

The Music Managers Forum

Recommended Reading



Managers' Guide
to YouTube



In the report, [Dissecting the Digital Dollar Part 2](#), the MMF carried out in depth research into how streaming is licensed and the challenges this presents for artists & managers. When it comes to YouTube, which operates on an opt-out rather than opt-in basis for music uploads, many managers we consulted see better remuneration for the use of their artists' content as a top priority in 2016 and beyond - but they also recognise the Google-owned site's promotional power.

During the round tables it was found that most artists felt the need to engage with the platform, despite the current controversies surrounding licensing remuneration. Heritage artists, in particular, have commented they struggle to keep their content off the platform, even with the assistance of Content ID. However, through numerous cross-industry roundtables, many acknowledged that in building Content ID, YouTube had created a micro-licensing platform that enables rights owners to generate revenues from user-generated content that would not otherwise be accessible.

Through the report, the MMF has presented several recommendations around safe harbours (alongside numerous other issues) stressing that transparency and fair remuneration need to be across the whole value chain from Alphabet to artists (not just between DSPs and rights holders). We also re-affirmed our commitment to educate and support the management community to enable the growth and sustainability of artist-centric business.

With that in mind, we spoke to a handful of managers and music executives that have helped artists optimise their presence on YouTube in order to boost promotion and squeeze as much revenue from the platform under the current model as possible - at least until real change is achieved.

Quality is key

These days, a musician's creative output isn't limited to the studio or the live stage. There are more platforms than ever for artists to reach fans from and each is as important as the last. When it comes to YouTube, make sure you're putting as much care and effort into your video content as you would into the tracks for a new LP. Competition across the platform is fierce and you need to provide your fanbase with quality content if you want to stand out.

At management company Intune Addicts, Bob James looks

after a number of acts that are seeing their time and effort pay off on YouTube. One of the company's clients, musician Hannah Trigwell, has built a following of more than 400,000 subscribers over the years thanks to simple but high quality videos featuring cover versions of popular songs alongside original music and various vlog entries.

"Good doesn't go viral, great ideas go viral," says James. "The first thing, when trying to build your YouTube audience, is quality control. I think most people go wrong because they upload something that's just 'good' and expect it to take off."

That being said, Adam Cardew, digital director at Absolute, which Trigwell has chosen as her label services partner, assures artists and managers working to a budget that quality video content doesn't have to cost a fortune.

"That's a stumbling block for most artists," he says. "They either end up producing stuff that doesn't look good or they don't produce content at all because they don't think they can do it to a high enough standard. Creating good quality video and audio doesn't have to cost the earth, it's just about being inventive and finding out what your fanbase engages with."

YouTube itself offers access to facilities and resources for channel owners that have managed to build their fanbase to a certain level. A 'YouTube Space' has recently opened in London which offers a number of free classes, courses and workshops aimed at improving channel strategy and production skills.

There's also a production facility that is free to use, for artists with 10,000 YouTube subscribers or more, housing a range of the latest technology including VR, 360 cameras and spatial audio equipment.

You can apply to 'Unlock The Space' for your artist channel [here](#) and access the studio reservation tool to book a slot.

Put real effort into promoting your videos

Creating and uploading high quality video content is just the start. No matter how entertaining and compelling your YouTube videos may be, on a relatively new channel they are still just tiny splashes in a sea of content. 'Discovery' is a core component of most digital music platforms, but it



isn't something that happens naturally. It's up to artists, managers and the wider teams surrounding them to actively attract new fans through hard work.

Remember that a large portion of video views come from recommendation within YouTube itself, so it's important to make use of all of the platform's free promotional tools to optimise your channel and capitalise on discovery as well as direct search. Using features like annotations, end cards, translated metadata and playlists will all help drive discovery.

While YouTube is a promotion platform that can be exploited from your desk by sharing videos with

websites, blogs and influencers, the more traditional forms of promotion such as playing in front of live audiences still apply.

"Hannah Trigwell started busking to get an audience and then shared her videos," explains Bob James. "It was a long process, she built her audience over six years. Some people upload a video on YouTube and sit back and think 'Why aren't I famous?' It's the same with any promotion, you still have to get out there and get in front of an audience."

Uploading content regularly can also help fans find it. "You have to have a channel strategy," says Absolute's Cardew. "If you do a cover each week, then drop it on that same day

every week. If you do it every Friday, people will expect it every Friday and keep coming back."

And don't forget about analytics! YouTube offers granular detail about how and where your content is being viewed. Look for patterns in which songs did better than others and investigate why. Establish which times of the day or week are popular, and the kinds of devices your fans are watching on, and adapt your strategy accordingly.

Don't rely on ad revenue alone

Recent reports have talked about YouTube revenues on a per stream basis, with music industry commentators suggesting that the company paid UK labels less than an average of £0.0009 per stream last year. As with other services YouTube does not actually pay on a per stream basis, although it also doesn't have the minimum guarantees that opt-in services like Spotify and Spotify . It operates a revenue share model that is influenced by the amount of time people spend on monetised videos. Essentially, the more views your videos command (as long as they are carrying ads) the more advertising revenue you will generate from YouTube directly.

For some YouTubers potential revenues do not end with that which is paid out by the platform itself and their fame goes way beyond traditional music consumption. According to Forbes, last year's highest paid YouTuber was a 25-year-old Swedish video gamer called Felix Kjellberg - better known to his viewers as PewDiePie. In 2015,

he earned \$12 million from his YouTube channel which commands the attention of 40 million subscribers.

PewDiePie is an exceptional example, with a fanbase that even the biggest names in music struggle to match (the most followed music star on YouTube, Justin Bieber, can only claim 22 million subscribers) but there is much to be learned from the world's top YouTubers when it comes to earning money from the giant Google site.

"All YouTube stars we work with on a management level are doing separate brand deals," says Mark Walker, a promoter at Kilimanjaro but also a director at affiliate Free Focus, a digital and music talent company that looks after a number of bonafide YouTube stars such as Noodlerella (who claims almost 500,000 subscribers).

For dedicated YouTubers, buddying up with brands directly rather than relying on Google's ad scheme is a common way of boosting income significantly. As Walker explains: "They might make dedicated videos for brands or mention a brand in one of their normal vlogs, and that can generate good money for them on top of the standard ad revenue coming from YouTube.

"I think the best thing traditional bands can do is take more inspiration from vloggers and just keep creating content," adds Walker. "Fans might want to see vlogs, what goes on behind the scenes, tour or studio diaries. If you're clever and have personality, your acts can become vloggers as well as musicians and build a following that way. That, in turn, leads to brand deals and higher income."

Combine your efforts

There's power in numbers and, when it comes to negotiating with brands, Multi-Channel Networks (or MCNs, which bring together a number of YouTube channels under one operation) can often command better deals for placements on their YouTube videos than an individual vlogger, simply because they boast a greater fanbase and overall reach.

"A multi-channel network can be good in the sense that they are in with all the marketing agencies, they deal with a lot of brands," says Walker. "Obviously as a manager I have my own contacts in that space as well, but MCNs look after many channels which means they have a bit more buying power in the marketplace and often have a whole

team of staff in place dedicated to finding brand deals. "And because of the volume of channels that they have, they get a higher return on Google's AdSense as well, because they are going to YouTube en masse in the same way that record labels are going to streaming services with as many artists as possible to try and get a bigger return because of their market share."

But collaboration doesn't have to be as formal an arrangement as a Multi-Channel Network. Individual artists and vloggers can support each other on an individual basis as well to boost their profile or engage with a new audience. Walker, talks about how Charlie Simpson – an artist born in the traditional music industry that has embraced YouTube – worked closely with Emma Blackery – a musician who has found success through YouTube itself.

"We took Emma Blackery out as Charlie's support," he explains. "She got to play to his fanbase – a more traditional music audience – and then, in turn, he did a couple of collaboration videos with her, which meant he was on her channel, reaching her 1.2 million subscribers.

"You can do these like for like trade-offs. YouTube musicians might want to play to a more traditional audience and gain new fans, and then there are bands that have a decent following on tour who want to tap into YouTube.

"There's a lack of small venues for bands to build up a following at early on in their career these days," he adds. "They need to be turning to things like YouTube, doing videos with other bands and vloggers to build a following that way so that, when they do put a release out, they already have a relatively engaged audience.

Do what's right for your artist

It's increasingly important for artists and the teams that support them to have a firm handle on a range of digital platforms in 2016. The likes of iTunes and streaming services are now crucial routes to market, while social networks have quickly become a core component of any marketing campaign. It takes a certain kind of artist to get in front of a camera and make the most of YouTube, however. Some are more suited to the format than others and so managers may have to adapt their video strategy accordingly.

Paul Crockford manages a number of young acts that are in tune with the YouTube culture such as Rothwell and Wild Front, but he also manages older artists such as Paul Simon and Mark Knopfler who have built and maintain incredibly successful careers without the video platform. That doesn't mean Crockford can ignore YouTube altogether when it comes to his older, more established artists – simply that the end goal is different, therefore so is the approach.

“It's not about the money for us in Mark's case,” he explains when discussing the strategy for Knopfler on YouTube. “It's about making sure there's one place that is the source for all the content. We are still in the process of building that, it's far from complete.

“Our younger artists are already on Snapchat, Instagram and so on. They're already in tune with all of that in their personal lives, so it's a no-brainer. With Mark, we are essentially collating and curating. You're not going to see him [fronting] a YouTube channel. He's like a lot of people from that era who came from a point where their music did everything for them; they got their tracks on the radio and they didn't have to do interviews or any of that – the music spoke for itself. It's really hard to change that mind-set and kind of pointless because those artists aren't comfortable in that situation. It would be counter-intuitive and counterproductive. It can take a lot of creative time and if you're happy to be straight-forward writer, recorder and performer of songs, everything else becomes a distraction.”

There are, however, examples of established artists like Queen who have managed to grow a subscriber base of 2.3 million on YouTube by regularly uploading a mix of archive content, podcasts, and new formats – further proof that acts cannot be pigeon-holed in an attempt to use cookie cutter strategies when it comes to YouTube. When you're 'doing what's right for the artist' it really does have to be on an individual basis.

Further Resources

For further help and information, check out the [Creator Academy](#) and [10 Fundamentals of a Creative Strategy](#) on YouTube. MMF members can also access a comprehensive resources section on the website for wider digital marketing advice and links.