



the TrueFans **MANIFESTO**

It's Time... for a Change.
Big Time. Past Time.





TrueFans

Explained, Explored & Expanded
Helping Music Artists build real careers—
without selling their soul.

"I think people have been obsessed with the wrong question, which is, 'How do we make people pay for music?'"

"What if we started asking, 'How do we LET people pay for music?'"
—Amanda Palmer

This TrueFans Manifesto™ was first published as a Special Issue of the AMP newsletter on October 18, 2023. It was a *looonnnnggg* one. Double our normal size. Still is. And it's 'heady' at points. We've made summaries and condenses for you to make it as easy as... So, skim. Scan. Dig down and drill deep. What's here may be 'more than you wanted to know' about TrueFans, but KNOWing what's true about TrueFans is THE key to your successful Music Artist future.

As an author I've learned every book has a PROMISE and a PURPOSE. The PROMISE is what the reader gets. The PURPOSE is what the author/publisher gets.

The PROMISE of this TrueFans Manifesto™ is to give you as complete an understanding of the *power* of TrueFans as possible—the good, bad, and... Not just THINK you understand the idea. KNOW that you do. And by the end, to show and tell you things you can do—*tout de suite, inmediateamente*, like *now*—to have that *power* Put Success In Your Music Artist Career.

The PURPOSE is to have you know where New Music Lives™ is coming from and why. We're making a Movement out of our Mission. A Transformation for your work and life. *You say you want a revolution...* Well, here ya' go, because, **It's Time... for a Change. Big Time. Past Time.** And you know it. And TrueFans will do it.

This is 24 pages. About a 30+ minute read. Here's what's here...

- **the INTRO**—a Brief Back and Front Story
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- **the INTRO**—a Brief Back and Front Story

The concept of "1,000 True Fans" was popularized by Kevin Kelly, co-founder of *Wired* magazine, in an essay he wrote in 2008. The idea is that creators don't need millions of followers or dollars to make a living. They need only 1,000 TrueFans—people who will buy most anything you produce—to make a sustainable income, *because* they're in-like and in-love with you and what you do. And *that's* the key. Kelly wrote:

"To be a successful creator you don't need millions. You don't need millions of dollars or millions of customers, millions of clients or millions of fans. To make a living as a craftsman, photographer, musician, designer, author, animator, app maker, entrepreneur, or inventor [or Music Artist] you need only thousands of true fans."

In this TrueFans Manifesto™ we'll look at the clouds of all numbers of TrueFans—100, 1,000, 1,000,000—from both sides now. From up and down, but still some how... We will be bold enough to say it's not *an illusion we recall*. In fact, it's the one-and-only way most Music Artists can create a successful career today. And...

TrueFans is what New Music Lives™ is basing all of its guiding Principles and operating Practices on. What we'll help you do. That could change. We doubt it. And for now, one practical example:

1,000 TrueFans is a target you can aim for.
and...
\$100,000 a year is the financial goal.

• BITS & PIECES—Goals.. Patronage... the Passion Economy... Social Proof... Marketing For TrueFans... and Generosity...

A few important and useful things to keep in the front and back of your heart and mind as you dig into the concept of building your career with TrueFans.

• **Goals...** A goal is a tool. Don't let it be a trap. A goal is something you aim for and create and adjust your skills and actions depending on the results you achieve. THE most practical and empowering goal is *Progress*. As long as you're getting better, you'll stay in the game because *progress* produces results and makes even the tough stuff fun.

And another thing: If your goal is to jump over the fence, and you aim for that, you may make it and you may not. But if you shoot for the moon and fall short... You'll clear the tree tops.

• **Patronage...** In the context of the arts, a *patron* is someone who supports artists and their work financially, providing them with the means to produce and showcase their work either through direct monetary aid, sponsorship, purchasing their work, commissioning works, or other means. TrueFans are your patrons.

Examples of patronage that fit the TrueFans concept are:

- **Crowdfunding Platforms:** (Websites like Kickstarter and Indiegogo).
- **Membership Platforms:** Such as Patreon (and what New Music Lives™ will be coming soon).
- **Micropatronage:** Lots of people giving small amounts of money to support artists.
- **Grants and Fellowships:** Many governments and private organizations have offers that support artists.
- **Subscription Models:** Fans pay a monthly fee in exchange for regular content or other

benefits (also what **New Music Lives™** has coming).

- **Direct Sales:** Artists selling their work directly to their audience, cutting out middlemen.
- **Benefit Concerts and Events:** Organizing events where proceeds fund larger projects or sustaining individual artistic endeavors.
- **Sponsorships:** Brands and companies sponsoring artists in exchange for publicity or other forms of collaboration.

***"The riches are in the niches."
Your TrueFans are your niche.***

• **The Passion Economy** is an economic model that enables individuals to *monetize* their unique skills, knowledge, or interests through direct relationships with a committed fanbase. Unlike traditional mass markets, the Passion Economy is driven by niche audiences willing to pay a premium for unique content or experiences—TrueFans. The creator focuses on delivering high-quality, differentiated value through premium content, tangible results, accountability, and exclusive access. This enables creators to sustain a viable business not by targeting a large, diffuse audience, but by closely, deeply engaging with a smaller, more dedicated group of TrueFans.

The Passion Economy thus empowers individuals to turn their passions into livelihoods by leveraging a variety of presentation platforms and direct-to-consumer models.

• **Social Proof—Quotes for and about TrueFans**

"If you have roughly a thousand True Fans... you can make a living—if you are content to make a living but not a fortune."

—Kevin Kelly

"The long tail is famously good news for two classes of people; a few lucky aggregators, such as Amazon and Netflix, and 6 billion consumers. Of those two, I think consumers earn the greater reward from the wealth hidden in infinite niches."

—Chris Anderson, editor of *Wired*, author of *The Long Tail*

"It's not about appealing to the lowest common denominator, but about finding your highest common denominator." And... "Rather than trying to reach broad swaths of the marketplace, aim for the smallest viable audience and delight them. They will tell

others."

— Seth Godin, multi best-selling author, blogger, marketing guru

"In the digital age, celebrity is more about interactivity, community, and one-on-one connection. You can't stand behind the velvet rope away from your audience; that won't work."

—Tim Ferriss, best-selling author, top blogger and podcaster

"Fans don't just buy your products; they join your movement."

—Donald Miller, CEO of StoryBrand and Business Made Simple

"We're in an age when creators can have not just fans, but patrons; not just audiences, but communities."

—Jack Conte, CEO of Patreon

"The key to making a living (or more) for creators in today's internet landscape is not necessarily going viral and hoping to get picked up by a big network. It's about cultivating a loyal community around your content."

—Hank Green, best-selling author and vlogger

• **Marketing for TrueFans...** As an independent Musical Artist, successfully offering your Music Artist self and your work requires marketing. And no, even if you've signed a record deal, promoting yourself and your brand will be *your* responsibility. Days when companies did the marketing for you—are gone. Bye.

The Good News is marketing—everything that you do to have people buy your stuff—is simple. Not easy. But simple.

Marketing 101 teaches that all successful marketing efforts for *any* product or service must achieve these three objectives, in this order: 1. Trial. 2. Franchise. 3. Consumer Advocacy.

Now, think Music Artist and the goal of 100, 1,000, or 1,000,000 TrueFans.

1. Trial—First and foremost you and your songs have to be heard. So, exposure is key. And to achieve step 2. those listeners have to *like* your songs enough to become your...

2. Franchise—People who like you and your songs become your franchise. They'll buy your songs, attend your events, follow you. You are your *brand* and your franchise

knows you, likes you, trusts you and buys what you make. Consistently.

3. **Advocates**—These are your TrueFans. They're in-like and in-love with you and what you do and they can't help themselves from recommending you to their friends, family and even—and especially—strangers.

1. 2. 3... 1. 2. 3... 1. 2. 3... That's the TrueFans waltz. Simple. Now, how?

Keep reading (and know this is what **New Music Lives™** *lives* to help you do well).

***Helping Music Artists build real careers—
without selling their soul.***

• **Generosity...** *"Every man for himself.... Looking out for number one... People are inherently selfish it's just human nature..."*

The good news is those clichés and most others like them are simply *not true*. Humanity hasn't thrived for all these centuries because we're ruthlessly selfish. We've prospered against all kinds of odds *because* we're really good at caring, sharing and being generous with each other. □

In a recent NYTimes, author and commentator, David Brooks, made the case that 'We the People' were generous and self-*less*-ly altruistic by nature. Here's one of his pieces of proof...

In a recent experiment led by the psychologists Ryan J. Dwyer, William J. Brady and Elizabeth W. Dunn and the TED curator Chris Anderson, 200 people in seven nations around the world were each given \$10,000, free, and then reported how they spent the money. Did they keep it all themselves? No. On average, the participants spent more than \$6,400 of it to benefit others, including almost \$1,700 on donations to charity. Of that prosocial spending, \$3,678 went to people outside their immediate household, and \$2,163 was spent on strangers, acquaintances and donations to organizations.

So... don't allow an inaccurate view of people as self-serving and selfish to distract you from pursuing TrueFans. Fact is, many thousand's of people are out there and eager to support you and yours. And if you're looking for a *Because...* that's coming next.

• **Appreciation...** is one of our most cherished human values. Do you know *anybody* who does not absolutely *delight* in being appreciated? Why do you suppose children crave recognition? And when appreciation is withheld in any relationship... What happens?

When you appreciate someone or some thing, how does that feel—for you? For them? Appreciation is hugely powerful! Because... Appreciation is Love. 'Show the band some Love' the lead singer calls from stage. And we do. Love *IS* the killer app.

Appreciation (Love) is the air that TrueFans breathe. TrueFans appreciate (Love) you and they want to be appreciated (Loved) by you. Do that—Love your Fans and be Loved by them, and you've got yourself an uber-successful Music Artist career. Big—very BIG—time.

• FEATURES

- **1,000 TrueFans. The Article that started it all: Summarized & Condensed**
- **Amanda Palmer— The Art of Asking: Her TED Talk and Book**
- **The Grateful Dead and the Original TrueFans Economy**
- **CounterPoint—Super Fans May Not Be Super Enough**
- **100 TrueFans— An updated \$\$\$\$ model for the Passion Economy.**
- **1,000 TrueFans—How To Get Started**

• **1,000 TrueFans by Kevin Kelly. The Article that started it all: Summarized & Condensed**

To read the original 2008 article, tap here **[1,000 True Fans](https://kk.org/thetechnium/1000-true-fans/)**
[<https://kk.org/thetechnium/1000-true-fans/>]

The Summary:

In the article "1000 TrueFans" by Kevin Kelly, the author asserts that creators don't need to amass millions of followers to be successful; instead, around 1000 True Fans can be enough. TrueFans are defined as those who will eagerly consume anything that a creator produces. With the help of modern technology, creators can establish direct personal relationships with these fans and harness their support more efficiently. By earning an average profit of \$100 per TrueFan per year, a creator can make a sustainable living.

The internet has made it easier to reach niche audiences globally and innovations such as crowdfunding and sustaining sponsorship further empower creators by letting their fans finance the projects they are passionate about. The "1000 True Fans" concept is presented as a more attainable and saner alternative to the conventional and often elusive mass-market success strategies.

The Condensed Version:

"1000 True Fans" asserts that creators don't need millions of followers to be successful. A TrueFan is someone who will consume anything you produce. Having around 1,000 of such fans can allow you to earn a living, provided that you generate an average profit of \$100 per fan per year and develop a direct, personal relationship with them. The number 1,000 is not exact, but serves as a benchmark; it might vary according to individual circumstances.

Modern technology, particularly the internet, has revolutionized the way creators can connect with their fans. Unlike the past where intermediaries like publishers and retailers were necessary, the internet allows creators to maintain direct relationships—connecting and engaging with and enrolling their fans in becoming TrueFans. This greatly reduces the number of fans needed to sustain a living.

The digital age has also democratized targeted access to niche markets. Now even obscure interests have potential global audiences. The challenge lies in finding these TrueFans—or more pointedly, having them find you.

Crowdfunding is an innovation that empowers creators. Platforms like Kickstarter (make sure to read the Amanda Palmer article below) allow fans to finance projects they're interested in. This creates a win-win situation for both creators and their fans.

Another mostly untapped source of financial support for creators is sponsorship (patronage). TrueFans who have fallen in-like and in-love with you and what you do are quite often willing and able to contribute to your career success through sustaining monthly support. 1,000 TrueFans contributing \$5 or \$15 a month (and many will do more) can result in an additional annual income contribution of \$50,000 and up.

However, building and maintaining such a loyal fanbase is demanding. If you build it, *they will come*, but *you have to build it and keep it built*. Some creators might prefer to focus solely on their art and delegate fan interaction to someone else. This choice might necessitate a larger fanbase to remain financially sustainable.

1,000 TrueFans is an alternative—think scenic—route to success, which does not rely on

mainstream or mass market stardom. Instead of aiming for the nearly unattainable peaks of blockbuster success, creators can aim for a direct connection with a smaller base of TrueFans.

• **Amanda Palmer— The Art of Asking; Her TED Talk and Book**

Watch her **here on TED**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_palmer_the_art_of_asking]

*Alt-rock icon Amanda Fu*king Palmer believes we shouldn't fight the fact that digital content is freely shareable—and suggests that **artists can and should be directly supported by their fans.***

Imagine standing on a box in the middle of a busy city, dressed as a white-faced bride, and—silently— using only your eyes to ask people for money. Crazy!?! How about touring Europe in a punk cabaret band and finding a place to sleep each night by reaching out to strangers on Twitter...

For Amanda Palmer, actions like these have gone beyond satisfying her basic needs for food and shelter—they've taught her how to turn strangers into friends, build global communities of TrueFans, and discover her own giving impulses. And because she had learned how to *ask*, she was able to go to the world to ask for the money to make a new album and tour with it... Raising more than ***a million dollars in one month!***



Amanda Palmer commands attention. The Music Artist-blogger-provocateur, known for pushing boundaries in both her art and her lifestyle, made international headlines in 2013, when she raised nearly \$1.2 million via Kickstarter—she’d asked for \$100k—from nearly 25,000 fans who pre-ordered her new album *Theatre Is Evil*.

Summing up her business model, in which she views her recorded music as the digital equivalent of street performing, she says...

"I firmly believe in music being as free as possible. Unlocked. Shared and spread. In order for artists to survive and create, their audiences need to step up and directly support them."

Amanda's non-fiction book, *The Art of Asking*, digs deeply into the topics she addressed [here on TED](https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_palmer_the_art_of_asking). [https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_palmer_the_art_of_asking]

Long before “community,” “direct-to-fan,” or the creator economy had names, the Grateful Dead were already living it. Their career wasn’t built on hits, hype, or control—it was built on trust, generosity, and an unwavering relationship with their

fans. What they created isn't history—it's a blueprint.

• **The Grateful Dead and the Original TrueFans Economy**
Long before the word existed—the model was already alive

Before algorithms.

Before radio promotion teams.

Before marketing funnels, fan acquisition strategies, or CRM dashboards.

Before the *music business* knew what it was doing at all.

Music had always traveled the same way.

Human to human.

Before the Business: How Music Actually Spread

Long before there were records, charts, or contracts, music survived because people shared it.

Stories, rhythms, chants, work songs, ceremonial songs—all passed from mouth to ear, body to body. No intermediaries. No gatekeepers. Just participation.

You didn't "discover" music.

You were *invited into it*.

Even when instruments became more sophisticated and songs became associated with individuals, the mechanism stayed the same:

Someone heard something that moved them.

They told someone else.

That was the original distribution system.

When the Music Business Arrived

The modern music business didn't begin in Manhattan boardrooms. It began when technology made replication possible.

Recorded sound.

Radio transmission.

Mass pressing.

The famous **Bristol Sessions** in 1927 are often cited as a turning point—not because they created talent, but because they captured it and sent it outward. Suddenly, music

could travel faster than people.

Radio amplified that effect.

Records monetized it.

Labels industrialized it.

For decades, the business mistook *distribution* for *connection*—and it worked, as long as there were only a few channels and millions of listeners with no alternatives.

But something essential was lost in the process:

The Relationship.

Enter the Grateful Dead

Now fast-forward to the 1960s.

A band emerges that—whether consciously or instinctively—refuses to treat music as a product alone.

The Grateful Dead didn't just play shows.

They created *gatherings*.

They didn't cultivate fans.

They cultivated *participants*.

They didn't protect scarcity.

They leaned into abundance.

And everything that followed came *from that*.

Giving the Music Away (On Purpose)

At a time when labels guarded recordings like vault gold, the Dead allowed—even encouraged—*tape trading*.

Fans recorded shows.

They duplicated them.

They mailed them to strangers.

Not bootlegs.

Blessings.

The band understood something the industry did not:

Music that spreads freely creates value elsewhere.

The recordings weren't the business.
They were the invitation.

The Show Was the Thing

A Grateful Dead concert wasn't a performance you attended.
It was a temporary city.
Parking lots became marketplaces.
Strangers fed one another.
Art, clothes, symbols, stories—all circulated organically.

Every show was different.
Every experience was unrepeatable.

Fans didn't go to hear songs they knew.
They went to be part of something *alive*.

Fans Built the Brand

Here's the part most businesses still don't understand:

The Dead didn't build their brand. Their fans did.

- The iconography
- The language
- The rituals
- The mythology

The skulls, bears, steal-your-face logos—much of it came from fan culture, adopted and amplified rather than imposed.

This wasn't marketing.
It was co-creation.

What the Band Did Right (Without a Playbook)

The Grateful Dead didn't follow a "TrueFans strategy."
They simply behaved in ways that made TrueFans *inevitable*:

- **Consistency**—They showed up, year after year
- **Trust**—They didn't police devotion
- **Generosity**—They led with openness
- **Respect**—They treated fans as adults, not consumers
- **Presence**—They made being there matter

*And in return, fans did what humans have always done when they feel included:
They told—and retold—the story.*

The Result: A Career Without a Center

The Grateful Dead rarely topped charts.

They didn't chase radio dominance.

They didn't optimize for mass appeal.

Yet they built one of the longest, most durable careers in music history—powered not by scale, but by depth.

When the industry shifted.

When formats collapsed.

When distribution models failed.

The Dead endured.

Because the relationship was the asset.

Why This Matters Now

In a world once again defined by abundance—infinite music, infinite content—the lesson isn't new.

It's ancient.

*Music spreads because people care.
Care spreads because people feel included.*

And careers last when artists build with their fans, not at them.

The Grateful Dead didn't invent TrueFans.

They simply loved them. Ñ

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- **CounterPoint—Super Fans May Not Be Super Enough**

from MIDiA Research by Mark Mulligan, 4 Aug 2023

Condensed and Summarized

While music superfans have historically been the backbone of the music industry, their value might not be as significant in the future due to the transformation of the music industry, particularly with the rise of streaming services.

Superfans in History

In the initial phase of the music industry, all music fans were essentially superfans, signifying their loyalty by buying records or attending concerts.

During the '70s, '80s, and '90s, music evolved to include professionalized fan clubs, merchandise sales, and live concerts as primary revenue streams.

CD sales represented a high point for superfans as they often bought multiple albums monthly.

With the advent of Napster, music sales witnessed a decline, leading to the rise of platforms like iTunes, YouTube, and Spotify.

Streaming's Impact

With falling revenues from music sales, live concerts became the new revenue source, with merchandise sales growing correspondingly.

Spotify was introduced as a solution to declining album sales, and while it achieved revenue growth, it capped the spending potential of superfans.

Modern music fans, particularly younger ones, no longer spend as much as previous superfans did on albums, instead, *they spend the same as casual fans on streaming services.*

This shift in behavior can be summarized by the quote from the movie *Incredibles*: "When everyone's super, no one's super."

Efforts to Reignite Superfan Spending

The industry has been trying to motivate fans to spend like superfans again, by encouraging purchases on platforms like Bandcamp or promoting album re-purchases by major artists.

However, these efforts are on the periphery of consumer behavior since consumers have been conditioned over the years to expect music to be priced low.

The once prevalent superfan spending habit has been diminished due to the shift towards live concerts and streaming services.

The Way Forward

To rejuvenate superfan spending, there needs to be a real value proposition. Fans require unique offerings that genuinely enhance their fandom, not just another opportunity for the industry to extract more money from them.

Tap to read Mark Mulligan's [original article](https://midiaresearch.com/blog/super-fans-may-not-be-super-enough?).
[<https://midiaresearch.com/blog/super-fans-may-not-be-super-enough?>]

• 100 TrueFans— An updated \$\$\$\$ model for the Passion Economy.

1,000 True Fans? Try 100

by Li Jin of a16z.com

This article challenges the idea that 1,000 TrueFans each paying \$100 per year can have artists earn a comfortable living. Instead, Li Jin argues that in today's evolving digital economy—specifically, the Passion Economy—creators can achieve financial success with just 100 True Fans willing to pay \$1,000 each per year. The global rise of social platforms and creator tools has significantly lowered the threshold for achieving this new level of success.

Li Jin argues that creators can now thrive financially with fewer, but more dedicated and higher-paying, fans. She suggests that instead of aiming for 1,000 fans paying \$100 annually, creators should focus on gaining 100 True Fans willing to pay \$1,000 per year.

The "100 TrueFans" concept as described is a thoughtful and incisive commentary on the evolution of the creator economy. It moves away from a mass-market volume-driven approach and emphasizes quality, exclusivity, and high-value engagement between creators and a smaller, more committed fanbase. Here's a more detailed look at each key aspect mentioned:

Premium content and community with no close substitutes

The focus here is on creating something so unique that it can't be easily replicated. This uniqueness could be a product of the creator's expertise, voice, storytelling, or community engagement. Because the content or community is one-of-a-kind, people are willing to pay a premium to be a part of it.

Delivering Tangible Value and Results

If people are going to invest in a product or community, they want to see a clear ROI (Return On Investment). For example, Dedao's audio courses offer self-improvement tools that people value enough to pay for, even if it's a significant chunk of their average monthly income. This indicates that when the perceived value is high—because it delivers actionable results—people are willing to pay.

Accountability

This is a two-way street: the creator is accountable for delivering high-quality content, and the community or customer is accountable for implementing what they've learned to achieve their goals. Upfront, higher costs often serve as a psychological commitment device, encouraging users to fully engage with the content and its provider encouraging a level of trust and investment from their fans.

Access, Recognition, and Status

People love feeling special or exclusive, which is why limited access tiers work so well. Whether it's patronage tiers or people paying to game with expert players, these opportunities offer a unique form of social currency. They offer recognition not just from the creator but also within the fan community. High spenders often enjoy a form of celebrity within these communities, which encourages others to aspire to that level.

From 1,000 to 100: Fewer, Truer Fans

The essence here is that while having a large follower count might look good, what *truly matters is engagement and how much value those followers get* (and are willing to pay for). It's not about creating something for everyone; it's about creating something so good for a specific group of people that they are willing to pay a premium for it.

The 100 TrueFans model is not for everyone. For some creators, monetizing through sponsorships or branded products may be easier and more lucrative than developing high-value, customized / personalized programs. But for those who can tap into a niche and cultivate such a committed fan base, the 100 TrueFans model could be a game-changer.

Overall, it's always and in all ways about understanding what the audience values, and then tailoring the offering to deliver exceptional value in a way that scales economically

for the creator. With the rise of new platforms that facilitate this kind of direct user-to-creator payment and community building, the possibilities are expanding for what creators can achieve.

Listen to the related a16z Podcast on this topic: ***How the Passion Economy Is Redefining Work*** [26:20]

[<https://a16z.com/podcast/a16z-podcast-how-the-passion-economy-is-redefining-work/>]

The podcast covers the the rise of online platforms that enable people to make a living off their unique interests and skills. The discussion—with Patreon cofounder and CTO Sam Yam and a16z consumer tech partner Li Jin in conversation with Lauren Murrow—covers the new forms of work made possible by these online platforms, why creators today are effectively making more money off fewer fans, and what all of this means for the future of creative entrepreneurship.

Tap to read Li Jin's **original article**.

[<https://a16z.com/1000-true-fans-try-100/>]

• **1,000 TrueFans—How To Get Your First True Fans**

Tim Rettig's original article published in Marketing and Growth Hacking. Tap **Here**.

[<https://blog.markgrowth.com/how-to-get-your-first-1-000-true-fans-kevin-kelly-style-86782612cd9a>]

This article emphasizes the importance of one-on-one interactions, providing value and listening to your audience to understand their needs. Although these concepts might seem basic or obvious, they are often neglected by entrepreneurs and creators who are more focused on scale or rapid growth.

The Key Points:

- **Building Relationships:** The path to 1,000 TrueFans is not straightforward and will take time. The effort is worthwhile and centers on building genuine relationships, friendships and partnerships with your audience. Questions to ask yourself include whether you are consistently producing value, understanding your audience's real wants and needs, and whether you are giving more than you are receiving.
- **One-on-One Communication:** The most effective way to turn someone into a

TrueFan *is through personalized interaction*. Whether through *direct messaging or thoughtful replies to comments*, the aim is to help the person on the other end without expecting anything in return. This fosters a sense of mutual respect and connection.

- **Listen and Observe:** Rather than constantly hustling and pushing out content, take time to understand your audience. Listen to the problems they are actually facing. What they need and want. Effective research tools include platforms like Quora, where you can identify the issues plaguing your target market.
- **Don't Over complicate:** The author stresses that although these strategies may seem basic, few actually implement them. It's not about doing more but about doing the right things. Aim to be genuinely helpful to one person at a time, and then move on to helping the next.

The article ultimately encourages creators to focus on quality interactions and delivering specific needs and wants rather than trying to appeal to the masses. This is the key to building a small but highly engaged audience of TrueFans that will offer more value in the long run.

- **the SSDA—Single Specific Daily Action**

The concept of the Single Specific Daily Action is a proven practice taken from the Productivity Coaching profession. The idea is to design one, specific action to be made consistently every day you do your business which alone will bring you to 80 - 90% of your target goal.

As an example, an SSDA for a Music Artist composing songs: Obviously, there are variables-times-variables divided by a variable here: Experience. Career stage. External demands. Creative process. Collaboration. Contractual demands. Do you have a dog? And, and... So, a simple hypothetical.

The goal: Releasing 12 songs—that'd be an album—that are more than good enough or better by your own measure—in one year. 12 months in a year. 4.3 weeks in a month. So, consistently completing one song each week 'should' do it. Yeah, Dolly Parton wrote *Jolene* and *I will always love you* both in the same day. One a week is a good 'I'm-not-Dolly' goal.

So, for an SSDA, how many hours of Songwriting—at your keyboard, with the guitar, or driving *through the desert on a horse with no name* singing into your iPhone would it

take? Three? Five? Pick a number, any number that you will commit to. That's you're *Single Specific Daily Action* SSDA. And give your self a break. Add two or three covers to the album and take a few days off.

Now you know the drill. What's an SSDA to take and make to grow your listeners into fans and TrueFans?

Let's call this... **54,000,000 TrueFans.**

Rick Barker, Taylor Swift's first manager, emphasized the importance of connecting with fans on a personal level, suggesting that *each fan should be treated as a potential influencer* who could help spread the word about her music. Below are some notable examples of actions Taylor actually took to build her base of TrueFans. Here to serve as an idea generator for possible SSDA's for you:

- **MySpace** (remember that?)—Before social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter took off, Taylor Swift was very active on MySpace. She personally responded directly to fan messages and comments. She spent hours interacting with fans, answering their questions and thanking them for their support.
- **Thank You Notes**—Taylor was known for writing *handwritten thank you notes* to radio show hosts and fans alike. This personal touch helped her stand out and connect in a unique and *memorable* way.
- **In-Person Meetings**—Swift often stayed long after her opening sets or concerts to meet with fans, sign autographs, and take photos, even buy pizzas! These "meet and greets" were sometimes spontaneous, without the structured environment that often accompanies such events today.
- **Gifts and Surprises**—Taylor had a habit of sending personalized gifts to fans based on what she knew they liked or needed, a practice she has continued to some extent even as her fame has skyrocketed.
- **Secret Sessions**—Although this became more prevalent later in her career, the idea of inviting fans to her home or to special locations for exclusive listening parties became a hallmark of her album releases. Taylor showed up and performed *Blank Space* at a fan's wedding garnering 976,806 views on YouTube.
- **Vlogs and Behind-the-Scenes Content**—Taylor often shared behind-the-scenes looks at her life and career through vlogs and other video content, creating a sense of intimacy

and direct connection with her audience.

- **Personal Songs and Narratives**—Though not a direct interaction, the deeply personal and autobiographical nature of her songwriting also created a sense of intimacy between Taylor and her fans. Many fans felt that they knew her through her music, which often touched on her own experiences, thoughts, and feelings in a very transparent way.
- **Fan Phone Calls**—In some cases, Taylor even made personal phone calls to fans to thank them for their support or to share news about upcoming releases or events. And those fans told their friends about it. And their friends told their friends. One phone call. Multiplied how many times...?
- **Cover Art and Album Inserts**—Taylor has always been deeply involved in the creative process for her albums, often including personal photos and messages in the album artwork and inserts, further deepening the connection with her fans.
- **Social Media Teasers and Easter Eggs**—As social media evolved, Taylor adapted by using platforms to drop hints, clues, and Easter eggs about upcoming projects, creating a highly interactive and engaging fan experience. Surprises are remembered.

Through these and other actions, Taylor Swift cultivated an exponentially expanding, deeply loyal base of TrueFans many of whom felt a personal connection—they *knew* Taylor—and she *knew* them. This has been a cornerstone of her enduring success.

As of August 25, 2023, Taylor Swift's global fan base—including social media followers—is estimated at over 518.996 million. In the USA, she has more than 180 million fans, with around 54.4 million being devoted TrueFans called Swifties. That's 1.000 TrueFans Xs 54,400. (2026 update: Over 100 million Swifties and hundreds of millions of followers across social media platforms with over 110 million monthly listeners on Spotify alone.)

And of course, Taylor Swift's rise to fame involved a combination of factors, including her own musical talent, savvy business decisions, and a strong support network, among other things. But the early advice to *engage closely and authentically with her fans* definitely played the transformative role in her success and helped to set her apart from other artists.

So... from all the above, what's an SSDA you will make and take to grow your 100 to 1,000 to 1,000,000 TrueFans...?

1,000 or 100 TrueFans
A lot of people doing a little.
A few people doing a lot.

• **Back To the Future: Your Strategy for 100 to 1,000 to 1,000,000 TrueFans**

Let's cut beyond the chase to you winning the race.

Here are the keys to your building a growing base of 100 to 1,000 to 1,000,000 TrueFans using our "Back to the Future" approach. Consider the following strategies that merge traditional principles with modern digital applications. And know that **New Music Lives™** is your partner in creating that future—as fast as we can.

- **Direct Engagement**—Start by playing small local venues, coffee shops, busking, farmer's markets, community gatherings... that directly interact with fans. Capture these moments and share them online using virtual leverage to reach a broader audience.
- **Email**—Create a digital mailing list where you provide exclusive content, updates, exclusive releases and up-close and personal vignettes. Older artists relied on fan clubs and newsletters; this is the virtual equivalent.
- **Quality Over Quantity**—Release well-crafted singles or albums rather than lots of frequent but less impactful music. Release these in sequences over time building to an album drop adding some additional tracks or exclusives, so that the singles build the audience for the project. This echoes how older musicians released seminal albums that defined their careers.
- **Community Building**—Use social media not just for your own promotion but to create a community of your Fans and TrueFans. Discuss music, share your creative process, and invite fans to share their own experiences, much like fan clubs did in the past, but now it's on-line and global.
- **Merchandising**—Invest in high-quality, unique merchandise. Physical goods create a tangible connection between artist and Fans, a dynamic that existed long before the digital age. Create items that are exclusive and only available to your Community and TrueFans, a strategy where all parts work together cross-promoting and developing each other.

- **Live Performances**—Although live streaming is prevalent, nothing can replace the experience of a LIVE show. Whenever possible, schedule live events like House and Backyard Concerts and other intimate gatherings, such as shows that only your fans and TrueFans can attend. Make it special and unique. They'll love you for it. And... always keep safety guidelines in mind.
- **Radio & Podcast Appearances**—Being featured on radio shows and podcasts—including your own—can expose you to new audiences. This is a modern take on the old-time radio interviews and guest appearances that musical artists used to make.
- **Personal Stories**—Share your journey and the stories behind your songs. Authentic storytelling can foster those deeper emotional connections that turn Fans into TrueFans, similar to the liner notes on older record and CD albums.
- **Limited Edition Releases**—Offer limited edition physical releases like vinyl or special edition CDs. Scarcity and exclusivity create demand and offer something special for your TrueFans.
- **Collaborations**—Work with other artists both new and established. This is the modern form of guest appearances on recorded tracks and performances. Community is a staple in most older music business models.

By using these approaches that blend old and new, you'll build a robust, engaged community of TrueFans who will provide the sustained support needed for a long-lasting successful career. And every item above is on **New Music Lives™** "To Do *For You* List." We're peddling as fast as we can, because...

It's Time... for a Change. Big Time. Past Time.

*Helping Music Artists build real careers
—without selling their soul.*

Thanks for reading.



Paul Saunders

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