

RAHIM 'CASS' KARENGA

Founder, Cleo

Cleo's Rahim 'Cass' Karenga talks working with Central Cee, data and competition...

You've worked with Central Cee for the past couple of years. What's it been like to be a part of that success?

"We are lucky enough to have been working with Central Cee, his manager Ybeez and ADA since Commitment Issues was released back in 2021. Since then, we have worked on some of his biggest records and more recently, Doja. We were tasked with running paid social ads on TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram to maximise viewership and streams. Within the allocated budget on this particular campaign, within a two-week window, we achieved 400,000 clicks to Cench's DSP link and acquired 8.2 million total video views."

Can you name the thing that sets your agency apart the most?

"Based on different interests, personality traits and musical tastes, Cleo has a worldwide data pool that we've curated from testing and understanding data [on social media]. This separates us from most companies because, 80 to 90% of the time, we don't have to test what will work and what won't work which, in turn, saves unnecessary spend. If, for example, we're working on an R&B record about breaking up with a significant other, we know we have an audience ready for it that will not only engage, but become invested in that artist. We live in a pretty invasive digital world, but when it comes to paid ads, some may forget that you're also targeting a real person. We never make that mistake."

And what's the thing that will take your company to the next level?

"As a person, I'm pretty private and not really one to mingle with peers or other professionals within the entertainment industry. Most of our clients have come through relationships via people we personally know. We're a small team by design, but I feel that, with a larger team, we could do so much more than we have been doing so far. I'm pleased with how things are going, but getting to the next level is something I'm progressively understanding more and more."

When it comes to executing a digital campaign, what do labels and managers often get wrong?

"Not thinking *bigger*. Not in a sense of more spend, but in terms of where digital ads should be targeted. Social media has enabled music to transition culture and language. Targeting your ideal fan based on their interests will often yield more engagement and better results if done correctly. I think a lot of people have an idea of what we do but don't necessarily know how effective it can be. Behind a great product and content, I believe that digital ads are the definitive attribute an artist can have at their disposal."

There is a great deal of competition in digital now. Which person or company is impressing you the most at the moment?

"There are many individuals that have paved the way for myself and other founders that have worked in labels and then started their own thing, but I really love what a company called Burstimo do. I love how educational their content is. I feel like the more we learn and rip the red tape off what we do, the more we can empower other future agency owners to start something with all the tools they need. Saying that, I love competition so the more people to 'compete' with the better. The sector is definitely healthy in that sense."

Finally, what does the future look like for your area of the business?

"Adapting to the market is imperative. Music is our passion and we will always strive to help as many artists, labels and managers as we can, but this year we are diversifying who we work with. There are areas we haven't delved into much yet like TV, film and gaming. My broader goal is to engage with other entertainment industries to maximise business opportunities, plus I'm a huge gamer so it's right up my alley."

"We never make the mistake of forgetting that paid ads are aimed at real people"

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