Why Sponsorship Proposals End Up In the Trash...

If your recording, publishing, and touring receipts are through the roof, you can probably skip this article. Otherwise, you've gotten the memo to chase corporate America and diversify your streams. Except, most bands and managers get it wrong, and end up wasting time, losing bids, or missing serious revenue opportunities. And their pitches quickly land in the trash.

So what's the problem? According to Ketchum Sports and Entertainment EVP Marcus Peterzell, it's not what's wrong but what's missing. Peterzell will be hosting a panel of branding experts on May 12th at the upcoming NARM Convention in Los Angeles, but ahead of that, he's compiled five "musts" for any proposal. And Peterzell has probably seen thousands of these things.

(1) Know Your Demographic.

Who are your fans? For brand marketers, it's all about reaching the right audience, so you must identify who your fans are. That way, the brand can decide if your audience is the right fit. This week I am looking for a tour that will attract 75 percent males age 25-30, and that's that. Anything I see that veers from that target goes into the delete file. You may find it difficult to pinpoint your audience demographic, but just know any brand you pitch is going to ask.

(2) Put the Brand Before the Band.

Most sponsorship pitches I see (and I see a lot) are all about the band; it's their press, their sales, and their chart positions. And while that's all fine and well, the executive you are soliciting is not selling your band, their job is to sell their BRAND. So above all else, you must emphasize how the sponsorship will sell more bottles, boxes, and widgets. You must show you understand the brand's objectives, and even putting their brand graphics on your proposal will show you are thinking about their needs, and not just your own.

(3) Focus on the Big Idea.

Although everyone uses the "I" word (integration), I can't tell you how many sponsorship decks I see with the same old 1990's sponsorship pitfalls: banners at venue, wrapped tour busses, name on tickets and ads, etc. I'm not saying those elements should not be included, but in today's market they should be listed as "additional exposure points" or "value add" AFTER you outline the big integration idea. As an example, if you are pitching a fashion brand, you should offer a fashion show on-stage right before the main act goes on, featuring the brands line... now that's exposure.
(4) Speak to ME!

Unfortunately one size does not fit all. It is virtually impossible to send one sponsorship deck that can address the needs of the dozens of brand verticals. Your big idea for an automotive brand does not resemble what you would pitch to a cosmetics company. Does that mean you have to come up with 10 integration ideas to cover all the major brand verticals? YES... so get busy.

(5) Tout Your Social Status.

For years, your email fan club of 15,000 members was a yawn to many brands, but with the social network (translation: Facebook) explosion, adding a robust social network platform to every sponsorship proposal is essential. You should be touting all of your social network stats, and present innovative vehicles to ignite these fans and turn them from band, into brand, ambassadors.

Okay, so let's say you do all of the above, now comes the hard part: how do you find the right contact, at the right brand, and then get their attention? Do you go directly to the brand? If so, do you hit up the brand manager, marketing director, CEO, PR director? Do you go to the brand's agency, and if so which one? Their ad agency, PR agency, media agency?

The good news is that we've got answers. So please join me and my esteemed colleagues - including the music sponsorship mavens from RIM/Blackberry and Taco Bell - on May 12th at the NARM Convention. "Anatomy of a Sponsorship Deal" starts at 3, more narm.com. Bring your pitch packages and notepads, and see you there!

- Marcus

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Or, simply reply to this note with 'brand' in the subject line.