



# MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

## WORKFORCE EDITION

A DEEP DIVE INTO THE RECRUITMENT,  
RETENTION, AND RESILIENCE OF BUILDING  
THE MUSIC MANAGEMENT WORKFORCE





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, part of the “Managing Expectations” series by the MMF (Music Managers Forum), dives deep into the experiences and challenges faced by music managers. It explores workforce demographics, the challenges and rewards of music management as a career, and offers insights and best practices for building and retaining a skilled workforce.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Workforce demographics:** The music management sector is heavily reliant on self-employed individuals and freelancers, with 90% of survey respondents identifying as such.

## CHALLENGES

**Sustainability:** A significant drop in managers remaining in the field after five years suggests difficulty sustaining a career.

**Income:** A large portion (61%) of managers who responded to the survey do not earn minimum wage, and only 17% earn over £50,000.

**Gender pay gap:** only 22% of women in management earn over £30,000 compared to 29.6% of men.

**Limited support:** Only 6% of respondents contribute to private pensions, and there are limited opportunities for part-time work.

**Skills gap:** A decline in apprenticeships and internships indicates a potential future skills gap.

**Job insecurity:** Managers are employed by their clients. They can spend years developing talent without the benefit of a safety net.

## REWARDS

**Job satisfaction:** The opportunity to work with artists and develop careers can be highly rewarding.

**Flexibility:** Remote working and freelance opportunities offer flexibility in work arrangements.

**Growth potential:** The industry is constantly evolving, offering opportunities for career development and innovation.

## INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS

The report also features interviews with leaders from several music management companies. They share their experiences in areas including:

### Building and retaining a workforce:

Importance of clear job descriptions, cultural fit, and providing development opportunities.

**Working with freelancers:** Establishing clear communication, setting expectations, and ensuring timely payment.

**The role of the MMF:** Providing training, resources, and advocacy for music managers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The report concludes with recommendations for various stakeholders:

**Music management companies:** Invest in training and development for staff, consider offering part-time work options, and explore innovative financing models.

**Industry bodies:** Advocate for better industry practices such as timely payments and standard contracts.

**Government:** Provide support for apprenticeships and training programmes in music management.

**Overall, the report highlights the need for a multi-pronged approach to address the challenges faced by the music management workforce. By investing in training, development, and creating a more sustainable career path, the industry can ensure a future with a skilled and vibrant workforce.**



# INTRODUCTION

The Music Managers Forum is the world's largest community of professional music managers with a UK membership of over 1,500 - ranging from UK-based global businesses that represent some of world's most successful artists and creative talent, through to emerging managers taking their first steps in the business.

Within the music industry, the role of the music manager has become increasingly important, especially as artists, songwriters and other music makers have seized opportunities to develop and run their own self-contained businesses. This has greatly expanded the responsibilities and workload of the manager, although the structural barriers to developing a sustainable management company are often overlooked. This report will look to highlight these issues in more detail.

Through our members' input, we fully understand the challenges that many, and perhaps the majority, of managers face - whether that's the fundamental pressures of business like sustaining an income, budgeting, cash flow and taxes, or the more psychological aspects of the role, such as job security, maintaining relationships, and protecting your mental health.

In general, an estimated 28% of all new UK businesses fail in their first year. However, even within the music industry, music management remains a unique and sometimes precarious profession. Many managers will work unpaid for the first few years out of determination, passion, belief and reliance. The role straddles the personal and the professional, and, until they are in a position to bring in outside expertise, there is an expectation for managers to oversee all aspects of their client's careers.

Similarly, the tendency for managers to make early and long-term investments in their clients, including direct financial investment, was explored in previous editions of Managing Expectations. However, the sustainability of such a model might now have to be questioned. For the first time since our survey began (in 2019), we are now seeing a significant 8% drop in managers building careers between one and five years. Such a trend suggests that greater early career support is needed. These early career managers are working across multiple time zones, platforms, and cultures, but investing and developing a business model to support a sustained workforce is increasingly hard. As managers pivot towards earning from long term relationships across multiple income streams, rather than from an industry model based on advanced investment, more support is needed.

Our research also reveals several other red flags. For example, only 6% of survey respondents indicated they paid into a private pension, which is significantly below the 24% national average for freelancers and the self-employed. With managers rarely having a long-term stake in their clients' careers or participating in rights ownership, this is one area among many that deserves greater exploration and awareness. Future instalments of Managing Expectations will research the value of music management to better equip music managers in articulating their value for both direct investment and terms.

But fundamentally we want this report to help and benefit our membership, by providing guidance on the key considerations needed to recruit, retain, and develop a workforce in the context of a music business that is increasingly globalised and bureaucratic, where artistic independence is opening new commercial opportunities, and that new technologies (such as AI) are continuing to disrupt.

Importantly, that includes the policies and ethics to consider when growing your company. We have therefore included advice and signposting on inclusion, accessibility and adjustments you may need to consider to attract and retain a diverse and relevant workforce.



# SURVEY AND REPORT METHODOLOGY

Every year the MMF surveys our membership to understand the challenges facing music managers. Thank you to the 176 managers who completed the survey to give a wide range of perspectives and insights. In 2023, we focused the survey on the workforce (e.g. the issues facing managers as businesses/employers). Thanks also to the management companies that provided insights into their business: Red Light Management, Finesse Foreva, VD Music, Mañana Music, Eleven Music Management, Westwick Management, Future History Management, and Tape Music Company. The interviewees were intentionally selected to give an insight into different scales and business models of management companies with a track record of building workforces across the UK. This report aims to support all members and employees in building a stronger workforce environment and use the findings to start discussions and find common themes across the management profession.

Report authored by Paul Bonham, Annabella Coldrick, and Adam Webb.

The full data findings from this and all our previous editions of Managing Expectations can be found at:

<https://themmaf.net/managingexpectations/>

## The key findings are:

### WORK

#### NEW WORKFORCE

39% have been in management 1-5 years indicating lots of people taking up the role. However between 2021 and 2023 there was a 13% drop in people entering the role.

#### LIMITED CAPACITY TO DEVELOP NEW WORKFORCE

Since 2019 Apprenticeships have fallen significantly with very few companies indicating they had been able to offer these roles in 2023. There are 50% fewer internships on offer in 2023 than in 2019.

#### MORE EXPERIENCE

Since 2019 there has been a 5% increase in managers with more than 10 years experience.

#### INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR PART TIME

Since 2019 there has been an 8% decrease in those running their own companies part-time to 12% and only 1% have permanent part-time employment.

#### MINIMUM REWARD

61% of managers do not receive the average national minimum wage (approx £20,000). 60% work full time hours. 41% work over a 40 hour week.

### GENDER PAY GAP

22% of women in management earn over £30,000 compared to 29.6% of men.

### OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGHER EARNINGS

17% earn over £50,000. Median gross annual earnings for full-time employees was £34,963 in April 2023.

### COMPANY DEVELOPMENT

#### INVESTMENT IN CURRENT WORKFORCE

Since 2019 there was a 30% increase in management companies investing between £2,500-£5,000 in skills development and training for staff.

#### REPAYABLE LOANS

5% are now accessing repayable loans, a significant increase since 2019.

#### GRANTS

17% are now benefitting from grants from charities and fund a 100% increase since 2019 to develop their businesses. A further 9% of respondents have received MMF Accelerator support.

#### VENTURE CAPITAL

Remains a challenge with 2% accessing this type of finance.



# KEY FINDINGS

## WHO ARE MUSIC MANAGERS?

**43%**  
IDENTIFIED AS WOMEN

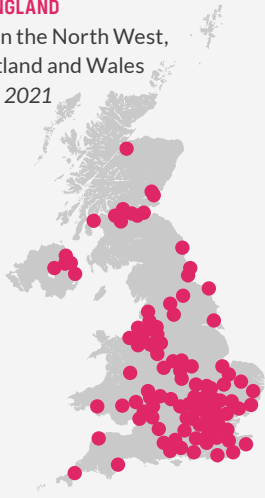
DOWN FROM 47% IN 2021  
UP FROM 42% IN 2020

**29%**  
IDENTIFIED AS BLACK, ASIAN OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND

UP FROM 20% IN 2019  
UP FROM 18% IN 2020

### MAJORITY ARE BASED IN LONDON OR THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND

With pockets in the North West, Midlands, Scotland and Wales  
no change from 2021



**8%**

IDENTIFIED AS DISABLED, DEAF OR HAVING A LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION

**23%**

IDENTIFIED AS BEING NEURODIVERGENT

**14%**

IDENTIFIED AS BEING LGBTQI+



**36%**

IDENTIFIED AS HAVING PARENTAL OR CARING DUTIES.



**53%**

OF THESE ARE THE PRIMARY CARER FOR A CHILD UNDER 10 YEARS OLD

## WHO DO THEY REPRESENT?

Most manage 1 or 2 clients... however

**23%**  
MANAGE 5-9

4% CHANGE FROM 2019

**45%**

HAVE BEEN MANAGING FOR 1-5 YEARS

**20%**

MANAGING FOR OVER 5 YEARS

**33%**

OVER 10 YEARS

**80%**  
REPRESENT ARTISTS

73% in 2020

**62%**  
SONGWRITERS

42% in 2020

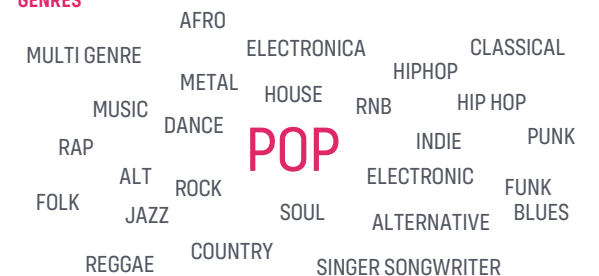
**51%**  
PRODUCERS

33% in 2020

**28%**  
DJs

18% in 2020

### GENRES





# LONG TERM INCOME SECURITY

## SKILLS

ACROSS FIVE YEARS OF MANAGING EXPECTATIONS, RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED THE KEY SKILLS MANAGERS NEEDED

### TOP 5 2019-23

1. Managing vulnerability, health and or wellbeing artists
2. Legal and contractual negotiation skills
3. Accounting and financial planning
4. Marketing
5. Live events and tour management

## TASKS DONE

81%  
LABEL & RELEASE MANAGEMENT

DOWN FROM 87% 2021

75%  
MARKETING

UP FROM 69%

77%  
SOCIAL MEDIA

73% FROM 2021

70%  
BRANDING AND CREATIVE

NO CHANGE FROM 2019

15%  
ARE EITHER FULL TIME OR PART-TIME  
EMPLOYEES OF A MANAGEMENT COMPANY

UP FROM 8% IN 2021  
DOWN FROM 16% IN 2020



## EMPLOYMENT

72%  
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS DO NOT  
MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO A PENSION  
OUTSIDE OF NATIONAL INSURANCE  
CONTRIBUTIONS OR AN EMPLOYERS  
PENSION SCHEME.

52%  
HAVE A POST TERM COMMISSION OR  
SUNSET AGREEMENT IN PLACE

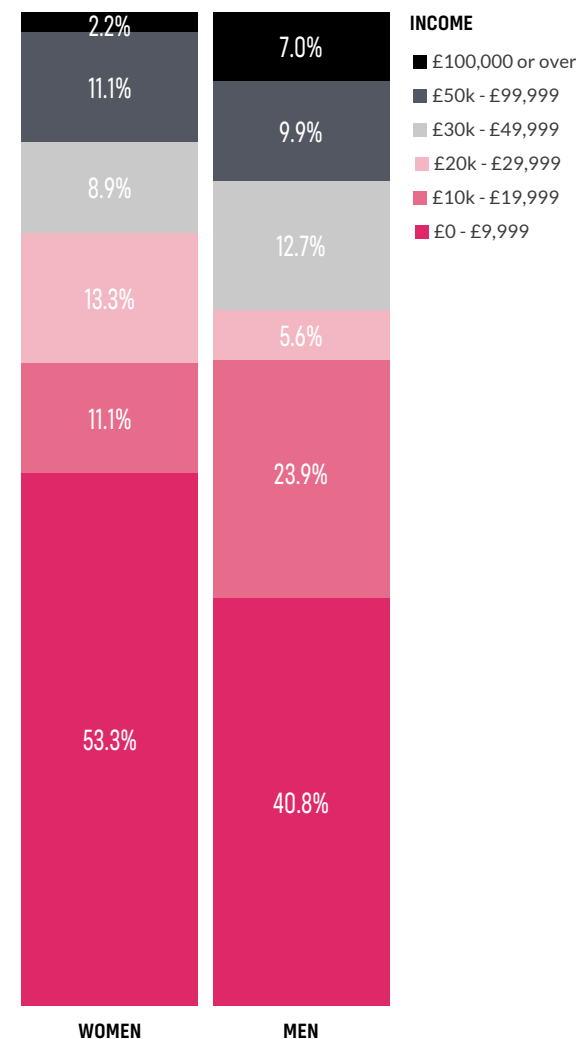
"Lawyers love to challenge the very  
notion of post term commission so it  
is, more often than not, a battle"

"It's a difficult conversation and  
lawyers are cutting down both the  
rates and the sunset clause length"

39%  
WORK OVER A 40 HOUR WEEK ON MUSIC  
MANAGEMENT

24%  
EARN OVER £30K WITH 12%  
EARNING NOTHING YET

73%  
ARE PAID ON COMMISSION





## INTERVIEW

NIAMH BYRNE & RÉGINE MOYLETT  
ELEVEN MUSIC MANAGEMENT

ELEVEN

**HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?**

Eleven currently employs 8 full-time members of staff and has 3 consultants/freelancers.

**WHEN YOU'VE EXPANDED YOUR BUSINESS AND BROUGHT IN NEW EMPLOYEES HAVE THOSE DECISIONS TENDED TO BE PLANNED, OR MORE A REACTION TO COMMERCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES?**

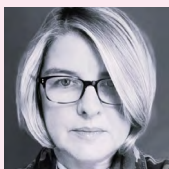
Our decisions to expand the team are both planned and in reaction to the work we are doing at the time.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?**

We recommend having a small core management team for consistency and increasing the team using regular freelancers to scale up when needed. We work in a creative industry and it is not always possible to plan when projects will happen, so it's good to have a flexible workforce to scale up and down when needed. We may also need to supplement different skill sets according to what projects we are doing at the time.

**HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?**

At Eleven, we offer flexible working arrangements. Our staff work remotely on Fridays and we offer an early finish Friday to enable our staff to make the most of their weekends. We also have a very diverse roster of artists/business and our staff have opportunities to work across the roster and get involved in a wide range of projects.



NIAMH BYRNE

**HAVE YOU LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY AROUND DIVERSITY OR INCLUSION IN YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?**

In addition to our Eleven team we use a lot of external companies and freelancers to support the work we do. As a team we focus on diversity and inclusion when making choices about who we work with and within our own team where possible.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?**

I think it is important to agree rates in advance and paper an agreement that clearly outlines what has been agreed so there is no ambiguity. If working on sensitive material or on an artist facing project it is worth asking any freelancers to sign an NDA to ensure details of their work are kept confidential. We would also recommend that you are clear about how you would like things to work day-to-day so that people can effortlessly slot in and out.

**WHAT ROLE HAS THE MMF PLAYED IN HELPING SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF YOUR COMPANY?**

MMF has been particularly helpful in keeping our staff up to date on new topics and trends that may affect our day-to-day business. Staff have regularly attended events and talks around these subjects - for instance, the AI summit last year, and this has been very helpful. Some of the insights and topics shared have helped shape how we do business. Managers also tend to operate in their silos - so MMF also offers a community for our managers to tap into. This is particularly useful to our younger managers who are developing artists and they can share experiences.



# MANAGERS: FREELANCE, SELF-EMPLOYED OR SOLE-TRADER?

According to 2022 data published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the UK music business is dominated by the self-employed and freelancers - who make up 70% of the workforce.

Based on our Managing Expectations survey, these ratios are even more accentuated in music management with almost 9 out of 10 respondents claiming to work on a self-employed or freelance basis, more formally known as a Sole-Trader.

In itself, this might also increase the challenges arising from irregular or unpredictable employment, since few managers will work on short-term projects - where roles are typically charged by an hourly or day rate. Albeit, we are seeing a number of managers branching out to offer consultancy services or development sessions for artists and other creatives. This is usually in parallel to their management work, and to ensure they have a regular source of income.

There is more detail on this area in our Essentials of Music Management book, but, according to the Government's definition, being a Sole Trader (or "self-employed") is "if you run your own business as an individual and work for yourself."

It is the most simple and straightforward way of operating a business and effectively means you keep all profits after paying tax through the Self Assessment process, but are personally liable for any losses that you may incur.

Our survey indicates that 52% of music managers fall into this category of working for themselves.

You need to set up as a Sole Trader if any of the following apply:

- you earned more than £1,000 from self-employment in the previous calendar year (April to April).
- you want to claim Tax-Free Childcare as you will need to prove you are self-employed to be eligible.
- you want to make voluntary Class 2 National Insurance payments to help you qualify for benefits.

Details about setting up as a Sole Trader and registering for Self Assessment can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-sole-trader>

Sole Traders operate by invoicing their clients for their services, with an expectation that they will be paid in a timely fashion (typically within 30 days of receipt). Sole Trader or Partnership means that you or your artists are personally responsible for your business - including any

debts incurred. You would also be expected to register with HMRC and file an annual Self Assessment tax return and public liability insurance is recommended.

## WHEN TO SET UP AS A LIMITED COMPANY?

Whilst being self-employed comes with certain simplicities, it also has risks attached. Being personally liable for debts means that if your business hits rocky times or if you face legal action, then your savings or property could potentially be seized.

For this reason, most semi-mature businesses with any degree of complexity eventually set up as a Private Limited Company (PLC) or Limited Liability Company (LLC).

In effect, both structures establish a separate legal entity, and limit the personal exposure of directors or shareholders if finances take a downward turn. It is the company that enters into contracts with third parties, not individuals - albeit both PLCs and LLCs come with additional reporting and administrative requirements, often undertaken by an accountant at additional cost.

As a PLC or LLC, you would typically become a director and shareholder of the new venture, offering you far greater protections and flexibility to grow your business.

Additionally, running a PLC or LLC is generally considered more tax-efficient than operating as a Sole Trader or Partnership.

However, setting up a PLC or LLC means that certain information about the company, including profits and losses and contact details, are made publicly available at Companies House. The company does not therefore have the privacy afforded to a Sole Trader or Partnership.

In practice, some managers and artists will operate as both Sole Traders / Partnerships and PLCs / LLCs. For instance, if an artist is signed to a label or publisher, it might be more efficient to receive revenues from recordings or songwriting through a Sole Trader business. However, when it comes to live touring, which holds a lot more risks, having a limited company might be more advantageous. Whichever route you choose, you would be advised to contact HMRC as soon as possible. For more information about setting up a business, we advise you to go to

<https://www.gov.uk/set-up-business>



## INTERVIEW

TK  
FINESSE FOREVA**HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?**

There are only 3 of us as Directors; the rest are freelance.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?**

It's important to look for a track record from recruits relating to what they are trying to achieve within the industry. We do a lot of community education and training events, such as our recent NXTGEN conference in Croydon as part of London Borough of Culture that we delivered in partnership with MMF. Raising awareness of our company and the roles available in music is so important to us as a company, you have to build the future.

**HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN YOUR TEAM AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?**

By giving more opportunities such as through our events, workshops, and freelance opportunities where we are able to pay more.

**DO YOU ALLOW REMOTE WORKING FOR YOUR TEAM?**

Yes, since we don't have an office and management is an on-the-go job.

**HAVE YOU LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY AROUND DIVERSITY OR INCLUSION IN YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?**

I don't believe there should be a strategy. I think you just do it.



TK

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?**

I think it's important to be flexible in arrangements. We also have an internship partnership with September Management. More of this sort of opportunity would be really good to see across the industry.

**WHAT ROLE HAS THE MMF PLAYED IN HELPING SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF YOUR COMPANY?**

Opportunities for collaboration and increasing our reputation and potential to grow our incomes. NXTGEN was a great event for us in Croydon and for our music scene that we hope to continue for years to come.





# RECRUITMENT AND EXPANDING YOUR TEAM

Recruitment for music management companies can be a real challenge for a number of reasons. Very few companies have an HR department, let alone a specialist, due to their small and often organically growing nature. The need for flexibility and adaptability can mean that even piecing together a job description is a challenge.

In this report we have pulled together some sample job descriptions shared with us by members. Each company is different and roles will need to be adapted accordingly. Consideration also needs to be given to intangible needs such as how an employee will gel with clients. Recruitment therefore can traditionally be quite informal with many people becoming known to a management company through networking or freelance work building into a more solid employment position.

Whilst informal recruitment can feel natural, it has risks, not least that it can make our industry a very hard one to enter and can perpetuate a lack of diversity in background. Opening up jobs to a wider network of people can bring in new thinking and skills. To do this you need to think about where and how you advertise - see below for more tips - making not only the information to apply more open but also thinking about the transferable skills that people from outside the industry may contribute.

In practice, music managers run small companies and usually look to bring in junior staff, making finding and developing employees a necessity. Apprenticeship programmes and internships can be a great option for this, with funding to support employee development sometimes available.





## INTERVIEW

# LYLE SCOUGALL MAÑANA MUSIC MANAGEMENT

## HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?

We have myself and Nathan, plus 2 full-time members of staff and 1 joint venture partner.

## WHEN YOU'VE EXPANDED YOUR BUSINESS AND BROUGHT IN NEW EMPLOYEES HAVE THOSE DECISIONS TENDED TO BE PLANNED, OR MORE A REACTION TO COMMERCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES?

Yes, we planned to bring in more members of staff to help facilitate the growth and expansion of the management company and affiliated companies.

## WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?

Have a look at what funding and employment opportunities are available to you. We looked at what government grants and employment schemes were available initially. We joined the KickStart scheme which provided us with 2x members of staff, and then also worked with Glasgow Council for their Glasgow Guarantee scheme which provided us with funding and employment opportunities. We subsequently trained the employees and both of the initial kickstarters are now integral members of the core team. Another tip would be to really sit down and organise the systems and processes within your operations to make sure you are employing for the correct reason, everyone understands their job roles and that you utilise the additional support effectively.



LYLE SCOUGALL

## HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?

Focus on us all growing together, provide systems and processes and be there to guide your employees through it when they need you. There is no quick fix for growing your business, it needs to be grown from solid foundations. And that is where a knowledgeable management and working team are essential, to enable you to focus on growing the overall business.

## DO YOU ALLOW REMOTE WORKING FOR EMPLOYEES?

Yes absolutely, I believe that getting out of the office is healthy. However, a central hub where we can be in an office is essential for ensuring healthy collaboration and overall business trajectory.

## HAVE YOU LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY AROUND DIVERSITY OR INCLUSION IN YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?

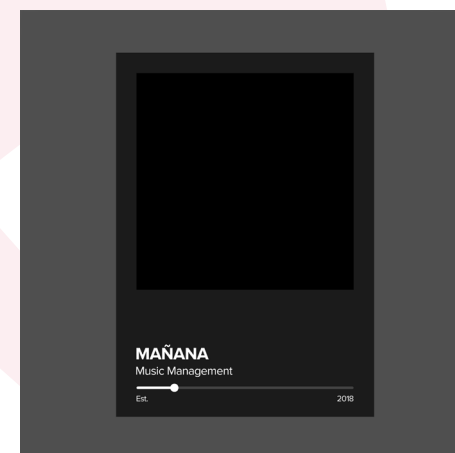
Yes, with the workforce at Mañana Music Management we are split 50/50 men and women.

## WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?

Ensure job roles and objectives are clear and a direct line of communication is established.

## WHAT ROLE HAS THE MMF PLAYED IN HELPING SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF YOUR COMPANY?

The MMF has provided us with the foundations in music management, and industry knowledge which has enabled us to branch out into records and publishing. Without the MMF and in particular the Accelerator programme, we wouldn't have been able to expand at the rate we have.





# HIRING YOUR FIRST ASSISTANT OR ENTRY LEVEL ROLES

OLIVER MORRIS, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS, UK MUSIC

**Taking on your first staff often means employing short-term, part-time or project-based employees. As soon as you employ someone, you should hold employer liability insurance. Government schemes are sometimes available for this sort of role.**

There are many potential careers in the music industry and a plethora of routes in. Often there can be misunderstandings around the terminology and also how the education and skills system works. Understanding this is key, not only for suitably supporting the industry of the future but also to ensure the music industry engages in a meaningful and positive way. This is especially important when discussing the situation in the UK – as the different devolved polities have different approaches and ‘ways of doing’ music education, skills, and careers guidance. The brief overview below mainly covers the situation in England – however further information pertaining to the situations in each devolved administration can be easily found. Links to topics mentioned in this piece can be found at the end.

A frequently misunderstood term is ‘Apprentice’. Historically it was loosely applied to any scheme that involved learning on the job at entry level – traditionally under the tutelage of someone more senior. It is now protected in law so only people in roles pursuing a recognised apprenticeship standard can

be called an apprentice. There are a range of different apprenticeship standards at differing levels and in different roles from business-focussed and design to media and technical. If interested in taking on an apprentice your first step would be to talk to a training provider. It is the employer’s responsibility to pay the apprentice’s salary. UK Music have in the past administered a grant to help towards salaries for apprentices and interns – under the Creative Employment Programme – and we hope that the success of this scheme at the time will lead to similar schemes in the future.

Another route is of course internships. A short period of work experience provided can be beneficial to an individual and host company. More detail on the different approaches and terminology can be found in the links at the end of the article. Many degree-schemes have work-placements as a part of their study scheme which can offer a good way to offer defined employment opportunities to young people with the support of an external body. Both MMF Education Associates and UK Music’s Music Academic Partnership (MAP) contain members who can discuss all of the above if interested.

To pass your knowledge onto the next generation you may find mentoring to be an interesting path. The benefits of being mentored to help grow your connections and knowledge-base can be massive too. Whether potential mentor or mentee I recommend you check out UK Music’s Mentoring in Music







– A DIY Guide. To get involved inspiring the younger generation we have developed in partnership with other Creative Industry bodies the Discover! Creative Careers programme. As an employer you can open your doors in November during Discover! Creative Careers Week or sign up with Speakers for Schools to deliver inspirational talks.

There are many pieces of work and research ongoing around supporting the creative industries in terms of education, skills, careers advice, and employment. UK Music continues to work on Discover! as well as Pathways to Industry with our members, DfE, DCMS, and other stakeholders such as Youth Music and Music Mark. We are currently undertaking qualitative research on barriers and opportunities facing young people accessing music careers.

Past and present schemes that have helped shift the employment landscape have been Kickstart and Skills Bootcamps. The former has unfortunately ended but had a very positive impact by all accounts and the latter is becoming an interesting alternative for some in terms of engaging individuals around routes into work – albeit with challenges around some aspects of the funding.

Other places I would advise you to look if interested in careers and the employment landscape in the creative industries would be the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence

Centre (PEC) which undertakes fascinating research in this area. Of course I would also encourage you to refer to UK Music's reports as we cover much of interest in our work. Other ways to reach potential employers – or to tap into networks as someone seeking work – is through Eric App or CREATEBritain.

TOPIC	SOURCE	WEBSITE
Research and reports	UK Music	<a href="http://ukmusic.org">ukmusic.org</a>
Apprenticeships	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education	<a href="https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/">https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/</a>
Jobs and opportunities	ERIC Creative Career App	<a href="http://meet-eric.com">meet-eric.com</a>
Employment rights and pay for interns	UK Government	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/employment-rights-for-interns">https://www.gov.uk/employment-rights-for-interns</a>
Music Academic Partnership	UK Music's MAP	<a href="https://www.ukmusic.org/education-skills/music-academic-partnership-map/">https://www.ukmusic.org/education-skills/music-academic-partnership-map/</a>
Mentoring	UK Music's Mentoring in Music Guide	<a href="https://www.ukmusic.org/education-skills/mentoring-in-music/">https://www.ukmusic.org/education-skills/mentoring-in-music/</a>
Careers in the creative industries	Creative Careers	<a href="https://discovercreative.careers/">https://discovercreative.careers/</a>
Speaking opportunities	Speakers for Schools	<a href="https://www.speakersforschools.org/">https://www.speakersforschools.org/</a>
Kickstart scheme	UK Government	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme</a>
Skills bootcamps	UK Government	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-bootcamps-training-providers">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-bootcamps-training-providers</a>
Research and policy on creative careers	Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre	<a href="https://pec.ac.uk/">https://pec.ac.uk/</a>
Promoting British creativity	Create Britain	<a href="https://www.createbritain.com/">https://www.createbritain.com/</a>
Digital and digital business skills for employers	Digital Skills Authority	<a href="https://www.digitalskillsauthority.org/">https://www.digitalskillsauthority.org/</a>



## INTERVIEW

DAN GARBER  
TAPE MUSIC COMPANY

DAN GARBER

**HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?**

We have one person full time and one part-time.

**WHEN YOU'VE EXPANDED YOUR BUSINESS AND BROUGHT IN NEW EMPLOYEES HAVE THOSE DECISIONS TENDED TO BE PLANNED, OR MORE A REACTION TO COMMERCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES?**

Yes, we have always wanted to increase team members. We have enough work, and would like to take on more work, but that first initial step to take on employees is often so challenging, financially and the time you put into training depends on their needs.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?**

Advertise in the right places. Just like having your artists connect with the right audiences, you need to put your advert in front of the right people. Find the right interview technique for your company's ethos, perhaps even practice interviews, questions and answers with other colleagues or peers. Remember that people can be nervous at interviews, so try to see past that. I always like to see if someone can add something to the role that I might not have thought about myself.

**HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?**

I always focus on their growth. Help them to discover what they love doing in the industry, not just what the role entails. I am excited by people who develop and expand their roles and can bring something new into the company so

I try to encourage that. Have regular reviews; not just of the employee but of the role and get them to review their work, workload and also I encourage the employee to review me as well. Hopefully I am constantly learning and growing too.

**DO YOU ALLOW REMOTE WORKING FOR EMPLOYEES?**

Definitely, however I think when you are starting a job it's important to work close together for both employees and employers. However I think you need to trust your own instincts when interviewing and employing someone, and then pass that trust on to them so that they will be productive in remote situations. I often leave the choice to them, but either way I have regular catch up and schedules in place to keep to each week.

**HAVE YOU LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY AROUND DIVERSITY OR INCLUSION IN YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?**

Yes, we have worked with the Kickstart government programme hiring young people. We also signed the Keychange pledge and actively work towards a more balanced workplace to provide opportunities to the underrepresented. I have also spoken at organisations like Small Green Shoots, Pie Factory Music and Art Education Exchange. All these situations help to introduce new opportunities around diversity and inclusion.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?**

Try to focus on their skill sets that can help and complement yours. Make sure that you set out very clear targets, aims and objectives. Check in regularly to make sure they are confident and comfortable with the tasks set, that they are realistic targets and what you can do to help them achieve their goals

**WHAT ROLE HAS THE MMF PLAYED IN HELPING SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF YOUR COMPANY?**

Confidence.



# MANAGEMENT ROLES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The following role descriptions have been shared with us by our company membership and might be helpful to think about as you expand your team.

**Artist / Talent Manager** - someone responsible for the overall strategy, delivery and accountability of an artist's career. Artist managers are usually directly responsible for holding key relationships for clients such as with lawyers and accountants, managing business affairs and negotiations exclusively on clients' behalf. They may be directly named in the contract as the manager through legal agreement or as a job title at a company. Often they are the early builders and investment in the talent they represent takes significant risks. They tend to operate on commission, retainer, or through a business partnership agreement with clients.

**Artist development consultants & project managers** - tend to work with clients on a consultancy agreement offering services such as marketing, strategy and artistic development. They often don't have direct accountability or influence over relationships with a client's business affairs services such as lawyers or accountants and may be freelancers working for other talent managers or management companies.

## Management Assistant / Day-to-day Manager

- day-to-day is usually the title given to someone employed by a management company responsible for the delivery of an artist's career. They may or may not be on payroll, a day rate, or a commission income model. They usually have accountability for the day-to-day running of an artist's career but will work with other more senior colleagues on major decisions and strategies.

**Managing Director/General Manager** - a Managing Director or General Manager usually has responsibility for the running of a management company, supporting and managing staff, overseeing operations, and also may have direct client management responsibilities.

## OTHER ROLES WORKING IN MANAGEMENT COMPANIES

Larger management companies often have a series of other services that cross-cut along the majority of clients. In the first edition of Managing Expectations we discuss how company models are evolving. They might include some of the following:

**Digital marketing, audience insights, design, brand and creative** - these roles tend to be delivered in-house by larger management companies and may be charged back to clients as additional services outside of commission models on a case-by-case basis.



**Touring specialist/agency** - larger management companies often work with an in-house touring lead who will oversee budgets, production, logistics, merchandise, and strategies for multiple clients. Smaller companies may tend to offer live booking and tour management services as they grow clients on an ad hoc basis, but it is always advisable to offer this type of service in addition to standard management commissions.

**Business affairs** - some bigger management companies are part of wider entertainment company groups (e.g. ATC, Young, Red Light, YMU, Modest) operating several businesses alongside management. In some cases they have a COO who oversees the connections and operations of the group or specific services in-house or outsourced such as licensing, royalties, legal and accounting.



## INTERVIEW

# RYAN RICHARDS FUTURE HISTORY MANAGEMENT

**FUTURE  
HISTORY  
MANAGEMENT**

## HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?

We started the company in 2018 with myself as the only employee, but in 2024, we've had another 7 people join the team.

## WHEN YOU'VE EXPANDED YOUR BUSINESS AND BROUGHT IN NEW EMPLOYEES HAVE THOSE DECISIONS TENDED TO BE PLANNED, OR MORE A REACTION TO COMMERCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES?

I'd say it was partly commercial circumstances, as well as having the right people come along at the right time. For me, it's more about having the right people working with us, as opposed to the right NUMBER of people.

## WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?

As I mentioned above, I would say that concentrating on the right people is the most important thing. Prior to taking on a 'Head of Touring and Production', I'd not really considered that role or been looking for someone with that skill set. But when the right person came along, it felt like the right fit. That's true for other roles within the company too.

## HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?

I think there's a balance to be met when bringing in new employees, between being overbearing versus not giving enough support. We try to empower our staff to take responsibility and ownership over the artists and projects they're working with, whilst letting them know that I'm always there to bounce ideas against and collaborate with.



RYAN RICHARDS

## DO YOU ALLOW REMOTE WORKING FOR EMPLOYEES?

All our employees work remotely, including myself. I've worked in an office environment for a large part of my managerial career, and did enjoy it - but if the pandemic taught me anything, it would be how much more productive you're able to be when you strip away the treadmill of daily travel. There are a lot of wasted hours there that could be spent a lot more productively, and I'll stick with that ethos until I see that it's no longer the case.

## WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?

Do it! Freelancers are the lifeblood of the creative industry and need to be supported and nurtured. Also, make sure you pay them on time. It should go without saying!



# EMPLOYEES OR CONTRACTORS

The vast majority of our survey respondents run their own businesses, and therefore assume responsibility for creating jobs, building a team, and employing freelancers or interns.

Taking on employees is a significant step for any business as it involves hiring individuals to work for your company - potentially expanding your operations, increasing productivity, and achieving your business goals.

Since the majority of music management companies are small and founder-led, however, there are several professional considerations to take into account.

Certainly, music managers will need to weigh up which tasks and responsibilities they want to delegate, as well as putting the structures and environment in place that will allow an employee to thrive. Taking on new staff can build a business, but it also means working out what part you are willing to somewhat let go of, and where your appetite for risk is regarding growth and other liabilities of becoming an employer.

The [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/employing-staff) website has a usual 7-step checklist of things you will need to when employing staff for the first time: <https://www.gov.uk/employing-staff>

## The MMF advises on these additional steps:

### IDENTIFY YOUR HIRING NEEDS

Take time to determine the roles and positions you need to fill. It might be short-term project based support you need, which might be ideal for a junior role. On the other hand you might want someone to bring new ideas, skills or clients to grow your business. Alternatively, it may be that your business has grown beyond your capacity and you need someone with more experience to fully realise your fast-growing enterprise with multiple lanes of income. From there, you should create a detailed job description that clearly outlines the responsibilities, tasks and activities you expect an applicant to fulfil, as well as their expected qualifications and personal attributes.

Importantly, you will need to calculate what you will be paying for the role, what the expected hours of employment will be, and how long you can invest in the post so you are fully aware of the impact it will have on your longer term cash flow. The MMF has cash flow templates and guides for its membership to view plus an array of MMF Associates skilled in supporting business growth.

### LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Ensure you understand and comply with all relevant laws, including minimum wage requirements, working hours, employee rights, and benefits. These may vary depending on the location of your staff and the number of employees you plan to hire but it is illegal to

not pay minimum wage. You will find helpful information on the Employing People section of <https://www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people>.

### RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Many positions in the music business are filled by recommendation or word of mouth, but you should consider recruiting from a wider range of candidates. The MMF offers members the opportunity to share jobs through its newsletter and the members Facebook group, which can bring you a targeted and skilled audience for roles. Across the industry, there are also an increasing number of avenues to recruit from ranging from established recruitment agencies such as Handle and The Music Market, as well as boutique agencies such as PALS Group. Led by two managers Shareena Harnett and Jono Ball, they state:

**"We feel that recruitment in the music industry is at an all-time low; skilled candidates are under-represented and recruiters are not being proactive enough."**

Having placed roles with various top management companies and A-list artists privately, their working industry careers give them the knowledge to find and match candidates based on more than skills. They go on to say "Having the right mindset is a major attribute we look for in the candidates we represent; we both appreciate how tough a lot of these roles are and having the right mindset and work ethic is often equally as important as

your skillset." Most of the key music business titles also carry job adverts (for instance: CMU, MBW, Music Ally, Music Week and Record of the Day).

To maximise reach, impact, and inclusivity, we always recommend that any adverts make role requirements clear, specific, and behaviour-based. You should also take care to make language and terminology inclusive, and to place job adverts where they are more likely to be seen by marginalised applicants. Grassroots and targeted recruitment opportunities exist too such as the Black Music Coalition newsletter, The Debrief and Creative Access. There are numerous Instagram pages and Facebook Groups too. We recommend all these options as a way to get the word out as far and wide as possible, particularly as many are free or low cost. It can also be a good idea to build relationships with local music talent development organisations such as Small Green Shoots, Generator or Oh Yeah Music Centre.

### INTERVIEW PROCESS

Once you have advertised for a position and sifted applications, you should also plan a structured interview process for your shortlisted candidates. Typically this should include a mix of behavioural, situational, and skills-based questions to provide a thorough evaluation.

In advance of an interview, you should offer candidates clear expectations, timelines, and communications. Sharing a task or a few



questions in advance can help make the most of the interview for both parties.

Proactively ask applicants if they need any reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process and in the job description do highlight how your company works - for example, what hours are expected, what travel with artists is expected and where the role sits within the company, for example the size client base an employee would be expected to work with.

### ONBOARDING PROCESS

Once you've selected candidates, create an onboarding process that helps new employees integrate smoothly into your company. This can include introducing them to your ways of working such as boundaries with clients or more formal policies such as client and company confidentiality, bullying and harassment as well as procedures such as holidays, expenses, travel, place and time of work along with their job responsibilities. Consider creating a company handbook or employee guide that contains all such information and can be updated as and when required.

### CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

Beyond any pre-agreed probationary periods, employers must offer binding contracts that outline the terms of employment including job title, compensation, working hours, and any exclusivity, confidentiality or non-compete agreements and any end of term conditions. You may wish to speak with an HR specialist to develop a standard set of policies for your company covering time off in lieu, benefits and how the company will handle disciplinary and grievance matters. If new staff are bringing their existing clients to your company you may need to engage a specialist music lawyer.

### PAYROLL AND BENEFITS

If offering permanent employment you will need to establish a system to ensure accurate and timely payment of salaries. You might also want to research additional employee benefits such as health insurance or enhance pension contributions and paid holiday entitlement beyond the statutory minimum.

You will find more information on these areas on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

Prioritise the health and safety of your employees by creating a secure work environment and complying with occupational health and safety regulations. This includes considering employees working from home, remotely and hybrid. Along with practical health and safety you need to consider how you safeguard your employees wellbeing with regards to any professional relationships they may make through your company.

### SAFEGUARDING YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOUR CLIENTS

Establishing boundaries within the music industry is paramount to safeguarding your employees and company reputation. Setting ways of working and communicating them with staff is essential. These might include expectations around late night behaviours, for example, on-the-road etiquette and the professional boundaries you expect around clients and business partners. Include a guide for how colleagues can find appropriate support networks for specific problems such as their GP, mental health providers, or addiction and behaviour support, many of which offer specific support for those working in the music industry such as Help Musicians or Music Support. You should hold a secure company document with personal details such as home address, next of kin and any medical or health information which

employees share with you.

Your guidance should also include how you will deal with any negative interactions with clients, industry and partners as well as behaviours mentioned in the MMF Code of Practice. If your business works with young people or vulnerable adults it is recommended you regularly carry out Safeguarding Training this is available at a low cost from providers such as NSPCC. If you or your staff work directly with clients under the age of 18 it is likely you will need a chaperone licence. You must also familiarise yourself with the rules and restrictions around child employment including work permits and child performance licences.

<https://www.gov.uk/chaperone-child-performers>

<https://www.gov.uk/child-employment/performance-licences-for-children>

### ILLNESS AND STATUTORY SICK PAY

Clearly define in your policies and contracts how sick days work within your company. Remote and hybrid working means it's easier to work when ill but keeping the health of employees in shape can mean the health of your company longer term. You will need to decide if you offer full rate or use Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) which is available if you have permanent staff unable to work. It can be paid to the employer for up to 28 weeks directly by the Government through eligible claims.

### ACCESS TO WORK FOR DISABILITY AND HEALTH CONDITIONS

According to the Department for Work & Pensions, an estimated 16m people in the UK have a disability - accounting for approximately 24% of the population. Despite the commonly recognised signage for disabilities, only a very

small proportion of disabled people (around 8%) are wheelchair users, and many people choose to hide their impairments. It is estimated that 1 in 7 of the UK population have some kind of neuro difference and our survey indicates this is higher for those working in music management at 25% of respondents. Therefore, having an understanding of any access requirements or support that your staff might require to do their work is important. Many adjustments cost nothing, although the Government's Access to Work scheme can provide grants for more extensive workplace modifications.

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

### HYBRID, FLEXIBLE AND WORK FROM HOME

Many management companies permit their staff to work from home or remotely some of the time. Agreeing mutual expectations on how staff report in and how time on/off work is agreed, when people are on call and when not, and how to handle often long and unsociable/too sociable hours is important to meet both the business needs and your team's wellbeing. As an employer you should consider adjustments which support your team with key moments in life which could include grief, faith celebrations, or menopause which reflect their needs and foster a healthy working environment.

### HR CONSULTANTS

It's rare for a music management company of any size to have a dedicated Human Resources function but having HR processes and clear accountability is beneficial for a resilient business. These are some of the specialist HR consultants MMF is aware of who often charge by the hour or by project. Typical things they support include employment contracts, HR policy development, recruitment and redundancy, and guidance on disciplinary and grievance processes.



Every business must have a clear disciplinary and grievance process in place which should be made available to staff when they join, alongside policies such as sick pay and absence management. Health and safety regulations apply to all businesses, but once there are over 5 staff, written documentation is required for your policy, risk assessments and so on.

You may also wish to consider legal expenses insurance which covers the cost of defending a claim brought against you. Many schemes come with phone advice lines you can use to help prevent situations from escalating.

#### HR CONSULTANTS - INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

**Pippa Reffold**

[pippareffold@pips1.com](mailto:pippareffold@pips1.com)

**Hope Place**

<https://hopeplace.co.uk/>

**Khazana Khan**

<https://khazanakhan.com/>

**Fran Ryba**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/franrybaconsultancy/>

**Journey HR**

<https://www.journeyhr.com/>

#### HR PROVIDERS

**Rradar**

<https://rradar.com/>

**Peninsula**

<https://www.peninsulagrouplimited.com/>

**Croner**

<https://croner.co.uk/>

**NatwestMentor**

<https://www.natwestmentor.co.uk/>





## INTERVIEW

LISA WARD & JAMES SANDOM  
RED LIGHT MANAGEMENT

JAMES SANDOM



LISA WARD

**HOW MANY STAFF DOES YOUR COMPANY EMPLOY?**

44 in the UK – majority are consultants, core leadership and support team are PAYE staff.

**WHEN YOU'VE EXPANDED YOUR BUSINESS AND BROUGHT IN NEW EMPLOYEES HAVE THOSE DECISIONS TENDED TO BE PLANNED, OR MORE A REACTION TO COMMERCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES?**

Both – when new management or teams come into the business that is obviously a long-term strategic decision. The same applies to our label investments. Hiring support staff / junior team members is always a more reactive process depending on the current needs of the artists and teams.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING STAFF?**

Be really specific with your job spec so neither side is disappointed. Don't just hire the first recommendation you get, and don't just look within music. Always do multiple interviews; some people interview very well but end up not well suited to the role, or vice versa. Get references, and place personality and culture first. In artist management the dedication required is incomparable to many jobs, a passion for the culture and the right personality goes further. Build in a probation period. Have clear communication lines, feedback both ways, and regular accountability from the start. Think hard about whether it's a full-time / fixed term role etc. We look for work ethic – you can teach a lot of skills but that one feels intrinsic.

**HOW DO YOU LOOK TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES AND SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTIVATION?**

We have relatively low staff turnover; lots of our team have been in the company for 7/8+ years, and globally the company has many 20+ years. It's especially gratifying to see those that have come in as an intern or assistant role moved upwards within the company and now building a successful management business of their own. Building in support networks within the office with their peers or outside their immediate team is also really important because as managers we can all end up working in silos. The majority of our staff are very self-motivated and entrepreneurially minded; that common trait comes from the top of the business and is something we definitely look for in staff, whilst trying to cultivate an environment that encourages and supports them to push forward.

**DO YOU ALLOW REMOTE WORKING FOR EMPLOYEES?**

Absolutely, they go where their artists are / where they feel they need to be. The majority of our teams don't have mandated office/WFH days, we operate in a trust culture that the work will always get done, and especially when staff are often working unsociable hours/travelling etc, we need to be flexible to support that. Some of our staff work entirely remotely from other countries, some like to be in the office every day, depending on their personal circumstances.

**HAVE YOU LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY AROUND DIVERSITY OR INCLUSION IN YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?**

Always striving for it, can always do better. Our teams have undertaken diversity/unconscious bias training, we have a decent gender split across the staff and are running university placements, and work experience and also currently have an apprenticeship to try and widen the routes into the company to people from different backgrounds. The artists we represent come from a really wide variety of genres and backgrounds. We would like to think of ourselves as an inclusive business, but are very aware our workforce is still majority white so it's a work in progress.

**WHAT TIPS WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER MMF MEMBERS ABOUT WORKING WITH FREELANCERS?**

Clear communication and expectations/deliverables are key. Treating them as part of your team, and negotiating rates up front (especially if you aren't the ones paying!) so everyone knows where they stand is important.

**WHAT ROLE HAS THE MMF PLAYED IN HELPING SUPPORT THE GROWTH OR DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR COMPANY?**

The industry-wide initiatives, lobbying and government updates etc are the most valuable to us on the whole; and it feels really important we work to support the MMF too in fighting for both artists and managers in such a fast-changing industry.



# REMUNERATION & PENSIONS

Agreeing on salaries, fees and any bonuses with employees and freelancers in advance of the commencement of work is paramount to a healthy workforce environment. Salaries in management vary, but companies must pay for labour within the law, and respect minimum salaries or preferably living wages. The Living Wage Foundation can provide advice on how to do this. Management is a precarious business with a majority of MMF members operating on commission, so budgeting expenditure to any contracted commitments is essential for a business to avoid any liability. The MMF has several Associates which can provide Employers Liability Insurance. Motivating a team with targets, bonuses or even equity can be a really good way to empower a team and bring entrepreneurialism to your business; but clear boundaries between employment and obligations are to be agreed in advance of any partnership or joint venture.

Our research strongly indicates that the majority of management companies work more flexibly than having all employees on a payroll, but under the Pensions Act 2008, every employer in the UK must put certain staff into a workplace pension scheme and contribute towards it. This is called 'automatic enrolment'. If you employ at least one person you are an employer and you have certain legal duties. Further advice can be found at the

Pensions Regulator. It's understandable that in a profession with so few permanent jobs that the majority of people working in music management are not paying into an employer's or private pension scheme. In fact, our research highlights that only 26% of managers are paying into a pension pot, and therefore the majority are not maximising the potential of the opportunity of savings advantage of pension provision.

Freelancers need to actively make the decision to start a pension (unlike employees). Starting early, even with regular small amounts, can make a huge difference when it comes to later life. MMF works with several Associate financial advisory partners such as Carrington Wealth Management and Cooper Parry Wealth who can provide further advice.

Two of the most common pension providers for employers are Nest and PensionBee.

Pensions Regulator:  
<https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers>

# INSURANCE & INCOME PROTECTION

Employer Liability Insurance is an essential and mandatory insurance you need to have in place for all staff or volunteers and is required by law. Other cover such as Professional Indemnity Insurance, is also advisable for music managers.

An important consideration for freelancers and business owners is income protection for injury or illness. The level of cover will depend on your individual scenario, liabilities and business risk. Income protection insurance, life insurance and critical illness insurance are personal matters and each individual should seek advice from an appropriate broker to see which options might be available to them.

Only 52% of managers indicated that post-term commission agreements are in place, with one member stating that it's only getting harder as "lawyers are cutting down both the rates and the sunset clause length". Exploring the possibilities of income protection for your business is a further security, as is potentially establishing new business models as highlighted in previous editions in the Managing Expectations series available for free on the MMF website.





# EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND GROWTH

Once you've onboarded staff into your management company and got them started, the perennial challenge, as for any small business, is keeping employees motivated, inspired and happy. You are unlikely to have a dedicated HR or professional development department, so as a small business, it is likely this responsibility will sit with you.

Given the expectation that managers will not operate in a silo and that they will be knowledgeable about all aspects of their client's careers - from recording, publishing and live, to digital marketing, contracts, accountancy and PR - there is an added responsibility to ensure that staff are consistently up-to-date with industry trends.

You may also want to encourage employees to gain specialist skills in specific areas that might benefit their personal growth while helping your business to thrive.

There are numerous online resources about staff retention, as well as consultants who specialise in supporting small businesses, but some key areas to consider when looking to strengthen your workforce are:

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

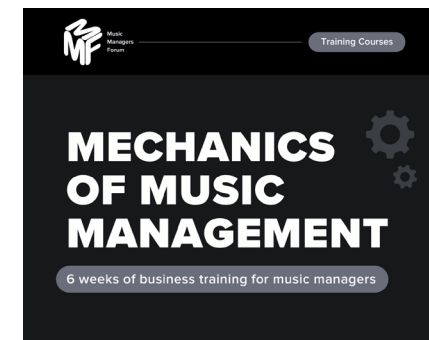
The music industry accelerates at an ever-increasing pace. New innovations, technologies and start-ups are continually coming to market. The need to learn is unceasing and cultural shifts and increased global opportunity call on a fuller range of skills and behaviours. Ensuring your employees continue to develop new skills and undergo self-development will have multiple benefits, and ensure they can contribute more effectively to your business.

As an Arts Council England national portfolio organisation (NPO), the MMF has recently embarked on a major expansion of the professional development services we can offer to managers across our membership. We strongly encourage that you sign up all your members to the MMF, or take out a company membership, so they are able to attend events and seminars, and can benefit from discounts for training courses such as our ever-popular Essentials of Music Management and Manager Summit events.

Other key initiatives include our groundbreaking Accelerator Programme, where our primary partner is YouTube Music, and, thanks to a new partnership with PPL, an annual Advanced Managers Retreat. The MMF has also developed an extensive programme of engagement with Welsh-based managers through a partnership with Creative Wales.

Going forward, we are currently exploring the idea of a manager certification system, and will be working with members to develop this concept over the next 12 months.

<https://themmf.net/resources/training-courses>





## COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

In a small team, it might feel that roles and responsibilities overlap. It is easy to become immersed in work but consider how efficient and smart your team really is. In regards to performance managing a team, it is important to retain open lines of communication with employees. Ensure you have regular check-in meetings in your diary, and that you can provide feedback on their performance, discuss their career goals, and address any concerns they may have. Think about how your clients can also provide constructive feedback and how that is best channelled to create a positive culture of accountability.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Establish a regular performance evaluation process, and an annual review to assess employee performance, keeping note of main tasks and deadlines. Try to recognise and reward outstanding contributions. Even a small gesture can go a long way even if just expressing gratitude in a fast-paced industry it's easy to let the wins slip from memory. Generally, it is good practice to give feedback regularly and not wait and hold lots of comments for an annual review. Think again about how best your clients can give feedback on how they work with your team.

## WELLBEING AND SUPPORT

At times, music management can feel a 24/7 job. It's important to step outside of the bubble. Offer employees information on mental health and wellbeing. This could range from joining an industry-focused sports group, company away days, sharing the [MMF Mental Health Guide for Music Managers](#), or highlighting services such as Music Minds Matter.

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Foster a positive work environment that promotes employee engagement, teamwork,

and a sense of belonging. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive and stay with a company. A shared away day or experience can build a sense of shared purpose.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As with most small businesses, the majority of music management companies do not have HR departments. However, you can still develop and put in place procedures to address any unforeseen conflicts or issues with employees. If you have more than 5 staff these processes need to be in your company policies in writing. The [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website has a useful section on solving workplace disputes: <https://www.gov.uk/solve-workplace-dispute>

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The MMF takes bullying and harassment seriously and this is referenced in our Code of Practice which all our members use as the principles of management. Employers should also consider whether it's possible the law has been breached and if a police investigation is needed. The MMF contributes to the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA) through membership fees which will be active from the end of 2024. CIISA exists to uphold high standards and good practice, and investigate complaints. CreativeUK has developed a training unit "It's Not OK" designed for everyone in the industry to become more aware and address inappropriate workplace behaviour. The MMF Code of Practice includes a complaints and disputes process to investigate potential breaches of the Code. In addition, Help Musicians offers specialist support services which could be useful for disputes or if bullying or harassment involves your client.

<https://www.wearecreative.uk/elearning/>

<https://ciisa.org.uk/services/>

[info@ciisa.org.uk](mailto:info@ciisa.org.uk)

Helpline 0800 088 2045

<https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/get-support/bullying-harassment>

## FAMILY AND CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

As an employer you must provide Statutory Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental Bereavement and Share Parental Pay; of which you are able to claim back from the National Insurance Contributions and Employers Office.

The MMF is a member of Parents in Performing Arts (PiPA) and is signed up to its The Charter Programme. Participating organisations benefit from data-driven insights, a comprehensive toolkit, ongoing collaboration and access to the growing network of PiPA partners. MMF wishes to be inclusive for all our members with caring responsibilities and address some of the many difficulties the workforce has in this area. To do this we provide many of our sessions both in person, remotely and recorded for catch up viewing, offering a variety of times to engage through different delivery of events. As part of our Managing Expectations survey we used PiPA standard insight questions to discover more about our working parent and carer memberships and wish to continue to advocate and explore what this experience means.

For more information of PiPA visit <https://pipacampaign.org>

## CHILDCARE

Music management often requires working lots of (un)sociable hours and being flexible to meet demands. This can include being on call/late nights/working across timezones/domestic and international travel. When music managers are also parents then this flexibility can be positive in terms of not needing to be in an office 9-5, but it can also be challenging to put boundaries in place with clients whilst meeting caring responsibilities.

37% of music managers responding to our survey have caring or parental responsibilities and 31% are primary carers. Of these, 55% of respondents have children under 10 years old. We asked managers to identify what the common issues, barriers and challenges being a working parent presented.

MMF board member Vicky Dowdall runs a successful independent management company, VDM Music, where her clients include Nina Nesbitt, Cody Frost and Olivia Sebastianelli. She also co-manages Ella Henderson in partnership with Mark Hargreaves of Crown Talent & Media Group and recently co-founded the label Apple Tree Records with Nina - committing that all songwriters involved with their releases will receive royalty/master points.

Twice nominated for Manager of the Year at the Music Week Awards, Vicky has been a visible advocate for working parents and has spoken candidly of her own experiences balancing the pressures of motherhood and business.

This, she says, is always a work in progress.

"In all honesty I'm still trying to figure out how to manage both. It's a real struggle and a lot of juggling. You are filled with guilt about either not being present enough as a mother or feeling like you aren't working hard enough. It's impossible to take time off.

I try to manage it by realising that if my children see me work hard I will be an example to them of how you can achieve your dreams. I want to be a good role model to them. More practically, I've also started to leave my phone upstairs for the morning and evening routines as that time is precious. I'm still learning the art of balance, but mothers out there need to be kind to themselves. We are doing the best we can.



In terms of positive changes I think we need a certain level of understanding across the industry [about the pressures of parenthood]. It's especially hard if you are independent like me, as there's no maternity leave to fall back on. If I had taken months off my business would have suffered. With the right team in place, or in a different business, that might have been a possibility - but when it comes to management, your clients ultimately want your direct involvement. If there was a pool of high-level experienced people to cover independent managers maternity leave that might be a nice idea. Honestly, I don't know the answer."

In terms of tips for prospective parents, Vicky offers the following advice:

"Managers face a lot of specific challenges when they have kids. The first is financial, simply dealing with the cost of living while making money.. Then you've got time management, and the demands of being present at events and things which take you away from your family. And finally, there's the all-consuming the business. Even if you're home with your family, it's hard to switch your brain off from work."

These challenges are shared with other MMF members we have surveyed, and who all raised the following challenges with balancing parenthood and work:

### TIME MANAGEMENT

The expectations of the job, and especially the erratic and unsociable hours of management, conflict with the routines and schedules of parenthood - especially with babies and toddlers.

### COSTS

Childcare can be ferociously expensive, especially if you do not have a family network

for support. This is compounded by the absence of maternity pay for freelance workers - making it difficult to take a sustained period of time away from work, or to make last minute changes to schedules (for instance, when a child is sick).

### COMMUNITY

Similarly, all the parents we surveyed stressed the importance of support networks, and the opportunity to share childcare experiences and stories with other managers in similar situations - whether advice on maternity leave, scheduling, arranging cover or achieving a better work/life balance.

Action: set up a Whatsapp group for parents and carers - provide information about support groups and job sharing.

Action: highlight more managers with family and caring responsibilities in our Manager Spotlight series where appropriate

### Resources for Parents and Carers

Cats Mother:  
<https://www.catsmother.co.uk>

Mother.Music (Facebook Group)

SheSaid.So Parenthood (Facebook Group)

Pregnant then Screwed:  
<https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/>

Parents & Carers in Performing Arts:  
<https://pipacampaign.org/>

Mother Pukka  
<https://www.motherpukka.co.uk>

Maternity Action  
<https://maternityaction.org.uk>



### DISABILITY ACCESS & INCLUSION

8% of Music Managers who filled in our survey identified as disabled and 23% as neurodivergent. This is lower than the UK Music Diversity Survey 2022 on disability (14.9%) but higher on neurodiversity (13%). The reasons behind this are likely to be a result of flexible working environments, the stimulating demands of the role of music managers along with the attraction to freelance work for those who are neurodivergent. For those with disabilities the challenging changing environments, external events and lack of stability regarding incomes might present barriers seeing a markedly lower statistic for disabled people.

As a management company and employer you are expected to follow The Equality Act 2010 which legally protects people from

discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Attitude is Everything and UK Music subscribe to the social model of disability which is the understanding that disability is something that is created by society. This is because disabled people face barriers that stop them from taking part in society in the same way as non-disabled people. As explored earlier, the Government's Access to Work scheme can help with grants to overcome barriers to work which can include additional assistants, technology and software or adaptations to workspace. Either way employers need to consider and make efforts for reasonable adjustments for staff with long term health conditions or disabilities.

Attitude is Everything also runs Beyond The Music, a development network for disabled and Deaf professionals in the music industry.



Emma Wiggins of Westwick Management shared her experiences:

“As a person with disabilities I find being a freelancer has provided many benefits that are often more difficult for companies to provide. I find setting my own schedule a huge benefit, being able to work hours outside of the normal working week, taking days off when my illness is bad and taking breaks throughout the day all allow me to work to the best of my ability. I always get everything done but not normally on a 9-5 schedule. I am also able to work with artists with disabilities themselves that don't fit the conventional mould but with someone who understands their needs is able to help them reach their full potential.

When looking for work both within other management companies and with artists I have often faced discrimination. There is a large range of disabilities and working with someone who has a complex ever evolving disability can be difficult for employers to plan for. I have often found I have been overlooked for work because of the lack of understanding/education or because people have preconceived ideas around disabilities.

Attitude is Everything has been an excellent source of support and resources. They accepted me onto their Beyond The Music programme which provides access to a community of like-minded people. Other programmes like The Great Escape's Elevate programme provided additional funding for access needs such as travel, which meant I could participate without the worry of extra financial burdens.



The MMF, EMMA and many other music industry bodies also have an excellent attitude towards supporting people with disabilities and often signpost me to resources. It would certainly be nice to expand some of the opportunities open to disabled artists to those working behind the scenes. Many of those individuals face barriers that would make it more difficult to get artists to those opportunities.”

#### Further reading

<https://umusic.co.uk/creative-differences>

<https://www.thebraincharity.org.uk/what-is-neurodiversity/>

<https://attitudeiseverything.org.uk/industry/training/>

# BUILDING IN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TO YOUR MANAGEMENT COMPANY

In 2022, UK Music agreed that its members needed to build on the diversity “Ten-Point Plan” and so last year its Diversity Task Force created “The Five P’s” action plan encompassing Policy, People, Partnership, Purchase and Progress. The MMF supports and encourages all of our members to read this long-term action plan for a change of thought, culture and practice within the music industry.

This path may be easier to navigate for some of our bigger management company members, and we acknowledge that with many of our MMF members being sole managers or running very small teams, implementing all the actions may, at first glance, feel an uncomfortable and unsuitable ask for their business structure.

With that in mind, we have highlighted and modified some key actions to show alternative ways some sole managers and small management teams may be able to better align themselves and their businesses with best practice in the plan:

## 1. POLICY

**Action:** Shape policies and procedures that work towards a 5 year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy and vision and sustain them by incorporating them into every part of the organisation.

If you are a manager who works as a sole trader or runs a small team, you may not have an EDI policy with procedures in place. However,

you can still get involved by looking at how you currently work and consciously thinking of ways you could improve equality, diversity and inclusion in your business practices. Think about your own decisions, work habits and business choices and how you can commit to modifying them over the next 5 years to improve how you increase awareness and actions towards increased equality, diversity and inclusion. Some of the HR consultants listed in the report might be helpful and there are templates and guidance available online. We suggest seeking something which feels appropriate and supportive of your businesses relevance and growth.

## 2. PEOPLE

**Action:** Cultivate a fair hiring process through improved equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups. If you have a team, whether direct employees or contractors you work with, champion them through allyship, and mentoring programmes, ensuring team members are given chances to develop skills and knowledge by giving a platform to new voices.

As an independent manager, you may not have the staff or employ people for skills training, but you can still implement this by thinking about who you work with and how you will decide who you will work with in the future. There is an opportunity to make positive change through working towards inclusive hiring of freelancers or other businesses you regularly work with.



Look into the way you hire new freelancers and team members. Are there alternative ways you could reach out to new communities with your hiring options? Participating in skills development could involve you helping others in your areas of expertise. For example, mentoring or providing an opportunity for work experiences or internships for underrepresented groups, thus allowing another way of knowledge and skills development. Also look at ways you can use your influence to help others to bring new voices to light.

### 3. PARTNERSHIP

**Action:** Build and cultivate new long-term EDI partnerships with an organisation outside of your geographical or genre base.

As an independent manager or small management team, there is always an opportunity to increase networks beyond your immediate geographic and genre areas. This can also be used to help to find new connections and partners (and even find potential new clients!).

For ideas on how this can be achieved attend virtual and in-person networking and panel events with the MMF and other music industry organisations such as LIVE and UK Music. Speak to other managers and industry people about their experiences, partnerships and recommendations. Find new communities to build relationships with that can lead to current or future partnerships.

### 4. PURCHASE

**Action:** Ensure a strong diversity mindset is at the heart of all tenders or procurement and ensure a diverse set of suppliers in the process who meet the highest standards of best practice from hiring PR or digital freelancers to TMs and engineers. If you have staff, deliver masterclasses and training programmes to

enable staff to grow beyond the boundaries of their roles and responsibilities.

Even as a solo operation or small management company with limited spend, you can assess who you purchase from and who you will purchase from in the future. Purchasing power is power. Think about how to find new ways to diversify your suppliers by seeking and finding suppliers who place importance on diverse teams as a priority of meeting high standards and best practices. Be bold and ask your current big suppliers e.g. merch companies, promoters etc. about their policies and training they have in place stressing it's important to you in deciding who to do business with.

If you don't have staff to train or deliver a masterclass too, expand your own horizons by taking a masterclass or investing in training yourself.

### 5. PROGRESS

**Action:** Share data, and insight and chart your progress to raise awareness internally and externally around diversity.

Solo managers and smaller management companies may not have the structure in place yet to collect data around EDI, but they can still make a meaningful impact by sharing their own experience. Communicating and talking openly about your diversity journey raises awareness. You can also share your feedback on changes you made and the progress you had over time within your network and community. Sharing this insight and discussing points raised in this plan openly creates ripples and starts conversations that can lead to more action and contributes to positive waves of change.

These are just some examples of how independent and sole managers can take action

on diversity and inclusion. It is also important to remember that this is part of a long-term commitment to doing what you can, as a management business of any size, to make our community and the wider music industry more equal, diverse and inclusive and measure our progress.

If you are struggling with this, we suggest that you find someone who may be able to help, either peer-to-peer or by reaching out to UK Music: [www.ukmusic.or](http://www.ukmusic.or)





# ENDING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION & MEDIATION

At some point it's likely professional relationships will come to an end. Whilst the majority of people move through working life with very few, if any, disputes or serious disagreements, they do happen. Small companies carry a high risk of redundancy and clear notice periods should be agreed with employees. If you have employees you must have a company policy to manage grievances or offer ACAS dispute resolution. If there are problems raised with the relationship between yourself and your client, you can access mediation through Help Musicians.

Employees, freelancers and associates often move on from employers or join companies with clients. The MMF Code of Practice states that

**"before entering into a management relationship with an artist, make all reasonable efforts to confirm that the artist has fulfilled their legal obligations to the previous manager, if applicable and, if possible, assist them in doing so."**

If disputes are between your business and another business or freelancer, you may want a professional mediator before proceeding any further. The Civil Mediation Council can provide further impartial advice and the subject is explored at length in our Essentials of Music Management publication.

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

<https://www.acas.org.uk/>

Civil Mediation Council

<https://civilmediation.org/>

Help Musicians

<https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/>



# CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS FOR MMF

We hope this report provides an insight into the music management workforce as well as some practical advice and guidance for our membership who are seeking to grow and build out their teams, whether by working with freelancers or hiring employees. Overall this research has led to the following recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Music management companies:** Invest in training and development for staff (such as MMF Essentials of Music Management course, PPL/PRS registration webinars, professional digital skills), consider offering part-time work options, and explore innovative financing models.
- **Industry bodies:** Advocate for better industry practices such as timely payments, standard contracts and stronger support for parents and those on maternity leave, particularly for freelancers.
- **Government:** Advocate for more support for practical apprenticeships and training programmes in music management.
- **MMF workforce growth:** Continue to support membership in business and skills development through our education and professional development programmes.









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