

THE DIY COLLECTIVE PACK

**Navigating the Music Industry as
an Emerging Executive/Creative**



#NowYouSeeMe

WORKBOOK 2 - NOVEMBER 2025

CURATED BY **The DIY
Collective**

INTRODUCTION



A few weeks ago, a simple question popped up in our community group chat, one that sparked a wave of shared experiences and honest advice: **How do you really grow in the music industry?**

That conversation revealed a truth most of us already know: there's no clear blueprint for this journey.

Everyone's figuring it out as they go, experimenting, failing, learning, and trying again. But while there's no single path, having guidance or insight from those ahead makes the road a little less confusing.

This edition of The DIY Collective Pack is for emerging music executives and creatives ready to understand the systems, realities, and unwritten rules that define success in today's music industry. It's for those who want longevity, not hype, the ones willing to do the quiet work that moves the needle.

Inside you'll find:

- Real insights from professionals actively shaping the culture
- Prompts and mindset shifts to help you grow with intention

Whether you manage artists, plan creative campaigns, scout talent, or you're still finding your lane, this guide is built to help you move with intention, clarity, and purpose.

Welcome to **The DIY Collective Pack (Q4 Edition)**:
Navigating the Music Industry as an Emerging Exec.



01. BREAKING IN

There's a popular saying: "**No one pops out of nowhere.**" I'm sure you've heard that a lot.

Every "**overnight success**" story in the music industry has a long, quiet backstory of trial, error, and persistence. If someone suddenly starts appearing everywhere, working on new releases, getting co-signs, or working alongside top industry people, there's almost always a stretch of unrecognized work, sleepless nights, and small wins behind the scenes that built up to that moment.

The truth is, the industry doesn't reward potential alone; it rewards proof. And proof doesn't come from waiting; it comes from doing. In the words of Odumodublack, "*show workings no be cho cho cho*"

One major pitfall is waiting for opportunities instead of creating them. You don't need a title to act like a professional. Start creating value before anyone asks you to. Do whatever gets you closer to the work. Everyone's path looks different, but the common thread is motion. This might sound cliché, but really, you need to **start doing something.**

The industry moves fast, and it pays attention to those already putting in work. If you want to be an A&R, start with local artists. Attend sessions, listen deeply, learn by doing. If you're into marketing, study rollouts, understand audiences, and experiment with ideas. Build transferable skills that make you valuable. When opportunity comes, you won't need to convince anyone; your work will speak.

Breaking in isn't about getting noticed once; it's about being consistent enough that your work starts speaking for you. This might take a while, but like Blaqbonez said, "*This no be quick fame, this is a career.*" Stay consistent, even when no one's watching. Consistency helps build muscle memory, so when the big moment comes, you're ready.

And don't rush it. Success built on hype fades fast. Be patient enough to build structure. Say yes to volunteering, to assisting, to learning from others. Don't be afraid to intern, to fail, or to start over. Humility opens more doors than ego ever will.

There's no defined entry point or formula for success in the industry. Every creative who "made it" began with something small: a playlist, an article, a short video, a local show. They showed up before the spotlight found them. So don't wait for permission. Start where you are, with what you have.



02. STAYING IN: COMMON MISTAKES

The music industry isn't just about getting your first big break; it's about staying relevant once you're in. Success here isn't linear; it comes in cycles of learning, unlearning, and rebuilding. What keeps you going isn't just your skill; it's your mindset, discipline, and adaptability.

Here are a few common mistakes young execs make:

- **Chasing Titles Over Experience**

“You can’t cosplay being a boss when you have nothing to show for it.”

Across conversations with industry professionals, one truth stood out: **many young creatives want the title before they’ve earned the experience.**

They're quick to slap “manager,” “A&R,” or “strategist” on their bio without building the patience and discipline those roles demand. You'll see someone who's been on set for two days already calling themselves a “creative director.”

There's a growing culture of instant gratification; everyone wants results, credit, and money now without putting in the work where it matters first.

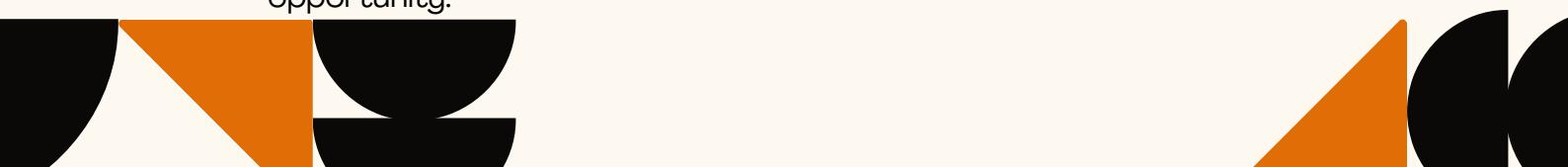
Credibility takes time, and you can't rush wisdom. You need to learn the ropes, listen more than you talk, take notes, and treat every stage of your growth as practice for the next. The real work is often unglamorous; interning, volunteering, assisting, and learning quietly. Skipping the process builds weak foundations, and in this industry, weak foundations always get tested.

- **Poor Presentation**

Many young creatives underestimate the importance of presentation. Applying for jobs or pitching yourself without a proper portfolio, documentation, or a well-written email can hold you back instantly.

Employers won't imagine your potential; they'll judge what they see. A poor social presence, an unedited AI-generated reply to emails, an untidy portfolio, or lazy communication all scream indiscipline. Presentation goes beyond visuals; it's how you write, follow up, and show respect for people's time.

Check for typos, tailor your résumé, and proofread before sending. Sometimes, these “small things” are the only barrier between you and that opportunity.





- **Mistaking Familiarity for Professionalism**

Because the music industry often feels social, many treat it casually. They show up late, reply like they're chatting with friends, or blur business with friendship.

But the music industry, while creative, still operates on structure, discipline, and respect. This is one thing people don't see from outside.

Yes, the industry is fun, but behind the parties are months of planning, documents, and deadlines. Learn structure and discipline. It'll take you farther than vibes.

Relationships are key, but they don't replace work ethic. Be friendly, but be professional. Your reputation grows not from how many people you know, but from how you treat them once you meet them.

- **Lack of Collaboration and Community**

Another recurring issue is the lack of community support. Everyone wants support, but few people give it. Collaboration is one of the fastest ways to grow. The people you help or collaborate with today might be the ones who recommend you tomorrow.

Communities don't just exist for brands; they exist for individuals, too. Surround yourself with people who challenge and inspire you.

Collaboration builds connection, connection builds credibility, and credibility builds momentum.

- **Money Before Mastery**

It's easy to chase quick paydays, but those who last prioritize growth over money. Early on, experience is worth more than a paycheck; it gives you leverage, proof, and relationships.

Don't get it twisted, money matters. You deserve to be paid for your skill, time, and effort. But know when to take a gig for growth and when to say no to exploitation.

If you chase only money, you'll miss moments that shape your career. Build skills and relationships first; money follows value, and value comes from mastery.



02 SURVIVAL ETHICS

Success here isn't linear; it moves in cycles of learning, unlearning, and rebuilding. What keeps you relevant isn't just talent, but your mindset, values, and ability to adapt.

Consistency, curiosity, character, and people skills are your real cornerstones. Consistency keeps you visible; you can't only show up when it's convenient. Curiosity keeps you growing; always asking questions and finding answers even when no one's teaching you. Good character takes you further than skill ever will.

And people skills? That's everything. Learn to read the room, manage egos, and maintain relationships. This business runs on trust, and people work with those they like and respect.

Understand the business side too; it gives you leverage. Protect your name like it's currency, because it is. Reputation builds faster than titles or connections. People won't trust your value if they can't trust your character. Match that with a strong work ethic, but balance it with patience. Growth takes time, and real credibility is earned, not claimed.

Support your circle while you build. You don't always need the big names; sometimes your peers are the best partners for growth. The real wins come from showing up, building value, and treating people right. Don't burn bridges. Don't fake it. The industry is smaller than it looks, and word travels fast. Let your work and your attitude speak louder than your ambition.

Always stay professional. Avoid unnecessary jokes, sexual innuendos, or anything that compromises your credibility. Look presentable; dress well, smell good, and communicate with respect.

Build emotional and mental strength; this industry will test both. It's not a **9-to-5, it's a 24/7** commitment that demands focus and discipline.

Find your "**why.**" Whether it's improving the culture, supporting artists, or pushing creativity forward, that purpose will keep you grounded when the noise gets loud. Be reliable. Pay attention to details. Nurture relationships and track your projects and wins.

Because the ones who truly last aren't just talented, they're consistent, disciplined, and self-aware.



03. NETWORKING & MENTORSHIP

In the music industry, your network is your currency, but mentorship teaches you how to spend it wisely. Both matter, but only when done with intention. Networking helps you get seen; mentorship shapes who you become when you're finally seen.



01 NETWORKING

A lot of emerging execs mistake networking for name-dropping. They chase every "big" person in the room but forget that real connection isn't about proximity, it's about purpose. Networking isn't about knowing everyone; it's about being known for something.

First of all, these **key players** already have people in your 'status' working with them, and for you to be able to reach them (the key players), you'll need to make friends with the people in your 'status' around them.

Basically, make the smaller guys your friends or pretend to if you have to, but not in a social climber type of way.

Most importantly, stop seeing it as networking, build real relationships, not transactional ones. Be genuinely curious about people, not just what they can do for you.

When you reach out to someone, do your research, be intentional about how you connect, be curious enough about what they do, engage with their work, drop thoughtful comments, or show support, and let your presence be felt over time. Offline, show up where the work is happening: events, shows, listening sessions, panels.

Lead with Value, not requests. Don't always be the one asking for 'help' sometimes, offer to help, other times, show them what you have worked on, or you just need their opinion.

Try not to come off as annoying. Be clear, genuine, and direct with your approach. People can tell when you're only reaching out because you want something, so be authentic.



Now, let's talk about the fear that holds many people back.

A lot of creatives are usually scared to reach out because they don't want to come off as annoying or be ignored.

"The worst they can say is no." That might sound cliché, but it's true, and even then, a "no" isn't the end of the story. It may be a redirection.

Too many emerging creatives hesitate to reach out to potential collaborators, mentors, or clients because they fear rejection or embarrassment. But the cost of success is embarrassment. Reach out to people you'd like to work with, be specific about your skill set, and communicate the value you bring.

If they don't respond, reach out to more people on your radar or work hard enough that they eventually have no choice but to notice.

Be bold enough to ask questions, pitch ideas, or seek feedback. **Closed mouths don't get fed, and confidence opens rooms that talent can't always reach.**



02 MENTORING

Mentorship is trickier than people think. Not everyone you admire can or should be your mentor.

Sourcing mentorship, especially as an emerging music exec, starts with identifying mentors or key players in the industry whose values and goals align with yours.

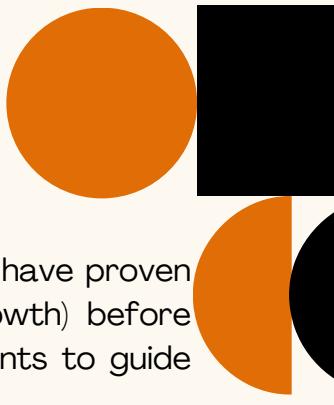
Simply put: goal alignment.

Ask yourself: "What do I want to achieve, and who's already doing it well in a way that feels true to me?" That's who you should learn from. This makes the sync easy.

When you find them, don't rush to ask, "**Can you mentor me?**"

Build a connection first. Be intentional about how you engage with their work. Offer value, show support, share insights, ask thoughtful questions. Mentorship is most effective when it's built on mutual respect, not hierarchy.

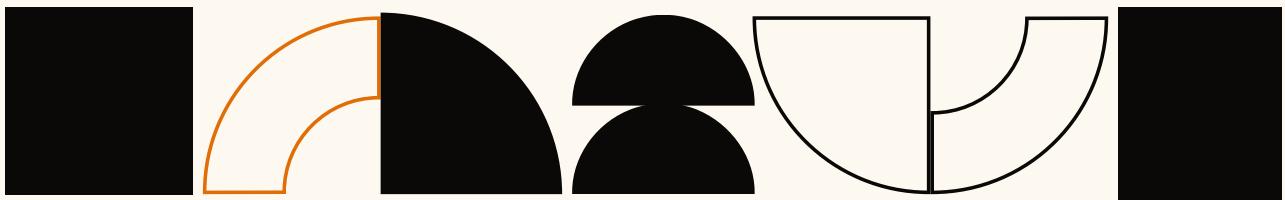
Once that relationship begins, nurture it. Communicate, apply their advice, and show growth. Mentors invest in people who take initiative. Respect their time, keep them updated, and prove that their guidance is making an impact.



Mentors are also drawn to mentees who have direction. You need to have proven that you're already doing the work (that you're serious about growth) before someone else will fully commit to helping you navigate it. No one wants to guide someone who isn't already guiding themselves.

And if you haven't found that person yet, learn through observation. Follow major execs, watch interviews, listen to podcasts, and read case studies. Mentorship doesn't always come through conversation; sometimes it's through watching how others move.

Be observant, stay curious, and apply what you learn. That awareness alone can open more doors than you realize.



04. BUILDING VISIBILITY & REPUTATION

In the music industry, visibility isn't about being everywhere; it's about being seen for the right things. Your work should speak before you do, and your consistency should echo even when you're silent.

For Creatives Outside the Key Hubs

Proximity can be an advantage, but value travels. The people who get seen, hired, or recommended are those who've built something that speaks for them, no matter where they are. Being away from the "**main hubs**" doesn't mean being out of reach; it just means your strategy has to be smarter. The internet made visibility borderless; use that advantage.

Start by putting out quality work consistently. Tell stories about your process. Give context to your journey. Storytelling humanizes your craft; it helps others connect with your journey, not just your output.

Reputation still moves through networks, so make yourself discoverable. Have a clean digital presence: website, portfolio, or social media page that shows your work clearly.



If you're building from outside the main cities, focus on using what's around you. Every location has its own sound, culture, and community worth exploring. Build locally before trying to "break in" elsewhere. When your work carries substance, it will travel farther than you think.

Be intentional about relationships: Collaborate with nearby artists, volunteer at local events, or work under someone already doing what you aspire to do. Even if it means starting small or working without pay at first, treat every experience as an investment in your growth.

For Creatives Building Brands and Communities

Before scaling, build identity. The first step to building a brand that lasts is defining what it stands for: its values, tone, and purpose. In music culture, people follow personalities, but they belong to movements. Define your brand's purpose, tone, and values before chasing growth. Give your brand a heartbeat.

Once your identity is clear, consistency becomes your foundation. From visuals to captions, every touchpoint should reflect your essence. Over time, people begin to associate your name with a feeling, and that's when you stop chasing relevance and start defining it.

Also, Community is the backbone of every strong brand, but building a community around your brand shouldn't be just about numbers; it should be about participation and belonging. Instead of chasing numbers, build belonging.

Create experiences; events, playlists, newsletters, or even conversations, that make people feel part of something bigger. When people connect with your "why," they'll become advocates for your work.

Finally, keep working and evolving. Growth means refinement, not reinvention. Stay open to feedback, study your audience, and evolve without losing your essence. Purpose-driven brands don't just attract attention; they build loyalty.





For Creatives Who Prefer to Stay Behind the Scenes

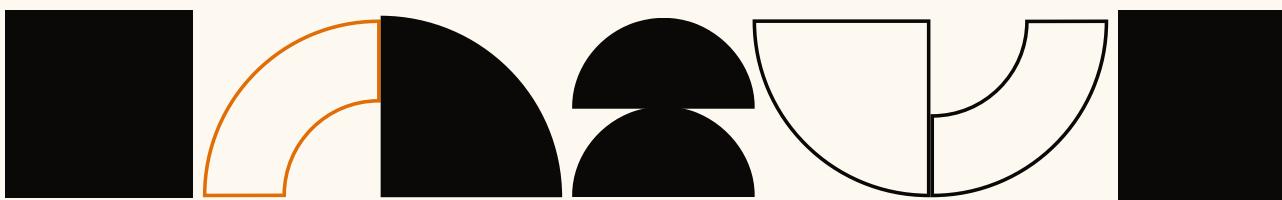
Not everyone wants the spotlight, and that's perfectly fine. Some creatives thrive in silence; they let their work do the talking. So if you want to be behind the scenes, your work must speak loudly enough to get you noticed.

Be twice as intentional with your craft. Partner with visible people: artists, managers, influencers, who amplify your results. Let them be the face while you deliver excellence. The people you've worked with can become your loudest promo. Word of mouth travels fast in this industry, and sometimes faster than social media. The key is to stay relevant even if you're not constantly seen.

Document your wins, keep your portfolio updated, and make sure your social media reflects the quality of your work. When your name comes up in rooms, people should already have an idea of who you are and what you do because your work online says it all. You can't be a ghost both offline and online and still expect people to remember you.

Also, building a strong network of industry players (artists, managers, marketing professionals, producers) gives your work more reach. When you're not in the room, your relationships make sure your name is. Connect genuinely, collaborate often, and be the person people enjoy working with. It might mean doing double the work, but it pays off when opportunities start finding you through referrals.

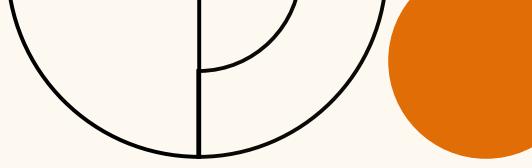
At the end of the day, being "behind the scenes" is not about staying hidden; it's about being intentional. Be reliable, deliver consistently, keep your reputation clean, and let your results do the loudest talking. Reliability travels faster than virality.



05. TOOLS, PLATFORMS & COURSES FOR GROWTH

If you're looking to transition into or grow in roles like marketing, A&R, PR, or artist management, knowing the right tools and platforms can make a huge difference. Below is a curated list of options courses for foundational knowledge, and tools/platforms for you to use day-to-day

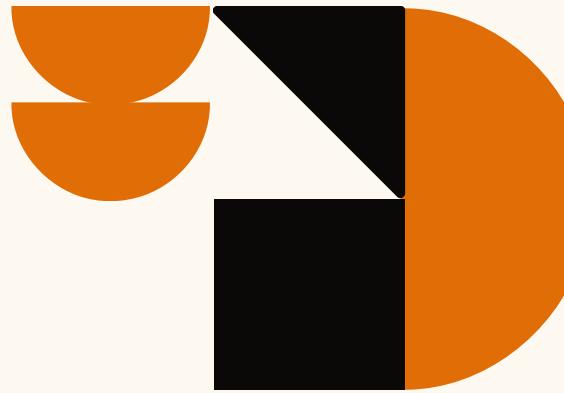
No	Tools/Platform	Use
1	Bandzoogle	Great for building professional artist or exec websites and portfolios. Showcase your work, projects, and brand identity in one place.
2	LinkedIn	Use it to connect intentionally: engage with professionals, share insights, and build credibility within the industry.
3	Canva / CapCut	Perfect for promo materials and short-form content. Quick, creative tools to bring your ideas to life
4	Google Workspace / Notion / Zoho	Keep your workflow structured. Manage projects, communication, and creative planning efficiently
5	Music Business for Africa / Sarz Academy	Structured programs that teach artist management, contracts, branding, and music business strategy tailored to the African creative scene.
6	Coursera / YouTube	For global courses and tutorials on marketing, PR, and music business fundamentals. Learn anytime, anywhere.
7	The DIY Collective, WeTalkSound & Creative Communities	Join spaces that offer collaboration, exposure, and mentorship. Community keeps you connected and visible.
8	Free Online Resources	If you can't pay yet, start with free books, webinars, and PDFs. Curiosity will always be your best investment.



Unpopular Truth About the Nigerian Music Industry

You didn't ask, but just so you know what you're getting yourself into, here are some unpopular truths about the Nigerian Music industry.

- The music industry is more than the glitz and glamour people see. They don't know you're lowkey signing off your freedom. Half the time you're running on no sleep, replying to emails at 1 a.m., and solving problems that weren't even yours to begin with.
- The industry runs like a proper **9–5** (sometimes even WORSE). You will prepare documents, write proposals, chase deliverables, chase artists, manage budgets, follow up with teams, and still have to keep your cool while spiraling internally.
- People don't care about your talent. They only care about the emotional or economic benefit of your music. Your music is a product; if it doesn't have any usefulness or does not apply to the context of their needs or experience, they will not reward you with their attention or money.
- There is real work to be done. Forget the flashy stuff, anybody looking forward to taking music as a life career should prepare themselves for the real work, and that includes questioning your skills and level of creativity.
- You'll face politics, broken promises, and even betrayal, sometimes from people you thought were friends. Charge it to the game and keep moving.
- It's hectic, sometimes depressing, and will surely mess up your sleep pattern.
- Talent and hard work aren't enough. You need to build relationships that matter.
- You don't own your time anymore, and you'll possibly lose every zeal in your bones.
- If you are a woman coming into this industry, you **NEED** to be strict. Over-familiarity breeds nasty disrespect, especially in a male-dominated space like this. Protect yourself.
- People will underrate your work simply because you're a woman. Keep your head down and put in the work.



Final Words of Advice

- Don't rush the process. Keep learning, pick up more relevant skills, stay bold, and focus on building real relationships. It'll work out
- start early. The more time you waste trying to figure out what you want, the more your chances of being good at it are delayed.
- Don't shrink yourself; take up space, even when you're still figuring things out.
- If you keep thinking you are not ready, you never will be.
- Be more daring and ask for what you want, all the time.
- Be louder about your achievements
- Have Fun and Keep Bombing.

To every creative or emerging exec reading this, whether you're in front or behind the scenes, your journey matters. Keep showing up. Keep building proof. The work you're doing is shaping the future of this industry.

In the last workbook, we included 3 Easter eggs for people to find and just 2 people found it. We're repeating it again and the first three to send us the codes via Instagram gets a gift. Happy hunting. :)



Acknowledgments & Contributors

This workbook wouldn't exist without the voices that shaped it. Every insight, lesson, and story shared here came from real people doing the work — music executives, creatives, and community builders who've lived the grind and still show up every day for the culture.

To everyone who took the time to respond, share their experiences, and speak their truth, thank you. Your honesty turned what could've been another guide into something real, practical, and deeply rooted in experience.

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