

Culminating Experience:
Disrupción Records - Label Manager

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Reflection Paper

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I. Summary

My culminating experience for the Master's degree in Global Entertainment and Music Business embodied the role of Label Manager for Disrupción Records. Disrupción Records is Berklee College of Music's student-run independent record label that offers distribution services, A&R guidance, marketing and promotional efforts and live events. In the role as the Label Manager, I was tasked with overseeing the operations of each individual department, fostering longevity for the record label in both monetary categories and reputation, and create a system of successful and efficient turnover for the teams of Disrupción Records post 2019.

The overall success of my position as Label Manager is directly correlated with the success of the projects and the label, itself as many of my decisions were based on the achievement of each project. Whether that meant using interpersonal skills to construct an effective team meeting, or use entrepreneurial skills to obtain business opportunities for the label, the overall success of the project played in my ability to determine which skill to use in a certain situation. Although there were times where my judgement was wrong, I still gained a vast amount of problem-solving skills, industry experience and the ability to understand the ins and outs of a working record label.

This year as the Label Manager of Disrupción Records brought many firsts for the label including, the creation of imprints, the opening of a Sync Department and the signing of a third party artist, one that was not a part of the Berklee community. It is behind these achievements that I confidently say Disrupción Records has a bright future.

II. Results

In first taking on the role of Label Manager, I expected there to be a lot of managing the business decisions and the final signings of the projects we were to be releasing. That focused was immediately shifted when the team and I realized that there was no real infrastructure of the record label from the previous team and that we had no clue where to start the process of getting things off the ground. In this realization, my expectations of starting off with signing projects and artists was put on hold in order to “build” the label from scratch. I now had to focus the “business” decisions to more of a start-up role and get everyone on board for re-branding the label into something that would have longevity.

The results of the rebranding were highly successful and I think achieved very high attention from not only artists that wanted to be a part of Disrupción but from the industry community. Disrupción was now a legitimate looking independent record label that allowed for us to reach out and start working on our goals and objectives. Although we reached this point, it was an unexpected three months where we couldn't focus on the fundamental part of the record label: distributing music.

As we moved towards the distribution portion, I expected my role to become the daily oversight of each time as they worked on the projects they were assigned. In this aspect, my expectations were met in the amount of work that I knew each project and decision would require. In some cases, there were disputes about decisions on artists but for the most part, I feel respected and expectations were met around the decision making portion of my role.

In having the expectation that every team member would be able to understand their role and handle tasks accordingly, the thoughts were not met 100%. I quickly realized that not every team member was a “self-starter” and that it was my job as the Label Manager to delegate tasks in a way where they could eventually handle it on their own and take initiative. While some tasks and heavily lifting ended up in my lap, I gladly took them on knowing that the success of the project and therefore the label depended on it. In this dynamic role-shifting from day-to-day operations and outreach for business opportunities, my expectations of being involved in every department were starting to come to fruition.

In signing a third party artist, my expectations was that it would legitimize the record label and continue to offer outreach and credibility among the community. I did not expect that there would be so much to figure out in terms of communication, and project details. I think that this was a special project and became more than just licensing, however, the amount of attention to detail and sensitivity made it feel like a real situation at a real record label. Working with Mayani Swave was the biggest task we took on, not only with his project, but bringing him to perform at Musaico, all the way from the Dominican Republic. Making sure his needs were met and all the logistics of the event were taken care of, was again, something that made it feel more real than any other project. The expectation of how much time that would consume and realizing how little I thought was needed to make this happen, I again, quickly realized that there was many more details that were at hand than what I had originally thought.

III. Plan of Action/Process

Overall, with the amount of releases we were able to achieve and the success and quality of each project, my expectations for Disrupción Records Label Manager were exceeded on a very positive note. Achieving record breaking numbers in both releases, streams and attendance at a live performance, I would gladly say that the results were a huge success. I learned, like I mentioned before, the Label Manager's role is to keep the gears running across the operation and make sure the label is taking care of all the details that it needs to in order to be successful.

My expectation was to release at least 5 projects this year and we were able to release over 8 including an international, third party artist. My expectations were heavily exceeded in that sense. I also had the expectation to expand the staff of Disrupción and hold regular meetings with the full team. In this aspect my expectations were not met because of availability and a realization that we didn't need that many hands at the label's use for the types of projects we were working on.

IV. Next Steps

The next steps were probably one of the most influential parts of my culminating experience since I was tasked with creating an efficient and smooth way for the new teams to transition into their roles without hindering the momentum of the record label itself. With a new, updated folder and "How To" guide, the resource can be used from team to team, revised, edited, and moldable with each new staff. It includes passwords, logins, contracts,

catalogue and useful information to help run the Disrupción Records. This perhaps, will create the most longevity for the label as the issue of the new teams coming in year to year ultimately stunted its growth. By using the Google Folder, resources will be shared and progress of the label can transition with the projects and staff themselves.

There will also be previous team members to help over the summer months in which there is no team present so that the Disrupción projects still have an opportunity to flourish and gain revenue. We will also be on hand as the new team transitions and hope to have Skype calls where we can explain the details of how to continue to grow and make Disrupción Records successful.

V. Contribution to the Profession

As stated, in being able to take a small, independent label from scratch and turn it into a bigger enterprise is helping Berklee and the industry in and around the school to flourish in ways that it hasn't before. It also gives artists that may not have the major recognition of the outside industry to have an outlet of release, promotion and live experience. It offers many ways to kickstart not only the team's career, but the artists' careers as well. The surrounding

entities of Disrupción Records will learn from the work we do and model their successes off of our 'build from the ground up' plan.

VI. Student Impact

Among the many tangible skills that I gained from being the Label MAnager, I ultimately gained the interpersonal and interpersonal communication skills needed to be in the industry and a successful business person. The trials and errors that were encountered along the way made me grow into a more professional and holistic person that is more valuable to the industry than I was prior to this role.

Outside of being able to lead a team and effectively execute all these firsts for the label, I will gain a 360 degrees learning experience about the record industry and what it actually means to run a successful label in 2019. Holding the Label Manager position gives me the opportunity to be creative in executing strategies, making a small label into something recognizable and credible for many years to come.