

Kathryn: Podcasting from Fairfield Connecticut, you're listening to Compass, where we talk with location independent women about finding work and getting paid. I'm your host Kathryn Hunter and you're listening to episode 12 with Margaret Tra, music publicist. Today we're talking about building contacts, taking the pressure off, and Australian business support. Margaret, welcome to the show.

Margaret: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Kathryn: I like to start with your early life to see what influences it has later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Margaret: I think I actually wanted to be a singer, actually

Kathryn: And how had that changed by the time you left high school?

Margaret: Oh, I just kinda realized I really wasn't that talented, when I heard other people singing.

Kathryn: And did you have a different plan?

Margaret: Well, I grew up with Asian parents. So, it was bit of more of a structured lifestyle. They really wanted me to be like a doctor or pharmacist or someone who worked in a bank or something like this. So, I think during high school, I mean it wasn't until the end where I kind of realized I wanted to be a journalist. With all of these influences and stuff, I think I was a bit lost on what career path to choose, to be honest.

Kathryn: Did you pursue college?

Margaret: Yes. So I did a Bachelor of Journalism, majoring in PR and back then it was online media, which didn't exist really, like blogs and stuff like that.

Kathryn: Is there anything from that style of PR that you use now?

Margaret: Not really, just because the online blogging and stuff like that has kind of taken over. Back then I was kind of learning a bit more about newspapers and things like that. Which, I mean are still a little bit relevant now, but for musicians, it's not that big anymore.

Kathryn: How did you get into being location independent?

Margaret: So basically, I was, started my music blog about seven maybe eight years ago now. And from there I started getting contacts within the music industry and then I decided to start my own PR agency. I was living in Sydney doing it and kind of established myself just a little bit and realize I wasn't really meeting anybody. So then I was like, I think I can actually try and do this whilst I'm traveling. So, the first trial was doing a road trip in a campervan around Australia.

Kathryn: When you're describing your job to people who are just kind of curious, what do you say?

Margaret: I... Usually when I'm traveling, just cause I don't really want to talk about my work so much, I just tell them I run an online business.

Kathryn: And when people are really interested?

Margaret: Yeah. Then I'd tell them I work in the music industry and that I'm a music publicist.

Kathryn: How did you actually get started with the publicity? So just the people would reach out and one by one you built up your business?

Margaret: It kind of built up a bit slowly. I guess I was building my reputation with the music blog and people kind of knew me from that. And then actually, I placed an ad on Gumtree, which is probably similar to your Craigslist. About finding a publicist, sorry, to find clients. And I found one actually, and through that, it was an agency and they sent me quite a bit and it just kind of slowly built up from that.

Kathryn: Is that still how you find clients or has that changed?

Margaret: It's completely changed. Yeah. I don't find clients anymore, they all come to me. With the music industry, everyone's kind of a bit more cautious with that. So, recommendations and referrals are the best way to go.

Kathryn: When you were getting started, what was your first major struggle?

Margaret: My first struggle was I guess like everybody was getting clients and getting people to kind of believe in you.

Kathryn: What would you say was your first major success?

Margaret: I guess when I started working on a lot of tours. So, when overseas artists came to Australia and I was asked to work on those tours, so promoting bigger artists.

Kathryn: If you could go back and start fresh today, what would you do differently?

Margaret: I think I would just put a lot less pressure on myself. I kind of was really hard on myself and didn't really believe in what I was doing. Kind of questioning it, questioning it a lot more. And it's probably something I could have started a bit earlier had I had that courage.

Kathryn: Odds are there's really not a typical day for you. You want to give us what a random day looks like?

Margaret: So basically I'm just checking my emails. I do work on a lot of PR campaigns, so working with a few different musicians. So, it's basically contacting the media, seeing if they've

received my email. If I'm just launching one, I have to get in touch with them and see if they're interested in covering it. Organizing radio interviews. In between that, I am a radio host as well and I'm deejaying too. And yeah, so I update my blog cause it's kinda like free advertisement for me and still keeps me in the music scene.

Kathryn: About how many hours a day do you end up spending on the publicity?

Margaret: Not long to be honest. Probably like an hour, two hours, I try to be quite efficient. Now I know when the media need me and when they're going to contact me.

Kathryn: How did you build up your contacts?

Margaret: So, basically from my blog I actually go a lot of contacts from that way. So I was on the other coin of PR and then also from reading a lot of publications and following the media, contacting them directly through the website.

Kathryn: So it was cold contact initially, but you had a reason so it kind of developed?

Margaret: Definitely, yeah. With music, the editors kind of know that you're going to send them music anyway. But the downfall obviously is that everybody's sending them music, but as a publicist, you know exactly what they need. So generally in the beginning they don't know who you are, but when once you start building that relationship, they will always open your emails.

Kathryn: Do you keep up with any kind of continuing education with this?

Margaret: No, I did try and do some online courses on like social media. But I haven't, it's something I do want to do in the future though.

Kathryn: All right, so now, we're going to get into some numbers. What would you say your salary range is and how long have you been doing this work?

Margaret: So now it's around three, three and a half thousand. And I've been...

Kathryn: Is that Australian?

Margaret: Yes, Australian dollars. So that was, I've been doing it for like four years now.

Kathryn: And that's per month?

Margaret: Yeah.

Kathryn: Okay. What would you say the starting range is?

Margaret: It was like super low. I think it was like \$500 or something. But actually started, so in Australia, we have this kind of, the government assists you if you're going to start up your own small business. And so basically once you sign up with that, they actually give

you a certain amount of income whilst you're starting your business. So they give you, I can't remember how much it was, but they gave me a certain amount of money. But then you also had to just solely focus on your business. So when I was earning around \$500 - \$600 per month, they were also providing me with money as well, to push me into focusing on my business, which is really great.

Kathryn: And is this program common knowledge in Australia?

Margaret: No, I don't think so. I didn't even know about it until, cause I just come back from London and I had to go, and kinda look for a new job and stuff like that. And I wasn't sure whether I wanted to work in media again and if I wanted to work for someone else. So I started kind of doing like PR just for friends and stuff. And then one day someone told me about it and I was like, oh okay, I'm going to kind of give it a go. But I'd say I don't think it's really advertised anywhere.

Kathryn: Do you remember what it's called?

Margaret: Yeah, it's called NEIS. N E I S.

Kathryn: And where would you say the salary range tops out?

Margaret: I guess it really depends, because obviously every month is different. But if I could say yes to everything, which I don't, but at the same, could be like \$6,000, I guess. Yeah. Could it be more.

Kathryn: How do you decide what to charge?

Margaret: So it's like, I guess at the beginning I did it quite low, but now that I've kind of established my contacts and establish, like where I am at the moment. I kinda take that all into consideration. And then the timing of how long it takes me to do it as well. But mostly it depends on how strong my contacts are. That's kind of how I do it. And it depends on the artists too. Cause tours, releases, and all those kinds of things, are like a little bit different. And I work with a lot of independent artists. So sometimes I'm a little bit flexible and a little bit, work with their budgets if I need to.

Kathryn: So what's your number one tip for women looking to get started in music publicity?

Margaret: Mostly, get your contacts and your networking in order. So, go to the events, find out who your local musicians are, the promoters, people... the key people in the music industry. You'll just need to kind of buddy up with them a little bit, make sure they know your name. And try and do some free work if you have the time. The music industry is a little bit cutthroat and it's kind of dominated by a lot of men. That it is a little bit hard to be seen, so you just basically need to make yourself there and know that people are aware of what you're trying to do as well.

Kathryn: But you said you had started with your rates lower than they are now. What was that a strategic decision?

Margaret: Yeah, it was, it was, and it was also, I guess I little bit of an investment and it still is, PR to be honest, it is a luxury for independent artists to be able to take on this service. You know, they spend quite a lot of money producing their music, you know, with the studio cost, obviously their time. However they choose to make their music. So if they have to hire other musicians, people to make the beats and things like that. So they've already invested quite a lot in their music. So, in the beginning it was more of just building that brand and letting them know that I was quite trustworthy because I do know, a lot of publicists who do promise a lot of things to their artists and they don't end up getting a lot back. So yeah, it was a little bit strategic on my end.

Kathryn: What would you say are your next steps?

Margaret: So my next steps is now I've got a PR assistant and hopefully she'll be able to stay on with me for a while. She seems to enjoy it, which is great. And just building on that so we can take on more clients. And at the moment I have clients in Australia and America, so I'd like to expand a little bit in Europe. I've been in here for a while, but like I said, like PR is a little bit of a luxury so that there are not many Europeans who are kind of investing in it at the moment. So the next goal is to kind of tackle the European market.

Kathryn: Where can listeners find you?

Margaret: I'm mostly on my websites, so [stimulateyoursoul.com](http://stimulateyoursoul.com) and then my Facebook page is The Real Maggie Tra. Everything I do, I'm always promoting it and copying it on there.

Kathryn: All right. And we will get that in the show notes.

Margaret: Awesome.

Kathryn: Margaret, thank you so much for joining us. This has been great.

Margaret: Oh, awesome. Thank you so much for doing this is such a great thing that you're doing and hopefully a lot of more women can get into it and yeah, it'd be a little be inspired by the journey and the stories.

Kathryn: Thank you for listening to Compass. You'll find today's show notes at [compasspod.com/012](http://compasspod.com/012). If you enjoyed this show, please share it with a friend, by visiting [compasspod.com/012](http://compasspod.com/012) and clicking the share buttons at the top of the page. Next week we'll be talking to Victoria Yampolsky, startup advisor.