



Ty Stiklorius

Artist Manager

“If you have friends who are undiscovered artists, try to help them grow their fan base and see what comes of it. Get right in there and do it.”

“I always wanted to be in the arts somehow—as either a painter or a musician—as long as creative expression was involved,” said Ty Stiklorius. In college, she balanced her creative side with a practical major in English and minor in economics. Meanwhile she served as president of a pop/jazz acappella group where she met the artist now known as John Legend. “That was probably my first lesson in managing because it was very much like running a business,” she explained. Today, Ty is on John Legend’s management team at a company called The Artist Organization, and works independently as manager for up-and-coming singer-songwriter Madi Diaz. Ty managed to squeeze in a chat to give us the ins and outs of being an artist manager and how her career path brought her full-circle.

How did you end up working with John Legend?

We had known each other in college but were off doing our separate things. After college, during the dot-com boom, I worked in a music notation software company. I started seeing how the music industry’s business models were changing and realized I didn’t know enough of the business side to help companies like the one I worked for. I then got my master’s in business administration thinking maybe I’d work at a big record label...but things were not looking so good [in the industry]. So I worked in a couple of other technology companies in California. Then one day, out of the blue, John called and asked, “Do you want to work with me?” Of course I said, “Yes!”

What are your main responsibilities?

One of the keys to being a music manager is having a long-term perspective on your artist’s career and coming up with a plan. It could involve meeting with record labels, talking to iTunes, Yahoo, and other online distributors to make sure my artists’ songs can be downloaded, and putting together a tour. Sometimes it involves going outside the traditional channels. For example, because Madi is not yet signed to a record label, we go on Facebook, MySpace, and other social networking sites to get her music heard. We think of creative grass-roots ways to reach people. That’s part of

the job: finding people who are willing to listen to your artists and getting them to listen. It’s a big challenge today because there is so much music out there, so you have to find a way to make your artist stand out.

What skills are necessary to be a good manager?

First, persistence. Then, you also need a real sense of integrity. You have to form a very strong bond with your artists and have a great sense of trust with them. If my artists didn’t trust me, none of this would work. You want to be very careful that, at the end of the day, you’re doing what makes sense for them and not selling them out. Also, really good managers can open their artists’ eyes to new ideas. I have a deep influence on the creative process, and that’s probably what I like the most about the job.

Is there anything you don’t like?

I wouldn’t say I don’t like it, but there are times when I’m just so passionate about what’s happening that I can’t stop [working].

How would you advise someone interested in becoming a manager?

If you’ve got the will, desire, and passion, go out there and do it! Follow your dream. If you have friends who are undiscovered artists, try to help them grow their fan base and see what comes of it. You just have to get right in there and do it.

—VERONICA DOMINGUEZ-GARCIA



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