

Becoming 'One': Anatomy of a #1 hit

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A few weeks ago, Jonas Tempel (Beatport Founder/CEO) and I (Beatport COO Matthew Adell) were asked to speak at the [International Music Summit](#) in Ibiza, Spain, presented and organized by Ben Turner and Pete Tong. Ben Turner asked that we speak to the evolving trends we see in the world of retail music for DJs.

We decided to use the opportunity to share our view of the digital music space today, explaining what aspiring artists and DJs can do to stand out, and what steps our most successful artists have taken to make it happen.

We want to share the knowledge that we've learned over the years, talk about how we see trends developing, and explain in detail how artists are improving their success on Beatport by taking advantage of new opportunities across the internet.

We've built a case study that shows actual data on some marketing strategies that were deployed recently on one particularly successful track. The outfit responsible is a relatively big brand, but the tools they used are largely free and available to everyone. Contrary to what many people believe, hitting #1 doesn't just come down to being featured in a slide on

Beatport. We get between 7,000 and 15,000 new releases a week, and we only have about 32 slots to feature content. Now, I'm not knocking Beatport, because we rock, but getting a slide featured on our homepage actually pales in comparison to what you can do for yourself.

What I am about to say below is a follow-up of that presentation. I will cover the same information, and I've included a link to the video below for the full effect.

News Flash: Swedish House Mafia hits #1 on first day of release

On April 27th, 2010, the [Swedish House Mafia](#) swept up the charts and took the #1 spot in our Top Downloads list only a few hours after the track was released. The Swedish House Mafia are three DJs—[Axwell](#), [Sebastian Ingrosso](#), and [Steve Angello](#)—poised for massive, mainstream crossover success, yet who haven't left behind their core fan base. The individual artists already have their own following, but this was their first original release as a production team under the name of Swedish House Mafia.

Great success doesn't just come out of the blue, and their well-timed release was the culmination of many factors. We're going to talk about the steps these guys took that got them to #1 on Beatport. We hope to show how a great approach to digital marketing can be accessible at every level of fame.

All the numbers we are sharing today are publicly available, and the guys in SHM were kind enough to share some additional details and permit us to share them here with you.

Becoming 'One': Prerequisites

When releasing a great track, there are a few things that must be done. Some of these must be set up far in advance; they become the foundation that much of your future work will rest on. Getting these prerequisites accomplished is within anyone's reach. They're not the only things you need to do, but if you don't do these things, you can't make it to #1 at Beatport, or anywhere else, frankly.

• Create a great brand for yourself

If nobody knows who you are, they can't search for you. And you can't rely on a rave flyer or a club promoter or Beatport or any of these other websites to do the promotion for you. You need to create your brand and you need to inject yourself into this community. This is a huge part of the responsibility for the artist or the act. You don't just market a track, you market your entire self, and this begins long before that shining star pops out of your head and into the throbbing crowds worldwide. What does it mean to create a brand for yourself? Know who you are as an artist and reflect that in everything you do. People need to recognize you, recognize your work, and recognize the footprint you leave behind you. In short: be memorable.

• Market yourself like a madman

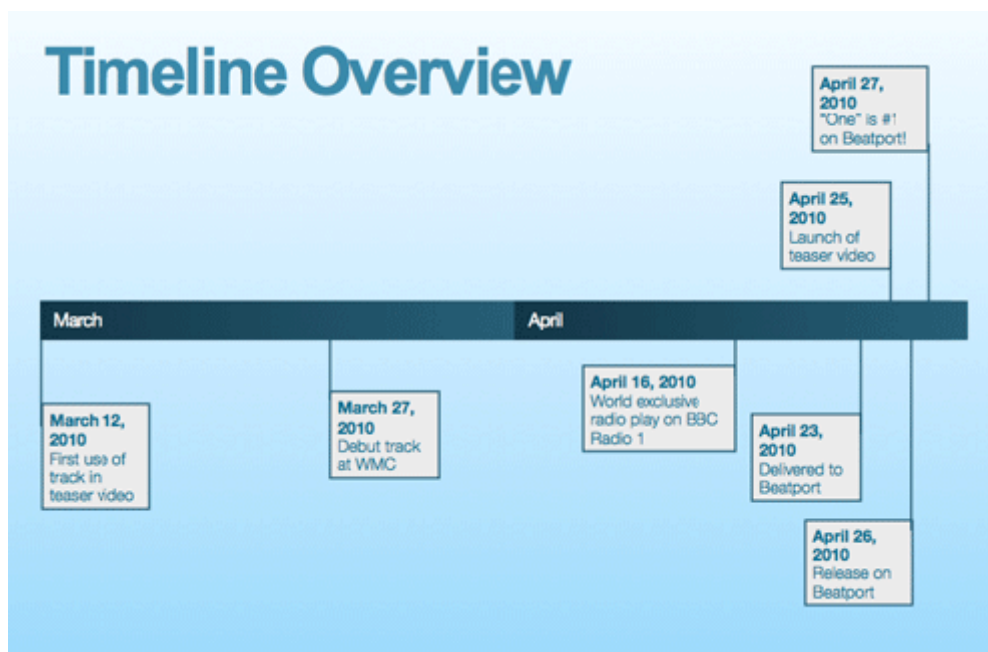
This is really what we're here to talk about. The tools at your disposal within your own network are indispensable in gaining a wider audience for your tracks. We're going to go through all those steps, but short of driving everyone you know crazy, never stop marketing yourself. Being memorable isn't enough-- people have to have heard of you first.

- **Make a great record**

I know this seems obvious, but in my 30+ years (I know, really) of selling records, one thing is always true: most releases suck. Despite this, I personally believe that almost every producer/musician has at least one great record inside them. What they frequently don't have is the patience to actually sit down and make one. Make a great record and you already win by having accomplished something you can be proud of. If you are your Number One Fan, then you can convince other people that you're great, too. If you can't be your own Number One Fan, don't expect anyone else to be.

Once these activities are firmly in place or already rolling, then you're in a position to approach your own #1 hit aggressively, professionally, and successfully. Ignore them at your peril.

The 'One' Overview



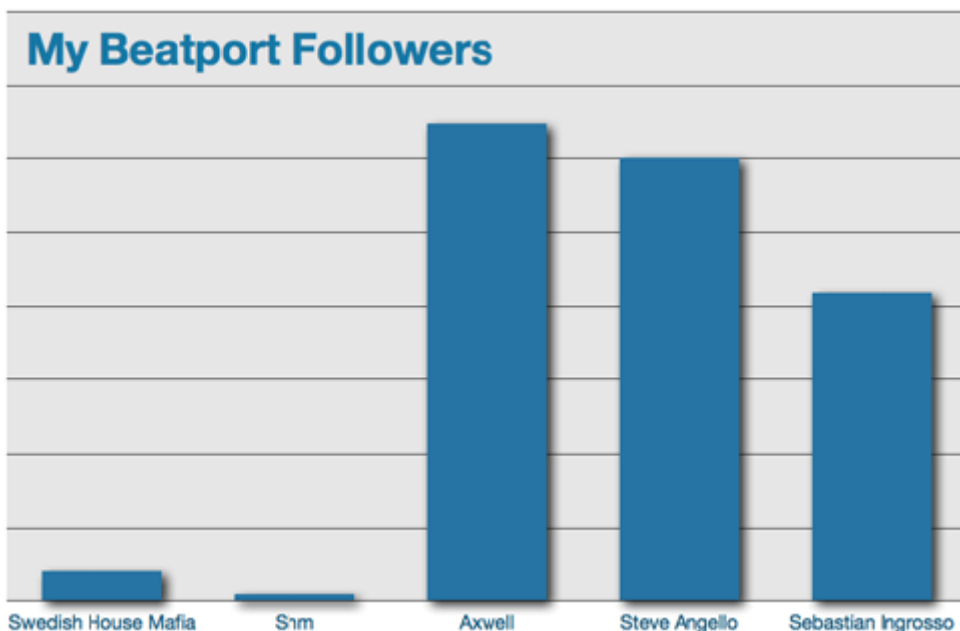
Here are the biggest milestones in the cycle that took SHM's 'One' to Number One.

- **February 23:** Sebastian Ingrosso's dog Gangster tweets about a new track. This starts rumors all over the Internet.
- **March 12:** SHM releases a teaser video for their participation in the Ultra festival. It features a clip of the new track, but doesn't call attention to it. That's a great tease.
- **March 27:** SHM debuts the new track at Winter Music Conference in Miami. The artists check the entire stage for any recording devices, ensuring that no one pirates the track during its public debut.

- On the same day, the track leaks to YouTube anyway, but has the wrong name.
- **April 6:** SHM does an interview for MTV news.
- **April 16:** The track gets its worldwide radio premiere on BBC Radio 1.
- **April 17:** The forthcoming release date is announced and avidly tweeted to fans.
- **April 23:** SHM has an interview with BBC Radio 1, where the track is called the “hottest record in the world.” The interview, with a clip from the track, is posted to YouTube and Facebook and tweeted by all three artists.
- **April 24:** The track is delivered last-minute to Beatport. This very nearly jeopardizes a smooth delivery, but everything comes off fine.
- **April 25:** One day before release, a short but compelling promo video uploaded to YouTube takes their fans by storm. Excitement for the new track builds to a fever pitch. All three artists push the video on their MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook accounts, and of course on the Swedish House Mafia homepage. Fans retweet it like crazy. Expectation is high.
- **April 26:** The track is released.
- **April 27:** The track is already #1.
- **April 28:** ‘One’ is featured on a Beatport homepage slide. It will be featured for a full week.
- **April 30:** Our blog Beatportal writes a feature piece on ‘One’ and its quick fame.

The image shows only the most important milestone dates in building this sense of expectation before a release.

A Tactical Approach



Let's break down some of the publicity and the tools involved.

Publicity Tool #1: My Beatport

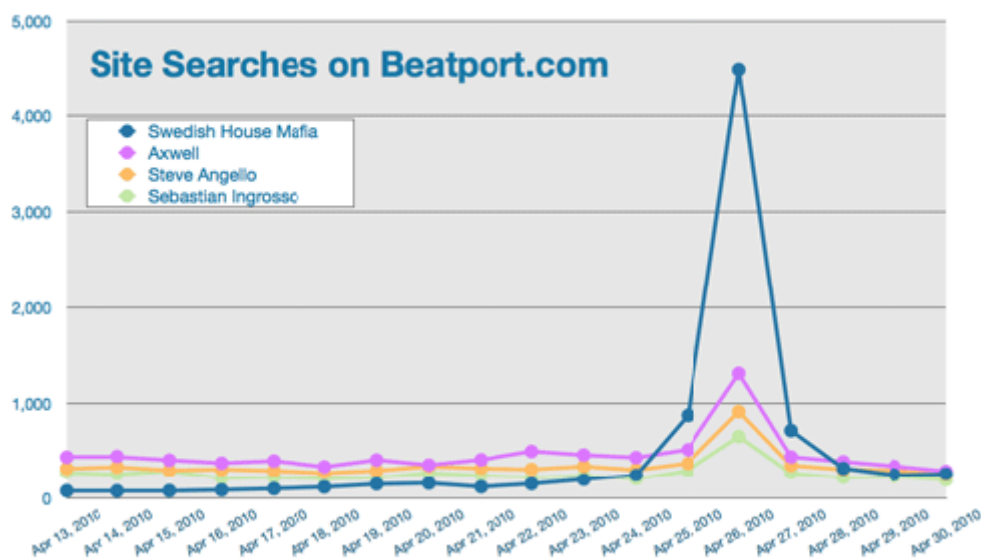
One of the most important ways that DJs discover new music on Beatport is through our My Beatport feature on our website. This feature allows me as a customer to follow any entity

(artist, label, remixer, etc.) on Beatport. And as a customer, any time an artist or label that I follow releases new music, it's automatically pushed into a little hold bin for me at the store.

As an artist or label, having your fans using My Beatport is the best way to make sure your fans can follow you, especially if you're a band or act or artist who might not get featured prominently on our site. Take every opportunity you can to get your fans to connect with you in that way. You can and your fans can learn more about My Beatport in [this article](#). That way, they'll never have to find you through search again; your music will simply be available to them right away.

We know for a fact that the people who open up their crate from My Beatport are more than 10 times more likely to buy what's in front of them than people who are simply looking at a search result or another page. There is no more qualified group of people to buy your record than the people who are following you through My Beatport.

But when people don't know who you are, they can't follow you yet. And this is an interesting challenge that the Swedish House Mafia faced, since 'One' was their first original track released under that name. In the accompanying chart, you can see the difference between the burgeoning group of followers that Swedish House Mafia (or their label, SHM) had and the well-established groups of followers that the three artists had individually. Luckily, they were able to leverage their individual brands to support the group.



Publicity Tool #2: Site Search

The reason that it can be so hard to start a brand when none exists is because on Beatport, just like on the greater Internet, search is almost all that matters. People navigate the Internet through search. People navigate Beatport through search. The lion's share of every record that sold on Beatport happens because someone searches for it, not because there was a promotional slide. If the fans you might have next week don't know your name this week, they can't search for you. If someone does not know how to search for you, you might as well not exist.

Here you can see the tremendous difference in search stats as SHM's social networking and other marketing initiatives paid off. The massive spike in searches for their brand and artist names corresponds with the days before, during, and after their well-publicized record release. That's because their message was focused on a very specific chunk of time—the opening weekend of the release.



Publicity Tool #3: Google Trends

Google Trends is a tool available to assess the general volume of searches made for a phrase or a brand through the Google search engine.

As a way to investigate your brand impact, it lets you get an idea of the relative rise and fall of interest on the Internet at large.

Here is the trend of people going to Google and typing in “Swedish House Mafia,” and you can see how that brand is growing. Spikes on this graph correspond with newsworthy items of the artists, such as a newly released album or other events. What we notice with this trend is the impact of the buzz surrounding the release towards the end of April.

Publicity Tool #4: Next Big Sound

Another freely available tool for artists and DJs to monitor their impact on the Web community is [Next Big Sound](#). This website analyzes the blogosphere, the twittersphere, and every socially available piece of data through APIs to show a breakdown of your Internet fan base: where your fans are located on the Internet and how they interact.

In the case of Swedish House Mafia, each artist already had an extensive following to which they could push messages about their new release. Try running a search for the three artists on Next Big Sound, and you'll see that all of them have extensive followings on Last.fm, MySpace, and Facebook, and you'll also see the areas in which they differ. (Twitter plays a greater role in Steve Angello's overall reach than Axwell's, while Axwell is more visible via iLike than Angello.)

The takeaway lesson here is that the more you know about your following, the better you can enhance your fan base.

Publicity Tool #5: YouTube and Video Media

These guys produce media, and they produce hype. And I think the Swedish House Mafia brand is about entertaining people (I'm not speaking for them; this is my interpretation of it). But the brand is bigger than the three guys-- it's about the entertainment and the quality of the experience that they create. And that transcends their performance; they extend it into the music that they create as a group and into the experiences that they share online.

So they were very prolific in posting videos on YouTube that got huge amounts of views in aggregate, maybe half a million total, and these were all related to this one song that found success so quickly.

What's amazing about these is the very calculated, coordinated fashion in which they released them, over a month's period leading up to the record's release date. And since you can't stop fans from posting their own videos, these also became part of a greater chorus contributing to the buildup before the release. You'll notice that these waves of YouTube publicity correspond with the broader timeline discussed above.

The video attack came in five main waves, although fan videos of similar content continued to be produced and distributed.

1. First, as discussed above in the timeline, the Swedish House Mafia released a teaser video for Ultra Music Festival. It was very short, and used the clip of the new song in the background.
2. Next, the track debuted at Winter Music Conference and a wave of videos featuring their act swept across YouTube. Even when their friend Laidback Luke played the track, the video released on YouTube hailed it as the "New Swedish House Mafia single". Anyone who was excited by the performances could easily find it to remember their awesome party weekend.
3. Now that the track was on YouTube in its entirety in some form, fans got hold of it and created YouTube videos with the entire track. Some of the views on these videos skyrocketed. At this point, the track was still not available for purchase or download, and still did not have a name. Thousands of people "favorited" these videos, and the comment sections were full of people clamoring to buy the track.
4. When Swedish House Mafia did a radio interview about 'One' with BBC Radio 1, the video of that interview was posted on YouTube and the link was pushed to the fans of all three artists on all available social networks. It was only a few days before the release.
5. The day before the release, Swedish House Mafia released a 30-second teaser video promoting their new track. It had footage from a successful gig and matched the thrust and excitement of the crowd with the epic feeling in the track. The teaser ended with their brand, the name the track, and information about where to download it. This short but compelling video became the main feature of any web presence that the three artists had and the subject of any tweets and posts.

The real power of these videos is that creating them provided content for all the artists to push across their respective social networks. They offered a tangible, audio-visual nugget that gave weight and presence to the sometimes-sterile communication environment of Twitter, and the accompanying comments gave feedback and built excitement for Swedish House Mafia and the track that they were about to unleash on the world.

And once the track came out, almost every one of those YouTube videos was updated to include a link to Beatport, to satisfy the fans and commenters demanding a link to purchase.

	Swedish House Mafia	Axwell	Steve Angello	Sebastian Ingrosso	Total
Facebook Fans	66,879	60,093	44,812	53,347	225,131
MySpace Fans	5,601		52,874	8,483	66,956
YouTube Subscribers	4,906		3,873	4,938	13,717
YouTube Friends	907	1,371	929	1,397	4,604
Twitter Friends	12,970	20,367	28,012	22,429	83,778
	91,263	81,831	130,500	90,594	394,186

Publicity Tool #6: All Major Social Networks

So how many people are really following the Swedish House Mafia, that they can create such huge buzz with such a huge impact in a relatively short amount of time? Here we have the total of Facebook fans, MySpace fans, YouTube subscribers and friends, and Twitter followers for each of the artists and the Swedish House Mafia brand. This shows just a snapshot in time-- right now, trending data is publicly unavailable, although you can find that data for your own reports.

When taken in aggregate, the follower count across the major social networking sites ends up being a huge number-- close to 400,000 connections working for them.

That sounds like a really big number, but these are not Paris Hilton numbers. These are not Beatles numbers or Elvis Presley numbers. These are the numbers of people who are influencers in our community, who take the community seriously and take the fans in the community seriously. I believe that these numbers, combined with a great record (remember the prerequisites), are within everyone's reach here. But remember that these guys do it themselves. This is not a press agent typing stuff up and spitting it out, or just re-tweeting stuff that comes from the label. This is an honest communication between these artists and their followers.

Why Internet followers are revolutionizing digital music retail

One of the things that's really been changing in digital retail in the last few years is that digital is innovating beyond old-school retail. Originally, sites looked like catalogs and operated like catalogs-- you look at the front page, you flip through it, you get to the products you want. Then we evolved to more of an Amazon model, where people can just go to the sections they want. But even that is built with a front door, so to speak; you walk through and see all the products that have been laid out for you, and eventually you move your way to the line of products that you're looking for.

Social networking can totally upend that. You can take away the power of anybody who controls the front door of their store. You are driving your community, your network, and your fans directly to your products. We see this happening, in terms of growth, every month. Every month there are new tools and new social networks that link people directly to content. And the traffic from users who come directly from Facebook pages, tweets, etc., is constantly growing. People are magically appearing in front of individual tracks instead of getting shuffled through the "front door" of the store. And I really believe that this is evidence of the Internet's democratizing properties—giving you the power to sidestep gatekeepers and drive fans straight to your records.



Publicity Tool #7: Build Interviews, Articles, and Other Connections

Swedish House Mafia was also lucky to get interviews with MTV throughout the process, creating more videos and articles surrounding the phenomenon that they were building for themselves.

And as you may know, our own Beatportal featured an article about them as they hit #1.

Some Friendly Advice and Conclusions

So we're wrapping up; here are the big takeaways that you can use for your own tracks.

1. Coordinate with Beatport for optimal sales.

Establish a relationship with your label representative and work with them. But be sure to coordinate with them, because a coordinated strategy is key. I cannot stress enough how important this is, and keep the following points in mind as you go through the process:

- **Timely delivery is key.** Beatport can't do anything special to promote your release if you're not at least a week or two out in front of your street date. Don't be rushed-- if you made a great record (again, see the prerequisites), it can wait a week to come out. Make sure you can coordinate with whoever your sales partners are.
- **Release the track as an exclusive.** This will almost surely allow you and your fans to talk more specifically about where to go get your record. In this case, choice is bad. The more choices you offer ("Here's a list of ten different places you can go look"), the less conversion you will see of people buying your track. Instead, tell your friends "This is the one place you can get it" and you'll see a higher conversion rate.
- **Deliver DJ Charts with release.** On our site (as well as other sites), we promote DJ charts as a way for people to find new music recommended by DJs whose taste they respect. They are extremely successful. The most exciting thing on our homepage for our customers is those DJ charts. So if you are producer as well as a DJ, give us a chart and include tracks that you feel represent your sound and your scene. This is a great way to promote yourself as well as your sound.
- **All promotion shows clear messaging of where to purchase.** Whether you're using Facebook, Twitter, iLike, MySpace, SoundCloud, or (ideally) some mixture of many social-networking platforms, include links to take users directly to your material on Beatport. (On Twitter, use a link-shortening service like Bit.ly to fit those long URLs into your 140-character tweet.) Again, this is a lot easier and stronger if it is released as an exclusive, which we discussed above.

2. Prevent digital leaks.

This is lost on a lot of people and is somewhat controversial, but I can't promote enough the high importance of preventing digital leaks. Let's put aside for a moment the fact that leaks allow your fans and your friends essentially to steal your music, as opposed to purchasing it from you. Even more important than the revenue you're losing to piracy is the fact that if you can't control the attention surrounding a specific release and a specific release date, you can't drive the bubble effect that the Swedish House Mafia created around 'One'.

Here are some suggestions for protecting your music against leaks:

- Use Ripblock or similar service
- Limit promo tracks to ZERO
- Inspect equipment and unplug all recording devices at gigs
- Release track ASAP after public debut

All this will enhance the true exclusivity of your tunes.

3. Launch an aggressive social media campaign

This is what we've been talking about as we've been sharing this case study. Just continuing to look for dates on Facebook and tweeting about the sandwich you're having is not good enough. You need a coordinated strategy with specific objectives in mind. Use freely available tools to look at how your strategy is performing. The tools can tell you if you did a good job yesterday reaching more people, and whether you need to adjust your strategy to reach even more people today. A few takeaway points include:

- Coordinate promotions
- Promote across all big social networks
- Offline promotion drives online excitement
- Tweet and re-tweet! Build to a crescendo the day of release, posting throughout the day
- Enlist fans and then give credit

4. Create a great teaser video

"Teaser" is key here-- just because people call YouTube "low-quality" does not mean you should put your entire track up. Some points to keep in mind:

- Include footage of fun gig
- Build epic feel
- Focus message on where to purchase track

5. Maintain follow-through

There has been a lot of talk about "community" here, and that really is the focus. All of these channels will abandon you if you do not have something to sell. You are going to have to keep the dialog open with your community. If you abandon them for three months while you are on vacation and not making a record, they will not be there for you next year when you're ready to release your number-one hit. So keep the dialog going. Thank your fans. You can reward them with intimacy and with the music they love. That is the greatest currency possible in your community.

- Credit fans for their dedication and support
- Continue updates on track progress
- Promote chart status
- Share Beatportal articles
- Keep teaser video as main feature on YouTube and MySpace

That concludes our case study on the use of digital media in the world of digital music retail. As mentioned before, this information was originally presented as a talk at the International Music Summit in May 2010. You can watch a video of the presentation made at the International Music Summit [here](#). (They will ask for your email; sorry.)



Matthew Adell is the Chief Operating Officer of Beatport.com. Having worked in the music industry for 30 years, he is excited about the recent developments in the digital world that are revolutionizing the way people can continue to enjoy the music they love.