

# POWER MOVES TO TAKE YOUR MUSIC CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

BY GLENN T. LITWAK

This article will discuss concrete things aspiring recording artists, music producers, songwriters and others can do to take their career to the next level. Whether you are looking for a major label record deal, to produce or write for known recording artists, become a manager or work as an executive in the music business, there are ways to get ahead.

## 1. Find a Great Mentor:

Mentors can be beneficial to an individual in any career. Mentors can be invaluable to encourage and give you advice as well as introduce you to people who can help you advance your career. And it's nice knowing you have someone knowledgeable to call when a question arises.

## 2. Be Polite and Professional:

Being professional means showing up on time, being polite, dressing appropriately, adhering to deadlines, etc. It also means knowing what you should know to do your job and being prepared to do it. People want to work with people who are professional. Not with someone who always has drama going on in their lives, or have obvious drug or alcohol problems. If you are an aspiring recording artist, have current photos, bio and music to provide to someone when the opportunity arises. I have run across people who say for months they are working on their bio. You should be able to do it in a few hours. And some aspiring artists do not even have a website after pursuing a music career for years.

## 3. Network Network Network:

You should attend music industry events such as fundraisers, conferences and festivals. Find out if your family or friends know anyone in the industry and see if you can arrange to meet them. Networking can happen anywhere at anytime. It is not restricted to formal networking events. Remember: that person you struck up a conversation with in the elevator may be someone in the music biz or may know someone who is. If you will be attending a music conference, such as the Urban Network "Back to Basics" Music and Entertainment Conference, plan ahead. Go on the conference website and target the panels and people you want to meet. Try and stay at the hotel where the conference is and don't limit yourself to running up to the panelist at the end. You may also be able to meet industry people where they are hanging out, such as the hotel restaurant, gym, lobby, etc.

## 4. Work Ethic:

While you are relaxing, someone else is making moves. You should outwork your competition. And do whatever it takes including working long days, nights, and weekends. This is your career. There is enormous competition in the music biz. How bad do you want it? Are you willing to make the sacrifices? Be determined and relentless.

## 5. Bringing Value:

This means bringing something to the party, so to speak. For example, when you approach someone in the music biz, rather than just ask them if they can help you, maybe there is

something you can do for them (like being a free hard working intern). Try to establish some rapport with the person you want to meet first. Maybe you have something in common with them such as coming from the same city or attending the same school. Or being a fan of the same sports team. Maybe you are a fan of one of the artists or producers this person works with.

## 6. Internships:

This is a great way to break into the music business. Puffy started out as an intern while in college and commuted to New York from Washington DC for his internship. He wanted it that bad. Internships often lead to paying jobs and, in any event, offer great networking and educational opportunities. Maybe you have to make a sacrifice and live at home with your family so you can afford to be an unpaid intern.

## 7. Learn your craft:

If you are a songwriter, for instance, study how to write songs from books and classes or from successful songwriters. Be a sponge. Learn everything there is to know about songwriting. If you are a singer, producer or musician, learn as much as you can about music and how the music business works.

## 8. Be Creative/Original:

Be creative in exploring potential opportunities that present themselves. When an opportunity arises, take advantage of it. If there is a great music conference you want to attend in New York but don't have the money to pay for it, be creative. For instance, maybe you can volunteer to work at the conference and get a free ticket. Make the sacrifices you need to make. There are not many overnight successes.

## 9. Websites and Social Networking:

I was reading an article on Facebook recently by a well-known record label head and he was discussing how they sign talent nowadays. He said forget about sending blind submissions to the labels. He said in his entire career they only signed one person that way and thereafter they went nowhere. You should have a great website. After all, that is how you are representing yourself. Many people say they are working on updating their website. Don't talk about it, make it happen.

The record labels no longer will do everything for you. You have to build a following yourself on social networks. If you can't do that, you won't have the drive and ability to make it as a recording artist. Once you generate enough heat, the record labels will find you.

## 10. Have incredible talent and be unique:

If you want to be a singer, you usually need to have a great voice to begin with. If you don't, be realistic. Maybe you can do something else in the music business like be a songwriter, producer, manager, or work for a record label or music publisher. Have that unique style or vibe. Don't try and be the next Beyoncé. Be your own unique self.



*Glenn Litwak is a veteran music and entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, and frequent speaker at music industry conferences around the country.*

[glenn@glennlitwak.com](mailto:glenn@glennlitwak.com)  
[www.glennlitwak.com](http://www.glennlitwak.com)