

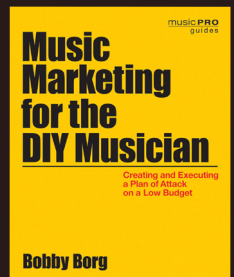
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# THE COMPLETE MARKETING PROCESS

Creating and Executing a Music Marketing Plan



An excerpt from  
*Music Marketing for the DIY Musician*  
by Bobby Borg



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## Creating and Executing a Music Marketing Plan

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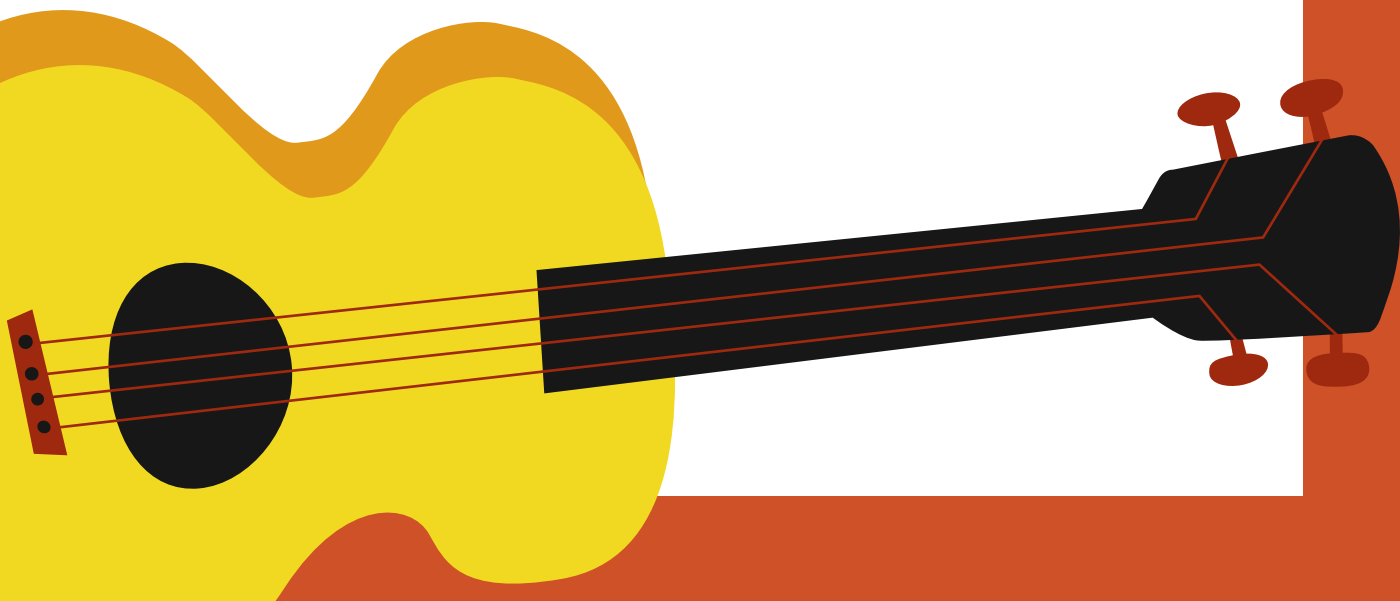
The material presented in this guide is an overview, and is expanded in the book *Music Marketing For The DIY Musician: Creating and Executing a Plan of Attack on a Low Budget*. It can be found in physical and digital format on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [iTunes.com](https://www.itunes.com), or at [BobbyBorg.com](https://www.BobbyBorg.com) where you will also receive a free music business CD and DVD (\$30 value).

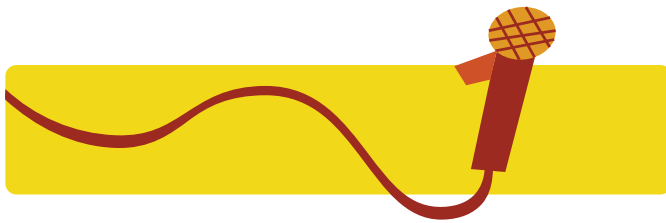
**During my 15 years of teaching and consulting,** I couldn't tell you the number of times I've heard a young musician say, "I just do what I do, and if anyone likes it, they'll buy it." My reply? "Congratulations, you're a true artist."

But as you get a little older and your responsibilities increase with school loans, mortgages, and kids, this attitude carries a significant amount of risk, especially when you don't have other sources of income to take care of life's basic necessities.

To increase your chances for success, why not adopt a more structured business and marketing approach from the start that involves researching, goal-setting, strategizing, assembling, and executing a customized plan of attack?

This approach — called "the complete marketing process" — is used by the world's most innovative companies, and it can be used by you, too. This overview will present the complete marketing process, broken down to 10 basic steps.





## 1. Have a clear vision statement

The marketing process begins by defining where you'd like your career to be in seven or ten years, and then writing out a clear vision statement. With your vision statement defined and in place, it's far easier to map out the directions for how you're going to get to your desired destination.

A vision statement summarizes what you are truly passionate about, and includes everything from the type of music you'd like to create, the products you might release, and the overall brand image you'd like to present to your intended audience.

Long before Marilyn Manson hit the scene, he envisioned himself as being a “pop star who would shock the world.” He kept drawings of costumes and stage set designs along with other business and creative details in a personal notebook. This was Manson's “North Star” — his guiding light. Several platinum albums later, he truly succeeded at bringing his vision to fruition.

As the saying goes, “If you don't stand for something, you can surely fall for anything.” So what's guiding your music career? If you haven't thought about it before, now is a good time.



## 2. Identify opportunities and needs

While keeping your vision at heart, it's time to examine what's going on in the world around to ensure that your vision actually fills a need and represents a true opportunity – from a creative and marketing standpoint.

As previously stated, Marilyn Manson had a clear vision of being a pop star who would shock the world. But he also identified and filled a specific void in the marketplace — and perhaps even a specific psychological need — for an entertaining and horrifically dramatic stage personality, similar only to what Alice Cooper had done decades earlier. In other words, the commercial marketplace was wide-open for a new re-creation like Marilyn Manson, and he utilized his talents to capitalize on this opportunity unlike any other rock artist of his time.

A valuable tool to help you examine the external (and internal) environments of the marketplace and find a truly unique and profitable opportunity is called a “SWOT” analysis. SWOT is an acronym that stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. The idea is to identify external needs and opportunities that match your internal strengths while also considering your internal weaknesses and the external risks (e.g. competition) that could impact your ability to succeed.

While all this might sound like business school jargon, the most successful companies, both big and small, use the SWOT model. And with a little thought and effort, so can you.



## 3. Analyze your most likely customers and target your market

Once you have a more refined purpose and clearer idea of the external environment and the market need you will attempt to fill, it's important to identify and thoroughly analyze the most important people in the world: Your “most likely” fans.

These are people or businesses who share similar characteristics and are most likely to come out to your shows, buy your music, or license your songs. To succeed, you

need to thoroughly understand your target audience. You must know where and how to reach them with consistent marketing messages designed to communicate your band's common-ground beliefs, as well as your products' meaningful and relevant benefits (i.e., what your products do for your target customers).

To describe your most likely fans so that you can better serve them, use one or all of the following factors: demographics (age, gender, income), psychographics (activities, interests, opinions), and geographics (city, state, country). Should your most likely customers be other businesses, let's say you're a composer serving ad agencies and music libraries, use these factors: company size (small boutique, medium-sized company, large firm), number of employees (1–3, 3–30, 30–300), and/or geographics (state, country, planet). Just joking about the planet, of course! Just wanted to make sure you're paying attention.

The more narrowly you define or segment your customers, the more customized and personalized your products and marketing messages can be to appeal to them. It's one thing to think of your fans simply as "alternative rockers" and another to define them as "predominantly male, angst-ridden alternative rockers, aged 21–32, with annual incomes of \$40K to \$60K, who are interested in watching extreme sports, drinking alcohol, and going to clubs once a week to see a high-energy show."

Once you win over your most likely fans (or primary segment) with customized marketing messages, you can then target your next likely fans (or secondary segment).

To conduct customer research, examine the fans of other bands in your genre — or closely related genres — and examine your fan base. You can do this by visiting social media sites and reading what fans say, attending concerts and observing the audience, and just speaking with fans to discover what they want and need — and what they may not even know they want or need.

Don't worry if at first you have trouble creating a fan profile, you'll continually fine-tune and adjust it as you gain more experience as a marketer.



## 4. Conduct a competitor analysis

Differentiation is crucial to your success, so the next step in the marketing process involves conducting a competitor analysis. This requires you to thoroughly analyze your competitors' brand image, products, prices, distribution methods, and promotion strategies.

What's that, you say? You don't have any competition? Of course you do! There are many levels of it, including various other forms of entertainment, but for your purposes, competition can simply be defined as "Any artist your most likely fan could see as being similar to you." Or more to the point: "Any artist who could draw attention away from you."

To conduct a basic competitor analysis, pick two local artists and two national artists to examine. You can conduct simple research online to determine what works and doesn't work for these artists and, potentially, to find out what the fans of these artists think. Not only does this provide valuable information for how you can step your game up and improve, it can help set your career apart in a way that's meaningful to your target audience.

To illustrate, after the Police realized that other rock/reggae bands in England had not yet attempted to gain an edge in the United States market (where rock/reggae was relatively unknown), the band toured the US relentlessly in vans on a bare-bones budget, won over audiences, and earned the position of being the first rock/reggae band of its kind in America. And as the late talent agent Ian Copeland told me in a personal interview, "The rest is history."



## 5. Demo your products and services and get feedback

The next few steps in the marketing process deals with “research and development.” This involves developing, testing, interpreting, and refining your products and services to get invaluable feedback from your target fan.

“Feedback is the breakfast of champions,” says management expert Ken Blanchard. “It opens your eyes and gives you an opportunity to forecast the future.” Without it, you’re creating in a vacuum, and that’s risky!

Now consider this: The first step in the demo/testing process involves developing a prototype of your products and services (or just a clear “idea” of them) to gauge how your intended audience receives them. This could simply mean writing and recording three songs inexpensively, and distributing them to your fans at shows (in exchange for their email addresses, of course.)

The second and third steps are deciding on the method of testing you’ll use (surveys, casual observation, interviews, etc.) and then conducting these tests on an audience via your social networks, an informal rehearsal room, or a club performance.

The fourth and fifth steps in the demo/testing process involve deciding what your data really means and then determining what changes and/or additional testing (if any) need to be conducted. This might require you to go back and rethink your vision and SWOT analysis, and even develop and test more recordings until you can show your idea is something about which people are truly excited.

As Edward McQuarrie explains in *The Market Research Toolbox*, market research can never provide guarantees, but it acts as an “uncertainty reducer.” It can help you predict the future and save you a significant amount of time and

money, which might otherwise be spent on creating products that simply don’t sell. Keep in mind that the key focus of my book is to help musicians like you turn your art into a more successful business. It’s always about creating music that truly matters to you, but also about creating music that gets heard.



## 6. Use the SMART model to set your marketing goals

As soon as you feel positive that you have a product/service of which you are proud and that will appeal to your most likely fan, you should set your marketing goals for the next year. Written goals help provide short-term guidance on the path to achieving your long-term vision.

Goals should be expressed as specific (exact) and measurable (countable) objectives based on the sales and/or awareness you would like to achieve in the marketplace within a set period of time. For example, your first-year goals might be based on selling “x” number of units of your six-song debut recording at a specific price, making back “x” percent of your initial investment of Y dollars, licensing “x” songs in film and television, or increasing your fan base from “x” to “5x” fans.

Goals should also be established on realistic projections, observations, past successes, and available resources to ensure they are attainable and realistic. Consider how well your competitors are selling. Think about whether you have sufficient access to personal savings, family loans, and discounted services to meet expenses. And assess whether you have access to band members and fans that can share the workload. These are all important factors.

And finally, goals should include the general strategies you’ll use to help you arrive at your desired and specific destination at the end of the year.

In short, goals should follow the “SMART” model (my take on this popular tool means **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**oad-mapped, and **T**ime based). And remember, goals should be high enough to challenge you, but not high enough to beat you.



## 7. Find the right blend of marketing mix strategies

With your marketing goals firmly in place, you must now develop the right marketing mix strategies to help achieve them. These strategies, include the “four P’s” of marketing (**P**roduct, **P**rice, **P**lace, and **P**romotion) as well as three other important building blocks (company branding, product branding, and measuring).

**Company branding:** This involves building a name, logo, slogan, attitude, image, etc. that together create a unique image in the customers’ minds.

**Product and service branding:** This involves creating strong names, packaging, and a personality that are consistent with the overall company brand, yet distinct from your other products/services and those of the competition.

**Product and service development:** This is the process of finalizing your offerings (songs, beats, albums, merchandise, live performances, fan clubs, etc.) for the marketplace, and designing an expert customer service policy to meet the needs of your target fan.

**Price:** This is the intersection of the amount you are willing to charge for your products/services and the amount your fans are willing to pay for them. Strategies may include keeping the price within consumer boundaries, donation pricing, free pricing, and more.

**Place:** This is the distribution of your products/services to places where your target fans will find them easily, such

as specific online sites, live-performance venues, stores, and certain TV shows and video games.

**Promotion:** This is the process of communicating your products’ unique features (what they are) and benefits (what they do) to stimulate the interest, attention, decision, and action of your target audience. This can be done via the Internet, word of mouth, guerrilla marketing, radio promotion, sponsorships, publicity, direct marketing, sales promotions, face-to-face selling, and advertising. (These are all discussed in my book.) While there are many promotional methods, the ones you choose will depend on your audience, budget, experience, and careful research. And finally...

**Measuring:** This is the continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and acting on important information collected from the marketplace. This might include feedback about the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and ideas from fans for new products and services.

Just in case it hasn’t yet sunk in — it’s not the individual marketing strategies themselves that will help you to achieve your marketing goals, but rather the complete “mix” of strategies functioning as one complete, integrated system of communication. It’s the right blend in the right amounts that’s required. Thus, careful consideration must be given to how each strategy affects the others and ultimately affects your target customer.

As USC professor Ira Kalb puts it, “Marketing strategy planning is a lot like baking a cake — it requires the perfect mix of several ingredients all blended into one to achieve a desired outcome, but also a willingness to get feedback and the patience to carefully adjust the strategies accordingly until you get it right.”

Harvard Business School professor John P. Kotter adds, “The strategy decisions you don’t make are just as important to the ones you do make.” This might seem like common sense, but as I frequently say, “Common sense is not always so common.”



## 8. Assemble a Marketing Plan of Attack™

Your next step is to compile all of the information gathered in your research and planning and put it into a standard marketing plan format.

A marketing plan (or as I call it, a Marketing Plan of Attack) is a written document that serves as a road map for your business idea and marketing campaign, a tool to keep all the members of your organization on track, and even a sales document to attract potential investors, distributors, and others. Yup, you heard right — no matter if you are an artist recording an album to release to fans or a composer building a studio to deliver tracks to ad agencies, a marketing plan could help you attract investors to fund your career. Marketing plans are tools business people expect, and they include language professionals are used to reading.

While marketing plans can come in all shapes, sizes, and lengths, the ordering and standard elements you'll use for your purposes, as an independent DIY artist, are as follows:

**Front cover:** A top page that includes your company name, logo, contact information, and photograph (or album cover).

**Executive summary:** An overview that includes your vision, market need, revenue generators, objectives, general strategies, resources, costs, and challenges.

**Table of contents (TOC):** A list that charts out the sections and page numbers associated with your plan.

**Vision statement:** A paragraph that forecasts where you want your band/company to be in seven to ten years.

**SWOT analysis:** An internal and external examination of your band/company and ideas.

**Customer analysis:** A profile of your most likely customer.

**Competitor analysis:** A study of your direct competitors.

**Demo/feedback report:** An analysis that proves you're business idea can work.

**SMART goals:** A paragraph that describes your company's sales and/or awareness objectives for the year.

**Strategy plan:** A proposal showing what you'll do to achieve your goals. It includes company branding, product branding, product, price, place, promotion, and measuring.

**Costs:** A budget that outlines the expenses involved in executing your strategies.

**Timeline:** A schedule that chronologically displays how you'll execute your plan.

**Appendix:** A section that contains additional matter such as detailed charts, graphs, or research findings. (This is optional.)

A Marketing Plan of Attack must be clearly written with complete, easily understandable sentences. The information is usually written in one of three ways: first-person plural (we), first-person plural possessive (our), or third person (your company name, or it or they). Your plan must also be concise (bigger is not necessarily better) and use common, easy-to-read font styles with 1.1 or 1.2 line spacing. A plan should also be paginated well, with consistent headings, subheadings, and bullet-point styles marking each section.

Keep in mind that a marketing plan is “a living, breathing document.” In other words, a marketing plan is not something you assemble once and use unchanged for the next year, but rather, it is a fluid tool that is continually revised

as you evaluate its performance and observe new marketplace developments on your path to success.

By the way, I call it a Marketing Plan of Attack because when it is handled with the extreme detail and care that my book outlines, your plan should be analogous to a battle plan — something on which you'd be willing to bet your entire life and the lives of others on your team. After all, your career and success really are that important to you! Right? Music is your heart and soul.



## 9. Execute your marketing plan effectively and get results

Doing the aforementioned work and compiling a plan are an essential beginning, but you must now execute your strategies successfully within the framework of your budget and timeline to give them worth. There are several factors that can seriously affect the outcome of your marketing plan (all of which will be discussed in my book). But here are three things to chew on for now:

**First**, you must get together the financing on which you based your marketing plan's goals — whether it be personal income or savings, a small loan from family members or friends, personal credit cards, customer donations and pledges, or barter exchanges. Amanda Palmer even pre-sold her record online and notoriously collected a reported one million dollars. Whatever the method you use, it's time to secure your financing! Remember, you're not going to get very far if you run out of gas to put into your car.

**Second**, you must take charge of your career and fully embrace the do-it-yourself methodology on which my book is based. Or, to think of it another way, you must fully utilize a “do-it-together” methodology toward your business and marketing. One band member can be the website guy, another the fan club and database gal, and another the promotion person. Create and utilize a street team of

your most dedicated fans or friends to help you with all of your marketing tasks.

**Third**, remember that you must strive to keep your work ethic in check over the long haul. Marketing is not something you do for just a few weekends. It's a continual process. Like a shark that must keep swimming to take in oxygen, your career dies if you stop marketing and measuring your efforts!

Does this all sound daunting? Look at it this way: your overall strategy can be to attract the attention of those who can help you by first helping yourself! Light as many small fires as you can until people see the smoke and take notice. Create some momentum in your career, and get the managers, producers, publishers, and investors to come to you.

As Guy Kawasaki, author of *The Art of the Start*, would say, investors are known to “pay attention to when the dogs are eating the dog food.” This might take a little time and hard work to make happen, but if you're a “lifer” and not just some wannabe weekend warrior with a rock-star fantasy, sweat and time shouldn't mean a thang!



## 10. Keep learning about marketing and strengthen your marketing muscles

The last step in the marketing process deals with your commitment to learning and staying alert for new techniques and methods that can sharpen your skills. There is so much to learn about this fascinating subject; you should strive to soak it all up.

Read every page that a book like mine has to offer and then investigate others, such as *Marketing Management* by the legendary Philip Kotler. You should also make sure to read the latest marketing and business news via popular



sites and blogs such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Wired*, and *Fast Company*.

Lastly, be sure to attend seminars and events held by important organizations such as the Direct Marketing Association, the Market Research Association, and the American Marketing Association (for which I sit on the board as VP of Special Events in Los Angeles). If you have any questions whatsoever, visit [www.bobbyborg.com](http://www.bobbyborg.com) or [www.musicmarketingforthediymusician.com](http://www.musicmarketingforthediymusician.com).

But wait... there's more.

**Be good at what you do, because marketing won't make you better.** Abraham Lincoln once said, "Whatever you are, just be a good one." If you don't have a great idea or product, you really have nothing to market. Fans do not reward bad songs, poor musicianship, shoddy production quality, and cheap merchandise — they are very discerning and sophisticated, and there are far too many choices. So do your homework, and as they say in marketing lingo, "WOW your customer!"

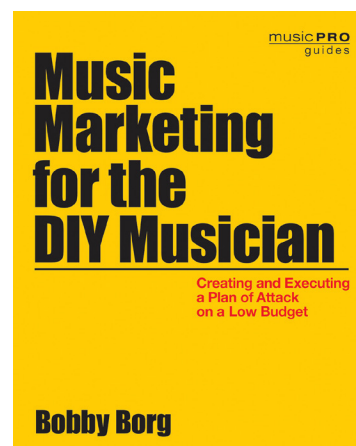
**Don't worry about whether Lil Wayne, Dr. Dre, or anyone else knew this stuff.** Make no mistake — successful people in all fields apply marketing and business principles to achieve their goals whether they know it or not. The advantage of being consciously aware of these principles upfront is that you don't have to discover them by accident. Rather, you can use them as tools at your own discretion to help you achieve your vision.

**"Marketing" is not a bad word.** Some people think of marketing as sleazy or pushy. This reaction is usually due to bad past experiences with deceptive advertisements or pushy marketing tactics. But as media critic Douglas Rushkoff said in the PBS special, *The Persuaders*, "Don't let your marketing show." If you can focus on the creation of products and services that uphold your vision, satisfy fans by giving them what they need, and present your offers in a non-intrusive manner that make fans feel like they are part of the process, people won't even know you're marketing to them. But make no mistake: if you want to make it, you have to market!

**Don't worry if you don't have anything to market right now, or you've already launched.** Remember that it's never too late — or too early — to learn about music marketing. By understanding the process, you'll know what to do long before starting your next project. And if you've already released your products and services, you'll know what needs fixing and what needs to be left alone.

**Don't be afraid to look at yourself under a microscope.** Finally, the marketing concepts discussed here are not necessarily difficult to understand, but they are certainly challenging to apply. They will push you to ask some very specific questions about yourself and to think long and hard about your music business endeavor. Some of you will be ready to dive into this material and will start using the templates in my book to write a Marketing Plan of Attack, and others will still need more time. Just remember that this material is here to help you. Be brave, have an open mind, and use what works for you!

**For an expanded take on the above subjects, and to access handy templates, marketing plan samples, and over 500 DIY music resources, get *Music Marketing For The DIY Musician: Creating and Executing a Plan of Attack on a Low Budget* (Bobby Borg, Hal Leonard Books). It can be found in both digital and physical form at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), [iTunes.com](http://iTunes.com), or at [BobbyBorg.com](http://BobbyBorg.com) where you will also receive a free music business CD and DVD (\$30 value).**





## **Bobby Borg:**

A former major label, independent, and DIY recording/ touring artist, sponsor/endorser for major music equipment manufacturers, graduate of Berklee College of Music with a BA in Professional Music, graduate of UCLA Extension with a certificate in Marketing, Project Management, and Instructor Development, educator at Musician's Institute and UCLA Extension, founder of Bobby Borg Consulting, contributor to international publications, guest speaker, Vice president of Special Events for The American Marketing Association, and author of Billboard Books/Random House's best-seller *The Musician's Handbook and Music Marketing For The DIY Musician* (Hal Leonard, 2014). CBEST certified instructor in the state of California.

### **Links:**

**[Music Marketing For The DIY Musician on Amazon](#)**

**[Music Marketing For The DIY Musician on iTunes](#)**

**[BobbyBorg.com](#)**



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