

Tommy Stalknecht

CEO
Single Music

Years with Company: 3

Address: Nashville, TN

Phone: N/A

Web: singlemusic.com

Email: tommy@singlemusic.com

Clients: Nirvana, Thirty Seconds to Mars, NIN, LANY, Kacey Musgraves, Lil Peep, Dine Alone Records, RL Grime

BACKGROUND

While working on digital storefronts for major artists at an agency in Nashville, Tommy Stalknecht noticed the unnecessary separation between music sales and ancillary artist merchandise. That realization led to the creation of Single Music, the only service specific to the distribution of music on Shopify. With a host of abilities that includes bundling, pre-sales and more, Single Music has lured performers like John Prine and For King & Country into their fold.

Seeing an Opportunity

My co-founder [Taylor O'Connor] and I both went to MTSU [Middle Tennessee State University.] We're both graduates of the recording industry program there. When I left, I worked for Apple and eventually landed a job at an agency here in Nashville. I worked from being an account manager overseeing Kenny Rogers, Charlie Daniels, Sam Hunt and a lot of other artists to eventually overseeing digital for their music side.

One of the divisions of that company was working primarily with Shopify for the e-commerce side of their websites. They kept coming to me with issues. I said Shopify has an app store, they're rapidly growing and a great platform; I can't believe somebody hasn't already built a solution for this.

A Service for Everyone

Although I'd worked with artists in varying parts of their careers, I always said let's make a professional-level product major artists can use, but make it publicly available so indies have access to the same tools. Let's make it affordable and simple. Being a musician myself and seeing my friends do their own self-promotion, we approached the company saying let's make it so that anybody can use this thing.

Shopify

Their app ecosystem is great. The technology they have that we have access to and the ease of use for us to be able to integrate was big. But also seeing the trend of storefronts and how people would not necessarily use some other platforms, [Shopify] seemed to be the one a lot were going toward. And since I built a lot of them, it was a natural fit to build to that first.

Sending Info to Soundscan

Do you want to have a number one record or not? A lot of times, those sales that [artists] are doing themselves, either they don't do the reporting or it takes hours. You should be focusing on the creation of your work as opposed to these operational things that should be automated. You're making sales



"Be as creative with the merchandise you're offering as you are with your music."

and selling directly to your fans. Physical is still selling, so you should get credit for that.

Merch Matters

Oftentimes, merch companies come to us because we've simplified many of the processes that even they've had complications with. Artists sometimes ask if we can help them with things like merchandise and we can point them in the right direction.

Creation of merchandise is typically done outside our main product offerings, which is digital direct to fan, physical and then the bundling of physical and digital. Oftentimes, [artists] have already created their merchandise but there are apps for print-on-demand services in Shopify so in theory an artist can create a website on Shopify, link up a print-on-demand provider and now they've got merchandise without having to purchase any inventory.

Bundling

If music is what got you fans in the first place, you should tie that to the things that are generating the most revenue for you. We wanted to simplify that process but also make sure it was compliant with Nielson's rules. We kind of knew that's where it was going but when we launched the app it was only digital music and then we baked in the physical reporting later. During those couple months we didn't have it, we got asked all the time so we had a hunch we were building toward it.

Artist Data

By selling direct, you can see who purchased what from you, so you can find your top fans and see who has spent the most money. You can see what the most successful product is you've been selling. All of that stuff is baked into Shopify. We have plans to take some of the data Shopify has and display it in a way that is even more specific to music. That's one of our main points—taking this platform, which is extremely powerful, and really focusing it into music.

Pre-Sales

We can tell from our data what pre-sales seem to be the most popular. You can figure out what your demand is, find out what's going to be the most popular and then focus on those things as you go.

Social Media Integration

Shopify has integration with social networks, so you can sell your t-shirts through Facebook and Instagram, even Pinterest. A lot of those [social networks] are leveraging what Shopify already offers and then making sure the bundles and other things we sell can still be powering in the background. Shopify's making it so fans can purchase from all these channels and extending the reach of [artists'] music.

Building Trust

To create trust with our early users, we've focused on customer service. We go above and beyond whenever we can, be it through our live chats or demos. Not only do they get the most out of our platform but they know they can trust us even though we're a younger service. With the reviews we've gotten and the artists that are currently using us, we're kind of proven that we can do very well for our artists.

Watching New Artists Come Aboard

We've had a couple of days where we were excited just sitting at our computers seeing who's getting on board. We knew the success would come because we've created a good product, but when a lot of the same people you grew up listening to and admire start to use your product it's really cool to see.

A Diverse Tool Set

People ask us about streaming and that kind of stuff. We use streaming services all day, every day. We know the vast majority of consumption is going to be going in that direction. That's why we've focused on multiple tool sets. And we've got ideas for other things we're going to be releasing that will create new tools. The misconception is that we're some download service and we're focused on past technology when really that's just a small set of what our overall tool set is and will be.

Complementing Revenue Streams

We want to make sure the artist is getting as much support as they can in creating new revenue streams with their music. We're not here to be a replacement for the major DSPs or anything like that. We want to complement. You're already selling your merchandise; you might as well be selling your music through the same place. And when you do that you're going to know who your fans are and they'll be getting the best quality straight from the source.

Be Creative

Have good music and good songs. If you make good music your fans will follow. Second to that is you have so many things at your disposal nowadays. If you're just starting out, you can still do crazy, creative things you couldn't have done in the past. There are many things outside of just a t-shirt and hoodie you can create. Focus on being authentic on all sides of your career and be as creative with the merchandise you're offering as you are with your music.