



# POWER TO THE PEOPLE PEOPLE

Tech and data might be at the forefront of biz minds, but as the music industry evolves, getting **recruiters** and **HR teams** to employ the **right humans** to work it is now more important than ever. *Music Week* investigates...

BY PAUL STOKES

**W**ith everything from algorithms to metadata, blockchain and analytics now an everyday part of the music industry, it is easy to overlook the human factor.

Yet, without the people on stage or in studios, the biz would just be a collection of random noise. It is true too of the individuals behind the scenes who make the music business work. Whether running labels, booking tours, representing artists, managing accounts, and beyond, ours is a people led business – in fact, with technological innovation increasingly forcing faster change,

having the right human beings in the right jobs is more crucial than ever.

“There’s always a need for bright, engaged and driven candidates who are passionate about music and the business of music,” declares UTA general manager Natalia Nastaskin of her *human* resources. “At UTA, as the scope of artist representation evolves, we are looking for candidates who read the trades, follow trends, and understand that it is a 360° business.”

So while other positions change within the biz, recruitment remains the constant specialist role needed

to ensure everyone else does a good job.

“Recruitment plays an integral role in developing and shaping unique company cultures,” argues The Music Market – Arts And Media founder and managing director Helen Ward. “Twenty years ago there were set roles within music companies, people rarely made the move from press to marketing for example, now both companies and candidates have to be more fluid and flexible in their recruitment approach.”

Jane Bellamy, managing consultant at Handle Recruitment, agrees that employing the right people is a critical skill.

“Recruitment is fundamental, it’s beyond just looking at a CV or writing a job description,” she suggests. “Our job is to help communicate and deliver against each company’s unique perspective by presenting every candidate as an individual who can contribute to the culture and the success of the business.”

Even within a sector like accountancy where professional qualifications can apply, when it rocks up alongside the biz, unique and individual factors start to apply, hence why the people they hire tend to be unique individuals.

“At CC Young, we want our employees to feel they have the trust and space for innovation and collaboration,” says Hannah Parish, the firm’s head of HR. “We encourage the staff to challenge the boundaries in the music accountancy sector.”

“**Recruiters are covering a wider landscape than ever**”

Natalia Nastaskin  
UTA

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**You're hired:** UTA's Natalia Nastaskin (left), CC Young & Co's Hannah Parish (top), Handle's David Johnston (below) & Helen Ward from The Music Market (bottom)

First, we need to know the generally accepted accountancy norms. Then, we need to learn the music industry accountancy standards. Once we know this, we challenge it. Is the industry standard equitable for our clients? If not, why not? And, what do we suggest to change this? The only way to achieve this change is by working together as a collective. By doing this, we hope to create a positive workplace culture to promote a long-term retention of our employees, as they will feel part of something special and know that they have helped to achieve something great."

While getting the best people remains a constant for the music industry, where the top candidates are now found continues to change as the biz evolves.

"The industry in general has become more receptive to hiring talented people working within other sectors, particularly technology, e-commerce and digital

first businesses," suggests Handle's executive director David Johnston. "This helps add a new dynamic and additional skillsets. It also allows us to engage with communities that are on niche digital platforms that would have previously been less visible or receptive to being approached."

UTA's Nastaskin notes that even the education of raw recruits is changing too.

"What I'm seeing is that more colleges and universities are incorporating some version of music business programming and courses into their curriculum. This yields more opportunities for students to get exposed to the music business and has expanded avenues for our

**"It feels more fluid. Career paths are becoming less linear"**

Jane Bellamy  
Handle  
Recruitment



recruiters to access interesting and engaged candidates," she explains.

This widening of the net is also helping the biz work towards collectively stated goals around the diversity of the people working within it.

"Our internal recruiters are covering a much wider landscape than ever before in terms of where they're looking for prospective candidates – schools, industry associations, job posting sites and industry networks," continues Nastaskin. "We recently conducted visits to Historically Black Colleges And Universities (HBCUs) with recruitment as one of our main initiatives."

The Music Market's Ward adds that current scope of recruitment is almost unprecedented in the music industry's history.

"Because I have over 30 years experience recruiting for this industry we have a unique overview of how companies' cultures have changed. The opportunities for under-represented minorities has been particularly noticeable over the last few years and changed the industry for the better," she says. "The broader the range of staff you have, the broader the audience you can reach. We have always put forward the best people we consider relevant for the roles we are working on. We have never recruited on the basis of sexual orientation, race, disability or religion. We make money from being successful, so will always put forward the strongest candidates. The fact that companies are more open to more eclectic backgrounds now is encouraging as, in order to think outside the box, sometimes you have to be outside the box!"

For firms like CC Young & Co, diversity not only covers background, but it also stretches to bringing together the different generations employed at the firm.

"Generation Z is the first generation to be born into a digital world where the information available is infinite and access to it is immediate. This makes their integration with the older millennials, generation X and boomer staff an interesting challenge for all involved," says Parish of the team building her department fosters. "The 'We've always done it this way' mentality is being tested more and more by our younger workforce who are trying to make their own path and who are keen to learn and embrace new technologies. That really is pushing our industry forwards."

Indeed firms are actively connecting old and new talents right across the biz.

"Apprenticeship and mentorship are critical in recruiting," argues UTA's Nastaskin. "I had the honour of being the executive in residence at New York University's Steinhardt School of Music Business for the 2018/19 school year, and was able to not just give lectures as part of that engagement, but also have office hours to meet with the students one-on-one. What I found from

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feedback I received from the students, is that the ability to make a connection with an industry professional was a valuable component to their experience."

While 'in job' development has been traditionally limited to firms with dedicated HR teams, increasingly training and investment in staff is expected across the whole industry meaning recruitment firms now play a role beyond just a hire. BIY People & Talent offer HR facilities to a range of smaller companies, and founder and director Silvia Gargiulo says she actively helps to cultivate a variety of teams.

"One thing that's become really clear is that lots of people we come into contact with, whether they be business leaders, managers, start-up owners, freelancers or employees, want more development and practical learning from a people perspective," she explains. "I started talking to an business psychologist friend and we created The X-Percent: straight-talking, jargon-free people development sessions where everyone is welcome. These are ticketed monthly events, but companies are also asking us to deliver these sessions in-house specifically for their teams. I think it's important to remember that as an employer you're hiring people, not just filling jobs."

Though the organisations and structures those new recruits end up in is increasingly up for grabs. As tech-driven change mutates the way the industry works, careers within it are changing too – but it is a challenge recruiters and HR specialist are ready to assist with.

"It's a specialist recruiter's role to make sure our clients are kept abreast of any trends or skills shortages," The Music Market's Ward explains. "The main way our business has changed is that it helps to be specialist. Most larger companies now have good in-house recruitment teams, they don't need agencies for all roles, but the tricky roles are where our expertise is used most as we know the market, the candidate pool and when all other methods have failed."

Handle's Bellamy agrees, the skills spectrum the biz needs is expanding, but by working closely with would-be employers and employees, they can create opportunities for both parties.

"As the services that labels, DSPs, management, distributors



**Model employees:** BIY's Silvia Gargiulo (top) & Handle's Jane Bellamy

and aggregators offer become more bespoke, the experience and skill requirements of roles are becoming broader," she notes. "It feels less structured and more fluid. Career paths are becoming less linear."

Indeed Nastaskin at UTA has witnessed first hand how good recruitment and attentive HR can benefit the biz and its people.

"We've seen candidates who came in to work on the touring side, who, after a year or two, discover that they're interested in brand partnerships or live events or crossover," she explains. "When our trainees bring that to my attention, I work with HR to ensure that we are able to place our people into opportunities which provide continued

professional growth in areas which pique their interests. UTA benefits from an engaged workforce and our employees benefit from professional development across departmental specialties. It's a win-win for both."

With those kind of results, you don't need any analytics to know that recruitment is doing a good job.

**"Recruitment plays an integral role in shaping cultures"**

Helen Ward  
The Music Market

## WHAT SKILLS DO YOU NEED IN 2020?

### Recruiters on what they're looking for..

#### Natalia Nastaskin, UTA

"From the perspective of music artist representation, there was a time when the music agent was looked to for the tour, show, personal appearance to support the artist's new music releases, and that was the end of that. That's no longer the case. The beauty of today's artist representation business is that the agent and agency are key players in the development of an artist's career. Companies like UTA, which offer a full suite of services to clients, are an integral part of the artist's team and can contribute multiple verticals in the development of the artist and the artist's brand: touring, brand partnerships, data analytics, on-screen film and TV opportunities, music licensing opportunities... The list goes on and on."

#### David Johnston, Handle Recruitment

"There is a continued demand for digital first experience and there has been a significantly increased demand for metadata specialists. Becoming at 'metadata expert' may not be the first role people think of when they imagine a career in music but music discovery, distribution and royalty allocation has made it hugely valuable – especially as streaming services and voice recognition software continue to evolve."

#### Helen Ward, The Music Market

"Digital skills are always in high demand. Content skills, videography, etc, for an ever increasing visual music experience. Candidates with a strong global commercial mindset an a working knowledge of analytics are also prized. I would like to mention that an increasing issue for us is the fact that potential candidates rarely read the job ads in full and apply regardless of whether they meet the criteria. I had one candidate apply for 23 different roles ranging from a junior management assistant to a VP of Latin America! I do wish people would take the time to check they have the skills we need."

#### Hannah Parish, CC Young & Co

"We have seen that new artists expect a digitally savvy service. Clients are keen on information being more interactive and readily available, so we have focused our effort on acquiring and building bespoke software, which allows greater visibility to the clients. This requires existing staff to embrace change and, from a recruitment point of view, we are actively seeking candidates with experience in data analysis and technology-based roles. For traditional business management, we look for staff with a 'can-do' and yet 'go with the flow' attitude. This requires someone to have a 'to do' list, but be happy to change the plan when required – the bus broke down, the band have to cancel, or sometimes the band turns up on the wrong day!"

#### Silvia Gargiulo, BIY People & Talent

"It's crucial for us to help clients understand why being open-minded and creative when it comes to recruitment is so key, so we encourage hiring with potential in mind rather than simply seeing only what's written on a CV. Considering behaviours and attributes, rather than just hard skills, is important if you want to create a strong, diverse team."