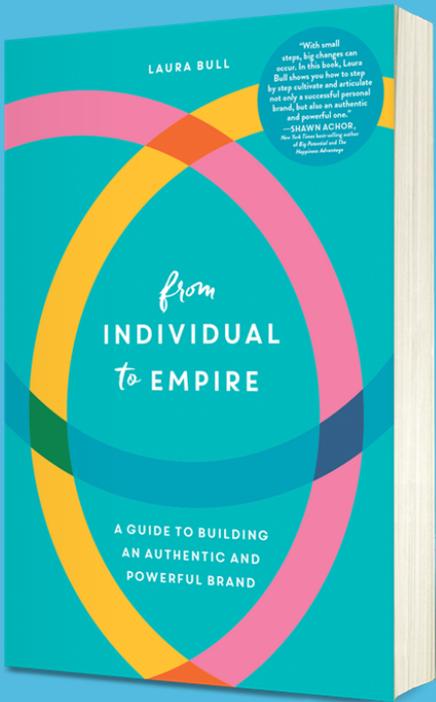


BRANDING FOR MUSICIANS

AN INTERVIEW WITH
Laura Bull

AUTHOR OF:
FROM INDIVIDUAL TO EMPIRE
A GUIDE TO BUILDING AN AUTHENTIC AND POWERFUL BRAND.



About Laura Bull



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Laura Bull spent ten years with Sony Music Entertainment where she became one of the company's youngest executives at the age of twenty-eight. During her tenure, she spearheaded artist development and marketing for globally recognized brands including Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley, and Johnny Cash among hundreds of other artists from Arista, RCA, Columbia, Epic, and Monument records. A veteran of the music industry, she has served for more than a decade on the National Advisory Board for Musician's On Call.

She is an expert who specializes in marketing and transforming people into viable brands by offering insurmountable knowledge to teach others what it takes to become a powerful "influencer." Everyone in the marketing arena keeps discussing the power of influencers, but no one is discussing how an influencer becomes powerful. Now she redefines the term "influencer" by expanding its scope offline, highlights positive psychology principles in terms of branding, and reveals the proprietary Brand Matrix to help entrepreneurs discover their authentic and competitive brand.

A consultant and speaker, Bull has been an adjunct professor for six years teaching disciplines in marketing and music business at multiple colleges and universities including SMU's Temerlin Advertising Institute. She has a BBA from Belmont University's Mike Curb School of Music Business and a Master of Liberal Studies from Southern Methodist University.

She currently resides in Dallas with her husband and daughter.

When it comes to any person, product or business, why is branding necessary for effective marketing?

Branding is the most important and valuable asset ANY business can have - whether that business revolves around a service or a product. That brand will lead a company into all business decisions regarding marketing strategy, product development, and even who to hire on a team.

How is branding musicians different than branding a product or franchise?

So traditional branding concentrates on placing a sellable personality onto an inanimate object in order to create a connection between a consumer. For instance, the marketers at JEEP associate the brand with fun, outdoorsy, and spontaneous in order to attract buyers who share those common values/traits. This also sets them apart from the competition - luxury cars for example. For public figures, their personalities and values already exist and cannot be created in a boardroom. Therefore, they must determine what those are in an authentic way using psychology principles, make sure those traits will remain authentic for the next 30 years, and what sets them apart from the competition. THEN, they decide which target audience will understand that brand with shared values. The thought process is different and the psychology elements are unique.

Have the major changes in the music business over the last 20 changed how artists brand themselves?

Yes and no. Yes in the sense that it is more imperative for artists to determine their brands and begin their business before a record label will take a chance on them. They must prove an audience base and viable business.

But guess what?

If a major record label doesn't come knocking...then the artist can still maintain a long term career with all of the independent options available thanks to digital distribution and the internet based marketplace.

No, [it hasn't changed] in the sense that most artists unfortunately don't understand what their brand is and rely on marketing strategies alone to get a record deal. Marketing strategy can get you a #1 hit, but they can't get you a #1 career. Any artist will lose their record deal or their audience if they cannot communicate a clear brand consistently.

Should every musician consider branding themselves, or can music be successful by just being "good"?

Generally speaking, music can be successful **in the short-term** by being "good." But of course, you have to ask...who places the term "good" onto a song? What is the quantifiable measurement that we have in the industry to support labeling a song "good?" I digress...

Here's the thing. Music is just one small element of an artist's brand. Sounds crazy, I know...but it is only one element of the product. The product is one element of the overall brand that also includes image and narrative. The product, image, and narrative all need to find a place where they come together in order to develop a clear brand. How many times does an artist release a song or album that is critically acclaimed or sells platinum only to disappear into thin air? Being "good" or "talented" does not equal success.

What are the biggest mistakes you see artists make branding themselves?

Catering to the mass market, to an audience they wish to have as their fanbase, or allowing an outside entity to “brand” them - ie: a record label or management firm. For a brand to be authentic, the artist MUST learn the branding process for themselves. Remember, branding never stops... yes, it is most discussed and more in focus at the beginning stages of a business, but the branding process must continue over the long term to make sure the brand evolves correctly. So, what happens if that team member who “created” the brand is no longer part of the team? Someone else will jump in and change major elements because they perceive the brand differently. This costs a lot of artists their careers.

Give me an example of a small time artist who effectively branded themselves.

“Small time” is a relative phrase and the true test of a brand strategy can only be measured in time.

So, I will say that artists who have effectively branded themselves have been able to stay at the upper echelon for at least a decade. Taylor Swift for example got her start at age 14...just as everyone else she developed her brand and listened to the audience. She was signed to a start up indie country label and developed a following on MySpace. She successfully transitioned that brand from child star to adult AND from country to pop. On the surface, people would think that her brand has changed, but the core elements of her brand have remained the same every step of the way. Since she was a “small time” indie artist who has maintained a solid brand consistently over a decade and has become a household name...she would be a good example.

Of course, there are MANY others.

What would you say to someone feels like branding and marketing is inauthentic or takes away from the art?

Honestly, I think knowledge is power and they are just being closed-minded because they fear selling out. In reality, most of the most successful artists I have ever worked with are hands on with their marketing and show up to record label marketing meetings. They understand that they are the CEO of a major company - they employ hundreds of people - and it's up to them to remind everyone on their team what their brand is on a regular basis. That's what any CEO would do.

The other thing I notice when working with artists is that when they dig into the branding and marketing they really discover that the process is a creative endeavor itself. I've never known an artist to not enjoy being creative when it comes to ANY aspect of the music - from studio to street. For an artist not to feel ownership over all the marketing would confuse me. It would be like someone saying "Well, I feel like I created a masterpiece in the studio...but I don't want to translate that into a stage performance that would bring it to life." Branding and marketing bring the music to life through images, messages, personality....it gives the audience something to connect to.

If you are doing something via marketing and branding that is inauthentic to the music, you are actually off brand. Being off brand in order to make a buck IS selling out. So, even more reason to really have fun with branding and marketing to make sure you aren't selling out. The number one goal of any brand strategy IS to be authentic.

What advice would you have for someone who is just starting out?

Don't look at the competition until you look at yourself. Figure out your purpose and define success for yourself. THEN, figure out your brand. I'm glad you "think" you know your brand...but you don't. Take the time to really solidify all those different elements of you and your music and bring those into focus. This process may take YEARS to someone who is just starting out...and that's okay. Experiment just like you would with music until you are 100% happy with what you are going to say for the next 20 years.

How does someone make a brand that has longevity?

Authenticity is the only real way. Of course, authenticity is a two way street with the audience. For instance, an artist can be completely authentic but some listeners may not understand that authenticity within their perception of the world. You see the color red differently than I do. So it's important to make sure the right audience is targeted.

Also, I dive into private vs public narratives in my book and that is a major component on the path for being authentic.

Tell me about the branding process you've developed and why it is effective for even artists in small scenes.

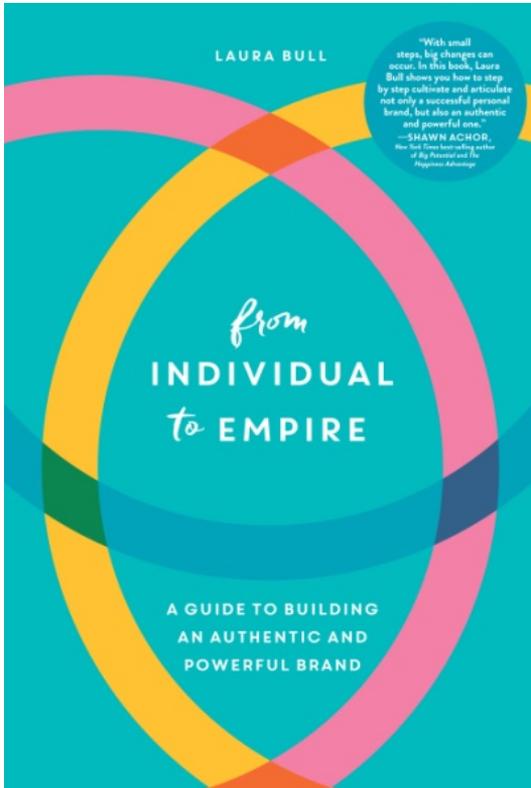
My book highlights macro-influencers who have all been artists in the small scene - whether it be musicians or comedians or authors. Some I've worked with some I haven't. NO artist becomes a major business overnight...so they have all started small and built empires. My entire book is based on turning an individual into an empire via branding.

The branding process itself is The Brand Matrix, but readers will need to work through the book to learn how to develop their own brand. It's not a textbook by any means as it's all story based, but I provide exercises and action steps in each chapter that build on each other so the reader understands this unique branding process from start to finish by the end of the book.

To Hear more from Laura Please Check out her interview on Bobby Owsisnksi's Inner Circle Podcast:

<https://bobbyoinnercircle.com/309-laura-bull/>

Please support the author by buying the book:



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Available through Amazon.com, Ingram, and laurabull.com

Author website: laurabull.com

Author's Press Kit Description:

Ever wonder what makes household names like Oprah, Ellen, or Beyoncé so powerful? It's all about influencer branding, and Laura Bull will tell you everything you need to know.

Bull spent ten years with Sony Music Entertainment, becoming one of the company's youngest executives and spearheading artist development and marketing for globally recognized brands. She is an expert who specializes in transforming entrepreneurs into viable brands and teaching what it takes to become a powerful "influencer."

Whether you are an artist, blogger, performer, politician, author, or thought leader, this book will change the way you think about your "brand" and your future.

Bull marries positive psychological principles with traditional branding strategies and reveals her revolutionary Brand Matrix that will have you soaring past personal branding into the very different world of *influencer* branding.

This intelligent, breezy read provides tools, exercises, and additional resources that offer real-world support to tackle your own engaging, competitive, and authentic brand identity. Entertaining examples from pop culture and politics round out this book that can truly take you from individual to empire.

A consultant and speaker, Bull has been an adjunct professor since 2013 teaching disciplines in marketing and music business at multiple colleges and universities, including SMU's Temerlin Advertising Institute.

PRAISE FOR "From INDIVIDUAL to EMPIRE"

"With small steps, big changes can occur. In this book, Laura Bull shows you how to step by step cultivate and articulate not only a successful personal brand, but also an authentic and powerful one."

—**SHAWN ACHOR**, *New York Times* best-selling author of *Big Potential* and *The Happiness Advantage*

"Engaging and informative."

—**JIM LOEHR**, performance psychologist and bestselling author

"Laura has achieved something remarkable."

—**THOMAS R. BALDRICA**, former Vice President of Marketing, Sony Music Nashville

"A must-read."

—**DENISE SHACKLEFORD**, attorney and assistant professor, Middle Tennessee State University



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