

AGENT, MANAGER AND PRODUCER TERMINOLOGY

Please note that the terms used here are generally applicable to North America. Some of these may vary depending on the international territory and local practices in which the events are held.

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THE DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS

The definitions of the professions listed below should be approached as examples, keeping in mind that cultural workers who perform those duties may simultaneously occupy several complementary professions. The boundaries between these professions are permeable and their structure is fluid, depending on the cultural workers' case and special needs of their partners. Adopting its characteristics within communicating vases, the hybridity of the professions allows as many models as there are agents and agencies. The particularities exposed in this document relate to the performing arts.

A main function gathers these professions; to cultivate the career of the artists concerned. Professionals in these occupations collaborate with high-caliber artists, whose works are in demand and are ready for touring. In addition, some may act as consultants and advisors to emerging and established artists, guiding them to the right strategies to achieve their goals.

An agency is a legally formed entity under whose umbrella one or more agents/managers/producers work.

AGENT

The work of many agents is primarily tour oriented. They aim to gather a list of artists and productions ready to tour or to be seen/heard. These agents become a one-stop shop for presenters and programmers, offering a selection of quality artists and shows that demonstrate their artistic choices and knowledge of the discipline. Through their expertise, agents sometimes become allies, or even consultants, to certain presenters in the development of specific disciplines. They act as an intermediary between the artist or artistic organization and the presenter by negotiating all the conditions of the agreement. The agreement will result in a contract.

MANAGER

The manager's job is primarily to support many aspects of an artist's career, strategizing with them, managing their schedule and day-to-day activities, advising and guiding them on key decisions, and providing feedback on experiences. This part of the job is normally not directly related to sales. The manager introduces the artist to industry practices, helps them develop a career plan, promotional and marketing tools. They also accompany the artist in their search for funding, such as grants among others.

PRODUCER

Generally recognised in the world of music recording, but not only, the producer intervenes essentially on the financial side. They select the artists or projects that seem promising and will occasionally finance them. This investment by the producer, sometimes called impresario, will be used to gather and pay all the human resources related to the show: artists, choreographers, arrangers, editors, public relations managers, graphic designers, etc. If the producer presents a show on stage, they rent one or more halls, and take care of marketing, visual image, promotion, ticketing, logistics, etc. They are paid from the profiteering of the show and the recorded music, for which they generally hold the rights. They will then have a contract with the artist to whom they pay a percentage or a salary. An independent artist who wishes to perform without a producer must self produce their own work.

These first three professions are distinguished by the fact that an agent/manager/producer usually maintains a repertoire (catalog, portfolio, etc.) of artists, unlike the model below.

IN-HOUSE AGENT

The in-house agent works exclusively for a company that hires them to ensure the circulation of its works and its representation in various territories. The in-house agent is usually involved in tour management and development strategy. They are usually salaried by the artistic company.

KEY COMPONENTS

Here we present some key elements of the work of the agents/managers/producers.

DISCIPLINES

Represents a segmenting of the various performing arts, under which artists or artistic works are categorized. When planning their programming, presenters generally allocate a specific budget for each category, and sometimes assign different programming staff to some of these categories.

Ex: Circus, Dance, Music, Theatre, etc.

These disciplines reach a variety of audiences, including general audiences (all ages), adult audiences, as well as young audiences, which have their own specific conditions and characteristics.

Agents/managers/producers may specialize in one discipline, or navigate through several of them.

Les agents/gérants/producteurs peuvent se spécialiser en une discipline ou naviguer à travers plusieurs.

TERRITORIES

Represents the different geographic areas in which agents/managers/producers operate. Agents/managers/producers generally require exclusivity for the artists they represent in their territories. They may collaborate with other agents/managers/producers in other territories to develop a particular artist's career abroad.

Agents/managers/producers choose the territory they wish to cover, whether it is as small as a single province, a continent or more.

The notion of territories is intimately linked to that of networks (see next definition).

NETWORKS

Touring Networks are often linked to associations of professionals in a specific territory (such as RIDEAU for Quebec, the Atlantic Presenters Association for the Maritime provinces and CAPACOA for Canada) or gatherings of professionals interested in the circulation of a particular discipline. For example, "Les Voyagements" promotes creative theater in the Canadian Francophonie, or CANDANCE supports the discipline of dance across Canada.

Members of presenting networks often organize themselves into working groups to coordinate block booking.

Most presenters' networks or professional associations typically hold an annual meeting of their members and invite artists and agents/managers/producers to attend, to network and showcase their work.

In the vast majority of cases, they also offer artists and agents/managers/producers the opportunity to include their available shows in catalogs or directories, often online or in print.

LEGAL STRUCTURE

The most common legal structures for agents/managers/producers are:

- Corporations (inc. / for-profit), also called companies or legal entities, in which profits are distributed among the shareholders;
- Non-profit organizations, which are generally a group of individuals who pursue a moral or altruistic goal and who do not intend to make monetary gains to be shared among the members. The organization depends on its board of directors;
- The sole proprietorship, which has no legal existence separate from its owner and has no separate legal personality or assets, unlike the first two models. It is sometimes referred to as a self-employed person who manages his or her own business;
- Cooperatives, which are unique and atypical models. Examples: Art Circulation and Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

Each model has its advantages and disadvantages. Each entrepreneur who decides to start a business must evaluate them in relation to his or her needs, his or her own situation and his or her resistance to risk.

COMPENSATION

There is no single model for agent/manager/producer's compensation. The agent/manager/producer will propose a model that is appropriate to their practice, their risk tolerance and their clients' ability to pay. Different elements that can contribute to the compensation can also be combined.

- The commission on sales varies from 10% (for example in opera) to 20% (in concerts), but is generally calculated at 15% of the price of the fee negotiated for the artist. This commission must be included in the sales price negotiated with the presenter. The model whereby the agent is remunerated solely by commissions on sales is gradually becoming obsolete. This situation is caused by the stagnation of show fees, the exponential multiplication of offers and the budgetary pressures imposed on presenters. This is why more and more agents are combining this model with the following;
- Fixed fee: represents an amount established with the artist, which can be paid in one or more installments;
- Billable hours: remuneration by the hour agreed upon for particular tasks, most often in management;
- Subsidies: the agent/manager/producer can be supported by the various arts councils to carry out tasks related to their work. Eligibility is evaluated according to experience, reputation, legal structure, the territory in which the head office is located, the disciplines in which they work, etc. The various levels of government that provide grants include the Canada Council for the Arts, the arts councils of the various provinces (for example, CALQ in Quebec), the regions, the municipalities, as well as specialized organizations such as SODEC (in music). Other organizations that fund music at the federal level include Musicaction (for music from French-speaking Canada) and Factor (for music from English-speaking Canada).

SET OF SKILLS

Here are some of the qualities and skills required to work as an agent/manager/producer:

- Discovering new talents;
- Showing a high level of curiosity;
- Organize your artist roster in a coherent and balanced way;
- Thinking strategically and thoroughly;
- Possessing strong personal and professional ethics;
- Developing a clear vision for the future of your business;
- Setting clear and specific goals;
- Having a strong sense of organization;
- Solving problems, sometimes with many ramifications;
- Constantly developing one's network and address book: presenters, programmers, other agents, partners, etc;
- Adapting quickly to change;
- Knowing how to seize opportunities;
- Demonstrating a strong sense of empathy;
- Demonstrating great perseverance;
- Ability to manage a budget, finances;
- Dealing with very stressful situations;
- Ability to work in a team;
- Etc.

PARTNERS

In the relationship between the artist, the agent/manager/producer and the presenter, it is often difficult to distinguish who is the client. Since the connection that links these parties is a collaboration in which the quality of the human and professional relationship is paramount, we prefer to speak here of the agent/manager/producer's various partners. Together, these three parties form a balanced distribution ecosystem and allow for the presentation of quality works to the public.

ARTIST

An individual whose works and/or repertoire are usually represented by the agent and whose career is managed by the manager. The artist's works are produced by the producer.

ARTISTIC COMPANY

A legally constituted organization, or collective of artists, whose works are generally represented by the agent and whose career is managed by the manager (internal or external). The company's works are produced by a producer. Often, an artistic company hires cultural personnel who work on the production, for example: technical director, accountant, various designers, etc.

SHOW

Work produced by an artist or an artistic company. Some agents choose to represent shows rather than an artist or an artistic company as a whole, which allows them greater freedom in their editorial choices.

PRESENTER

Represents the organization responsible for presenting performances to an audience. To do so, it may own and manage a performance hall, rent it out or have a partnership with another organization. The presenter books the services of an artist or an artistic company in exchange for a performance fee as well as several conditions agreed upon in advance with the agent/manager/producer, for example: meals, accommodation, transportation, percentage of ticket sales, technical specifications, etc.

A contract seals the agreement by linking the responsibilities of the presenter and those of the artist. The presenter is generally responsible for promoting the event, selling tickets and ensuring the smooth running of the event by providing the necessary personnel.

VENUE

The venue is the space in which a performance takes place, indoors or outdoors.

When the presenter organizes a show outside of its venue, it is an «off-site» performance. This can include site specific models determined by the needs of a work (park, riverbank, beach, public garden, etc.), as well as atypical locations (galleries, factories, disused sites, etc.), and others.

It happens that certain artists self-produce and rent a venue to present their work.

PROGRAMMER

The programmer is the person in charge of choosing the artistic program for the presenting organization or venue. This person is usually the one in contact with the agent/manager/producer.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The artistic director is responsible for the overall long-term artistic vision of the programming of a performing arts organization or venue. This person does not always fulfill the role of programmer.

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