



Tips for independent musicians

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## **Networking on myspace**

by Julian Angel

### **Introduction**

With the advent of the social networking platform [myspace.com](http://myspace.com) a new opportunity opened up for musicians and bands to present and promote themselves and network and interact with both their fans and other musicians or people in music related businesses like A&R managers, music publishers, club owners etc.

Using myspace myself daily to communicate and, of course, to get my music out to the people I have experienced a few ups and downs, dos and don'ts both in my way of using myspace and the way others are using it.

In this article I will discuss such questions as

- how to set up an effective myspace profile
- how to win new friends (fans)
- how to stay in touch with your fans to create a loyal fan base

These tips are written from my own personal experience and point of view. Other ways are likely to work as well. If you have any other good ideas, please let me know and I will post them with a link to your website or myspace profile.

### **Choosing your profile**

myspace offers different types of profiles. Personal profiles for private people, comedy profiles for comedians and, of course, music profiles for bands and musicians.

If you are a musician (we expect that here...), be sure to select a music profile. Compared to a regular profile the music profile offers a regular link to your website, a four-track standard music player and the opportunity to categorize your music, to add your biography, label name (if applicable), upcoming shows etc.

Once you have signed up for a profile you cannot change the type you have chosen. So, like many others, I have picked a regular profile first and wondered about how to get that music player – so I had to delete my profile again and get a music profile.

### **Look and settings**

Some bands seem to go by the maxime 'the fancier, the better' or 'the more information, the bigger the statement'.

Let me give you a few reasons why you should keep your profile as simple as possible:

People who surf over to your profile have a certain (bigger or smaller) interest in you and your music. However, their time is valuable, so keep your band info and bio as short as possible. Three to four sentences will do. Make sure to include such information as your style, upcoming or previous recordings, some milestones (like playing at a renowned festival or opening for a well known artist, feature on TV, movie, sampler etc.) and your future activities (trying to get signed, more live shows, touring etc.). That's it. That's all.

Keep your information well structured and thus easy to read. Nobody is willing to go through a huge block of letters without any structure or breaks, nor does anybody care if 'Noname 1' has been replaced on the drums by 'Noname 2' three years ago...

Avoid any extra graphics on your profile's main page. There is a standard profile picture in the upper left corner to make you or your band visible. An extra banner for your fans to download or a newsletter subscription box will be fine. Anything else wastes precious time. Visitors with a slow internet connection probably will not wait until your band member pictures, live picture slide show, skull and glitter graphics or even videos will have been loaded properly so they can enjoy your presentation. Keep in mind: for some reason the music player is one of the last things to open, so your music will not be heard until all that extra crap has loaded.

Your myspace profile offers extra sections for pictures and videos, so use them.

Also, make sure you disable HTML comments from your friends. Simple text comments always do. You wouldn't like your profile to be crowded and slowed down by loads of these "Have a nice day" glitter graphics...

As far as layout and colors are concerned, try using basic colors and make sure there is a good contrast between background and text colors, so your information is easy to read.

A simple profile that can be perused quickly within 30 seconds is perfect.

### **Attracting fans**

Getting new fans who will buy your music, attend your shows and spread the word is probably your main goal when you network on myspace.

In marketing experts speak of 'push' and 'pull' tactics to win new customers.

#### *The 'pull' tactic*

Pulling would mean to lean against the bar, look cool and wait til a girl (or boy) gets attracted by the way you lean there, comes over and starts a conversation with you... On myspace this could be your profile picture in a friend's comments or friend space. Someone might see you there and click on your picture to view your profile and hopefully send you a friend request. This is why many musicians regularly flood their friends' profiles with comments. This is fine as long as you don't annoy your friends when they identify your comments as 'shameless self promotion'.

Another more discreet way of 'pulling' is group participation. Sign up for some of the numerous groups on myspace and take part in discussions. There are groups dedicated to about any musical style where musicians and fans meet, chat or play silly games. Taking part in such groups regularly can increase your popularity and hopefully attract a few people to click through to your profile. Most of all you will become familiar to the other group members.

### *The 'push' tactic*

Pushing would be if you spot a girl (boy), get off that bar and tell her (him) that you are just the one she (he) has been waiting for...

The most indiscreet way of pushing on Myspace is to send messages to yet unknown people and tell them openly about your new album that's coming out. The response will be obviously poor. Also posting 'promo messages' in guestbooks or, on Myspace, in groups is actually one of the 'don'ts' because other members will get annoyed – and they will tell you for sure and find others to join the rant!

The most polite way to win new friends using a push tactic is sending them a message, introducing yourself and asking them to add you as a friend if they like your music. This is a way to make sure your friends are really interested in your music and not just some friend collectors.

I used to send friend requests to people I had found in appropriate groups or on music profiles that featured music related to my style. This is a secure way to reach the right people (you wouldn't necessarily send a friend request to a folk music fan if your band is death metal).

### **Get a hold of your fans**

Here's one thing I see really often on Myspace: Some bands proudly sport their list of 10,000 fans, but if you look at their profile view stats and they are just about 10,800 it is pretty obvious that their "fans" haven't been to their profile more than once.

Having 1,000 fans that come back regularly to see if you've got any new songs or pictures on is much more valuable.

Now if these fans don't come back voluntarily as often as you like, there is a way to improve your relationship with your fans: Using the Myspace blog. Those who sign up to read your blog always get notified when you post something new. Your fans will also have a chance to comment your postings. This is interaction, which is highly appreciated and considered valuable by marketing experts.

When you add someone as a friend, always leave a comment or message to thank for the friend request. However, don't just type "thx 4 the add". That's annoying and the most impersonal message you can leave. Try to refer to something you have found on their profile, especially the "about me" section. Your comment should be a teaser for your friends to comment back. However, always stay personal.

### **Adding bands**

Most of the bands who like to add you as their friends aim for your comment space. They will leave a comment and hope to get discovered by other people who are viewing your profile. They will rarely buy your music. From this point of view adding bands doesn't seem to be as beneficial to you as adding 'regular' people – unless you want to use their comment space; it's up to you how far you like to go.

The actual reason for you to add other musicians and bands as friends should be interaction. Add them because you like their music and want to stay in touch with them to get their upcoming record. Add them because you like to cooperate with them (live shows, production, songwriting...) or share any music related ideas. For example, this could be a good way for bands from America and Japan to trade their media contacts. Maybe you could lay down some drum tracks for another musician and get a few guitar tracks in return. You might also find a lyric writer for your songs and so on...

### **Porn stars and models**

You will, of course, appear to be the most terrific, outstanding stud if you have the hottest models and porn stars in your top friends list. However, don't expect one of them to write you (except for promotional reasons) or, not to mention, buy your music. They usually are way too conceited and self-occupied to do that... If any of them ever wrote you personally anyway, let me know – I'll check their spelling...

The days of showing off certain friends are gone. Everybody knows that celebrities will add about just anyone as their friends.

### **Conclusion**

I hope these tips can be of any use and value and help you promote yourself, your band and your music on Myspace. Remember not to push people too hard just to make them buy your music. Pick the right people who are into your style of music and try to establish long lasting relationships. After all, you hope they will buy your following albums too and attend more than just one live show...

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