



strategy + support for
musicians creating change

Air Traffic Control

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RISE AGAINST RADIO PROMO: TURNING AWKWARD “MEET + GREETINGS” WITH FANS INTO MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY EFFORTS

While participating in ATC’s Artist-Activism Retreat in New Orleans in March 2010, Tim McIlrath (lead singer of Rise Against) spoke about how Rise Against had turned the awkward radio promotions that bands usually have to do into an opportunity to highlight the issues they care about: the band spent time with their fans volunteering at soup kitchens or animal rights organizations. All of the artists at the Artist-Activist Retreat, and others who have heard about it since immediately responded to the idea and intrigued to hear more about how Rise Against was able to do it.

ATC interviewed Rise Against’s manager, Missy Worth, as well as the person at their label who quarterbacked the effort, Jeff Stacey, to find out what made these successful and how other bands could do the same. Here is what they shared with us:

1. Before doing anything, a band has to be 110% into the idea and ready for the extra hours that volunteering might cause while on tour. (It was noted in the interviews that if they are there begrudgingly, it sucks for everyone and the band will burn bridges with the radio stations.)
2. Once every band member is on board, a person on his or her management or promotions team with close relationships to radio stations should be identified to be the main coordinator of the effort. This should be a person who can negotiate independently of everyone to keep everyone involved and invested, and to manage expectations of the band, radio station, and eventually the charities involved.
3. Have a serious conversation about what the band won’t do or doesn’t want to do. Also, identify which markets would be best to implement this project in. These opportunities can take up to 4 hours extra in a day for the band, so plan accordingly and know that these probably can’t happen in every market.
4. Think about these questions: Which places on the tour seem like the best ones to do this? Which stations would be most open? What types of charity partners would fit best with the band’s passions?

5. Once the key questions are answered, the main coordinator of this effort should now contact the radio stations to explain the idea of doing a charity or issue based promotion with the band and the station. If the station is reticent, keep asking. Perhaps mention that it could help the station document their public affairs work for its license renewal.
6. Begin a brainstorm with the station on what the promo could look like, and what the beneficiary organization could be. The promo should bring value to the station AND do tangible good in the community or on the issue the band is focused on, so consider aspects of the promo like an acoustic on-air performance (from a community center or soup kitchen or at the end of an interview with band members and fans on an issue); a text campaign; connecting it into the radio station's website somehow. (If the station needs help identifying the kinds of organizations that the band wants to work with in their area, feel free to contact ATC staff for help.) Make sure that the promo is not just a drive-by at a nonprofit or soup kitchen: the effort should demonstrate meaningful support and effort that is needed by the organization. Using a Charity that the station is already involved with or has an ongoing partnership with is a good way to insure they want to be involved and will do a great job.
7. Once the band approves the idea, begin incorporating the logistics of the event into the tour.
8. Day of: THE BAND MUST BE READY TO GO AND ARRIVE AT THESE EVENTS ON TIME. Make sure the band is there on time and knows what the organization is (one idea is to include a description in the tour book or day sheet).
9. Have fun!
10. Measure impact: record how many hours of volunteer time were donated, dollars raised, items donated, lessons learned on how to do it better, etc. and present it to all of the people that helped make the promotions charitable (this includes the band!). It will put the entire project in context and help you make it easier to do. ATC would love to see these reports, especially the lessons learned so that we can share with other bands and help them do this even more easily and effectively.

For more information on this and other strategies, contact us: www.atctower.net or 415-255-0331.