

Reflection Paper

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The summary of my culminating experience project was to work with different artists to design and execute an operational project in a creative practical way using DIY tactics. My goal was to design tailored marketing and branding plans that fit the need of each artist. The majority of my work was focused on two different artists. Sergio Martinez and Gracie Hays.

I chose these two artists because I wanted to have variety between the two projects. Gracie is an up and coming pop-folk artist, where Sergio is an established Flamenco percussionist. I was intrigued that Gracie was a pop artist, and I saw a lot of potential for marketing and expanding her image. After listening to some of her music, I decided that she would be great to work with.

Although, initial I thought Gracie was an artist who had her brand and image figured out, so I was not sure if she would want to embark on a project with me. When I approached her, she was enthused that I took a liking to her music and that I wanted to help her with marketing her new project. She not only was looking for development of a marketing campaign for her EP, but also to re-brand her entire image. Gracie was seeking to find authenticity in her brand and image.

The fact that she was looking for marketing and branding allowed me to really implement the tactics and strategies that I wanted to focus on. When I was seeking to find another artist to work with I decided to look into different genres of music, and since I am studying in Spain I thought of Flamenco Jazz. I knew that Sergio was an amazing percussionist in that style of music so I decided to see if he was interested in my culminating experience project.

Sergio was beyond thrilled when I approached him. He was very new to the idea of social media and using digital channels to build his image. He also lacked brand identity. I saw that he was able to be branded, but that he needed to see how to portray that in an interesting and authentic way. Brand identity became the main focus for Sergio. Initially I was going to help him release his own original music as well, but the tracks were never completed and delivered to me. This is one example of a challenge I faced when working on this project.

I also originally approached Nacho Marco, he is a well-known DJ from Valencia Spain. I wanted to see if he was interested in my culminating experience thesis project. He found some interest in my project, but said that he had his brand and image figured out. Although, he would be willing to deliver a single track to me in order to develop a marketing plan for release.

The first step I took with Nacho, which I did with every artist was an overview of social media presence, website and music channels. After doing that I had a meeting with Nacho to discuss how I could help him. One major area that I noticed needed improvement was his Spotify presence. He literally had zero followers on Spotify, but 3,907 followers on Soundcloud. I figured I could come up with creative ways to move his audience to the Spotify platform. I wanted to implement this because on Soundcloud you do not make money from streams, where on Spotify you do get paid for streams. Unfortunately, I never received a single track from Nacho, and his schedule was always too busy to try to develop a tailored plan for him.

If I had more time and were to continue this project I would have enjoyed

creating a plan for Nacho that worked for him and his image. Some ideas that I had in mind were to get him involved in the DNC turntable championship, building his fan base on Spotify, and pitching his single to DJ and music magazines such as, Pitchfork and Fact. I also thought of brand partnership ideas that would have been great for Nacho such as, Beatport and Traxsource. One other area I would have liked to explore with Nacho would have been pitching to radio stations abroad to grow his international reach.

Reviewing the reflection of my project I know that I could have achieved more if I had a larger time frame. Another obstacle that I faced was cooperation with artists. Relying on artist to deliver music, post content and stick to a specific schedule was a challenge. My project began to evolve from tailored marketing and branding plans to management and consulting as well. Adding more elements into my project made it more challenging, but allowed me to grow and discover other areas in the industry.

Overall, the results of my culminating experience with the artists I did work with in detail went well. I definitely would have liked to have done more with each artist, but time and resources became an obstacle. For example, I would have liked to go beyond building Sergio's brand and help him to actually market and release music. The issue is that there was no music ready for release. Although I faced some challenges, I still was able to benchmark the achievements that were successful.

The greatest achievements made for both Sergio and Gracie was a clearer sense of artistic brand, updates on online platforms, increase in performance

opportunities and growth in social media. I was very impressed by Gracie because she was having a hard time being herself on her socials and having that transfer over to her artistic brand. When we first met I told her that she should combine her two Instagram pages and allow the public to see her authentic self. It took many consulting meetings for her to finally make the decision to consolidate to one account.

At first, we were using her personal Instagram page to funnel people or fans to her music Instagram page, but the results were not showing growth. I believe this was because she was more authentic and posted more interesting content frequently on her personal page. After consolidating to one Instagram page Gracie increased her following, and became more aware of her authentic brand. In a way, I wish she had made this move earlier in the campaign, but I was able to adjust to the situation and use it to build anticipation and buzz for her single release on the 22nd.

I believe the overall process for my culminating experience project went fairly well considering the time frame and obstacles I faced. I was able to expand my knowledge and use my skills to handle content creation projects for other artists such as, Jim Alxndr and Hienn. I feel pleased with the process, but if I had more time I would have been able to help Sergio release music and help build a tailored campaign for Nacho Marco.

Although, the implementation of success would still be dependent on the artists ability to deliver music on time. I enjoyed working with both Gracie and Sergio, but working with Gracie was smoother because she was good at

cooperation, punctuality, sticking to time lines and delivering the appropriate resources. I believe that is why I was able to achieve the most with her and why I will be able to release her full EP at the end of July.

Another step in the process that made it difficult to hold an artist to a certain standard was working without a contract. In the future, I would like to implement a contract when working with an artist. Even if it is a short-term contract it will help to keep the progression of the timeline on point. The process was challenging, but pushed me to grow.

Moving forward the next steps I will take will be to finish my work with Gracie. We still have the single release on the 22nd, a pre-release event on the 4th of July and the full EP release on the 27th of July. I will be promoting the event on the 4th of July. My idea is to reach out to American restaurants in Valencia Spain such as, Portland Ale House to promote the event as a 4th of July celebration. I will also be looking into options to draw in tourists to come join the event. I will also be promoting the pre-release event to the Valencia community as well.

Another step to take beyond this is to pitch Gracie's music to publishers. I will be reaching out to a publisher I know in LA. I will also research other opportunities to get her music published with a sync license deal. I believe her new EP really has the potential to find placement on TV and film. Another step I would like to take beyond this project is to look into playlist placements on different DSP's.

I truly believe that my thesis project thoroughly contributed to the discipline and profession in the music industry because it was focused directly on working

with the artist. I implemented my knowledge and skills to help the artist progress. I touched upon A&R when choosing the artists to work with. I focused on consulting and artist development with each artist. I took on the role of management, and I was able to create marketing and branding plans that worked for each artist in a DIY way.

I enjoyed challenging the idea of DIY and introducing this aspect into my project as well, because the current industry allows for the modern artist to release music without a label deal. I also enjoyed trying to figure out ways to market and promote at low cost, it forced me to think about assets that can be used to reach an audience without using spend. That is why digital marketing was so important in my project because it was a free way to reach an audience. I also believe the further we move into the future the more the digital environment will grow for the music industry. I think it is extremely important for the music industry to continue to adapt to technology and the digital space.

The impact from the completion of my project was great for both me and each artist that I worked with. I thoroughly enjoyed the learning exploration, and I was able to gain hands on real life experience. I have never tried to manage another artist so that was a completely new challenge for me. Also, before this project I had never implemented a marketing plan all by myself. In my music marketing class first semester I created a marketing plan for myself as an artist, but it was a fake plan using a fake budget of 10,000 euros. In my final thesis project, I was actually creating real marketing plans tailored to the artist and their needs with little to no budget.

I believe that this was useful to me because in the industry you don't always have a big budget and a huge team to work on a project. I liked the impact of trying to implement things indie and DIY. Also, I really enjoyed helping other artists. It was very nice to see the progression and development of each artist in a short period of time. Sergio was extremely thankful for helping him realize that he can use social media and other online platforms to maintain and build his audience fan base. Gracie was happy with the entire campaign and liked working with me. I know that completing this work has had a positive impact on me.

The completion of the project showed me that I can challenge myself and develop my brand while still managing and developing other artists. It is not always easy, but I know that I am capable and able to handle the role. While I was developing this project I still was able to record and produce my own music and create content for my own social media accounts as well.

In conclusion, the project was a lot of hard work, but it pushed me to be self-disciplined. I learned a lot from this project and I was able to grow and develop myself. I know that in the future I will continue to use these skills for other artists in the music industry.