



Digital Servicing Myths

One of the new tricks to confuse artists is "digital distribution" or "digital servicing". This is a service where the following is supposed to happen: You pay a small fee to have your audio sent to radio stations, then the person at the station listens to your track, plays it, and the service then tells you who played it. Problem is, it's very misleading.

First of all, you have to understand the difference between "servicing" radio, and "promoting" to radio. Promoting to radio means you have dialog/conversation with the person at the station, and this requires phone calls and emails. After all, you want to actively talk WITH the person about his/her activities, gripes and stories. That is promotion. Just getting the music to them is simply "servicing" (which is a subset of marketing).

Now, we don't have anything against digital delivery itself; we provide it to every client for free (it's called email). But the real problem with those digital delivery services is what they allow you to believe. We hear a lot of artists who said, "I paid \$200 and my song was sent to 2000 stations, and the report said that 600 of them played it on air!" If you are believing this kind of stuff, your career is going to be having a multitude of problems.

First off, no commercial PD/MD is going to be playing anything from "just an email". It must come from a person/group that he is talking to or has talked to in the past, be it you, a promoter, a label, or an uncle. From just this group of people, the PD/MD is already overwhelmed by many thousands of releases that he could never play because his playlist is already packed. He would never need to add to this universe by clicking on some email.

Second, even non-commercial PD/MD's primarily play stuff that comes through "a person/group that he is talking to or has talked to in the past", although that person/group may be roommates, workmates, bandmates, schoolmates, drinking mates, etc. Now these non-commercial PD/MD's might actually open the email, but then again they might just instead open the mp3's sent to them by "the group" first, and never get to the distro email.

Continuing: How many songs do you think are in those digital distro emails? Answer: Every one who paid to be in them. That's right, the more popular they become, the more drowned out you get. In 2003 you thought getting your music on Myspace was a low-cost answer to promotion, but now there are millions on there. It's kinda like having a phone number: Every radio station and label in the world can call you, but how many do? In comparison, when we send out our "digital servicings" (an email) for a client, there is always the same number of artists in them: One.

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Let's look now at practicality. Why is an email (with tons of tracks) on it of any interest to anyone, when you have this thing called the web available that has cool sites like CDBaby, MySpace, etc.? Radio stations (and everyone else) has access to basically every song ever made, instantly. Getting more on top of this is just not needed. What radio DOES need is some indication of growth of the song: Gigs are happening, press is printing, sales are occurring, other stations are playing, etc. And they expect this information to come to them through the usual "group" that they usually get this info from.

Digital only: Some folks are now attempting a "digital only" release. We, personally, don't really care how the stations get the track, as long as they do. We know that they are only going to play it if we have a good phone/email conversation with them anyway. However, physical CD's (and anything else physical that can be mailed) do stand out more, and are easier for them to "recall getting" than just our email we send. So we recommend making CD's, if for nothing else, to sell at gigs as well as send to radio.

Lastly, would we recommend a "digital delivery service" if used along with a regular (human) promotion campaign? Well, it wouldn't hurt, but it won't help, other than MAYBE (for college radio only) them seeing it one more time, and thus MAYBE remembering it a bit more. But so far I've not seen this happen: Any action/results that a client achieved was due solely to our calls/emails alone, and the digital service was never even mentioned by the stations.

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