created, and come the night of the concert they had a capacity crowd. They played a kick arse show and became one of the most popular bands of that decade.

And Kiss are still pulling in the punters. True story my friends.

Phone Arouds:

The phone is the most simple and cheap way of advertising your gigs. If you aren't already using it you should know that many of your friends and acquaintances are missing out on seeing you play live.

An absolutely crucial part of your live gig promotion strategy:

Phone the people on your phone list EVERY time you have a gig. If they say no once, it doesn't mean they hate you, or don't like your music.

Encourage them to bring their friends along – make a night of it!!!

Remember to thank them when they turn up to your gig.

Who Should Be On Your Phone List?

Make a list of everyone you know that you can think of:



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Now add:

Family

Friends of your family



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Friends you haven't seen for a while

Friends of friends



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Workmates

Old workmates

Adding To Your Phone List

Carry your phone list with you AT ALL TIMES.

Make a point of adding to this list everyday. ASK people you meet, if they would like you to add them to your list of people to keep updated about gigs.

It's not as daunting as it sounds. Here is a conversation you could have in a bank for instance:

Bank Teller: Hello, how can I help you today?
You: Just a deposit.
Bank Teller: Certainly.
You: Do you like music?
Bank Teller: Yes, yes I do.
You: My band is playing on Friday night. Can I put you on our database and contact you with the details?
Bank Teller: That would be most propitious!!

You see? It's not tricky at all.

- Don't shy away from asking those who you think aren't interested, like the grumpy bus driver or 60 year old Chinese Takeaway owner
- To Joe Bloggs, you will be a bit of a star! They will be excited they have just met a musician
- Every time you do it you will get better at it, and it will become easier
- Expect that they will say "Yes!", but don't be disappointed or take it personally if they say no. Strange though it may seem, not everyone in the world is into live music.

Email Lists

Do you have an emailing list? If you don't you should start one now. Email is an easy, effective and cheap way of communicating with a lot of people.

A crucial part of your live promotion strategy.

Email lists also come in very useful for when you have a new CD or any other merchandise to sell.

If you don't own a computer don't worry. You can still set up an email address through Hotmail or Yahoo, and it's free. Just pay a visit to one of the many internet cafes and set yourself up.

If you don't feel confident on computers you can get one of their staff to help you. Before you know it you'll be an expert because **it's easy!!**

On the end of this toolkit you'll find a simple emailing list form. Start filling it up!

When Emailing About An Upcoming Gig, Include:

- A personal invite
- Some hype about the gig
- A description of your music
- A strong call to action
- A request for them to forward it on to anyone else who may be interested
- Day, date and time of the gig
- Venue name and details:
 - Address (and instructions of how to get there if its hard to find)
 - Phone number
 - Website
 - Email
 - Where people can find parking
 - A sentence or 2 about what the venue is like. Many people don't like going to new places because they don't know what to expect
- Ticket details: where/how to get tickets and the cost
- Any other gig details eg who else is playing, style of music
- Your details
 - Performance name
 - Phone numbers
 - Website
 - Postal address
 - Email

Some Do's And Don't For Email Lists:

- DO ask people if they want to be on there before you automatically subscribe them OR send them an introductory email saying you have included them asking them to reply if they don't want to be on your list
- DO have an unsubscribe option at the end of every email
- DO have a subscribe option, so anyone that gets a mailer (eg if its forwarded by someone else) knows how to subscribe
- DO use the BCC box so everyone on your mailing list CAN'T see everyone else's email addresses
- DO ask people to forward it on to friends
- DO (if your technology allows), personalise emails going out. A simple way to do this is a mail merge using word
- DO keep your list up to date. If people ask to be removed, remove them IMMEDIATELY
- DON'T send attachments - always just text only
- DO include all your contact details, name, email, website, phone numbers and postal address on all your emails

Add To Your Email List At Every Opportunity:

- Invite people at **every** gig to join your email list. Do this several times
- Talk to your audience members in the breaks and after the gig
- Even bolder would be to get people to give you the email in the middle of the gig. You might make up an "Email Song" and add a traditional tune to the lyrics and then have someone pass around a guest book where everyone leaves their email address
- Invite people to join your mailing list from **EVERY PAGE** of your website
- Have it on you all the time. If you are looking for opportunities to add people to your mailing list they will happen every day
- Join email discussion groups. You can post your gigs and news on these
- Make sure everyone you know is on your mailing list (use the prompter list above in the "Phone Arounds" section)

Txting

Get people's mobiles and txt them.

- You can make 5 txts for free per day from the vodafone website if you have a vodafone (www.vodafone.co.nz)
- Check your mobile plan, you may well get a certain number of free txts a month
- Try www.mtnsms.com

Industry Mailing Lists

Keep industry people / media up to date with what you're up to. Send monthly or bi-monthly newsletters.

Don't go in with all guns blazing and demand things from them! Remember these are busy people who are worthy of your respect.

So approach these people politely, introduce yourself, tell them who you are. Ask them if they'd be willing to receive a monthly email about what's going on in your world.

Nine times out of ten they will say yes. You can now send out an industry newsletter once a month. Don't make it any more than that. The idea is to make these people aware of your existence, not inundate them with weekly gig guides and anecdotes. And don't forward blonde jokes to them!!!

Also have a good think about **why** you are approaching these people. Don't try and contact every radio station in the city. What kind of music do you play? Is it really worth chatting to the Programme Director from Mai Fm about your latest experimental punk CD? **Do** the promoters Slipknot's NZ tour need a solo acoustic opening act?

Do some research and make the best use of your time by contacting the people who can actually help you build your career.

- Keep this separate to your fan database
- Keep to one A4 sheet – preferably in colour
- You will have more success using snail mail and hard copy instead of emails
- Make it interesting and newsworthy
- Bear in mind **everyone** in the industry is extremely busy - keep in touch, but also be (reasonably) unobtrusive
- Send them free tickets to every show that is worthwhile them seeing. Ask the venue is you can send a bar tab/free drinks tickets. It is generally advantageous for the venue to have industry people there too.

Posters And Flyers

- Do posters and flyers for **every** gig
- A3/A2 glossies are great if you can afford them, if not, photocopies are a good alternative. Try coloured paper to help them stand out
- Try a slightly different angle on the poster/flyer thing eg postcards, laminated cards etc
- Posters can be pasted along the street, put into cafés and bars, music shops etc
- Posters and flyers not only promote a particular gig, but also give you valuable exposure and branding
- Make flyers that people can pick up & take away as well
 - Carry them on you **AT ALL TIMES** to give to **ANYONE** you talk to
 - Enlist the help of your friends and family – get them to carry some with them as well
 - Find out where there will be large gatherings of people interested in music and entertainment eg music in parks, concerts, movies. Hand out flyers
- Now take it one step further and get flyers made up for the next 2 or 3 gigs on your calendar. You can give these out to the people who come to your show, and ask them to take a few extra for their friends who couldn't make it
 - Include all your contact details and website on this flyer. They may want to book you for their next corporate function!
- Don't forget your mailing list! Post those flyers off to the people on it, put a note in with it if you want telling them how much you'd love to see them there

Artwork

- KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid)
 - It is a marketing tool – not fine art!!
 - Keep it as uncluttered as possible
 - 2 fonts maximum
 - Chose fonts that are readable
- Make sure it has all the info:
 - Acts performing
 - Act logos
 - Where
 - Get the venue's name right!
 - Use their logo if possible
 - Include the address
 - If room include venue phone number and URL
 - When
 - Time
 - Day of week eg Friday
 - Date and month eg 3 October
 - Your URL
 - Price?
 - Have a strong call to action
- Keep your branding consistent – people will start to recognise it
- For printed posters try one colour (heaps cheaper) – but don't pick black as your one colour.

Perform at Open Mic nights

Search them out and utilise them to your fullest advantage

- They give you valuable performing experience
- Many people only go to see acts they have seen before and liked
- A lot of audience members like going to open mic nights because of the diversity of talent and seeing a number of people perform. Use this to your advantage
- Use it as an opportunity to add people to your mailing list
- Use it as an opportunity to build up relationships with venues
- Use it as an opportunity to build relationships with other performers
- You can still earn money from them by selling CDs and merchandise
- Refer to the “Make Every Show Worth Going to See” section of this toolkit

Gig Guides

- Keep a database of gig guides and deadlines
- People can only come to see you if they know you're playing!
- Most gig guides are free
- Even if the venue does these – it's always a good idea for you to do your own
- This also gives you an opportunity to build up relationships with the media

Live To Airs / Radio Interviews

Many radio stations (particularly in provincial centres if you're touring) will do live to airs and interviews, particularly if you're promoting something special eg album release, fundraising gig.

Magazine / Newspaper Articles

Lifestyle magazines and ‘market segment’ publications eg maori and local newspapers and music magazines are all good places to get some exposure.

You will need some press “friendly” photographs, this is how the press get and keep people reading their publication:

- Make sure they are good quality
- Make them interesting!
- Action shots are great
- If not using an action shot – make sure you use props – ideally your instruments – that way the picture will immediately indicate what the story is about

Support Gigs For Better Known Bands

- Go to gigs, see which bands are suitable for your style of music. Be bold – approach them
- Read the music press, see which well known acts are going to be playing on your area. Approach the band (if you can get in contact with them) or the promoter

Get A Web Presence

Music Directories

Get a listing in the 2 main music directories. Send in photos as they always publish photos in the directories.

- NZ Music Services Directory - PO Box 10081 Dominion Rd
- The Index – PO Box 17-510 Greenlane – info@theindex.co.nz

Utilise Your Doorperson

- Get a stamp with band logo and URL on it for doorperson at gigs
- Get your doorperson to sign people up to your mailing list

Answerphone Message And Signature Files

ALWAYS advertise upcoming gigs on your answerphone and your signature file on outgoing emails.

Quickfire Promotional Show

Find a location near where you'll be performing, like a cafe or a park, where there will be a lot of people. Perform a couple of songs—just long enough to grab people's attention, hand out flyers, stickers etc.

Look After Your Fans and Look for Ways to Involve Them

- Make them feel important
 - Remember their names
 - Say hi and have a chat
 - Offer to autograph CDs
- Reward your best fans
 - Have a loyalty programme
 - Give them discounts
 - Develop a “Bring A Friend Strategy”
 - Offer them “Special Release” deals
 - Have freebies you can give away
- Run competitions
- Invite their feedback
- Invite their ideas. Publicly acknowledge them if you use an idea of theirs
- Make it easy for your fans to do business with you
 - Give them a money back guarantee
 - Be easy to contact
 - Make it easy for people to order CDs and merchandise
 - Consider becoming a credit card merchant so you can take credit cards for CD and ticket sales. Talk to your bank about this

Benefit Concerts

There are always benefit concerts happening, or why not create your own? Not only does this give you a chance to support a worthy cause, it's also a chance to build up your following, and it gives you a media angle.

Be Creative

You are a creative person!! Think of exciting ways to promote yourself and your gigs:

- Stunts (safety first)
- Sidewalk signs (watch any legalities)
- Interesting takes on flyers and posters
- Develop a “Bring a Friend” strategy

.....what else???????

Sample Email List

Insert your performance name and logo at the top

Name	Email Address