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Planning Ahead

With the coming of the new year our thoughts often turn to new projects. It may be an idea we have had backburnered for years or a totally new inspiration. Like new year's resolutions though, we often start after a great idea with lots of energy and focus only to find that a few weeks later we have set the project aside. Or sometimes a new project can be so big that we never even get started. What can you do to help ensure that your idea comes to fruition?

1. Make a list.

Sit down with a pen and paper and write out everything you need to do your project. That's right, a pen and paper. It might seem a little old fashioned but studies have shown that the act of writing by hand actually helps to fix ideas in our minds and aids in stimulating creative thinking.

If the project is a new album, you'll need new songs, rehearsal space, time at a studio for recording, and album art. You will need to decide if you want to release the album only in digital format or if you'd like to do a limited edition CD to sell at shows.

Whatever your project is there are sure to be lots of decisions to make. A list of everything you think you'll need, however improbable is a good place to start.

2. Make a calendar

Deadlines make it much more difficult to procrastinate. Start by setting the date for when you'd like your project to be complete. Then take a look at your To do list. Are there certain items that need to be done in a certain order? Are there items that might have a more flexible deadline? For instance, you obviously need to record your music before you can edit the tracks, but something like your album art could be done at any time.

How do you pick dates? Well if you've done a similar project before you have a rough idea of how long things take. If it's a totally new project, it can't hurt to ask friends or other artists who have done something similar how long certain things took for them. However you choose your due dates, be sure to add a few days' cushion to allow for the unexpected.

3. Find the people you need

No one can do everything. Whether choosing musicians for a band, an editor for a book project or a promotor for a tour, the right people can make all the difference. If you know you aren't great with managing money, finding an accountant is a necessity. Will your project include a need for contracts for session musicians or partnership agreements for group endeavors? A lawyer who knows the entertainment industry can be an indispensable resource.

4. Check in

Now that you have your To Do list, your deadlines and the help you need to do the job right, you are ready to get started. It's all smooth sailing from here on out right? Wrong! Chances are that there will be some glitches and unexpected setbacks along the way. These can all be much easier to handle if you take the time to check in on your progress.

Whether once a week or once a month, having a time to bring everyone together to make sure things are still going smoothly can make a world of difference. Even if you are working alone taking the time to go over that To Do list, crossing things off that are done or adding new items you didn't know you needed can help make sure things continue to move ahead.

5. Be flexible

Finally, be prepared to be flexible. Things will go wrong and when they do you will handle the situation much better if you meet it with an open mind. A bump in the road is not a detour, it just means you might need to slow down and reassess where you are at.

New projects and goals are exciting and with the right amount of planning and hard work they can go from idea to creation.