

PAUL ALLEN

A vertical microphone on a stand is positioned in the center of the frame. The background is a dark, moody sky with wispy clouds. The title 'ARTIST MANAGEMENT' is superimposed over the image, with 'ARTIST' in white and 'MANAGEMENT' in orange. Below the title, the subtitle 'FOR THE MUSIC BUSINESS' is written in white. The publisher's logo, a red square with a white 'f' and the text 'Focal Press', is in the bottom right corner.

# ARTIST MANAGEMENT

FOR THE MUSIC BUSINESS

# Artist Management for the Music Business

Paul Allen



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Focal Press is an imprint of Elsevier



Acquisitions Editor: Catharine Steers  
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Project Manager: Mónica González de Mendoza  
Assistant Editor: Dave Bowers  
Marketing Manager: Christine Degon Veroulis  
Book Production: Borrego Publishing (www.borregopublishing.com)

Focal Press is an imprint of Elsevier  
30 Corporate Drive, Suite 400, Burlington, MA 01803, USA  
Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford OX2 8DP, UK

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#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Allen, Paul.

Artist management for the music business / Paul Allen.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-240-80924-3 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Music trade--United States. 2. Music--Economic aspects. 3. Performing arts--Vocational guidance. I. Title.

ML3790.A45 2007

780.68--dc22

2007020282

#### **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 13: 978-0-240-80924-3

For information on all Focal Press publications  
visit our website at [www.books.elsevier.com](http://www.books.elsevier.com)

07 08 09 10 11 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

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# **Artist Management for the Music Business**

# Acknowledgments

I extend my personal and deepest thanks to industry professionals and colleagues who helped guide my work on this book. This group of special people includes Cosette Collier, Mike Milom, John Beiter, David Ross, Hal M. Newman, Amy Macy, Chris Palmer, Chad Campbell, Trudy Lartz, Jeff Walker, Troy Festervand, Geoff Hull, Tom Hutchison, Richard Barnett, Paul Fischer, Jeff Leeds, Lee Logan, Bill Mayne, Larry Pareigis, Mike Dungan, Charlie Monk, Joni Foraker, Tandy Rice, Denise Nichols, Clarence Spalding, Jim Beavers, Dan Franz, Catharine Steers, David Corlew, Mike Alleyne, Melissa Wald, Shelia Biddy, John Dougan, David Bowers, Todd Cassetty, and Matthew O'Brien—plus the countless others who I have encountered during my career who have let me learn by being involved in their careers, especially Cindy.

# Introduction

## ***Considering artist management as a profession***

Whatever the name—manager, personal manager, artist manager, brand manager, or representative—managing artists in the music business means that you are becoming a part of every facet of someone else’s life. There is virtually no aspect of the professional and personal corners of an artist’s life that a manager doesn’t encounter on a regular basis. Helping direct the career success of an artist requires it. To the manager new to the profession, they will find it is immensely time consuming, slow to deliver rewards, but energizing with its fast pace and regular challenges.

Artists in the music business are sometimes managed by attorneys. But, there is a reason why professional managers make the best choice by artists to manage their careers. Mike Milom, one of the top entertainment attorneys in the country, told me at lunch one day that attorneys are not necessarily the best choices to provide career management to artists primarily because of their conservative nature as practicing professionals. Lawyers are disposed to advise their clients on ways to conduct business without creating conflict. Today’s artist manager, in order to stand as the strongest advocate possible for an artist in a highly competitive industry, must be able to push their advocacy to the limit—without overstepping the boundary of business ethics. Attorneys have become effective managers but it generally requires that they step away from practicing law.

## **Be creative, informed and connected**

Today’s artist manager must be willing to encourage their artists to take calculated risks and to support their clients when they do. This doesn’t mean they take chances with an artist’s career. Rather they involve the artist in promotional ideas that get the artist outside of their comfort zone and open up opportunities to help them reach their goals.

While you’re managing some else’s career, you must manage your own. That means you must keep current with the entire music business. Certainly technology and changes in the legal environment of the music business will create new directions

and challenges for artists, but they also provide opportunities. As a manager you will need to be aware of trends and how they impact artists on your management roster. That means regularly reading publications like *Billboard* and *Pollstar*, attending industry conventions, and subscribing to online industry headline services like those provided by *Billboard.biz* and *AllAccess.com*.

Veteran artist manager Ken Kragen titled a book he co-wrote, *Life Is A Contact Sport*, and in it discusses the importance of developing and servicing a personal network of contacts. To the artist manager, being able to get that telephone call returned is among the most important assets they can claim. Without the connections—either direct or indirect—it is difficult to get business done on behalf of the artist. For the aspiring artist manager yesterday wasn't too soon to begin building that network.

## **Understand people and business**

Developing meaningful interpersonal relationships can be challenging, but it is more important to the artist manager than any other skill or talent. The work of an artist in the music business is a web of negotiated deals that requires the manager to have patience, an understanding of human nature, great communication skills, and a solid reputation of dependability. Each of these traits requires cultivation but they will become the foundation of a successful career in management.

Aside from the music, business is the other constant in the career of an artist manager. As surely the connection music makes with an individual's passion, it doesn't become commercial until it's good for business. The artist manager must develop an understanding of team building, marketing, budgeting, and sales as they apply to the income streams available to the artist.

This book is intended to be the definitive guide to the student of management of artists in the music business, as well for as those seeking to become professional artist managers. Some of the tools developed for this book are found nowhere else, and active artist managers will find them to be helpful planning and organization tools. The companion website for this book, which is [www.artistmanagementonline.com](http://www.artistmanagementonline.com), is a continuing resource for both the artist manager and artists, and includes a directory of artist management firms, advice, and links to help the manager be a more effective manager in the music business.

Information from this book has been drawn from the experiences of many who work or have worked as artist managers, as well as from the 35-year career of the author managing people, assets, companies, organizations, projects, performers, and performances.

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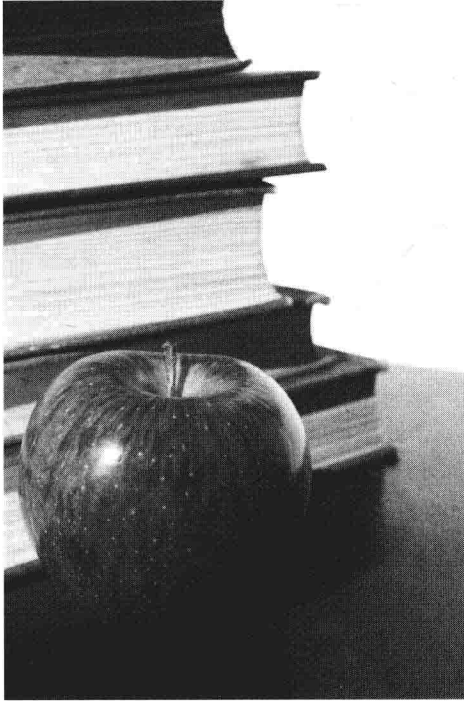
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# 1 Principles of Management for the Artist Manager

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For the reader who is relatively new to management science, this chapter becomes the starting point. It puts the balance of this artist management book into the context of the basic principles of management. As you will see in the chapters that follow, managing an artist in the music industry uses science, business, and a good measure of creativity to achieve success for clients. This is especially true of the music business because of its nature of being an industry that offers high rewards for the relatively few who become successful when success is measured by affluence.

As we consider principles of management it is important to understand that the goals of artist management are different from those of other segments of the music business. Record companies are in the business of marketing and selling recorded music and related products. Radio companies are in the business of building audiences to lease to advertisers who in turn, purchase spot advertising from the radio station that airs within the programming. Artist managers are in the business of developing long-term careers for their artists, which includes touring, merchandising, sponsorships, licensing, and the full exploitation of all of their talents.

As we look at management principles, it is important to understand that the work of an artist manager in the music business is somewhat different from other kinds of managers. The traditional relationship a manager has with the employing company is one that has a reporting hierarchy, and by definition is very structured and “corporate” in nature. Traditional managers use resources of owners to ultimately sell goods or provide services, and in many ways that is what the artist manager does.

Much of the work of an artist manager is sales and promotion, planning, and managing the work of the team around the artist. The relationship between the artist (employer) and the manager (employee) is considerably closer than that of typical managers in business, and is much more like a partnership. The level of trust and the strength of the relationship between the two are often compared to those found in successful marriages. That kind of association of a manager with an employer is rarely found in the business world. However, there are times when an artist manager takes on most of the traditional roles of management as he or she oversees the management of the artist as a brand, with the artist being a creator of art and entertainment experiences.

## ***Functions of management***

Nearly every text, research paper, and discussion of management embrace the four classic functions: planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. And they all apply to the work of the artist manager in the music business.

### **Planning**

The difference between success and failure in any endeavor can often be tied to planning. Luck by itself can sometimes deliver success, but coupling it with a well designed plan can put the manager in a position to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. It is very satisfying when an opportunity opens a door to implement an active plan to take advantage of it. For example, young Josh Groban was asked by award winning producer David Foster to replace an ailing Andrea Bocelli in the 1999 Grammy television rehearsals with Celine Dion. His performance at the rehearsal was powerful enough to help launch his multi-platinum recording career as an artist. Groban’s planning and preparation for a career put him in a position to benefit from the lucky timing of Foster’s telephone call.

When a leader or manager identifies worthy goals, they will often collaborate with stakeholders to develop a set of logical steps to achieve them. Those steps, or plans, become the framework for successfully meeting goals. Dr. Carter McNamara puts it

very well when he says “planning is identifying where you want to go, why you want to go there, how you will get there, what you need in order to get there and how you will know if you’re there or not.” (McNamara, 2006) It is easy to see why planning is often viewed as being a road map that helps define the route to success.

## **Organizing**

Organizing the manager’s work is closely tied to the planning function. Organizing is assembling the necessary resources to carry out a plan and to put those resources into a logical order. It also involves defining the responsibilities of the artist’s team, and to manage everyone’s time for efficiency—especially the artist’s. The manager allocates the amount of time necessary to follow each step of a plan to get the intended results.

The manager of any enterprise also seeks funding or financing necessary to pay for the plan. The grandest example is Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca’s successful pursuit of hundreds of millions of dollars in loans from the US Federal government in the late 1970s to save his ailing company from bankruptcy. For the artist manager, financing and funding the plan for a new artist’s career could include a combination of an accelerated touring schedule, finding sponsors, relying on assistance from fans who offer financial help, asking friends and family, and helping the artist secure loans. Managers also recruit and employ labor and expertise to put the plan into operation and see it through to its success.

The manager of an artist in the music business forecasts the need for members of the artist’s team, and plans for the time when they will become an expense to the operating budget for the artist. The manager also draws any other necessary resources together, creates a logical structure for the organization of those resources, develops a career plan, and then executes it. From an artist’s perspective they look to the manager to take the chaos of a prospective career and organize it into the prospect for success.

## **Leading and directing**

Managers provide a leadership function for the artist and their team by ensuring that the talents and energy of the team are directed toward the career success of the artist. The work of a manager in directing activities is to take the resources needed to reach goals and use them efficiently to achieve success. This means they coordinate the energies of the people working toward the goal, monitor the expenditure of funds, and plan and manage time. And all of this requires that the artist manager keeps everyone motivated toward achieving the goal.



An artist manager sets up a team of support for the artist. Some are on the active payroll and others are used to support the plan on an as-needed basis. The term “team” as applied to the group of professionals who support the artist is indeed a group with a common goal, that being a successful career for the artist. However, it is rare that the team as a group will assemble for a meeting about the artist. Instead, the artist manager provides each with continuous communication about the activities of the artist, and will draw expertise or assistance from each member of the artist’s support team as their help is needed. And members of the team will communicate with each other as necessary. For example, the artist’s booking agent will forward budgets and offers from promoters to the artist’s manager, business manager, and perhaps accountant, and then anticipate feedback from each.

## **Controlling**

Any manager who has created a plan follows its implementation by controlling all of the resources required to achieve the goals of the plan. When the resources (time, people, equipment, financing) have been assembled and the plan is underway, the manager monitors how effective the plan is being carried out and makes any necessary adjustments in order to be efficient with the resources and to be effective in advancing the plan.

The business of managing an artist in the competitive world of the music business means developing strategic plans in an effort to control as much of the artist’s developing career as possible. This means the manager must be realistic in what they feel they will be able to control, but it also means they must be flexible enough in their encounters with reality to adjust to the circumstances. For example, a manager should anticipate that a new and promising artist will not be able to give a powerful performance at each audition, and they should be prepared to put the most positive “spin” on the result.

## ***Artist management skills and personal traits***

The list of management skills compiled for this section of Chapter 1 is an indication of the breadth of the practical understanding of people and the music business required by an artist manager. For the prospective artist manager, these provide a guide to learning; for the active manager, they become an affirmation of the truly special talents of management professionals who guide the careers of artists in the music business.