

There has been quite a bit of discussion about the music business lately. In particular the ongoing decline in CD sales. So I decided to revisit a blog post from April of 2005 entitled "[The Countdown for the extinction of CDs is about to begin](#)"

I don't think I said anything groundbreaking. I made the point that I no longer listened to music on CDs. That I had them on an iPod when I listened. That it was difficult to deal with CDs in order to get to the music I wanted, when I wanted.

So here we are 2 years later and the media is [full of articles](#) about the seemingly never ending decline in CD sales and the inability of digital sales to close the gap. Can anyone be surprised ?

When was the last time you saw anyone listening to music on a CD Player ? At the gym ? No. At the Mall, maybe only some of the senior walkers at 9am. On downtown streets at lunch ? No.

Does anyone even know what percent of music is listened to via CD any longer ?

I would say the music industry has put itself in the position of being incredibly stupid. They are dependent on a format, the CD, that few people listen to. Although this is a guess, my guess is that the majority of CD purchases are then put in a PC and imported into an MP3 or other format for consumption on a mobile device. Few people buy a CD and just listen to it. Which means you can say goodbye to impulse buying of CDs.

We are in a market where, whether we like it or not, the music industry has tethered us to our PCs. The easiest way to buy, the easiest way to get the greatest utility of their products is via the PC. That's a HUGE, HUGE, HUGE mistake. Did I say that it was a huge mistake to make the PC an inevitable part of the music buying process.

Our ability to consume music has gotten incredibly easy over the past 25 years. From the walkman to the CD Walkman to the iPod, we have ditched the album (to the chagrin of milk crate manufacturers everywhere) and evolved to the point where an 80gb iPod has the capacity to carry every song we might imagine listening to over the course of our lifetime. So easy that it revived Apple and catapulted the company from an innovative niche PC marketer to a technology leader. So easy that we consume more music than ever before, yet total sales are in a tailspin.

Can the music industry be saved ? Yep. It would be so easy it's scary. **Make music available anywhere and everywhere.**

How much music can be stored on 1TB of hard drive space ? All of it. How many people does it take to carry a 1TB drive ? My 3 year old daughter can do it.

I would find a manufacturer of cash machines, the ones you see in every bar, restaurant, mini-mart and retail outlet and work with them to reconfigure the machines so that they can hold a hard drive that can be updated with new songs via wired or wireless internet access and whose screen can offer a simple interface for people to select music. The consumer plugs in their SD card from their phone, or plugs the USB cable attached to the machine into their iPod or similar device and the music selected, downloaded and debited to the customer's credit or debit card. Pay the machine host a commission, or a per transaction and everyone goes home happy.

Why wouldn't the music industry do this ? I understand the difficulty of getting an entire industry to do anything, particularly the music industry where the fault is always someone else's. But this is a matter of survival and the solution is simple.

Not that there aren't other issues, it's certainly not a simple process to connect your iPod to a random device and buy music. The future of the music industry depends on the negotiation of a software update with Apple. It would be a simple, simple enhancement to iTunes software on every iPod. The software, when connected to one of these music dispensers would look for a unique ID and a number with a check digit. If it found a valid number, it would allow the one way transfer of music from the dispenser. Simple and easy...if Apple goes along. Which they should, because it wouldn't be a stretch to put an ITMS like interface on the dispenser, let people login with their Apple ID, and buy music that could be charged to the credit card on file with Apple.

None of this is rocket science. In fact, it's easy. Music Kiosks have been proposed for years and years. Kiosks have been developed time and again. They haven't worked because they have been over engineered and music labels haven't made enough content available.

I hope the music industry has reached the point of desperation where now is the time.

It's time to recognize that it's never been easier to listen to music and more people are doing just that than ever before.

The only difficult part of the music equation is buying it. Sitting in front of your PC works sometimes, but it isn't optimal all the time. Where ever you see people listening to music, they should be able to buy and immediately listen to their new music. Why can't the music industry get that we should be able to buy music when we want, where we want, in the format in which we consume it, on our iPods and comparable devices. Until that happens, total music sales will continue to decline and quickly.