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Empowered Public Relations

**Songwriters, Musicians, Bands, Producers and Other Creative Types  
Adapt to Emerging Industry Trend of Taking Back Control**

***Artists Begin to Understand the Value—and Other Benefits—of  
Managing Their Own Careers***

New York, NY – As options for artist development—once readily provided by record, production and artist management companies—dwindle, and recording contracts for unknown and unproven talent become virtually extinct, many musicians, songwriters, bands and producers, as well as young managers and independent labels have been forced to take control of their own careers. And while it was initially difficult for these creative types to embrace this new music industry reality, many artists are adapting well to their new independence. Some even relish the opportunity.

“For too many years, musicians and bands looked to others—record labels and management firms, in particular—to invest in them and with that investment came control,” says Madagascar, a singer/songwriter based in Cleveland. “Artists readily relinquished their control in hopes that these industry types would lead them to gold records, sold-out arenas and the top of the charts.” Unfortunately, success for far too many of these artists has at best remained elusive and at worst destroyed careers before they even started.

“Even in the best of industry times, nine out of 10 artists who were lucky enough to ink a recording contracts, never had their music released,” says James Citkovic, president of Countdown Entertainment ([www.CountdownEntertainment.com](http://www.CountdownEntertainment.com)), a traditional artist management firm established in 1983, which has represented clients as diverse as one of the *Top 100 Black Entertainers* of all time, platinum-recording artist Irene Cara; Grammy-nominated producer Chris Conway; and Epic-recording artists, Wood Ready, among others.

“With a record deal in hand, artists who thought they had made it suddenly found themselves axed from the label nine months later,” says Citkovic. “I’ve seen the downside devastation of it more times than I care to remember.” Madagascar continues. “The current state of the industry has forced most of us to take control of our own careers, make the creative and business decisions we think are right for us and not leave those things in the hands of big corporations which have their own agendas. It’s not easy, because like they say, ‘you don’t know what you don’t know,’ but it’s also been a blessing in disguise. These days, if you aren’t being responsible for your own success, you aren’t doing your job.

In response to this trend of artist-led careers, a new breed of fee-based music consultancy services are cropping up, many headed by long-time industry professionals who see an opportunity to offer their expertise and important contacts to these independent musicians in need of guidance, introductions and the chance for their music to be heard by the “right” folks.

*Hire A Consultant*, a division of Countdown Entertainment, is one such consultant service leading the pack. More than a decade ago, after seeing developmental opportunities for both young and established musicians, songwriters and bands all but disappear, Citkovic decided to put his years of experience and extensive network of contacts to work in a different way. He opened Countdown’s *Hire A Consultant* division, which offers fee-based services designed to help artists get their musical house in order business-wise and to have their music heard by top-level industry professionals. Through that process, Citkovic has seen many of his clients secure contracts.

The kinds of music services the *Hire A Consultant* division provides run the gamut including, song placement with major artists; music placements opportunities in TV and film, international licensing, access to industry decision-makers worldwide, image and presentation development, business advice about such critical documents as band agreements and work-for-hire contracts. Still, Citkovic is quick to point out, that it’s always about the quality of the music first and foremost. “We have to believe someone’s music is good enough to score deals before we offer them our services.” Artists interested in being considered by Citkovic and his team can send an email inquiry to [info@CountdownEntertainment.com](mailto:info@CountdownEntertainment.com).

And although some of these services are similar to those a manager provides, there are several major differences. “As personal consultants we are paid a retainer but we NEVER take a commission on any deals our clients secure,” states Citkovic. “And we are non-exclusive, meaning clients can work with anyone else they choose while taking advantage of what we offer. In addition, there are no long-term contracts, and that’s a big benefit for independent artists with relatively small budgets.” But he also warns, “Artists should NEVER pay a manager a retainer fee. Managers are compensated based on the earnings of their artists.”

In this new age of artist independence, consultancy and other fee-based services like those provided by an attorney, PR agency, radio promotions company and *Hire A Consultant* are valuable resources that assist artists to take the next step in their careers without handing over the keys to their potential kingdom. Even though ‘the times they are a changing,’ some musicians say they can’t afford to pay consultants. To that Citkovic states, “These are the same people who have spent \$10,000 recording, mixing and mastering their music but never think about a budget for getting it out into the world so it actually has the chance of making them some money.” He, like an ever-growing number of industry professionals, believes artists need to recognize that paying a fee for services is a “clear-cut” way of doing business since it ensures the artist remains in control of their intellectual properties.

Drastic industry changes particularly over the last decade are forcing artists to become more directly involved in their own careers. And Citkovic, like many of his clients, thinks that’s a good thing. “If you’re going to endeavor to carve out a successful path in such a risky industry, it’s a good idea for an artist to make his

or her own decisions not only creatively, but to know the parameters of various types of licensing and publishing deals, be responsible for keeping track of monies due them and know how to put their best foot forward via image and presentation materials. But there's no substitute for professional guidance, knowing the right people and having the inside track on opportunities for their music to be heard and used. That's where *Hire A Consultant* comes into the mix. "Although we charge a fee for our services, we are also very selective about the clients we take on. It's always about the music first and foremost. We have to believe that our clients' music is good enough to score deals," Citkovic is quick to point out.

Through these *Hire A Consultant* services he began offering in 2002, Citkovic has helped hundreds of artists, and dozens of his clients have landed deals. Jordana Greenberg of Harpeth Rising is one such example. Here's what she writes. "*Working with James Citkovic has been fantastic for us—he helped us to get our image, website and publicity materials in great shape, and within a few weeks of receiving our first leads we've been offered two deals. We are thrilled!*"

As a manager, James Citkovic has represented clients as diverse as one of the *Top 100 Black Entertainers* of all time, platinum-recording artist Irene Cara; Grammy-nominated producer Chris Conway; songwriter and Epic-recording artists, Wood Ready, among others. He has also contracted more than 40 full-length albums, 50 singles, numerous international licensing deals and music publishing contracts for his clients with companies such as BMG Entertainment, Warner/Chappell, and MCA Music Publishing.

Over the years, Citkovic has also partnered with other music managers including Michael Lang (Joe Crocker, Billy Joel, and the creator of the Woodstock festival), Mike Appel (Bruce Springsteen) and John Regna (Jose Feliciano).

Citkovic has also been quite successful brokering music publishing catalogues and music masters of major artists including those of The Ramones, Elvis Presley, Joe Strummer (The Clash) and Lynyrd Skynyrd, among others.

Those interested in advancing their careers by being considered for the services offered by Hire A Consultant should send an email inquiry to [info@CountdownEntertainment.com](mailto:info@CountdownEntertainment.com).

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<http://www.countdownentertainment.com>.