

# Building a SOCIAL MEDIA Audience

by Nick Ruffini



**W**ith the Internet at your fingertips, you have an amazing tool that can help you springboard your music career, grow your business, and make connections with people around the world in a flash. The key thing to remember is that the internet is a tool and shouldn't be used to replace the human interaction that goes along with networking and playing live.

That said, growing an online audience can make all the difference in the world when it comes to your career. Audience, in this case, can be described as anyone who enjoys, follows, and supports your work through consumption or some sort of payment.

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*I'll come right out and say it: growing an audience is hard. I've been working on my podcast for more than three years and have interviewed most of the greatest drummers in the world, and I still find it challenging to attract new readers, listeners, followers, etc. But, if you're up for the challenge and believe in your work, growing an audience can be one of the best things you can do for both your music and personal brand.*

*Here are a few things to keep in mind when growing your audience:*

### Start Today

The best time to start building your audience is now. Far too many people wait until their website is perfect or for something else to happen before they put their content into the world. Don't do that. Don't allow a fixation on perfection or process to paralyze you to the point that you do nothing. Get your content to a place where it's 'good enough' and improve it along the way. You'll never think you're 'ready' to start, so you have to dive in and learn as you go.

### Find Your Medium

That is to say that some people are better suited for specific mediums. Some are excellent writers, others are natural talkers, and still others present well on video. Decide which medium is your strength and play that up. For example, if you completely freeze up on camera but can string a sentence together in print, start writing and don't worry about the video aspect for now. That will come later; it's just going to take more effort and preparation. Once you've dialed-in one medium, you can start expanding over to others. I felt that my verbal and social skills were my strength, so podcasting made perfect sense to me. That was phase one. Now that I've got that down, I'm expanding into video content. This isn't coming as easy, but

I'm working on it and improving day by day. It's just another way for me to expand my audience and I'm up for the challenge.

### Be Authentic

Authenticity and transparency are both buzz words right now, but for good reason. This is key: if you're trying to build an audience, concentrate on finding the real you and expressing that genuineness. This will establish a more immediate connection with your followers. Remember, your goal is to grow your fan base, but you'll also want to keep your original supporters engaged. Think of social media as digital word-of-mouth. If people like what they see and relate to you, they'll be more likely to jump on board. People, and especially musicians, gravitate to things they can relate to, so be relatable.

### Put the Audience First

Far too often, personal content can be perceived as a form of bragging. We tend to post the exciting or special things in our lives, the fancy trips, the famous people we meet, the infamous selfie, etc. While it feels good to share these things on a certain level, and it's worked quite well for the Kardashians, it could possibly alienate your audience. Private message the people who already follow you (even if you have ten readers/followers), and ask why they follow you. Do some informal market research on what's working and what isn't as effective. Give them more of what seems to be working, or at least getting their attention. Bottom line, focus on giving the audience what they want and avoid trying to feed your own agenda.

### Be Consistent

Whether you have the ability to release content every day or once a month, stay consistent with your schedule or broadcast. Humans are creatures of habit and once you've developed a

routine they'll expect new content to be released in-line with the schedule. For example, my podcasts are released on Monday and Friday at 3:00 A.M. EST so my European audience can listen during their morning commute, if they'd like. When my US audience wakes up, the podcasts are ready for them, too. My listeners know that every Monday and Friday there will be a new podcast released and that consistency keeps them coming back and helps to create a habitual listener.

### Focus on Depth and Engagement

Likes and follows on social media give us that warm, fuzzy feeling we all enjoy, but they're not as important as you may think. Sure, it looks impressive when you see an Instagram page with 50K followers, but if the audience isn't engaged or interacting, those numbers are useless. Rather than focusing on numbers, remember that those numbers represent people and you should get to know the people behind the numbers. Ask questions. Get involved. Go deep with your audience. It has been said that an artist needs 1,000 'true fans' (see: *1,000 True Fans* by David Kelly) and in order to do that, you have to go deep, not wide.

*For me, growing an audience has been incredibly challenging and rewarding at the same time. I hope I've inspired you to take the next step in propagating your work out into the world. As drummers, we are focused on our instrument, and we should be, but in today's music world, we also have to be managers, promoters, booking agents, and so much more. Develop your drumming career the way you develop your chops and it will pay dividends. You might even learn something new about yourself in the process. **dw***

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