

From mx.d.dk: Bands and Brands in Germany [Interview]

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**One way for bands to find new audiences and establish themselves is collaborating with a brand, something that has become increasingly popular during recent years. MXD met with Michael Frohoff, founder of Kruger media and an expert in the field, to discuss collaborations between brands and artists.**

**Michael Frohoff** is the Managing Director and founder of [Kruger Media](#), a German PR and media company working in the cross-over field of music and brands. Kruger Media is based in Berlin with clients including **Deutsche Telekom**, **Volkswagen** and **Casio**. Kruger has managed to get artists such as **Ed Sheeran**, **Coldplay** and **Placebo** to successfully engage with brands and creating campaigns with value for both parties.

‘The days are over when bands and brands working together was uncool’, says Michael. ‘Today fans have no problems with artists engaging with brands. Of course that doesn’t mean campaigns shouldn’t be smart and carefully thought out.’

Michael has several years of experience from working in music, media and branding. He started his career with arranging punk rock shows, working as the media contact for the

venues. That eventually lead onto a path of fanzines, journalism, artist booking and eventually work in the PR field.

‘Communication between a fan and the subject of that fandom, like an artist or a brand, all comes down to only a few things. I believe there needs to be story and a physical event or experience of some sort to make it successful.’

‘Storytelling is very important. People say it’s the new shit but really, it’s the old shit. If you’re talking to any moderately serious journalist and you fail to get to the point, they will ask you ‘so what’s the story?’. Putting your logo-sticker on the wall is not a story, so no one will be interested in that.’

Michael thinks it’s important to make the story tangible - to make it a physical happening or event that people can see, visit and touch. Kruger Media has many examples of how that can be done.

‘We invited Ed Sheeran to play on top of one of the highest mountains in Germany as a part of a campaign once. That was great, and traveling up there with a gondola and everything makes it a story to tell to people.’

Kruger Media has been responsible for many campaigns involving musical equipment brands and artists, and not only with artists in the highest tier. One case includes an electrical piano introduced by Casio in collaboration with Bechstein, with the idea that the instrument was small and affordable but still of a high quality.

‘We invited **Gabriela Montero**, a really skilled Venezuelan classical piano player to play, as well as a famous German actor who plays the piano, and **Jacob Collier**, an up-and-coming British jazz pianist. They all accepted the invitation and we had a little session where they played the instrument in their own special ways and told us what they liked about it. They’re not all super famous, but authentic, and the good thing about it is that we can get people on board that actually *love* the product or brand.’

Another of Kruger’s music campaigns included video service **Vevo** and car brand **Seat**.

‘Our client Vevo started a series called “Auf Achse”, which featured up and coming bands across Germany such as **Heisskalt**. It featured truly authentic, music critics driven content. Weeks after it started the car brand Seat asked if they could jump on as they liked the idea and the match with brand values. Now they’re investing in the format, which enables Vevo

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to promote even more new talents, which we as an agency support with communication.

Michael says there's a risk that campaigns involving brands with big purses become unpersonal, whereas small brands might be more concerned with the quality of the content.

'Some people still think that throwing a lot of money in the right direction will be effective. To some extent I guess they're still right. But I've seen so many TV ads with **Helene Fischer** [top-selling German schlager artist], that I don't even remember what they were advertising anymore - the connection and value for the brands are lost.'

### **What's the most important part of a campaign?**

'For brands it always comes down to reach. They often start with an idea about a really nice niche event, then a few weeks later they start thinking about reach and just before the event they ask us to talk to the Bild newspaper.'

'We try to package content in a way that it's not too branded, which is also nicer for the artists participating. That way it's easier to share around and the reach is bigger.'

Despite working with music profiles for global brands, Kruger still takes on PR duties from small and up-and-coming bands. The latest signing includes Icelandic indie act **Vök**.

'We take on these small bands because we are music fans and love their music. To be honest, the economical benefit remains quite small. We naturally have very good connections to the German media, including TV, and we can achieve quite a lot through just getting the right tracks onto the right online playlists for example.'

Kruger Media is not a very big company, despite the impressive list of clients. At the moment Michael employs ten people in the Berlin office.

'I don't want it to be any bigger right now. We outsource some of the production of course. The most people we've had was during the **European Music Awards** for which we did PR in 2012, our biggest project to date. Then we were 25 people for a time.'

'I'd love to split the office and make exchanges with other companies. Like having a couple of people working in Hamburg or Munich for a week and bringing someone here from over there. When you're in Berlin you kind of lose the connection to the real world in Germany.'