

14 Tips to Creating a Better Music Website

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Since first publishing my free guerrilla music marketing and promotion newsletter, The Bards Crier, I've surfed hundreds of band websites from the professional sites designed by high-tech designers to the generic free sites you'll find at Geocities. From this perusing I've learned a few simple techniques to designing a website that serves its purpose.

There are two purposes to every band website: first, to sell your band; and second, to sell your CDs. That said, if your website does any less, you are selling yourself short.

So let's get started with 11 hot tips on how you can turn your website into a seller.

1. **KISS. Keep it simple.** Websites should not be flashy. Sure you can try and impress people with killer graphics and dazzling flash animation, but all you are doing is limiting the number of fans who will visit your website.

I can't tell you how many times I stopped trying to surf a website that opened up with some fancy FLASH or gave you a blank page with a pop-up. That's pretty popular with the Major Labels, but ye know, more and more folks are finding it necessary to use pop-up stoppers because too many people use them for SPAM.

2. **Use consistent navigation.** It doesn't ultimately matter where you put your navigation bar, but be consistent. Place it at the side or top of the page and give it quick and easy access.

Also realize that search engines need clear and easy paths if they are going to navigate your website, and search engine traffic is something every website should try and gain.

3. **Know your market.** You can't be all things to all people, so focus. If you play Alternative Country music, cater each page to that style of music. Submit your website to those websites. Exchange links with bands in your market.
4. **Include your contact information.** Just like with regular press kits, your website should be packed full of contact information for your band, including a book phone number, a mailing address, fax number if possible, and of course, an email address. Nothing is more frustrating than having to search a website just to send the owner an email. Post your contact info at the bottom

of every page of your site, along with your email address. Offer the option to send a form AND a hot linked email address.

5. **Keep graphics to reasonable size.** I have high-speed internet access, but the vast majority of the world doesn't. And most of those who don't, don't want to have to wait two minutes while your graphics take their sweet time loading. Again, KISS. Optimize your graphics so that they are under 15k, and your visitors will be even happier with your band when they get to the music and information in a reasonable amount of time.
6. **Add a newsletter.** If you don't have a newsletter, you're selling yourself short. Many folks don't buy immediately. They wait until the time is right. Encourage your visitors to sign up by offering incentives like free MP3s, discounts on CD, or notification of upcoming gigs. Send out your newsletter on a regular basis to get your visitors excited about learning more about YOU. For more on how to start your own ezine, see <http://ezineuniversity.com/>. You can free list management at <http://ezinedirector.com/>.
7. **Add sticky content.** People need a reason to come back to visit you, otherwise, they may forget all about you. Include regular news updates on your site, a journal, chat room, discussion board. Build a sense of community so that your visitors will *want* to come back again and again.
8. **Get a domain name.** I know you don't want to spend a lot of money on a website, but a domain name is essential for any professional band, and you can purchase one as for as little as \$9 these days. Check out GoDaddy at <http://www.godaddy.com/> and have your domain name point to your website even if it is hosted on a generic site. At least, you can tell people to find you easily.
9. **Use META Tags.** Seems more and more people are forgetting to use META tags. Despite the fact that search engines no longer weigh them heavily in their algorithms, they are still use in determining how well your rank. Visit <http://www.netmechanic.com/> for a quick and easy way to create META Tags that you can add to your website.
10. **Add a Privacy Statement.** As spammers become more prevalent online, it is becoming more crucial than ever to reassure your visitors that you are not a spammer. You can do this by adding a privacy statement to your website. This statement says that you will not sell or misuse your visitor's information for any purpose other than to promote your band. Stick to this and your fans visitors will develop confidence in you.

11. **Offer a guarantee.** If you really want to build confidence in your product, offer a guarantee. Make it a no exceptions 100% money-back guarantee. This not only removes the risk for the buyer, but it gives you credibility and shows that you have complete confidence in the product you sell.
12. **Make it easy to accept payment.** If you don't take credit cards on your website, you are losing sales! There are still a lot of great ways to accept payment through credit cards. CDBaby.com is a great full-service website. Or if you don't mind mailing CDs yourself, then sign up with Paypal at <http://bardscrier.com/paypal/>. Paypal allows you to setup a simple customizable store on your website, and best of all they only take a very miniscule piece of the sale. And unlike they used to do, customers do not need to have a Paypal account to order.
13. **Content is King.** If you've been to any marketing websites, you will have heard this phrase before. Well, it's as important now as it as ever was. Good content on your website will sell your music products. This might mean streaming or downloadable MP3s, articles about your style of music, reviews of bands of your style of music, or great ad copy that will sell your products. Great content is what makes a great website. If there is information or resources that are useful, you will develop repeat visitors. This will ultimately result in increased sales.
14. **Add a *Links* page.** Many websites (mine included) require you to add a link reciprocal link from your website in order to be added to theirs. So make sure you setup a links page to trade links with other websites.

While you won't see instant success by implementing these steps, you will begin to see increased traffic and increased sales. This will begin to move you in the right direction of turning your music into a profitable musical career.

For a more complete list of tips for promoting your music online, check out David Nevue's book "How to Promote Yourself Successfully on the Internet" at <http://www.bardscrier.com/musicpromote/>.