

Building A Following To Get Bar Gigs By Joe Bunn for DJN

I'll be honest with you, it's been a long time since I've rocked a club, but some things never change. Let me guess, club owners and promoters want a DJ "with a following". Sound familiar? Secondly, they don't want to pay you jack. Am I right? Basically, they want you to market their club for them, and when folks don't show up, they blame you. I already know I'm right! In any case, I know I'm knocking them, but club/bar shows can be a good source of income for "off nights"...but save those Saturdays for making the real money, weddings and big corporate events.

OK, so even after I've trash talked them, you still want some of that bar and gig money? OK, no problem, let me try and help because in my youth, I did make a ton of money off these places. Granted, it was a different era. There wasn't a DJ on every corner or in their parent's basement willing and ready to DJ for free (or a \$20 bar tab). I would go into a deserted place on say a Tuesday night, look around and tell the manager, "I can put 250 people in here in less than a month. I want every Tuesday night, but I'm taking \$5 cover charge from everyone that walks in here and my boy is running the door." I don't think I ever had someone turn me down. They kept the alcohol money and I'd walk out at 2:00 AM with about \$1500 cash money on a Tuesday. I don't know if you can pull that off in this day and age of "everybody and their mother is a DJ", but it doesn't hurt to try. The other thing you have to remember about "back in my day" (dang I'm old), is that social media wasn't a part of the picture. Facebook didn't exist, Instagram didn't exist. The internet was a baby fledgling! I would go around campus with my staple gun and post flyers I got printed at Kinko's on these big wooden signs. I would call my friends. I would let people know on the mic at my frat gigs. That was my big marketing plan.

The first thing a club owner is going to want to know is if you're any good. The only way to do that is to send them a mix. Back in my day (ugh I'm old), I would show up and give the manager or owner a mix on a cassette, or later, a CD. These days if you don't have a Soundcloud or Mixcloud page, you're going nowhere. Once you make your mix, post it right away. I prefer Mixcloud because a lot of my mixes get pulled from Soundcloud due to copyright issues. When I post the mix, I make sure it has artwork to go with it. Try picmonkey.com or fiverr.com if you can't design something good yourself. Also, make sure to tag the mix with the type of music that it is, and also, always list out the tracks. Those are all critical steps for getting people to listen and to follow you on mixcloud or soundcloud. The next thing I do after making sure the post is right, is I share the link to the mix on all of my social media channels. I tweet it, Instagram it, Facebook it, all of that! I even text the link to some of my friends. If it's good enough, it will get shared over and over. More listens=more followers=more power with club owners.

The next thing a club/bar owner will want to know is if you have a following, meaning do people in this town know or care about you. These days, "gaining your following" is going to involve technology. The only way to prove this is with numbers. Numbers of followers on Instagram, friends on Facebook, followers on Soundcloud or Mixcloud. You've got to get those

numbers up! Other than buying followers, which I can assure you a ton of DJs do, you can get them organically by trying a couple of different tactics. No matter what the social media channel, you'll get followers if you engage with other people. What I mean by that is if you follow people or search hashtags and start to like and comment on other people's photos, they will eventually follow you back. It's actually psychologically proven. It's sort of like when a neighbor shows up at your front door at Christmas with a fruit cake and you don't have anything to give them. You frantically search under the tree for something you can re-wrap and give them. It's the same thing on social media. If you follow folks or like their stuff, they are going to want to do the same! Try it. I can't promise super fast growth, but I can promise growth. Also, you must hashtag your photos, especially anything DJ related. You can use up to 30 on Instagram! Try ones like #DJ #DJlife #music etc. People seek out hashtags, believe it or not, and you'll get followers if you use them! Check out the way I use them on my @bunndjco Instagram account (5 periods and then the tags in the first comment section). It makes it not look so "spammy".

The final part of the equation is just being out and about around your city. If you want to play in these bars and clubs, you're going to have to frequent them. Get to know the owner or manager, the door guy, and even the DJs. NEVER talk junk to people about the other DJs around town. I promise that will come back to haunt you. Yes, we know you're better than they are, but keep it to yourself! Now get out there and get that money! Good luck DJs! Hit me up if you have any questions.