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The contribution of artist management processes to success/failure in the music industry – a case study

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Abstract

This research is an in-depth case study conducted, through participant observation and semi structured interviews, within Spaceship Management, a well-established boutique artist management company, active in the field of electro/pop music genre.

This study examines the management processes, related to the concept of artist success, operated by the company's managers. The capacity to understand success, could be also crucial to improve the personal professionals skills of the author, under the reflexive approach, in his double role of both researcher and practitioner.

This study contributes to the literature offering an operative management insight into different themes such as artist/manager relationship, strategic planning, reflective practice, success and artist management processes related to artist success.

Success, through the analysis of this specific case, has been considered as the result of a two stages artist management process. These two stages could be defined as “self-management” and “total management”. The first stage has been observed to occur within the autonomous experience of the artist, during his “self-management” phase. This phase has been found to include three elements that need to happen consequently in order to contribute to the artist success: the creation of an artistic identity, the exposure of this identity to the audience and the occurrence of an initial visibility.

Then the author observed how, as soon as an artist manager at Spaceship recognizes that both the elements of creation of the identity and exposure have generated a first level of visibility, they are ready to take in serious consideration to start working with an artist, permitting the shift from “self” to “total management”.

During the total management stage, a process of value adding has been observed to take place. A Spaceship's manager, as soon as the relationship is established and the targets have been defined with the artist, could start to implement the strategy plan agreed, engaging the best team possible in order to guarantee a constant effectiveness of the delivery of the artistic product into the market.

This study contributes to increase the stock of relevant and practical management knowledge within a specific case.

Key words: *Artist management, success, reflective practice, reflexivity, experiential learning*

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the artist management processes related to the concept of success/failure in the current music industry through the study of a particular company.

As reported by Anderton et al. (2013:4) “*the study of the music industry is not a uniform endeavor*”. They state: “*many different approaches lead to a variety of understandings; including their economic and cultural impact and their effect on the lives of those who work in and interact with it*”. These approaches, they continue, can occur at a “*macro level*”, in which researchers examine the economic impacts and practices of the music businesses “*as a whole and their inter-relationships with other businesses*”. They can also happen at a “*micro level*” where “*they center on the activities of individual businesses or, indeed, individuals*” (Anderton et al. 2013:4). According to this view, this research aims to investigate the “*micro level*” of the artist management function in the music industry that, as this research will show further, could be considered one of the key job positions related to artist success/failure.

The current study is then an in-depth case study research conducted, through participant observation and semi structured interviews, within Spaceship Management, a well-established artist management company in the field of electro/pop music genre in Europe. In particular this research examines the artist management processes operated by Spaceship’s managers related to the development of electro/pop artists. This study defines electro/pop artists as musicians who aspire to pop success through the use of electronic instruments to create their musical products. Pop music is a term used in this research to explain “*the commodification of music*” as a process that is driven by the need to maximize profit, and reward commercial enterprise (Frith, 2001).

Electro/pop dance music (EPDM) is considered by this research as an umbrella term (McLeod, 2001) to label those dance-oriented musical genres heavily influenced by advances in new computing technology (Reynolds, 1999) created for clubs and music

festivals with the intention of being danceable but also suitable for radio airplay.

According to Venrooij (2014) the historical origin of electronic dance music could be located in the mid-80s after the commercial decline of disco¹, when dance music moved back into the “underground” clubs of major US cities, earlier in Chicago and later in Detroit developing respectively in the genres of House² and Techno³. As stated by Conner (2015:159), from that period to now days, electronic dance music transformed from *being a marginalized, even deviant, music-based subculture to the multi-billion dollar cultural industry that it is today*”.

In order to provide some context, electronic dance music events such as The Electric Daisy Carnival, one of the biggest music festivals in the world, generated \$207 million in taxable revenue, and created 618 full-time equivalent jobs in 2012 (Conner, 2015). In USA, electronic dance music promotion conglomerates such as SFX Entertainment have become large-scale multifaceted corporations. In late 2013, SFX became a publicly traded company, went public at \$13 a share and was valued at more than \$1 billion in October 2013.⁴

As reported by Conner (2015) electro/pop dance artists such as Adam Richards Wild, known as Dj Calvin Harris, are also producing songs alongside major pop-stars. Harris’s collaboration on the song “We Found Love,” with the pop singer Rihanna, became the longest running number one single of 2011.

David Guetta’s collaboration with the pop group Black Eyed Peas is another significant example of electro/pop dance music. Together they created the song, “I Gotta Feeling,” which became the best-selling song in iTunes history in 2009. Even Madonna stepped in the current electronic/dance music world, with her 2012 album called MDNA, which features two tracks produced, by the Dj Benny Benassi, an artist managed by Spaceship Management. It is exactly in this context that the current research takes place.

The research approach used is qualitative. The main tool of data gathering is the semi-

¹ For further analysis about disco music see Brewster, (2014), Echols, (2010) Hanson, K. (1978) and Shapiro, P. (2006).

² For further analysis about house music see Saunders, J., & Cummins, J. (2007) and Hook (2009)

³ For further analysis about techno music see Sicko, D. (2010) and Thornton, S. (1996)

⁴ For further info about SFX see Forbe’s article at the following link <http://goo.gl/JLAvCJ>

structured interview. The study aims to investigate the concept of success in the current music market by combining an academic approach with the reflection of a professional according to the “*virtuous circle of theory and practice*” (Tranfield and Starkey 1998 cited by Sanders et al. 2011). This will provide an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995) of managerial practice, with no aim of generalization. It will increase the stock of relevant and practical management knowledge within a specific case.

Therefore as, it will be highlighted in the next chapter dedicated to the review of the literature, the efforts of the academics related to the matter of investigation, are mainly focused on what does a manager do and not how he does it. A reflective analysis within the case to be studied will show how a specific artist management company operates within its own context contributing to the body of knowledge through the insight practices explored within a specific case.

1.2 Background to the study

As reported by Morrow (2013: 13) “*The methodologies artist managers employ, need to be analysed within specific contexts. The distinct sections of the music industry in which individual managers operate constitute these contexts*”.

The music industry is a very broad business sector, which includes economic activities ranging from the production, marketing and distribution of recorded music as well as live performances, exploitation of copyright and brand partnerships. The revenue streams have been multiplied in the last decade (IFPI, DMR, 2015) and, the operations of artist management related to success have been to deal with constant professional updates related to an uncertainty and unpredictability of the market.

According to the International Federation of The Phonographic Industry (IFPI) in its last report called “Recording Industry in Numbers” (IFPI, 2014) over the last fifteen years, the digital domain and the widespread growth of the net have revolutionised the way to enjoy music. As emerges from the review of the most recent “Digital Music Reports”⁵, previously the radio, the records and the specific places dedicated to the music were the principal means of listening to it; now the Internet, mobile phones and

⁵ The author refers to the Digital Music Reports published annually by the IFPI. In particular have been reviewed all the reports from 2008 until 2014. The reports are available at http://www.ifpi.org/content/section_resources/dmrarchive.html

the continuously expanding use of new media have radically changed consumer's habits. Mark Piibe (Sony Music) says: (IFPI, DMR 2014:7) *"the record industry is more open to new models now than it has ever been."*

If on one hand it is still true that the presence of an artist on the charts, according to the position and the type of chart, can describe the level of his/her success in a given moment, on the other hand, it's not always true that if an artist is not on the charts it signifies that he/she cannot be defined as "successful" (Leonhard, 2008). Internet has in fact become one of the most important means for the circulation of music as witnessed by the growing use of web-radios, specific social networks, and music platforms. As IFPI states (DMR, 2014:7) *"The consumer is driving the digital music revolution. Consumers worldwide are embracing digital media, using new devices and changing the way they access entertainment. In response, record companies have reinvented the way they do business, innovating with business models and licensing a wide range of services."*

1.3 Significance of the study

In the light of the continuous changes that the music industry is currently facing, a study which combines an in depth case study analysis of the concept of success from artist manager's point of view, could help other practitioners to better read the market they are involved in. The case study analysed is illustrative so the ultimate aim will be not generalization but an in depth analysis of the management processes of a particular company involved in the business of artist management who works with some of the most popular artists active in the electro/pop music genre. This study aims to contribute to the literature on success in music offering an operative management insight of the processes that govern a professional active in this sector. In particular, what will be explored, are the processes applied in the specific context of artist development by the company's managers.

The activity of management in the field of music could be defined as the process of the identification of a potential artistic value and of creating the conditions necessary to ensure that the value identified can settle and grow within the market (Morrow, 2006). The study will investigate how a manager within the case, could be able to identify and eventually develop that value. The means and processes applied by

Spaceship managers will be also explored and researched.

The study aims furthermore to investigate how a manager sees the creativity or the creative product of a given artist as a chance for economic exploitation and how he creates the best conditions to develop it on a long-term perspective. The connection between artist expectations and manager's strategy could possibly lead to success.

1.4 Success

What this study is also exploring is the concept of artist success in music within the case study. The meaning of success could be explored at least from two different points of view in relation with management processes. Success may include the tracking of quantitative factors like size of the market segment in which the artist operates, the number of records previously sold, his/her capacity to sell in the future, number of shows already done and possibility to expand further the live concert activity factors that could be taken in account as quantitative data. Success can also have a qualitative component related to the personal inner sphere of the artist which embraces a complex combination of factors. In particular, in music, this may involve other factors such as: perseverance despite adversity, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, the ability to take risks, the ability to self-promote, support or obstruction of parents and social surroundings, the self-confidence, public relations skills, technical skills, the knowledge of the music business, personal motivation and "charisma" (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005:343). This study argues that both aspects need to be taken in account, evaluating the characteristics of the artist he/her works with. Both points of view will be examined in order to explore how the case study relates to them.

1.5 Strategy

What this research is also aiming to explore is the concept of strategy as one of the key processes for an artist manager in order to achieve artist's success. According to Mockler (1995:3) "*the general strategic management processes are complex and their knowledge is very limited*". Many authors have taken into account the topic of strategy related to business environments as small businesses, companies or corporations. Very little effort has been dedicated to strategic management processes

related to artist management profession in the music industry, in particular in the field of electro/pop music, the one this study is aiming to explore. This study aims to contribute giving an insight point of view of a professional working day by day in order to improve artists' careers.

1.6 Identity

This study shares Morrow's research (2006:58) arguing that the concepts of brand and identity are fundamental to a study of artist management processes. The current study thus argues that artist's success could be achieved only when audience will embrace artist identity. This research argues that artists' identity, which can be basically composed by the name, the type of music and how these elements help to communicate the whole musical project to the audience, could be considered a brand. How this brand needs to be exploited and developed into the market could be argued to be an essential part of managerial operations related to artist management. Artists' identity helps to create demand for a product by using social media that could be re-conducted to management operations set up by artist themselves, by managers or by professional companies. These methods, that will be investigated through the data gathering and reflected during the analysis, communicate the product to the public/audience and make the product attractive to potential audience members/customers.

1.7 Reflective Practice

The capacity to understand success from an artist management perspective could help to improve the personal professional skills of the author under the reflective approach framework applied to the business practice in his double role of both researcher and practitioner.

The reflective approach in research can be understood as an advanced form of business modelling (business model design)⁶ integrated into a broader business strategy. In particular, conducting the daily work, reflecting on it and optimizing the processes of professional development it is often possible to create new development

⁶ According to Osterwalder et. al. (2010) a business model describes the rationale of how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value.

strategies useful to improve the company workflow. This research in fact could be useful for the researcher in order to improve his own effectiveness as a professional reflecting on his daily activity in connection with the purposes of this study.

The current research then argues that the reflexive approach is vital to daily improve the management skills and helps to refine and better understand the management operations in order to achieve artist's success.

1.8 Research process and research questions

The research phases of the current study could be summed up as follows:

- a) Entering in the social environment as a reflective practitioner (Schon, 1987)
- b) Generation of the research purpose
- c) Review of the relevant literature
- d) Generation of the areas that could be considered as key for data gathering
- e) Data gathering within the case study according to the key areas generated through the review of the literature
- f) Data analysis
- g) Conclusion and results

The macro areas that emerged following the work on the literature review and that will be investigated within the case of study are:

- 1) Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist
- 2) Artist management processes and how these are described and operated in practice
- 3) Relationship between artist and manager, how it is build and maintained
- 4) Music industry context and how a manager copes with its continuous changes
- 5) Strategy and how a manager relates to this concept in his daily working activity
- 6) Reflection and reflective practice and how managers implement their knowledge through reflection.
- 7) Success/Failure in music and how a manager, an artist and other music industry professional see this concepts in relation with artist manager profession

These are general key areas that helped then to generate the data gathering. What emerges from these areas of investigation is a set of practices and theoretical insights which are important to map out the process of thought involving different parties including the author of the current study. The data gathering will help to explore and expand or contrast the arguments highlighted in the literature review chapter as previously mentioned.

In particular the data analysis chapter will reflect on the following questions

- How does an artist manager define artist management processes?
- How does an artist manager decide to work with a specific artist?
- How does an artist manager get in touch with an artist?
- How does the personality of a manager affect his/her work?
- How does an artist manager define a strategic process?
- How do an artist manager and artist define the concept of success? How does an artist or a music industry executive define it?
- How does an artist manager operate in relation to the concept of artist success in practice?

1.9 Research approach/method

The overall approach is qualitative. The research takes the form of a case study. Data are collected in the participant's setting and the central role of the researcher is to make interpretation of the meaning of data in their broader social and historical context (Creswell, 2013:4). The author is in a unique position of being both an artist manager and a researcher and can provide an in depth insight of how the artist managers of the company operate in their daily activity through the tools of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with managers, artists and professionals involved in the company's network. The main aim of the current investigation is to pursue an understanding of the reality in which the author of the study works and lives. This study starts from an individual interest of the author in the artist management processes related to concept of success in music. The interpretations of the data collected will be generated by the past experience of the

researcher and also by his world-view. This study entails ontological assumptions that see social reality as socially constructed by social actors, where there is no single reality but multiple and changing social realities (Ong, 2010). Ontologically the researcher shares Blaikie's (2000:116) assumptions regarding "*social scientific knowledge*" as being derived from "*everyday concepts and meanings, from socially constructed mutual knowledge*". The role of the researcher is then to observe the reality, reflect on it and finally interpret it. The researcher, who has a double role of both practitioner researcher, has decided to commence an in depth study of his working environment, to eventually gain a more conscious approach to his profession reflecting, during the research process, on the dynamics related to artist management. This research can be framed as intrinsic case study, according to Stake's (1995:136) definition. In Stake's work (1995) the intrinsic case study is one undertaken to better understand a particular case. Its primary aim, he says (1995:237), *it's not to be generalised and extended to other cases but it represents the interest in the case itself*. The whole research process could be considered abductive (Alvesson and Skoldberg (2010:4). Abduction could be then considered in this research as an iterative process that stems from a real practice situation that has been chosen to be investigated without aiming to generalization. A preliminary phase of observations led to the review of the literature, which generated seven macro-areas that constitutes a general overarching pattern to be compared with case study. This process differs from deduction because theory is not clearly defined at the beginning of the study and there are no assumptions to test. It differs also from induction because it doesn't starts from data. There is a general initial pattern of macro-areas emerged from the review of the literature that will be refined, adjusted, compared and contrasted with the data gathered.

The semi-structured interviews have been administered to three different samples:

1) Artist managers:

Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti

2) Artist managed from those managers

The Bloody Beetroots and Crookers

3) Music industry professionals that work on a daily basis with both those managers and their artists

President of a Major Label 1 (PML1), President of a Major Label 2 (PML2)

Participant observation within the case is also integrated with direct observations happening in specific other contexts as concerts and festivals, industry meetings, recording sessions, travels and ordinary office life. These multiple contexts, led to include in the reflexive diary attached to this study, also short conversations with colleagues, artists and professionals from related sectors.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has been structured in four main chapters. Chapter one is the current chapter and it is related to the introduction of the main themes that will be discussed during the whole study. The second chapter pertains to the review of the literature and it will introduce a critical selection of relevant articles and books in order to define the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter three is dedicated to the methodology of research, chapter four analyzes the data gathered by the author in the field and chapter five will reflect on the conclusions related to the research process.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The current section will present the theoretical framework of this study in order to discuss the research already done on the subject of discourse. A general overview of the concepts of art and art management will be explored so as to introduce a selection of the most important literature on artist management in music. The artist manager is seen by the author, as an intermediary able to convert creativity into a product with economic value to be exploited in the market. The review of the literature will also explore a selection of studies regarding success and success in music.

The profession of artist management will be considered from a business point of view. The concept of strategy and reflective practice will be examined in connection with the profession of artist manager and his capacity to learn from the field. The theoretical approach will be therefore multidisciplinary. Concepts from cultural and business studies will be combined.

The following sections will introduce the concepts that constitute the theoretical framework of this research. The review of the literature will start from the macro concept of the relationship between art in general, the concept of management of creativity and its implications that take in account the contrast between creative products and their exploitation into the market. The text will then review the most relevant writings about the profession of the artist manager, which will be connected with the concepts of strategy, reflective practice and success in music through appropriate resources.

The main topics researched through the literature that also correspond to the seven sections that constitutes this chapter are the following:

- 1_ Relationship between art and management
- 2_ Creativity vs Commerce
- 3_ Artist management operations
- 4_ Contemporary music context

5_ Strategic Management

6_ Reflective practice

7_ Success/Failure in music

Accordingly the next section will introduce a reflection made through the review of a selection of literature concerning the relationship between art and management.

2.2 Relationship between art and management

As reported by Chong (2010:5), the opening paragraph of the International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration, written by Dan Martin (in Shafritz, 1998:128) offers an inspiring definition of arts management as: *“The application of the five traditional management functions – planning, organizing, staffing, supervising, and controlling – to the facilitation of the production of arts and the presentation of the artists’ work to audiences”*. Megan Matthews (2006) cited by Chong (2010) articulates an understanding of the same definition that helps to further deepen the concept: *“Arts management, she says, allows people to combine business, artistic and organizational skills with activities that make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities. Arts management is the facilitation and organization of arts and cultural activity. The arts manager is a person working in the field of arts management; a person who, on some level, enables art to happen. Simply put, arts managers bring art and audiences together”*.

These definitions highlight the main characteristics of arts management from the perspective of the production of the cultural product. If the creation of the art product is related to the artist, the manager could be considered the intermediary that helps to connect the creation with a potential audience, setting up the best strategic practices and processes in order to maximize the impact that it could have towards the public’s reception. This observation opens up the discourse about the connection between art, and the audience. The main aim of this research is to add to the body of knowledge about this process, by providing an insight from a professional artist manager, reflecting on his activity as a practitioner, and giving a reflective account of the processes related to the concept of success related to the case of study. This study is therefore based on the concept, mentioned above and further explored in the text, that success could depend on the relationship between art and its reception by the audience

and; particularly on the processes that stay between the creation of the artistic product and its delivery into the market operated by artist managers. The author will therefore offer a reflective account of how an artist management company specialized in the field of electro/pop music, operates in order to create/achieve success (a concept that will be further explored) connecting art (Music) and audience (Market) in its specific field of work.

Chong (2010:8) reports that most people involved professionally in the arts industry, talking about “*arts management*”, primarily refer to the “*purely administrative functions of art administrations not the management practices involved in producing the artistic work*”.

Shafritz (1998:129) identifies five management departments: “*strategic planning, finance management, fundraising, marketing, and facility or physical plant management*” that could be considered as the tools to support the delivery to the market of the art product the company is involved in”.

Arts management profession involves many aspects related to administrative, planning and strategic tasks but it can't be reduced to a purely administrative function. In particular Negus' work (2013), on the music industry, showed the importance to extend the range of the research to the wider sociological and cultural influences when studying operations that encompass professionals involved in art management. This research shares Negus' perspective which sees professionals involved in the industries not “*as a mechanical component of an assembly line, which filter and treat products on the basis of organizational conventions and commercial logic*” (Negus, 1992: VII) but as professionals who can add value to the processes as well as subtract it, determining both success or failure. This research aims to explore the management practices applied from artist managers in order to create, develop and monetize artist's careers in a long-term perspective, creating a solid bridge between creative products and their potential audience. As argued by Van de Kamp (2009), the work of Negus (1992) explores the informal world that outlines the production of cultural products; “*the less orderly organizational life within the companies and the many human mediations that come in between the corporate structures and the practices and sound of musicians*” (Negus, 1999: 16). As reported by Van de Kamp (2009), therefore, he (Negus, 1999) investigates how “*ideas, values and practices*” of people working in the cultural industries “*direct their work and emphasizes the role of*

intermediaries within corporations". Negus focuses on processes in the music industry⁷. His research approach, in particular the one adopted in his book titled "Music Genres and corporate culture"(1999) is shared by the current research. He (Negus, 1999) examines the recording industry as a researcher from the inside, revealing how the music industry's executives relate to artists, examining their processes and addressing the investigation to a wide framework which includes also cultural and sociological aspects. Therefore, through the case study conducted within Spaceship Management, this research aims to explore the managerial practices and processes and way of thinking of a company, which works actively in the music artist management market. As it will shortly be analyzed in the following sections, artist managers could be seen as an intermediary between the artists and the audience with the aim to build, sustain and exploit the artists' careers into the market through management practices and strategic operations. This study shares also Matthews' (2006) view of the arts manager as someone who "*enables art to happen*"; in particular the current research, argues that a musical product exists as soon as it is created by the artist but it really happens to exist as soon as it meets an audience. Mintzberg (2004: 10), cited by Chong (2010) considers management as a practice, in particular he says (2004:11) "*There is no one best way to manage; it depends on the situation*". In doing so, Mintzberg (2004: 11) is advancing an "*experience-based style labeled engaging – quiet and connected, involving and inspiring*". What this study is also aiming to explore, is the context in which artist managers examined within the case study work and how they improve their learning from their experience in the field. Before introducing the most important literature regarding the profession of artist management, the current study, will explore the works of the main authors regarding the concept of cultural industries and their exploitation into the market in order to further expand the theoretical framework.

⁷ For further analysis on the structure of the recording industry, see Burnett (1996), Negus (1999), Hull (2000) and Tschmuck (2002).

2.3 Creativity vs Commerce

The relationship between creativity and commerce is a recurring theme, which has been studied by cultural economic and cultural sociological theories⁸. The main aim of this study, is to explore the artist management practices operated by managers active in the music industry in the field of electro/pop music and how these processes are related to the concept of artists' success/failure. The artist manager can be seen as a medium that aims to convert art/culture into something that has an economic value into the market. Even if the current study is more focused to approach the management practices from a business angle, the overall approach will be multidisciplinary. For this reason, in this section, it will be briefly explored a selection of relevant literature regarding the concept of cultural industries in order to complete the framework. Cultural Industry is a term coined by two German sociologists working in the US, Adorno and Horkheimer, who, in their book *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in 1944, criticised the contemporary forms of popular art. As reported by Van De Kamp (2009), their critique, born in the United States during a period of mass production of cultural goods, enabled by the development of new technologies applied to the recording industry, which made "*pop culture*" products becoming more accessible to the audience instead of traditional art. Their (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944) main criticism of the new production system and of the new model of production of cultural products, was the increasing commodification of culture. Culture is seen by the authors, not as a result of human creativity, but a result of calculation and procedures that alter the creative process; as a thing that could be bought and sold (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). As reported by Van De Kamp (2009) they (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944) coined the term "*the culture industry*" to label these new industries. The innovative combination of the words "*culture*" and "*industry*" was as a "*concept intended to shock*" (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 24). Their study, had thus a clear and significant impact between the academics involved in sociological and cultural studies, even if they only criticised the shift occurring in the industry, without approaching in any way a discourse about opportunities that this new paradigm could offer. As argued by Van De Kamp (2009) the development of the cultural industries over time, showed that the criticism by Adorno and Horkheimer on the culture industry "*did not hold*" and, citing Rutten (2000: 8), that new and creative products did occur in the industry that created popular culture. Adorno and Horkheimer's term and study were therefore used as departure point but were criticised and altered in new studies. As argued by Hesmondhalgh (2012) in the 1970s, French sociologists (Huet et al., 1978, Edgar, 1962, Miège and Garnham, 1979) modified the term "*the culture industry*" to its plural form, in order to highlight that cultural production is not a unitary concept but has many faces. The plural form, in fact, implies a unified concept which embraces all the different forms of

⁸ See Negus (1992), Thornton (1995) and Tschmuck (2012)

culture-related products “*that coexist in the modern life and obey to the same logic*” (Hesmondhalgh, 2012). As reported by Van de Kamp (2009) Segers and Huijgh’s (2006) outline of the progression of the concept, reporting that the term has been assumed by the American academics involved in sociological, labor, cultural, political and economic studies. Cultural industries imply the relationship between two concepts that this study is exploring: culture and business. An artist manager could be thus considered as a mediator who pushes artist’s cultural assets (music and image) into the market. Van De Kamp (2009) citing Lampel, Shamsie & Lant (2006) reports that it is hard to detect a “*good combination of the two domains of culture and industry*” in order to find a definition of the cultural industries. Lampel, Shamsie & Lant (2006), as she reported, state that definitions “*either stress the distinctive features of cultural products or the industry system of production, distribution and marketing. A good definition would include both and would balance the two*”. A possible definition of Cultural Industries could be researched analyzing the differences they have from other industries. They in fact differ from other industries because they produce cultural products. As reported by Van de Kamp (2009), studies by cultural economists and strategic management researchers (e.g. Lampel, Shamsie & Lant, 2006) mainly emphasise on the rationalised organisation of the production, distribution and marketing activities of the industries while sociologists (e.g. Wynne, 1992; O’Connor, 2000) pay more attention to the products and their consumption. This research is setting itself in the middle of these two approaches aiming to describe specific management practices within a particular context trying to give a dimension to them that could take account of both aspects.

As stated above, the current study approaches the subject of artist management from multiple angles. The current section reviewed a selection of literature in order to introduce and expand the theoretical framework including the perspective of cultural economy. This research aims to contribute to the literature related to artist management practices using a multidisciplinary approach, through a progressive analysis which starts from macro concepts as “*arts and management*” and “*culture versus Industry*” as just reviewed in the previous sections and proceeding at more detailed level, in the following sections. The next paragraph will then explore the most relevant literature about artist management relating to its operational processes and practices.

2.4 Artist management operations

“The best managers, just like the best business executives, are planners. They are also catalysts that make things happen; movers, motivators, and communicators who work with record companies, producers, agents, promoters, publicists, and anyone else with a stake in the artist's career. The objective is simple: To make sure everyone pulls together with effectiveness and enthusiasm to make the artist shine” (Frascogna and Hetherington,1997:8).

This definition is really inspiring and it is totally shared by the current study. It also opens up the discourse to a number of professionals involved in the activity of the artist manager that need to be explored through the most relevant definitions found in literature in order to complete the context in which an artist manager operates. The current study will use the definitions included in the extensive work of Richard Strasser called “Music Business, key concepts” (2009) which defines deeply all the main concepts related to the music industry, in alphabetical order. The following definitions are extracted from his cited work.

Major record company: *“They control all the aspects of record manufacturing including the production, the distribution, and sale of recorded music. Another feature that most major record labels possess is that they are part of multinational conglomerates. A conglomerate is a company that owns a large number of divisions”*. According to IFPI (2014) the Major record companies are currently three. Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Group.

Independent record company: *“An autonomous record label that functions without the direct funding of a major record label”*

Producer: *“A person who is involved in the creation of a musical recording, often based on their artistic vision. This person has multiple functions during a recording session that culminates in the production of a recording. These functions include the overall control of a recording session; the organization and scheduling of resources based on specified budgets; the supervision of recording, mixing, and mastering of the recording session; and the training, arrangement, and guidance of musicians and singers during the recording”*

Agent: *“Agents act as an intermediary between managers and promoters or venue operators. For the procurement of employment, agents are compensated via commissions that range between ten and twenty percent of an artist's gross payment”*

Promoter: *“Individuals or companies responsible for the organization and management of live performances. Promoters, also known as concert or tour promoters and/or talent buyers, will organize a range of live performances, from special event performances to international concert*

tours”

Publicist/Pr: *“Public relations, through the direct management of communication, seeks to create and maintain a positive image of a product (tangible or intangible) or a concept or a service for its targeted audience. To achieve this goal PR individuals and companies use a variety of techniques and media, which range from press releases and press kits to the use of wire services and the Internet”.*

Publisher: *“A publisher is who takes care of the marketing, sale, and administration of music copyrights and catalogs”*

These general definitions help to give to the reader the basic notions related to the main stakeholders involved in the artist management activity (Frascongnna and Hetherington, 1997). All these notions will be deepened during the data analysis chapter of the current study. Many definitions of artist management in music have been explored in literature under an operational perspective, mainly describing “what” an artist manager does. Arts management, as previously stated, could be researched from many different angles. This study offers a multidisciplinary approach but restricted to the literature regarding business, organisational and cultural studies. Watson (2002) as reported by Morrow (2013:12) offers the following definition of artist management: *“A manager is a person who earns a living from helping artists build and maximise their musical careers”*, while Woodruff (2002:1) cited in Morrow (2003:12) states: *“A manager's job is to create the perception that the band/artist is successful”*. Rogan (1988:382) claims that the mythical “*perfect*” artist manager lies somewhere between the hard businessperson, the medical doctor and the dedicated schoolteacher. These three definitions combine the basics characteristics that could describe what an artist manager is in the current music market. Arguably an artist manager could be defined as businessperson who translates artist talent into economic value through the market, in order to eventually gain a share of that value. An important factor of the “*economic value*”, beyond of course the creative product, is the “*perception*” he, along with the artist, will be able to create. Managers thus, may need to create, nurture and maintain a perception of how his/her artist is seen by the market in order to monetize that perception. This concept will be soon explored in connection with the section dedicated to the marketing aspects of artist management. Morrow (2013:13) affirms: *“no manager can be fully understood out of the context in which he/she and their artist(s) operate”*. Watson (2002) notes that to understand a manager you have to first understand the artist they are managing. Accordingly, the context could help to define also the level of the business environment in which both artist and manager operate. In particular the relationship with some of the key stake-holders (record labels or agents) could help to define the

level on a geographical scale. It could depend on the typology of the record deal (an artist could be signed by a record label that will exploit his/her music at a local level only or by a multinational that could do it worldwide) the number of records sold in the previous releases if any and their geographical spread, the number of shows per year and their geo-localization, the brand partnership deals (typology and market share of the company with the partnership has been set), the size of the fan base and the types of media interested in the project. The level of the manager could be defined accordingly. Therefore an artist manager's behavior is somewhat dictated by the decision-making process set with the artist they manage. As stated by Morrow (2013:13) "*the dynamics between the artist and the manager should form the basis of any study of artist management; the managerial role is intricately connected to the artists and their work*". The interpersonal relationship is therefore fundamental. Managers represents their artists in many business relationships with stakeholders and also have the central role to advise artists in making choices related to macro-strategy on the long term and on a day by day basis. Frascogna and Hetherington (1997: 34) assert that "*more than any other person, the artist manager is the most influential force behind an artist's career*". His or her efforts are often critical to the artist's ultimate level of success or failure. It could be argued that mutual trust should constitute the base of the relationship of representation. In particular artists often, especially at the very beginning of their careers, don't know anything of how the industry mechanism works. A good advisor could then be vital to their project (as well as detrimental). These aspects will be deepened during the data gathering and analysis phases of the current study. Frascogna and Hetherington (1997:17) define three types of artist managers: "*Self-manager, Limited manager and total manager*". "*Self-management*" simply means that the artist will manage his or her own career rather than retain the services of a separate individual or firm. "*Limited management*" is an approach that involves the retention of a person other than the artist to provide specific managerial services (while the artist performs all functions not delegated to this individual). "*Total management*" involves an individual or management firm being completely involved in the creative and business development needed to maintain an artist's career. (Frascogna and Hetherington, 1997: 19). This classification, that will be a matter for reflection during the data analysis, could be read along with the stage of development of an artist career. For example self-management could occur at the very beginning of the career when, after the self-exposure to the audience of the cultural product, the artist starts to receive the first positive feedback. limited and total management could be included in the process just after that phase in order to maximize and exploit that first positive feedback. The current study will shortly return to the exploration of this concept related to the exposure process of the artist to the market. As stated by Morrow (2013) a framework of best practice for artist management is challenging because the various ways in which

managers operate are not only dependent on the individual manager's personality. The methodologies that artist managers employ need to be analysed within specific contexts. The various contexts in which an artist manager operates will be analysed and reflected in connection with data analysis.

This study aims to investigate artist management in music in order to describe the management processes used by a well-established artist management company in the field of electro/pop in Europe. In particular, what will be explored, are the methodologies applied in the specific context of artist development by the company's managers. According to what emerged so far from the review of the literature, the activity of management in the field of music could be then defined as the process of the identification of a potential value (artist / creativity) and of creating the conditions necessary to ensure that the value identified can settle and grow within the market. The study will investigate how a manager within the case, could be able to identify and eventually develop that value. The study aims furthermore to investigate how a manager sees the creativity or the creative product of a given artist as a chance for economic exploitation and how he creates the best conditions to develop it in a long-term perspective. The connection between artist expectations and manager's strategy could possibly lead to success. What this study is also exploring is the concept of artist success in music within the case of study. This concept will be further elaborated in section 2.8 of the current chapter and will be then compared with the data in chapter three of the current study during the analysis of the data gathered

Frascogna and Hetherington (1997), make a parallel between companies and artists saying that an artist could be considered as a "*corporation*" and an artist manager as the "CEO" of the corporation. Chong (2010) citing (Hoving, 1992) reports that: "*a leading arts manager is characterized by the contemporary balance of skills and competencies as scholar, aesthete, and connoisseur on the one hand; fundraiser, publicist, and diplomat on the other*". Chong (2010) shares Frascogna and Hetherington (2004) point of view saying that: "*greater attention is being accorded by arts organizations to individuals who can clarify achievable overall missions and goals and practical targets, resolve conflicts and ... and manage business information flows as they get more complex. This is largely consistent with the accepted roles of corporate CEOs, as identified by the Harvard Business School: an organizational leader is responsible for planned results*".

One of the fundamental key aspects of the relationship between artists and their managers, that will be extensively analyzed in the data analysis chapter, is the set of certain goals that the interaction between the two, along with the rest of team, aims to reach in the long and short term. From the interaction between manager and artist, a process of value creation with innovative features takes

place. A manager with expertise gained in the market in which he/she operates and thanks to his/her professional skills and experience, is able to identify and develop his/her potentials, inherent in the creative product created by the artist. The union then, between management strategy and artistic product can lead an artist to success or failure; for example how well received is the product by the market. Problems could arise over time as the game changes. All these aspects will be deeply analyzed by the author of the current research reflecting on the data collected on the field. Artist management strategies are relative to the historical and commercial context of the music industry in which they are located; so to better understand managerial practices, the current study will analyse the current music industry context in order to further extend the framework of the concept of success/failure of an artist related to management operations. The next section describes through specific literature, the contemporary music industry context. This is a key unit of this literature review chapter, in order to expand then, through the next sections, the concepts of strategy, success/failure and reflective practice, that complete the theoretical framework of the study.

2.5 Contemporary music context

As reported by Morrow (2013: 13), *“The methodologies artist managers employ, need to be analysed within specific contexts. The distinct sections of the music industry in which individual managers operate constitute these contexts”*.

The music industry is a very broad business sector, which includes economic activities ranging from the production, marketing and distribution of recorded music as well as live performances, exploitation of copyright and brand partnership (IFPI, 2014). The revenue streams, have been multiplied in the last decade and, the operations of an artist management related to success, have been to deal with constant updates related to an uncertain market. The digital transformation has had a dramatic impact on many aspects of the music industry (IFPI, 2014). One of the main effects could be found on how artists' success should be judged. Before the advent of the world wide web, success has been commercially considered in connection with the sales figures and positions occupied in the airplay radio charts (Hughes et. al., 2013). However, over the last decade, the music industry supply chain have changed considerably and such indicators have become not complete in order to give a picture of what success is. As argued by Morrow (2013) this substantial shift has forced artists and other industry professionals, especially artists managers, to reconsider how they can create sustainable careers transforming the concept of what can be considered a successful artist. Wilkinstron and Tschmuck (2013:6) reported that in the current music industry scenario *“the management role has become more important than ever and therefore the manager-artist-*

relationship is crucial for success”.

As reported by Geoff Taylor CEO of the British Phonographic Industry: “Looking back over the past ten years, from when the iPod⁹ was still a new device for consumers, the speed of innovation has been dizzying.” He says: “In that decade we have seen the entry of iTunes, Amazon MP3¹⁰, 7digital, YouTube¹¹, Spotify, Deezer, Rdio, Vevo, Xbox Music, Google Play and more – not to mention the arrival of Facebook, Twitter, smartphones, tablets, mass broadband, 3G and 4G mobile connections” (BPI - Digital Music Report 2013). If before the digital shift, it was essential to deal with gatekeepers like labels who held the monopoly of promotions and distribution of the musical products, now, the Internet and the digital technology offer to artists new ways to expose their identity to their potential audience. In the “pre-web” era as Graham (2005:351) explains: “the artists are the content providers, contracted by record companies to record material that is either their own or provided for them by writers”. In this model, as he continues: “The power and control of the supply chain¹² is very much in the hands of the record company which has ownership of the major item of value in the chain, which are exclusive rights to the artist’s content” (Hardaker and Graham, 200:133). On the supply chain side, digital music revolution has, at least, two distinct effects on music labels and artists. As argued by Waelbroeck (2013) for producers and artists, both marginal and fixed costs of production of digital music have decreased with new affordable home recording studios, as well as online storage and cloud services. Secondly, as explained by Tilson et. Al (2013) “some artists, particularly less established ones, viewed it as a way of reaching a larger audience or a means of promotion”. The market of social media is moving very fast and there are constantly new possibilities offered to the artists to spread their visibility and share their creative contents on-line. In particular, especially at the beginning of the career, where a musical identity has been created and it’s ready to be exposed to the market, the Internet offers great chances of costless promotion. This reconnects to the concept of self management found in Frascogna and Hetherington (2004) and previously discussed. As reported by Morrow (2013), for artists in their early phase of exposure, more career benchmarks including being discovered by the recording label’s Artists and Repertoire personnel (A&R), being signed, and having a network of industry figures are therefore not necessarily features of a successful music career. While it is true that, at an early stage of his/her career as an artist, it can be helpful to use the technology available to expose the identity, it is also

⁹ Portable Digital music playe <http://support.apple.com/kb/SP15>, for more info please visit <http://www.apple.com/pr/products/ipodhistory/>

¹⁰ For more info about Amazon please visit <http://www.amazon.com/Careers-Homepage/b?ie=UTF8&node=239364011>

¹¹ Form more info about Youtube please visit http://www.youtube.com/t/about_youtube

¹² Mentzer et. al (2001) citing La Londe and Masters (1994) define supply chain as “a set of firms that pass materials forward”. He argues that “Normally, several independent firms are involved in manufacturing a product and placing it in the hands of the end user in a supply chain—raw material and component producers, product assemblers, wholesalers, retailer merchants and transportation companies are all members of a supply chain”. Interesting is also the citation of the work of Lambert, Stock, and Ellram (1998) who define “a supply chain as the alignment of firms that brings products or services to market”

true that if there is a response from the market by the audience, it would be essential to create a team to support the later stages. This is exactly where an artist could need a manager in order to develop the artists' identity to the next level and to maximize all the opportunities offered by the market. This is a key concept that the current study will expand through the analysis of data in chapter four. As reported by Hughes et al. (2013) distribution of music and video online, and subsequent metrics of views, downloads, and streams, can be considered as another means of measuring success. Online video, for example, can simultaneously serve as a revenue stream (via YouTube advertising), as way to expose artist identity in order to gain visibility (through creating "viral" videos or by, for example, covering other musicians' works) and for measuring fan engagement (through views). This study considers "engagement", a term that will be further explored in the text, as a key concept to be explored along with the concept of success in the current music industry. The spread of the engagement could define the level of popularity of an artist and as well could be a valid tool for a manager in order to better plan the next moves. All these new opportunities become a new challenge of exploitation and creation of success both for artists and professionals involved in the industry. As reported by Kusek (2010) the record business has never really been good for the vast majority of musicians. Today artists and their managers sit in the middle of a musician enterprise and can make things happen on their own. This is redefining the music business. Technology has shifted the power base from the record labels to the artists and managers—and to the music fans. Performer and patron are meeting again with direct relationships between artists and their fans enabled by technology.

The next section will review the basic concepts of strategic planning through relevant literature in order to further expand the theoretical framework.

2.6 Strategic Planning

This section aims to explore the concept of strategy as one of the key processes for an artist manager in order to achieve artist's success. According to Mockler (1995:3) the general strategic management processes are complex and their knowledge is very limited. Many authors examined the topic of strategy related to business environments as small businesses, companies or corporations. Very little effort instead has been dedicated to strategic management processes related to the artist management profession in the music industry, in particular in the field of electro/pop music, the one this study is aiming to explore. This study aims to contribute giving an insight point of view of a professional working day by day in order to improve artists' careers. As it was previously reported citing Frascogna and Hetherington (1997), an artist could be considered as a

company and his/her manager as the CEO of it. This perspective will help to go further in the discourse. The concept of strategy originally takes place in military environments, where plans were made to take advantage of enemies. As reported by Ansoff (1965:118) the first application of the concept, out of a military context, can be found in Neumann (1944). Levy et al. (2003) consider Neumann (1944) as the first researcher who developed the concept of business strategy. Many studies take in account a review of literature of strategy and key authors have developed a huge body of work about this concept approaching it from different angles. The current study aims to explore the role of strategy, as a management process, related to the concept of success/failure of an artist. As reported by Steptoe-Warren (2011) the aim of strategic management is to ensure survival of the organization in a competitive marketplace. As argued by Grewal and Tansuhaj (2001) the music industry is a constantly changing environment and, as showed in the previous section, the market is full of threats and opportunities that need to be spotted by a manager. Bowman & Asch, as reported by Beech (2003) describe strategy as a process, which stems from the setting of targets and objectives and a phase of monitoring whether these have been met (Bowman and Asch, 1989). Faulkner and Bowman (1995:2) report that strategy on an operative level could be re conducted at the following questions:

- Where should we compete?
- What products should we compete with?
- How will we gain sustainable competitive advantage in these chosen markets?

These are questions that an artist manager constantly poses to himself during his daily activity especially in their more simplified version that could be re-conducted as:

- Where is the artist now?
- Where does he want to go?
- Which is the best way to reach the target?

The author shares the view of Stacey (1993) who stresses on strategy as a dynamic process. As reported by Beech (2003) he highlights a system in which the success of a strategy depends on changing the belief systems that govern how organisations operate (Stacey, 1993:100). Success, he says, flows from innovation rather than from adaptation to the environment. His vision of strategic management includes that, on a long-term perspective, strategy must be “*extraordinary*”, relying on “*contradiction, revolution, self-organization and irrationality*”. As reported by Steptoe-Warren (2011) according to the management approach, strategic thinking involves two distinct thought processes: planning and thinking. Bonn (2005) cited in Warren et al. (2011) give a deeper

understating of the previous statement citing Bonn (2005) who suggests that the “*process orientation*” focuses on “*how strategic thinkers understand and take strategic action in a highly complex, uncertain and competitive environment*” like the music industry (Steptoe-Warren et. al 2011:239). Eisenhardt and Brown, (1998:787) argue that while, traditionally, strategy was about building long-term defensible positions, today strategy should focus on continuous adaptation and improvement and be constantly shifting and evolving in ways that surprise and confound the competition. The music industry, as shown in the previous section, is a constant variable and uncertain business environment, which offers new opportunities to explore, as well as many threats. Operational strategy needs then to operate in a dynamic way. These topics will be explored in connection with the data analysis. Simon (1991) states that managers, when needing to find strategic solutions, face a “*bounded rationality*”, caused by “*imperfect and incomplete information*”. These “*incomplete information*” include the complexity of the context and the problematic situation that needs decision making, the personal capacity to process information, the time-restrictions in which decisions have to be made, the potential problems with other actors included in the decision making process (stake-holders) and of course the competencies each decision maker needs to use during the process. As reported by Steptoe-Warren et. Al (2011) the importance of identifying such competencies was outlined by Hambrick (1989) who argues that “*if we want to explain why organisations do what they do, or, in turn, why they perform the way they do, we must study top managers*”, who represent strategic thinkers and decision makers, and the competencies they have. This is what this study is going to do. The main aim of this research is therefore to study the management operations of a selected sample of artist managers and music industry executives and artists who deal every day with the concept of artist success/failure within the current music industry in order to investigate how they think and act in the field. As reported by Mumford et al. (2000) in its broadest sense, “*competency*” refers to the sum of experiences and knowledge, skills, traits, aspects of self-image or social role, values and attitudes a strategist has acquired during his or her working activity. It is based on past experience in terms of what has been successful and what has not. This was first put forward by Schon (1983) in his seminal work on the reflective practitioner. It is argued that professionals apply formally learned and specialist knowledge to situations and develop repertoires or solutions to difficult problems. The main competence would be reflection where, with every experience, a strategic decision maker would develop their knowledge of what will and what will not work. However, Schon did not provide a model of types of competency required for strategic decision making, but he views reflection as the overarching competency.

The current section covered the theme of strategy highlighting that very few efforts have been

dedicated to strategic management processes related to the artist management profession in the music industry, in particular in the field of electro/pop music. This study aims to contribute giving an insight point of view of a professional working day by day in order to improve artists' careers. The approach that this research is following and that overarches the whole research is reflective. The next section will introduce this concept through a selection of literature.

2.7 Reflective Approach in the business practice

The capacity to understand success from an artist management perspective could help to improve personal professional skills under the reflective approach applied to business practice. Therefore as emerged in the review of the literature previously examined, the effort of academics, is focused on what a manager does and not how he does it. A reflective investigation within the case study will illustrate how a specific artist management company operates within its own context. The reflective approach in research can be understood as an advanced form of business modelling (business model design) integrated into a broader business strategy. In particular, conducting the daily work, reflecting on it and optimizing the processes of professional development it is often possible to create new development strategies useful to improve the company workflow. This research in fact could be useful for the researcher in order to improve his own effectiveness as a professional reflecting on his daily activity in connection with the purposes of this study. Citing Chen (2009), every professional has the ability to self-improve, facilitating, due to professional "discoveries", the company itself, colleagues or possibly the scientific community. The concept of business modelling could also be extended to the concept of "success" and to strategies that a manager needs to apply to the artist's career to obtain "success". The current thinking concerning the role of reflexivity in management research of this study is very much influenced by the work of Argyris (1978) and Schon (1987). They contend that management research cannot be carried out in some intellectual space which is autonomous from the researcher's own context. They develop the notion of epistemic reflexivity, in which the researcher's participatory approach increases awareness of their own intuitive processes. According to Johnson and Duberley (2000) as reported by Cole et. al. (2011), "*Management researchers should be concerned to develop new modes of engagement that allow subjects to pursue interests and objectives which are currently excluded by the dominant management discourses*" The current study needs to explore this further by considering reflexive research in practice using hermeneutics as an example of interpretivist methodology that explicitly recognise that a researcher's own feelings, knowledge and experience have a part to play in the research, and as such, afford the professional researcher from any industry the opportunity to

engage with their research in a critically reflexive way. In carrying out research in this way, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) contend that it is possible for the researcher's knowledge or experience to be greater than that of the individual being studied, and it is possible for the researcher to have a better understanding about the subject individual than the individual has of themselves. This is, they suggest, one of the key principles of the hermeneutic approach (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). The current research then argues that the reflexive approach is vital to daily improve the management skills and helps to refine and better understand the management operations in order to achieve an artist's success. In order to further explore the context and define the theoretical framework the next section will introduce the concept of success/failure in music through a selection of literature, in connection with the artist manager profession.

2.8 Success/Failure

As section 2.5 of the current chapter has explored, the radical changes faced by the industry, following the development of digital technology and the world wide web, have radically changed the mode of production, distribution and consumption of music. In particular, the digital technology has, in a sense, made access to content more accessible; giving the consumer many possibilities of interaction with the musical product. These events have radically changed the traditional business model based on sales of physical products (records). If before the chart's ranking and the number of spectators at concerts could be used as the only means to certify the success of a musician, now, with the proliferation of the possibility of exposure available to an artist, the contours of this scheme are re-described. As reported by Letts (2013) success involves monetary revenues recognition and/or peer appreciation of musical ability. Thus if on one hand, success could be defined as an achievement of goal in terms of record sold, fan base numeric or number of concerts, it could be also related to a more subjective view related to human behavior and belief in one's own ability to create and accomplish something often less tangible. This involves for example also perception of the critic about a live performance or a recording or appreciation of peers involved in the same musical scene. What this study is going to investigate is the concept of success in the current music market so the business/economic meaning of success would be taken in account. The main aim of this study is to research the management processes related to the concept of success of an artist. One of the main processes related to this profession is how a manager chooses an artist. As this study will show in chapter four, an artist manager as reported by Frascogna and Hetherington (1997:17) could work with different artists in different phases of their career development. What this study also aims to investigate in chapter four, through the semi-structured interviews,

participant observation and reflexive analysis, is how management processes also relate to the criteria that determine how a manager decides to work with a specific artist. If on one hand the past results in terms of fan base, concerts sold, records sold and social media popularity, average turnover per year could be a parameter to lead a manager to choose an artist in which he sees potential development in the future based on past results, how does it work when it comes to a totally unknown artist with no past presence and proven results on the market? These arguments will be reflected during the data analysis, examining all these aspects.

The current section will expand further the theoretical framework exploring the concept of success/failure in music, related to the inner sphere of the artist development, through a selection of literature regarding the subject of study. As illustrated by Subotnik & Jarvin (2005), during their artistic development, musicians need, for example, “*analytical skills*” to read music, “*creative abilities*” to interpret it in an innovative and personal way and “*practical skills*” to finally understand to what extent their interpretation will be acknowledged by the public in a positive way or not. The authors (Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005) continue the analysis arguing that the “*abilities*” need to be developed through “*talent*” to become “*competencies*” leading a musician to success. In synthesis, this means that the talent develops abilities (inner sphere individual) which allow everyone to turn them into skills through learning (outer sphere). Subotnik and Jarvin (2005) also identify some critical factors that could be crucial in the process like: “*Knowledge of own strengths and weaknesses*”, “*Self-promotion*”, “*Social Skills*”, “*Self-confidence*”, “*Risk Taking*”, “*Charisma*”, “*Motivation*” and “*Parental Involvement*”. They (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005:343) essentially see success as a sequential process which, in its early stages, is defined as “efficient yet comprehensive development of ability into competence in a domain” then, they say that: “*during the middle stage giftedness becomes associated with precocious achievements of expertise*”. Finally, they view giftedness in adulthood as “*scholarly productivity or artistry*”, “*taking the form of unique contributions to a field or domain*”. Their study continues explaining that, an artist at this point would be expected to be supported by a manager to perform most of the work acquiring opportunities to perform live and ensuring financial stability and connecting his/her art to the market. They (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005), continue arguing that many managers also play the important role of financial advisor and life coach. The manager also ensures that the artist “*masters the game*”, which at this stage becomes part of the professional career in music”. They (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005) also consider “*Social skills*” as extremely important to success in musical careers. This thus becomes an important aspect of the capacity of an artist to expose his/her art to the market building an identity through also social media. This aspect will be further explored during the data analysis.

Acute and enlightening is also the work of Gladwell (2008) who introduces the concept of “opportunity”. Gladwell (2008) sees success as a continuous sum of elements that together contributes to the formation of a coherent design; this design derives partly from the innate characteristics of individuals, such as talent, passion and hard work and in part from some external conditions such as a particular environment. These conditions are fundamental to becoming successful but what makes the difference is an “*opportunity*” that needs to be recognized and caught at the right time Gladwell (2008). Gladwell (2008) also focuses on the quantification of “*hard work*” citing an earlier study conducted by psychologist K. Anders Ericsson (1993) together with two colleagues at Berlin's elite Academy of Music who quantified 10,000 hours as the average time necessary for a professional to spend constantly to reach the maximum level of their discipline. Gladwell (2008) as Subotnik & Jarvin (2005) identifies a natural inclination as a fundamental component, which together with contingent events, helps to generate success, but complements this by adding the concept of “*opportunity*”, a fortuitous event, not wanted and even much less earned with effort and commitment, which has played a key role in the generation of a successful person. To explain this combination of factors, Gladwell (2008) refers to the concept of “*cumulative advantage*,” theorized by Robert Merton in a famous article entitled: “*The Matthew Effect in Science*” published in 1968 in the journal Science. In this article, Merton points out that often, in the academic environment, the works of scientists and researchers already famous are rewarded with greater frequency than works of equal scientific value proposed by unknown scholars. These conditions constitute a very important basis for becoming “successful” but what makes the difference, in addition to advantageous starting conditions is an “opportunity” for which one should be ready (Gladwell 2008).

In the light of what has been previously reported, the meaning of success could be explored at least from two different points of view in relation with management processes. Success may include the tracking of quantitative factors like size of the market segment in which the artist operates, the number of records previously sold, his/her capacity to sell in the future, number of shows already done and possibility to expand further the live concert activity factors that could be taken into account as quantitative data. Success can also have a qualitative component related to the personal inner sphere of the artist which embraces a complex combination of factors. These include analytical skills and creative practices that have their origin in the inner sphere (e.g. genetic) as a special talent or predisposition and that are refined through outer experiences such as theoretical and practical training (10000 hours), as well as the place and time of birth and the ability to seize a career opportunity. In particular, in music, this may involve other factors such as: perseverance despite adversity, awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses, the ability to take risks, the ability

to self-promote, support or obstruction of parents and social surroundings, the self-confidence, public relations skills, technical skills, the knowledge of the music business, personal motivation and charisma. This study argues that both aspects need to be taken into account evaluating the characteristics of the artist he/her works with. Both these points of view will be taken into account in order to explore how the case study relates to them.

2.9 Conclusions

The current chapter has shown that artist management processes in the field of electro pop dance music is a matter of study very little explored in the literature. In particular it has been found that many definitions of artist management have been generated under an operative perspective, mainly describing “what” an artist manager does but not “how”. The review of the literature has started broadly from the concept of arts and management in order to reach the core of the concept of success related to artist management processes. The author identified in Shafritz (1998:129) five management operations, constituted by the activities of *“planning, organizing, staffing, supervising, and controlling – related to the facilitation of the production of arts and the presentation of the artists’ work to audiences”*. He has also highlighted that the artist manager cannot be reduced only to an administrative function *“as a mechanical component of an assembly line”* (Negus, 1992: VII), but as a professional who can add value to the processes as well subtract it, determining both success or failure of the artist managed. Negus’ research approach, in particular the one adopted in his book titled *“Music Genres and corporate culture”* (Negus, 1999) is shared by the current research. In the cited book Negus analyzes how the music industry’s executives relate to artists, examining their processes and addressing the investigation to a wide framework, which includes also cultural and sociological aspects. This study aims to explore the management practices with the same approach. The artist manager can be seen as an intermediary who aims to convert art/culture into something that has an economic value in the market. Even if the current study is more focused on approaching the management practices from a business angle, the overall approach is multidisciplinary.

Morrow (2013:13) affirms: *“no manager can be fully understood out of the context in which he/she and their artist(s) operate*. According to Morrow’s view, a selection of studies has been reviewed in order to better understand the uncertainty and mutation of the current music industry context and to give to the reader also some basic notions related to the main stakeholders involved in the artist management activity. All the notions emerged will be deepened during the data analysis chapter of the current study in order to contribute to the literature. As emerged by the review of the work of

Kusek (2010) today, artists and their managers sit in the middle of a musician enterprise and can make things happen on their own. One of the fundamental key aspects of the relationship between artists and their managers, that will be extensively analyzed in chapter four, is the set of targets that involves the planning of a strategy. Mockler (1995:3) reports that the general strategic management processes are complex and their knowledge is very limited. The review of the literature showed that very little effort has been dedicated to strategic management processes related to artist management profession in the music industry, in particular in the field of electro/pop music. The current research will contribute analyzing how Spaceship's managers and their artists formulate and implement strategies.

The framework has been then further extended in order to involve also the relationship created between a manager and an artist. As stated by Morrow (2013:13) "*the dynamics between the artist and the manager should form the basis of any study of artist management; the managerial role is intricately connected to the artists and their work*". The interpersonal relationship is therefore fundamental. It could be argued that mutual trust should constitute the base of the relationship of representation. This relationship will be extensively covered during the data analysis.

The review of the works of Frascogna and Hetherington (1997), Gladwell (2008) and Subotnik and Jarvin (2005), helped to identify that the meaning of success could be explored at least from two different points of view in relation with management processes. Success may include the tracking of quantitative factors like the size of the market segment in which the artist operates, the number of records previously sold, his/her capacity to sell in the future or the number of shows already done and possibility to expand further the live concert activity; these factors could be taken into account as quantitative data. Success can also have a qualitative component related to the personal inner sphere of the artist which embraces a complex combination of factors, the ones that this study aims to further explore.

The current chapter helped to identify the areas that this research aims to explore as follows:

- 1) Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist
- 2) Artist management processes and how these are described and operated in practice
- 3) Relationship between artist and manager, how it is build and maintained
- 4) Music industry context and how a manager copes with its continuous changes
- 5) Strategy and how a manager relates to this concept in his daily working activity
- 6) Reflexivity and how managers implement their knowledge through reflective practice.

7) Success/Failure in music and how a manager, an artist and other music industry professional see this concept in relation to the artist manager profession

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As previously reported, the current research is an investigation conducted through a case study in order to explore the management processes related to the concept of success in the music industry, in the setting of one of the most influential and established artist management companies in Europe. The overall approach is qualitative. Data are collected in the participant's setting and the central role of the researcher is to make interpretation of the meaning of data in their broader social and historical context (Creswell, 2013:4). The author is in a unique position of being both an artist manager and a researcher and can provide an in depth insight of how the artist managers of the company operate in their daily activity through the tools of semi-structured interviews administered to managers, artists and professionals involved in the company's network. According to Stake (1995) this case of study, as it will be soon described, could be considered intrinsic, so generalization is not intended. The current chapter will introduce and discuss the research methodology that guides this research and the methods used to collect data. As argued by Howell (2013:2) methodology can be defined as *"the general research strategy that outlines the way in which a research project is to be undertaken and identifies the methods to be used in it"*. These methods, he states (Howell, 2013:2), described in the methodology, define *"the means or modes"* of data collection or, sometimes, how a specific result is to be calculated. Corbetta (1999, p.10) defines methods as: *"special operating procedures of a scientific discipline that are used for the acquisition and control of their own data during empirical research."* They are no more than the instruments studied, analysed and created by the methodology in order to investigate the phenomena under study.

This chapter is composed by six main sections related to:

- 1) **Research Philosophy:** intended as the philosophical worldview that the researcher brings to the study. The research philosophy underlying the current study is clearly rooted in constructivism.
- 2) **Research Approach:** intended as the author's use of theory during the research process. The current study uses abduction as a research approach.
- 3) **Research Design:** the author describes here the research strategy chosen and clarifies the research choices and time horizons in order to draw the attention on the procedures related

to the research project. The strategy of enquiry selected for the investigation is the case-study, the main data collection instruments are semi-structured interview and observations.

4) **Research Ethics:** this section will describe how the researcher dealt with the privacy safety of people involved in the research

5) **Validation:** the author explains in this section the criteria used to validate the data gathered.

6) **Data Analysis:** in this section will be explained how data will be analysed and interpreted.

3.2 Research Philosophy

As argued by Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) the importance of the research paradigm chosen by a researcher precedes the choice of methods. Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) define “*paradigm*” as “*a basic belief system or view of the world, that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways*”. The word epistemology derives from Greek’s “*episteme*” meaning “*knowledge*” and “*logos*” meaning “*study of*”. Epistemology is concerned with “*the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis*” (Honderich 2005:260). Another way of looking at this is reflected in the question: “*what is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be known?*” (Mertens 1998:6). According to Saunders et al. (2009:597) “*ontology is the study of being or reality*” which, as reported by Cohen et al., (2013:5) “*concerns the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated*”.

The phenomena studied by this research are artist management processes, related to the concept of success in music within a particular case. Under an ontological perspective, management processes are seen by this study from a subjectivist angle as “*social phenomena created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors*” (Saunders et al. 2013:111). The author of this study is aware of his ideological positioning and of the way that this has influenced his research. The main aim of the current investigation is in fact to pursue an understanding of the reality in which he works and lives. This understanding starts from an individual interest in the artist management processes related to the concept of success in music. The interpretations of the data collected will be generated by the past experience of the researcher and also by his world-view. This study entails ontological assumptions that see social reality as socially constructed by social actors, where there is no single reality but multiple and changing social realities (Ong, 2010). Ontologically the researcher shares Blaikie’s (2000:116) assumptions regarding “*social scientific knowledge*” as being derived from “*everyday concepts and meanings, from socially constructed mutual knowledge*”. The

role of the researcher is then to observe the reality, reflect on it and finally interpret it. The reflective account described in chapter four has been forged by the author's interpretation of the discussions and interactions made by the researcher with artist managers, artists and other professionals involved within the case through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The reflective approach is considered by the current study as a key process in the artist management activity. As emerged in the review of the literature, in connection with the concepts of uncertainty of the music industry, the business environment in which an artist manager operates is nowadays constantly evolving so the possibility to reflect on the daily activity becomes vital to consciously evaluate the opportunities and the threats offered by the market. This is a key point that will be furthered explored in connection with the data analysis.

As argued by Schön (1983:68), professional practice is often dominated by what he calls "*technical rationality*"; a mere application of theories and principles of scientific basis, borrowed from the academic education of each professional. For "*technical rationality*" he contrasts a different model that consists of "*reflection in action*". According to this scheme, there is no clear separation between knowledge and action, because the knowledge is generated whenever the professional faces a problem which he seeks to provide a solution to by means of reflective practice. The practitioner is thus seen not as a separate "*applicator*" but as an autonomous source of epistemological theories, which are "dependent" on their own knowledge. Thus it could be argued that knowledge accumulated over time, enables the practitioner to create new knowledge whenever he or she faces and solves a problem related to their profession. The possibility of improving the understanding of professional practice is indicated as the main purpose of a "*reflective investigation*", which therefore assumes the characteristics of a learning process.

This research takes place according to these assumptions. The researcher, who has a double role of both practitioner and researcher, has decided to commence an in depth study of his working environment, to eventually gain a more conscious approach to his profession reflecting, during the research process, on the dynamics related to artist management.

The reflective process will be integrated by a reflexive perspective. Reflexivity, as intended by the current research, adds another layer of reflection to the process of reflective practice previously described (Schon, 1983:68) and specifies the researcher's role epistemologically. With the term "reflexivity" the author of the current study means being reflective on reflection. This process takes into account a first basic level of reflection as a researcher, a second level as a practitioner who reflects within the context of his profession and finally a third level as a "reflexive practitioner" that considers the double role of the author as an agent of discourse adding a further level of critical

reflection. According to Cole et al. (2011:143) citing Blaikie (2007) reflexivity, in this sense, takes the position that “*observations are only intelligible with respect to the social context in which they originate and that the meaning and order of the context is dependent upon such observations*”. The results of the reflexive process will be deeply examined in chapter four.

The next section will introduce the research approach of the current study related to the use of theory in the research process.

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach is basically related to use of theory that a research project involves. On the basis of the role that theory assumes within the research project, a study could be framed to follow an inductive or deductive research approach (Saunders et al. 2009:124). According to Hyde (2000) “*inductive reasoning is a theory building process*” which starts with observations and moves towards more abstract generalizations and ideas. As argued by Saunders et al. (2009:126) the purpose of induction is “*to get a feel of what was going on, so as to understand better the nature of a problem*”. Deductive reasoning instead is a theory-testing process, which moves from the general to the particular. It commences with an established theory or generalization, and aims to explore if the theory pertains to specific instances (Hyde 2000:83). According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2010:4) these two approaches are usually “*regarded as exclusive alternatives, but it would be difficult to force all research into them*”. As argued by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2010:4) “*abduction is probably the method used in real practice in many case-study based research processes*”, as the case the current study is examining. According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2010:4) abduction starts from empirical observation as induction does, but “*does not reject theoretical preconceptions*”. The analysis of the empirical facts, they (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2010:4) continue, “*could be preceded or combined by previous knowledge found in literature*”. This combination is not a mechanical application of a theory as happens in the deductive approach but it constitutes “*a source of inspiration for discovery of patterns that bring understanding*”. The research process of the current study follows this approach. The interest of the author in studying the artist management processes starts from the observation of his colleagues during his initial work period at Spaceship Management, with the aim to better understand their managerial practices, in order to gain a better understanding of the profession. After a preliminary phase of observation, the author decided to review the literature in order to research the most relevant studies regarding the artist management processes. The review of the literature revealed a gap in describing the artist management processes related to the concept of success and led the author to generate seven areas

that could be considered relevant in the artist management daily operations as described in chapter one of this thesis. The next phase of the study, consisted of the data gathering process, through the tools of semi-structured interviews and observation. This phase explores how those areas relate to the case of study. The research process then alternates observation and research of literature that constitutes the basis for the reflexive account. The researcher acts as an insider through his double role of practitioner and researcher to finally observe, interact and interpret the reality under the lens.

The research phases of the current study could be summed up as follows:

- a) Entering in the social environment
- b) Generate the purpose of the research
- c) Review of the relevant literature
- d) Generation of the key areas that could be considered as key for data gathering
- e) Data gathering within the case of study according to the key areas
- f) Data analysis under a reflexive approach
- g) Conclusion and results

Abduction could be then considered in this research as an iterative process that stems from a real practice situation that has been chosen to be investigated without aiming to generalization. A preliminary phase of observations led to the review of the literature which generated seven macro-areas that constitutes a general overarching pattern to be compared with case of study. This process differs from deduction because theory is not clearly defined at the beginning of the study and there are no assumptions to test. It differs also from induction because it doesn't starts from data. There is a general initial pattern of macro-areas emerging from the review of the literature that will be refined, adjusted, compared and contrasted with the data gathered.

3.4 Research Design

The previous sections have explained the research philosophy and approach underlying the investigation conducted by this study and its research approach. The current section will explore the research strategy chosen and clarify the research choices and time horizons in order to draw attention on the procedures related to the research project. According to Yin (2003) this study could be defined as explanatory. The main aim in fact is to explain and describe the artist management processes related to the concept of success operated by the managers working within the case of study. This research purpose takes place within the work environment of the author, in particular

within Spaceship management; a music company specialized in artist development on a global scale. The study will explain in detail the characteristics of the business model of the company during the data analysis chapter. According to the research aims, philosophy and approach of this study, the author decided to employ the case study (Yin, 2003) as a strategy of enquiry for research.

3.5 Case study as a strategy of enquiry

As previously explored in the research philosophy section, the reflective approach used in the current research can be considered as an overarching way to interpret reality (used especially during the data analysis phase), which encompasses the whole research. The research strategy chosen to conduct the investigation and collect the data is the case study. According to Yin (1984:14) a research strategy is composed by a complete plan for research that includes “*the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis*”. Yin (2003:13) defines the case study as: “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident;*”. Farquhar (2012:6) adds “*...in business research, that means collecting evidence about that phenomenon where it is actually taking place, for example in a company...*” These definitions perfectly describe the current investigation. The concept of artist success in music could be considered the “*phenomenon*” and the artist management company, “*its real life context*”. “*The boundaries between the phenomenon and the context*” can be then considered the artist management processes operated by the company’s managers that this study aims to investigate through the tools of semi structured interviews and participant observation.

Stake R. (1995:136) describes 3 different types of case studies:

- A) Intrinsic
- B) Instrumental
- C) Collective

This research can be framed as intrinsic case study, according to Stake’s (1995:136) definition. In Stake’s work (1995:136) the intrinsic case study regards the one undertaken to gain better understanding a particular case. Its primary aim, he says (1995), “*is not to be generalised and extended to other cases but it represents the interest in the case itself*”. The author of this research chose the case study as a research strategy because it also suits the research philosophy and the abductive approach, which as previously reported, could be preceded by previously gained knowledge found in connection with the review of the literature.

As reported by Eisenhardt (1989:532) the case study “*is open to the use of conceptual categories that guide the research and analysis of data*”. Eisenhardt states (1989:536) “*this pre-understanding may arise from general knowledge or specific knowledge*”. From the elaboration of this pre-understanding in connection with data gathering and analysis new understating could be created in terms of expanding concepts or theories or building a new one. According to Rowley (2002:16) the researcher has to make a speculation, on the basis of the literature and any other earlier evidence as to what they expect the findings of the research to be.

The macro areas that emerged following the work on the literature review and that will be investigated within the case of study are:

- 1) Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist
- 2) Artist management processes and how these are described and operated in practice
- 3) Relationship between artist and manager, how it is build and maintained
- 4) Music industry context and how a manager copes with its continuous changes
- 5) Strategy and how a manager relates to this concept in his daily working activity
- 6) Reflection and reflective practice and how managers implement their knowledge through reflection.
- 7) Success/Failure in music and how a manager, an artist and other music industry professional see this concept in relation with artist manager profession

In particular the data analysis chapter will reflect on the following questions

- How does an artist manager define artist management processes?
- How does an artist manager get in touch with an artist?
- How does an artist manager decide to work with a specific artist?
- How does the personality of a manager affect his/her work?
- How does an artist manager define a strategic process?
- How do an artist manager and artist define the concept of success? How does an artist or a music industry executive define it?
- How does an artist manager operate in relation to the concept of artist success in practice?

At this stage, the research area of study could be described as follows: artist management processes related to the possible achievement of artist success within the case of study, drawing on the

concepts of strategy, decision making processes, value adding processes, reflexive processes, personal relationship components of the artist/manager relationship.

These are general key areas that help then to generate the data gathering. As emerges from these areas of investigation the set of practices and theoretical insights are important to map out the process of thought involving different parties including the author of the current study. The data gathering phase, will help to explore and expand or contrast the arguments included in the proposition that constitute the main core of the research.

The next section will explore data collection procedure, research ethics and specific approaches to data analysis.

3.5.1 Unit of Analysis

This component according to Yin (2013:109) is related to what is the subject of the case. He (Yin, 2013:19) states that the unit of analysis of a case study research may be “*an individual person, an event, an organization, a team or a department within the organization*”. The current study aims to reflexively explore the particular procedures related to artist management processes in connection with the concept of success operated by Spaceship Management, a company founded in early 2010 by Enrico Mutti and Paul Sears, specialized in artist management and development, in the field of electro/pop music. The company and its managers could be considered as the units of analysis of the current study. The artists managed and the net of professional relations of the company will be an additional source of data. The author of the current study, who works actively in the company since 2010, could be considered as well a unit of analysis, reflecting, on his daily job as artist manager, on the interpretation of data collected and on the process of reflection.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

(Yin, 2013:83) states that “*evidence for case studies may come from six sources*”.

The sources of evidence of the current study are: company documents/archival records, interviews, observations, secondary data gathered from the web or from official reports and conference proceedings.

3.6.1 Documents/Archival records

The author of this study being part as artist manager of the company will be able to have access to company files, archival records, published reports of company consultant, slide shows, contracts with partners, artists and suppliers. All the data collected through these tools will be used during the data analysis. Each use of these resources has been approved by the owner through specific consent.

3.6.2 Participant Observation

As previously mentioned the author of this study covers a double role. He is both a professional who works daily with the organization and a researcher who observes and collects data from within. This position is considered by the current study extremely valuable. In fact, usually participant observation requires cost, time and availability that is rarely possible to obtain or provide; living for a few months or a few years in a community is not easy. In the context of the current research, the researcher, as a partner of the company, had the possibility to observe and reflect on the case of study as a normal activity included in his daily operations. The observation process is a constant on-going process of data gathering that takes place since the beginning of the work experience of the author within the company. Participant observation within the case is also integrated with direct observations occurring in specific other contexts as, industry meetings, recording sessions, travels and ordinary office life. Observations have been then collected and transformed into data in two main ways. Recording of the voice of the author reflecting and describing the observation and through notes taken on the phone. It was not always possible to use the recorder or take note of the observations. In these cases the researcher, waited for the first free moment to write down his thoughts and report them into his reflexive journal. The reflexive journal attached to the thesis is constituted by a selection of those observations, the ones that the author considered significant for the research purposes.

A major criticism directed against at participant observation is the potential lack of objectivity, as the researcher is not an impartial observer. The author's considerations about bias have been introduced at section 3.2 where citing Steedman (1991:53) the author said that in the context of this research the "*knowledge can't be separated from the knower*" and in the whole description of the ontological and epistemological approach to this study. As will be better revealed during the data analysis phase, intuition, interpretation and understanding are part of the research process under a reflexive approach and bias could be considered not as counterproductive but as necessary. The reflective approach in practice uses hermeneutics as examples of interpretivist methodology that explicitly recognise that a researcher's own feelings, knowledge and experience have a part to play

in the research, and as such, afford the professional researcher from any industry the opportunity to engage with their research in a critically reflexive way.

3.6.3 Interviews

As previously explored the author of this text is in a unique position to explore the subject matter from within, through purposive sampling of respondents by profession, sector, and type. Such a unique position is also reflected in the fact that as an active manager, the author is able to interview colleagues, clients and professionals from related sectors. This has quite some significance in reflexive analysis of reflective data (own accounts) and interviews.

The interview strategy followed two main directions: Semi-structured interviews agreed with the interviewed and informal conversations conducted by the author with professionals included in the network of the company administered during the participant observation. For “informal conversations” the author of this study considers, meetings, industry events, phone-calls, emails and any kind of communications that took place during the data gathering period between the researcher and the net of professionals with whom he works on a daily basis which is composed by, other artist managers, publicists, record labels’ executives, booking agents, publishers, social media managers, sponsors and concert promoters. These are labeled as “informal” because they happened more as informal chat than real semi-structured interviews. These data, included in the appendix of the study, have been used extensively during the data analysis.

The semi-structured interviews have been administered to three different samples:

1)Artist managers:

Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti. They could be considered the main unit of analysis of this research

2)Artists managed by those managers

The Bloody Beetroots and Crookers

3)Music industry professionals that work on a daily basis with both those managers and their artists

President of a Major Label 1 (PML1), President of a Major Label 2 (PML2)

The Interviews with the managers and artists could be considered the main core of the data gathering process because they really represent and form Spaceship management as a unit of

analysis. In particular the interviews with Enrico Mutti and Paul Sears, the two co-founders of the company, comprise the main batch of data gathered.

Corbetta (1999) defines qualitative interviews as conversations caused by the interviewer, addressed to individuals chosen on the basis of a plan of survey, having a cognitive purpose and guided by the interviewer on the basis of a flexible scheme. From the definition given, it is clear that interviews are not normal conversations where the roles of the interlocutors are placed at the same level but could be considered as guided conversation in which the interviewer establishes the topic and makes sure that the outcome matches the purpose of knowledge that he has set. The interviews conducted by this study are semi-structured. As reported by Ronzon (2008) this type of interview is the most traditional type of ethnographic interview and is widely used in the field research together with observation. The proximity and accessibility of relevant informants and the agreement of the interview happened without any particular negotiation. The researcher didn't prepare a "pre-packaged" framework of question but just a list of main topics to discuss with the interviewee, the ones previously cited at section 3.5. The questions therefore arose during the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. In some occasions the author needed to moderate and contain the flow from the interviewee, in order not to deflect the content of the interview from the real goal of the research. This interaction is related to the interview process that could be considered as inter-subjective. This means that there is a mutual interaction between both the interviewer and the interviewee; both influence and are influenced by the process. During the data analysis the author will try to make explicit these interactions through a reflexive account. He will also try to make explicit any prejudice or assumption related to each interview in order to clarify the context in which it happened. The time devoted to the conversations was not always fixed, the average time for each interview was around 45 minutes, never less than 30 never more than 1 hour.

3.7 Research Ethics

The current study takes into account ethical issues that arise during all the research processes; since the formulation of the research questions, the data gathering, the data analysis and also the writing up phase. The owners of the company that constitute the main unit of analysis of the current research have been informed of the idea to undertake an in depth investigation about artist management processes related to the concept of success within Spaceship Management in March 2012. The communication has been done in two steps: the idea was firstly introduced during an informal lunch-break, then it was submitted by a formal email. They unexpectedly agreed with enthusiasm to be observed and researched for the period of two years with the genuine belief that,

the double role of the researcher as also practitioner will bring benefit to the company and its employees. They have been specifically informed about:

- The purpose of the research, the expected duration
- What role they will play in it
- How the data collected would be used
- How the research did not affect the demanding working activity of the author
- Potential risk of disclosure of reserved information
- Potential benefits of the research results both for the company and the practitioner
- Possibility to read the result of their interview in order to evaluate its content

The only request received by them was to send them in advance the whole work before being submitted to the University in order to read it carefully and eventually identify possible disclosure of reserved information that they would not want to share.

The other participants involved in the semi-structured interviews have been informed via e-mail before doing their interviews and they have fully signed an informed consent letter. They also had the possibility to read the transcript of the interview in order to verify the information reported. Both the artist and the professionals that received the interview request have accepted immediately. The fact that the author of the study has been already in contact with all the interviewees that have taken part in this research made easy the negotiation phase. The real names of the president of the Major Labels will be kept undisclosed.

3.8 Validity

Even if the bias is clearly declared by the empathic relationship with the reality observed, the author followed some criteria of reasonableness as the inquiry audit, the triangulation and member checking during the research process that will be explained in the following section.

3.8.1 Inquiry Audit

The "*inquiry audit*", formalized in 1982 by Lincoln and Guba in order to assess the dependability of a qualitative research, is a process of review of the research phases according to the standards of

"good professional practice" (Lincoln, Guba, 1982:1). According to the two authors each researcher must prepare a reflective journal in which they describe all the procedures used during the investigation. The reflective-records established by each researcher, during its investigations shall include all field notes, transcripts of the interviews, the description of the observations, the phases of the focus group discussion, the procedures for analysing the data collected, the techniques used for the treatment and the selection of data to be included in the report, how to write, essentially all the relevant information needed to ensure the "reproducibility" of a third party "auditor". Specifically, it's important to give a chance to a possible auditor to assess whether the methods chosen by the researcher were valid or not for the purpose of research, if the techniques used to analyse the data are consistent with those used to collect them, if the analysis report is structured in a consistent and credible manner and if the observations deduced can be traced to groups or categories of data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1982, p. 6). The author will use the data analysis chapter as a reflecting account of the research processes. The appendixes will also include, field notes, transcription of the interviews and a reflexive journal.

3.8.2 Triangulation

Another important criterion useful for validation is "triangulation". As reported by Rothbauer (2008): "*The concept of triangulation is borrowed from navigational and land surveying techniques that determine a single point in space with the convergence of measurements taken from two other distinct points.*"

In Denzin (1970) the concept of triangulation assumes clear and defined connotations involving the combination of multiple sources of data collection in order to study the same social phenomenon. He (Denzin, 1970:297) describes four main types of triangulation:

1. Data triangulation, which entails gathering data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations, as well as on a variety of people, are gathered.
2. Investigator triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one researcher in the field to gather and interpret data.
3. Theoretical triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one theoretical position in interpreting data.
4. Methodological triangulation, which refers to the use of more than one method for gathering data.

Points 1, 3 and 4 will be explored in connection with the current research. Data as previously explored have been collected from multiple sources as previously mentioned. The data will be

interpreted from the researcher on three main levels: a) as a researcher reflecting on the research process, b) as a practitioner reflecting on the impact of the research on his professional knowledge and reflexively considering both the previous level and adding a third level related to the context. For context the current research intend author's pre-understanding, ideology, background and personal feelings.

3.8.3 Member Checking

Informant Feedback and Member Checks, as reported by Yanow and Schwart-Shea (2006:104), are terms of anthropological and sociological origin. Both of them recommend that the researcher returns to the people studied for an assessment or whether the researcher has "got it right". This practice implies that, during the observations, interviews, data collection or at the end of the study, the researcher will interface again with the reality studied, in order to share with it their own thoughts, which will be reflected in the elaboration and interpretation of their accounts gathered in the field. The feedback received, as described by Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p.230) can still reasonably be affected: *"The memory of the respondents may not be vivid, cannot grasp the implications of the analysis inspected by the researcher or may pay little attention to the process of validation which the researcher submits them"* (Long and Johnson, 2000:33). Important variables in order to obtain the maximum reliability of a process of this type are, in the author's opinion: the possibility to measure the relationship of "trust" that the researcher is able to establish with the reality examined; the socio-cultural level of the sample; the time between the facts on which the sample is investigated, the time in which the survey is carried out (a good memory is not the prerogative of all people) and the state of serenity and collaborative arrangement in which the sample is located in the moment in which the researcher is required to read and evaluate results of the survey on himself '. All these aspects have been taken into serious consideration during the survey.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research could be considered as an on-going process that lasted until the end of the writing up process of the thesis. As previously reported the author's interest in starting this research began with a first period of observation within the company where he is employed since 2010. The main aim of this research was to improve the author's understanding of the management processes related to the concept of success, in music within the case of his company. Spaceship

management, the main unit of analysis of the study, manages and have managed in the past some of the most important and successful electro/pop music acts and producers including Benny Benassi, Crookers and The Bloody Beetroots. Those names may look not popular to the an average music listener but they have been involved in projects at top levels in their music genre; their music productions and remixes include works for U2, Madonna, Beyonce, Lady Gaga, Ac/Dc and Chemical Brothers, just to name a few. Spaceship Management raised those artists from scratch to the worldwide market of top selling artist's music production and remixes as well as world-wide touring and performing as DJs.

The author of the study, involved since the beginning in this environment, decided to investigate how the artist management operations, put in place by the company, are related to the concept of artist success. Since then he commenced to collect data in the form of observations mainly collected during the everyday office life. These observations have been written down on his phone, on his notebook and sometimes recorded as voice messages. It always depended on the context in which the researcher was. All the observations have been then organized in folders on a computer and divided by themes of interest. This first phase led then to a literature review research process that lasted six months. The review of the literature helped the author to expand and deepen the ideas generated during the observations. During that period the author continued his working activity at Spaceship Management, which influenced through the continued observations also the choices of the themes, selected to form the theoretical framework. Observations included also informal conversation with colleagues, artists and other professionals on the concepts of success related to artist management processes. The author tried as much as possible to write down the results of these episodes on paper or on his phone and notebook at the end of the day. The data gathered in this form were again archived in a folder of the researcher's computer and divided by themes. All the semi-structured interviews have been made on a second phase, which took place after the first draft of the literature review, when the main themes of the theoretical framework of the study emerged more clearly and helped to generate the research questions and consequently the main question of the interviews. During this period the author continued to collect and archive observations.

The real analysis of all the data gathered, in order to build the current document, commenced in January 2015. The author of the study proceeded firstly to systematically order all the data coming from different sources and in different formats. Interviews have been transcribed, notes and diary have been organized as well as the field notes taken during the observations. This process was key in order to know exactly what data have been gathered (Taylor –Powell and Renner, 2003). The data gathering phase lasted a couple of years so, during this period, the author collected a huge amount of data that needed to be organized and selected in order to respond to the needs of the

investigation. The transcripts of the interviews have been read several times, as well as the field notes and the archival data and secondary sources. During this phase the author proceeded to write down ideas both on a word file and on a notebook. Those ideas were related to multiple themes: organization of the whole writing up phase of the thesis, reflection on concepts emerged from the data, methodological issues. The data collected have been then carefully selected and the author noted during the process, how some of the field notes both recorded or written down were meaningless. In particular since the author in some cases, because of the short time related to the situation, recorded or wrote just a few words without appointing the context in which they have been generated, making these data not useful for research purposes. This helped to focus the analysis starting from the themes which emerged from the literature review. The data gathering continued also during this phase. In particular, the informal conversations and observations became more focused and the quality of the data more useful accordingly. The author tried to write down all the observations including the context, time hour, in as much detail as possible (Ronzon, 2008). At this point the researcher decided what should have been the main unit of analysis of the study, previously described, in order to look at managing processes from both angles, the management side and the artist side. The data have been carefully selected and categorized again for the writing up process (Morgan et al. 2008). The information has not been coded in the sense that codes have been formally assigned. They have just carefully selected and stored in seven main folders accordingly to the main themes emerging from the literature review phase. This was probably the most important process of the whole research and required more or less four weeks. Categories were identified that could be defined as the main areas of interest that constitute the theoretical framework, then sub categories or themes that constitute different specifications of the main themes (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). The researcher did not use a software to organize the qualitative data. The categories and sub-themes have been organized and coded in an Excel file in correspondence with a folder in a hard drive which contained all the subfolders with both data gathered and sources from literature review. The main differences between these two is that categories are the main topics that emerged from the review of the literature and helped to generate the main areas that composed the theoretical framework. Sub categories are instead areas that emerged from the analysis of data, in particular from the reading of the interview transcripts. The next step was to identify connections, similarities or differences between each category by interviewee responses. The whole process led to the reflective account, which forms the next chapter.

3.10 Limitation of the study

One of the main limitations of this study is related to the fact that qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative, thus it is subject to personal views and background of the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

The management processes have been explored by this study from a subjectivist angle as “*social phenomena created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors*” (Saunders et al. 2013:111). The author is aware of his ideological positioning and of the way that this has influenced his research. The main aim of the current investigation was in fact to pursue an understanding of the reality in which he works and lives. This understanding starts from an individual interest of the author in the artist management processes related to the concept of success in music. The interpretations of the data collected have been generated by the past experience of the researcher and also by his world-view. This study entailed ontological assumptions that see social reality as socially constructed by social actors, where there is no single reality but multiple and changing social realities (Ong, 2010). Ontologically the researcher shared Blaikie’s (2000:116) assumptions regarding “*social scientific knowledge*” as being derived from “*everyday concepts and meanings, from socially constructed mutual knowledge*”. The role of the researcher was then to observe the reality, reflect on it and finally interpret it. The reflective account described in chapter four has been forged by the author’s interpretation of the discussions and interactions made by the researcher with artist managers, artists and other professionals involved within the case through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The reflective approach is considered by the current study as a key process in the artist management activity

A major criticism that could be raised concerns the tools used for data gathering.

For instance, although interviews can be considered a good way to explore findings they present several limitations in terms of reliability (Saunders et al., 2007) related to the interviewer and interviewee biases. Moreover the interviewees may choose not to reveal particular aspects that are crucial to explore and understand the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2007). Additionally, as the topic is complex and dynamic, findings may reflect the reality at the time they are collected; therefore they are not necessarily repeatable.

Important variables in order to obtain the maximum reliability of a process of this type are, in author’s opinion: the possibility of qualifying/ quantifying the relationship of “trust” that the researcher is able to establish with the reality examined; the socio-cultural level of the sample; the time between the facts on which the sample is investigated, the time in which the survey is carried

out (a good memory is not the prerogative of all people) and the state of serenity and collaborative arrangement in which the sample is located in the moment in which the researcher is required to read and evaluate results of the survey on himself.

Participant observation could involve a potential lack of objectivity, as the researcher is not an impartial observer. The author's considerations about bias have been introduced at section two where citing Steedman (1991:53) the author said that in the context of this research the "*knowledge can't be separated from the knower*" and in the whole description of the ontological and epistemological approach to this study. In particular intuition, interpretation and understanding have been part of the research process under a reflexive approach and author's bias could be considered not as counterproductive but as necessary.

Another point is related to the capacity to understand success, from an artist management perspective that could be crucial to improve the personal professional skills of the author, under the reflexive approach, in his double role of both researcher and practitioner. One evident limitation of this study is related to the fact that this learning process could not be verified in the current study.

The learning process of the author is nowadays happening on at least two levels. He learns from the field observing Paul and Enrico and by interacting with professionals that work in his environment absorbing and capturing notions and know-how every day. The second level of the learning process relates to the current research and to the reflective process used to gather and analyse data. The reflexive process constantly guides the author to give a deep understanding of any issue he comes across. This process cannot be tested and verified in the short term.

The current study could be then considered, in relation to this theme, as a preliminary study. The main purpose of the researcher is to continue to monitor if the current research produced a real improvement in his capacity to understand the profession and if the research process and the reflective practice have generated new competencies. A new auto ethnographic study could be conducted by the researcher in order to further explore if the reflective processes applied during the current research could produce in him an improved effectiveness as a professional.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The current chapter stems from the analysis of the interviews that comprise the main batch of data gathered. The main aim of the analysis is to explore the management processes related to the concept of success operated by Spaceship Management, the company that constitutes the case of study.

The interviews with Paul Sears, Enrico Mutti and the reflective account of the author in his double role of both practitioner and researcher within the case, will be the starting point of the analysis.

The following text constitutes a reflective account based on the interpretation of the transcriptions of those interviews, integrated with both the analysis of the observations included in the reflexive journal and secondary data, such as documents and agendas, reviewed within the company with the permission of the owners.

The author will give, through the text, his own view of the data collected that, starting from the core interviews with Paul and Enrico, includes multiple voices regarding the concept of success in music related to management operations and processes. Artist managers, artists managed by those managers, music industry professionals and the author himself will comprise those multiple voices.

The analysis will be preceded by a short prologue about Spaceship Management describing the background of its founders.

4.2 Background and development of an artist management company

The following section will describe the background from which, Spaceship Management, the company that constitutes the main unit of analysis of this case, has been created by its founders. The author considers this section as key for the analysis in order to provide the reader with information about the context in which the founders of the company started their profession. This information will be useful to better understand the approaches and operations related to artist success that will be reflected in all the other sections that comprise this chapter.

Spaceship Management is an artist management company founded by Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti in Parma (Italy) in October of 2009. The current section will describe the background of the founders giving brief hints related to how the company was created in order to expand the context.

As reported by Paul Sears:

“I’ve always admired the artistic capabilities of Enrico and his way to recognize and develop new talents. The idea was to join together different experiences, skills and network with the aim to create a unique reference point for artist that might need management services to exploit their music world-wide” (Paul Sears, interview attached in appendix).

Enrico says:

“Paul has always been a reference to me and as well as a consultant in defining the technical details of some recording and publishing deals for my artists. Our relationship evolved naturally to the point that together we decided to join forces and create Spaceship” (Enrico Mutti, interview attached in appendix).

Paul and Enrico have peculiar characteristics and different professional backgrounds that it would be appropriate to describe, in order to have a clearer picture of their operational approach to the profession of artist management. The following description will help the reader to see that the case of study is primarily based on long standing managers in the field of artist management and will also give some important information related to their background that will permit to better understand the analysis.

Paul Sears, born in 1960 in London, moved to Italy in the early 80’s to study at the University of Rome. He has always been passionate about music and started to participate in several musical projects when he was still a student at the University. *“It was a very funny period, I was young and open to collaborate with several people in the new wave/pop Italian scene, I’ve never thought to become an artist manager, it all happened by chance”*. After moving to Parma he started to work with a music production company called Off Limits that, in that period, was very active in the production and exploitation of dance/pop music. There, he witnessed the rise of Ivana Spagna with “Call Me” that reached in 1987 #2 in the Uk chart¹³ and of Whigfield, whose song “Saturday Night”, produced by the Italian founder of Off Limits, Larry Pignagnoli, reached #1 in the Uk pop chart at its debut, selling more than one million records in 1994¹⁴.

¹³ <http://www.officialcharts.com/artist/24373/SPAGNA/>

¹⁴ http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/number-1-today-in-1994-we-interview-chart-record-breaker-whigfield_6067/

Paul, who was very active in that company as language-coach and songwriter, was asked by Larry to take care of the Whigfield's project as a manager. That was the real starting point of his career as a manager. He began from the top level of what in that period could be considered a commercial success of a dance record In Europe.

“The turnaround of my career could be recognized with the release of Benny Benassi's Satisfaction in 2002 which reached #2 in the Uk and had a huge popularity in the clubs worldwide¹⁵ inspiring the whole dance scene with a new way to approach the production of dance music.” (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix)

Since that moment, he created his own company called “Cock an Ear”, and he started to manage Benny Benassi who won a Grammy Award in 2007 and is still very active as a DJ and a producer. Benassi's recent production credits include Chris Brown (2011), Madonna (2012) and John Legend (2013), to name but a few.

Enrico Mutti, born 1972, started his career in music professionally in 1998 when, with his friend Giammarco Ibatici, he founded Mac Mac, a booking agency specialized in international artists related to club-culture¹⁶. In twelve years of activity together as agents, they organized the Italian tours of such artists as Kruder & Dorfmeister, Gotan Project, The Chemical Brothers and Daft Punk among others. This activity led Enrico to create a huge network of contacts with the managers of the artists he invited to play in Italy, their record label executives, press offices and with the artists as well that considered Enrico their exclusive agent for the Italian territory.

In 2006 he founded another company, My Management with the main aim to exploit the experience gained in the past years as a booking agent in order to develop new talented artists he came across. There started the relationship with Crookers, an Italian duo of producers and DJs, that he brought to achieve a #2 in the Uk with the remix of the Kid Cudi's song “Day And Night” and with The Bloody Beetroots, the project founded by Sir Bob Cornelius Rifo, that sold more than two million records worldwide and collaborated with artists like the legendary Paul McCartney. Enrico managed both these two projects since the beginning of their career, when they were almost unknown, to the peak of the popularity in their musical genre crossing over to Pop genre. While the professional relationship with Crookers ended in late 2010, he still successfully manages The Bloody Beetroots and several other projects at Spaceship.

Francesco Gaudesi, the author of the current research, began his career in music professionally in 2005, when, after graduating at Sae Institue as a recording engineer, he started a recording studio in

¹⁵ http://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/official-charts-pop-gem-66-benny-benassi-satisfaction_7660/

¹⁶ Thornton, Sarah (1995). *Club cultures: music, media and subcultural capital*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.. ISBN 9780745614434.

Milan. His main business in that period was audio post-production for commercial advertising, movies and tv-shows but the studio soon became a meeting point for artists involved in the Italian rap and dance scene. One of them was Phra who had just formed, together with Bot, the Crookers. Phra rented a desk in the studio setting up his computer and machines to produce music and remained there for a six-months period, from autumn 2005 until spring 2006. This opened up to multiple meetings with people involved in the Crookers project, included Enrico Mutti who was starting to represent Crookers as a manager.

The author began to be passionate about the artist manager profession and then started a BA(Hons) course at Middlesex University (London), graduating in 2009. The same year he joined My Management and started to take care of some aspects of the day-to-day artist management operations related to Crookers' and Bloody Beetroots' projects. In particular his main duty was to manage press/media requests and build relationships with sponsors.

In 2010 he joined Spaceship and become partner of the company at the end of 2013; his main duties now are related to the development of pop acts in the Italian territory and he supports the activity of Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti on several other international projects including Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots.

Spaceship Management manages now (April 2015) seven main artists: Benny Benassi, The Bloody Beetroots, Razihel, Alex Gaudino and Aucan developing their careers on an International level. Dargen D'Amico and Andrea Nardinocchi constitute the roster of the local division (Italy only). The company is currently working on six other international projects that will be released in 2016. Spaceship could be considered as a "boutique company" where, according to the interviews with Paul and Enrico attached to this study, the main aim of Spaceship is to privilege the development of a few artist that show an artistic uniqueness that could be eventually exploited into the market.

Paul says: "*I prefer to work with just a few artists. If they need something they know they can count on me because I dedicate daily my activity to their exclusive development*". (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix)

Enrico: "*I consider myself as a tailor. My work with The Bloody Beetroots is tailored on his needs. I try to look to any detail in order to meet the targets set with the artist*". (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix)

Paul is the main reference for Benny Benassi and Alex Gaudino, Enrico for The Bloody Beetroots and Razihel. Francesco for Dargen D'Amico, Andrea Nardinocchi and Aucan. The company has also a digital department that takes care of the social media strategy of the artists as well as a

logistic department that organizes the travels of all the artists during their tours. An accounting department, whose main focus is to manage all the incomes and to send statements to the artists, completes the organogram.

The company works on a daily basis with stakeholders that include: branches of all the Major Recording labels (Universal Music, Sony and Warner), the most important and active booking agencies in the field of international electro/pop music, Pr companies, marketing companies, lawyers and accountants expert in international deals.

The following sections will introduce the analysis on the basis of the topics highlighted during the review of the literature. As previously described the themes emerging from chapter two have informed and guided the data gathering process.

Each of the next sections will start analyzing the answers of Paul and Enrico and will integrate them with other interviews, relevant observations and the reflection of the author as a practitioner. The reflective account of the author will include also secondary data and references to additional literature.

As described in the previous chapter, the interviews have been administered to the respondents in a semi-structured form. The author shaped the conversations with the interviewees, keeping in mind the list of the themes that compose each of the seven themes highlighted in the literature review chapter. Therefore, the guided conversations, started from the concept of “*artist management*” in order to explore then the “*management processes*” related to “*contemporary music context*” and in particular related to the concepts of “*strategy*” and “*success*”.

The interview process has informed the structure of the sections of the current chapter that will explore all the previous arguments in the cited order. Accordingly, the following section is concerned with the notion of artist management comparing it with the data gathered in the field along with the reflection of the author both as a practitioner and as an agent of discourse.

4.3 Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist

The following section will help to further explore the respondents’ approach to the profession of artist management, analysing how they define it and how they learned it.

This section will also explore some aspects of the managers’ personality that, as emerged from the data collected through the observations, could influence management processes related to artist’s success.

The first person interviewed was Paul Sears. The interview took place in the offices of Spaceship Management in Parma during an ordinary work-day on March 15th 2015. Paul and the author moved to the meeting room in order to have a quiet place to speak comfortably. He was previously informed that the interview would be structured as a conversation having as the main topic the artist management profession and its role related to the concept of success in music. The author opened up the conversation asking Paul for his definition of artist management. His answer is here reported:

“This is a good question and I’m very happy to try to answer to it, so it would probably help me to clear up my ideas and be ready when my mother will ask me for the umpteenth time what do I do for a living (half-smile). Joking aside... I think artist management is a profession with very fluid and not well-defined boundaries. I’ve always interpreted my role mainly from an administrative and strategic point of view. I look at my job as working with an artist and setting up targets that might be achieved together. In this process the artist could dedicate himself to create art (music) and the manager to achieve those targets through a strategy. (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix)

Paul is a very acute and ironic person as emerges from the first line of his answer. This opening approach helped the author to feel relaxed in that condition that was really far from the usual relationship based only on a professional level. The role of the author as interviewer/researcher was not felt at all and the overall feeling was as a really normal conversation between colleagues.

From Paul’s personal definition of artist management could be understood his general attitude towards the profession. According to the author’s observation of Paul’s daily work, his approach put emphasis on the strategic and administrative side of the job instead of the contribution to the creative process.

As emerges from Enrico’s interview, Paul has a great ability and competency in negotiating and structuring deals. *“They can be recording deals or any other type of contract as sponsorship or publishing or live representation agreements”*, he says (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix). As reported by Enrico, some of his main characteristics that also shape his personality are the *“elegance, the accuracy and the competence that emerge when he approaches his job through phone calls, meeting or e-mails. This has a reflection also in how people perceive his role; there is a kind of admiration and respect that this natural attitude generates in the people he works with”* (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix). According to the author’s experience and observations, his general attitude inspires confidence. Also on the administrative side of the job he is impeccable. His capabilities include very technical administrative tasks such as international taxation, business management, and international copyright collection.

The interview continued smoothly and Paul then elaborated further saying that being a manager for him means “*create and manage a functional team*” that could be composed by “*a record label, singers/song-writers, producers, booking agents, social media marketing experts, publishers, lawyers, and accountants*”. “*I oversee, direct and coordinate all these professional roles and functions in order to achieve the set targets*”. *There are other managers that have a more artistic approach; they give advice on the arrangements and sounds. I have a more administrative approach, but this doesn't mean less creative. You need creativity to build, manage and sustain a long-life career in music*” (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix).

According to the author's observations¹⁷ a relevant aspect that completes Paul's approach to management processes is related to his attitude toward the creative product. He prefers not to affect the creative process of the artists in the sense that he never advises on the use of a particular sound, of a melody or any other kind of detail related to the creative process of the music of the artists he manages. It is not because he doesn't have the skills to advise. It is been observed¹⁸ that this is more a sort of ethical choice. He prefers not to interfere in the artist's creative sphere. He actually prefers to listen to the artist's needs and together with him find the best solution to meet those needs. On the artistic side for example this could mean suggesting to the artist a songwriter, a producer or an arranger that could help to achieve the desired result. He basically provides the artists with tools that could help them to reach a next level and meet the target. The analysis will come back soon to this point analyzing the strategic processes related to artist management operations.

Enrico was interviewed the day after Paul, in Piacenza, in the offices of My Management that are his main operative base. People at Spaceship Management work most of the time not being physically in the same office every day. Paul generally works from Parma, Enrico from Piacenza and Francesco from London and Milan. They speak to each other regularly everyday on the phone and via skype and do collective meetings all together in the office at least five/six times per month.

That day the author and Enrico were alone in the office and the conversation took place in the comfortable environment of the coffee room. The mood was very relaxed and the author felt Enrico more than willing to be interviewed about his job, giving a personal perspective on what he does every day and what he has done in the past. The conversation started asking a personal definition of artist management as a profession according to his experience.

Enrico answered as follows:

¹⁷ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 15th March 2015

¹⁸ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 15th March 2015

“I think that the main task of a manager is to capitalize on the potentialities of an artistic project. From this point a manager branches out his activity at 360 degrees around the artist, creating and managing the best team for the project. Then the daily activity of a manager is to coordinate all these partners in order to balance their work towards a common target, the manager presents the artist to the market, helps him to monetize his work, his art” (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix).

The author observed¹⁹ how Enrico could be considered a great communicator. One of his peculiarities is the ability to transfer ideas to people and inspire them of their value. He is able to create enthusiasm and empathy with his interlocutor. This can be argued to be a very important quality for a manager. It is part of the daily job to filter and give a scale of priority to the artist’s ideas that will be realized with external partners, sponsors for example. In these cases the manager, represents the artist, in communicating that idea that might need also an economic contribution by the partner. It’s fundamental in this process being able to communicate effectively.

He is also very capable of doing negotiations but sometimes leaves to Paul the technical details of the agreements. According to what he reported during the interviews, he does not like administrative tasks and, unlike Paul, he participates actively in the creative processes of the artists he manages being discretely present, when it comes to taking decisions about any video or particular arrangement of a song and giving his personal perspective. According to Paul’s interview, *“one of Enrico’s best qualities as a manager is the use of long time vision and strategy”* (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix).

On a first level of interpretation, the approaches of both Paul and Enrico help to broadly define, the artist management profession within the case of study. Therefore artist’s management, as operated by Spaceship Management, could be described as a multifaceted consulting activity that includes strategic and administrative processes activated by managers in accordance with their artists, in order to achieve common targets. It constitutes part of the process, the ability of a manager to create, maintain and motivate a team. The manager guides the team towards the set targets in order to present the artist’s creative product to its potential audience (market) in the most effective way.

According to what has been reported in the previous paragraph, all the elements highlighted in the definition of artist management profession within the case of study, corroborated the definitions which emerged from the first three sections of chapter two of the current work where the author reviewed a selection of the literature regarding the matter of investigation. What could be

¹⁹ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 16th March 2015

considered new and worthy of further reflection is the aspect of the consulting activity of the manager which, it could be argued to imply, important concepts that will help to further extend the analysis of the artist management processes related to the concept of success, within the case of study.

According to Kitay and Wright (2003:22) “*The consulting role*” of an artist managers could be explored “*along two main dimensions: “firstly the nature of their expertise on which the consulting activity is based, secondly the nature of the boundary relationship between the consultant (Manager) and the client”*”(Artist).

The next two sections, will explore these two main dimensions underlying the consulting activity of the company; its expertise and the characteristics of the relationship between artist and manager that the consultancy activity implies, will be analyzed in connection with the interpretation of data. The author will explore these concepts within the case of study in relation to their relevance to artist management processes associated to the concept of success. The role of knowledge will be analysed, investigating the place it takes in the professional training of artist managers at Spaceship and the importance that could assume in the market, enhancing the power of negotiation of the company. The artist/manager relationship will be explored from two different points of view that include both the personal and business side of the rapport. The author argues that examining both these two perspectives could be considered key in the investigation of the processes related to the concept of success.

4.4 The role of knowledge in artist management

For a company like Spaceship, the knowledge and expertise of its artist managers could be considered the main company’s assets, that contribute to the process of value creation/disruption that this study argues to be created by the interaction between a manager and his artist.

The concept of intensive knowledge helps to deepen the reflection on this theme.

According to Starbuck (1992:715) the term “*knowledge-intensive*” reproduces the classification that economists give to firms “*as capital- intensive or labour-intensive*” where these labels highlight the importance of capital or labour as production input.

Capital-intensive firms can be defined the those where capital has more relevance than labour; labour-intensive firms, those instead where labour has the predominance (1992:715). Thus, by analogy, as reported by Starbuck (1992:715) a knowledge-intensive firm could be defined as a company where knowledge and expertise are more important than other production inputs.

Knowledge, within the case of study, could be considered not as an accumulation of theoretical information but as a baggage of past experiences and network of contacts that have been gained over time by the members of the company, during their professional activity in the music industry.

According to the interviews with both Paul and Enrico, they didn't have a particular specific training in artist management. When they started, especially Paul, this profession was still partially not recognized as a specific profession or not totally clear in its definition as he says (see Paul's interview, attached in the appendix).

They learned their job by doing it, discovering its nuances day by day. Paul says:

“Now there are courses at Universities that teach about artist management. I think that there are skills that could be taught. The more a manager knows about the technical aspects of his work, the more effective he can be” (Paul Sears, interview attached in the appendix).

This statement offers an opportunity for reflection, which includes the authors' direct experience and helps to better understand Paul's answer related to the role of knowledge in the artist management profession.

The author of the current research, during his training at the University, has been taught many technical aspects of the artist management activity as, for example the structure of recording or publishing contracts, how the collecting societies collect and distribute rights payments, how to do a business plan for a live tour, how social networks work or more generally how the music industry has evolved. But it was just a broad-spectrum understanding; the real learning of all these aspects happened when the author began to experience in the field, the problematic situations of the artist management activity.

Competencies have been acquired facing problematic situations (Schon,1983). This is exactly what also Paul and Enrico explain during their interviews, in relation to their personal experience related to the learning process of the profession.

Paul: *“I didn't receive any formal education to become an artist manager, I just learned the trade in the field day by day making mistakes and trying to avoid making them again in the future”* (Paul Sears, interview attached in the appendix).

Enrico: *“Every day I learn something new. Our job is sometimes mysterious and there are no rules, so it's always up to you. Sometimes you do the right thing sometimes not, it's part of the job. What is important is not to make the same mistake twice”* (Enrico Mutti, interview attached in the appendix)

Knowledge covers another important role in management processes, in particular the possibility of attracting other artists that might need management services and could have relevance in enhancing the company's power of negotiation within the market.

Being recognized as a company that, in recent years has developed projects such as Benny Benassi, Crookers and The Bloody Beetroots, even if these could sound totally anonymous to a common reader (according to data) helps to create a reputation among the competitors which opens the possibility to attract new clients

Razihel (New artist): *"I finally choose to work with Spaceship because, I think that the experience gained with Benny and Bloody Beetroots will help the development of my career"*²⁰

Merk and Kremont (New artist): *"We decided to finally approach Spaceship because we would like to see our project reach the position gained by Benny. It would be great for us to reach that level"*²¹

Beyond Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots, Spaceship, as previously mentioned, manages six other talented artists that could become the new breakthrough electro/pop artist of the 2016. The author had the possibility to assist and critically observe the conversations with Paul and Enrico during the first contact with them before they have been chosen to be part of the company's artists' roster. In most cases, all the artists knew Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots, demonstrating admiration for their work and aspiring to follow the same path and looking forward to receiving the right advice by their future managers.

So expertise and knowledge gained with artists like Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots, as emerges from data, help the company to attract new artists activating a virtuous circle that has also an impact into the market.

Spaceship is a very specialized firm and the artists that it manages are active in a very specific market segment, which could be defined as electro-pop dance music. As reported by Enrico in his interview, *"Benny and The Bloody Beetroots are at the top level of this genre, where the main stakeholders are well defined"* (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix). According to the author's experience as a colleague of both Paul and Enrico, they both have well established relationship with all the main record labels, booking agents, Pr companies, publishers, and, even when a new stakeholder comes in the play, it happens to be contacted and get in touch very quickly.

This asset is extremely important when, as is happening in this period in the company, the management team is working to present or propose to the market new talented artists.

²⁰ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 25th October 2012

²¹ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 19th March 2015

These long-term relationships help to introduce new projects from the main door immediately adding value to them.

According to Paul's and Enrico's interviews, this is the kind of expertise that can't be learned at the University but can be only achieved by gaining competencies and building professional relationships in the field through experience.

4.4.1 Section summary

The current section has explored the role of the knowledge within the company. According to the respondents, their knowledge is constituted not by an accumulation of theoretical information but by a baggage of past experiences and network of contacts that have been generated over time during their professional activity. Their competencies have been acquired facing problematic situations. It has been found within the case that the expertise of the company's managers contributes to enhance the company's negotiating position. The reputation of being managers of successful artists, activates a virtuous cycle that permits to attract new artists and, at the same time, to develop them, through the network of contacts generated over time by the company.

4.5 Artist/Manager relationships

Beyond the role of knowledge previously examined (exploring the nature of the elements that underpin the consulting activity of artist managers at Spaceship) this study argues that investigating the artist/manager relationship could be considered key in defining the managing processes related to an artist's success in the case of Spaceship. This concept corroborates what also emerged during the review of the literature in particular in Watson (2002) and Morrow (2013) as mentioned in chapter two of the current study.

The author reports here the answers of both Enrico and Paul as starting point of the analysis regarding this theme. The question posed during the conversation offered the possibility to respondents to reflect on what, in their experience, underpins the relationship with their artists.

Enrico answered as follows: *"Trust, as in any human relationship in life, is the basis. Of course it is a business relationship but humanity is fundamental. I try not to become a friend but a reliable consultant"*(Enrico Mutti, interview attached in the appendix).

Paul elaborates a little further: *"Mutual trust, about the targets to be achieved. A common vision. Our job implies also to manage amounts of money. Here the trust is fundamental. I think it's*

something that should be built gradually and it grows bigger when results come. It's a very personal relationship. Not only with the main manager but also with all the other members of the company, with roles and different nuances" (Paul Sears, interview attached in the appendix).

According to the respondents' answers, it could be argued that the relationship between artist and manager could be broadly defined, within the case, as a business relationship that implies a deep personal involvement where mutual trust between manager and artist is essential.

From a first level of interpretation of the text, the relationship involves both a business (economic) and a personal (social) aspect that need to be the object of reflection.

According to the author's observations²² the business relationship could be regulated by a contract but this is not necessary at Spaceship. Usually the contract is set up for a certain period of time within which, both artist and managers, give time to each other to achieve their set goals. It could be usually a minimum of three years for a new project; the rapport could be also set on a project-cycle basis; for example the release of one or more music albums. With Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots there are no management deals in place, there is a sort of an unwritten gentlemen's agreement between the parties. The company and the artists agree on a % of the gross income that would be generated by the projects as a compensation for management services. This % goes from a minimum of 10% for the most well established artists to a 20% for the new ones. According to the author's experience, this kind of relationship between artists and managers is common in artist management companies that manage very few artists such as Spaceship. In this type of "boutique" company, the relationship, most of the time, takes place from the very beginning of the introduction of the project into the market and the basis of the link between the manager and the artist resides in their mutual trust. The author has experienced this type of relationship with the artists he manages and could help to deepen further the reflection on this theme. In particular the concept of risk could be worthy of additional reflection. It could be argued, accordingly to the author's experience, that a certain component of risk could be a driver in achieving artist success in relationships not regulated by a contract. This condition could imply the possibility to be fired by the artist at any time contributing to motivate the manager to achieve targets.

As emerges from data and according to the author's observations, this kind of business relationship based on a percentage of the results instead of on a fee for services has an impact on the determination to achieve results and it could be considered a driver that contributes to the achievement of artist success. This type of rapport implies that the consultancy service can't be

²² See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 17th December 2012

viewed only as a market transaction where a client asks for a service that then will be provided by an external consultant. The manager could be actually considered as a partner of the artist in the project, having a share of it.

According to what emerges from both the interviews with Paul and Enrico, this business relationship could include a personal involvement. The high level of proximity between the manager and the artist could blur sometimes the boundaries between the roles of consultant and customer. Both Paul and Enrico are not friends of their artists. It's important to separate the professional side of the job, they say (Interviews attached in the appendix).

Examining the concept of mutual trust within the case will help to deepen the analysis related to artist success. Mutual is a key term meaning a one to one involvement in the trust process.

A manager at Spaceship, as soon as the relationship has been set up, starts to represent the artist acting as a filter between the musical project and all the stake-holders involved in it. From the artist side trust needs to be huge, he virtually assigns all the business aspects of his work to another person. If it's rather intuitive to read the trust relationship from the artist's side, it is also worth reflecting on some aspects related to how trust needs to be also accorded to the artist. The act of representation implies that, not only is an artist seen through his manager, but also a manager is, in a certain way, represented by the artist. The artist through his manager assumes obligations related to the delivery of songs to the record label, to the publisher, interviews to media or posts on social networks for the sponsors, just to name a few. These, become the tasks that an artist, within the case of study, needs to accomplish as soon as he has set up partnership with other professionals involved in the project. His attitude and approach on respecting deadlines and meeting the agreed commitments, contributes to create a reputation for him and for his managers towards the stakeholders involved.

According to respondent's answers trust in this sense, forms the basis of the professional relationship and is the fundamental for a serene path that could conduct to the achievement of the set targets.

4.5.1 Section summary

The relationship between artist and manager within the case has been defined as a business relationship that implies a deep personal involvement, where mutual trust between manager and artist is essential. The type of business relationship, based on a percentage of the results instead of

on a fee for service, has an impact on the purpose to achieve results that could be considered an important driver for a manager for the achievement of artist success.

4.6 Artist/Manager Dynamics

Having reflected on the importance of the roles of knowledge and artist/management relationship as founding elements of the consulting activity argued by the current study as fundamental in examining the artist management processes related to the concept of success, this investigation, in the present section, will explore how an artist manager thinks and operates, within the case, in the process of deciding the opportunity to start working and invest time and resources on the development of a musical project. This theme will help to deepen the analysis on the matter of study, contributing to define the artist management processes operated by Spaceship's managers.

As stated by Morrow (2013:13) "*the dynamics between the artist and the manager should form the basis of any study of artist management; the managerial role is intricately connected to the artists and their work*".

Before exploring this theme it could be useful to briefly report the typology of artists and the way in which they get in touch with the company in order to give the reader a more complete spectrum of the context.

4.6.1 Typology of artists and typology of approaches

According to the data gathered through participant observation²³ and based on the interview transcripts, it has been possible to identify at least four main categories of artists that have been commonly encountered during the author's period of observation within the company.

These categories will be briefly reported as follows:

- a) Talented artists with no experience of the market. They have great capabilities and artistic talent but they never received any feedback from the audience. They have never thought about the possibility to have a manager and a professional team to support their project.
- b) Talented artists with some initial feedback from the market. These artists have already experienced the opportunity to expose their musical product through social media, self-releasing it to the audience without any external professional help.

²³ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 14th February 2013

They have received positive feedback and started to generate a following on social networks. Among the followers, in addition to music lovers and potential fans, there are signs of interest from industry professionals like music blogs, journalists, record labels. This type of artists never had the possibility to work with a professional team but they feel the need for it.

c) Talented artists who have already experienced the market and have worked professionally in the industry. They received positive feedback from the audience, but have not had not a positive experience with their management. They are looking for another manager.

d) Talented artists who have been present in the market from several years with the same manager and are happy with him/her. This is the case of the artists like Benny and The Bloody Beetroots that Spaceship is currently managing.

According to data²⁴, at Spaceship, there are basically two different approaches to get in touch with the artists. The author defines these approaches as “Pull” vs “Push”.

The “Pull” approach is constituted by the external request of management services that could come from artists or sometimes from other music professionals that are involved in the daily working environment of the company.

It happens quite often to receive information about a new project from record label executives or booking agents. This usually happens by email or phone call or even during meetings.

The artists generally send their demos via email or through messages sent to the social media of the company. As a result of the observations, the author confirms that all the material submitted is subject to review and feedback to the sender. The company receives at least thirty requests per month. An example of an artist selected through the “Pull approach” is described in the next section.

The Push approach happens when a member of the company sees a particular potential in an artist, which captured his/her attention commonly through social media. In this case it is the manager who tries to contact directly the artist in order to fix a meeting and examine the possibility to start working together.

At Spaceship this kind of approach is really rare and happens only with artists of group a) or b). The author had the possibility to see only two relationships born in this way since 2010, the year he started to work for the company. An example of how a relationship is started with a type b) artist contacted through a “push approach” is described at section 4.8.2.

²⁴ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 14th February 2013

The push approach is then been observed to occur only with artists of type a) and b) mainly because they don't have already a manager. Both Paul and Enrico, according to the author's observations²⁵, never talked about or thought about the possibility to contact an artist managed by another company in order to propose to come to work with them. Both Paul and Enrico might see this, according to the author's experience and familiarity with them, as a tremendous unfairness. As will be further analyzed in detail in the next section they both prefer to work with new artists that never experienced having a manager.

4.6.2 Choosing a new artist

The previous section explored the typologies of artists and the approaches through which they can get in contact with the company. The author considers the previous section fundamental in order proceed further in the analysis. The following section will investigate how a manager thinks and operates in the process of evaluating the opportunity to work with an artist.

As it was previously reported, the consultancy work of an artist manager, within the case of study, is not based on a fixed fee. It depends on how much the artist is able to generate and it is based on a percentage of that gross income. It could take time for a project to start generating profits for the manager so, it could be worth of reflection, how a manager at Spaceship, decides to dedicate his efforts to the development of a new project.

According to the data emerging from both the interviews and from the participant observation of the author, Enrico is keener to work with artists who did not have a past experience with a manager. He feels personally more stimulated to shape something from the very beginning instead of beginning to work on a project, which has been started and set by another manager who eventually achieved unsatisfying results for the artist.

The work of an artist manager, as he affirms in the interview attached in the appendix of this study, relates also to the management of artist expectations. A well-established artist could be really demanding in terms of result, compared with a new artist, especially if he had an unproductive previous experience with another manager. According to the data, also Paul prefers to develop new artists, but he is always open to evaluate the possibility to work with any type of artist, if he feels engaged in the project.

²⁵ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 14th February 2013

It will be helpful in this phase to extract and comment on portions of the interviews in order to deepen the analysis and examine how the processes of selecting an artist could possibly affect an artist's success.

Paul says: *“The main aspect now is that I don't have to decide by myself. I do have a team to share ideas with. The first process that I elaborate in mind in evaluating a project is: may I help this project to develop to the next step? I do need to recognize if I can contribute massively to an important development. The other aspect is related to what we could define feeling. I do need to feel a vibe. Then I have to find a common language with the artist and a target to reach together”*(Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix).

Paul answered according to his attitude towards the profession. He is a very rational person. This appears also in his way to approach and evaluate new musical projects. From this answer emerges that he gives more importance to the pragmatic side of the job; his main concern is related to the concrete possibility to bring results to the project on which he decides to work together with the team. *“Team”* in this case means the rest of the company in particular his partners Enrico and Francesco.

This approach, according to his account, is also related to his experience gained as a manager. He actually did not choose to become a manager, it just happened. He was in the right place at the right time with the package of skills useful to support what he was called to do. His ability to plan, organize, coordinate, supervise, negotiate and the fact of being an English native speaker, working with Italian artists that need to manage their career internationally, led him to successfully manage an artist like Benny Benassi, since his launch into the market and guiding him towards the productions for Madonna going on to the winning of a Grammy Award.

From his answer emerges another important element related to the processes that could lead him to start working to the development of a project. This element relates to personal feelings. These can be shaped in at least in two different meanings. One is related to the emotion created by the general effect that the project has on him, starting from the music. He describes it as a *“vibe”*. Music has to hit him emotionally. It does have an impact on him.

Then feelings are also related to personal interaction with the member/s of the project. The feeling would need to be established in terms of sharing the same vision and targets with the artists; but he also needs to feel personal compatibility with the artist. This connects back to the analysis made in the previous section related to the importance that personal involvement underlying the professional relationship assumes between the manager and the artist.

Paul adds “*What makes the difference to me are intangible things. Talent, charisma, originality, communication skills that are elements that I feel or I think I’m able to feel because I listen to new music and meet artists since almost thirty years and I guess I’m able to notice someone who stands out*” (Paul Sears, interview attached to the appendix).

Enrico’s answer, has similarities to Paul’s and helps to further explore his personal approach and way of thinking during the process.

He says: “*a project needs to tell me something new. I think that in more than twenty years I could be able to identify potentialities. I need to feel something that could be brought to a next level. This, I think is the first driver for me. Then I structure my thought in an operative way. Artistically I try to figure out, if needed, what can be done to the song in order to take it to a next level. Simultaneously, my thought, addresses to how this music could reach the market. If something really hit me, I share it with people that I trust that could give me feedback to confirm my perception. These could be colleagues, other artists, agents, publicists, critics and friends*” (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix).

Even if they are professionals with different backgrounds that led them to approach to artist management profession in different ways, both Paul and Enrico apply very similar processes in evaluating the opportunity to start working with a new artist.

Enrico highlights the “*character or the general attitude of the artist*” as a distinguishing feature that could lead him to start working on a new project.

“*In the past*”, he says, “*when I started to work professionally as a manager, it was more a matter of instinct, now I learned how also the artist’s character is important*” (Enrico Mutti, interview attached to the appendix).

Paul and Enrico report that this ability to structure the process of understanding how to proceed in evaluating the possibility to start working with a new artist comes with experience. This process, observed by the author ²⁶, corroborates the studies of (Schon, 1987) and then of Kolb et al. (2001) about respectively reflective practice and experiential learning. According to data, both Paul and Enrico, have experienced a process of trial and error that led them to gain competencies and better structure their workflow, through experiencing and solving problematic situations.

The current study corroborates also Andersen’s (2000:225) research about experiential learning which characterises it as “*continued reflection upon earlier experiences in order to add and*

²⁶ see the reflexive journal, Sept. 9th 2013

transform them into deeper understanding. This process lasts as long as the learner lives and has access to memory". The quality of reflective thought brought by the learner is of greater significance to the eventual learning outcomes than the nature of the experience itself. "*Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*"(Foley, 2000:230).

One episode that has been witnessed by the author²⁷ of this study relates to the experience that Spaceship had with an artist who sent his demo to the company in late 2011. As soon as it was played in the office, Paul, Enrico, the author and the other members of the team at Spaceship, were amazed about the quality of the music. So Enrico e-mailed back the artist in order to meet him personally.

After the first meeting, the business relationship took place and the primary management operations, led the artist to an international recording and publishing deal with a very credible and active American independent record label. In six months, one of his songs was included in an important commercial that was also massively broadcasted during the opening ceremony of the US Super Bowl²⁸ 2012. The commercial was then also programmed in heavy rotation on TV both in US and Europe. This result, from a management side was seen as a great achievement and an important step to start to build several other activities around it. The same approach was shared also by the record label that asked for a follow-up record. This kind of unexpected positive result generated a lot of pressure on the artist that led him to a creative crisis, which is still ongoing today. From that episode he was no longer able to generate any other complete song.

The importance of looking at the general attitude of the new artists to work with has been confirmed also from the record label executives interviewed²⁹ by the author, included in the data that the current study is analyzing. From those interviews that are attached to this research, there emerged as fundamental factors to achieve a long time successful career, beyond the quality of the artist product also the following factors:

- The general attitude of the artists toward work: They need to be able to demonstrate their ability to cope with heavy workloads and strict deadlines
- Great ambition and will to succeed
- Determination to stand out

²⁷ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 28th March 2013

²⁸The Super Bowl is the annual [championship](#) game of the [National Football League](#) (NFL), the highest level of professional [football](#) in the [United States](#) for more information please visit <http://www.nfl.com/>

²⁹ See Interviews with PML1 and PML2 attached

- Clear ideas about the artistic identity to be exploited
- Sense of duty
- Abnegation towards work
- Capacity to communicate

As the current study will further develop through the analysis of the data gathered, these elements along with the artist's music could be considered as the initial potential value that the artist manager could contribute to develop and exploit into the market.

4.6.3 Section Summary

The current study has so far analyzed the background to which the company operates exploring also the different experiences of the founders in order to introduce the reader to the artist management processes applied by them.

The profession of the artist manager, within the case of study, has been defined as a consulting activity worthy of investigation along two main dimensions: firstly the nature of the knowledge of the artist managers of the company on which the consulting activity is based, secondly the nature of the boundary relationship between the consultant (Manager) and the client' (Artist).

These two elements are considered by the current study as fundamental in management processes related to artist success.

The study proceeded investigating the typology of artists encountered by the respondents according to their experience in the field, and then explored the processes that underlie the managers' opportunity to start working with an artist. The study has also mentioned the role of reflective practice and experiential learning in contributing to generate their workflow.

From the analysis of the interviews, what has emerged as important factors are, the relevance of the quality of the music submitted but also some personal characteristics, inherent in the artist's personality. Both these elements constitute the basis of the evaluation of a new project operated by the artist managers at Spaceship.

The study at this point, before introducing the reader to a reflection on the concept of strategy, will explore, analyzing the data collected by the author on the field, the contemporary music industry in which the Spaceship's managers daily operate. This will expand the analysis of the context of the artist management processes investigated.

4.7 Music industry Context

In order to further extend the analysis of the management processes operated by Spaceship, this section will explore the contemporary music context highlighting some themes that match what emerged during the review of the literature; the author considers key the following section so as to continue the exploration of how the company operates in relation to the concept of success within the case.

The context will be analyzed from two main different points of view. The one of the music industry, represented by the sample of two presidents of the local division of two Major Record Labels, who are connected to the network of the company, and then, from the point of view of Spaceship's artist managers; Paul, Enrico and the author. The Presidents of the Majors will be here respectively reported as PML1 and PML2. Even if their interviews were very brief, they led to significant reflections.

The analysis will start extracting parts from the interviews.

The first interview happened in Milan in the middle of July 2014. PML1 was contacted by email. The author specified that beyond his regular professional involvement in artist management, he was conducting a research project at London Metropolitan University with the aim of exploring management processes related to artist success. He promptly answered the message, giving two alternatives of availability for the meeting that week. This responsiveness surprised the researcher because usually, for requests related to the normal working activity, it could take more time to receive a positive answer and obtain a meeting.

The interview took place a couple of days later, in a restaurant, at lunchtime. The mood was friendly and relaxed and he was extremely keen to speak without asking anything about the author's double role, as of both a professional and a researcher. The perception was that he felt very comfortable to speak about the matter requested, seeing it as a moment of escapism.

The conversation lasted around one hour. He was very frank and direct, giving important insight about the context of the contemporary music industry related to artist management.

He said: *"Some managers are naive. Not you of course, you know it (he laughs). They just look at the number of records sold, the position on the chart. They don't look at the diversification of the revenues. They just want to discuss a royalty advance"*³⁰. (Interview with PML1, attached to the appendix).

³⁰ According to Strasser (2010) an advance is composed by *"Monies paid by one party to another as an incentive to sign a contract. In a recording or publishing contract, this payment is often a prepayment of royalties from future*

This is an important insight, from what is normally a very inaccessible point of view, the one of a Major Label senior executive. It clearly emerges from the text how, nowadays, the possibility to monetize the revenues from music have been multiplied as well as how some managers are still anchored to the old model.

On a different level of interpretation that also takes into account the tone of voice, his facial expression and the general posture of his body, he was criticizing the fact that some managers are losing opportunities for their artists, negotiating agreements that are part of the past and not taking into account how the industry is moving forward.

According to the interview's transcript, PML1 refers in particular to the fact that the industry is now completely conscious that the business shifted from a model based on record sales in which is incorporated the musical performance, to the sale of a content, which could be also incorporated in a record but that possibly could produce revenues in several other ways.

He continued saying: *“On evaluating a project we of course still look at the business plan and sales forecast in order to assess the investment. But, before the advent of the digital world the lines of this document were just a few. Now, the lines that were less important before, have gained a significant importance”*

According to the transcript of the interview, the respondent refers to the opportunities offered by the licensing of music to third parties, by the synchronization of music with films, videogames and TV-shows and by the income generated by the collection of the performing rights (generated by radio airplay, TV broadcasting and live shows). According to the data these are revenues that the record labels are able to generate and sometimes remain a point that some managers do not consider with the attention deserved during the negotiation phase of a recording agreement.

As reported by PML1 the industry is conscious that it cannot survive only counting on selling physical copies of records and needs to change its strategy embracing all the different income streams offered by the current market.

The interview went on discussing how music is nowadays accessible in many ways; in particular through digital streaming services, which constitute half of the market of recorded music. Digital sales have in 2015 reached the physical sales for the first time (IFPI, DMR,2015). Within the digital side, the streaming services continue to spread their popularity in the consumption habits of the music listeners despite the digital downloads that are constantly declining (IFPI, DMR 2015).

earnings. In effect, this income is a loan to an artist or songwriter for the production and delivery of one or more recordings or songs”.

PML1 reported: *“Before the advent of the digital technologies, the aim of the industry was to monetize only the possession of music, now the access to it. The industry is evolving from a model of ownership where music is incorporated in a physical product like a CD for example, to an access model, where music is physically stored in remote servers and users can access it from everywhere. The online streaming rewards the listening. The more your song is listened to, the more money you get. You can buy a CD and don’t ever listen to it”* (Interview with PML1, attached to the appendix).

The conversation led to an important reflection made by the interviewee and here reported by the author according to the interpretation of the text of the interview. In the old model, the one related to the business of manufacturing physical copies, the revenues of recorded music were calculated mostly on the number of units sold. That data alone did not give any particular insight about the demography of the people who bought the product and in particular, if that product would have been really listened to or not by the customer. The profits, as well the success of a record, was measured mostly on the action of selling the units. With the advent of streaming services record labels ultimately sell infinite numbers of plays that could be currently only experienced through computers and smart-phones. The action of selling is not concluded with the purchase of the record but it’s a constant consumption flow.

This dramatic shift, according to what emerged from the interview with PML1, helps the reflection on at least two dimensions, one social and one economic. The possess of the records in the old model, the one in which there was no other possibility to store music, contributed to place and identify a person in a social context according to the type of music listened and shared with friends. This context was basically partly inaccessible by the Major Labels. Nowadays the industry, thanks to the digital technology is instead able to classify the typology of listeners, advise them and address their preferences through the systems implied in the streaming services. So where the ownership of music in the old model was a way also to express a listener’s identity, now it becomes a consumption pattern useful to help the industry to expand its business.

PML1 affirmed: *“Digital technology helps to give a name and a surname to everything. This streaming modality of consumption of music is nowadays the most used by young people. Kids have time to spend online to listen to the music. With the streaming will be advantaged the artist that will be listened by young people”* (Interview with PML1, attached to the appendix).

As emerges from the analysis of the transcription of the interview, according to PML1, the streaming services are nowadays the prerogative of young people in particular aged 18-24 (IFPI, DMR, 2015). This is mainly for two reasons: one is related to the fact that the listeners are over many years transforming themselves in generations that never experienced the possession of music,

the other to the fact that to listen to the music you need to have time to spend to do it. And young people have a lot of spare time according by PML1.

The other interview worth of reflection is the one made with PML2. The author contacted him in the same way happened with PML1. He didn't show particular curiosity about this request, which was extraneous to the normal work activity. The meeting happens very shortly in his office in mid-July, the day after the one with PML1.

From the interview emerged several themes highlighted also in the PML1's interview that confirm how also the Major label represented by PML2 is facing consciously the digital shift of the industry. The author decided at this point in the reflection to extract parts of the interview that help to advance the analysis.

As reported by PML2 : *“Nowadays, as never before in the past, it is important to have fans. A fan is not a general listener. A fan is a person who listens to your music time after time, comes to see the concerts, buys the merchandising, follows the artist on social networks and participates to the whole artist experience”* (Interview with PML2, attached to the appendix).

This is an important statement, which is worthy of reflection according to what happens within the company in relation to the use of social networks. A significant part of management processes, as this study will analyze in the section dedicated to the concept of success, is building a perception around the artist which as will be soon analyzed within the case it's been affected by several factors, which include image, artistic identity, results in terms of audience impact and media response.

The study will report in the following paragraphs the results of an observation made by the author on the 15th of September³¹, which is included in the appendix of this study. In that occasion Paul, Enrico, and Valentina, who takes care of the artists' social networks within the company, discussed about the importance of social networks and digital services. The author transcribed the observation the day after and is reported as follows.

According to Enrico, the streaming services help to make the music more accessible to the potential audience and the social media help to promote it. The digital shift is offering to the artists and to their managers tools that are extremely valuable to engage fans and build a relationship with them. Paul engaged the conversation saying that, social networks are key in the daily operations of a manager at Spaceship. Social media have become a crucial tool for many aspects of success in contemporary music careers. Successfully building a fan base via social media involves providing

³¹³¹ See Reflexive Journal attached

diverse and well-timed content to fans and creating connections with other artists in order to expand the awareness of the artistic identity and its perception.

Valentina then joined the conversation adding that “*The most used social networks within the company are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and each one is used in a particular way to convey specific information to fans*”. According to what Enrico explained at the end of the meeting, Facebook could be considered the diary of the artists related to their profession. Here the artists share information related to their activity as musicians. They basically announce news; it could be a new album release, the preview of a record’s artwork showed exclusively to fans, the share of a well written article published by a journalist. They also announce tours and any information that is related to the musical project and could be useful to update the fans. This is done basically in two ways, by the artist himself, who speaks directly from his own voice. In this case he shares emotions and messages that often have a personal involvement, like personal thoughts about a song or a performance. The other type of communications is made by the team and are related to communicate official information with a wording that does not emotionally involve the artist. These have a signature that helps the fan base to understand that it is not the artist speaking, like for example #teambennybenassi or #teamthebloodybeetroots. Twitter is used as a blog. Through this social network, Spaceship’s artists are free to express their opinion on several themes beyond their activity as musicians. Of course this is another way to connect to fans and build a relationship. Because here a fan could know a little bit more the artists. In particular what they think about specific themes as for example sports, other music or movies. Instagram is another important tool. This helps the fan to get involved in the life of the artists. They usually post here pictures related to their life. It could be tour life but also personal moments. Of course this as well is a medium for artists’ promotion, posting album’s artworks, work in progress of the live performances, outfits and any other image that could be related to artist activity, especially backstage.

4.7.1 Section summary

The current section helped to corroborate some of themes emerging from the literature review, adding, to the literature about the contemporary music context, from the point of view of professionals that operate within the industry. The next section will introduce and analyse the concept of strategy and its importance in management processes related to the concept of artist success within the case of study.

4.8 Artist management operations and Strategy

The previous section has highlighted, through the author's reflection on respondents' answers and observations, some aspects related to the music industry in which Spaceship's artist managers work nowadays, in order to further expand the context and introduce the concept of strategic operations.

As it has been explored by the author in section 2.6 and it has been also corroborated by the data gathered through interviews and participant observation, strategy is a key concept that has been cited by both the respondents as a fundamental component of their daily working activity.

The current section will explore artist management processes related to strategy operated by the company in order to give an insight into what happens within the case of study in relation to this theme.

According to the selection of literature reviewed by the author, strategy could be broadly defined as a "*dynamic process*" which needs to take into account "*adaptation*" (Stacey, 1993) so as "*to ensure survival of organizations*" (Warren et al., 2013) "*in highly complex, uncertain and competitive environments*" (Grewal and Tansuhaj, 2001), "*setting of, targets and objectives and monitoring if they have met*" (Faulkner and Bowman, 1995:2).

This definition, describes some of the characteristics related to strategy and confirms its relevance within the case of study, in relation to the uncertainty of the complex and competitive environment of the contemporary music industry in which Spaceship's managers need to operate, daily coping with both the dynamicity and unpredictability of the market.

The author will examine here the respondents' answers related to the theme of strategy in order to explore how they relate to it, within their context. The analysis of this concept will start from Paul's and Enrico's definition of it in relation to their daily operations.

Paul

"Strategy for me is *what you have to do, to go from A to B; identifying what are the intermediate steps and choosing in what order you have to follow them to reach the target. Conscious that, those steps and their order could change during the way and you have to be clear minded and responsive to react*". In this process the artist could be able to dedicate himself to the production of his art and the manager to the achievement of that target" (Interview with Paul Sears, attached to the appendix).

Enrico

“It’s like having a palette full of colors and start to choose the ones I want to use to paint the canvas. What I will paint has been decided with the artist. The style and techniques are part of my sphere. We set together the targets. I then develop a strategy in order to achieve them”. Strategy means for me the creation of a team and the creation of the path that will help to reach what has been set (Interview with Enrico Mutti, attached to the appendix).

Both the definitions of Enrico and Paul have similarities with what emerged from the review of the literature and several aspects have been confirmed.

According to a literal interpretation of the text, the respondents confirm that strategy within their experience needs to take into account the definition of targets and the capacity to adapt and re-arrange those targets during the path to achieve them.

What is related to the specific case of study and will be worthy of further reflection is the dimensions that strategy assumes within the relationship with the artist in terms of setting targets and externally between the managers and the stakeholders in terms of achievements of those targets. These two aspects, which will be soon analysed in the following sections, have been defined by the current study as *internal* and *external* dimension of the strategy process.

As reported by White (2004:7) *“Strategy assumes the existence of at least one strategist... who takes responsibility for the successful formulation (with the artists) and implementation (alone) of the strategy”* (White, 2004:7).

According to this definition, the artist manager within the case could be seen as the strategist who formulates the plan together with the artist and then implements it in a separate process where the artist is not part of it.

The following two sections will help to further extend the analysis on how these two dimensions take places within the operations put in place by the company.

It will be analysed how does the *“formulation”* phase arises internally in the sphere of the manager and the artist. Then the reflection will move then to the *“implementation”* phase of the strategic process that occurs externally between the manager and the stakeholders involved in the project.

4.8.1 Internal dimension of the strategic planning: direction and target setting

The previous section generally introduced the theme of strategy and highlighted how, within the case, the process assumes two separate and consequential phases defined as *formulation* and *implementation*. The current section will explore the *formulation* phase in its internal dimension that

takes place within the relationship between artist and manager. The author reminds the reader that what is being here reported is not a generalization but a reflection on the data gathered within the specific case of study. According to the procedures observed and also reported by the respondents, as soon as the agreement between the company and the artist has been set, the first operative step of the development plan is to agree on concrete targets to be achieved.

Enrico reported: *“Artists need to know who they are and where they want to go. This needs to be clear to them in order to help us to help them”* (Interview with Enrico Mutti, attached to the appendix).

Paul: *“Artist need to have a vision, managers must be able to embrace and empower that vision”* (Interview with Paul Sears, attached to the appendix).

The author has selected these two extracts from the respondents’ interviews because they could be considered representative of the company’s approach to the profession related to the formulation of an artist development strategy. According to the respondents, the “*root*” of a strategic plan, stems from the consciousness of an artist of what are his/her targets in the long and short term. The manager is seen as a professional that, as soon as he has embraced the artist’s vision, could help to better shape it in order to achieve those targets.

Paul continued saying:

“The artists need to know who they are and the managers need to know who the artists are. I don’t think that it makes sense to say to Bob Dylan: Hey Bob you are a little bit off-key here or to Woody Allen: Hey Woody, why don’t you go to the gym to gain some muscles? What I always tried to do is that, if I work with a Bob Dylan or a Woody Allen, I then try to help them to translate those peculiarities into an effective delivery of them to the audience; but they firstly have to be clear what those peculiarities mean to them. I have to be able accompany in this path without imposing anything” (Interview with Paul Sears, attached to the appendix).

This answer moved affectively the author. In fact until that question was posed by the author, the conversation was mainly focused on the themes of processes and operations discussed from a very technical and administrative point of view; Paul answered ironically to some questions but that answer brought the discourse back to a great level of seriousness and importance.

As emerges also from author’s observations³², these sentences perfectly describe Paul’s approach to his profession, which is agreed as one of the company’s main aims. The basis for working to the

³² See Reflexive Diary attached, observation made on 15th March 2015

development of a musical project, needs to start from a clear vision of the artist that need to be shared by the manager who uses his/her competencies and knowledge to grow it into the market and eventually add a value to it. This is an ongoing process that starts as soon as the relationship begins and that goes on as soon as it develops through the years. At Spaceship, as also reported by respondents, the managers help the artists, to develop their uniqueness, and this is what the company, as will be further explored, cultivates in artists.

Spaceship, as previously described, works mainly with well established artists such as Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots that have been managed by the company's founders for more than ten years and with new artists that have just been signed and need to be further developed.

According to the different stages of development of the artist, the company puts in place different strategic approaches and methods that will be described as follows.

According to the observations³³ of the author and to the respondents' answers, the strategic planning process generally takes place during a face-to-face meeting with the artists. At Spaceship this kind of meetings happens with the artists every one/two months. Of course there are several other occasions in which managers meet personally their artists, as for example the live shows or the meetings with other stakeholders (Record Label, Sponsors, Publicists, etc.).

But these kind of meetings related to strategy happens with the frequency set above.

With well-established artists, a strategic meeting usually has the following topics to discuss:

1) Revision of the short-term targets set during the previous meeting

This topic relates to what Paul and Enrico define as outbound operations; the ones that the company activates, in order to achieve the targets set with the artists. The areas of interest could be multiple and they could involve, the scheduling of record releases, the discussions about promotional plans, about sponsorship research, tour production, live performances, media partnership, collaborations with other artists or the delivery of new music. During this part of the meeting, Spaceship's managers usually explain and describe the results of the operations put in place since the last meeting. The activity sometimes produces the expected results, sometimes not. In all the cases, for each topic the results of the plan are shared and analysed by both the artists and managers in order to re-arrange them accordingly.

2) Revision of the long-term targets

³³ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 9th September of 2013

According to the data gathered, Spaceship's managers usually set a long-term strategy with artists on two levels. One level has a time perspective of one year, the other up to three years. Within the one-year strategic plan usually are defined and discussed concrete targets such as: number of record releases to do during the year, number of live shows, promotional strategy for both the releases of the music and of the live shows, partnerships with sponsors and endorsement deals. These targets have been set the year before and during the meeting are monitored in their development stage and modified accordingly.

The long time strategy has less definite boundaries and it pertains to a general target, related to where the artist will see himself on a long perspective; if he wants to stop to perform live shows and concentrate the efforts in music production or if he want to achieve a good balance of both, for example.

3) New opportunities to evaluate

Paul and Enrico, according to what emerges from the author's observations³⁴, usually define this topic of discussion, as "*in-bound requests*" that have not been planned or activated by the management; these proposals are generated by external partners with certain regularity. This kind of opportunities is related to projects such as sponsorship requests, television appearances, special events or collaboration with other artists.

As remarked by both Paul and Enrico this "three steps method" is important in order to really stay focused on targets and multiply the possibilities to achieve them. Artists need to be focused and have deadlines to respect, they say, and managers need to have tasks to be achieved. This systematic approach helps to give rules and monitor constantly the workflow. By the respondent answers emerges also how, during the application, of this method sometimes arise problems especially with new artists.

According to the answers of the respondents, this approach hasn't been decided only by Paul and Enrico but occurred as a result of the practices learned managing the projects of Benny and Bloody that continue to gradually grow every year. The managers learned by their experience how to structure the strategy process.

With new artists, usually the process is less structured. After the first meeting, the one set in order to decide the first steps, all the communications are made by phone and emails on a weekly basis. Meetings are generally set-up when something important has to be decided, like for example the signature of a recording contract.

³⁴ See Reflexive Diary attached, observation made on 9th September of 2013

4.8.2 External dimension of the strategic planning: implementation

The current section will reflect on the “external” dimension of strategy, the one that involves other stakeholders beyond the artist manager and that this study has defined as “implementation” phase of the strategic planning process set up by the company.

According to the interviews with Paul and Enrico, the implementation phase of a strategy plan, as soon as decided and agreed with the artists, implies the creation of a team. The team is modeled according to the needs of the set targets.

As emerges from the author’s review of the documentary data as well as emerges from Paul’s and Enrico’s interviews, the team of both Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots is composed of the following entities: artist manager, record label, booking agent, publicist/ Pr, publisher, and social media manager.

These could be defined as the secondary stakeholders of both the projects according to the definitions below.

“Stakeholders are defined as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984:46).

“Firm activity is embedded in a network of stakeholder relationships. In general, there are two types of stakeholders – primary and secondary” (Darnall et. Al, 2010:1072).

According to these definitions, the artists could be considered the first stakeholder who can be affected by the operation generated by the manager through the members of the team.

These definitions corroborate what has been found and help extend the reflection about the artist manager operations related to the concept of strategy.

As previously explored, strategy in its internal dimension and in relation to the case of study, is constituted by the setting of targets agreed between the manager and the artist. Those targets, according to the data, could be generally divided in long-term targets and short-term targets. Short-term targets are usually the components that lead to achieve the long term ones.

According to the data, the manager, as soon as the targets are agreed, builds the best team possible in order to achieve them. As Paul says: *“any stakeholder could be able to assure the completion of short-term target but only the artist managers could be able to achieve the long term targets through the coordination of the singular strategy set by him with of all the stakeholders involved in the team”* (Interview with Paul Sears, attached in the appendix).

According to Paul's and Enrico's interviews, the creation of a team is a gradual process. And the members of the team could vary according to the stage of development of the project.

Enrico says: *The coordination of the team could be key for the success/failure of a project. A manager needs to build, maintain, motivate and modify a team according to the needs of the project and the targets set. A good team helps to expose a project to the potential audience and creates, nurtures and maintains a perception and awareness of a project* (Interview with Enrico Mutti, attached in the appendix).

It could be useful at this stage, in order to deepen the reflection, to briefly report a case that happened within the company during the participant observation of the author. The following analysis, including all the data reported, is based on the author's observations included in the diary appended to this study³⁵. The names of the actors involved in the case will be altered because some information is highly confidential.

The following case, related to a project called "X" which reached the company by a word of mouth generated between the industry executives involved in the daily operation of the company, has been selected because it well describes, in practice, the internal and external dimension of the strategy processes described so far.

The music of "X" reached the company's offices at the end of 2014. All the people at Spaceship, as soon as they listened to it were intrigued by its uniqueness, not similar to any other artist in the market of electro/pop music.

"X", is a duo of music producers and DJs that define the peculiarities of their project as follows:

"We try to think outside the box and bring something new to the scene, keeping our originality. X is experimental electro/pop music, created in our own musical world, where nothing but our own laws and standards exists."

Paul and Enrico, after showing their interest about the project via email, decided to invite them into the office. The business relationship started officially in January 2015, just after the first meeting. Paul and Enrico decided to assume the direction of the strategic operations. The first target to be achieved, as emerged by the first meeting, is described by what the artists report as follows:

"We would like to bring our style and vision to the more people possible building a long life career as both producers and DJs"

³⁵ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 20th March 2015

Paul and Enrico agreed on that vision and started the concrete procedures to elevate the project to the next level.

The management operations, as previously mentioned, started officially in January 2015.

Enrico: *“working with a new project in this super competitive environment means to start creating a buzz and build a perception around the project”*

Enrico, conscious of the new language of X’s music, thought that the first thing to do, was to generate interest around their name within the industry. The key professionals involved in the context in which Spaceship operates, are just a few as previously described, so Enrico started to speak by phone and send the material to some professionals involved in the network of contacts of the company like label executives, booking agents, publicists, and other artists, all friends of Enrico. Paul did the same.

Enrico: *“I was pretty sure that all the people that would have received the material, could have been impressed by it and that they would have begun to talk to other music industry professionals about it extending the buzz”*

This is exactly what happened. After one month, Enrico was contacted by the local division of a major record label that offered to X a recording deal. Paul negotiated the contract for the release of three songs with an option mechanism. It meant that the Major had an exclusive option to listen to the songs and evaluate the opportunity to release them or not; if they decided that the records were not good for them, the manager, along with the artists could be free to propose those records to another label.

The guys produced then three tracks. These have been submitted to the Major that chose only one between the three, the one that both Enrico and Paul considered the less powerful.

The Major released the record, which had little impact in the market.

Simultaneously Paul and Enrico decided to work on the other record, the one that was rejected by the Major. The idea was not to work with a major label but with a label with credibility and followers that could transfer that credibility to the artists.

An independent record label present on the market since 2005 with a great reputation and following decided to publish the record.

As soon as the track was released, some popular blogs started to review the song, which finally was published by hypemachine.com³⁶ one of the most influential music blog within the internet

³⁶ For more info about hypemachine please visit <http://hypem.com/about>

specialized in discovering and promoting new independent music. This blog aggregates through an algorithm the most discussed tracks on-line and creates a ranking of the tracks on their website. The track was then reposted by some other on-line blogs and became very popular online. This kind of exposure generated the following results:

- the track was chosen by an important UK agency specializing in sound-tracks for an important European advertising campaign. The deal is still in a negotiating phase.
- the buzz created the opportunity to remix a track of David Guetta which has been released
- Another Major Label from the USA showed interest in the project and it is currently in the phase of sending a proposal.

This brief account has been reported at this stage of the analysis in order to give to the reader a concrete case of how the internal process of formulation of a strategy has been translated by the external implementation of the artist managers through the right choice of stakeholders. From the case clearly emerges also how important in the management processes is the role of knowledge described in section 3.4. The data gathered also corroborate Simon's (1993) work where the author affirms that managers, when needs to find strategic solutions, face a "*bounded rationality*", caused by "*imperfect and incomplete information*". These "*incomplete information*" include the complexity of the context and the problematic situation that needs decision making, the personal capacity to process information, the time-restrictions in which decisions have to be made, the potential problems with other actors included in the decision making process (stake-holders) and of course the competencies each decision maker needs to use during the process. In particular it could be argued to corroborate what emerged in the literature review reflecting on the work of Mumford et al. (2000). Competency, within the case, refers to the sum of experiences and knowledge, skills, traits, aspects of self-image or social role, values and attitudes an artist manager has acquired during his or her working activity. It is based on past experience in terms of what has been successful and what has not. As previously reviewed in chapter one of the current study, this was first put forward by Schon (1983) in his seminal work on the reflective practitioner. It is argued that professionals develop and apply repertoires of solutions to difficult problems. The main competency would be reflection where, with every experience, a strategic decision maker would develop their knowledge of what will and what will not work

The next section will discuss all the data previously described and analyze the author findings about artist management processes related to Spaceship management.

4.9 The concept of artist success within artist management operations

In the current chapter, the author has explored the processes that underlie the profession of artist manager analyzing the data collected through the interviews and observations made during the participant observation period spent within Spaceship Management, which constitutes the main unit of analysis of the investigation.

The profession of artist management, has been defined, within the case, according to the analysis of the data gathered in the field, as a consulting activity, which is grounded on the expertise of the artist managers.

Within the term “*expertise*”, as emerges from data, it could be included both the knowledge and the power of negotiation gained with experience in the field that have been reached by the members of the company in more than twenty years of activity.

The study has then examined how the relationship between artists and managers at Spaceship has peculiar characteristics, related both to the business and personal spheres of the rapport, that could affect positively or negatively the result of a project.

The author has also explored how the process of choosing to start working with an artist, implies the definition and the identification of those peculiar characteristics, that the artist needs to have beyond talent; these, as it has been observed, are mostly related to his personal character and attitude towards work.

Strategic planning has been found to be, within the case, a multidimensional process that has an internal component related to the setting of specific targets, which happens between the manager and the artist during the formulation phase of the plan, and an external component, related to the implementation phase of it, that the manager apply through the identification of specific stakeholders that could help to achieve the set targets.

The current section, which concludes the study, will explore the company’s management processes more deeply, in order to investigate the concept of success through the mention of the specific cases observed by the researcher and emerging from the interpretation of the respondent’s interviews and author’s observations.

The text will start trying to find a definition of success, within the case, through the interpretation of the answers of the three categories of respondents that this study has selected through purposive sampling during the data gathering.

Artists, managers and music industry's executives gave their explanation of what success means to them, helping to generally define it from different points of view related to the case and helping to give more insights about this concept within the specific case.

All the respondents, selected, have been already cited during the study except Andrea Nardinocchi. Andrea is a very talented guy, who was recently included in the artists' roster of the company. The author decided to present his point of view at this stage of the analysis so as to have also the voice of an artist who aims to succeed in the current music industry but who is still working on the definition of the targets to be achieved. As previously mentioned, the author selected the following portions of answers that will help to proceed further with the analysis.

The Bloody Beetroots (well established artist)

“What success means to me, relates to being recognized for the music that I produce. This, I think is the best target that an artist can achieve; being recognized by the people for what he does; Music needs to be embraced and supported both by the public and then by the critics. It's a very simple thing for me. Then it comes the rest, the economics and business part of it, but just after that (Interview with The Bloody Beetroots, included in the appendix).

Andrea Nardinocchi (emerging artist)³⁷

“Success for me means to find out that the people have well received what I've created and that they have made this as a part of their lives. The more people are involved in this process, the more, I guess, I succeeded in my delivery; for me it's a matter of sharing my music with the most vast audience possible.

Both the artists interviewed, have generated the same priority. They both highlight the need of being recognized and embraced by their possible audience. They give the priority to reception of their art by the people and they consider success, as the possibility to reach as many people as possible with their music. Andrea does not make any mention of the economic side of the work and this is probably related to the fact that he is at his very starting phase of the career and, as he reports, he never had the possibility to experience to be paid for a performance. According to the author's experience, Bob considers himself as a “*seasoned professional*” who made a living from music and even if for him, this is a business, he still gives the priority not to the economic side of the work but to its personal dimension, the one that helps him to connect his music with the audience.

³⁷ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on 16th February 2015

The following answers of Paul and Enrico, will contribute to add more elements to the concept of success as it emerges within the case of study.

Paul Sears (artist manager)

“I’ve always considered reductive to rely only on an economic unit of measure of it. I think that artists should be firstly able to afford their lives doing what they like, this could lead them to be free to create. This is the first step for an artist’s success, I guess. Then there is the market. A manager could help artists to create or expand a perception, an awareness of their creative product and give an economic meaning to their artistic creativity, taking care of the business side of the job and letting them continue to focus on music creation” (Interview with Paul Sears, attached in the appendix).

Enrico Mutti (artist manager)

Everything starts from the music, which needs to be new and fresh, but it’s a whole package that need to be taken in account; in my opinion, image, styling, communication skills are fundamental. Since the advent of the digital revolution, the game changed a lot. Previously the presence of record label was essential, now the web and social media could be central, especially at the beginning of an artist’s career. A song could become viral instantly and generate an immediate perception of a musical project at three sixty degree. A manager, as soon as this happens, needs to be able to nurture and develop that perception” (Interview with Enrico Mutti, attached in the appendix).

Paul contributes once again to define his position as a facilitator of the expression of the artistic talent. As emerges from data, he sees his role as able to permit to the artist to only take care of his art, absorbing all the other issues related to the management of the artistic activity as soon as it has generated an interest by the market. Enrico helps to define the basic elements that constitute the artistic identity as the music, the image and the way to communicate to the public focusing on how the digital technology offers nowadays multiple channels to expose that identity contributing to build a perception of it.

The answers of PML1 and PML2 further expand the reflection adding new elements.

PML1 (president of the local division of a major label)

“Success for me is related to the revenues generated by the project. This is how I measure it. But of course this is related to my personal position in the business. Between talent and success there is a label. No one could arrive to commercial success without a record label” (Interview with PML1 included in the appendix).

PML2 (president of the local division of a major label)

“From my operative point of view an artist could be considered as success when he/she dominates the music scene from any aspect of the industry. This means record sales, presence on the social media, traditional media coverage and sales of tickets shows” (Interview with PML2 included in the appendix).

Both the respondents offer their definition of success, which takes into consideration, primarily the generation of revenues for the project. As also stated by them, they answered in their role of industry executives of a multinational who need to look more at the numbers than at the philosophical implications. Their point of view contributes to complete the picture of the concept of success within the specific case.

Even if the main aim of the study, is not to explore the meaning of the concept of artist success within the case, but the artist management processes, that could lead an artist to it, the author considered functional at this stage of the analysis, to report the respondents’ answers related to their personal definition of what success means to them.

This passage helps to formulate a broad definition of success within the case of study, that takes in account the multiple points of view of the different actors involved in the management operations of the company in order to proceed then with the reflection about the management processes operated by artist managers at Spaceship and related to concept of success.

According to the interviews and through the analysis of the author’s experience, success, within the case, could be defined as an effective delivery of the musical product to the potential market that enables the artist to be recognized by the audience, by the critics and by the industry professionals involved in the context, as an active member of the artistic community within a musical genre.

The concept *“effective delivery”* is key in the current analysis and corroborates Letts’s (2013) study, cited in the literature review chapter, where he argues that success involves both *“peer appreciation”* and *“monetary revenue recognition”*.

According to the author’s interpretation of the respondents’ answers, it could be argued that the artists interviewed, primarily consider *“effective”* the delivery, if it generates appreciation from both peers (other artists) and the audience independently of the monetary meaning. Industry executives, instead, consider the effectiveness of the delivery mainly if it really generate revenues taking into account only secondly the peer appreciation and the critics’ opinions.

According to the data gathered, artist managers could affect *“the effectiveness of the delivery”*, through their processes and operations applied to the specific cases. In particular as emerges from

respondents' interviews, an artist manager could be considered as an intermediary able to translate that appreciation into quantitative monetary results through the implementation of strategic planning and the coordination of the right team of stakeholders. This is where the current study argues that a value creation process takes place.

According to their interviews, both the respondents, Paul and Enrico, consider artist's success as related to their ability to build and maintain "*effectiveness*" around the project concerning the targets defined with the artists and implemented through the other stakeholders that compose the team.

The data analysis reported in the following section will help the author to expand further this concept analyzing the notion of success through management processes operated within the case.

4.10 Artist Management processes related to the concept of success

According to Frascogna and Hetherington (1997) an artist could experience three different types of approaches in artist management that the authors define as "*self-management*", "*limited management*" and "*total management*".

This classification, even if theorized in 1997, finds correspondences with the single cases of artist development investigated by the current study.

As it was previously reported in chapter two, according to the authors (Frascogna and Hetherington, 1997:17), "*self-management*" pertains to artists who take care personally of their careers without any consultancy of external professionals; "*limited management*" relates to artists who delegate specific functions to other professionals; for example to a lawyer who manages all the technical aspects of an agreements or to a booking agent that helps to find opportunities to play live. The artist then performs all the other management functions. Finally, they identify "*total management*" which considers the involvement of an individual or a company in all the activities of an artist; from the creative process to all the business and strategic aspects of the artist management process.

As emerges from data, this categorization matches what emerges from the case study. In particular, Spaceship managers mostly work with artists that arrived at the top of their "*self-management*" and begin to feel the need of professional management services asking for a "*total management*".

An extract from Bob Rifo's interview, the artist behind the project The Bloody Beetroots, will help to deepen, from his point of view the passage from "*self-management*" to "*total management*".

The analysis will proceed examining the management processes that occur in both the “*self*” and “*total management*” phases as emerges by the cases investigated by the author.

The Bloody Beetroots says:

“A manager becomes indispensable in order to maximize the activity of a musician who wants to work professionally, exploiting his possibilities into the market. In my case everything began in the basement of my parents’ house. I was just a kid. I started to produce my songs there. My reference were the artists that I followed on the internet, as a fan. I aimed to be part of their musical scene so I spent days and nights experimenting with instruments in order to find my personal way to reach that level. As soon as I felt to be ready I put my songs on the internet and it all happened”(Interview with The Bloody Beetroots, attached to the appendix).

According to Enrico’s interview what happened when the songs were published on-line was basically the reaction of the musical scene that Bloody Beetroots aimed to be part of.

The most important and influential artists of the electro/pop genre commenced to support the music of The Bloody Beetroots, sharing their songs on-line and helping then to spread them through their fan bases.

This generated an instant word of mouth, that contributed to create an initial audience following and generated also the interest of possible stakeholders like Enrico who then started working actively on the project.

Enrico: *“the project, even if it showed some technical issues related to the overall quality of the sound recording and mix/mastering of the songs, was already a project with extremely clear ideas. Music, public image, logo, name, way to communicate and pictures, spoke a coherent and unique new language and this contributed to produce an immediate effective perception of what was the project”*(Interview with Enrico Mutti, attached to the appendix)

This sentence helps to deepen the concept expressed in section 4.6.2 where emerged how Spaceship’s managers decide to embrace a project only if they recognize that the artist has clear ideas of what he is doing with his project, which is not composed only by the music he plays and produces but by a whole collage of elements.

Bob continues:

“Since that moment I started to receive an incredible number of requests for concert, record releases and sponsorships. I didn’t have any idea of the technical issues related to tour production or to recording deals and, frankly I didn’t also have the lucidity and expertise to do it. From that moment starts my experience with Enrico which is still on-going now. Only the confrontation of my

personal vision with that of a professional capable to see me from the outside helped me to build a solid project like the one we are running today and that led me to sell more than two million records, to perform more than one thousand shows in five continents, and to receive media coverage from all the most important music media of the world'(Interview with The Bloody Beetroots, attached to the appendix)

According to what the current study has previously reported, The Bloody Beetroots has been able to create and expose a project capable to effectively hit the market generating interest around it.

During the phase of self-management (Frasco and Hetherington, 1987), a solid artistic identity has been created that started from the generation of a clearly defined music project in terms of genre and potential target, able to engage the interest of the other artists involved in the same scene consisting in what has been defined by Letts (2013) as "*peer appreciation*".

From that point, Enrico commenced to guide the project as a total manager starting to build a team of professionals around it that permitted to the project to grow and develop worldwide. According to Enrico's interview he operated strategically setting targets with the artist and then developing them as analysed at section 4.8.1 of the current study.

In his role of artist manager, he basically helped to translate the initial effectiveness only constituted by peer appreciation (Letts, 2013), that The Bloody Beetroots was able to generate alone during the "self-management" phase, into a monetary effectiveness (Letts, 2013) involving the right stakeholders into the projects and directing them within a long term strategy.

According to the author's experience, Enrico operated choosing the record label that he considered the best in that moment for the development of the project, the best booking agent and the best PR agency. This process happened both vertically and horizontally. He basically scanned the market to find the best stakeholder possible and within each company the best professional able to support the project.

This process led to the release of "Warp", the first commercial success of The Bloody Beetroots which has generated sales for two million copies and could be considered the starting point of a career that led Enrico to engage other stakeholders obtaining important recording deals, extensive tour dates worldwide and collaborations with artists such as Paul McCartney and Peter Frampton or official remixes for Chemical Brothers, Depeche Mode and Britney Spears just to name a few.

The Bloody Beetroots experienced the passage from self-management to total management in 2005 and, even if, as emerged from the analysis, the music industry context is constantly changing, the same processes related to the creation of a solid artistic identity, the exposure of that identity

through the internet and the generation of visibility that could lead to a transition to total management are still valid nowadays within the case of study as showed in the case of “X” reported at section 3.8.2

Paul’s point of view could help to go further in the reflection.

According to Paul *“Technology totally changed the context in which an artist manager operates nowadays but the core of the job remains the same. Artist managers need to receive music, they then need to identify a market for it, and face the ancient problem to make that music visible; They need to create the perception and the awareness around that musical product. The problem is the same that Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley or The Beatles and their managers had, what changes nowadays are the tools that a manager has, to build, nurture and exploit that perception”*.

According to what the current study has investigated so far, artist management processes related to success, within the case of study, could be defined as a progressive step process which starts, in its early phase, in the personal sphere of the artist leading him to the formation of a defined artistic identity.

During this phase the artists, interviewed within the case, guided by the ambition to succeed, by their self-esteem, by the constant practice of music production and by their passion about a specific musical genre, happened to create a solid artistic identity which was basically the result of a research process that they have experienced, extensively dedicating themselves to their passion.

This process led them to master their ability to produce music creating something able to be appreciated both from their peers and from the market (Letts, 2013).

This process basically confirms what Subotnik and Jarvin found in their 2005 study about the generation of expertise in talented artists, also reported in chapter two of the current study.

The cited study (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005) affirms that artists could achieve success if they have the capacity to translate their initial talent, defined by the authors as *“abilities”* into *“expertise”*. This, they argue, is the result of a learning process that takes into account several critical factors such as *“self-confidence”*, *“motivation”*, *“charisma”* and *“risk taking”*. They found the *“ambition to succeed”* as crucial in order to stimulate an artist to persevere in practicing what he is doing at its best. The current study found perfect correspondence of Subotnik and Jarvin study within the case.

The second management process which this study observed within the case related to the concept of success, is the exposure of that artist identity that, as will be soon described further in the text, happened in different ways for each artist.

According to the data gathered, this exposure, within the case, generated an initial visibility from peers (other artists), audience and industry professionals that, as will be soon further analysed, led to a first level of engagement around the projects.

Both these two processes (creation of an artistic identity and exposure of it) have been found to happen within the “*self-management*” sphere of the artist.

According to the respondents’ interviews, it could be argued that artist managers at Spaceship, could consider to start working at an artist development project only with artists that have passed through these two phases and as soon as they have generated an initial visibility constituted by a first interest of possible stakeholders and peers (Letts, 2013). This process could be argued to be defined as a preliminary creation of value.

The author observed how, as soon as an artist managers at Spaceship recognizes that both the stage of creation of the identity and exposure of it have generated a first level of visibility, they are ready to seriously consider starting to work with an artist permitting the shift from “self” to “total management”.

The total management, according to the data gathered within the case, could be able to transform that visibility in engagement through the application of strategic planning and the involvement of the right team able to make the project grow into the market. During this process it could be argued that a value creation process takes place through the artist management operations.

The dimension of that engagement gives to the managers observed within the case of study, the possibility to define the spread of the success of their artist management operations and the level of value added.

The process observed by the author as emerges from the data analysis gathered within the case could be summed up as follows:

Self-Management Stage (creation of a potential value): The artists, at the end of a learning process that permits them to transform abilities into competencies (Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005) arrive to a formation of an identity and experience the exposure of that identity to the audience and the creation of a visibility.

Total Management (value adding process): A Spaceship’s Manager as soon as he has verified by an initial meeting with the artist that all the phases previously described have been experienced by the artist could decide to embrace the project and to engage a selection of stakeholders through the implementation of a strategy in order to guarantee a constant effectiveness of the delivery of the

artistic product into the market maintaining both the credibility of the artist generated by the peer appreciation and maximizing the impact of it into the market (Letts, 2013).

The current study has already explored the phase of implementation of a strategic plan related to the total management stage at section 4.8.2. At this point it could be useful to deepen the concepts of creation of artistic identity and exposure of the identity according to the data gathered.

4.11. Creation of an artistic identity

According to respondents' interviews, all the artists that started a relationship with the company, had spent a variable amount of time before starting to generate the consciousness of the characteristics of the musical projects that they finally exposed into the market. In this phase, all the artists that compose the artist's roster of the company have experimented with the creation of their musical style. This process took several years in these cases. For Benny it took more than eight years³⁸, spent to produce and experience the skills of DJ in the clubs before he found the right path with "Satisfaction" in 2003. According to the author's observation, his experience as a DJ in the clubs permitted him to constantly monitor what, in a particular moment of a record, could generate a positive reaction from the people present on the dance-floor that he was able to see from his DJ-booth. Every week he used to bring into the club his new tracks in order to observe the reaction of the crowd and adjust the track accordingly. For The Bloody Beetroots it took the same time, "*almost eight years*" (The Bloody Beetroots, interview). As he reports, he started his experience in music with a hardcore punk band playing bass and guitar; then, as soon as he experienced the possibility to produce music with a computer, he started to transfer that approach to the production of electro-pop dance music, with elements gained from the hardcore punk attitude. This led him to release "Warp" in 2008, which was a massive success in the club scene all around the world, "*probably for that uniqueness of sound and approach that I brought from my punk-hardcore experience*" (Bob Rifo, interview). The Crookers, before reaching the planetary success in 2009 with the production of the song "Day and Night" performed by Kid Cudi, which sold more than eight million copies, experimented with different genres, spacing from hip hop to the influence of Brazilian music in order to generate a unique and personal style. Phra (Crookers) reports, in the interview attached to this study, that their training activity, before reaching that point was huge, they actually used to spend more than ten hours per day producing new tracks in order to then reach their personal style.

³⁸ This data comes from an observation made on 8th October 2013, attached in the appendix to this study.

All the artists of the company do not have any specific preparation in marketing and they just acted, in the operative phase of building their musical identity, basing their choices on a process which it could be argued to be assimilated to the one discovered by Subotnik and Jarvin (2005) as cited in the previous section and in the literature review chapter. According to the data, they were moved by a great ambition to succeed which brought them to apply themselves full time to discover and develop their personal way to express themselves through music. Their talent along with their determination and hard work permitted to create products that finally hit the market.

The amount of time observed by the author finds similarities with a study made by K. Anders Ericsson (1993) together with two colleagues at Berlin's elite Academy of Music who quantified in ten thousand hours the average time necessary for a professional to spend constantly to reach the maximum level of their discipline.

According to the data gathered by the author this process happened in all the three cases analyzed above, during a self-managing process, where the artists experienced autonomously, without the consultancy activity of a music industry professional, how to generate an effective artistic identity.

4.12 Exposure of the Identity

According to the data gathered, the process that the current study defines as “exposure” has been observed to occur after the formulation of the artistic identity. During this process, which, as the formulation of the identity, happens during the self-management phase, the artist could be able to receive a first feedback from the potential audience.

The exposure process, according to the data gathered within the case, happened in different ways.

In the case of Benny Benassi it occurred through a record label that released “Satisfaction”.

According to what Benny reported to the author³⁹, at the beginning of 2002 he was working day and night in the studio with Alle, his cousin, in order to find the right way to create a distinctive sound for the project; Alle came up with the idea of the baseline of the track and together they finished the song. As soon as Larry, their producer, listened to it, he sent it to Energy Productions, an independent record label specialized in dance music that made the release and exposed that creative product to the audience, which became a huge commercial success.

³⁹ See Reflexive Journal, observation made on October 8th 2013

In the case of The Bloody Beetroots and Crookers, the exposure happened through MySpace. It was 2006 when they started to expose themselves through the Internet. According to the data gathered through the interviews, the strategy they self-applied in the initial phase was based on building connections with other artists offering their remixing services for free. They did around one hundred remixes that year that helped to build a great reputation and also permitted to them to perfect their style. The processes explained so far find correspondence also in relation to the new artists that the company is developing in the current months (May 2015). As also already reported in 3.8.2 regarding “X”. They started producing songs that have been noticed by some other producers and DJs more famous than them and these generated the visibility of their work that eventually reached also Spaceship. According to author’s experience the other six artists that have been recently signed to Spaceship, had the possibility as well to expose their music after a period of almost eight years that led them to define their style. Paul and Enrico decided to sign them only after they have recognized a first interest of the audience and verified the possibility to engage stakeholders. The following section will introduce the concept of what the current study defines “engagement”, argued by the author to be a key-element in the process of effective delivery of the artistic product into the market.

4.13 Engagement / Maximization of the Awareness

At this point of the analysis, success could be considered as the result of a two stage artist management process. This definition, as all the findings generated by the current analysis, could not be generalized and it must be considered pertinent only in relation with the case of study.

The first stage of the management related to the concept of success, begins within the autonomous experience of the artist during the “self-management” phase.

In this phase the artist experiences a learning process involving several critical factors such as “self-confidence”, “motivation”, “risk taking” and “ambition to succeed” that helps the artist to persevere, in order to practice what he is doing at his best. This period of constant practice, could be quantified in eight years. During this period, the artist proceeds with the formulation of an artistic identity that, as soon as it is exposed to the audience, could generate what the current study defines as “visibility”. It could be argued that visibility is the first interest generated towards the project by the audience, the media, the recording industry and concert promoters/booking agents.

The second stage of the artist management processes related to the concept of success, has been observed to begin as soon as the artist feels the need to be managed by a professional and when a manager decides to embrace the project, verifying that the phases of creation of identity, exposure and visibility have been generated.

As described at 4.8.2 , when the artist/manager relationship takes places and the targets have been defined with the artist, the manager could start to implement the strategy plan agreed, engaging the best team possible. Engagement is considered by the current study as the fourth key element in artist management operations where the process of value adding, takes place. It has been observed that all these phases occurred consequentially within the case. In particular, “visibility” came after the creation of an “artistic identity” and after that identity has been exposed. The artist manager at Spaceship decides to embrace the project and then engage stakeholders only if he has recognized that the previous phases have taken place. As also reported by the managers interviewed and according to the author’s observations⁴⁰, engagement could be related to at least four categories such as the recording industry, the booking agents/concert promoters, the media (Tv, Web and Printed Press) and the fans. It is interesting to report, at this stage, how the company monitors the level of engagements generated by the managerial operations. According to both Paul and Enrico a manager needs to maintain a constant balance of engagement between these four stakeholders: the record label, the booking agent, the publicist and the fan. As the current study has previously reported in the section dedicated to strategy (4.8), each manager sets up different strategies with each stakeholder and continues to monitor these relationships constantly. The results of each single strategy, applied by each stakeholder, contribute to generate feedback on the overall strategy and define the level of engagement generated by the coordination of all those strategies at an appropriate geographic level. As emerges from the author’s observations⁴¹ for example, according to the monitoring systems experienced within the company, a London artist will be considered “engaged” in London, if his/her fan base is mainly composed of Londoners, if the major music newspapers/blogs in the city are interested in his/her work, if promoters fight to manage his concerts and if the record companies operating in the area are offering him/her contracts. When the artist begins to generate more engagement to the point that his/her fan base begins to be distributed in five different continents (e.g. the press of different continents begins to get interested in his/her music by requesting interviews and writing articles in multiple languages, and the requests of the promoters are coordinated by a booking agent who arranges shows on a world tour and finally the

⁴⁰ See Reflexive Journal, reflective account of 18th June 2014

⁴¹ See Reflexive Journal, reflective account of 18th June 2014

records of the band are distributed through sub-licenses all over the world) we can say that the band/artist has reached a worldwide success in its context.

This is the way Spaceship artist managers monitor the effectiveness of their operations. The constant discussion with the stakeholders involved and the monitoring of the engagement parameters are important indexes for an artist manager in order to regulate his procedures and operations. The level of the engagement generated could be used to determine the level of value added by the management to the artistic project.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the artist management processes related to the concept of success, in the current music industry, through the study of a particular case under a reflexive approach.

The current research is then an in-depth case study conducted by the author of this text, through participant observation and semi structured interviews, within Spaceship Management, a well-established artist management company in the field of electro/pop music genre in Europe.

In particular this research examined the artist management processes operated by the company related to the development of electro/pop artists.

No one of the findings generated by the current analysis, has intent of been generalized, but it must be considered pertinent only in relation with the case of study.

5.2 Background to the research process

The interest of the author in studying the artist management processes started from the observation of his colleagues during his initial work period at Spaceship Management, with the aim to better understand their managerial practices and eventually gain a better understanding of the profession.

After a preliminary phase of observation, the author decided to review the literature so as to research the most relevant studies regarding artist management. The review revealed a gap in describing the artist management processes related to the concept of success and led the author to generate seven areas that could be considered relevant in the artist management daily operations as described at chapter two of this thesis. The next phase of the study, consisted of the data gathering process, through the tools of semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The research process then alternated the analysis of data and the research of additional literature. The researcher acted as an insider through his double role of practitioner and researcher to finally observe, interact with and interpret the reality under the lens.

5.3 Significance of the study

In the light of the continuous changes that the music industry is current facing, an in depth case study analysis of the concept of success from an artist manager's point of view, could help other practitioners to better read the market they are involved in.

This study aims to contribute to the literature on success in music offering an operative management insight of the processes experienced by a selection of professionals active in this sector. In particular, what has been explored, are the processes applied in the specific context of artist development by Spaceship's managers.

5.4 Structure of the chapter

The current chapter will review the areas of investigation circumscribed in the introduction and will assess the results achieved by the thesis in each area of interest. In particular the following sections will show how the study answered to the following research questions and will highlight the related areas of interest.

1) Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist

- How does an artist manager define artist management processes?

2) Artist/Manager dynamics

- How does an artist manager get in touch with an artist?
- How does an artist manager decide to work with a specific artist?

3) Strategy

- How does an artist manager define a strategic process?

4) Success

- How does an artist manager and artist define the concept of success? How does an artist or a music industry executive define it?

5) Artist Management Operations related to the concept of success

- How does an artist manager operate in relation to the concept of artist success in practice?

5.5 Empirical findings

The discussion under this section provides a synthesis of the empirical findings from the study with respect to the individual research questions.

1) Artist management profession and how it can influence the career path of an artist

The study commenced giving a definition of the artist management profession through the author's reflection on the data gathered. The author defined the artist management profession as a multifaceted consulting activity, which includes strategic and administrative processes, activated by managers in accordance with their artists, in order to achieve common targets. As emerged from the interviews, the ability of a manager to create, maintain and motivate a team constitutes part of the process. What could be considered new and worthy of further future research, is the aspect of the consulting activity of the artist management profession which, it has been observed to imply, within the case, two important concepts related to:

- a) the knowledge exercised by the managers during their consulting activity
- b) the relationship that they build with their artists

It has been found that the knowledge gained by the respondents is constituted not by an accumulation of theoretical information but by a collection of past experiences and a network of contacts that they have generated over the time, during their professional activity. Their competencies have been acquired facing problematic situations. The experience in solving those problematic situations has been found to constitute their expertise.

From the analysis of the data it emerges that the expertise of the company's managers contributes to enhance the power of negotiation of the company. The reputation of being managers of successful artists, activates a virtuous circle that permits to attract new artists and, at the same time, to develop them, through the network of contacts generated over time by the company. The processes of gaining expertise from the experience accumulated on the field has been then considered an important asset for artist managers in contributing to artists' success.

The relationship between artist and manager, within the case, has been defined as a business relationship, which implies a deep personal involvement, where mutual trust between manager and artist is essential. The type of business relationship, based on a percentage of the results instead of on a fee for service, has an impact on the managers' purpose to achieve results and it has been considered by the study as an important driver for a manager to achieve success for the artist.

2) Artist/Manager dynamics

The study proceeded investigating the typology of artists encountered by the respondents according to their experience and then explored the processes that underlie the managers' opportunity to start working with an artist. In particular the analysis concerned how the company get in touch with new artists and how the company's managers decide to start working with a new artist. From the analysis of the interviews, emerged as significant factors in the selection process operated by the managers, the relevance of the quality of the music submitted, but also some personal characteristics, inherent to the artist's personality.

According to the data gathered through the interviews, the study revealed also some other fundamental factors to achieve a long time successful career:

- The general attitude of the artists toward work.
- Ambition and will to succeed
- Determination to stand out
- Clear ideas about targets to be achieved
- Sense of duty
- Abnegation towards work
- Capacity to communicate

These elements have been found to constitute the basis of the evaluation process of a new project operated by the artist managers at Spaceship. The study has also mentioned the role of reflective practice and experiential learning in contributing to generate the company's workflow and procedures. In particular the respondents have revealed that they have experienced a process of trial and error that has led them to gain competencies and better structure their workflow, through experiencing and solving problematic situations. The study in this section corroborated the theories related to reflective practice and experiential learning examined in the literature and analyzed how, in the case of study, the artist managers interviewed, act and think in the processes of selecting a new artist to work with and how this could be related to the achievement of success.

3)Strategy

Strategic planning has been found to be, within the case, a multidimensional process that has an internal component related to setting specific targets, which happens between the manager and the

artist, during the formulation phase of the plan, and an external component, related to the implementation phase of it, that the manager apply through the identification of specific stakeholders.

The respondents reported that strategy, within their experience, needs to take into account the definition of targets and the capacity to adapt and re-arrange those targets. This corroborates what the author explored also during the review of the literature. A new finding could be considered the dimensions that strategy assumes within the relationship with the artist in terms of setting targets and, externally, between the managers and the stakeholders, in terms of achievements of those targets. These two aspects have been defined by the current study as *internal* and *external* dimensions of the strategic processes and they are considered as key processes in contributing to artists' success within the case of study.

The internal aspect of the strategic planning has been assimilated to the formulation phase of the plan, the external dimension to its implementation. According to the data collected, the artists contribute only to the formulation phase of the plan. The implementation has been found to be a prerogative of the artist managers.

What has been considered as key processes related to the concept of success is the need of a clear vision of the artist during the formulation phase of the strategic plan. According to the artist managers interviewed, the basis for working to the development of a musical project, is constituted by a clear vision of the artist that need to be shared by the manager who uses his/her competencies and knowledge to grow it into the market and eventually add a value to it. As reported by respondents, the managers help the artists, to develop their uniqueness, and this has been found as the main component that the company looks for in artists.

4) Success

The analysis then proceeded investigating the meaning of success within the case. Artists, managers and music industry's executives, gave their explanation of what success mean to them, helping to generally define this concept from different points of view and helping to give more insights related to the artist management processes. Success has been defined as an "*effective delivery*" of the musical product to the potential market that enables the artist to be recognized by the audience, by the critics and by the industry professionals involved in the electro-pop dance music genre. The artists interviewed, primarily consider "*effective*" the delivery, if it generates appreciation from both peers (other artists) and the audience independently of its monetary meaning; industry executives, instead, consider the effectiveness of the delivery mainly if it really generates revenues, taking into account only in a second stage the peer appreciation and the critics' opinions. It has been observed

that artist managers could affect “*the effectiveness of the delivery*”, through their processes and operations applied to the specific cases. In particular, an artist manager could be considered as an intermediary able to monetize that appreciation, through the implementation of strategic planning and the coordination of the right team of stakeholders. This is where the current study argues that a value creation process takes place contributing to the achievement of artist success.

5) Artist Management Operations related to the concept of success

Having explored the different meanings that success could assume according to the respondents interviewed, the author analysed how an artist manager, within the case, operates in relation to the concept of success, investigating the processes that could lead to it.

Success, as emerged from the data analysis, could be then considered as the result of a two stages artist management process. The two stages, that has been found to match other definitions found in literature, could be defined as “self-management-and “total management”.

The first stage has been observed to occur within the autonomous experience of the artist, during his “self-management” phase. This stage according to what emerges from the analysis of the data gathered through the interviews with the artists, includes three elements that need to occur consequently in order to contribute to the process:

- The creation of an artistic identity
- The exposure of the artistic identity to the audience
- The creation of an initial visibility

In this stage, according to the analysis, the artist, experiences a learning process, involving several critical factors as “self-confidence”, “motivation”, “risk taking” and “ambition to succeed” that help the artist to persevere, in order to practice what he is doing at his best.

This period of constant practice, could be quantified in eight years, as emerges from the data gathered within the case. During this period of value creation, the artist experiences the creation of an artistic identity that, as soon as it has been exposed to the audience, could generate what the current study defines as “visibility”. Visibility, according to the data gathered, could be defined as a first interest generated towards the project by the audience, the media, the recording industry and concert promoters/booking agents.

The author observed how, as soon as an artist manager at Spaceship recognizes that both the phases of creation of the identity and exposure have generated a first level of visibility, they are ready to

take in serious consideration to start working with the artist, permitting the shift from “self” to “total management”.

This second stage of the artist management processes related to the concept of success has been observed to begin both when the artist feels the need to be managed by a professional and when a manager decides to embrace the project, verifying that the phases of creation of the identity, exposure and visibility have been generated. According to the results of the analysis, as soon as the relationship takes places and the targets have been defined with the artist, the manager could start to implement the strategy plan agreed, engaging the best team possible. Engagement is considered by the current study as the fourth key process in artist management operations, related to the concept of success, where the process of value adding, takes place.

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Appendices: Fieldwork & Company profile

Interviews

Interview 1: Paul Sears

Sample: Artist Manager at Spaceship

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: Paul Sears

When: March 15th 2015

Where: Parma (Italy), Spaceship Management offices

Q HOW DO YOU DEFINE ARTIST MANAGEMENT?

A This is a good question and I'm very happy to try to answer to it, so it would probably help me to clear up my ideas and be ready when my mother will ask me for the umpteenth time what do I do for a living (half-smile). Joking aside... I think artist management is a profession with very fluid and not well-defined boundaries. I've always interpreted my role mainly from an administrative and strategic point of view. I look at my job as working with an artist and setting up targets that might be achieved together. In this process the artist could dedicate himself to create art (music) and the manager to achieve those targets through a strategy. I see myself as a team leader that works daily to achieve the targets set with the artists though the coordination of multiple other entities.

Q WHAT IS FOR YOU STRATEGY?

A Strategy for me is what you have to do, to go from A to B; identifying what are the intermediate steps and choosing in what order you have to follow them to reach the target. With the consciousness that, those steps and their order could change during the way and you have to be clear minded and responsive to react". In this process the artist could be able to dedicate himself to the production of his art and the manager to the achievement of that targets. Artist need to have a vision, managers they must be able to embrace and empower that vision. It could be become credible in a certain circuit, identify the right remixer, songwriter or record label that could contribute to increase the perception about an artist. For me the good thing are also the "no" that you have to say. Sometimes some proposal could be seductive but only because they imply a huge amount of money but maybe are not good for the artist's profile.

Q What do you consider when start to evaluate the possibility to work with a new artist?

A The main aspect now is that I don't have to decide by myself. I do have a team to share ideas with. The first process that I elaborate in mind in evaluating a project is: may I help this project to develop to the next step? I do need to recognize if I can contribute massively to an important development. The other aspect is related to what we could define feeling. I do need to feel a vibe. Then I have to find a common language with the artist and a target to reach together.

Q Do you consider anything else?.

A "What makes the difference to me are intangible things. Talent, charisma, originality, communication skills that are things that I feel or I think I'm able to feel because I listen to new music and meet artists since almost thirty years and I guess I'm able to notice someone who stands out"

Q How do you see your relationship with the artists you manage?

A Mutual trust, about the targets to be achieved. A common vision. If you work with an artist that does reggae music and wants to stay credible in that scene and you propose to him a collaboration with an heavy metal band probably there a problem in sharing the same vision. I see myself as a facilitator a channel to be used to reach targets. Our job implies also to manage amounts of money. Here the trust is fundamental. I think it's something that it should be built gradually and it grows bigger when results come. It's a very personal relationship. Not only with the main manager but also with all the other members of the company, with roles and different nuances.

Q During you experience you had the possibility to meet a lot of other artist managers, how many types?

A I think that there are many ways to this job. There are multinational companies that could be very technical but a little bit colder in the approach. I've seen managers that are very present also in the artistic sphere of the artists, I've also seen managers that work on a single project, it could be an album or two. Then there are companies like Spaceship that decide to carefully select their artists in order to develop their careers in great details. I prefer to work with just a few artist. If they need something they know they can count on me because I dedicate daily my activity to their exclusive development

Q Previously you mentioned the importance of a team

A Yes it's part of my job to create and manage a functional team this is sometimes composed by a record label, singers/song-writers, producers, booking agents, social media marketing experts, publishers, lawyers, and accountants, I oversee, direct and coordinate all these professional roles

and functions in order to achieve the set targets". There are other managers that have a more artistic approach as mentioned before they give advices on the arrangements and sounds. Enrico is one of them. I've always admired the artistic capabilities of Enrico and his way to recognize and develop new talents. The idea of funding Spaceship Management was to join together different experiences, skills and network with the aim to create a unique reference point for artist that might need management services to exploit their music world-wide. I have a more administrative approach, but this doesn't mean less creative. You need creativity to build, manage and sustain a long-life career in music. Any stakeholder could be able to assure the completion of short-term target but only the artist managers could be able to achieve the long term targets trough the coordination of the singular strategy set by him with of all the stakeholders involved in the team

Q What characteristics do you think could be important to drive an artist to success?

A The artists need to know who they are and managers need to know who the artists are. I don't think that it makes sense to say to Bob Dylan: Hey Bob you are a little bit out of tone here or to Woody Allen: Hey Woody, why don't you go to the gym to gain some muscles? What I always tried to do is that if I work with a Bob Dylan or a Woody Allen, I then try to help them to translate those peculiarities into an effective delivery of them to the audience; but they firstly have clear what those peculiarities mean to them. I have to be able accompany in this path without impose anything.

Q What do you think about artist success?

A I've always considered reductive to rely only on an economic unit of measure of it. I think that artists should be firstly able to afford their lives doing what they like, this could lead them to be free to create. This is the first step for an artist's success, I guess. Then there is the market. A manager could help artists to create or expand a perception, an awareness of their creative product and give an economic meaning to their artistic creativity, taking care of the business side of the job and letting them continue to focus on music creation.

Q How do you see the artist management profession nowadays?

A Technology totally changed the context in which an artist manager operates nowadays but the core of the job remains the same. Artist managers need to receive music, they then need to identify a market for it, and face the ancient problem to make that music visible; They need to create the perception and the awareness around that musical product. The problem is the same that Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley or The Beatles and their managers had, what changes now days are the tools that a manager has, to build, nurture and exploit that perception

Q How do you learned?

A Now there are courses at Universities that teach about artist management. I think that there are skills that could be taught. The more a manager knows about the technical aspects of his work, the more effective he can be. I would have attended an artist management course thirty years ago. The learning process on the field is long and probably have some general notion could help to better understand some dynamics I didn't receive any formal education to become an artist manager, I just learned the trade in the field day by day making mistakes and trying to avoid making them again in the future. I've never thought to become an artist manager, it all happened by chance. It was a very funny period, I was young and open to collaborate with several people in the new wave/pop Italian scene, when finally approached OFF LIMITS production and I've started to collaborate as a language coach. The turnaround of my career could be recognized with the release of Benny Benassi's Satisfaction in 2002 which reached #2 in Uk and had a huge popularity in the clubs worldwide inspiring the whole dance scene with a new way to approach the production of dance music.

Q How do you update yourself?

A The better strategy is to be surrounded by young people. It's important to recognize our own limits (he laughs)

Interview 2: Enrico Mutti

Sample: Artist Manager at Spaceship

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: Enrico Mutti

When: March 16th 2015

Where: Piacenza (Italy), My Management offices

Q How did you start with Paul?

A *“Paul has been always to me a reference and a consultant in defining the technical details of some recording and publishing deals for my artists. Our relationship evolved naturally to the point that together we decided to join forces and create Spaceship. He has a great ability and competency in negotiating and structuring deals. They can be recording deals or any other type of contract as sponsorship or publishing or live representation agreements. I then always admired elegance, the accuracy and the competence that emerge when he approaches his job through phone calls, meeting or e-mails. This has a reflection also in how people perceive his role; there is a kind of admiration and respect that this natural attitude generates in the people he works with.*

Q: What is for you artist management

A *“I think that the main task of a manager is to capitalize on the potentialities of an artistic project. From this point a manager branches out his activity at 360 degrees around the artist, creating and managing the best team for the project. Then the daily activity of a manager is to coordinate all these partners in order to balance their work towards a common target, the manager presents the artist to the market, helps him to monetize his work, his art. I consider myself as a tailor. My work with The Bloody Beetroots is tailored on his needs. I try to look to any detail in order to meet the targets set with the artist.*

Q Facilitate art and market?

A *The manager presents the artist on the market and then helps him to monetize his work, his art.*

Q How did you learn it?

A Every day I learn something new. Our job is sometimes mysterious and there are no rules, so it's always up to you. Sometimes you do the right thing sometimes not, it's part of the job. What is important is not to make the same mistake twice.

Q How do you choose to work with a new artist?

A I feel more keen to work with new artists that never experienced to have a manager before. It's a more creative work, more stimulating and with less pressure compare with the work with an artist who had past experiences with another manager. The work you can make it with a new artist is made of small and big steps. It's easier for me to start gradual and create a business environment around the artist.

Q How do you think and act when evaluate to work with an artist?

A A project needs to tell me something new. I think that in more than twenty years I could be able to identify potentialities. I need to feel something that could be brought to a next level. This, I think is the first driver for me. Then I structure my thought in an operative way. Artistically I try to figure out, if needed, what can be done to the song in order to take it to a next level. Simultaneously, my thought, addresses to how this music could reach the market. If something really hit me, I share it with people that I trust that could give me feedback to confirm my perception. These could be colleagues, other artists, agents, publicists, critics and friends.

Q Then?

A In the past when I started to work professional as a manager, it was more a matter of instinct, now I learned how also the artist's character is important I need to receive also good vibes from the person I'm speak with. I need to know his general attitude towards the work. How much determination he has and will to succeed. This is super important to me. It happened to work with artist with some problem of general attitude, great talent and not so much determination or ambition. They never succeeded. They also need to have clear targets. If you don't have a clear target a manager would probably not be able to help you. Targets and determination are fundamental. Artists need to know who they are and where they want to go. This needs to be clear to them in order to help us to help them.

Q In concrete what do you do?

A I set a meeting and then I chat with the artist.

Q Do you consider also other factors as important?

A *Other managers think about the age. For me it's not that important Talent could be exploited in several ways. It depends by the talent and the targets. A 35 years old producer could be considered "old" to become a deejay but his experience could be canalized in ghost production, for example for other artists. It's always a matter of targets.*

Q You are in the music industry for more than 25 years, how do you feel it changed over the time?

A *Yes, for some reasons it changed. We manage Benny and The Bloody Beetroot among the others, they are at the top level of their genre, where the main stakeholders are well defined. The main actors before the advent of the digital revolution were just a few. Now everything is more fluid. You don't need a label to publish your music. There are a lot of new actors. I refer to the music blogs, the self-promotion that an artist could do on the social networks and the possibilities offered by the digital. It's a total new world, more open. This reminds me to the experience with Crookers. Everything started from the music which was fresh and new. They just started to post their songs on Myspace and then they become viral generating a huge hype around the project. No manager, no label, no PR or promo professional was involved in that process, they did everything by themselves in the initial phase. A label and a team could help in a second step. I started to work with them in that phase helping them to monetize the buzz gained. Artist now could be better helped by managers if they already have clear in mind the audience they want to reach. The management company will need to structure their operations including a web/social department. In my experience all the artist I worked with, started with self-promotion. Trying to pitch artist more famous than them and try to ask for collaborations in order to make their name grow bigger. Then. As soon as something happen and there is something to manage, they usually look for a management. Take a look at Cashmere Cat, he is not a top seller record maker but he is now touring extensively just because his music is fresh and has generated a big buzz in the net.*

Q Is correct to speak about artistic identity here?

A *I think it's part of a general attitude of the artist. If an artist knows very well the scene in which he wants to be and knows who the main players are it's natural, he absorbs from that culture and he make it part of his life. Today I think there are too many contents on-line for a new producer or artist who is looking for an inspiration. This could be both good but also counterproductive. I*

receive a lot of demos full of different types and genres produced by the same artist, perhaps the quality is good but it's to uneven. An artist need to have his own style and uniqueness, need to be coherent with a personal touch. Cashmere Cat for example has a definite world. It's electronic music, with hip hop influences but it's totally new and coherent. Sometimes the demos that I receive try to copy something that already exists. I don't believe in copies. I believe in hard work and practice to mature a personal and unique style.

Q *What do you say to someone who doesn't have clear ideas?*

A I don't work with artist that have no clear ideas. Anyway I would suggest to find a path that makes him feel good in doing music and advancing on be unique.

Q *What do you think is the base of an artist/manager relationship?*

"Trust, as in any human relationship in life, is the basis. Of course it is a business relationship but humanity is fundamental. I try not to become a friend but a reliable consultant".

Q *How is your relationship with The Bloody Beetroots?*

A It's complex, he is extremely creative and full of ideas. I try to simplify and give a priority to his ideas according to the targets we have set together.

Q *How do you take a decision?*

A I always try to think to the impact that my decision could produce. I try to imagine what could happen next. This is something that I've learned with experience. Before I was much more instinctive e now I'm more reflective and this is also related to the experience that I've gained in 25 years of activity. My capacity to evaluate things is more clear because probably I know more things and I'm able to create a clear picture of the situation that needs a decision very fast.

Q *What do think about the current music industry?*

A I think it's a business environment in continuous evolution. It's like a glacier that is meting down and we as managers need to be ready to understand where the river and then the lakes will take place. The music industry it's not dead at all, it's just changing continuously. I dedicate great attention to it and I daily try to monitor what could be the new channels to do business.

Q *What are the best revenues channels for an artist nowadays?*

A Firstly the live shows. The market is starting to saturate. Technology, as we discussed earlier, offers multiple possibilities of visibility but at the same time contribute to saturate a market where the opportunity to play are not infinite. Before an artist could evaluate the possibility to start playing something needs to happen. It's not true that if you make an hit record then you will go on

tour. What is important today is the perception that an artist could be able to build around the project. The project need to be perceived as fresh and cool. The competition is huge and you need to stand out. It's more important what the people say about you instead to have a record on a chart. Robin Schultz for example with a remix set up a new tendency in the biz bringing to the mainstream the deep house genre. Tchami is growing bigger because was able to generate buzz around his music. The continuous buzz is what contributes to make an artist "hot" catalyzing the audience attention.

Q *What do you think about the concept of success?*

A *Everything starts from the music, which needs to be new and fresh, but it's a whole package that need to be taken in account; in my opinion, image, styling, communication skills are fundamental. Since the advent of the digital revolution, the game changed a lot. Previously the presence of record label was essential, now the web and social media could be central, especially at the beginning of an artist's career. A song could become viral instantly and generate an immediate perception of a musical project at three sixty degree. A manager, as soon as this happens, needs to be able to nurture and develop that perception. In the old model it was assimilated to massive record sales. Today this is still important but it's even important the attention that you could be able to generate. I could consider and artists as a success even if he didn't sell a record but have a generated a following. The social network becomes artists' riches. It's not important the quantity but the quality. This is something that no one can give to an artist, it's something. The coordination of the team could be key for the success/failure of a project. A manager needs to build, maintain, motivate and modify a team according to needs of the project and the set targets. A good team help to expose a project to the potential audience and create, nurture and maintain a perception and awareness on a project.*

g that he need to be able to generate by himself. A manager then could be improve and grow that riches.

Q *What about strategy?*

A *It's like having a palette full of colors and start to choose the ones I want to use to paint the canvas. What I will paint it's been decided with the artist. The style and techniques are part of my sphere. We set together the targets. I then develop a strategy in order to achieve them". Strategy means for me the creation of a team and the creation of the path that will help to reach what it's been set. During the path there are several steps to follow, for example, the creation of a buzz and the creation of a perception. A manager could help but need to come firstly from the artist. Working*

with a new project in this super competitive environment means start creating a buzz and build a perception around the project.

Q *How do you operate in relation of the concept of success?*

A *I think there are ¾ types of artist management companies in the market. Our company is constituted by people with different backgrounds and active in the field of electro/pop music. Then there are the “relatives”. In this type of artist management where a parent, brother cousin or close friend becomes a manager everything could happen. Sometimes people learn fast, sometimes they do damages. Then there is the old style one, the manager who was used to managed great artist 20 years ago and continue to manage them but he is part of the past, this type of managers I see, need external consultancy to go on and stay updated. Finally there are the big companies, where there are several departments and tens of artist managers. Our company has many competencies also beyond the electro pop genre. My strategy is to try to create long standing careers. I don't aim to create an instant success but a career that could last for decades.*

Q *How?*

A *Talent is the base. Then the artist need to assume his risks. The artists need to try to maintain its uniqueness trying not to replicate what he done before. At the beginning I think an artist needs to find his style, then need to have the ability to maintain the core of his style trying to vary it. David Guetta for example is both able to do club hits and radio hits maintaining his presence simultaneously both in radio and in the most important music festivals around the globe. He for example is an artist with clear targets. His manager is Caroline Portero. She managed his career perfectly from the planetary success in 2009 bringing his name into the Pop market. Now his name is super strong, he is a Pop star that comes from the club culture. I think he could arrive to his 60 continuing to play and produce music without being erased from the music scene.*

Interview 3: Sir Bob Cornelius Rifo a.k.a. The Bloody Beetroots

Sample: Artist

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: Sir Bob Cornelius Rifo a.k.a. The Bloody Beetroots

When: June 2014

Where: Milan, Respondent's home

Note: The interview below is the "original". It has not been made any subsequent corrective action. The questions as well as the answers were rewritten on the laptop as simultaneously. It was not possible to record.

Q What schools did you attend?

A Well I went to primary school, middle school, and high school, science a bit '(laughs)

Q When and how did you notice a propensity for music? Did you study it?

A Already at the age 6/8 years I was part of a mini-church choir, then aged 9 to 16 I have assiduously studied music theory guitar and sang for 2 years and then at 16 I took classes in jazz singing

Q How much do you think has influenced your music the place where you grew up?

A Bassano del Grappa? Very much so, there was little or nothing in Bassano and in the end I spent my time at home, fueling my passion, in my case the music.

The fewer things you have more your creativity can be develop in your mind

Q What other factors do you think were important for the development of your style?

A The school of music, especially this Australian teacher, he was a person

different from the usual, perhaps the fact that it wasn't Italian and had a totally different approach from what I was used to, opened my mind...

Then surely the fact that I was a manager of a company that sold mechanical air components. I did it for about 6/7 years here I have learned the work-routine, meeting deadlines and the formulation of objectives

I then applied this work-flow to music and I still apply it,

This has taught me discipline and to become aware of what I do.

Q Have you done other work as well as a musician?

A Of course (he laughs) in addition to the salesman for the company that I told you, I did the ice cream man, the bartender, the editor of antique lamps, the guardian of a museum and the tourist's guide near the castle where I lived

These jobs have taught me to have contact with people, trying to know and understand them even by a few glances and words, I have learned to relate

with others. Different stakeholders stimulate you.

Q When did you realize that you would be able to live music?

A It was about the '98, at that time I was very active on many sides, I worked with an English band , then I did the production of several house records, then I had a punk-band, I had done the soundtracks for a film, in short, I was working and I saw

That something good could have happen

But let's say, now that I think about it, that around '98-2003 , I was just generated a

Intellectual process that led me to realize that I could work abroad, doing stuff like the one made by other English musicians, I could have send my stuff there too and then

yes I could have live doing music.

On this idea eight years ago I created bloody beetroots and I left my old job

Q When did you start making music with electronic instruments?

A The first production was an Italian hip hop track, 96-97, with Cubase on Atari, then after I did a little 'Trip Hop, Drum and Base, I had strong contacts in London so I was trying to do the stuff requested by that market

Then I walked into the team of airplane records (label) and I started to inquire and learn how the music business works, all the issues regarding the rights related to music and all those boring and bureaucratic things that you eventually should know

Here I learned to work well on the tracks, I understood the importance of theory

Applied to the tunes, in particular certain tracks were flat and I tried to apply what I had learned over the years studying harmony, especially I worked on the harmony of the tunes giving them

depth, I made that time about 15-20 singles as a ghost producer.

Q What tools do you use to compose your music?

A Now mainly Cubase and internal virtual instruments, I have a mute keyboard

I use to play

Q How did you learn to use them?

A Alone, if a technician who knows his trade would have a look at my sessions would put his hands hair, my sessions are errors that work.

Q Do you mix you own songs?

A Yes

Q What kind of techniques you used to make your work visible to the audience (podcasts, remix requests, mixes,)?

A Well many ... (thoughtful), as I said, I applied a business work-flow to the thing,

derived from my experience as a commercial, I knew how to sell a

product, so essential was the creation of a brand, I had so many ideas then came bloody beetroots, if you do a google research there is nothing else with that name, on the www just me, then of course the music, which is the most important thing, that is the result a bit 'of all my influences, punk, rock, hip hop, trip hop eetc, various things, however, has a distinctive brand, recognizable.

Surely the remixes helped to generate visibility. I produced a lot of tracks. As soon as I heard on my space someone that I liked, more famous than me, I asked him to send me the stems for a remix.

Sometimes they sent to me the tracks, sometimes not. I did a lot of remixes for free in that period.

Then the blogs, they were important but just after the word of mouth has been generated on myspace. They basically posted my most popular remixes published on myspace...

Q Do you remember a few names of the blogs

A bah (thoughtfully) Yes, I think his name was Discodust so, then KIDS BY

COLETTE, MISSING TUFF, BIG STEREO, ACID GIRLS and then others that I do not remember

Q Did you want at the beginning of Bloody Beetroots to make people listen to your music or was just passion and nothing else?

Yes, yes, with Bloody, yes, maybe it was only passion during adolescence at the very beginning, with no other purposes, I was playing around with a punk band but just for fun, at that time I

learned how to stand on stage, I was playing at private parties and wherever there was an occasion to perform

Q What factors do you think influenced what you have achieved so far

A In order:

PASSION

TALENT

STUDY

SACRIFICE

PERSEVERANCE

FRIENDSHIP

FORTUNE

CAPACITY OF SELF MANAGING

Q If there was an effort, how was it big? Have you fronted it naturally?

A Well there was an effort and it was big... due to the fact that in Bassano there was nothing to do, I spent all my time fueling my passion, studying classical music, playing around, producing my own tracks, learning how to use a sequencer and a computer... it took almost eight years of hard work before being able to meet the audience with “Warp”

Q How do you think it's important the presence on the www though the social networks nowadays?

A Fundamental

Q What was your first approach to them?

A It was the 2006 with myspace, it was crucial for the development of my project

Q What other Social Network do you use?

A Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Soundcloud, Youtube, Tumblr and I'm probably forgetting some other, ehmmm, yes Google +

Q Tell me about your concept of success

A “What success means to me, relates to being recognized for the music that I produce. This, I think is the best target that an artist can achieve; being recognized by the people for what he does; Music needs to be embraced and supported both by the public and then by the critics. It’s a very simple thing for me. Then it comes the rest, the economics and business part of it, but just after that.

Q What are the tools that permitted to you to express yourself?

A Being with people and communicate. Communication is fundamental. Then if you can stay with people in the real life you could be able also to transmit something through your music. This is what I think.

Q Key points in your career?

A Awareness that the discography was no longer essential. I tried to find an alternative way to release my music. Through other channels. Then the mask that I use in public. I define it as a great tool for catalysis. It draws attention, it helps to create a strong identity of the project, to make it unique. It’s a matter of Iconography. I was also very lucky. I hit the market with an innovative music project and with a new way of communicate it. But there was not any particular strategy behind it. At the very end I just made music and I’ve released it with the tools that I was able to afford autonomously, without any hesitation. I have basically published contents as soon as I felt that I needed. This is very similar to what happened with the Punk scene in the 70s, DIY.

Q What did you do factually?

A Setting and revising targets every 4/5 months. New music, collaborations, remixes. The main aim was to reach a demography every time bigger.

Q How did you created you whole imaginary?

A There is a lot of naivety behind. Instinct no calculation. This is also confirmed by the real lo-fi quality of the first releases. But I think that it was the key for the success of that stuff. With a better quality probably it would have had the same impact. That music was very direct and genuine, this I think was its strength.

Q What about you relationship with a management?

A A manager becomes indispensable in order to maximize the activity of a musician who wants to work professionally, exploiting his possibilities into the market. In my case everything began in the basement of my parents’ house. I was just a kid. I started to produce my songs there. My reference were the artists that I followed on the internet, as a fan. I aimed to be part of their musical scene so

I spent days and nights experimenting with instruments in order to find my personal way to reach that level. As soon as I felt to be ready I put my songs on the internet and it all happened. Since that moment I started to receive an incredible number of requests for concert, record releases and sponsorships. I didn't have any idea of the technical issues related to tour production or to recording deals and, frankly I didn't also have the lucidity and expertise to do it. From that moment starts my experience with Enrico which is still on-going now. Only the confrontation of my personal vision with the one of a professional capable to see me from the outside helped me to build a solid project like the one we are running today and that led me to sell more than two million records, to perform more than one thousands of shows in five continents, and to receive media coverage from all the most important music media of the world.

Q If a very talented guys ask to yourself some advices to emerge, what you would suggest to him?

A the creation of a brand and a strong identity, artistic coherence and personality that could be achieved only with determination and hard work toward a clear target.

Q What do you think a musicians need to know to emerge in the current music business?

A The more he knows the more he can understand and react

Interview 4: Crookers

Sample: Artist

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: Crookers

When: June 2014

Where: Phra Home in Lago Maggiore

Note: The interview below is the "original". It has not been made any subsequent corrective action. The questions as well as the answers were rewritten on the laptop as simultaneously. It was not possible to record.

Q When did you recognize you had a passion for music?

A I took piano lessons when I was a child, weekly like 2/3 hours per week for seven years but actually I can't play a piano... I know some theory, that's it. I didn't like that much. I continued with piano lesson until the age of eleven I think. Then I started to listen to Rap music and with some friends we started like a collective of music lovers of the same genre. We all loved hip hop. That period I think it's what made me what I am right now. There I started to know what was a DJ. I learned the art of scratch and mixing with vinyls. In that period I also started to experiment for the first time with music samplers and I produced my first beats. I think I was fourteen when I produced my first beat.

Q Where did you grow up?

A Lago Maggiore, in a small village.

Q How do you think that place influenced your passion for music?

A It was fundamental. Here the main passions of the kids are probably drugs or soccer. I'm not good at soccer and I've never liked drugs. Probably more than the place were the people. Andre for example, was fundamental. Without him probably I would not be a producer. I had just good friends that introduced me to hip hop as a way to enjoy and share a culture. It was also an occasion to stay all together. When you grow up far away from the main cities it's more difficult to find people that could share your same passion. I grew up in a small village, and I was seen by the people of my same age, like a kind of freak, interested in something that, the other guys, didn't even thought

could exist. Then I met Andrea and some other guys three/four years older than me and we used to catch up every week-end. That group was magic for me. Just think that every week end I used to move from my village, take a bus for half an hour, than a boat to cross the lake, than walk and after like one hour and a half of total journey finally I could be able to reach this small studio fully equipped where we basically experimented with music. I did this for years, from my twelve until my sixteen when I did a small studio in my parents' house.

Q When did you come up with the idea to start working as a DJ in discotheque?

A This is funny. It was very simple, I was like thirteen and I went on a cruise with my parents. One night after dinner we decided to visit the discotheque and there I saw for the first time a deejay spinning records for a crowd of people that was there to dance and I said to myself, this is what I want to do. As soon as I come back I started to practice in private parties then I found resident night in a small club near my village where I started to play weekly. For me being a deejay, before that episode was just scratching and doing beat juggling between two turntables with my friends in the studio.

Q What happen then?

A I just practiced and practiced. As soon as I had some spare time after school or in the evening I used spent it on the sampler and then on the computer trying to compose my own music. My main influences were from hip hop like J Dilla, Mad Lib then the minimal house and broken beat. Artists like Switch, Bugs in the Attic, Basement Jaxx, Dj Sneak and many others. In 2006 I created the project CROOKERS and from that moment my life changed radically.

Q Tell me about Crookers and how it started

A In 2003 I was finishing the university and every week end I used to come to Milan to by some records to play at the club where in that period I had a residency. The same year I decided to move to Milan to rent a room and try to make something happen. In that period I had a residency in a small club near the lake but in a month I was barely able pay the rent. In a record shop called Discoid I met Bot, that now is no more part of Crookers' project. We recognized that we shared the same passion for music and for the same type of music so we decided to start to produce some tracks together. In that period I had the possibility to play in Milan before Stefano Fontana, a dj/producer who was already well known. At the end of his DJ-set I gave to him a CD with my beats and he decided to do a release on his record label called P-HOUSE. It was the first release with the first song produced with Bot under the name CROOKERS. A that time Stefano was managed by

Enrico Mutti, and I actually aimed to reach Enrico at the end because I felt the need to have a manager that could eventually help to spread our music through the right channels.

Q Then?

Then we put the songs released with Fontana also on Myspace and from there the tracks started to rebound from blog to blog. We started to receive a lot of messages from other artists, from people from record labels asking collaborations or just to say that they liked our stuff. The tracks were reposted by the most influent blogs in that period and the tracks reached Annie Mac. She included one track on her DJ MAG compilation and then hosted a mix in her BBC show. After that the Fabric called us to play in London. It happened very fast and we were speechless. It was great because this came unexpectedly in a period where all the people around us, were discouraging us from doing music. This was fundamental to build up some self-confidence and continue to work on other tracks. In that period I felt to be on the right track.

What happened next?

We started to work day and night on producing music. As soon as we were ready and satisfied we uploaded on the net. In the same period we started to ask to do remixes for other artists that we liked. We did like thirty or forty remixes for free. In those days we met Enrico and we started to collaborate with him. It was the end of 2006. Enrico was really surprised by our stuff and start to work on it.

Enrico was your first manager?

Yes. We could say that before Enrico we were the manager of our self (he laughs) but we didn't like it. I think that at some point you need a manager that helps you to absorb part of the work that subtract time to music production. It was great to have Enrico on-board because we started to concentrate only on music production delegating everything to Enrico. Enrico helped also us to start generating some money from our work and give priorities to our work. We started to ask some money for remixes and do some shows in Italy and also somewhere in Europe. The real turning point was when Enrico sent our stuff to his friend Nathan who grew up with the Chemical Brothers. Nathan gave us the possibility to officially remix two tracks, one for Armin Van Helden and the other for Dusty Kid. Both the remixes were a huge success in the underground club scene. This I think moved Nathan to send our music also to the Chemical Brothers who gave us to remix one of their singles. In September of 2007 the remix came out and it was huge. Chemical Brothers at their shows played our remix instead of the original. (he laughs)

Q Then?

A Enrico then presented us to Martje Kremers probably the best agent in EMEA for electro music in we started to tour Europe and then six month later Australia. Since then it was an escalation we never stop until 2013. You know the rest of the story... (he laughs).

Q Have you done any other job?

A No, my first job was the DJ, I did like seasonal work in summer as a gardener of helping to organize things in the club near the Lake where I used to play weekly but nothing else. I've never did a proper job as an employee for example.

Q What do you think it was important?

A Hard work, Fortune, massive fortune, to be at the right time in the right place with the right skills, Talent probably, Self Confidence, I mean capacity to believe what I was doing even if the results didn't come.

Q How much time do you spend on the social networks?

A Very few, there are other persons that do it for me. But at the beginning it was a lot. Everything starts from there so, yes at the beginning I spent a lot of time on internet trying to figure out how to make it, contacting other artists, asking for the parts of their tracks for remixes, collaborations etc.

Q What do you use?

A Email, Skype, Ichat, twitter, instagram, facebook

Q What do you do when you are not in tour?

A I wake up very early, then breakfast, then I call my manager, then I start to work on tracks until lunch time, then back to work until dinner and then I work also after dinner. I'm an hard worker, I love what I do it so I try do it as much as possible. I have been doing this life since I was fourteen.

Q What advices could you give to a new kid?

A I really don't know... Probably believe in yourself and pray god (he laughs). We had a lot of fortune. I think that success happen when you do your thing and the people is ready to receive that stuff. The music need to be right for the time in which it will be released. You need to be lucky that the music you love and represents you is ready to be embraced by the people.

Interview 5: PML1

Sample: President of Universal Music Italy

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: PML1

When: July 10th 2015

Where: Milan

Q What is success for you?

A Digital technology helps to give a name and a surname to everything. The revenues streams have nowadays multiplied. If before the main aim was to sell a product now we try to sell a whole experience. So success it's no more related only to the number of the units sold but to multiple sources of income streams. Some managers are naive. Not you of course, you know it (he laughs). They just look at the number of records sold, the position on the chart. They don't look at the diversification of the revenues. They just want to discuss a recording budget and a royalty advance. The sources of income now need to be also found in the synchronization of the songs with movies, the collection of the neighboring rights for example or the streaming services that now have been multiplied. I feel that a certain generation of managers and their artists will be probably left behind if they don't update themselves. It's a world that is changing radically.

Q Why?

A Everything starts from the music. But you also need to understand how to use of it. The shift from CD to streaming was revolutionary. The streaming rewards the listening, the revenues come from the number of plays, so the more a song is listened the more it generates revenues. Before the advent of the digital technologies, the aim of the industry was to monetize only the possession of music, now it monetizes the access to it. The industry is evolving from a model of ownership where music is incorporated in a physical support like a CD for example, to an access model, where music is physically stored in remote servers and users can access to it from everywhere. The online streaming rewards the listening. The more your song is listened, the more money you get. You can buy a CD and don't ever listen to it. In the old model a fan of an artist as soon as the new record of his favorite artist was published could be able to buy the record and then evaluate just after the purchase if he liked or not. Now If you like a record, you can multiply the listening "x" times

generating every time a revenue for the artist. This streaming modality of consumption of music is nowadays the most used by young people. Kids have time to spend online to listen to the music. The other categories of listeners have a job, a family and sometimes they just buy a CD and listen to it inside their cars, sometimes they don't even buy music and just listen to the radio. With the streaming will be advantaged the artists that will be listened by young people.

So how do you see an evolution of the market? Now that we are facing a transition?

Now we are in a market where the CDs generate the same revenues of the digital services divided between digital downloads and streaming where the streaming occupies the biggest part. So in the streaming area the most successful artist will be the ones that will listen by the young generations that have a lot of free time to dedicate to the music listening. If you are an artist who makes music for adult people you will probably have a bad future in terms of revenues generated. If think about it for a second, it works like this. Think about the young girls that listen to One Direction or Justin Bieber from their mobile, they are able to generate huge revenues for those artists. There is another phenomenon that is important to observe. In the market of live concerts, the artists that had a huge success in the past and now don't make records anymore continue to sell a lot of tickets. This confirms what I was telling just before. The consumption habits are changing radically and the people that have less time to dedicate to listen to the music, prefer to go to see a concert probably, instead to buy a CD or listen through a mobile or a computer. Think at the Aerosmith for example or the ZZ Top, they are still on tour selling thousands of tickets without any hit since ten years or even more.

Maybe their brands became a classic and now also young people join their concerts having discovered them on streaming services?

No. I was at the Aerosmith's concert in Milan and just a few kids were there. The majority of the audience was over thirty five I guess. If I was an artist that has an adult audience I wouldn't allow my music to be streamed. Because I would push my audience to buy the records. I'm provocative, I would probably not do it, but you know what I mean, I would think about it a lot.

Let's get back to concept of success, you said that is basically related to the generation of revenues...

Yes of course, it can't be different in my position. Maybe personally I could have other definitions but professionally I can't think at any other dimension to define the success of an artist. I will tell you more. Let's imagine for a moment a world where only the CDs exist. If an artist sell one hundred thousand CDs at 10 euro and another the same amount at 15 euro the project that has

much success for me is the one that has generated more revenues even if the number of copies is the same.

What do you see between talent and success? Especially evaluating new artists?

A record label in the 99.9 % of the cases. The value of a record label is enormous. When big artists have tried to do on their own they, in most cases, failed. Look at the Radiohead, I'm not talking about the quality of their music. I talking about numbers. Then record labels have great professional that are not replaceable. The know-how that you gain with the experience and the repetitively of what you do is an important element that adds value to the process. I'm talking about artists that want to reach success embracing a large audience, I'm not talking about niches.

From the artist's side what are the key elements that could contribute to the generation of success?

Beyond the talent. A great capacity to communicate, both online and offline. This could be included in the word talent probably nowadays. Then perseverance, loads of it. Ambition, will to arrive first. For young artists especially, they need to know the hard work behind it, it's bigger than the efforts that can make a workman, a waiter or a cleaner. Artist need to have this consciousness, they have to work a lot. The biggest artists that I ever met are tireless workers. I'm lucky because I have the possibility to meet a lot a real great artists and frankly, I recognize instantly when an artist is a great artist. It's a matter of energy. Great artists have an energy bigger than the other people, This is how I feel it.

How do you choose to sign a new project?

I have people in my company that can choose and are paid to choose new artist to be developed. But of course I feel to be very close to the artists.

Imagine to receive a demo on your desk and you have to evaluate it, what criteria would you use?

I think it's a mix of rationality and instinct. Rationality gives you a method.

- a) The probability that an artist will do a success after the first or a second album are just a few. So if I receive a demo of an artist that has a past experience of failure, for me he is out.*
- b) Is it easier to work with a solo artist or with a band? With a band is much more difficult so if I have to choose between the two I would choose the solo act.*
- c) Is a songwriter or a performing artist? I prefer to work with songwriters.*

I could tell you more than one hundred of these factors, this is the rational part, then comes the irrational.

If a song hits me emotionally could make me forget all the rational so I could be able to sign a band of performing artists that are ready to publish their fourth album. I think that sometimes you have to trust your instinct.

Interview 6: PML2

Sample: President of Warner Music Italy

What: Semi Structured Interview

Who: PML2

When: July 9th 2015

Where: Milan

My opinion is an operative vision of the things that need to do it. I will give you my perspective as a professional covering my role.

Q What is your definition of success?

A Record sells are only a part of the gross turnover today. The industry perfectly knows that its assets are not the records but their content. This is a process that started fifteen years ago. The recording contracts made with artists are related to their music performances in the form of recordings that will be exploited in the market according to an agreement where the parts share a % of the revenues generated by that recorded performance. An artist need to arrive to dominate the music scene from any point of view. Starting from the record sells including all the revenues generated by the recording. To look only at the charts could be frustrating but they could give you a hint of what is going on. Nowadays charts include also the streaming. Anyway charts are important in this industry and they have always been a thermometer. When I say chart, I mean record sales charts, radio chart and, video charts related to YouTube and VEVO. These charts sometime helps to testify an artist popularity in a particular moment, especially the big commercial successes. On the other side technology nowadays offers many other channels to artist to expose their music in order to gain popularity. I think we are facing a period where the big successes for upcoming artists are much more difficult. There are a lot a great examples of successes that are coming from talent show. The talent shows produce worldwide great talent that make the right choices and have the possibility to create longstanding careers. The examples of new artist that are not related with talents that had a great impact into the market are just a few. I'm referring to Stromae, Emeli Sande, Adele or Ed Sheeran for example.

Q How do you measure it?

A On evaluating a project we of course still look at the business plan and sales forecast in order to prorate the investment. But, before the advent of the digital world the lines of this document were less. Now, the lines that were less important before, have gained a significant importance. In particular the incomes generated by the licensing to third parties, the synchronizations but also the rights generated by both the airplay and streaming. Now there are many more variables. There is much more attention to the interaction between artists, recordings and the audience. In the old model, before the advent of the internet, we had a system with media from one side and record stores from the other side. The interaction with the final user is now much more present. Social media are fundamental. You can have important market data that could help you to better know who your potential customer could be. I think that it is still import nowadays what I define an “imitative principle”. Especially on the social networks it’s what push a fan to like a post of an artist and then follow him through an identification process. Social media are not able to give us data on this process. Put a “like” on a page it doesn’t mean anything, anyone can do it, it’s free. The number of likes of a fan page could be misleading. We still don’t know the % of likes that will be converted in sales. Nowadays, as never before in the past, it is important to have fans. A fan is not a general listener. A fan is a person who listens to your music time after time, come to see the concerts, buy the merchandising, follow the artist on the social networks and participate to the whole artist experience

Q What do you see between artist talent and success?

A I see determination, humility, hard work, perseverance, but also dialogue. Humility must be mutual, it must come from both the parts. From who recognize a talent and who aims to build his credibility as an artist in the market. An Artist can’t think to be able to do everything on his own. Determination as well as the perseverance must be values shared by both parts. If you don’t believe in what you do, both in business but also in life, it’s better you give up. Otherwise you lose time. The belief that funds the choices that we make every day must be sincere. Then it could happen wrong choice sometimes, but we need to totally believe in what we do. In my opinion teamwork is essential. In the old model the roles where more defined now are a little bit more blurred. In the past we had the artist, the manager, the record label then the booking agent and the audience. Now I feel that the value added by a recording label sometimes is not recognized. Probably it’s true, I don’t think so. I think that big commercial successes need the professionalism of a record label. In any sector and business environment the supply chain has particular functions. For example our body has multiple functions, some help us to stay alive, like the hart beat, the breath and the brain

activity, some others are not so important. All the business environments have functions, think about the automotive, to the computer technologies or communications. In the new model of the recording industry the new tendency is to dismantle these functions. Look at the sub labels for example, like Atlantic, Warner Bros, Parlophone etc. These are still alive in some territories but in some other they closed. This sector I think can go on and improve only if we can be able to experiment. In the past, part of the budget, was dedicated to projects that would never be released. But of course you didn't know it in advance. Because if you sign a new artist that need for example a producer, you can try to create the right balance, with one, two even three different producers until you find the right formula possibly shared with the artist. But this is a result that sometimes you are not able to achieve. From there it could happen to be in stall and being not able to go on in the project finding the right way to present it to the audience. It happens. This could happen from both sides. I mean that both the artist and the record label could lost the initial enthusiasm and confidence in the project. But this is not a problem only of the major, the same problem could be found also within the independents. It's part of the natural cycle of the industry, some artist do not arrive at the end of the process and their music will be not released. My question is, how many artists that experience this, then are able to change environment and have success? It's a question, I really don't know it, I don't have data. According to my empirical observations this never happened. The only case that I know is probably Katy Perry. She was signed by Columbia and nothing happened then she changed also musical style and approached CAPITOL and then reached a planetary success. But how many Katy Perry we have around the world? I don't think we have many. The problem is that a musician is if he feels to be an artist will probably fight with any mean to become popular but this don't happen to everyone. All the environments make a selection.

Reflexive Journal

16th January 2010

I'm currently experiencing, since I joined Spaceship a lot of incredible things that stimulate my curiosity. Everyday something incredible happens in the office, both Enrico and Paul were able to create and manage artist that are now working at the top levels in their field. I'm pretty new to this working environment but I want to learn it. Artist management is probably connected with several aspects. I feel to be in the right place at the right time and I really like this job and I feel right for it. What I've learned at SAE was just a sum of theoretical information, ok I know what is a record deal and how the music industry evolved during the past 50 years but now I'm on the field and I need to gain experience and become credible. How?

20th January 2010

It's about six months since I've graduated and now that I moved to London I miss the time in which I made my first researches about the music industry. I should have to follow Giorgio's advices and try to continue to study and apply for a master degree. I could study and apply the methods of the reflective practitioner as I did in my BA thesis. This could probably help me to improve my understanding of the profession and in the meantime achieve a degree that could be useful for me in the future.

1st June 2011

Today I received the official offer from London Metropolitan University in order to intake an MPhil/Phd research program. They probably liked my research aims and feel interesting to give me the opportunity to carry on my research.

16th January 2012

I've finally decided. I've accepted the offer. It will be taught also money wise. This is an extremely busy time at work but I will do my best. I truly believe that this process could help me to improve my knowledge and probably also my effectiveness at work and could also produce something interesting for the other professionals involved in the same field of artist management.

15th March 2012

Today I spoke with both Paul and Enrico telling them my research purpose. They were surprised and probably didn't understand why I made this choice. Paul in particular asked me if I'm planning to become a professor. I said no. What I want to do is to produce a research about Spaceship as an artist management company. They finally accepted maybe a little bit scared about the possibility that this could subtract time to my daily job.

5th June 2012

I'm facing great difficulties to manage both work and study. I'm currently involved in the production of The World Tour of The Bloody Beetroots. It's a very important experience for me professionally but I can't even have the time to have a proper meal because there is too much to do.

25th October 2012

Today I participated to a meeting with both Paul, Enrico and a new artist called Razihel that sent his demo to Enrico a couple of months ago. I wasn't able to record because the memory of my phone was full, due to previous recordings. He is very talented and we decided to invite him in the office in order to better know him. The meeting went very well, it lasted around two hours in the office and more hour at lunch. I observed both Paul and Enrico as well as the artist. Enrico and Paul tried to understand how did he come up with the idea of become a producer and a DJ with specific question like "*did you study music?*", "*which is your background?*", "*how long have you been doing this?*" Razihel told all his story and how he did approached to music production. He seemed very happy to receive that kind of questions and answered extensively. He basically come from a punk/hardcore background, then started a pop project with another friend that didn't well and two years ago started Razihel a project with a clear target to say something in the Electro/pop scene. He was looking for a management able to help him to develop the project. Paul and Enrico then proposed to him a contract that he happily signed. During the meeting he said "*I finally choose to work with Spaceship because, I think that the experience gained with Benny and Bloody Beetroots will help the development of my career*"

17th December 2012

Today I spoke a lot with Paul and Enrico about contracts, what come out is that the business relationship at Spaceship could be regulated by a contract but this is not necessary. Usually it is set up a certain period of time within which, both artist and managers, give time each other to achieve the set goals. It could be usually a minimum of three years for a new project; the rapport could be also set on a project-cycle basis; for example the release of one or more music albums. With Benny Benassi and The Bloody Beetroots there are no management deals in place, there is a sort of an

unwritten gentle agreement between the parts. The company and the artists agree on a % of the gross income that would be generated by the projects as a compensation for management services. This % goes from a minimum of 10% for the most well established artists to a 20% for the new ones. This kind of relationship between artist and managers is common in artist management company that manage very few artists as Spaceship both Paul and Enrico told me. In this type of “boutique” companies, according to author experience, the relationship, the most of the times, takes place from the very beginning of the introduction of the project into the market and the basis of the link between the manager and the artist resides in their mutual trust. Anyway I’m observing that we new artists both Paul and Enrico are now deciding to do contracts. This is probably related to the evolution of their work. They both started by chance to do this job and build the relationship with their artists day by day, at the beginning with Benny and Bloody they have each their own company and only an artist to manage. This relationship grew bigger day by day as soon as some targets have been achieved so probably there is no need then to create a proper agreement. Both the parts have self esteem in the other. They set targets together and try to achieve them, if they met the targets they will be able to earn money and eventually share that money in the % set. With new artists is probably different. There is probably no time to create such a define personal relationship so it’s better to agree on a contract in order to defines roles and duties. A manager at Spaceship, as soon as the relationship has been set up, starts to represent the artist acting as a filter between the musical project and all the members of the team involved in it. From the artist side trust needs to be huge, he virtually assigns all the business aspects of his work to another person. If it’s rather intuitive to read the trust relationship from the artist’s side. The act of representation implies that, not only an artist is seen through his manager, but also a managers is, in a certain way, represented by the artist. The artist through his manager assumes obligations related to the delivery of songs to the record label, to the publisher, interviews to media or posts on social networks for the sponsors, just to name a few. These, become the tasks that an artist needs to accomplish as soon as he has set up partnership with other professionals involved in the project. His attitude and approach on respecting deadline and meet the agreed commitments, contributes to create a reputation for him and for his managers towards the stakeholders involved. Maybe a contract could make an artist, especially a new one, more responsible in doing his job as a musician more professionally than without it.

14th February 2013

Today I had a very interesting conversation with both Paul and Enrico about the typology of artists that we encounter during our daily activity and how the company gets in touch with them. The conversation was stimulated by Valentina, out intern that takes care of the social media who was observing that the messages we receive on Facebook from new artist that would like to receive our

management services are increasing. She then asked for the typology of artist that the company come across since its beginning. I wasn't able to record but I'm now, at the end of this day, during my travel back to Milan in train, trying to summarize the typologies emerged.

a) Talented artists with no experience of the market. They have great capabilities and artistic talent but they never received a feedback from the audience. They never thought about the possibility to have a manager and a professional team to support their project.

b) Talented artists with an initial feedback from the market. These artists have already experienced the opportunity to expose their musical product through social media, self-releasing it to the audience with no external help of any professional.

They have received a positive feedback and started to generate a following on social networks. Between the followers, in addition to music lovers and potential fan, there are signs of interest from industry professionals like music blogs, journalists, record labels. This type of artists never had the possibility to work with a professional team but they feel the need of it.

c) Talented artists who have already experienced the market and have worked professionally in the industry. They received positive feedback from the audience, but had not positive experience with their management. They are looking for another manager.

d) Talented artist who have been present in the market from several years with the same manager and are happy with him/her. This is the case of the artists like Benny and The Bloody Beetroots that Spaceship is currently managing.

Regarding the typology of contact Paul, Enrico, Valentina and me agreed on the following Spaceship, there are basically two different approaches to get in touch with the artists. The author defines these approaches as "Pull" vs "Push".

The "Pull" approach is constituted by the external request of management services that could come from artists or sometimes from other music professionals that are involved in the daily working environment of the company. It happens quite often to receive information about a new project from record label executives or booking agents. This usually happens by email or phone call or even during meetings. The artists generally send their demos via email or through messages sent to the social media of the company. All the material submitted is subject to review and feedback to the sender. The company receives at least thirty requests per month. The Push approach happens when a member of the company sees a particular potential in an artist which captured his/her attention commonly through social media. In this case it is the manager who tries to contact directly the artist in order to fix a meeting and examine the possibility to start working together. At Spaceship this

kind of approach is really rare and happens only with artist of group a) or b). The author had the possibility to see only two relationships born in this way since 2010, the year he started to work for the company. The push approach is very rare, at Spaceship, because, according to author's observations, the artist managers of the company has really few time to dedicate to the discovery of new artists. All the managers, as it has been observed by the author are extremely busy dedicating most of their time in managing their current artists. Then the push approach is been observed to occur only with artists of type a) and b) mainly because they don't have already a manager. I've never seen both Paul and Enrico consider the possibility to work with an artist managed by another professional. This might be seen by both Paul and Enrico as a tremendous unfairness.

28th March 2013

Yesterday at lunch I spoke a lot with and Enrico about ----- he was signed in late 2011. We were extremely excited about the uniqueness of his approach toward music productions and we had great expectations about what he could have done but due to his personal attitude toward work and due his personal fragility he didn't make it. I could be able to record but I will reconstruct what emerged by the conversation.

----- sent his demo to the company in late 2011. As soon as it was played in the office, Paul, Enrico, me and the others members of the team at Spaceship, were amazed about the quality of the music. So Enrico e-mailed back the artist in order to meet him personally.

After the first meeting, the business relationship took place and the primary management operations, led the artist to an international recording and publishing deal with a very credible and active American independent record label. In six months, one of his songs was included in an important commercial that was also broadcasted during in the opening ceremony of the Us Super Bowl 2012. The commercial was then also programmed in heavy rotation on TV both in Us and Europe. This result, from a management side was seen as a great achievement and an important step to start to build several other activities around it. The same approach was shared also by the record label who asked for a follow-up record. This kind of unexpected positive results generated a lot of pressure on the artist that led him to a creative crisis, which is still ongoing today. From that episode he was not more able to generate any other complete song.

9th September of 2013

Yesterday I had a conversation with both Paul and Enrico regarding how to plan and work with the artists. The conversation took place from one of my questions related to some problems that I were

experiencing with one of my artists. In particular I asked how do they monitor the results of their strategy and in particular how do they set up their relationship with the artists. I was able to take note of the conversation but I wasn't able to record it. The result of the conversation is reported as follows. According to what both and Enrico told me the strategic planning process generally takes place during a face-to-face meeting with the artists. At Spaceship this kind of meetings happens with the artists every three/four months. Of course there are several other occasions in which managers meet personally their artists, as for example the live shows or the meetings with other stakeholders (Record Label, Sponsors, Publicists, etc.). But these kind of meetings related to strategy happens with the frequency set above. Paul and Enrico agreed in describing the process as follows. With well-established artists, a strategic meeting usually has the following topics to discuss: 1) Revision of the short-term targets set during the previous meeting. This topic relates to what the Paul and Enrico define as outbound operations; the ones that the company activates, in order to achieve the targets set with the artists. The areas of interest could be multiple and they could involve, the scheduling of record releases, the discussions about promotional plans, about sponsorship research, tour production, live performances, media partnership, collaborations with other artist or the delivery of new music. During this part of the meeting, Spaceship's managers usually explain and describe the results of the operations put in place since the last meeting. The activity sometimes produces the expected results, sometimes not. In all the cases, for each topic the results of the plan are shared and analyzed by both the artists and managers in order to re-arrange them accordingly. 2) Revision of the long-term targets. Paul and Enrico reported that usually they set a long-term strategy with artists on two levels. One level has a time perspective of one year, the other up to three years. Within the one-year strategic plan, usually they define and discuss concrete targets as: number of record releases to do during the year, number of live shows, promotional strategy for both the releases of the music and of the live shows, partnerships with sponsors and endorsement deals. According to them these targets have been set the year before and during the meeting are monitored in their development stage and modified accordingly. The long time strategy has less definite boundaries and it pertains to a general target, related to where the artist will see himself on a long perspective; if he wants to stop to perform live shows and concentrate the efforts in music production or if he want to achieve a good balance of both, for example. 3) New opportunities to evaluate. Paul and Enrico usually define this topic of discussion, as "*in-bound requests*" that have not been planned or activated by the management; these proposals are generated by external partners with a certain regularity. This kind of opportunities are related to projects as sponsorship requests, television appearances, special events or collaboration with other artists. As remarked by both Paul and Enrico this "three steps method" is important in order to really stay

focus on targets and multiply the possibilities to achieve them. Artists need to be focused and have deadlines to respect, they say, and managers need to have tasks to be achieved. This systematic approach helps to give rules and monitor constantly the workflow. By the respondent answers emerges also how, during the application, of this method sometimes arise problems especially with new artists. According to the answers of the respondents, this approach hasn't been decided only by Paul and Enrico but occurred as a result of the practices learned managing the projects of Benny and Bloody that continue to gradually grow every year. The managers learned by their experience how to structure. With new artists, usually the process is less structured. After the first meeting, the one set in order to decide the first steps, all the communications are made by phone and emails on a weekly basis. Meetings are generally set-up when something important has to be decided, like for example the signature of a recording contract.

8th October 2013

Today I was all day with Paul at Benny studio, near Reggio Emilia. We made a meeting in order to review the targets set last time and listen some new music. Benny at lunch has told about how Satisfaction born. According to what Benny reported, at the beginning of 2002 he was working day an night in the studio with Alle, his cousin, who is the musician, producer and sound engineer behind his productions, in order to find the right way to create a distinctive sound for the project and Alle came up with the idea of the baseline of the track and together they finished the song. As soon as Larry, their producer, listened to it, he sent it to Energy Productions, an independent record label specialized in dance music that made the release and expose that creative product to the audience, which become a huge commercial success. Benny explained that it took more than eight years, spent to produce and experience the skills of DJ in the clubs before he found the right path with "Satisfaction" in 2003. According to what he reported, his experience as a DJ in the clubs permitted to him to constantly monitor what, in a particular moment of a record, could generate a positive reaction by the people present in the dance-floor that he was able to see from his DJ-booth. Every week he used to bring into the club his new tracks in order to observe the reaction of the crowd and adjust the track accordingly.

10th January 2014

Today I spent a little more time than usual at lunch with Paul, he asked me how is it going and then the conversation fallen on his background. So I decided to turn the recorder of my telephone on and I've recorded what he said.

I am an old Englishman in Parma, I was born in 1960 in London, and I lived there until the early eighties. I moved to Italy because I decided to study there. I was in love with Rome and I started a

course of Latin languages at the University. There I met Emma, we fallen in love and married. After moving to Parma I've started to work with a music production company called Off Limits that, in that period, was very active in the production and exploitation of dance/pop music. There, I witnessed to the rise of Ivana Spagna with "Call Me" that reached in 1987 the #2 in the Uk chart and of Whitfield, whose song "Saturday Night", produced by the Italian founder of Off Limits, Larry Pignagnoli, reached #1 of the Uk pop chart at its debut, selling more than one million records in 1994. That was my real initial training. That company was very active at that time. Especially in the field of electro dance music. All the most important artists related to that scene used to pass by and say hello. I saw that company grow. In that period I was helping as a language coach. They produced records in English sometimes with Italian singers with a good pronunciation but not a mother tongue one. At off limits I've also experienced to work on recording contract and publishing deals, I really gained a lot of experience there. There I met also Benny and I started to work closely with him and his cousin Alle until the release of "Satisfaction" which was a huge club hit. That could be probably considered as the point that led me to change gear and improve my professional skills very fast. So I then decided to leave Off Limits and create my own company, the Cock An Ear.

18th January 2014

I've just transcribed the conversation made with Paul. There are valuable data that could help to define the context of the research I need to fix a meeting with Enrico and generate the same informal conversation.

28th January 2014

I met Enrico in Piacenza, we are currently working on a sponsorship contract for The Bloody Beetroots. At lunch I had the possibility to ask about his background and he was happy to tell. Also in this occasion as soon as it was the time a turned on the recorder. I was born in 1972, after graduating in graphic design I started to organize concerts in my city Piacenza. I had many experiences from small concerts of local bands until a big concert of Manu Chao. In that period I worked as booking agent for several artists, mainly from the electronic music scene. I started to work professionally as a booking agent in 1998 when, with Giammarco I founded Mac Mac. Mac Mac was, actually it is, because Giammarco is still running it, a booking agency specialized in organizing the Italian tour dates of artist that we liked mainly related to the electronic scene. In twelve years of activity together as agents, we organized the Italian tours of Kruder & Dorfmeister, Gothan Project, The Chemical Brothers, Daft Punk for example. It was a great period. I met Giammarco because he was running in that period a club in Reggio Emilia called Maffia and I was

helping him to bring there some international act so together we decided to start MAC MAC. This experience lasted 12 years but at the end I felt fed up by the booking agency work and at the same time I felt myself ready to change and start something new. In 2006 I founded My Management with the main aim to exploit the experience gained in the past years as a booking agent and start to develop new talented artists that come to all the concerts that I was in that period organizing in Italy giving me their demos. I felt that there was a scene in Italy that was growing and I guessed that I was ready to help it to develop further. There started the relationship with Crookers, that you know very well. We achieved incredible targets with them also unexpected, it's the best part of the job the unpredictability of the results that you can expect from what you do. We reached a #2 in Uk with the song "Day And Night" and with The Bloody Beetroots, the project funded by Sir Bob Cornelius Rifo, we sold more than two million records worldwide and collaborated with artists like the legendary Paul McCartney. I learned a lot from these experiences and I'm continuing to learn every day.

18th June 2014

Today I took part to a sort of lesson that Paul and Enrico made in the office. Me, Valentina and Giorgio, Paul's son were present. The conversation started from the analysis that Valentina was doing looking at the insight of Facebook. We were basically commenting the stats of each artist managed in order to see what happen since the week before for each one. So Paul started saying that the social network helps to monitor the online engagement of the artists but it's also important to monitor how the artists are engaged also offline. Enrico added that the most important thing is for him that his artist are constantly engaged by their agent proposing shows, from the record company asking for new records, from media and from the fans. Paul totally agreed to this saying that for him is the same, in this model for him all the four components need to have a constant balance. I then asked if could be considered a good measure to monitor also the spread of the popularity of an artist to translate those components on a geographic level trying to understand the popularity of an artist in accordance to his engagement origin. Paul and Enrico started to talk and they arrive to conclude that for example, a London artist will, according to the monitor systems experienced within the company, be considered "engaged" in London, if his/her fan base is mainly composed of Londoners, if the major music newspapers / blogs in the city are interested in his/her work, if the promoters fight to manage his concerts and if the record companies operating in the area are offering him/her contracts. In the case in which the artist begins to generate more engagement to the point that his/her fan base begins to be composed of fans distributed on five different continents, that the press of the respective continents begins to get interested in his music by requesting interviews and writing articles in multiple languages, and the requests of the promoters are

coordinated by a booking agent who arrange shows on a world tour and finally the records of the band are distributed through sub-licenses all over the world, we can say without doubt that the band / artist has reached a worldwide success in its context.

This is the way at Spaceship artist managers monitor the effectiveness of their operations. The constant confrontation with the stakeholder involved in the project and monitoring of the parameters of the engagement are important indexes for an artist manager at Spaceship in order to regulate his procedures and operations. The level of the engagement generated could be argued to be assimilated to the level of value added by artist management operations to the artistic project.

8th of July 2014

Today I met PML1, the president of of a local division of a major label In Italy. The interview took place in a restaurant, at lunchtime. The mood was friendly and relaxed and he was extremely keen to speak without asking anything about the author's double role, as of both a professional and a researcher. The sensation was that he felt very comfortable to speak about the matter requested, living it as a moment of escapism. The conversation lasted around one hour. He was very frank and direct, giving important insight about the context of the contemporary music industry related to artist management. Tomorrow I meet PML2, the president of the Local Division another major label in Italy. The conversation led to an important reflection. In the old model, the one related to the business of manufacturing physical copies, the revenues of recorded music were calculated mostly on the number of unit sold. That data alone did not give any particular insight about the demography of the people who bought the product and in particular, if that product would have been really listened or not by the customer. The profits, as well the success of a record, was measured mostly on the action of sell the units. With the advent of streaming services record labels ultimately sell infinite numbers of plays that could be currently only experienced though computers and smart-phones. The action of selling is not concluded with the purchase of the record but it's a constant consumption flow. The possess of the records in the old model, the one in which there was no other possibility to store music, contributed to place and identify a person in a social context according to the type of music listened and shared with friends. This context was basically partly inaccessible by the Major Labels. Nowadays the industry, thanks to the digital technology is instead able to classify the typology of listeners, advise them and address their preferences through the systems implied in the streaming services. So where the ownership of music in the old model was a way also to express a listener's identity, now it becomes a consumption pattern useful to help the industry to expand its business.

15 September 2014

Today Enrico, Valentina and Paul spoke extensively about the use of social networks within the company. I was able to take some notes that now, that I'm coming back from Parma, I will translate in a proper observation.

According to Enrico, the streaming services help to make the music more accessible to the potential audience and the social media help to promote it. The digital shift is offering to the artists and to their managers tools that are extremely valuable to engage fans and build a relationship with them. Paul engaged the conversation saying that, the social networks are key in the daily operations of a manager at Spaceship. Social media has become a crucial tool for many aspects of success in contemporary music careers. Successfully building a fan base via social media involves providing diverse and well-timed content to fans and creating connections with other artists in order to expand the awareness of the artistic identity and its perception. Valentina then joined the conversation adding that "*The most used socials within the company are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and each one is used in a particular to vehicle specific information to fans*". According to what Enrico explained at the end of the meeting, Facebook could be considered the diary of the artists related to their profession. Here the artists share information related to their activity as musicians. They basically announce news; it could be a new album release, the preview of a record's artwork showed in exclusive to fan, the share of a well written article published by a journalist. They also announce tours and any information that is related to the musical project and could be useful to update the fans. This is done basically in two ways, by the artist himself, who speaks directly from his own voice. In this case he shares emotions and messages that often have a personal involvement, like personal thoughts about a song or a performance. The other type of communications are made by the team and are related to communicate official information with a wording that not involves emotionally the artist. These have a signature that helps the fan base to understand that is not the artist speaking, like for example #teambennybenassi or #teamthebloodybeetroots. Twitter is used as a blog. Through this social network, Spaceship's artists are free to express their opinion on several themes beyond their activity as musicians. Of course this is another way to connect to fans and build a relationship. Because here a fan could know a little bit more the artists. In particular what they think about specific themes as for example sports, other music or movies. Instagram is another important tool. This helps the fan to get involved in the life of the artists. They usually post here pictures related to their life. It could be tour life but also personal moments. Of course this as well is a media for artists' promotion, posting album's artworks, work in progress of the live

performances, outfits and any other image that could be related to artist activity, especially the backstage one.

15th October 2014

Today I came with Enrico, Paul and Valentina to Amsterdam for the Amsterdam Dance Event. In the morning I had the possibility to attend a seminar of music management where the main speakers were: Steven Braines of The Weird and The Wonderful (Manager), Liz Miller vice president of SFX Group and Tommi Tamburine of Listen Up (Publicist), the moderator was Kerri Mason. Here briefly the copy of my notes that need to be further developed.

Steven Braines

Healthy Right level

Been able to afford their lives

Support to have a vision

Artists needs to know who they are

and managers need to know who the artists are

Artists are brands

Try to think as one of your fan could do –

nurture your brand without affecting it in a bad way

Same thing for a video and everything that could affect your brand

Do you want to be famous? Or do you want to be celebrated?

Share a vision, be a team

I aim to develop artist as Vivienne Westwood not Donatella Versace

Contract how long? I never do contract with artists as a manager

Tommi Tamburine

Publicist (Toni Tamburine - Listenup)

Put them out - Make a reputation

Protect their reputation

Build e strategy of exposure

Liz Miller

But putting a record on radio doesn't mean to build a long life career

You need to know what success means to you.

Do you want to live with it? Or you want to become super popular?

There are rules - promotion (radio/tv)

Skrillex - 320 shows in a year without any radio hit

Development is all you do before a major could be interested in the project.

Best relationship with a manager/label- the person who works with an artists should be a fan or emotionally involved into the music.

Streaming contributes to charts

16th February 2015

During a skype call Andrea Nardinocchi reported:

“Success for me means to find out that the people have well received what I’ve created and that they have made this as a part of their lives. The more people are involved in this process, the more, I guess, I succeeded in my delivery; for me it’s a matter of sharing my music with the most vast audience possible.

This could contribute to the definition of success within the case.

15th March 2015

Today I’ve interviewed Paul. He was informed about the purpose of the interview and was more than keen to do it even if he was extremely busy. We moved to the meeting room in order to have a quiet place to speak comfortably. He was previously informed that the interview would be structured as a conversation having as the main topic the artist management profession and its role related to the concept of success in music. Paul is a very acute and ironic person the interview went smoothly and gave I guess important insight for the research. The role of the author as interviewer/researcher was not felt at all and the overall feeling was as a really normal conversation between colleagues. I observed that A relevant aspect that completes Paul’s approach to management processes is related to his attitude toward the creative product. He prefers not to affect the creative process of the artists in the sense that he never advises on the use of a particular sound, of a melody or any other kind of detail related to the creative process of the music of the artists he manages. It’s not because he doesn’t have the skills to advice. It’s more a sort of ethic choice. He prefers not to interfere in the artist’s creative sphere. He actually prefers to listen to artist’s needs

and together with him find the best solution to meet those needs. On the artistic side for example could mean suggest to the artist a songwriter, a producer or an arranger that could help to achieve the desired result. He basically provides the artists with tools that could help them to reach a next level and meet the target. After the interview, a couple of hours later, I was thinking about his answer related to his personal way to choose a new artist and he explained once again to me that the basis for working to the development of a musical project, needs to start from a clear vision of the artist that need to be shared by the manager who uses his competencies and knowledge to grow it into the market and eventually add a value to it. This is an ongoing process that starts as soon as the relationship begins and that goes on as soon as it develops through the years. He told me that this a common vision that he shares also with Enrico and was one of the basis on which they started the company. Tomorrow I fixed a meeting with Enrico, I will interview him on the same topics. I think that today I learned a lot also on how to do interviews. It's not easy dealing with a person that you know professionally and that knows you professionally. At the beginning I felt like I was doing something not appropriate, I mean interviewing Paul during the normal working activity in a busy day subtracting time to the normal office work. But as soon as we started I felt relieved he finally also said thanks me because the interview helped him to clear his ideas about his profession but it was probably just another joke...

16th March 2015

Today was the turn of Enrico. I interviewed him in Piacenza at My Management offices. People at Spaceship Management work most of the time not being physically in the same office every day. Paul generally works from Parma, Enrico from Piacenza and I work from London or Milan. We speak to each other regularly everyday on the phone and via skype and do collective meetings all together in the office in Parma at least five/six times per month. Personally I feel that when we are all together in the office we are way better productive that when we are in different offices and talk on skype. Skype is a good tool but I think it can't be considered a replacement of a real meeting. I have been observing this since the beginning I've started to use it. It's useful for general meeting of update but the real effectiveness incomparable with a real meeting. This could be a matter of future research, maybe. That day me and Enrico were alone in the office and the conversation took place in the comfortable environment of the coffee room. The mood was very relaxed and I felt Enrico more than willing to be interviewed about his job, giving a personal perspective of what he does every day and what he have done in the past. Comparing this experience with the one had yesterday I felt much more comfortable. Enrico is a great communicator. One of his peculiarities is the ability to transfer ideas to people and inspire them of their value. He is able to create enthusiasm and empathy with his interlocutor. This can be argued to be a very important quality for a manager. It is

part of the daily job to filter and give a scale of priority to artist's ideas that will be realized with external partners, sponsors for example. In this cases the manager, represents the artist, in communicating that idea that might need also an economic contribution by the partner. It's fundamental in this process being able to communicate efficaciously. He is also very capable of doing negotiations but sometimes lives to Paul the technical details of the agreements. I think that one of his main characteristics is the general positive approach that he is able to transmit also to the other people he gets in touch. He is very self-confident and I guess this is an extremely important quality for a manager.

March 19th

Today Paul and Enrico invited in the studio two talented guys from Milan called Merk and Kremont. They are very young, I guess around 22/23 and are a duo of producers and DJs that is doing great both with records that with shows all over the world. They are currently working with Giammarco, who is taking care of their booking worldwide but now they feel the need of a manager. They looks a little bit scary. It's a typical attitude of people that have to take an important decision for their future but they don't know what to do. What emerged from the meeting was their attitude. Their consciousness of what they are doing. This is an extremely important factor for artist managers in selecting an artist to work with. Paul and Enrico proposed their view that was agreed by the guys. In this occasion I was able once again to observe how many contacts both Paul and Enrico has in the industry. All the people cited by the guys that included American record label executives, booking agents, concert promoters and festival organizer had longstanding relationships with both of them because of their past experience with their artists Benny and Bob. I was able to observe further how this type of familiarity generated in the artists a sort of happiness. As soon as, during the conversation happened to cite a common name known by both the parts they showed a more relaxed feel also in their facial expressions. We took the train back to Milan together. They are really nice guys with a great ambition to succeed and hard workers. They dedicate all of the time they have during the day to make music and respond to the messages they receive on the social networks. They use socials both to communicate with their fan base but as they said they use it also for stay in touch with other artists and exchange part of the songs and do plans for future releases. They are really looking for a management and they need to choose very fast. They said: "*We decided to finally approach Spaceship because we would like to see our project reach the position gained by Benny. It would be great for us to reach that level*".

20th March 2015

I'm currently working on the strategy section reported in the data analysis chapter and I would like to include an observation made just some few weeks ago but that I lost. It was written on a notebook that I've probably left on a table of the cloakroom of the British Library. So I asked to both Paul and Enrico to tell me what happen with a new duo of music producers that we just signed and I guess it could be considered a perfect example of how the strategy processes are implemented by the company. The music of "X" reached the company's offices at the end of 2014. All the people at Spaceship were intrigued by its uniqueness not similar to any other artist in the market of electro/pop music. Paul and Enrico, after showing their interest about the project via email, decided to invite them in the office. The business relationship started officially in January 2015, just after the first meeting. Paul and Enrico decided to assume the direction of the strategic operations. The first target to be achieved, as confirmed by Paul and Enrico, is described by what the artists reported to me on skype yesterday during a normal working call as follows: *"We would like to bring our style and vision to the more people possible building a long life career as both producers and DJs"*. Paul and Enrico started from that vision the concrete procedures to elevate the project to the next level. The management operations according to Paul and Enrico, started officially in January 2015." Enrico, conscious of the new language of X's music, thought that the first thing to do, was to generate interest around their name within the industry. The key professionals involved in the context in which Spaceship operates so Enrico started to speak by phone and send the material to some professionals involved in the net of contacts of the company like labels executives, booking agents, publicists, and other artists, all friends of Enrico. The same did Paul. Enrico: *"I was pretty sure that all the people that would have received the material, could have been impressed by it and that they would have begun to talk to other music industry professionals about it extending the buzz"*. This is exactly what happened. After one month, Enrico was contacted by the local division of a major record label that offered to X a recording deal. Paul negotiated the contract for the release of three songs with an option mechanism. It meant that the Major had an exclusive option to listen to the songs and evaluate the opportunity to release them or not; if they decided that the records were not good for them, the manager, along with the artists could be free to propose those records to another label. The guys produced then three tracks. These have been submitted to the Major that chose only one between the three, the one that both Enrico and Paul considered the less powerful. The Major released the record, which had little impact in the market. Simultaneously Paul and Enrico decided to work on the other record, the one that was rejected by the Major. The idea was not to work with a major label but with a label that with credibility and followers that could transfer that credibility to the artists. An independent record label present on the market since 2005 with a great reputation and following decided to publish the record. As soon as the track was

released, some influent blogs started to review the song, which finally was published by hypemachine.com. The track was then reposted by some other on-line blogs and become very popular online. This kind of exposure generated the following results:

- the track was chosen by an important UK agency specialized in sound-tracks for an important European advertising campaign. The deal is still in a negotiating phase.
- the buzz created the opportunity to remix a track of David Guetta which has been released
- Another Major from the USA showed interest in the project and are currently in the phase of sending a proposal.

Spaceship Management S.r.l – Company Profile

Business Information:

Business Name: Spaceship Management, Est. 2009 in Parma (Italy)

Business Activities: Artist Management

Business Address: Borgo Delle Colonne 3, 43121, Parma

Email: info@spaceship.it

Website: www.spaceship.com

P: +39 0521 235638

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Founders: Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti

Partner: Francesco Gaudesi

Head of Digital: Valentina Tridente

Head of Logistics and Accounting: Fabio Tondelli

Consultants: Giorgio Sears, Luca Giudici, Leonardo Tanzi.

General Business Activities

Spaceship Management is an artist management company founded by Paul Sears and Enrico Mutti in Parma (Italy) in October of 2009. Francesco Gaudesi is part of the team since the beginning and became a partner in 2012.

Spaceship's central aim with the acts it work with is to ensure that their music and performance receives a high level of exposure to the audience the company feel they need to reach. While Spaceship runs a core roster of key acts as a management company, the company's business does also on occasion provide services for artists on a project by project basis.

Since 2009 Spaceship Management represented artists such as Benny Benassi, Crookers, The Bloody Beetroots, Congorock, Alex Gaudino, Merk & Kremont, Planet Funk, Aucan and many others. Spaceship could be considered as a "boutique company" where the main aim is to privilege

the development of a few artist that show an artistic uniqueness that could be eventually exploited into the market.

Paul says: *“I prefer to work with just a few artists. If they need something, they know they can count on me because I dedicate my daily activity to their exclusive development”*. (Paul Sears)

Enrico: *“I consider myself as a tailor. My work with The Bloody Beetrots is tailored on his needs. I try to look after any detail in order to meet the targets set with the artist”*. (Enrico Mutti)

Paul is the main reference for Benny Benassi and Alex Gaudino, Enrico for The Bloody Beetrots and Razihel. Francesco for Dargen D’Amico, Andrea Nardinocchi, Aucan and he also supports Paul and Enrico in their daily activities. The company has a digital department that takes care of the social media strategy of the artists directed by Valentina as well as a logistic department that organises the travels of all the artists during their tours directed by Fabio. An accounting department, whose main focus is to manage all the incomes and to send statements to the artists, completes the organogram.

The company works on a daily basis with stakeholders that include: branches of all the major and independent record labels, the most important and active booking agencies in the field of international electro/pop/dance music, Pr companies, marketing companies, lawyers and accountants expert in international deals.

Collaborations include artists such as: Madonna, Paul McCartney, Chris Brow, John Legend, Kelly Rowland, Will i.am, Skrillex and many others.

Official Remixes include: U2, AC/CD, N*E*R*D*, The Chemical Brothers, Timbaland, David Guetta, Nelly Furtado, Britney Spears, Mike Snow, Tiga, Lady Gaga & Beyonce, Robbie Williams, Martin Solveig, Metallica, The Kills, Public Enemy, and many others.