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The Role of a Music Agency by Roger Lopez

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A music agent uncovers the clientâ€™s needs and budget and finds a suitable band to fulfill that need. The musicians in the band will require payment, accommodation, shipping, stage equipment, travel, food, beverages and visa permissions are included, which the agent then negotiates a package with the client.

When setting up as a music agent, the company needs to decide what the market needs in their area of set-up. What live music is required; DJ, bands, famous stars? The best way to discover what a region needs is to go out what music is being played where; hotels, bars, clubs, restaurants, opera houses, theatres, and exhibition venues. Once you have a clear idea of who plays where, how many days the venue has live music, what music the band plays, how much money the musicians are paid and what is part of their package, does the venue have a PA system, the venues part of a hotel chain, and who is the F&B or Stage Director. Put all of these ideas into a spreadsheet and begin to work out which venues seemed happy with their band, which bands did not like working where they did, what venues offer the best packages and which musicians are the best (even if the guitarist is the best player or the Drummer Wanted in the other band was fantastic â€“ write down all this information, including contact details).

There will be gaps, there will be areas for you to launch your business so you fill that gap. Dig hard and deep and find out what it is. In Beijing alongside HouHai Park there is a musician playing in every restaurant, 99% sing Chinese songs and original material. The PA systems all blast from the venue outside, so as the tourists walk 100yards to the next 100 yards the music overlaps and not much can be heard, let alone appreciated! The tourists flock this area â€“ the gap here would be to put in a western top-40 hits band for all those tourists. No offence to Chinese music, but where money is to made, go ahead and make it.

When you finally decide what the gap is and are driven to accomplish build up your database of bands you would like to represent, that you know you can rely on (they are your money-burners) and start to build a rapport with the clients that have the right budgets. It will be hard to be choosey at the start, however, keep aiming high to soar. In the music industry, the last thing you need is a client who cannot pay up or a band that does not show up.

Your marketing needs to be in good shape â€“ have business cards, a website with photos, demo clips and footage of your stars â€“ be professional about everything. Your accounting and cashflow must be impeccable and 100% on the mark. Treat each person with respect, this is their career and they deserve to earn a living for the performance they provide. Do not waste time with time-wasters, give a band only one warning for serious unreliability and then choose to rather not represent them.

Make sure the contract you draw up with them protects you as an agent against hooliganism rock â€˜n roll musicians, but also be fair to them and give them rights to protect them â€“ especially for payment, marketing, copyright, visa and contracts arranged with clients. All communication needs to be clearly understood and contractual â€“ signed by agent and client, client and musicians and musician and client.

When expats live and working different regions, like Dubai, they will need a work visa and permission to work as a musician. The contract signed is law-binding and they can only work for that one company or venue, because that company is their sponsor. Should a musician decide to underhandedly work for another company, they will simply be deported. The same goes for an agent who does not receive payment from a client, can take them to court. As can a musician that

has not been paid by the agent. All monies need to be registered and monitored by the law so that taxes can be applied. The government does not give chances to anyone, including megastars on tour. So it is imperative for the client, the agent and the musicians to keep to their contract. A music agent will need a legitimate accountant and lawyer to help set up banking, visas and contracts legally â€“ do not produce â€˜legalâ€™ documents that are false as the law will catch up with you.

Always protect your musicians, as they are the entertainment you provide. A good percentage to take is 10% of the artistâ€™s earnings. Load your fee on top of the musicians so that they are paid well. If providing long-term visas, then a higher percentage (no more than 20%) can be negotiated. Explain to a musician what you will do for them and then live by that â€“ otherwise you will not have their loyalty and they will find an agent who does. Look after them and they will look after you. If they are bad eggs, then replace them with musicians just as good and more reliable.

When a music agent makes a booking they will need to organise each musicianâ€™s schedule for the show; flight bookings, airport transfers, accommodation, shipping, payment, rider of stage equipment, food, beverages and visa permissions â€“ for all rehearsals, sound-checks and shows. The agent needs to be very clear in all communication to each person, so that everything can run smoothly. The client also needs to be kept updated on all the organization and the agent will work closely with him or her to ensure this is so.

There is much organization and planning which makes a good music agent operate well and be asked again to provide entertainment. Know your market and your clientâ€™s needs and meet them with the right musicians to ensure a long life in booking live music.

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