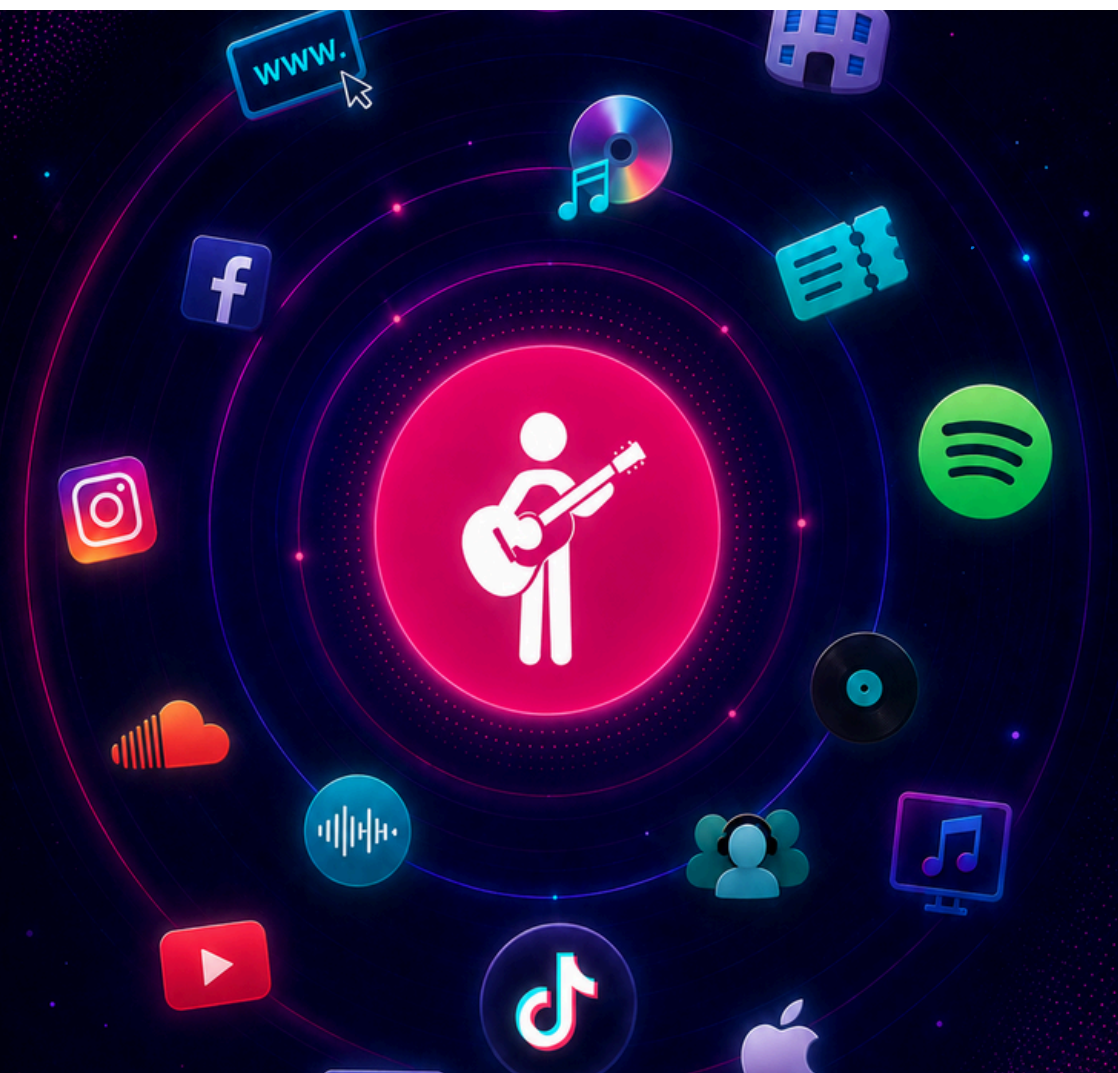


# THE FAN DATA GUIDE



SECOND EDITION



**This MMF guide (updated from 2019) is designed to provide information and insights around the basics of how to capture, use and encourage a more pro-active approach to Fan Data among MMF members - specifically:**

- The value of controlling data and building artist / fan relationships.
- Understanding the different sources of fan data available to artists, and how to secure them.
- The responsibilities of collecting, managing, utilising and sharing that information.
- Detailing some of the tools and services available to help you in that task, as well as some legal practicalities

Now fully revised to reflect the progress in access to data and with updated advice and practical templates, we hope it will prove a useful addition to the MMF's extensive range of educational resources.

Like all the previous MMF 'Digital Dollar' research, we have to thank the managers and other experts who provided knowledge and insight to inform this guide.

In particular James Patterson from ATC Group, Andy Blair from Reverb Data, and Amelia Scivier, Kira Howe and Noorjahn Green from September Management, as well as Lisa Ward (Red Light Management), Jessie Scoullar (Wicksteed Works), Tom Burris (now at Zephyr) and Peter Mason (Russells Solicitors) who contributed extensively to the original version.

The original 2019 edition was written by Chris Cooke of CMU. Adam Webb researched and updated the 2026 version for the MMF.

# INTRODUCTION

**At the heart of the entire business of music is the artist's relationship with their fanbase. Every revenue stream for every strand of the music industry begins with that connection.**

The shift to digital music, online ticketing, social media and mobile communications - alongside the enhanced opportunities for artists and their teams to build their own micro-businesses, develop D2C strategies and retain greater control of their rights and IP - means fan relationships are now more tangible, more intimate and more measurable than ever before.

In today's music business - and even more so in the future - securing access to fan data and nurturing fan connections can provide the bedrock of an artist's career.

At the most basic level, that might simply involve artists accumulating the email addresses and mobile numbers of their most ardent fans.

However, given the plethora of specialist tools and services now available, there is also the potential for far more sophisticated and forensic approaches.

Whether drawn from ticket or merch transactions, from digital marketing campaigns or from streaming consumption, data can help inform artists and their business partners who their fans are, where they live, what age and gender they are, what specific tracks they listen to, how they discover and access that music, what shows they attend, what merchandise they like to buy, how they respond to different messages, and what other interests those fans have, both within music and beyond.

It goes without saying, this kind of information is incredibly valuable.

Consequently, understanding the dynamics and power of fan data is becoming absolutely fundamental to the role of the manager.

Unsurprisingly, consumer data is also hugely valuable to other parts of the music business, notably to record labels, retailers, concert promoters, and ticketing services.

Historically, some of these partners have been reluctant to share data with artists - either as a result of commercial interests or by the perceived limitations of data protection laws.

Subsequently, over recent years there has often been an inherent tension around the control of fan data - a situation exacerbated by three wider trends:

## 1. ARTIST AUTONOMY

As more artists operate with autonomy and exert greater control over their business affairs, there is increased scope to build and nurture online fanbases and deliver sophisticated, innovative and rewarding marketing campaigns - either by taking the reins of their own label or D2C operations or in tandem with their business partners.

As a result of these changing dynamics, and against a backdrop of consolidation and retrenchment elsewhere in the business, the roles performed by the manager have also continued to expand.

Unlike labels, promoters or ticket companies, managers do not operate in a silo. Their job is to oversee all aspects of an artist's career and - ideally - to combine, segment and incorporate multiple datasets in a way that will maximise the overall value of this data for their client.

In this way, fan data gleaned from streaming or social media, for example, might help inform the routing of tours and influence the targeting of advertising spend. In theory, this creates something of a virtuous circle: with these different aspects of the artist business reinforcing and expanding each other, while continually ingesting and processing new kinds of information.

By comparison, a label or promoter is unlikely to have such personal investment - and they may also want to cross-collateralise your artist's data with other acts on their roster.

As a consequence of these shifting sands, there has been a significant push from managers for access to or control of fan data, with more established management companies now frequently investing in in-house technology or CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems to help them manage artist-fan relationships more strategically.

## **2. THE MANAGER AS “DATA CONTROLLER”**

Inevitably, with the increased expectation that labels, promoters and other partners will loosen their grip on the consumer data they collect, then artist teams - and managers in particular - will need to gain additional expertise.

By operating as de facto “data controllers” for their clients, managers must also typically assume greater responsibility for compliance with data laws such as GDPR, ensuring information is stored securely and the rights and permissions of users are respected.

For the majority of MMF members, especially those who are solo operators or small businesses, that also raises the issue of resources and - among all the other tasks they are expected to undertake - how they can utilise fan data into effective campaign strategies that connect meaningfully with audiences.

Given the ever-present obstacles to gaining traction in a global “attention” economy, there are clearly a number of challenges here - as well as multiple opportunities.

### 3. SUPERFANS & SPECIALIST SERVICES

The buzzword “superfan” has been widely adopted by marketers over recent years. While impossible to pin down precisely, it essentially refers to a demographic of highly-sought-after music enthusiasts - formerly known as “early adopters” or “high-spending consumers”..

In short, the kind of ardent, day-one champions and advocates who are most likely to buy tickets, vinyl and merchandise, enter competitions, or engage and participate in listening parties or other marketing activities.

As detailed above, it is not only artists who are aiming to capture this elusive demographic. Record labels, promoters and DSPs, amongst others, are also looking to become the gatekeepers of superfans by developing premium products and services.

Many managers feel that – because the fan relationship ultimately belongs to the artist, not to the platforms they use or the business partners they work with – any data generated as a result of the artist’s involvement should be shared. Moreover, the industry should be developing default practices to reduce friction around data sharing - ensuring that artist’s businesses and campaigns remain uncompromised.

Indeed, given the fan's relationship is usually with the artist, not the business partners, there is a strong argument that they too would prefer that artists first and foremost have access to this information.

So, while it may well be that an artist's business partners make more use of some or all of this data on a day-to-day basis, artists should nevertheless be able to access all this information to inform their businesses, and should be assured that they won't lose any data or access to any data if and when they move business partners.

A number of specialist services have entered the market over recent years looking to facilitate these kinds of demands by helping artists and their teams capture, store, consolidate and manage different verticals of fan data and to utilise it effectively.

Finally, our Dissecting The Digital Dollar series has placed an overwhelming focus on empowering managers to ask the right kinds of questions of their business partners - particularly in regards to data and transparency.

The previous version of this guide aimed to identify all the different categories of fan data and how they fit together. Based on the input of MMF members – and specialists in direct-to-fan relationships and data protection law – that overview is at the heart of this 'Fan Data Guide'.

As well as highlighting the different categories of data that artists and their managers should be aware of, we have also provided advice on what managers can do to ensure their clients have maximum access to information that should help foster and develop their long-term career.