



THE INDIES: STREET TEAM PLAYERS November 10, 2007

Online Sites Excel In Harnessing Street Team Power
by CORTNEY HARDING

The last time I visited my parents, I came across a box of stickers, posters and T-shirts collecting dust in the basement. Bearing the names of long-forgotten mid-'90s indie bands, the goods were left over from my stint as a street-teamer. Back in the day, there was no way to keep track of street teams and no real strategy to guide their work, hence, the pile of fliers gathering dust in Clackamas, Ore., rather than posted on a coffee shop wall in 1996.

In the last 10 years, street teams have evolved from an afterthought and a way to get some posters up for free to a highly regimented system that demands accountability from young recruits. While indies and majors have jumped on the bandwagon, the limited marketing budgets that many indies have make the work of their unpaid fan army much more crucial.

Two Web sites, Reverbnation.com and Fancorps.com, seek to help emerging artists and independent labels manage their grass-roots outreach efforts. Both sites are doing well, if recent news is any indication: Reverbnation announced two weeks ago that it is expanding to offer a new suite of services, and Fancorps inked a deal last month with MySpace Records to manage the street teams for its roster.

The sites take pains to set themselves apart from traditional guerrilla marketing firms like BzzAgent, which has volunteers shill sausage one week and novels the next. While fans who sign up through Reverbnation and Fancorps can choose to work with more than one act, both sites make it clear that volunteers will never be asked to work for bands they don't like. "We want to involve the hardcore fans and create an exclusive community for our street teamers," says GI Sanders, head of marketing and client relations at Fancorps.

The hardcore fans who sign up through the sites can expect to be given a variety of "missions"—anything from posting banners on social networking sites to giving CDs to their friends.

Jay Wilson, who manages rock band Manchester Orchestra and uses Fancorps to coordinate his street team, says the site's emphasis on accountability has allowed him to assign more in-depth and quirky missions. "We do the usual MySpace banner stuff," he says, "but we're also able to do things like get kids to organize screenings of our new tour documentary in local venues." On the Fancorps site, street teamers communicate via message boards and upload photos of themselves hanging posters and maps of locations they've already hit.

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