AN ARTIST'S GUIDE TO
CROWDFUNDING
DOMINATION

GET BACKERS.
CRUSH YOUR CAMPAIGN.

IAN ANDERSON

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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT REWARDS-BASED CROWDFUNDING AND HAS been researched and written for artists and creatives, especially for those whose primary expertise lies in the creativity behind the idea but who may not have a ton of real-world experience in basic project and campaign planning, budgeting and marketing.

In the chapters that follow, I will give you a simple, step-by-step explanation of how to create a successful, optimized crowdfunding campaign. I will also discuss exactly what to expect during your campaign, debunk widespread misconceptions, answer FAQs and address common pitfalls that leave campaigns stuck in place when they should be getting backers and raising funds.

But before we jump right into that world, let's get a few things straight.

Is this book only for Kickstarter?
Throughout the book, I will often refer to the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter, by far the largest crowdfunding site at the time of writing this.

But keep in mind that *everything I talk about* applies equally to any crowdfunding website be it Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Gofundme or any other website including your own if you choose to self-host your campaign. The principles in this book are **platform-agnostic**. It does not matter where you choose to crowdfund — it matters *how you choose to crowdfund*!

So, though I write liberally about Kickstarter and discuss examples from it, you can safely assume that the same principles you are accumulating will apply to the platform of your choice.

The Difference Between Projects and Campaigns
Let's also take a moment to straighten out the terminology that will be used often throughout this book: project versus campaign.

Your **project** is your creative undertaking that will result in a final product such as a book, movie, CD, a new kind of beef jerky, a super-fashionable denim purse, etc. This project is your overall plan and process for creating, reproducing and distributing your creative idea.

Your crowdfunding **campaign** is only a portion of your project. The campaign will show off your concept and raise money to invest in your project. Typically a brief 3-4 week window, your campaign will focus almost exclusively on raising money. Most campaigns will have a video, rewards and a written description.

Most people out there refer to crowdfunding "projects" and do not use the term

"campaign." Kickstarter does this. Indiegogo does this. Most platforms do this.

But I will not do that.

In this book, you will find a system for building a successful campaign; it will help you set a goal and surpass it to ensure that you have money to spend on your project. In other words, your campaign will give you money whereas your project will be your creative output.

During the campaign, you will talk about your project. You will talk about the purpose of your project and why your project is exciting and meaningful in your life. But you will not talk about your campaign much at all, you'll just do it.

Your campaign is not your project and your project is not your campaign. They go hand in hand but are functionally two different things. Understanding this key distinction will keep concepts and instructions clear as we move into the hands-on sections of this book.

Before we jump in, I'd like to share the backstory of Launch and Release, the website for which the concepts in this book were developed. The set of events leading up to our studies illustrates exactly why crowdfunding is so powerful and should be of great interest to independent, DIY creatives including but not limited to artists, photographers, videographers, musicians, designers, crafters and creative-minded entrepreneurs.

From Broke to Doing Business: The Story of _Launch and Release_
I've known Levi James, whom you'll read about in this story, for pert near a few decades. But it wasn't until a conversation at Rockford Coffee in downtown Bozeman, Montana that we hatched an idea that quickly turned into something much larger than the two of us.

Levi and I have both struggled as new artists and as creators. We've felt the pain of being completely willing to put the work in to make our dreams a reality but not knowing where to focus our energy to get the results we wanted.

The journey started in 1999 with a band called the Clintons; I played guitar; Levi was the drummer. We started playing original music after about 6 months and quickly vowed to do "whatever it takes" to make it big.

For the first six years we were stuck in the "ignorant new band" mentality which included tons of busy work that made us feel productive and kept our minds off of the fact that at least 90% of our effort was misplaced and wasted. We toured for the sake of feeling busy and important. We even spent $600/month for an office to further the illusion that we were taking this band thing seriously.

We Paid For Our First Record Out Of Our Pocket
We made our first record with the first 10 songs we wrote. All five band

members put in $3,000 each of our own money to pay for the record. We gave ourselves one year to explode onto the national scene. Our plan to be recognized nationally within 12 months? There wasn't one. We figured we would just be awesome for a year and stuff would start to happen. Sounds really ignorant but we aren't the only band ever to start out this way. Plan B if this didn't work out? There wasn't one.

To be fair, we were wildly popular in our hometown of Bozeman, Montana. We were selling out the biggest venue in town (capacity: 400) two nights in a row. We grew almost as popular in the rest of our geographically large but not overly populated state: cities like Missoula, Helena, and Billings. We really had a great thing going.

But after a year went by, we had not managed to "explode onto the national scene." Shocker, isn't it?! So we set out to record our next record because, hey, that's what you do when you are musicians.

For Our Second Record, We Borrowed A LOT of Money
In 2002, we spent a whopping $40,000 on our second full-length record. We borrowed $20K from the bank and $20K from our parents. Although we still hadn't sold the first 2,000 copies of our first CD, we strongly considered ordering 5,000 of the second one. We thought that because it SOUNDED so "pro" it would obviously sell a lot faster than the first one.

Adventures equal to this brilliant type of thinking continued.

With two full-length CDs in our pocket, we did OK, building a regional fanbase in the American West and putting a boatload of miles on our various vans and RVs but we were not able to "break through" to any true success. We hung in there for several years through sheer guts, subsisting on peanuts and "living the dream."

In 2005, with little direction and no real idea of what to do next, we fizzled out. We'd lost creative and business momentum and our vague sense of purpose disappeared.

It was at this point that I left the band for other life goals while my bandmates' adventures continued without me.

Levi had been the quiet guy up until now but was left in the position of either stepping up to lead or letting the band dissolve. Being young, single and having almost no overhead ($300/mo for rent and food), he decided to quit his day job and focus 100% on producing the bands music and touring. Within six months, the Clintons were gaining momentum again as Levi worked on branding, building a mailing list and keeping fans engaged online.

Progress: a Pre-order Pays for the Fourth Record

the Clintons' fourth record paid for itself before it was released by using a pre-order strategy. On top of that, the band was making really good money playing throughout Montana and popularity was growing.

Levi knew he was onto something and, if he could fine-tune this process, the Clintons could make records indefinitely without spending their own money! Every artist's dream, right?

Bundling and Touring Leads to Profitable Fifth Record

In 2008, the Clintons released our fifth record using a bundling approach that Levi had seen some larger artists use. The pre-order consisted of four bundles ranging from $15 for CD and download to $120 for the premium bundle. This resulted in around $16,000 of online sales and $17,000 of live show merchandise sales. In total, the band grossed almost a quarter of a million dollars that year between merchandise and booking fees. This was an absolute miracle to Levi. Many label artists can't count on that type of income, yet he had somehow figured out how to do it without leaving the state or playing more than 65 shows.

Crowdfunding Helps the Band Capitalize on Their Following

In 2011, after the band had slowed down quite a bit, Levi decided to use Kickstarter to fund their seventh record. At this point he was about as experienced as it gets for a DIY band manager, but the thought of launching the campaign still terrified him. He was paranoid that fans might not care because the band hadn't been very active with shows or sending emails.

Reluctantly and hoping it wasn't too big of a risk, he set the initial goal at $5,000. In hindsight, this low goal amount sounds pretty absurd for a band that had been around over a decade, had 6,000+ Facebook fans, over 3,000 people on their email list, and had done two pre-orders that each did well over $10,000.

The campaign raised $5,000 by the end of the first day and went on to raise just over $21,000!

After floundering for 10 years trying to figure out a reliable way to avoid going into debt every time they produced a record, the Clintons had finally found a way to fund the creative process smoothly without picking up extra shifts at the local 7-11. And to this day, there still doesn't appear to be a better way for an independent band like the Clintons to go about making a record.

And crowdfunding isn't going away any time soon. It provides such an important solution for indie bands that it CAN'T go away.

Would Crowdfunding Without a Following Work?

the Clintons were an established band with thousands of fans. But, Levi kept wondering, can you crowdfund a new band with zero fans? In 2012, he

answered this question when he formed a side-project rock trio called Golden Grenade.

The music came easily and the trio wanted to jump on the creative momentum to record an EP. There was one huge problem though. They all had kids and responsibilities. Playing a bunch of shows to save money for the first record wasn't an option.

The only viable option was crowdfunding, but even with Levi's previous experience, they were hesitant and scared. Only about 15 people even knew they were a band. They had played less than 10 shows and most of those were in front of only a handful of people.

As far as the world was concerned, Golden Grenade *didn't even exist*!

Nevertheless, the trio launched a Kickstarter campaign in January 2012 with a goal of $4,000. The campaign officially raised $10,600 plus three private contributions that totaled $1,500.

So, there was at least one data point that answered the question: it *was* possible to crowdfund with no fans!

As Levi is prone to do, he became obsessed with the idea. He couldn't stop thinking that the Clintons would have experienced an entirely different existence if we had crowdfunded our first record. Not only would we have gained immediate business momentum, we would have united an initial fan base around a purpose that would have given us the creative momentum we needed but didn't have at that time. Not to mention we would have been able to use the combined $55,000 from our first two albums in a more purposeful, productive manner.

Levi wondered: what if, right now, there are thousands of young bands just like the Clintons when we were just getting started? Could they use crowdfunding to help skip several years of floundering?

Launch and Release is Born
It was at this point that Levi invited me to coffee. Remember, we had been band mates and longtime friends. So as he was obsessing about the idea of helping people crowdfund, he kept thinking of me. And, at this point, I should mention that I had earned a Master's degree in Applied Economics prior to my time in the Clintons. So Levi also knew me as the number crunching, analytical type.

When he told me this entire story and described his extreme level of interest in figuring out the exact process any artist could follow to succeed at crowdfunding, I couldn't help but want in.

Levi lives by the mantra that if something is worth doing, it's worth overdoing. I

live by the mantra that if I commit to something, I'll stop at nothing to complete it (which also explains how I've dropped 100 pounds and ran thousands of miles the past few years).

So when we came up with the idea of analyzing 100 music Kickstarters, there was no turning back and there was no half-assing it. It was in our DNA not only to follow through with interviewing, analyzing, then writing about each of the 100 campaigns, but we also tracked and compiled all of the data for later analysis. We contacted or analyzed around 160 campaign creators but only wrote about the ones that provided the most useful and actionable lessons. To this day, I continue to gather data and experience from campaigns.

More Than Music
Together, Levi and I have experienced the frustration and tail-chasing of being a new band starting from scratch. But between these experiences and our in-depth study of music crowdfunding, we've been able to help people skip the guesswork and go straight to raising money and launching their careers.

Over the past few years, we have not only applied what we've learned to hundreds of music campaigns, we've also applied our concepts to genres beyond music and we have seen the same results in other creative genres like film, design and publishing. The methods presented in this book are applicable to any creative genre because they address the core issues inherent to in psychology of and the mechanisms underlying crowdfunding.

Good luck!

CHAPTER ONE

CRUSH IT

SOMEWHERE AROUND THE TIME WHEN MITT ROMNEY WAS CAMPAIGNING TO unseat President Obama and Apple was taking pre-orders for about a bajillion iPhone 5s, I found myself in a very precarious position. I think Gotye was playing in the background.

I had just started researching the best practices of rewards-based crowdfunding on platforms like Kickstarter and Indiegogo with Levi James, my partner and one of my best buddies. We weren't just looking for the superficial advice that most 800-word blog posts freely dole out, such as "make a video" and "promote, promote, promote," but the deeper questions like:

- Does anybody actually *know* what they're doing when it comes to crowdfunding?
- Can an average person with an idea find specific, actionable help that will save them time and effort in a campaign and help them raise more money?
- What is the key distinction between a successful campaign and a failed campaign?

We were also looking at more specific questions such as:

- How "amazing" does your video actually need to be in order to be effective?
- Do you need "fans" or "community" to find success?
- Does getting "exposure" do anything for a campaign?
- What does "getting featured" do for a campaign and is it even possible?

There were many, many questions and we had a ways to go in finding answers. Yet here I was, in the infancy of my research, without a lot of experience, facing a tough problem posed by a campaign that was struggling near the end. I had run across an artist named Neva[1] who was attempting to raise $19,000, but with only three days left in her campaign, she was stuck at about $12,000. She needed to raise an additional $7,000 in just a few days or her campaign would fail. Neva posed a question to me:

So my question to you... I'm in the final days of my campaign and it seems to be at a halt. I have promoted like crazy through Facebook, my website, emails, and flyers. Any suggestions for last minute help???

Remember, Levi and I were just getting started in our research. But at the time, I didn't claim to be an authority by any stretch. So what did I tell her? I didn't feel overly helpful with my general advice: keep trying, be clear about your need and ask people directly.

Fast-forward a few years and I would have been very prepared to answer that question.

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How This Book Will Help You
You have an idea.

Perhaps you have limited experience evolving your ideas from concept to widely distributed product. And maybe you are thinking, "I haven't really done this before, I'm not totally sure what to do next, and I could really use some help in getting started and launching my idea."

Or perhaps you have gone through the process of sharing a few ideas with the world, but this next idea is bigger than you can pull off on your own so you want to leverage the participation of other people to help launch your idea on a wider scale.

Either way, you would definitely like to raise money for your project so you can get over the next hurdle and continue forward in your creative path. That being said, it would be so much better, easier and even cheaper to follow a set of proven steps that:

- are simple and actionable,
- remove as much of the risk and uncertainty as possible and
- don't leave success in doubt until the last possible second.

This book will help your campaign raise *as much money as possible* without the second guessing, misplaced effort, worry, hassle, anxiety or *needless risk* that is so common to crowdfunding campaigns whose creators read a few Google results and then go it alone.

Take a second to think about your idea.

Crowdfunding is a fantastic way to finance this creative endeavor without dragging yourself, your family and/or the owners of the couch that you sleep on through the depths of financial despair encountered by so many entrepreneurs

and artists.

Soon, I will explain the specifics of how to crowdfund so that you can be sure to raise the maximum amount of money with the minimum amount of work, worry and hassle. But first we need to have a frank discussion about your idea. The concept you are thinking about right now represents a bundle of potential life-changers such as:

- Finding financial and professional freedom.
- Working for yourself instead of for others and benefiting from your own effort and hard work.
- Having a positive impact on society by making peoples' lives better, more interesting, easier, more meaningful and/or more fun.
- Proving that your creativity is legitimate and worth something.
- Gaining recognition for your contributions both from society in general and from those who love you most.

These are damn exciting ideas and, if you are to achieve them, how you handle your idea is of primary importance. Because right now, your idea is simply an idea. It may be theoretical living only in your mind or perhaps you've turned your idea into something tangible with the potential to be reproduced, distributed and shared.

Either way you have no choice. In order for your idea to produce any benefit at all, not only must you bring it to fruition, you must do so publicly. Doing your project in your bedroom or your garage isn't enough.

This book will help you do the one thing *you must do* in order to move forward with your career: ship your idea.

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Why This Book Exists
Seth Godin is widely known as a marketing luminary. He has sold *millions* of books and is one of the most sought-after, in-demand speaker/author/podcast guest/marketing gurus alive today.[2] Seth is one of those cats who delivers a constant supply of discussion-worthy ideas.

In his audiobook titled *Leap First*, he explains that *shipping your art is your highest priority*.

Shipping your art is your highest priority! Not trying too hard, over-planning or being a perfectionist. Some planning is clearly required, but when you go too far, a common result is project paralysis and significant shipping delay.

Why is shipping so important? Because it's how you make progress. It's how you connect to other people. It's how you learn what works, and it's how you learn

what doesn't work.

Seth says, "It doesn't matter whether you're in the mood or not. It doesn't matter whether you feel like it. It doesn't matter whether you are afraid… Do. Work. Worth. Doing. *Shipping this work into the world* is not only your work but it's the way to live your life." For my money, this notion is the swift undercurrent beneath crowdfunding. It is what moves crowdfunding campaigns and their associated projects along.

But Seth also points out that we are our own worst enemies. In each of our heads is a little part of brain matter he calls the lizard brain. And the lizard brain is simple. It has no ability to think through complex situations or overcome mental hurdles. The lizard brain never gets any further than telling you to stop what you are doing because it is bound to be difficult and you don't know how you'll do it, it is bound to be difficult and you will fail.

We all have a lizard brain.

But we also know that we must overcome this sort of thinking in order to do our art! Seth tells a story:

> Steve Dennis wrote a great post called Unleash the Demos.[3] It was about listening to a Billy Joel demo and it sorta sounds like Billy Joel but it doesn't quite sound like Billy Joel. It sorta sounds like a hit but it isn't quite a hit. It would have been really easy in that moment for Billy Joel to say, "Nah, I gotta stop now cuz this isn't good enough to be played 400 million times on American Top 40. This isn't good enough to be a pop hit."

> But instead, you put the demo in the world and you make better art…. The only way we're gonna get there is not by planning but by shipping those demos.

What song was the story referencing? Only what evolved to become one of the most popular songs of all time: "Piano Man."

Doing work worth doing and shipping it is a worthy concept to keep in mind through the course of a crowdfunding campaign. A campaign can be a son of a bitch to prepare for and execute (if not properly approached), and there is no shortage of opportunity for self-doubt and second-guessing throughout the process. But, perhaps ironically, those moments of questioning yourself don't just stall your campaign, they are also the moments that keep you from moving forward towards your ambitions, goals and dreams:

- Many people get caught up in trying to make an "amazing video". Which is even worse if you have very little experience making just a decent video.
- Most everybody spends quite awhile trying to design and price rewards

that "make sense" without understanding what they're trying to accomplish. Trying to figure out how much the "crowd" values you and your creative output is an exercise that can drive you crazy.

- A surprising number of people are unable to articulate WHY they do what they do and they have NO IDEA how they are going to tell people about it. Now if that isn't a recipe for self-doubt, I don't know what is!

You might be surprised at how often situations like these completely prevent people with an idea from getting to the other side where they are ready to ship their idea and move forward with meaningful work. But one of the best ways to deal with the lizard brain (and to continue moving towards a better future) is to have a crystal-clear concept and process for creating and executing your campaign.

And that's why this book exists: to remove the pitfalls of crowdfunding through a straightforward process that ensures:

- A solid campaign design that nails each of the key elements,
- Maximum potential for raising money and a successful campaign and
- Minimal risk of campaign failure or unforeseen problems.

But as important as these points are, it may be even more crucial and critical that you use this process to be damn certain that you keep moving forward with your art. That you ignore the lizard brain. That you ship your creativity. Because in the long term, getting your art out there is the *only* way you will achieve your visions, goals and dreams.

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Who This Book Is For
If you like keeping score, then you'll be happy to know that Neva *did break her goal,* hitting $19,690, though not without a lot of anxiety, sweating and needless risk.

In talking with campaign creators, it becomes readily apparent that the experience of doubting, second-guessing and cutting it close isn't unique to Neva nor is it unique to musicians. This is an often overlooked characteristic of crowdfunding campaigns but one that can be effectively dealt with. Consider something Neva said:

> The scariest part about hitting the launch button was probably the paranoia that I didn't choose the right goal amount. If it was too low, I wouldn't be able to follow through with everything that I promised. Even though I did the math and had a spreadsheet going, a project that's as involved as making an album along with merchandise and all other costs can really fluctuate at so many different points. There are so many variables. And then of course if I set my goal too high, I may not make my

> *goal.... There were and have been many of these feelings for various reasons and the whole thing is quite nerve-racking really.*

Uncertainty in budgeting, who will pledge, how much they'll pledge and whether you'll ultimately be able to deliver on your promise abound in every crowdfunding genre — creative genres like art, crafts, dance, film & video, journalism, music, and photography as well as product-oriented genres such as design, fashion, food, and technology.

These questions apply to almost everybody but this book is *especially for individuals or groups whose primary expertise lies in the creativity behind their idea* but who don't have a ton of real-world experience in basic project and campaign planning, budgeting and marketing.

Why do I mention this?

Most people who fit into this category tend to downplay, ignore or miss the uncertainties implicit to crowdfunding until it's almost too late (which has the very real effect of increasing their campaign's risk of failure) because either:

A) They are not familiar with how to evaluate and compensate for uncertainty or

B) They don't care because they have the mistaken impression that crowdfunding will magically get them "in front of more people," get them "exposure", or they'll go "viral," which then becomes their primary plan.

At least one of these ideas, if not both, is present in the majority of crowdfunding campaigns.

But the good news is that even if you aren't experienced in bringing your idea to the marketplace in a profitable manner, there are simple ways to reduce your uncertainty and risk of failure and to practically eliminate the second-guessing.

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4 Simple Ways to Make the Most of This Book
This book will provide you with a specific framework to design and execute a campaign that will eliminate practically all of the risk in crowdfunding while gaining the most backers who will have pledged the most possible. The only real trick to using this framework successfully is to **stick to the steps**! You will save yourself a lot of heartburn and a lot of time, and you will have a successful campaign.

Here are four simple ways to make the most of this book:

1) Read the whole book FAST!!
Read at least the six steps of the Advanced Crowdfunding System presented in chapters 4-9, if not the whole book, before you buckle down on creating your

campaign. Knowing each step will help you understand how the steps work together. Understanding this from the very beginning is necessary to achieve a higher level of quality. Make sure to skip the homework during this run-through; you will come back and do it later. It should only take a few hours at most to read these chapters.

DO NOT wait until you have completed each chapter's work prior to moving on. This can result in loss of momentum and total stoppage. You can absolutely move on to the following chapter without completing the work. It's not only possible; it's recommended!

2) Return to each step and do ALL of the work!
You will want to have finished reading the whole book prior to building out your campaign. You may have started on each chapter's work but the time to start finalizing each step is once you have completed the book. At this point, return to each chapter in order and do the work. Each step is a small amount of work, but it needs to be done in the right sequence to do the best you can.

3) Beware of your excuses!
While you are unique in what you do and how you do it, the day-to-day circumstances of your life are likely to be very similar to everyone else out there. Here are a couple of things that I've noticed really hold people up from creating or launching their campaign:

- Inability to carve out enough time in your personal life to create campaign assets, especially the video,
- Planning too much around the campaign, such as going on tour, planning a vacation or even being deep in the creation process,
- Envisioning more and more complexity around your campaign, such as multiple campaign events or lining up appearances,
- Feeling like you must have an audience of arbitrary size (100? 1,000? 10,000?) in place prior to launching. (To be clear, this is not necessary.)

4) Follow the framework!
We have noticed a phenomenon where artists like to do their own thing even after they have seen the whole system and even when they actually agree with it! We call this the Dave Boat Effect.

Dave Boat was working with us and provided a video draft that didn't resemble the 3-part pitch video framework we had jointly discussed *in the slightest*! Instead, the video was a jumbled together series of interview clips.

When we asked him if he'd watched the module, he said, "Oh yeah, absolutely, I love it!"

So we told him to do a 2nd draft, actually use the 3-part pitch video framework and send it to us. So he was quiet for a second and then said, "You know, I can't

believe I did that. That must be common with a lot of creatives. I literally watched your stuff, loved it, agreed with it and then without even really knowing it, I went out and just did what I had in mind anyway!"

We laughed pretty hard and it finally made sense that this is what will often happen. Artists have a creative brain that just wants to do its thing!

Soooo, just check in with yourself while you're out there building your campaign. And remember to check whether you are following the framework or just doing your own thing without really knowing it. If you find yourself floating aimlessly at some point, come back to this page and check to see if any of these ideas can help get you back on course.

Pay attention to these four steps, and you will be well-positioned to build an optimized, hyper-effective crowdfunding campaign!

Now, before we jump straight into building an optimal campaign, it is crucial to clear up the most common misconceptions arising from having an inaccurate picture of crowdfunding. Unfortunately, much of the information available on the web either contributes to misunderstanding or does little to clear it up. The end result for campaigns can be fatal. The next chapter will lay this problem to rest by comparing the "common knowledge" found on the internet with a few crucial facts and figures that most people running a campaign commonly miss.

CHAPTER TWO

CROWDFUNDING STATISTICS POINT THE WAY

QUICK: WHAT'S THE ONE BIG ASSUMPTION THAT ALMOST EVERYBODY HAS about crowdfunding?

If you don't already have an idea, just Google "crowdfunding tips and tricks" or "how to do a Kickstarter," and you will quickly find a laundry list of advice like:

- "Solve a real problem"[4]
- "Shoot a stunning video"[5]
- "Offer a lot of small rewards"[6]
- "Make sure your funding goal is well calculated"[7]
- "Promote, promote, promote"[8]

Yeah, no doubt. Thank you, Captain Obvious! Advice like this, though more or less true, is superficial, not actionable and potentially misleading because failing to dig more deeply into these ideas can actually lead to big problems.

The real problem, one that can easily result in campaign failure, is the **assumption** that a crowdfunding campaign's primary concern is to "get more exposure." Almost everyone, especially those with no crowdfunding experience, assumes that a campaign will get more backers by "getting in front of more people" through social media shares, blog placement or mainstream media coverage like newsprint, radio or television.

It is possible for each of these things to make a difference. But *assuming this is your biggest mission **is a huge mistake***. "Exposure" through social, digital or traditional media is <u>NOT</u> the primary means of gaining backers for most campaigns, and **you can tell just by looking at the facts of the crowdfunding landscape.**
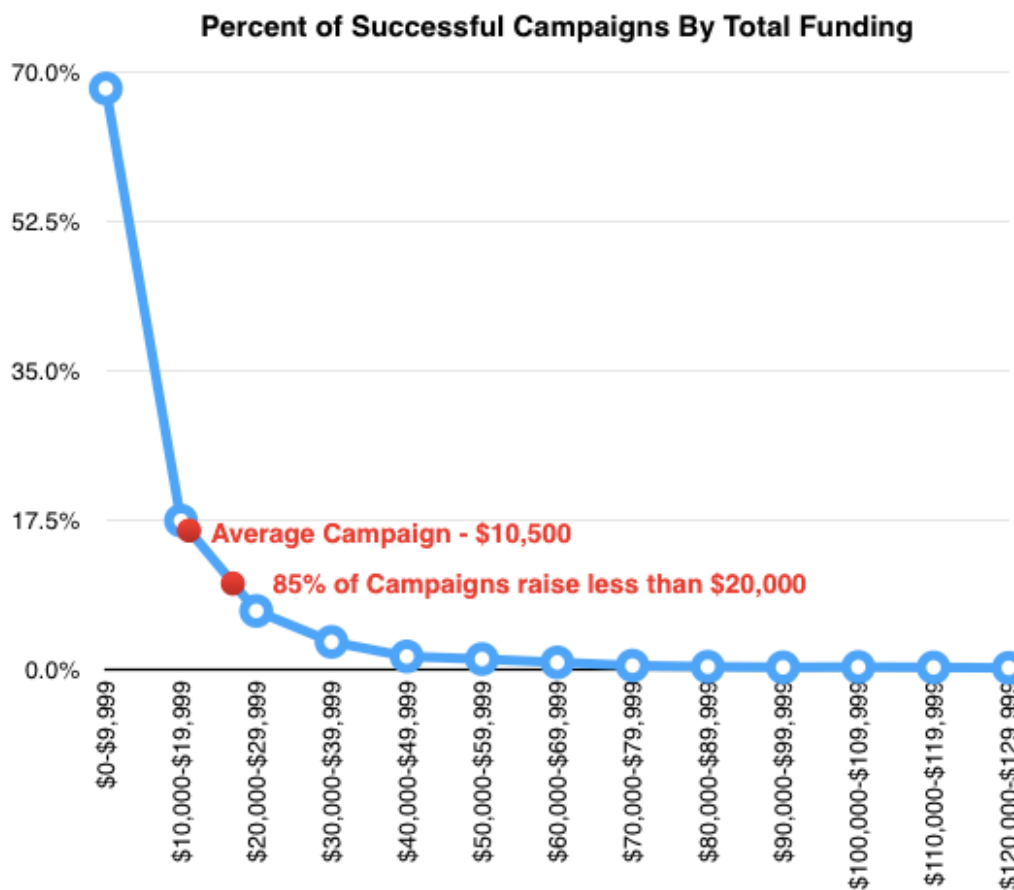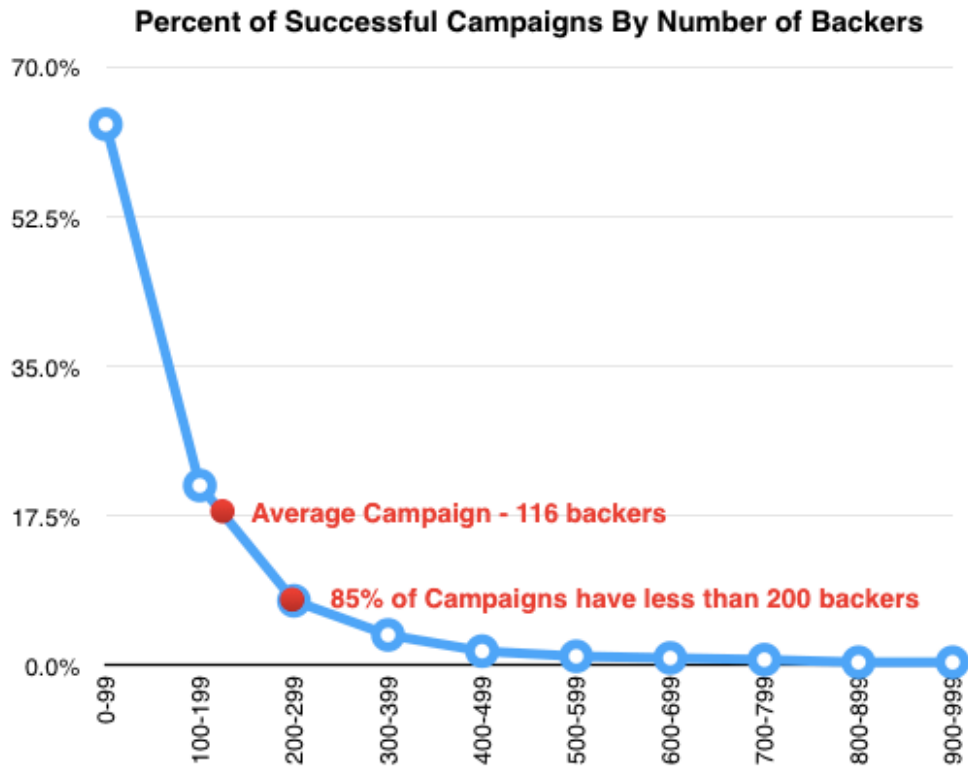
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I recently pulled a couple thousand successful Kickstarter campaigns from the genres of Publishing, Film & Video, Fashion, Food and Music. (This could be done at any point in time and the results would be the same.) I removed the extreme campaigns that had over 1000 backers or more than $130,000 raised.

This is kind of arbitrary but campaigns with that level of backers and funding are typically conducted by companies or people with large, established fanbases. And, even though there are very few of them (maybe 2% of successful campaigns), they bear almost no resemblance to the other 98% of us.

So how does the other 98% look?

- The *average successful Kickstarter campaign* raised just over $10,500 from about 116 backers.
- Over 85% of Kickstarter campaigns raise less than $20,000 from less than 200 backers.

Percent of Successful Campaigns By Number of Backers

● Average Campaign - 116 backers

85% of Campaigns have less than 200 backers

Percent of Successful Campaigns By Total Funding

● Average Campaign - $10,500

85% of Campaigns raise less than $20,000

These numbers may be surprisingly low. Most people think of crowdfunding in multiples of thousands of backers and tens of thousands of dollars. This is true

for 2% of successful campaigns or less. But for the other 98% of campaigns, stop and think for a moment… *where do the vast majority of these 100-200 backers come from?* (I'll answer this really soon, I promise.)

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You've probably been doing your research on crowdfunding and you've probably run across a lot of advice that seems inconsistent with focusing on fans, friends and family. Or maybe you think that there's no way you could pull enough backers out of that pool and that you need to focus on the dark art of turning strangers into backers. Either one would be justifiable.

But the problem is that most standard crowdfunding advice you'll see misinterprets or confuses the issue of where backers come from. Consider these nuggets of advice:

- "Build a community"[9]
- "Build your audience"[10]
- "Build an email list"[11]
- "Use all social networks to promote your campaign"[12]

None of these comments are dead wrong per se but they sure aren't right for most campaigns who will need about 100 backers to raise $5,000 to $10,000. The problem with this advice is that it deflects your attention from where it should be and leaves you chasing a fairytale. Let's talk about why that is.

■ ■ ■

As my dad used to say, "Quiz for duck:" (Sidenote: I never did win a duck and I have no idea what dad was talking about. But there is actually a question here.)

Multiple choice question: where do most backers for crowdfunding campaigns come from?

A. Scattered people around the globe who have never heard of you but who have access to the Internet.
B. People living in your hometown or people who are interested in your vocation who ALSO watch the news, read the newspaper or listen to the radio AND who happen to eat, sleep, wear pants and breathe just like you!
C. Friends of your mom's friends on Facebook or your best friend's little sister's Twitter followers or your college roommate's girlfriend's Instagram followers.
D. People on the internet who have demonstrated interest in products similar to yours and who have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of similar ideas over the past year.
E. People who know you and have an interest in you and what you do: your

fans, friends and family.

Hopefully you sniffed out at least some sarcasm but this list could be rewritten as:

A. Complete, random strangers.
B. Most traditional media consumers: strangers, either in your area or who are fans of music/film/photography/fashion/etc., who have shown no real interest in what you, specifically, are doing.
C. Most social media users: primarily strangers who have no direct connection to you.
D. Most readers of blogs and websites: strangers who like other projects in music, film, photography, fashion, etc.
E. People who know you and have an interest in what you do: your fans, friends and family.

Hopefully the answer here is obvious: *The people most likely to back your campaign are the people you already know:* **your fans, friends and family**.

Fans.

Friends.

Family.

Remember these three F's, they'll be the ones who contribute the vast majority (usually about 95%) to your crowdfunding campaign. Call it want you want - community, audience, list, social networks, personal networks, etc. - but *the people most likely to back your campaign are the people most likely to get your back*.

■ ■ ■

Definition: conversion rate is the percentage of users who take a desired action.[13]

Your campaign's conversion rate is the percentage of people who hear about your campaign that actually become a backer.

Marketers all over the world are *obsessed* with conversion rates because it helps them improve their overall sales and revenue. There are people who charge a *ton of money* to help increase conversion rates and there are definitely people *who will pay it!* This is worth noting. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people, probably millions, whose *only mission* is to bump up conversion rates.

With that in mind, what are typical conversion rates? Here are some estimates:

- "Conventional wisdom says that a good conversion rate [for a website] is

somewhere around 2% to 5%."[14]
- "Experts agree that an average conversion rate for email marketing is 1% - 5%, while conversion rates on social media and SEO are very difficult to measure because they rely so much on what happens on your website."[15]
- "Social media represented… a conversion rate of less than three-quarters of one percent (.71%)"[16]

From what we've seen, these numbers will be about right for your crowdfunding campaign. Check out this chart that I put together based on the information above:
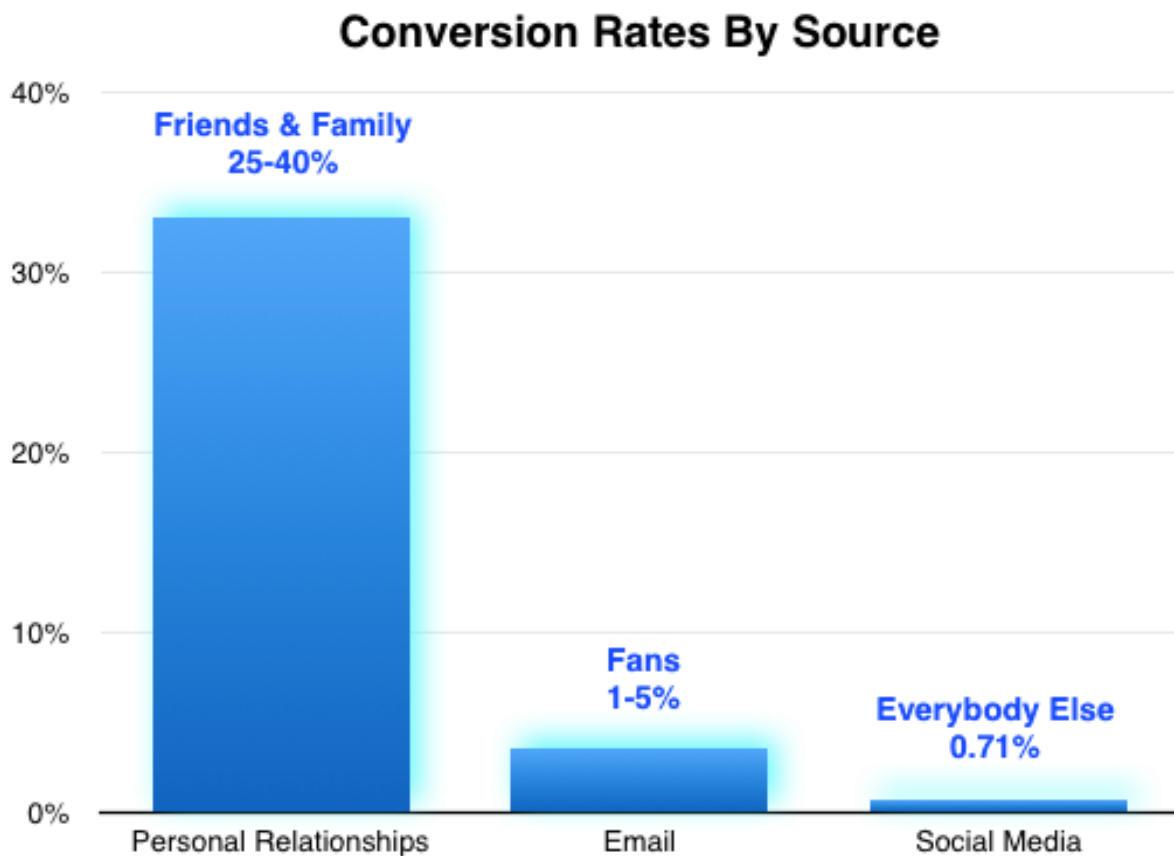
Those are pretty low numbers.

And what you **must** remember is that these conversion rates apply to people who *are already on your list or following you on social media.* For cold traffic (i.e., strangers) such as friends of friends on Facebook whom you have no connection to or people in your geographic area who listen to the radio in the morning, your conversion rates will be even lower.

But, after the big fuss about fans, friends and family up above, you are hopefully wondering what the conversion rate is for them. A conservative estimate is 25-40% of the people you tell about your campaign will become backers. It can be a little higher but probably not much OR it can be lower—a lot lower. It depends a lot on how you handle telling people about your campaign and how

much effort you make in doing so.

For the rest of this book, we will focus on how to create and execute a crowdfunding campaign that will best help people pledge to your campaign (whether they know you or not).

■ ■ ■

At some point as a creative individual, you made the decision to move your passion from private hobby to public art. You decided to take what you were doing in your kitchen, bedroom or office and bring it into public view.

You may be filming a documentary or mini-feature, writing a series of novellas, exhibiting your photography, creating your first line of T-shirts, distributing your home-made triple berry jam or releasing your first CD. Regardless, making the bold decision to chase your dream while subjecting yourself to public judgement, criticism and the possibility of failure is no small step. It's one of the biggest steps you'll ever take!

However, functionally speaking, it's only a small step. It's a lot like deciding that you want to run across the continent and then showing up on your front porch with only your running shoes and the memory of having run a mile in freshman year gym class.

Ok, I'm here… now what?

I'm here… how do I get *over there*?

Well, as ridiculously difficult as it might sound to run the 2,800 miles from LA to NYC, it might be more simple and straightforward than trying to turn your art form into a successful, sustainable career. I mean heck, if you want to run across the country, get yourself ten pairs of running shoes, a smart phone with Google Maps and somebody to drive your rig. At that point, you pretty much know what you've got to do.

But if you want to transform your creativity and art into a fun, fulfilling career that won't leave you couch surfing or begging for people's attention, that's a big ol' nebulous task with no clear road map. Most people who find themselves here take a logical next step: they look for successful examples and then attempt to replicate that example.

When you are looking at a vast world of infinite possibility, this strategy makes *a ton of sense*! It helps distill an almost unfathomable volume of choices down into a few manageable ideas. You give yourself a starting point and a clear ending point. Then you do your best to bridge the gap by doing what you see others do. Makes perfect sense.

Unfortunately, there are two problems that plagues many, many creative artists (and even businesses and brands) who are just trying their best. The first problem is when *you don't completely understand why you do your art/career/vocation/ profession or you cannot convey why you do it.* In other words, your purpose is vague or even unknown. The second problem is when *you don't understand the mechanics underlying the actions being taken in the example you are taking your cues from.*

I see one of these two problems in the majority of crowdfunding campaigns I work with. Both of these situations will compromise your efforts. Your message will be blurry and unclear at best or, worse yet, will be completely inauthentic and not applicable to what you are attempting to do.

It's still possible for campaigns with either of these problems to achieve success. All they have to do is set their sights low enough! As you are doing your crowdfunding research, many of the successful campaigns you view will suffer from one of these two problems, which can mislead you into thinking they are a good example of what to do. But if you are trying to *maximize how much you raise*, you must pay close attention to distinguish the difference between a campaign that really *nailed it* versus a campaign that set the bar low and managed to hit its goal amount.

Here's the reason why: when you don't understand the mechanics of what you are doing or why you are doing it, you run the risk of turning into a Copycat Marketing Robot. A Copycat Marketing Robot will look at what everybody else is doing and simply do the same. They will not give due consideration to crafting a marketing message congruent with their purpose and identity as an artist. Or they will apply the marketing techniques they have observed in a manner that doesn't make sense in their own unique situation.

HUGE problem! Trust me, you don't want to do this. The insidious side effect is that the Copycat Marketing Robot will not even know they have sabotaged their own efforts which makes progress and success more difficult to achieve and less likely! (In other words, they'll end up raising less money.)

We've all done this.

For me as a musician, whenever I'd write a song, I'd imagine a stadium of 20,000 people singing along (mostly good looking co-eds, of course) or hearing it played on the radio (because the hook was that righteous). It happened this way *every time*! Despite the fact that none of my songs were ever played on the radio, nor did I ever headline a stadium show!

We have a cognitive bias towards our own success and away from our own failure. It is what makes objectivity with ourselves difficult. It is why we sometimes need outside perspective on our work and effort.

Thing is, the successful brands and people you are watching in the public eye have a deep understanding of themselves and how they relate to their customer. Apple, Coke, Google… Taylor Swift, One Direction, Lady Gaga… James Bond flicks, any Disney film, the endless parade of Superhero movies… Tom Clancy, Dan Brown, J.K. Rowling…

When any of the aforementioned choose a particular flavor of PR or marketing, it is with knowledge of customer dynamics and the emotional relationship therein.

But when a musician writes a crowdfunding campaign press release that looks just like the newspaper clipping from the last time Aerosmith rolled through town, they are naturally inclined to believe it is great and think it will be effective without examining whether it is authentic or even accurate. Or when a filmmaker creates a trailer for their upcoming crowdfunding campaign that looks just like the trailers out of Hollywood, they naturally tend to think, "Wow, that looks flippin' fantastic! How can people NOT want to get on board with this?" perhaps without considering whether they have effectively conveyed the purpose behind what they are doing and the reason it is important.

Mimicking others who have been successful is only useful to a limited extent. To achieve your greatest success, you must have an adequate understanding of yourself, your situation and the mechanics at play. This is the entire premise of the Advanced Crowdfunding System:

- To guide you to a complete understanding of yourself and what you are trying to do (never as easy as it seems)
- To give you an understanding of the mechanics of crowdfunding
- To help you construct your campaign in a fully informed manner so that you can use what works for other people without accidentally making common mistakes that others are making.

The remainder of this book will show you the Advanced Crowdfunding System in depth. After covering the necessary mindset for finding success, you will move through six streamlined steps that build on each other as you go.

The first and most important step is to **Find Your True Purpose**. You'll learn more about why this is critically important and you'll work on clearly defining your purpose. In my experience, this is the step that most artists and creatives struggle with and end up revisiting multiple times before their purpose and message are distilled accurately and clearly. This step is also typically the biggest "Aha!" moment for people, resulting in a significant paradigm shift.

The second step is to **Know Your Backers**. You will define precisely who is most likely to back your campaign so that you don't forget them while spending all of your campaign time chasing the white whale. Skipping this step is the downfall

of many a failed crowdfunding campaign.

Setting your **Fail-Proof Goal** comes third. Most people don't have a problem coming up with a budget for their project. But it *must* be compared to a funding estimate that is rooted in reality. Your estimate will be based on the work you did in step two, Know Your Backers. Your likelihood of campaign failure increases dramatically when you base a campaign goal only on what you think you need or on your hopes and dreams.

Next, you will create your list of **Magnetic Rewards** which are specifically designed to be attractive to backers, maintain high reward margins, make fulfillment simple and easy and minimize your guesswork, hassle and time spent.

Then you will create your **Perfect Pitch Video** and Campaign Description. There are many, many misconceptions about what a campaign pitch video should look like, say and do. It is the number one area of misplaced energy and effort for most campaign creators. In reality, the essence of a pitch video is simple and straightforward and this step will give you a framework to deliver an effective campaign message that will help you gain backers.

Finally, you will engineer **The Perfect Storm** for executing your campaign. You will learn when and how you get the most backers including the crucial Pre-Load strategy, 4-day Launch Sequence and 3-day End Sequence.

Beyond that, we will take a deeper look at how to solve common problems, cover Frequently Asked Questions and then give final reviews of exactly what to do during the most critical times of your campaign.

The content of this book is directly applicable to any "artistic" crowdfunding genre. We will often feature the genres of music, food, fashion, film & video and publishing but the steps are equally applicable art, crafts, dance, theatre, journalism, comics and photography. Smaller campaigns for less than $20,000 in genres like design, technology and games can also directly apply the ideas and steps covered here.

CHAPTER THREE

The Mindset of a Successful Campaign

CROWDFUNDING IS MORE THAN AN EXPLICIT SET OF STEPS. IT is a process that requires the complete investment of your heart and soul. Because of this, crowdfunding is also a place of personal vulnerability, and it is quite common to have some discomfort with the whole notion of crowdfunding. These thoughts typically have to do with fear and doubt. Many people are afraid to fail, or they are afraid to ask for money. Some people are afraid of looking stupid or desperate.

In order to ensure you get the most out of this system, we must discuss these blocks up front and do our best to remove fear and doubt before moving forward. A positive mindset will help you to understand the principles and practices much more readily than a doubting mind.

One *huge hurdle* that you must overcome prior to launching your crowdfunding campaign is to convince yourself that it's okay to ask other people for their money. Somewhere along the line, you've likely had thoughts similar to these:

> *As an artist, it is hard to ask for money. Especially when you're playing a show and the people who are there have already paid to get in, maybe bought a t-shirt, and are just enjoying the music. I feel bad asking for more money.* ~ Josh T.

> *The biggest reason I didn't launch until two days ago is fear. Afraid people wouldn't help. That they'd think it was dumb. That they'd think that I was just mooching and not contributing myself.* ~ Maggie D.

> *I was terrified of asking for help.* ~ Cindy H.

Self-doubt of this nature is totally normal. Just about every artist I've encountered has felt this way. People who make a decent living (and have a little money in the bank) are *even more likely* to feel this way.

But there's good news. First, evidence from both the marketplace and from past Kickstarter campaign creators suggests that people in general do not have a problem with crowdfunding. Second, you can deal with your doubt by focusing

your energy on positive ideas like opportunity, abundance, purpose, mission and relationships. This will allow you to see your ASK as an opportunity to succeed regardless of whether you receive a "yes" or a "no."

FAMOUS PEOPLE'S KICKSTARTERS GET HAMMERED IN THE MEDIA... YET STILL SUCCEED

The first bit of evidence that people are okay with being asked for money lies in famous peoples' campaigns.

Now, if you just listen to the media, you would think that famous people crowdfunding is some sort of evil, unethical money grab:

> *If people think you have a lot of money, they're going to ask why you're asking them for more.* ~ Angela Wattercutter

Remember Zach Braff from NBC's Scrubs (and other movie fame)? His campaign was questioned very publicly by the New York Times[17], not to mention in online blogs with headlines like "I Won't Give Zach Braff One Dime" and "Dear Zach Braff, You Are Rich and Famous and Don't Need Kickstarter."

Tom Hanks' son Colin ran a Kickstarter for a documentary on Tower Records and as Mike Masnick points out in his article, "Is It Bad When The Rich & Famous Use Things Like Kickstarter," it wasn't well received. Slate.com's Culture Blog openly wondered if Rob Thomas's campaign for a Veronica Mars movie could ruin Kickstarter! And Alan Jones isn't too happy about rich people using Kickstarter, directing people to "Stop Giving Your Money To Rich People On Kickstarter."

But take note of what the campaigns of Zach Braff, Colin Hanks and Rob Thomas have in common: they absolutely CRUSH it! In other words, the campaigns raise a boatload of dollars for their project and there is a very simple reason for this: people who make up the crowd make their decision to pledge based on their own self-interest.

If people value your project, they'll help make it happen. If people don't value your project, they are free to go on their merry way. For example, the campaign by actors Zosia and Clara Mamet for their project, The Cabin Sisters, was a total flop.

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO WILL STEP UP

Another piece of evidence comes from past successful crowdfunding campaigns by not-famous people. Consider this quote, which tidily summarizes the comments of many people with whom I've talked on this subject:

> *With all the folks I had on my list and was sure they would pledge, I was stunned by who really came forward. All in all, more folks that I did not expect to pledge did so and the ones I would have bet my life on it did not. ~*

Hans York

That is to say, you cannot predict who will pledge and who will not so don't even try.

> *Some of the people we thought would give didn't, and some of the people we didn't think would/could give did.* ~ The Douglas County Daughters

The scary thing about asking individuals for money is the chance of rejection. It sucks to be rejected. Period. But people WILL step up.

Imagine this: you take all of your fans plus everybody else that you directly know and put them in a room. Then, you ask everyone who will not or cannot pledge to your campaign to walk out of the room.

You WILL NOT have an empty room. Some people will want to help and will! Some people will want to help but won't be able to. Some people will be too distracted (by life) to really understand what you are asking of them. And some people won't want to help but that's okay, too.

Of course you won't actually get everybody that you know in one room at the same time. Nor will you have the luxury to ask the NO's to depart ahead of time so that you can only ask the YES's - that would be wicked awesome or at least comforting buuuuut it's not gonna happen. So how do you deal with the NO's in a constructive way?

FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIP
I would encourage you to read "A Contrary Way To Ask For Money[18]" by non-profit coach Rich Snowdon. It is worth your time to at least glance over it. But in the meantime, let me summarize it for you:

- Asking is difficult when people focus on their own need for money.
- They like YES so they feel pressure to get it.
- They don't like NO because it is disappointing and doesn't help towards their goal of getting money.
- The resulting dynamic is one of fear and intimidation.
- A better approach is to focus on the relationship and the needs of BOTH parties.
- When you focus on the relationship in total, then you don't need a YES; you just need to inform somebody of your purpose and project and then receive an answer that is also *in sync with their needs*.

It's called the **advocacy ask** and here are the three parts of it (reprinted from the article):

1) **You are advocating for yourself**—You get to be true to your core values.

You get to ask from the place that's deepest in your heart.

2) **You are advocating for your donor**—You're on their side. You want them to make the best decision for themselves. You want them to be true to what's in their heart. You don't ever want to finesse them. You don't want them to give sacrificially.

3) **You are advocating for the relationship**—When you're done asking you want the relationship between the two of you to be stronger than before, not soured or broken. Sometimes people get the money but lose the relationship. And is that worth it?

Fortunately, crowdfunding is a little lower stakes and more forgiving than raising money for non-profits. But the general idea is the same. As long as you are full of purpose and belief, then you can put aside the simple need of money for your campaign and instead focus on your greater need for somebody's honest answer. This will allow you both to walk away feeling good about your relationship.

In contrast, as Hans York points out, *"If you're attached to the outcome, you're doomed."*

WHAT IS NO?
Back to Seth Godin. In his aforementioned audio book, *Leap First*, Seth tells a story that will help you frame just what "No" means:

Last year I [Seth] was at a big fancy brainstorming event where they invited 30 people to come… and we're all fancier than everybody else and we're sitting there doing the cocktail part and they say, "Okay, everyone go have a seat." And everybody sits down at this one big long table and there are 29 seats at the table and one's missing and I'm the last guy to sit down… [meaning there was no seat for Seth, he was standing all alone in a room where everyone else had a seat]

And there it is all over again, the same thing: what "No" means.

"No" means someone has judged you; judged you accurately, really understood who you are and rejected you…

And when you say it that clearly and that baldly, it's obvious that that's **not** what's happening.

No doesn't mean you suck, you have bad ideas or that you are unredeemable. It just means that the person isn't currently interested in your project or campaign for their own personal reasons. And, again, it's okay for that to be the case. Don't take it personally!

You could be writing a book about how to deal with the loss of cancer, a very redeemable subject, and somebody very close to you *might not be interested* because maybe they've never had to deal with that and they don't understand. You can't turn that into a referendum on you. It isn't fair to yourself, nor is it fair to them. And maybe someday in a different place and a different time their answer would be 100% YES.

You simply cannot let the possibility of NO sabotage the opportunity for YES.

YOU NEED THE CROWD TO SPEAK
Other than the spirit of collaboration, the coolest thing about crowdfunding is that it lets you know whether the crowd values your project enough to fund it or not. Instead of spending tons of your own money and time on creating something you're unsure of, you just float the idea and let the crowd make its judgment. If the crowd backs a campaign, they want it. If the crowd doesn't back a campaign, the idea needs work.

An artistic project isn't exactly analogous to some business idea because it is intensely personal in nature, encompassing your very soul. But, if you truly BELIEVE in yourself and you KNOW that you are putting your best effort forward, then you OWE it to yourself to find out what the crowd has to say. There is no other way to move forward as an artistic, creative person than to lay it on the line by releasing your project. If it takes a crowdfunding campaign to make this happen, then you must proceed.

Think about those people who have accomplished what you want to accomplish and who you look up to. They, too, faced uncertainty in their career. And, whether it was the first time or the tenth time, they faced it down and overcame it.

The crowd is ready and eager to accept and fund your creativity as long as you have the purpose and belief in yourself that you can do it. Put your fears aside and let the crowd speak. You'll be better off for it.

■ ■ ■

Once you are comfortable with the notion of asking for people's support in a manner that values their needs as much as yours, you are well-positioned to move forward in your campaign. But even then, the actual asking can be tricky. Perhaps you have lingering fears of rejection, or maybe you worry that you'll look desperate, greedy, incompetent or rude. It's a lot like being a middle schooler trying to hold hands or put an arm around your date at the movies.

Asking for money often raises internal doubts like:

- Will I seem greedy?
- Will it negatively affect our relationship?

- Do they trust me?
- Will they understand why or buy into my vision?
- Will I look like an a—hole?

These are legitimate questions and they can arise in a variety of circumstances in life. But when you are going to run a crowdfunding campaign, they are not questions you can afford to have dogging you because self-doubt and fear will betray your efforts in some subtle and many not-so-subtle ways. Thus, it is CRUCIAL that you are WELL PREPARED to ask for money for your crowdfunding campaign. If you are not, you run the potential of sabotaging your own efforts, which (newsflash!) isn't really a great thing to do.

There are tons of resources out there to help you in preparing to ask for something you want (in this case money and support). Just Google "how to get what you want." It shouldn't take you more than a page or two of results to get a good grasp.

You should study up on this by reading a few articles. A few of my favorites are "The Art of Asking[19]" by Sarah Peck and "How To Get Everything You Want[20]" by Dave Kerpen. Also, spending fifteen minutes with Amanda Palmer's TED Talk, also titled "The Art of Asking[21]," will always be worthwhile.

I will discuss the ideas from these articles in the following pages but here is the cheat sheet:

- Be grounded, centered and certain in why you are asking. I call this understanding your Purpose and Mission.
- Be both kind and certain that it is in the other person's best interest to say yes.
- Practice asking so that you are confident in what you are saying.
- Directly and clearly ask for what you want.
- Say thank you.

Once you've gone through the aforementioned steps, you will be quite a bit more prepared than before. But as you actually set forth in your crowdfunding campaign, there will be a lot of potential pitfalls when you are asking. So let's talk about the **Top 25 Ways Crowdfunders Screw Up When Asking For Money**.

The root causes of these mistakes are addressed in the Advanced Crowdfunding System (ACS) so you don't need to worry about fixing everything right up front. But reading about the most common mistakes ahead of time will help you understand why it is so important to *fully address* each step of the ACS so that these mistakes will not bleed into your video, campaign description and campaign updates.

Going through this list will help you solidify your overall asking strategy as well

as how you will approach asking individuals during your campaign.

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE, OBVIOUSLY
1) NOT ASKING
I honestly can't imagine needing to write much about this. YOU HAVE TO ASK!

Whether you are quoting Sarah Peck from her article, Nora Roberts, Tony Robbins or anybody else with a pulse, they'll say: If you don't ask, the answer is always no. Obviously, you need to ask. But many people don't.

You will also need to beware of Not Asking's stealthy cousins:

2) The Non-Ask Ask
The non-ask Ask is usually due to fear or perhaps forgetfulness. It is where you talk about your campaign, your purpose and your mission. You talk about what the funds will be used for and how the result will affect your life. You talk about how great it is to have supportive people in your life…

Then you wait to see what happens. At this point, some people will jump right on board but many will not and, when that is the case, YOU HAVE TO ASK! Don't forget this.

Another infamous cousin of Not Asking:

3) Thinking You Shouldn't Have To Ask
This is functionally equivalent to the Non-ask Ask but is rooted in ego and pride instead of fear or uncertainty. It is particularly likely to happen with the people you are closest to and care the most about because you feel like they should know what's going on with you and that they should give their support automatically because you would obviously do the same for them.

But the truth is that even the people whom you are closest to in your life will need to be asked directly.

While some people may volunteer support, others who really care about you may be too busy or may just not realize the importance to your life of what you have going on. Or maybe they're just not thinking clearly and they become a victim of the Bystander Effect where they assume everybody else will do it so they don't have to.

Don't hope for mind readers. Ask.

HOW YOU ASK
These mistakes are big ones because they can severely decrease the chance of a person saying yes to your request. They usually happen either because you don't completely understand your purpose and passion OR because you try to copy all of the other disingenuous marketing drivel you are used to seeing as a

consumer or from other crowdfunding campaigns by creators who don't know what they are doing.

Overcoming these mistakes is as simple as spending enough time to prepare yourself so that you truly know what you are about and you know specifically what you are asking for. It also requires that you care enough about the other person to only want their "YES" if it is also right for them.

4) Being Phony or Employing Bullshit Hype

A Forbes business blog post called "4 Ways To Get What You Want Just By Asking[22]" that lays out the genetic makeup of a good ask: connection, vulnerability, timing and honesty. Dave Kerpen's aforementioned post, "How To Get Everything You Want" also supports the notion of being authentic, transparent and vulnerable.

Once you start reading about asking, you'll see this all over the place. The reason: it works.

You cannot bullshit your way to crowdfunding success; I see examples of this all over the place.[23] As Danielle Laporte says in her post "Qualified Request: How To Ask For Stuff[24]," "No bullshit hype… heart hype is essential." Which means that you can't simply toss out notions like awesome, amazing or best-ever with nothing to back it up and expect people to resonate with your campaign.

You **must** understand your purpose and passion and communicate on a trusting, person-to-person level. It's the same way you'd talk to your best friend. Don't try to be all I'm-a-superstar-you-are-an-adoring-fan (unless you are actually a superstar, I suppose). It doesn't work in crowdfunding because crowdfunding is much more personal than your typical internet-based marketplace.

5) Being Uncertain of Your Desire

Are you doing this because it seems like it might work? Or are you doing this because you have a fire burning behind your artistic vision and you have to see it through?

Back to Sarah Peck: she's right… *you need to know you want it!* Want as in "You need it with your very soul," not simply "It would be nice." Want as in "You would do whatever it takes to help your mom cover that life-saving medical treatment," not "Oh look at that sweet phone cover, I want it."

I have seen crowdfunding campaigns where it's closer to the latter, and guess what? They fail.

6) Not Having Dealt With Your Fear of Asking

Fear is a very powerful psychological factor in our actions and choices, so much so that you can go pay $99 for an online course[25] on how to deal with it right

now!

If you haven't dealt with your fear of asking in general, then you may end up betraying your own efforts. It's not that you have to be completely fearless. You may always have a little bit of discomfort when asking people to back your campaign. You simply need to have a holistic understanding of your mission and purpose so that you understand your own need and can justify asking people for money.

If you are fearful, chances are good that you don't really think you need it or you don't really believe in what you're doing.

If you get into your campaign and feel like you've got your purpose covered, and you know you want it but you're still having trouble, head on over back to the previous section on The Fear of Asking and review the finer points therein. Also take a look at "How To Ask For What You Want[26]" by Stever Robbins [sic] which points out that "Asking for help makes the relationship stronger."

7) Lacking Genuine Concern for the Person You are Asking
Crowdfunding = asking for help. Period.

There is nothing wrong with that because the people that will help are interested in the outcome of the campaign; they benefit from it. But before you run off asking for help, spend a little time focusing on the ideas of gratitude towards and caring for those whom you'll approach.

Why? Because people are more likely to GIVE help when they know they're likely to GET help.

Simon Sinek tells a story[27] about how the Marines build the relationships and social fabric necessary to send soldiers into battle who must be willing to *kill* or to *be killed* for their fellow soldiers. He points out that those who think they can do it on their own or who aren't team players slowly get ostracized during training and that they aren't able to accomplish their individual goals *until* they help the team accomplish its goal.

Now obviously, crowdfunding isn't life and death. But there are subtle ways to screw this up like when you put out the vibe that you'll achieve your goal because of how awesome you are, how awesome your project is, how awesome your team is or how much you've achieved in the past.

On the flip side, don't pander. This isn't a contest to see who can gush on and on about how supportive your fans are and how you couldn't do it without them and how everybody is awesome and how much you love them and blah blah blah. (Even though it's true.)

The way to show that you care is to be certain that pledging to your campaign is

right for the person you are talking to. Don't EXPECT them to back you. Don't COERCE or FORCE them into backing you. Don't GUILT them into backing you. Show them the *opportunity* in front of them and let them make their decision.

8) Expecting People to Jump on Your Bandwagon
One of the most annoying lines ever in a crowdfunding video is, "And that's where YOU come in…"

Bullshit. People don't come into the equation just because you need money.

They come into the equation because you are developing your artistry, your vision, and your project in a way that will benefit them. You should be thinking about people from the very beginning because, without them, your project is the same as silence, a blank canvas or an empty memory card.

This isn't anything new to you, but just be mindful of what you say and how you say it because trying to coerce people into backing you is counterproductive.

9) Asking Clumsily
"Practice until you're an expert, and keep practicing."[28]

The first several times you present your story and ask for help are going to be awkward. There is no way around it so don't worry about it. You will need practice to find a smooth and flowing narrative that succinctly accounts for all of the necessary considerations. This is why professional salespeople go through extensive training and often times work from a script ~ so they don't miss things or screw it up!

Find a trusted friend who is willing to invest some time and practice going through what you're going to say. I would recommend practicing at least five times. You should be getting the hang of it by then.

When you think you're good and comfortable, ask your friend to start pushing you out of your comfort zone with non-receptive body language or snarky comments. This will give you a big leg up when you start talking to people during your campaign.

10) Playing the Victim Card
You aren't likely to start out your campaign in victim mode where you feel sorry for yourself because raising money is sooooo difficult. But when progress becomes difficult, it can be tempting to place the blame on things outside of your control, including other people. This might make you *feel* better, but it sure as heck isn't going to *make* things better. And if you start leading with negative feelings about how things are going, you are not likely at all to get backers.

People will back your campaign because of ***purpose, mission and vision***, which we'll cover in the next chapter. If you act like a victim, it will sound like whining

and an uninspired cash grab.

11) Focusing More On Your Need Than On Your Mission

This is another area that can subtly shift people's perception of your campaign towards a cold grab for cash. Obviously, you have a need. But you can't afford to focus on it because people don't give due to need. The non-profit world knows this all too well. Many, many organizations make the mistake of thinking that because their motives are worthy, people will respond to their need.

Not true.

A catch phrase at many successful organizations is "Money follows Mission." It's a fact that you need to internalize before you start talking to people. Don't get me wrong: you can still talk about what you'll spend the money on. You just can't present your costs as a primary motivator because it *won't motivate anyone*!

12) Boring People With Your Laundry List of Credentials

This is the sneaky stepbrother of Bullshit Hype but instead of exaggerating or using an innocent little white lie, everything you say is actually true. It's just that it's either boring to hear or the listener doesn't really think it's important to their decision.

Most creative people are trained to do this from early on. Go pick up the local What's Happening This Weekend and read through the press releases for local bands - *after opening for the Beatles, we recorded our newest CD with our best songs ever, produced by the legendary Bob McSchmee (who also produced The Most Awesomest Band Ever) and featuring the lead guitar player whose name you should recognize from that one hugely successful group that everyone knows about* - or book reviews of local authors - *the author has received many awards including the Western Area Critics Book Award for Best Introduction Featuring Two Characters and has been published about 50 bajillion times since…*

But honestly, most people start tuning out if you lead with this, especially when it comes to crowdfunding. Instead, they want to hear about mission, purpose and what the project means to your life because *that's what drives 90% of crowdfunding contributions*. Hell, maybe it's even 100%.

When a person starts showing interest and asking you more about your project, feel free to gush. But don't make the mistake of leading or even trying to convince with your laundry list of features or past accomplishments.

WHO YOU ASK

Asking the wrong people is probably *the most common mistake* I see in campaigns and generally results from a misunderstanding of the mechanics of crowdfunding. Remember, 85% of crowdfunding projects are for under $20,000

and have 100-200 backers or fewer. Think about where these backers are most likely to come from: your pool of existing relationships (friends, family, fans) or strangers who you've yet to contact?

It's not that you can't turn strangers into fans; you can. But, as I've pointed out, trying this is a bit like a sales person cold calling prospects out of the yellow pages: EXTREMELY DIFFICULT with a low conversion rate.

Your strategy with the highest probability of success focuses on existing relationships. And without going into detail, the bottom line for dealing with these folks comes straight from Simon Sinek:

People don't buy what you do; they buy **why** *you do it.*

The best way to communicate your Why on your campaign page (which is your purpose and mission) is to think about talking to a series of many individuals one at a time versus addressing a single, large crowd all at once. And so it follows:

13) Ignoring Individuals and Focusing On "The Crowd"
Big mistake—killer even!

There is *no better way* to establish a connection with someone than by being completely personal.

So you cannot think of "the crowd" like it's a gym full of people who you are going to give a speech to. Instead, and I can't believe I'm saying this, take a cue from the politicians. Talk to people on both an individual basis AND to all of them at once. If you only talk to all of them at once, your chances of making a personal connection fall dramatically.

In *The Psychology of Persuasion* (one of the most widely read psychology books of all time, especially in the business world), Dr. Robert Cialdini talks about the Bystander Effect and how, the more people there are in a crowd, the less likely each individual is to act. You've probably heard stories of experiments on this where researchers will set up a fake "mugging" in a busy place like Times Square just to see if anybody will help the victim. And, amazingly enough, nobody helps even though there are hundreds or even a thousand people around.

Cialdini has a simple solution to this: when he needs help, he approaches an individual directly. For example, if he were in a crowd and fell down in cardiac arrest, he would make eye contact with a single individual, point to them and say, "You, get a doctor please." (You know, if he could talk during cardiac arrest.)

And guess what? The chances of that person helping out go from nearly zero to

nearly 100%.

The mechanics of crowdfunding work similarly, maybe not from 0 to 100, but even a modest doubling of the probability of receiving help makes a huge, measurable difference. So, do the work of talking to one person at a time.

Yes, you should still deploy communication to your email list and through social media. But this is your *secondary task*. Your first objective is to reach out to individuals. It is literally the difference between a successful campaign and a failed one.

14) Trying to "Go Viral"

The holy grail of *any* marketing effort is to "go viral." You end up getting untold amounts of exposure for free, which usually results in new, paying customers. So, why wouldn't you try to go viral? Simple: the probability of success is soooooo low that it's a waste of your most precious and constrained resource: time.

Crowdfunding campaigns typically last for three or four weeks. This is a limited amount of time to contact all of the individuals whom you need to reach. You cannot afford to waste time screwing around trying to "go viral." This results in lots of unfocused, unproductive effort. Oh, and two more things:

First, have you ever actually seen a creative crowdfunding campaign go viral? For music? For a book? For indie film? For a food truck? I have not. Even the biggest ones like Amanda Palmer, Veronica Mars or Zach Braff were primarily funded through relationships that were already in place when the campaign started.

Second, remember all that stuff up above about how you ask? When you try to go viral, you will inevitably confuse the issue and water down your purpose and mission.

P.S. If you want to shoot for going viral *after* your campaign is over, have at it. Just don't try it *during* your campaign. Given the low likelihood of success, the tradeoff just isn't worth it.

WHAT YOU ASK FOR

Asking for the wrong thing will also adversely affect your efforts. But simply knowing what you will ask for ahead of time will take care of the possibility that you get off track and go wrong.

15) Confusing the Issue

If you Googled "how to get what you want" earlier and read a few results, then surely you have seen the advice to be clear and specific in what you ask for. And you need to communicate this clear, specific need in a straightforward manner.

This article excerpt[29] takes it a step further by pointing out that piling on extra reasons doesn't really help:

> **2. Don't pile on the reasons.** Speaking of charity donations, research by Dartmouth psychologist Daniel Feiler and colleagues (2012) showed that alumni were more likely to give money to their alma mater when given a single basis for the request. The alumni asked to give for altruistic reasons (to help others) *or* egoistic reasons (to help them feel good) gave twice as much, on average, as alumni asked to donate for both altruistic and egoistic reasons. Find one reason to make your request, and give that the biggest play possible in order to ensure that you'll get a positive response in return.

I often see artistic campaigns tack on a little charity donation, maybe 5 or 10%. Heck, PledgeMusic makes charitable giving part of their platform. But I don't think it helps.

If you do a great job of communicating your purpose and mission, then a charitable donation *might not* hurt. But if you try to use your charitable intentions, honorable as they may be, as a reason to support your campaign, then your efforts are misplaced.

Start with your Why… and if you ask me, finish with your Why with a ton of Why in the middle.

16) Asking For Too Much
This is a mistake that can happen particularly on an individual level.

Yes, you need to be specific and clear about your need. But, as we discussed earlier, you need to also have concern for the person you are talking to. If that person is broke for whatever reason, then asking them for a $100 donation (or even $25) is a real stretch that could come off as pompous.

Some consideration and use of judgment will go a long way here.

17) Asking For Too Little
The converse of this is that you don't want to ask your super supportive, really rich buddy who hit it big importing tea from Manitoba to pledge $20 if he was really thinking about pledging $500! (Of course, if your buddy is rich but only mildly interested in what you are doing, then maybe $20 is right for him.)

Non-profits understand the natural phenomenon of 80/20 where 80% of the results come from 20% of the occurrences so they're always on the lookout for big fish donors. You'll usually see non-profit appeals lead with a very high dollar amount followed by a couple of lower but still high dollar amounts, such as, "Please consider pledging $2,000 to our very worthy cause" followed by some checkboxes with the amounts of $2,000, $1,000, $500 and Other where you fill

in the blank.

Most people will choose other and throw in $10 or $100, but every once in awhile, the person will just throw down a big ol' chunk of change. You must keep this option on the table for the backer by not removing it. It is fine if *they* remove it because it's right for them, but it isn't fine for you to remove it.

WHEN YOU ASK DURING CONVERSATION
The first type of When-You-Ask mistakes are made when talking to individuals. These mistakes generally arise out of discomfort in asking. The easiest way to keep yourself from making these mistakes is to do all of the preparation that we've already discussed: know your Purpose and Mission and have an authentic concern for the people you are talking to.

18) Thinking You Should Ask About Them First
This is something I am guilty of ALLLLLLL the time! You think you should show some concern for the person you're talking to before you ask. Call it "buttering them up." But in the Simon Sinek talk referenced earlier, he explains how the simple ordering of your request can be the difference between a Yes or a No. He gives this example of what might happen when emailing someone with a request:

> *Hi Person,*
>
> *Haven't seen you in years. I hope you're doing well. Congratulations on all you've been doing. It's really amazing! We should grab coffee sometime. If you could do me a favor, I'm in an online contest where I can win a big prize and I was wondering if you'd vote for me. Hope you're well, talk to you soon.*
>
> *Thanks!*
>
> *Kenny*

As Simon points out, reading that email would leave you dismissive or maybe even offended and hitting DELETE! But what happens when you get the same email with a change of order: request first, pleasantries second?

> *Hi Person,*
>
> *I'm hoping you could vote for me in an online contest where I can win a big prize for my work. I haven't seen you in years. I hope you're doing well. Congratulations on all you've been doing. It's really amazing! We should grab coffee sometime.*
>
> *Thanks!*

Kenny

This works better because the person knows what you want so the pleasantries don't seem like a thin veil of disguise. Instead, the person can be grateful for them as well as willing to consider the request.

When you put the Ask last, your pleasantries seem really disingenuous and can potentially offend the person you are communicating with, even though you have no intent of offending them in the first place. Be very careful with this one in both spoken communication and in written. Because of our inherent discomfort with asking, it can sneak up and bite you anytime!

19) Giving Up Too Early #1
This one is really subtle but it can be a bugger. Let's say you are talking to somebody who is listening intently to your story and your request, but they are maintaining a fairly neutral body language and posture, so you aren't sure where they're at. You ask them to become a backer of your campaign.

They pause for a moment. Perhaps they are trying to find the words to express their admiration of you for taking such a bold risk and being so proactive about it. Or perhaps they are trying to decide how much to donate. Or perhaps, at precisely the moment you stopped, they just had to swallow and take a breath before they can talk.

But you take the slight hesitation as a negative sign and because it's so unpleasant to be denied, you pipe up: "Or could you just share it with your friends by email or like it on Facebook?"

Mistake made.

This won't actually bite you all the time as some people will really have your back. But some people will decide that *instead* of being a backer themselves, it would be better for them to *share* your campaign! But it's really not better. Check out this article excerpt from a post[30] describing the aforementioned Bystander Effect:

> My friend Brian Solis led a project for the United Nations in 2010 to help increase awareness of Malaria in Africa and also generate $10 donations for bed nets. He found that initially most people shared rather than donated, essentially accomplishing just one of the two goals. In his research to uncover why, he found that people believed that their act of sharing was worth much more than a $10 contribution. He found that people truly thought that their digital influence or social capital equated to tens or even hundreds of individual donations from their connections.

People believe their act of sharing is worth much more than their potential contribution! So they share away and think somebody else will take care of it.

Their intention may be noble but the crappy thing is that the idea is not true! Think about it. If everybody just shared but didn't pledge, well, you'd have a boatload of shares and no pledges!

This is very related to what Cialdini wrote about in The Psychology of Persuasion: ask specific people to take specific actions.

20) Not Following Up
A critical part of any sales process is follow up. It is so critical that companies spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars training their staff and implementing follow-up procedures. Hell, they probably even spend millions on it!

Commonly held wisdom is that you need to ask people up to seven times before they'll take the desired action. Sarah Peck, whom I referenced earlier, says it in her article on the Art of Asking and I know I've heard it from other sources.

Get comfortable with the idea of asking people multiple times. If they say NO, obviously you need to respect that and stop asking. But if you contact somebody during the first three days of your campaign and don't see them take action, nor do they say no, then contact them the 2nd week, the 3rd week, and especially in the closing days.

Heck, sometimes people will say yes and then not take action because they get distracted and forget. ASK AGAIN!

WHEN YOU ASK DURING A CAMPAIGN
There are also a few ways to mess things up by having completely bad timing. These will all seem obvious, but I am constantly surprised at how many people contact me asking for help in the middle of their campaign who are guilty of one of these mistakes. Usually, these mistakes are made due to lack of planning, misplaced expectations or possibly due to discomfort with asking.

21) Starting Too Late
Many, many, many crowdfunders are guilty of launching a campaign and then waiting to see what happens. Perhaps they don't want to ask, perhaps they think they don't need to ask or perhaps they think they can make up for it later (they have 30 days, right?).

But he who hesitates is lost. Or at least HAS lost… a golden opportunity.

There are two periods to capitalize on people's excitement and momentum. The beginning of the campaign is one of them. I strongly advocate that campaigns plan to roll hot right out of the chute and then do the work to make it happen. I have seen campaigns hit a $10,000 to $15,000 goal in as little as two days! Get early support from your closest friends and family to generate momentum and social proof and then capitalize on that by continuing to make your appeal for

people to become backers (more on how to do this later in the book).

Don't wait until it's too late. If you wait, success will be a lot harder and, at the very least, you'll end up raising less overall.

22) Bad Timing: Not Asking When You Have Momentum
This mistake isn't as bad as the last one but it has the potential to *dramatically* lower the amount you raise. I mentioned seeing campaigns hit a $10,000 to $15,000 goal in as little as two days.

But what happens *after* that can vary dramatically. Take a look at this band's funding progress:

Funding Progress: The Sammus Theory - NEW ALBUM 2013 PROJECT   Closed at: $14,350 / $10k (143%)
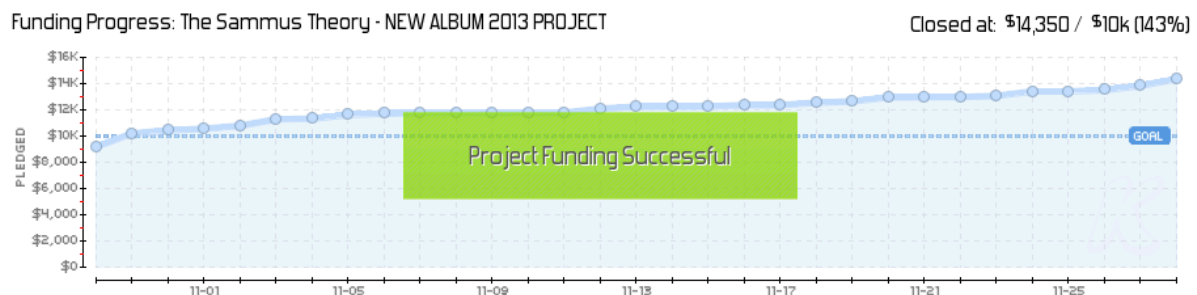
(c)2015 Kicktraq. Additional content provided by Kickstarter Inc. and The Sammus Theory. Trademarks and related content are owned by their respective companies. Shared under the creative commons (CC BY-NC 3.0) license. Read more about sharing this image at www.kicktraq.com/projects/316364414/the-sammus-theory-new-album-2013-project/#sharing

You can see that they hit their $10,000 goal by day 2 and then coasted, raising an additional $4,000+ over the remaining 28 days. That may have been okay with them, so it's not a criticism, but my bet is that, had they wanted to, they could've kept the pedal down and further increased their fundraising.

Now take a look at Jay Stolar's funding progress:

Funding Progress: The Happiness and Connection Project   Closed at: $50,053 / $15k (333%)
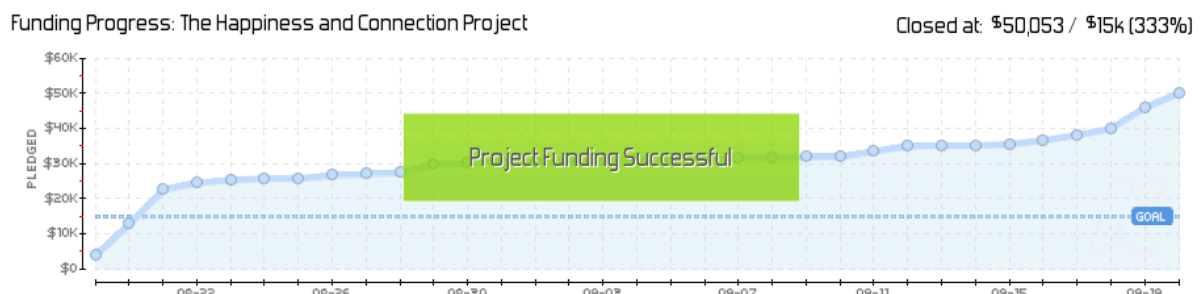
(c)2015 Kicktraq. Additional content provided by Kickstarter Inc. and Jay Stolar. Trademarks and related content are owned by their respective companies. Shared under the creative commons (CC BY-NC 3.0) license. Read more about sharing this image at www.kicktraq.com/projects/1089614302/the-happiness-and-connection-project/#sharing

He broke $20,000 on day 3 but then continued working and raised over $50,000 by the end of the campaign! Pay particular attention to the last couple of days of the campaign. *The end of your campaign is where you can capitalize on people's excitement and momentum*.

If you hit your goal but don't have a plan for the end of your campaign, you will

be leaving money on the table.

23) Giving Up Too Early #2: Giving Up Mid-Campaign

Don't worry about how long you've been campaigning compared to what percent of your goal you've hit. If you hit the 2/3 mark of your campaign and you've only raised 20% of your goal, that doesn't mean you'll fail. So many people make the mistake of assuming that your funding progress should somehow match up with the amount of time that has passed in the campaign. It's not true.

I have seen campaigns make close to 25% or even up to 70% of their total funding in the last few days. Even Kickstarter says "Of the [campaigns] that have reached 20% of their funding goal, 81% were successfully funded. Of the [campaigns] that have reached 60% of their funding goal, 98% were successfully funded."[31]

What you need to worry about is being sure that you've contacted your friends, family, fans, mailing lists and social media contacts. Do it as personally as possible (in person, by phone or personal email) especially for those with whom you have a tight relationship.

If it helps, think of your campaign as a few mini-campaigns where your JOB is a race to 20%, a race to 50%, a race to 60%, etc. If you get close to the end and have a long ways to go, it just means that you have a LOT of work to do in a short time.

Also, remember that people are procrastinators in general and that you may have to remind them several times to view your campaign and pledge before they take action… *even if they have meant to all along*.

Lesson: believe in yourself and be sure to do the work.

A FEW OTHER MISTAKES

I don't really know where to put these, but they are also important, so let's not forget them.

24) Focusing Too Much On Rewards

Whenever you ask somebody for something, it's nice to have something to offer them. It just feels better. So naturally, you want to have great rewards to offer your people.

But keep in mind that for the vast majority of your backers, they'll care more about WHY you are doing your project than about WHAT the project is. In other words, the people who decide to back you will do it because they believe in your purpose and mission, not because of the rewards you offer.

So when it comes to asking in your video, your campaign description and in

person, you must supply the information needed for a person to make the decision to back your campaign. This information is your Why: your Purpose and your Mission.

If you gloss or skip over your Why because you want to get to the rewards, thinking it will demonstrate value to the person, then you'll be leaving out the most critical information they need when deciding whether to back your campaign. So be sure to put your primary focus on Why and continue to refer back to that throughout your story and your ask.

Rewards are necessary, and people DO want them, but they very rarely convert backers on their own merits.

25) Not Saying Thank You

I've mentioned a few times that you can't just desire money in your pocket when you ask. You need to have a genuine concern for the person you are talking to. It follows that if you do have genuine care, then you will definitely feel compelled to say thank you.

If you notice that you're forgetting this step, then you are probably sabotaging your efforts by focusing too much on the outcome and not enough on the relationship. Take a little time to get grounded and to think about how you feel about the person you're talking to. Chances are that just their prior interest in you is enough to make you feel thankful. After all, they've helped you get to where you are already.

And as a side note, publicly thanking someone on Facebook or Twitter is a good way to make their support of you known publicly and have your campaign show up in their feed. It won't help you "hit the jackpot," so to speak, but it will raise awareness and you just never know how those things will turn out.

The Final Word On Asking

In the words of Maya Angelou, "Ask for what you want and be prepared to get it!"

As you can probably tell, it takes some preparation and maybe even some practice to nail it when you ask somebody to pledge to your campaign. But as long as 1) you are very clear on Why you are doing your project, 2) can clearly explain this to people and 3) come to the conversation focused more on your relationship than on the outcome of the request, then you will have the best possible experience when asking people for support.

And remember, you never know who is going to pledge. There will be a few disappointments, but there will likely be more fun surprises. Remember, as Hans York pointed out, some people you least expect will come through while others you assume you can count on may not.

Moving On

Being in a positive mindset is crucial to your campaign's success. Using the advocacy ask to focus more on your relationship with people than on their answer to your question will likely alleviate most of your uncertainty about asking people to support your campaign.

And, rest assured, though we just spent a few pages going over 25 ways people screw up, the system that will be laid out in the next six chapters will help you avoid all of these mistakes. I have, so far, only alluded to the best practices in building and executing your crowdfunding campaign. Now it's time to dive into the details.

CHAPTER FOUR

STEP 1: FIND YOUR TRUE PURPOSE

IT'S TIME TO START BUILDING YOUR CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN. THERE ARE many things to do, where should you start? It is natural to assume that you should jump right into filming a clever video. Or perhaps you work best when you have the numbers all lined up so you want to work on your project budgets and campaign goal. Some people are so focused on coming up with "cool" rewards that this will be their place to start.

But wait! The fact of the matter is that none of these are the place to start. Though video, goal and rewards are the most notable of your campaign assets, addressing these too early will run the risk of missing out on the single ingredient that is the special sauce behind creating an absolutely killer-sure-to-be-successful crowdfunding campaign.

This ingredient will permeate your campaign. Everything you create, say and do will be based on it. And, hopefully you are *demanding* to know right this very instant what that single ingredient is.

Your Purpose Worth Backing
Purpose is defined as the *reason* for which something is done or created or for which something exists"

The FIRST MISTAKE that people often make in their crowdfunding campaign is *assuming* that their purpose is obvious and understood. Not only is it not obvious to people in general, but, amazingly enough, it is often not even obvious to yourself! And making this mistake is a surefire way to sink your campaign before you've even launched—or, at the very least, to make gaining backers a really, really hard job.

But if you take the time to dig past your assumptions and clearly understand the core purpose behind what you are doing, you will remind yourself of the *deeply personal* reasons you have for dedicating yourself to your art. You will also figure out how to clearly communicate your purpose which will give you the power to inspire others by being a great example of chasing your dream while including others in the chase.

Whether you can see the need for this straight off or are feeling a little skeptical at the necessity of know your purpose, there is one phrase that you need to memorize:

"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it."

When fully understood and taken to heart, this phrase from Simon Sinek's TED talk titled "How Great Leaders Inspire Action"[32] will not only set the course for a successful crowdfunding campaign, but it can change the entire trajectory of your career by adding meaning and purpose to everything you do. But ironically, most of us are so deep inside our own game, we forget about the true reasons behind heading down our path to begin with.

"People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Think about it from another angle: why do you buy into things?

Do you pledge to your buddy's 5k fundraiser race because you really think the animal shelter needs your $10 for a dog collar? Do you order pancake mix or fridge magnets from your seven-year-old nephew for his elementary's fundraiser because the pancakes are freakin' incredible or the fridge magnets are just that artistic?

Or do you pledge because you know the person, you believe in them and you know that if it's important to them, then it's important to you?

People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it.

This statement couldn't be any truer for a crowdfunding campaign. As a matter of fact, the entire premise of crowdfunding revolves around this idea!

Surprisingly, many campaign creators do not understand this. They think the campaign revolves around their music, their film, their food product or their amazing idea for a smart lightbulb that teaches math to kindergartners while they sleep! They think it's about how they're going to mass produce a sandwich container that doesn't make things taste plastic-y or their interpretive dance rendition of Shackleton's journey to the South Pole or about making their next album with that producer who just produced an album for Justin Bieber's second cousin once-removed.

But most campaign creators miss the fact that your fans, friends and family will back you and your campaign because of WHY you are doing it and WHY running a successful campaign is so important to you and what you do. It is NOT about your product. It is not about the DVD, the coffee table book, the clever hypercolor postcards or the CD. It's not about any of those. Not yet. That will come later.

It's about you. It's about how completing this project will help you fulfill your purpose and your dream. We call this your Purpose Worth Backing, and without it, your campaign is just an uninspired grab for cash.

People back YOU, not your campaign.
Think about your fans: the people who are waiting for you wherever you showcase your creativity. They can't wait to talk to you about what you do!

Think about your friends: best friends, friends you'd debate politics with, friends you'd bail out of jail, friends you take the extra time to ask how they are doing because it is important to you that they are doing well and feeling supported.

Think about your family: mom and dad, bro and sis, cousins, proud grandparents, crazy aunts and uncles. All people who would give one of their kidneys for you. Which makes a couple of bucks towards your dreams look like the no-brainer, doesn't it?

These are YOUR people… and guess what? Your people WANT to support you. They genuinely WANT to see you succeed. They WANT to see you shoot for your dreams in a meaningful way. So your challenge is to make sure they see your campaign as your *mission*, not the making of a product.

You advancing your life's mission = a purpose worth backing.

You making a product = soulless, lack of meaning, uninspiring.

Give your people a concrete mission with reasons behind why it's the most important next step for you.

People are intelligent and their intuitions are strong.
If you skip your purpose and move straight to your output/product/idea, your fans, friends and family *won't even know* why they are *not* moved to back your campaign. Their subconscious impression and judgement will be based on factors they are not even aware of. They will make a snap decision: either stay and pledge or leave within seconds.

If you want to succeed at crowdfunding, don't be like most campaign creators. Consider most unsuccessful music Kickstarters. They know what they are making:

- an awesome record (http://kck.st/Ubi3lK),
- a new tour van (http://kck.st/UyUIu0),
- a music video (http://kck.st/XlYxEp).

They also know how they're going to make it and why it's better than what they've done before:

- They've got an awesome producer (http://kck.st/YaS7JP),
- a sweet recording studio (http://kck.st/TFSUM6),
- or fantastic guest musicians (http://kck.st/QAoEWv).

But almost none of them know WHY they are making the record, buying the tour van, or making a music video. Of course they'll all say they know why:

- Because this album is going to rock! (http://kck.st/YwRi86)
- Because with a new van, we'll get to keep playing shows! (http://kck.st/W4x3Ri)

But that's not good enough. They haven't spent the time to dig deep and uncover the true meaning of this campaign to them and the effects it will have on their lives.

"People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Many unsuccessful campaigns get their priorities backwards like this:

1. What (the music is going to rock and here are the 10 reasons why!)
2. How (we'll use rad instrumentation and record at this amazing studio with this famous producer!)
3. Why (this is totally going to be our best record ever! Help us make it a reality!)

But the *really successful campaigns*, the ones that just FEEL good and FEEL authentic and seem to have an overarching purpose beyond the project, they do it like this:

1. Why (this is my mission and this is why it's so important to me)
2. How (we'll collaborate with amazing people and use these rad techniques!)
3. What (the final output is going to be awesome and here are the 10 reasons why!)

By the way, these sorts of campaigns are the ones that can *blow their goal out of the water*! Because when people are pledging to your purpose, there is no real price tag on that. The only limit becomes you, your plans and your imagination versus just the budget and what you can do with it for your project.

Naturally, you are excited as all hell to start shooting your campaign video and listing out rewards. But before any of that, doing your homework is an *absolute necessity*. It is REQUIRED because your true purpose worth backing, your Why, will affect every facet of your crowdfunding campaign and will be used explicitly in your pitch video.

"…cheesy at it sounds, the purpose worth backing assignment kicked off some seriously needed soul-searching about WHY I have maniacally dedicated the last

decade of my life to music." - Rebecca L.

■ ■ ■

Your Assignment

Get started on finding your true purpose! Take a crack at the following exercises. Don't hurry through them and remember, even though your purpose can seem really obvious, it takes most people a minimum of a couple days and three attempts to really nail their purpose. Many people comment that it is the most difficult part of the whole process, which they quickly follow up with how it had the most profound effect and positive impact on not only their campaign but also their career.

> *Figuring out my purpose worth backing - to be a source of love for others through my music - was one of the* **hardest things I've had to do in years***. It took me weeks of journaling, brainstorming, going for walks, laying in bed, procrastinating - but knowing I'd be asking people like my brother or friends I've grown up with for their help and money for my project pushed me to really dig deep and figure out my purpose.* ~ Peter S.

Exercise 1: Examples

Go to Kickstarter.com, click on "Discover" and choose your genre. Once the page loads, sort by "End Date". Look through the first 15 campaigns or so, which are the campaigns ending soon, and click into any of them with funding between zero percent (0%) and ten percent (10%).

Dollars to doughnuts, these campaigns will immediately start talking about WHAT they are selling (if they have a video at all). They will talk about the features of WHAT they are making and how it is so new/cool/awesome/ amazing/relaxing/etc. It should be readily apparent that these campaigns lack much, if any, real purpose. Otherwise, look at these unsuccessful, failed Kickstarters and notice the pattern of a weak Purpose Worth Backing.

Failed Kickstarters

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2041057701/things-mother-should-have-taught-youif-only-shed-k
You can see all you need to see in the first 20 seconds of this video during which the creator introduces herself and then bolts straight into WHAT she did and WHAT she plans to do with it. If you continue watching, you'll hear plenty of admirable and worthy ideas, but at no point will you actually hear WHY she is doing this and WHY it's her mission. And the results speak for themselves: one backer. Chances are good she didn't try too hard, which is also a direct reflection of the fact that she doesn't understand her purpose. (Because if you understand your purpose and your campaign reflects it, there is no way you *cannot try* to achieve your goal.)

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/cardsofjoy/cards-of-joy
An extremely well-meaning person with a decent idea who got no traction on his campaign. This campaign launches straight into the WHAT. The more I watch the video, the more I wonder if he's even serious. By the end, he reveals the campaign for what it is: a cold cash-grab. People don't want to fund your business so you can pay off debt. Get serious; people don't care about that. Figuring our how to make ends meet is your problem the same as everyone else. But if you want to chase your dream, well, people do care about that. This guy missed the mark by a mile.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/jessejoejohnson/recording-and-releasing-first-album
This campaign was "tweeted to over 230,000 people" but ended up with only seven backers. The video talks about this project and that's it. No background, no explanation, no authenticity.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1064762599/inspired-soap-creations
Uh, this isn't a Kickstarter video; this is a marketing video. And it's not a good one. Geez Louise. Lesson: don't try to make a marketing video. Marketing is a multi-bajillion dollar industry and the reason is because marketing straight to a consumer is ridiculously difficult (not impossible, just difficult). And even professionals screw it up. It's possible that you *might* market your campaign in a way that gets some backers, but it's about 40 times more likely that if you just understand your Purpose and clearly explain it, people will respond positively.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/angelmessenger/conscious-awakening-and-emotional-intelligence-rea
You'll need to scroll down for this campaign video; it is embedded in the campaign description. The book idea sounds good as it will "show others that they, too, are not alone," amongst other things. It is meant to connect to humanity and that is admirable. But there is not hint of purpose here. Notice the second line spoken, "Basically, WHAT we're trying to do…" Enough said.

These five campaign videos very obviously miss the mark, and you were probably never going to do a video like them anyways! But what is more worrisome is when people make a pretty decent video but just forget to include the important part, their why. And this can happen to any well-meaning person who just gets too wrapped up in *what* they are trying to do. Observe.

Failed, but not terrible, Kickstarters
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/toadandtadpole/soleils-table
This campaign had some potential. Heck, they managed to raise over $5,000, so clearly they have something going. But it failed. Watch the video and notice a few things. While it's cute, it focuses on marketing bullets: too simple, too complicated, here's what you get in this cookbook. They never took the time to

set up why this campaign is so important and what the PURPOSE for it is.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2069883951/fishy-business-sound-fund
This gal has some skills. And if you just watch this without thinking about it, you might be surprised that she didn't raise more funds. But once you realize that she has no purpose, the campaign comes across as a cash grab and the results clearly match.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1182956867/josh-tarp-and-the-still-lets-make-a-record
It pains me to put this example in here. I visited with Josh about his campaign. He's a well-meaning, hard-working, good guy. And there are people who wanted to see his project happen as he did raise over $3,000. But it wasn't enough and here's the reason: there's no purpose here. Josh doesn't explain why he is doing what he does nor does he explain why completing this mission is so important. Reason number two (and Josh told me this one himself): he was afraid to ask! (See chapter 3.)

These three videos are a bellwether for what happens when you skip your purpose. They are otherwise qualified, doable campaigns. Be very careful not to miss this part. Now, let's see some examples of people letting their purpose shine!

Successful, Purpose-filled Kickstarters
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/intothesea/peter-sus-debut-album-into-the-sea/description
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1089614302/the-happiness-and-connection-project/description
This pair of music campaigns absolutely nail down their purpose and then communicate it clearly within the first minute of the video. They are compelling because they give context first in order to make connection points with the viewer and lay the groundwork for presenting the mission. As you watch, most likely you will get sucked into the story without even knowing it as the videos set up their purpose in a way that leaves you needing to find out what the campaigns are about.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1042976249/reclaiming-america-a-journey-into-the-heart-of-mod/description
These guys could have focussed on the specifics of how they'll pull off the project, like where exactly they'll go, how awesome their re-cycled bikes are and what they plan to do with their creative output when they are finished. But they didn't. Instead, they offered a plethora of emotional connection points that together weave an inspirational narrative that illuminates their purpose. P.S. Their campaign description is also worth a skim as it provides further insight into

the backstory and motivations behind the campaign.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/bookleggerslibrary/bookbox-project-by-bookleggers/description
Campaigns like this one that are community-minded and altruistic in nature often end up on the scrap heap. The typical reason is that the creator assumes their purpose is obvious because it is inherently "good." But this campaign took the time to lay out the Why from about the 30-second mark to the one-minute mark. Without this section, the campaign would likely not have broke the 100 backer mark and gotten funded.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/vanajeros/vanajeros/description
This video is an excellent example of leading with the vision behind the artistry. The photographers are living a life of art and speaking authentically from their core identity.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/409802326/rugged-and-modern-ceramic-drink-vessels/description
Demonstrating an authentic purpose can even be done in regards to drink ware! Pay special attention to the connection points during the first 30 seconds of the video.

Exercise 2: Further Develop the Understanding of Purpose
Watch Simon Sinek's TED talk about "starting with why".

http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

Also watch Amanda Palmer's TED talk, "The Art of Asking," and notice how she mentions her music only once. The rest is about connection and purpose.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMj_P_6H69g

Exercise 3: Finding Your Purpose
Find the "Emotional Core" of your project mission using the Three Whys. Ask yourself the question: why are you doing this project? Then determine why your answer is important. Do this at least three consecutive times. For example:

Why are you doing this project? *I am making a 20-minute video documentary about runners that will feature a compelling story and my best camera work to date!*

Why is this important? *Because I think the runners in this story are an amazing example of how to persevere and not let challenges get in the way.*

Why is this important? *I want people to know this story because I think too often we get in our own way but I wish more people would just believe in*

themselves.

Why is this important? *Because it is important for people to understand themselves and how much they can affect the outcomes in their lives. I want to not only champion that idea but to be an example of it so that others can see how to do what is meaningful to them and to shoot for their dreams!*

Note that though you start by asking specifically about your project, the exercise is designed to drill more deeply into why you do what you do in general. Each subsequent answer should back further away from the narrow focus of your project into the broad focus and bigger picture of why you do what you do.

You don't have to limit this to just three times. You may get to something truly compelling if you just ask one more "why?"

Once you've done this, start talking with people you trust. Let them know you are working to uncover your true purpose and then tell them what you think it is. They will be able to tell you if you are talking more about your What than about your Why and whether you sound authentic or not. The more you talk about it, the more refined your Purpose will become.

Exercise 4: Core Influence
You can't really do a good job of influencing other people for the better unless you ultimately come to realistic grips with who you are and what you want as a person. -Frank Kern

Core Influence is when you truly connect with the people viewing your campaign in a manner that will positively *influence* them. And it will not happen until you really know yourself as a person which includes understanding your own deep motivations for your artistic project and resulting crowdfunding campaign. Thus, knowing yourself is critical; then you can communicate from your core identity, NOT from the identity you think everyone wants you to be or that you've been pretending to be.

Step 1: Ask yourself what your perfect, average day looks like?

Say you've got 50 years left to live. That's 18,250 days. In a perfect world, what would your perfect average day look like? What time would you get up? What would you have for breakfast? Where would you live? How do you make your living? Who would you spend your time with? How much of your time is spent on creating? Are you working from home, or do you have a studio or office? What would you spend the first half of your day doing? Second half? What would your thoughts be as you went to sleep? Keep going until you see the movie of your perfect average day playing in your head.

Step 2: What role does this project play in moving you towards your perfect

average day?

This project won't get you to your perfect new life by itself, but it should play a big part in moving you one step closer to it. If you can answer this question naturally and authentically, your core identity will shine through and connect with your audience.

P.S. This isn't supposed to be easy! Getting uncomfortable and taking extra time to do this even when you're impatient to launch is the best thing you'll ever do for your career and your life.

CHAPTER FIVE

STEP 2: KNOW YOUR BACKERS

NOW THAT YOU HAVE A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR PURPOSE Worth Backing, it's time to determine your Circle of Influence. And before we get too far, let's be sure to understand precisely **what** your Circle of Influence is and **why** it is so important.

Your Circle of Influence is a comprehensive list of all people and relationships that you have a connection to. In other words, it is the pool of your potential backers. It is extremely important to accurately assess your Circle of Influence because it is *directly related to a very common reason for crowdfunding campaign failure:* choosing the wrong goal amount.

Did you get that? This step will help you avoid the primary reason why half of all crowdfunding campaigns fail.

You don't want to end up having 24 people pledge $2,581 when your goal was $5,000 or 121 people pledge $5,216 when your goal was $20,000. Not only is this a public embarrassment, it's a big hit to your ego. After all, this can make you feel like you don't have much worth to your fans and that nobody really cares. This is the stuff your worst dreams are made of, *and it's totally avoidable.*

Remember all of that information about the people most likely to back your campaign and conversion rates from Chapter 2? That is why it's so important to start with your Circle of Influence and create an exhaustive list of all your relationships. This will do **two very important things.** First, it will help you to set your goal amount based on a specific, real-world understanding of the people most likely to back your campaign. Second, it will allow you to craft a campaign that your audience can relate to and will want to participate in by having these people in mind throughout the campaign creation process.

In this step, we'll cover how to take inventory of every person you have any type of connection to. This inventory will be used again later on to help set a realistic, real-world goal (Step 3: Fail-Proof Goal) and to systematically launch and roll out your campaign (Step 6: The Perfect Storm).

TIME TO PARTY

To help you understand why nailing down your Circle of Influence is paramount to your campaign's success, let's pretend like you're planning a party. Not just any party, though. This party HAS to be off the hook. You want people to not only show up in droves, but you want it to be the talk of the town for months to come.

Step 1: Understand what determines your party's success.

It's highly dependent on who you invite. You have to invite people. They don't just show up!

You've got the rave lights, the world famous DJ, the PBR on tap and tons of free parking. This party is going to be EPIC. So, are you willing to bet the famous DJ's $15,000 appearance fee on OTHER people "spreading the word" about your party? ANSWER: Hell, no.

You need to invite a ton of people. Not just any people though, you want to invite people who are most likely to actually show up and pay the $15 cover. It's not how **many** people but how many of the **right** people you invite.

Step 2: Think of your Circle of Influence like a wedding invite list.

A wedding goer's feeling of obligation comes in different tiers. If you are a parent, grandparent, brother, sister or best friend of the bride or groom, then *no excuse will get you out of going to that wedding*. If you are a cousin, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, close friend or co-worker, the pull is also very strong and it is difficult to get off the hook.

When putting your "invite" list together for your campaign, these "inner circle" types of people are solid gold. Not only are they obligated to you (especially if they get a very personal, in-person invite), but they are the people who want to see you succeed.

Out of all the people in the big ol' world, *it means the most to them that you are* ***following your dreams*** *and* ***making a bold move***.

Of course there are other categories of people for your consideration so let's take a look at the ever-important **Six Categories of Influence**. These six categories of your Circle of Influence will each require a different channel of communication and perhaps a different style of communication.

1. **Inner Circle** — Family, close friends, turbo fans. People you would call on the phone or send a personal email to.

2. **Intermediate Circle** — Friends, extended family, or turbo fans who you may

not feel comfortable calling on the phone but who deserve a personal connection that is more than just a blast email list communication. These are people who follow your personal Facebook profile, for example, who you'd email one-on-one, send a personal message through Facebook or send an SMS text message.

3. **Fan Email List** — Not to be confused with your personal Gmail contacts! This is your actual artist mailing list for your profession/vocation that is populated with people upon their request so that you will contact them regarding what you do. If you are just starting out, you may not have an email list and that's okay. If you have several years of experience, you may have hundreds on this list. And if you have several years of experience and have actively worked on building your list, you may have a few thousand on your list.

4. **Social Media Followers** — Followers you'll reach through status updates on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, etc. This circle will include any personal connections who aren't in your Inner or Intermediate circle like Facebook friends on your personal profile as well as fans/likes of your official Facebook artist page or your official Twitter artist profile.

5. **Personal Networks** — Other groups, causes or email lists you have a connection to. Examples: former employers or co-workers, clubs, teams, social or spiritual groups you have a connection to. Also worth considering here is any other email list you may have access to via a personal connection. For example, do you know another band that might let their list know of your campaign? Or is there a blogger in your mastermind group whose list might appreciate your campaign? There will probably be people from this circle who made it into your Inner or Intermediate circle. But don't forget about everyone else. They may be interested in a short email to catch up with you and hear what's going on in your life.

6. **Media: Blogs, Radio, TV, Newspaper** — Scheduled on-air radio interviews, TV morning shows, or being featured in blogs or newspaper articles. Warning: though these sorts of activities are highly gratifying, especially for your ego, they rarely end up providing more than single-digit backers. Yes, it's counterintuitive. Yes, it's disappointing. Yes, it's true. Be very careful to not spend much of your time chasing this circle; it will cost you. As a matter of fact, most people get the causation backwards here. Media coverage arises out of general interest, not the other way around.

If a person from one of these 6 categories backs your campaign it's because:

- They feel obligated,
- They want you to succeed or

- The campaign personally connects with them.

Why? Because, with the exception of media, they all have one thing in common: every person listed in these categories has a personal connection to you or a personal connection to the campaign you are trying to create.

Notice that these categories are ordered by likelihood of contribution. In other words, the higher on the list, the more likely people from that category are to back your campaign.

NOTE: When an individual is in multiple circles, you should only include them in the "highest" circle that they are in. For example, if your cousin is also a co-worker who happens to be your best friend, then they would go into your Inner Circle. Best friend is Inner Circle (1) which is greater than extended family.

"Wow - you really cut to the essence of it. Personal outreach and a compelling reason... " - Peter S.

■ ■ ■

Your Assignment
Now that you have a full understanding of your Circle of Influence and why it's so important for your crowdfunding success, **create your spreadsheet and begin adding individual names to your list**.

At a minimum, your spreadsheet should have these columns:

- *Name*
- *Circle/Category*: Inner, Intermediate, Personal Network, or Media. You'll notice Email list and Social Media are not listed, as you won't be contacting these people individually.
- *Group*: We naturally tend to think of people in groups. Examples might be high school friends, college friends, people from your softball team, people from church, etc. Thinking this way makes it easier not to miss people (or entire groups of people).
- *Contact Method*: Phone, SMS text, email, etc.
- *Pledged*: Track whether people have pledged or not so you can sort on this later in the campaign.
- *Pre-launch Contact?* Note whether you plan to and whether you have contacted individual prior to the campaign launch (this will make more sense later).
- *Launch Contact?* Note whether you have contacted the individual during campaign launch.
- *Mid-campaign Contact?* Note whether you have contacted the individual during mid-campaign.
- *End Campaign Contact?* Note whether you have contacted the individual

during campaign end.

Name	Circle / Category	Group	Contact Method	Pledged	Prelaunch	Launch	Mid	Ending
Jen Ski instructor	inner	Aspen Friends	phone	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Charm West	inner	College	phone	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Jessie Anders	intermediate	College	email		yes	yes		
Andrew Smith	intermediate	Aspen Friends	facebook		yes	yes		
chase	inner	College	in person		yes	yes	yes	
The Clintons Email List	Fan email list		email			yes	yes	
Katie Benson	Personal Networks	work	email			yes		
Jeff Bridges		work	email			yes		
Tom Arnault		work	email			yes		
Sheldon Degraw		kickball team	text			yes	yes	
Matts Becker		kickball team	text			yes	yes	

Example of spreadsheet

You may get the majority of the names written down in your first sitting, but you'll undoubtedly think of more in the coming days. Do take the time you need to make the most complete list possible. Don't leave anyone off!

Remember, this list is the foundation of your successful campaign. Don't estimate. Write names down. We'll actually use your Circle of Influence numbers when setting your goal. And we'll use the actual list extensively during your campaign.

P.S. This is the first step that helped one or our first campaigns ever raise over $9,400[33] without fans, Facebook, or a mailing list. It should be obvious that you need to do the work and make this list right now!

CHAPTER SIX

STEP 3: FAIL-PROOF GOAL

YOU'VE STUDIED WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE PURPOSE, SO YOU now know that people back **you** and not your project. You've taken inventory of every person, network, and human connection you can think of using the six categories of influence. Now it's time to talk numbers.

Depending on the genre, about 40% percent (dance, theater) to 75% (fashion, crafts) of crowdfunding campaigns on Kickstarter fail[34].

The number one reason for failure is choosing a goal amount that is too high for the campaign creator's **ability to raise funds.** It is *critical* that your campaign's goal amount has roots in reality. In other words, regardless of project cost, how much do you think you can raise from *your* Circle of Influence?

Before we go on, I want to tell you a story about David.

David has finally landed his dream date. She's the most beautiful brunette with big brown eyes, the girl of his dreams. Her name is Darla. Every day for five months straight, he orders a tall, non-fat latte from Darla before he gets up the courage to even talk to her. After two more months of small talk during his daily visits to Starbucks on the corner of 4th and Stuart, he makes the most daring move of his life.

He ASKS HER OUT! And Darla says yes.

Now before I tell you how things went for David, consider this: not only does this move by David take a HUGE amount of courage and carry with it real risk, but the outcome of the date could very well affect the REST OF HIS LIFE. So there was never a doubt in David's mind he was going all out.

He takes Darla to an extremely expensive restaurant, and after a bottle of wine, an order of crab cakes, two petite filets with a creme brûlée and espresso for dessert, the bill comes back for $192. But this didn't bother David; it had never even occurred to him to think about other alternatives.

Then, As David whips out his debit card, he realizes that he's not really sure if

he's got enough money in his account to cover the cost of dinner. Everything has gone well up until now but, if he only has $191 in his account, this night will be the most embarrassing moment of his life.

David does some quick math in his head and determines that there's a super good chance that he has at least $200 in his account, but he's not 100% sure. He hands the waiter his debit card then almost blacks out in anxious anticipation for the next 7 minutes while he waits for the waiter to come back.

Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

But David! You KNEW you were going on a date and you knew you were going to that fancy restaurant. You KNEW what was on the line. Why the HELL didn't you check the balance of your bank account?

This story about David is exactly what happens to many creatives and artists who crowdfund: a few people gamble and win, but a lot of people gamble and lose. To be specific, about 63% of all Kickstarter campaigns "lose" or fail!

DON'T take that chance.

Now, figuring out how much fundraising potential you have is a lot more complicated than simply checking your bank account balance, but it's essentially the same thing. By objectively analyzing your unique situation, you can eliminate the needless risk and fear of gambling. So let's estimate your fundraising goal amount based on two things:

1. Real world cost estimates for your minimum viable project *as well as*
2. An estimate of your fundraising ability based on your Circle of Influence inventory list.

Overall, the desired outcome here is to set the *lowest goal amount possible*. Yes, that sounds counterintuitive. But don't worry, we aren't advocating lower expectations! You are simply lowering the probability of a failed campaign while maintaining enough budget to do a project that you would actually be happy to do. We will also design a campaign whose top priority is to *fund at the highest level possible,* which we can do using strategic flex goals.

For now, let's concentrate on choosing a goal amount that minimizes the risk of failure.

Step One: Minimum Viable Project
The higher your goal amount, the greater your risk for failure.

A goal of $1 will certainly fund. A goal of $100,000 will certainly not fund. This goes for almost everybody. In the music genre, this even includes former major label artists!

To ensure your best shot at successful funding, your goal amount should always be *as low as possible* in comparison to your ability to fundraise. In other words, your project budget should be lower than the amount of money you can raise through your Circle of Influence (which we'll determine in step 2).

Your **Minimum Viable Project** is the most bare-bones project that you are willing to do.

For example, if you are a musician, your minimum viable project will likely include some recording, mixing and mastering costs, perhaps some duplication costs. While you may really want a marketing budget, vinyl pressing budget, tour budget and PR budget, your minimum viable project is almost always the wrong place to put those costs (*unless* the campaign is specifically for one of those things).

A filmmakers minimum viable project might pay for camera equipment and filming but may leave discretionary costs like travel, graphics, effects and music to be included in stretch goals.

No matter what crowdfunding genre your campaign will be in, there are always parts of the project that are critical. Without them, there would be no project. Those parts, done in the simplest and least expensive way *that you are willing to do, make up* your minimum viable project.

So what is the absolute simplest project that you are willing to do?

If you are a writer planning to do a trilogy of young adult, sci-fi novels, can you get started by doing just the first novel? If you want to print a run of 1,000, is it possible that an eBook would suffice?

A restaurateur's vision for their kitchen may involve an upgrade to a workhorse beast of a griddle and a super-deluxe Italian espresso machine, but is it possible that even a mid-level griddle by itself would provide a significant boost to your food-making ability that you'd be happy to have?

As a fashion designer, you may be looking to complete production of an entire line, including packaging and marketing materials. Can you simplify your packaging from a custom-designed, hand-cut, printed box to a standard size box with your simple label attached to the front?

For a musician, what is the least number of songs and the simplest manner of recording that you are willing to do? You may want to do an album but are you willing to settle for an EP? Or if you want to record a guest choir or mini-orchestra, are you willing to use some simple studio overdubs and a keyboard? Will it work to record your basic tracks in a live setting instead of multi-tracking the entire song?

Don't worry, there is no *wrong* answer here. But **you owe it to yourself** to be completely honest and transparent.

Understand your simplest, scaled-back project and determine what the project will cost. This is your Minimum Viable Project; a project that you will still want to do (and will be happy to do) if your campaign doesn't garner as much support as you had planned.

With this scaled-back, minimum viable project budget in hand, do two more things.

1) Add an additional 25% to cover project overhead and credit card fees (10% total) as well as a loose estimate of rewards fulfillment (15%), which includes the cost of rewards and shipping and handling. Both of these numbers are fairly conservative (high) estimates of these costs that should leave you adequate budget for your project after being accounted for.

2) Subtract any money that you are willing to personally contribute to the project. If this number is zero, that is fine. But if you're willing to put in two thousand dollars of your own money to make this project happen, then factor that in.

For example, if your Minimum Viable Project costs $4000, add 25% ($1000) for overhead.

Then, if you are willing to spend $2000 out of your pocket, the final amount will be:

$$\begin{array}{r} \$4000 \\ + \$1000 \\ \underline{- \ \$2000} \\ \$3000 \end{array}$$

In this example, $3,000 is your **official goal amount.**

One important note as you consider your official goal amount: it is a mistake to neglect factoring in what you are personally willing to contribute and would spend out of pocket. Many people ignore their own willingness to contribute when setting their goal amount either because they think it will influence the total pledge amounts of their circle of influence or because they'd prefer not to spend their own money.

You will not coerce people to pledge by creating the appearance of greater need. People will pledge because they align with your purpose and because they want to see you succeed! Though poorly-planned campaigns can result in fewer total pledges, campaigns that are well-designed, understand their purpose and use a stretch goal strategy will not see a decrease in pledges just because

the creator is willing to kick in their own money.

So don't worry about a situation where people stop pledging after you hit your official goal. As long as you use stretch goals to communicate your further needs and vision and as long as you *don't stop trying* and you *don't quit*, your campaign will continue to fund after you hit your official goal, assuming your minimum viable project is reasonable compared to your funding estimate (which we'll calculate next).

Step Two: Your Funding Estimate (The Value of Your Circle of Influence)
In this step you'll use your Circle of Influence inventory numbers to derive a Funding Estimate. This estimate is a simple approximation of the monetary worth of your human connections and will give you a safe, conservative number to build your successful campaign on.

More often than not, your funding estimate will be less than what you really want to achieve with your campaign. Sometimes, it is significantly less. This is disappointing for most people and they will often mistakenly assume that they can't raise more, which is not the case at all! (And in just a little bit, we'll cover how to shoot for the stars by using Stretch Goals.)

This is the "safe" part of building your campaign. By assuring that your minimum viable project costs less than your funding estimate, you are alleviating a substantial amount of risk and uncertainty. In essence, you are assuring yourself of a successful campaign and an opportunity to actually do your project and ship it to the public!

Let's get down to business. Remember those conversion rates from earlier? Let's take them and apply them to the Circles of Influence we just listed out.

Circle	Conversion Rate
Friends & Family	25%
Fans (Email)	3%
Everybody Else (Social Media)	0.7%
Personal Networks	-
Media	-

It is *extremely important* to remember that these conversion rates are general guidelines. They are accurate in the aggregate, across many campaigns. But for any individual campaign, these conversion rates can be way off! It is critical that you understand this point because your actual conversion rates may be higher or lower, perhaps even significantly.

Also crucial to your understanding is the fact that your total funding estimate is *just an estimate*! This system is designed to result in final campaign funding that is double, triple or even quadruple the estimate. In our experience, most

campaigns end up with funding that is between 100-200% of the funding estimate. Several end up between 200-300%. Some end up between 300-400%. And a few end up between 400-600%.

However, there's no guarantee, and if you skip steps or don't do the work you can just as easily end up with half of the estimate. Very, very few campaigns using this system end up like that, but it is possible.

To derive your funding estimate, just do the math!

Friends & Family (aka Inner & Intermediate Circles) * 25%
+ Fan email list * 3%
+ Social media followers * 0.7%
= Backers Estimate

You will naturally notice that we did not include two categories: personal networks and media. Let's talk about each briefly.

Personal networks are incredibly difficult to quantify and have a high amount of variation depending on how close to the group of people you actually are.

For example, if you worked at Amazon.con for a decade as a box stuffer and had 100 friends there, all of whom knew that your passion has always been cooking, you are likely to see a conversion rate more similar to your Intermediate Circle. (It is possible that some of these people would actually be in your Inner or Intermediate Circle!)

But an opposite example might be when you get a friend to email their list. Then your conversion rate might be dramatically lower and you would probably be happy with a conversion rate around 1% give or take a little bit.

Because of this uncertainty and variation, we do not *count on* anything from this circle, but *we do work like heck* to reach out to them once the campaign starts. Think of it as building in a little cushion for your campaign goal!

The Media circle of influence is even less certain and typically provides a dramatically lower return to your time. It is quite possible to get your campaign in front of tens of thousand of readers, listeners or viewers and get not even a single backer out of the deal.

QUICK ASIDE: To be completely honest, not only is that possible, it's quite likely. We have had many experiences with campaigns that successfully secure media coverage through local news or radio or even national blog or news coverage and come away with only an additional one to five backers. The implied WARNING here is that spending time gaining media, while nice for the ego, has almost ZERO effect on your campaign (we have NEVER seen a music campaign go viral, for example). And when you add in the opportunity cost of

your time, it may even have a negative effect. It is best to save these efforts for other moments in your business cycle that are not responsible for directly providing the critical funding you need just to get started with your project.

With this in mind, you can plug in your numbers and gain your estimate of backers.

To give you an idea, most people have an Inner Circle of between 50 and 100 people and an Intermediate Circle of between 75 and 200 people.

If you had an email list of 500 people and 2000 social media followers, your estimate would be:

$$(50 + 100) * 25\%$$
$$+ 500 * 3\%$$
$$+ 2000 * 0.7\%$$
$$= \textbf{66.5 Backers}$$

If you assume an average pledge per backer of $50 which is about right across most campaigns, your funding estimate would be:

66.5 backers * $50 per backer = $3325

This is a conservative estimate of what your campaign can achieve, and the vast majority of the time (like 99% of the time) campaigns employing the system in this book will surpass this mark by gaining more than the predicted number of backers OR by achieving an average pledge per backer that is higher (between $50 and $100), but usually by doing both!

However, a word of caution… as you sit down and start to play with the numbers, you quickly realize that the more people in any given category, the more your funding estimate will be. It is tempting to go bonkers and start sticking people into your Inner Circle and Intermediate Circle to get the estimate higher. But you should absolutely make certain that each person you put in any given circle absolutely belongs there. If your cousin, Dan, is somebody you really like but you don't talk to that much, he should probably go in your Intermediate Circle. But if you are totally tight with Dan and still get together every year or more trading emails more often, then he would belong in your Inner Circle.

This is one of the easiest places to fool yourself in your campaign, so check yourself before going back to your Circle of Influence list to add people or move them around.

One final useful fact to keep in mind: your campaign time will be limited and most likely between 17 and 27 days. Even the most socially hyperactive person has a hard time reaching out to any more than 300 people. Because of this, I

place a limit at 100 Inner and 200 Intermediate whenever I am working closely with a campaign. It is just not possible to adequately reach out to more people than that in a limited timeframe.

The *only* exception to this is when you have multiple campaign creators (like four people in a band) who will ALL do their best reaching out to their people. If all four people have a 50-person Inner Circle, then 200 might be realistic. (But beware, campaigns like this usually end up with people shirking their responsibility but, hey, that's a whole other ball of wax.)

Now you have the ability to estimate what your campaign can do. This is highly powerful in alleviating the risk of failure but the other edge of the sword is that it is also easy to fool yourself. As long as you are honest in drafting your Circle of Influence and as long as you follow through contacting that list of people during your campaign, you'll be okay.

Step 3: The Intersection of Your Minimum Viable Project and Value of Your Circle of Influence

Now, simply double-check that the value of your Circle of Influence from step 2 is at least as high or higher than your goal amount from step 1. As long as it is, you have just set your official campaign goal amount!

WARNING: if you discover that the value of your Circle of Influence is really close to or lower than the budget of your Minimum Viable Project, then it is time to take a step back and SERIOUSLY assess your plan. Proceeding under these conditions will severely increase the probability of campaign failure. It is highly recommended that your goal amount be less than or equal to your funding estimate.

Remember, using your minimum viable project to set your official campaign goal *does not* mean that you'll only raise that much. It is fairly normal to double that amount and possibly triple or quadruple it. So do not let this step significantly alter your plans, aspirations or expectations unless there is a dramatic difference between the two amounts.

Step Four: Using Stretch Goals to Achieve the Project You Really Want

To this point, you have set a goal that achieves two objectives.

1. You are practically assured that your campaign will fund (as long as you follow through) and
2. Your campaign will provide the funds for you to, at the very least, execute a project that you are happy doing and fulfill the promised rewards to your backers!

That is badass for sure! Now, let's take your project OVER THE TOP by crafting your **Stretch Goal strategy**.

In it's simplest form, your official goal will be your MVP and your unofficial flex goal will be the budget of your envisioned project. So, if your 4-piece indie rock band was planning to record a 10-song studio album but you know you are okay with a live recording, then your **official goal** will be for the cost of the live recording and your **stretch goal** will be for the cost of the studio album.

But if you can be more specific, break your stretch goals down into a few different levels. For example:

- Official Goal: $4,000 live album.

- Stretch Goal #1: $5,500 multi-track recording in the studio.

- Stretch Goal #2: $7,500 which allows all tracks to be recorded in studio PLUS mixing and mastering performed by Joe Cool in Nashville.

- Stretch Goal #3: $10,000 which allows all recording, mixing and mastering to be performed in Nashville plus a clown concierge for the convenience of musicians…

WARNING: This strategy does work BUT you will need to clearly communicate these goals throughout your campaign and demonstrate how they will increase the overall quality of the resulting project! In other words, you cannot leave it up to the viewer to connect the dots. If you don't tell them what you really want to do or you don't show to them how and why it matters to you, then people will not be compelled to take action.

We have seen artists successfully achieve stretch goals by either defining them initially in the campaign or by clearly introducing them once they've surpassed their official goal amount. Either way, you must to tell your audience the precise amount of your stretch goal, what it will allow you to achieve and, for maximum effectiveness, describe the additional quality that your stretch goal will ultimately bring to your project. The example bullet list of flex goals is the *minimum* that your viewers MUST understand.

When you design your flex goals, be sure that they make sense to YOU and what YOU are doing. Your campaign may only need one flex goal OR it may need four! Just be sure that it makes sense and will be easily understandable to those who may back your campaign. Then, get ready to chase after that flex goal like a MOFO!

Common Problem: Your Funding Estimate Is Way Lower Than You Had Hoped
So, you went through all of the hard work of listing out your Circle of Influence and used those numbers to get your funding estimate. Then you took a serious look at what you want to accomplish and came up with a Minimum Viable Project budget for making that happen.

And the numbers are way off.

As often as not, people come up with a project idea and associated budget for it long before they think about how much they can actually raise. It is understandable and not uncommon to see a real disconnect between what a person wants to raise versus what they can realistically expect to raise. People have a cognitive bias towards what they want to raise.

But those campaigns are the ones that find themselves in trouble.

So remember that your funding estimate is *just an estimate* based on imperfect information. That's why it is an *estimate!* It Is just a number and it **does not affect** how much you will actually raise. How much you will actually raise depends on how you actually reach out to people and communicate during the campaign.

I often have this conversation with coaching clients where the estimate is a point of contention. They want to see bigger numbers for their funding estimate, which I don't blame them for. But the mistake people make is assuming that the funding *estimate* somehow affects the outcome. It doesn't. There is often correlation but it really doesn't affect the outcome. What DOES affect the outcome, like I said before, is how you reach out to people and communicate during your campaign.

With clients I'm coaching, I convince them to go with the more conservative goal amount (assuming minimum viable project will be met), and we have never regretted it. Sometimes we end up blowing by it, which is the best case scenario! But sometimes we end up barely making it.

You will likely find yourself somewhere in the middle but there is no way to know which it will be. Believe me, if there was a way to know, we'd be working from those assumptions!

If you set a conservative goal and then crush your campaign outreach, you will not be disappointed. However, if you set an aggressive goal and the outreach ends up being unrealistic, you'll be in trouble.

Bottom line: the goal amount in an all-or-nothing campaign is a risky proposition. That's why we do a funding estimate. It's an objective, conservative estimate of what you can expect to raise that doesn't care about "what you want".

Are there any other factors? Yes, there are a few considerations.

First, we like to hit the official goal AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. It demonstrates more momentum and provides social proof in a manner superior to hitting your goal later.

Second, consider this: Ernie Halter's first Kickstarter[35] raised over $34,000 which is certainly remarkable. But for his second Kickstarter[36] a few years later, he set his goal at *less than $2,000* even though he was virtually guaranteed to break $20,000... It turned out just fine raising over $28k.

It just goes to show that setting your goal amount according to "minimum viable project" isn't a strategy that costs you (as long as you put the work into your campaign) PLUS it has the benefit of decreasing your risk and helping with consumer psychological factors.

In the end, most campaign creators hit what they are subconsciously or consciously determined to hit... If you are dead set on hitting $3,000, that's what you'll hit. If you are dead set on hitting $10,000, you can probably hit that. Not saying it will be easy, but I do know that campaigns don't hit higher stretch goals unless they absolutely want them. Not having inner conviction to hit a specific stretch goal usually results in complacency once you have hit whatever lower amount you are comfortable with.

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STRETCH GOALS IN DEPTH
The steps to raising your best-case funding total via stretch goals are:

1. **Set your Official Goal amount at or lower than your Minimum Viable Project.**

2. **Estimate the value of your Circle of Influence.**

3. **Finalize your official goal amount after comparing the results of steps one and 2.**

4. **Use one or more stretch goals to reach your best-case total.** If all goes well, you'll hit your official goal early in your campaign. You'll need to be prepared to announce your next stretch goal so you can keep potential backers engaged by letting them know you still have lots of fundraising left to do.

5. **Announce new stretch goals with campaign updates.** It's hugely important to communicate your stretch goals to the world via Facebook, email, one-on-one communications, and especially *your campaign updates and at the very top of your campaign description in large title text.*

6. **Use specific numbers and tangible, authentic descriptions.** It's very important that you choose and communicate stretch goals just as carefully as you craft your entire campaign. Each new stretch goal *must* have

purpose, authenticity, and feeling behind it.

You are responsible for coming up with your Stretch Goal levels that are typically in $1,000 to $5,000 increments above your official goal (or sometimes more), depending on your needs. Once you have done that, let's take a look at precisely how to show your Stretch Goals in your campaign.

An Excellent, Real-World Example from One of our Campaigns
Be OBVIOUS and Crystal Clear. Your Stretch Goal information should go at the very top of your campaign just below the campaign video.

1. Insert a crystal-clear headline in larger font with bold and/or italics that says what you are doing.

2. Embed a new, short 30-60 second video update that says "Thanks a ton! Here's our next goal. Here's what we're trying to accomplish." NOTE: This doesn't REPLACE your main video, it is embedded just below it. It's a simple iPhone video that takes about 2 minutes to do!

3. Bullet out your remaining stretch goal levels. Each one should communicate the desired total amount raised (not the desired additional amount) and go into specifics about the stretch goal's benefits to the project (and, therefore, the viewer). Use vivid language that will help the reader imagine the benefit or understand the importance.

Jim's campaign is a great example.

Jim Campilongo & Honeyfingers are looking to make a totally swingin' record. They're burning as hot to make it as you are to hear it!

▶ PLAY
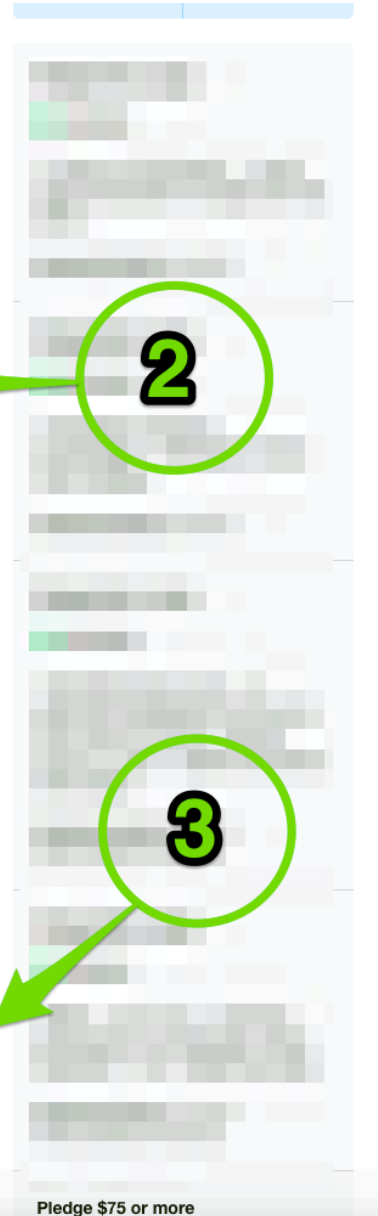
Our Second Goal Was Reached!
Can You Help Us Reach 20K?

UPDATE: November 10th

WE JUST CRACKED 15K!!!

Thank you! The support we've received over these past few weeks is *really incredible!* Thanks to you, we're well on the way to getting this record made. But just to let you know, there's still further we can go. In these last two crucial days of our Kickstarter project, **we're now shooting for a goal of $20,000. Here are our big plans for the extra money when we raise it:**

- **Stretch Goal - $20,000:** Funds for an additional day of mixing as well as an upgrade in the mastering process (for impeccable sound quality), a music promotion firm/publicist to get our CD heard on the radio, placed in print and online stories and blogs, magazine advertisement and generally to help us share "Jim Campilongo & Honeyfingers" with a larger audience.

Pledge $75 or more

STRETCH GOAL EXAMPLE FORMATTING
Here is an example of how you might bullet out your Stretch Goals.

We passed the first goal! Thanks to you I'm making my CD. But a proper campaign for the CD's release will cost about $15,000. Here are my big plans for the extra money we raise.

Stretch Goal #1 – $10,000: Time, care and ultimate quality… These funds will be used solely on studio time, engineers, mixing and mastering. The amazing thing about this is it's where you can absolutely slam-dunk the recording process and produce a product that will make ears perk up and bring a deep warmth to your musical soul. It is really a game changer for the project.

Stretch Goal #2 – $12,000: I want to make a full-blown **MUSIC VIDEO!** It will

cost about $2,000 to make a themed video for one of my singles – this would really be a career launcher.

Stretch Goal #3 – $15,000: I need a **music promotion** firm to get my CD heard on the radio, place stories in blogs and papers, and to help me share "Milk & Honey" with a larger audience.

Stretch Goal #4 – $18,000+: I will plan a **tour** to perform in cities near you with my whole band! The travel costs and expenses of touring add up fast but performing these songs live would be an incredible experience and help me build my fan base but I can't do it without you.

Everything helps. This job is not easy. The business is unforgiving, and it takes a LOT to be successful. Please join me on this journey! I will be so grateful for your support.

ONE LAST NOTE REGARDING STRETCH GOALS

By the time you get to your stretch goals, you are often near the end of your first week or beyond, and your campaign will likely have slowed down. This is extremely normal and should not trouble you. It is really an opportunity to get organized again. There are a few things to keep in mind during this time.

Do not back down on the personal outreach! This is the time to systematically follow up with people you've already contacted.

Don't be paranoid that people will get annoyed when you follow up. People are busy and they will appreciate a follow up. Something like "Hey John! Just wanted to keep you posted on my campaign. We've hit our first goal and I'm now moving to bigger stretch goals. Check it out and let me know what you think! Any help is appreciated. Thanks!"

People who completely intend to pledge may still need to be contacted three times before they actually get around to doing it. (Marketing literature suggests up to seven times before people take action.)

And remember, the last 3 days of your campaign will be the most important. This is where you'll get a large bump in pledges. You may even see a quarter to half of your entire funds come in these last few days. Again, use this final period to follow up with everyone who hasn't pledged (yes, a third time if necessary). And again, they will appreciate the reminder.

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Your Assignment
1. Determine your Minimum Viable Project budget.

2. Develop your Funding Estimate using the numbers from your Circle of

Influence.

3. **Make sure your MVP is lower than your Funding Estimate.**

4. Create a stretch goal strategy with specific dollar amounts and descriptions that will help you achieve the project you desire.

"If I had found Launch and Release before I launched my Kickstarter, I would have worked hard on my contact list for a week and had an easier time of it. As it was, I was lucky to get to my inadvisably high goal." - Melanie H.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Step 4: Magnetic Rewards

TO THIS POINT, YOU HAVE TAKEN VERY BLACK AND WHITE steps. You've discovered your Purpose Worth Backing, defined your Circle of Influence and created a goal strategy based on your project budget and your unique ability to fund. These steps together build the foundation for your campaign's success.

Now, you need to create the funding mechanism itself. While you'd think it would be fun and quick to design rewards, for many people it is confusing, stress-inducing and a big suck on your time! But fortunately for you, we've compiled and analyzed data from literally thousands of crowdfunding campaigns to identify what rewards are most interesting to potential backers. And we've used science and statistical evidence to identify the optimal rewards price points to maximize how much money your campaign ultimately raises.

In this chapter, we will help you DOMINATE your rewards strategy, including step-by-step directions on *exactly* how to build your quality set of rewards quickly—in minutes not hours.

KEY CONCEPTS IN REWARDS DESIGN
But before we start building your badass rewards, there are a few key concepts to cover.

What, Exactly, Are You Selling?
The very first thing to understand *and to embrace* is that your crowdfunding campaign is not simply a marketplace where you offer things for sale. It looks a lot like one and it functions a lot like one but there is a very important distinction between your crowdfunding campaign and a standard marketplace: your campaign isn't just selling your product, it is selling *the creation* of your product. To some extent, you are actually selling yourself! And you are definitely selling your Purpose and your Mission at hand.

Reasons People Back a Campaign
The second thing to understand ahead of time is that only a fraction of your Circle of Influence will back your campaign, probably only 10% or less of all of the people you know and fans you have! Now before you get all defeated about that idea, just know that this is normal. It's the same for EVERYBODY, even for

the campaigns with thousands of backers and six-figure funding.

So what do backers who pledge have in common? They back your campaign because:

- They feel obligated to you,
- They want to see you succeed or
- The project personally and emotionally connects with them.

Notice they don't back your campaign because of how "awesome" it is or because you are doing your "best work ever". Your project will be awesome and your best ever, but those are not the reasons people will back your campaign!

Crowdfunding Campaigns Are FUNDRAISERS
Now, combine these two concepts. Your campaign isn't just a product marketplace; it's a showcase for your Purpose. Coupled with the fact that the people who pledge to your campaign are your biggest supporters who feel obligated to you, want to see you succeed, and/or with whom your project connects on a personal level.

The end result is that backers tend to support the use of crowdfunding as a **fundraiser**, where they'll contribute a price premium above and beyond the street-value of the reward. They do this because they believe in you and your purpose, and they want to see you succeed!

And though they are only a fraction of all of your fans, friends and family, THEY are the ones who you are designing your rewards for, NOT for the skeptics or even for the hundreds or thousands of people who will see and buy your product after its release. Forget about them and concentrate on the people who will *actually back your campaign!*

We have literally watched thousands of these campaigns and closely observed or participated in hundreds and the evidence supports this notion. Crowdfunding backers as a whole are willing to pay a premium price for rewards packages above and beyond the real-world value.

For example, backers of a music campaign will often pledge $40 for a CD whose "street value" is closer to $15 or $20. Backers of a film campaign will pledge $50 for a DVD and comics lovers may pledge $25 to $35 for a comic book or graphic novel!

It is up to you to understand your Circle of Influence well enough to determine if higher fundraiser pricing is right for you. If you have family, friends and fans who are obviously very supportive or generally have mucho dinero, this is an attractive strategy. Obviously, it may not be true of each and every person that backs your campaign. You will be sure to hear some moaning and groaning

about things; this happens no matter what. But it will be true for most people and that is important to keep in mind.

80/20: The Pareto Principle
The last key concept is a little natural phenomenon called the Pareto Principle, aka the 80/20 rule.

In 1906, Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto observed that 80% of Italian land was owned by 20% of the population. Supposedly, he then checked out his garden and noticed that 20% of his pea plants produced 80% of the peas! I don't know how true that is, but the 80/20 rule was thus born and has become a commonplace rule of thumb in the business world, where it is suggested that 20% of your customers account for 80% of your sales.

We first heard of it from web marketing guru Perry Marshall who not only banks boatloads of money each year through web marketing and consulting but also supplies many examples and case studies of 80/20 in the real world.

It turns out that 80/20 relates pretty well to how crowdfunding campaigns are funded! In the crowdfunding dataset that I've amassed over time, you can see 80/20 occur. This graph shows the cumulative percentage of people who have pledged compared to the cumulative percentage of funds raised.

How Backers Contribute To Funds Raised
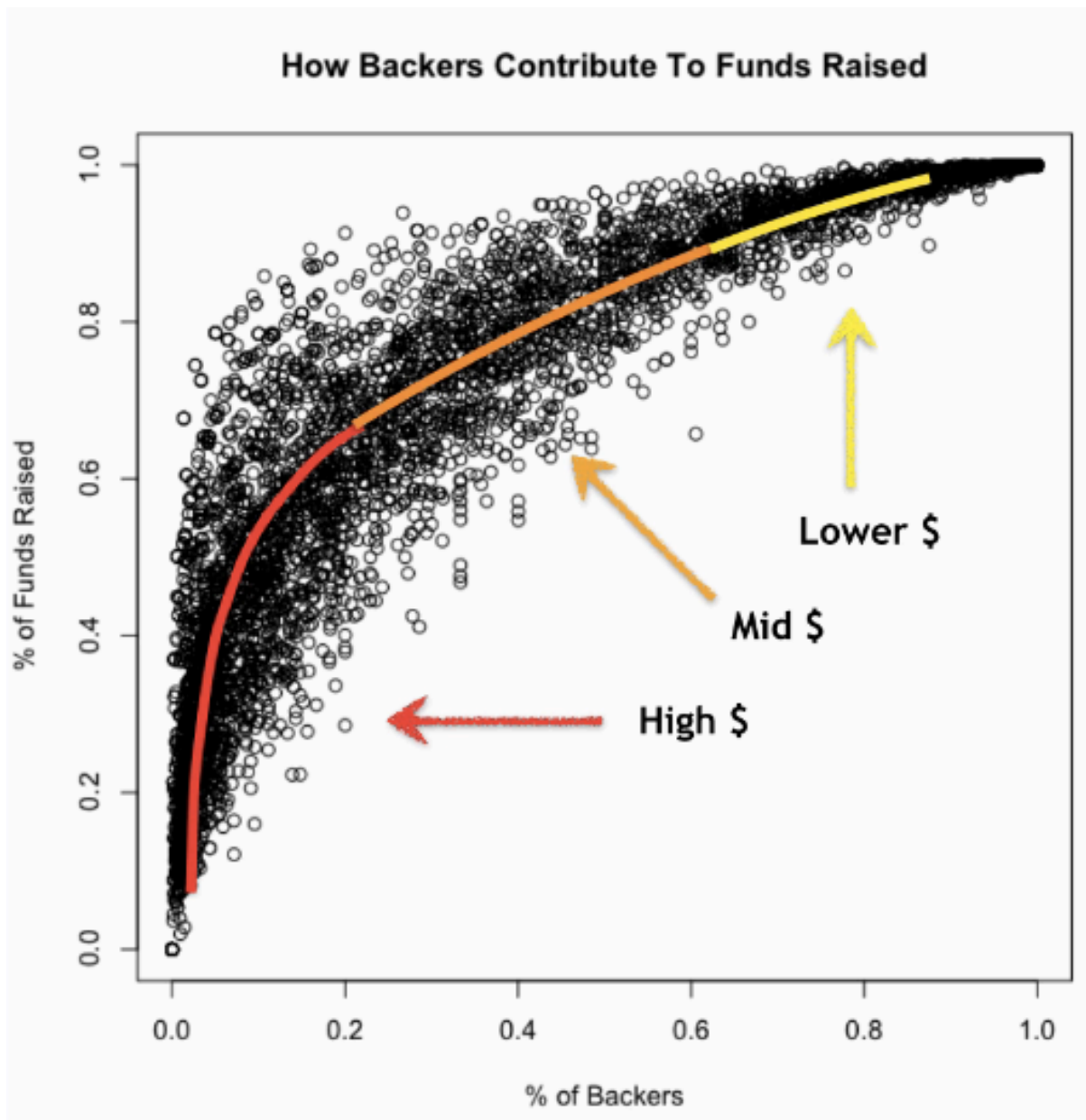
Just look at that curve! The thing to notice is how steep it is initially.These are your high dollar backers who are contributing several hundred if not several thousand dollars. As the curve continues, it flattens out; these are your mid-level backers. And then finally there are lower-level backers, who are still very important. (But it takes a lot of people pledging $10 to match 1 person pledging $500 or $1,000.)

The actual numbers across my data set are more like 30% of backers account for 70% of pledges… but the implications are the same: one must be sure to offer mid-level and high-level rewards in order to take advantage of this phenomenon.

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Campaign Rewards

An efficient and optimized set of rewards uses the 80/20 principle by including all levels of contribution: low, mid and high prices. It also factors in the potential for premium fundraising prices. Your campaign rewards should:

- Include rewards that have been proven to be attractive across thousands of campaigns
- Maintain high rewards margins to ensure the most money left for your project
- Be easy to fulfill—which doesn't seem like a big deal right now, but more than one artist has cursed their former selves when it came time to fulfill rewards… how would you like to hand-write 100 pages of lyrics or recipes?!
- Minimize guesswork, hassle and time spent

This is all *super* important! We've seen terrible videos and description areas that don't seem to affect a campaign much, but bad rewards packages DO have the power to kill your potential, so let's take a look at it.

Rewards fall into three price ranges:

- Low-price rewards under $50, the most important of which is your main idea and product.
- Mid-level rewards ranging from about $50 to about $350, which are usually fun, value-added items like personal greetings, backer credits, t-shirts, posters or other unique swag.
- High-price rewards starting at about $250 and going up to $1000 or even several thousand dollars. These rewards are typically very personalized, custom experiences or very high end, special edition collectibles.

All three ranges are crucial to taking advantage of 80/20. Most projects receive 50-80% of their funding from the mid-level and high-level rewards, so you'll need to include all of them. In other words, you need the standard $10 to $50 items most people will buy, but much of the money will be raised with $50 to $250 in the mid level and $250 to $1000 or more as your high level.

Your distribution of rewards and pricing should be an enticing stair step strategy, kind of like adding features to a Macbook: always make the backer want the next step up.

Low-Tier Rewards
The majority of your campaign backers will generally select a reward in this category which typically ranges from $1 up to $50 or maybe $75 depending on what your project creates. These rewards, or tiers as I will label them for purposes of example, should be simple to design and it is easiest to think about them as their own group of three rewards/tiers:

Tier 1 - Gratitude ($1-$10)

Usually a simple thank you—there is often no actual reward to fulfill in this tier. If it's $1, there's nothing to do other than your digital thank you, shout out or high five. For $3 or $5, campaigns will sometimes send a postcard or thank you card but not always. Either way, this reward is important because it invites everyone into the project whether they can really afford to or not. There are definitely people out there who will want to participate and support you but are not in circumstances with extra money to part with. It is an important and kind gesture on your part as campaign creator to make sure they still have that opportunity.

Tier 2 - Digital/Stripped-Down Idea ($5-$20)

Campaigns for music, film, photography or publishing can easily create a digital version of their main idea: a digital download (mp3), a link to streaming version of film or an eBook/PDF. These are usually priced at approximately half of Tier 3, your main product, and it is common courtesy to give a lower-price alternative for those who want to support you but are strapped for cash.

Tier 3 - Main Idea ($25-$50)

For musicians, it's a CD and for filmmakers, a DVD. For authors, this is their book and for foodies it would be a jar or two of Uncle Homer's Famous spaghetti sauce. For crafts it is your bar of soap and for fashion it is your T-shirt. Of course there can be exceptions where you would not price your main offering here such as a piece of art made of 24k gold or super-fancy, amazing jeans. But, normally, this is your main product.

Mid-Tier Rewards
Rewards in the middle tiers typically start at between $50 and $100 and range upwards to somewhere between $200 and $350 depending on the campaign's "quality" and "experience". Beginners with a simple project will be on the low end: $50 to $200. High quality products from people with other projects under their belt can have more aggressive prices: $100 to $350. And, of course, there are many places to fall in between.

The rewards in this range have highly subjective values, so determining exactly what reward to offer at what price and in what order takes a lot of judgment on your part. In general:

- Shoot for four or five mid level rewards but no fewer than three.
- Price jumps should range from $25 on the lower end to $100 on the upper end. Remember, no big gaps.

Tiers 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 - Supporting Swag ($50-$350)

Again, these rewards tend to be highly interchangeable but here are some ideas:

- Prints, posters or photos
- Special books or magazines you are making in conjunction with your main idea
- T-shirts* or other knick knacks
- Packages that include several items from the above
- Hand-written or hand-drawn pieces that you will make in conjunction with your main idea
- Personal lessons or consultations via phone or internet
- Group consultations such as Q&A or expert panel
- Group experiences such as a release party or behind-the-scenes peek

*People love to include T-shirts as a reward but it can kill your profit quickly if you don't pay attention. Depending on the quantity and quality, your cost should be $6 to $10 per shirt plus shipping (around $4). If you go this way, be certain to account for these costs. This tier should be a minimum of $40 on up to $75.

High-Tier Rewards
These are extremely important to get right as they typically comprise a very large percentage of your overall support. Offerings will start at between $150 and $500 depending on your campaign and range upwards from there. You will want to offer four or five of these as well.

Tiers 9 and 10 - Backer Credit or Custom Experience ($150-$750)

Backer Credit means you give that person public credit for being a patron of your project. This would be done in the credits of a film, the thank you section of a book or the liner notes of a CD, for example. This is a *very high margin* reward!

Custom experiences are things like having a song written for you, being written into a book or film as a character, VIP tickets to events you are holding, a day with you at the studio, dinner together, etc.

The one other item these tiers might include would be higher-end, original art such as paintings, prints, photos or collections done by real professionals that would hold some value beyond your standard 8"x10" glossy!

Tier 11 - Live Experience ($350-$2000)

This is a very special event where YOU bring the show to the BACKER! Examples would be a concert, film screening, special cooking class, public reading, in-person performance or simply a themed party at the location of the backer's choice, usually their home or a friend's home.

A few things to note about this: First, you can place some restrictions around these experiences such as being within a certain mileage of where you are located or being held within a certain timeframe or on certain dates (for example, only on Sundays). It is important that the eventual arrangements work for you as well as the backer. And almost all of the time, the backer is really excited about what you are doing so they are more than happy to help make it work.

Second, if you have the ability to do different "levels" of a performance, you can split this up into two tiers. For example, in music you might offer one tier at $500 for an acoustic performance and another tier at $1,000 to bring a band with you.

P.S. A real added bonus of these experiences is that you will sometimes create customers who will come back for another concert or cooking class in the future. Hello, revenue stream!

P.P.S. It is VERY IMPORTANT that this reward be priced at a level that a few people are likely to take you up on, usually close to real-world value (if there is such a thing). Getting just a few backers at this level accounts for a dramatic proportion of your funding.

Tier 12 - Producer Credit or The Ultimate Experience ($750-$2500+)

In other words, *Something Exorbitant That Nobody Will Likely Choose!*

This reward will rarely if ever get purchased and that is fine! Its purpose is to provide a context for the value of your live experience, creating the perception that your live experience is a great value. This reward should definitely be included.

It is usually a fully blown-out production or a Producer Credit, which is a more formal, significant acknowledgement of the backer's patronage of your campaign. Also, just in case some crazy (generous) person out there decides to take you up on it, be sure that you attach a legitimate price to this tier, one that would make you happy it was chosen!

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How To Build Your Rewards
Alright, let's get to actually building your campaign rewards. This exercise should take you less than an hour. Good luck! (If you find you are spending much more time than an hour, then you are overthinking things, so grab a beverage, relax for a bit, review the section above and then re-approach with a clear head!)

Step 1: Create a Spreadsheet and Draft List of Rewards

Starting with the low, mid and high tier rewards from the previous section of this chapter, make a list of the rewards you'd like to offer. Don't worry about assigning an actual price to the rewards right now.

This is also the time to include any other rewards that you've been considering, even if they weren't mentioned in this book! For example, we did a campaign with Jim Campilongo, a cat from NYC who takes himself very seriously as a musician. (No offense, Jim!) But he absolutely wanted to include his mom's "World Famous Cookies," and who were we to refuse? They sold out, by the way!

Once you are finished with this list, go ahead and order them as you see fit from least expensive to most expensive.

You may have as few as nine rewards tiers, and I've seen some successful campaigns with up to 16 but I would not recommend going beyond that as you'll be creating unnecessary hassle for yourself and, potentially, confusion for the people trying to ingest all of the rewards that you offer.

Step 2: Price the Main Idea
This is Tier 3 from up above. You should have a pretty good idea of what this is worth. Take into account the fact that you are fundraising and set the price.

Step 3: Price the Live Experience
This is Tier 11 from up above. You should also have a pretty good idea what to charge for this. We would recommend approximately street value or maybe 20% higher.

Step 4: Price the Remaining Rewards
This step gives everybody trouble but it doesn't need to. You have already set two prices in steps 2 and 3 that determine your curve. Now, start plugging prices into the other rewards in a manner that leaves a smooth pricing curve with no major gaps.

For example, if I price Tier 3 at $20 and Tier 11 at $1000, then I might fill in the other tiers like this:

- Tier 1 $5
- Tier 2 $10
- ***Tier 3 $20***
- Tier 4 $40
- Tier 5 $75
- Tier 6 $125
- Tier 7 $200
- Tier 8 $300
- Tier 9 $500
- Tier 10 $750

- ***Tier 11 $1000***
- Tier 12 $1500

Notice that the increments increase as the dollar amounts rise. Don't forget to price the last tier nice and high! You don't expect anything from that reward, and if somebody does choose this reward, it needs to be worth your while.

Also, don't worry about this too much right now—you can fine tune later and will likely want to do so after reviewing your margins. For now, just get something that looks good to you.

Step 5: Estimate Rewards Costs
Be certain to include the platform's cut (usually around 5%), credit card fees (usually 3% give or take a little) and your costs of reproduction, packaging and shipping. Be as specific as possible. However, if you don't know then make your best estimate and come back to it later on.

Step 6: Calculate the Margin and Margin Percentage, then Review
Margin is the reward price less costs.

Margin percentage is the Margin divided by the Price.

This is a critical step as it will assure that you get enough money to both fund your project and fulfill all of the rewards, including shipping, without you having to dip into your stash of cash. Worth noting:

- Your Digital/Stripped-Down reward (Tier 2) should be the highest percentage—around 90%, give or take a bit.
- Most of your rewards should have a margin percentage between 70-90%. A few will likely be in the 60% range.
- Rewards with actual physical items will obviously have a lower margin percentage, but you don't have to skip the T-shirt just because it has a 55% margin. However, it is good to be aware of what you are doing.

Make adjustments to prices as needed in order to get the margins to the appropriate levels (70-90%). But also understand that this is the *most subjective* part of what you are doing. You need to walk the fine line of maintaining margin but also using your best judgment as to where you think rewards should be priced.

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Mistakes To Avoid When Building Rewards
Now you know how to build rewards, and as long as you follow this process, your rewards will be in great shape! But just to cover our bases, let's review a few of the most common mistakes people make that trip them up:

Big Skips in Pricing

Make sure the prices ramp up smoothly and proportionately to their size. In low-tier rewards, you don't want one reward to be $20 and the next to be $100. That cuts out a lot of prices in the middle where people might like to donate such as $40, $50 or $75.

In mid-tier rewards, it is just fine to go from $200 to $300 but you wouldn't want to go from $100 to $500. In high price rewards, $250 to $500 might work but $250 to $1500 would obviously be too big a gap.

The general idea here is that people will have an idea of where they want to contribute when they come to your campaign page, and you don't want to be too far away from that proportionately. If they are thinking $25, you wouldn't want the only rewards in that range to be $5 and $50 with nothing in between. Or if they are thinking $300, you don't want them to have to choose between $100 and $1000.

Now, it is often possible for people to donate however much they want for any particular reward. So it would be possible for $300-dollar-guy to just pick a reward for $100 and still pledge $300. But the scenario of giant price gaps does introduce the possibility for confusion or second guessing, and those are thoughts you want to avoid when it comes to your potential backers. The process needs to be as smooth as possible for them.

Low Margins

A few low margins are okay, but if your margins are only 50% across the board, then you'll be dipping into your pocket significantly to fund your project. Margins ranging between 70% and 90% should leave you enough room to do what you need.

Excluding Items That People Want

If you have a reward idea that you know people would like, but you are concerned that it will be too difficult to fulfill, you can put a limit on how many are available. For example, you certainly don't want to hand-write 100 pages of text to fulfill rewards. So just limit the quantity to 10! That way you know the worst that might happen ahead of time.

Also, if you are concerned about a rewards price and the resulting margin being too low, then just raise the price! Especially in the mid-level and high-level rewards, the prices are very subjective, so it is a mistake sitting around feeling like you need to justify the price based on some notion of market value. If people will want it, just ask for what you need to make it worth your while as well. Then let the potential backer decide if it is worth it to them.

Bad Formatting of Your Rewards Description

This can really trip the viewer up and cause them to not pledge or to miss out on something they would've pledged for. Your absolute main objective here is to

not confuse the reader! Here are three simple steps to writing clear rewards descriptions:

1. List out each and every item in every package.

Absolutely do not say "and all of the above" or "plus everything in package #3." List it all out. For example:

> T-shirt, poster, vintage 1976 yellow Camaro Hotwheels toy, 14 guitar picks, a My Little Pony sticker, 2 book marks, a signed CD, a signed cassette tape, a signed 8 track, 13 mini-marshmallows, the Digital Download 2 weeks before release and a heart-felt thank you.

Listing each and every item out is the only way to ensure that you communicate the entire contents of the package, which helps the viewer internalize the value of said package.

2. Maintain item order in successive packages.

If package #4 is "T-shirt, Photo album, CD, and Digital Download" then make sure package #5 is the "Hand-knitted socks, T-shirt, Photo album, CD, and Digital Download." And make sure package #8 is the "House Concert, Backer Credits, T-shirt, Photo album, CD, and Digital Download."

Keeping items in order gives the viewer the ability to quickly determine what has been added to each successive package. It is basically an implied "plus all of the above".

3. Use capitalization and punctuation to add formatting to your package

This adds clarity to your package and allows the viewer to quickly establish what has been added to each successive package. Package descriptions can get a little long; this is how to avoid one big, run-on sentence.

Leaving space between the main reward and the rest of the package really helps people take it all in. This effect is compounded when there is a whole string of rewards to look through.

If you have the ability to use bolds and italics, use those as well.

With these three simple conventions, you will make your rewards packages uber-simple so that each and every viewer can easily understand what you are offering for their pledge.

For Extra Credit, Put Some Personality In Those Packages!
You don't have to simply make a list; you can use any language you want! Take a few moments to think of some words and/or phrases that align with your

personality and image and stick them right into your descriptions.

Your grandma called. She says to pull up your pants. We'll send you a HAND-MADE LEATHER BELT with your name on the back! =====ALONG WITH===== the t-shirt, signed CD, stickers, and Digital Download 2 weeks prior to release.

*How's about a brew? This package includes HOME-MADE ICE-TEA BAGS put together by yours truly. Perfect for those sunny, Alabama days. *****PLUS***** …*

You get the drift?

Alright, we've covered a ton of ground here. Now it's time for you to go out and start working on those packages. It may seem daunting, but by breaking it down into these steps, you'll be whistling dixie in no time!

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Your Assignment

1. Create your draft rewards spreadsheet including low-tier, mid-tier and high-tier rewards. Use the 6 Steps from How To Build Your Rewards

2. Review your rewards. Double-check pricing for appropriate margins and no big skips.

CHAPTER EIGHT

STEP 5: PERFECT PITCH VIDEO & CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION

YOU HAVE SPENT THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS OR WEEKS discovering your Purpose, listing out your Circle of Influence, setting your goal strategy and creating a killer set of rewards. Now comes the part you have been expecting all along: the all-important video! But it doesn't have to (nor should it) be a difficult experience.

CREATE YOUR VIDEO WITHOUT STRESS & ANXIETY

So here's the deal: Making your campaign's pitch video is a daunting task for you. Talking to a video camera can be as nerve-racking as public speaking. Asking people for money can be even more terrifying. If you get hung up on what to say and how to say it, you're not alone. When you add a possible lack of experience making videos and fear of looking unprofessional to this already long list of negatives, you can get OVERWHELMED and start to procrastinate.

What most people in this position end up with is a video that is just barely "good enough" because they think, "Hey, it's done, isn't it? That's better than NOT having a video."

This is a BAD scenario to be in because, other than actually talking to everybody in person, *your video is your number-one tool for communicating to your potential backers*.

Fortunately, there is a way to prepare, structure, and organize your video approach to minimize procrastination, anxiety, and over thinking. By using a *three-part pitch video framework,* you'll squeeze every ounce of potential out of your video in a fraction of the time and with almost no stress.

Focus On Storytelling - Not Epic Video Quality, Elaborate Concepts or Wacky Ideas
Please don't be tempted to come up with cute "concepts" for your video. This isn't the time to wow your audience with your creativity. It's the time to tell a story that increases their connection to you.

Imagine this: A video producer named Ted is commissioned by VH1 to tell the

story of a burned-out rockstar, once a world-wide sensation, who is now a meth head living in an alley on the corner of 4th and Stewart in downtown Seattle.

VH1 is taking phone pledges to raise money to send this burnout to rehabilitation so he can get his life back.

Should Ted the video producer **A)** make an elaborate parody about the burnout chasing two street thugs who stole his cardboard box and shopping cart, only to find that it was all a dream and that he really doesn't live on the streets thanks to a twisted contract he signed with Rumpelstiltskin, which is all really just a clever parallel story to show the viewer that they can help by calling the TV station to pledge?

Potentially entertaining? Yes.

But it's confusing, right? A wacky concept like this would distract from the reason you asked the viewer to visit the page.

Or should Ted **B)** make a video that shows the viewer the good ol' days of this rockstar's life and the work he put in to get there, then the struggles he went through that led to his demise, then interview footage of the burnout telling the viewer all the reasons he wants to live a clean, healthy life? Reasons like spending time with his new granddaughter, learning to windsurf, and being a positive role model for his kids.

As you probably guessed, the second scenario allows the viewer to see life from the burnout's perspective. They can relate to him by seeing parts of themselves in him and his story. This creates empathy between the viewer and the subject in the story. They also value being with a child in her earliest years or learning something they have always wanted to learn, like windsurfing. Perhaps the viewer has had struggles of his own or is close to someone who has had similar struggles.

These are called connection points. *The more you provide, the more opportunity you have to form a bond with your viewer.* If you choose not to speak earnestly to the camera, then you're relying on other elements of your campaign to do the heavy lifting that personal connection can provide you. This is why the vast majority of successful crowdfunding campaigns use the story-focused, talking-to-the-camera approach to create their video, and it's also why we advocate for filming this style of video.

THE THREE PART PITCH VIDEO FRAMEWORK: CONTEXT, CONNECTION AND ACTION
Part 1: Context
Establish human connection points by creating a context for the dream project you're about to present.

Shot 1: Who you are (Hi, I'm Tony Schwameeni) and where you've been (Over the past four years I've been…)

Shot 2: Where you are at now (This has led me to where I'm at now, which is…)

Part 2: Connection
Show your passion, excitement, and commitment by explaining where you hope to go with your project, how it gets you there, why it means so much to you and what your project is.

Shot 3: Where you hope to go (being an elite finger cymbal performer has always been a dream of mine)

Shot 4: How this project gets you there (so if this project goes well it will propel me to elite status because of these reasons)

Shot 5: WHY this means so much to YOU (I can't imagine anything more exciting because of these specific and compelling reasons that the viewer can relate to)

Shot 6: What the project entails and why it's remarkable (with your help I'm going to create and release my second album inspired by Swahilian finger cymbals, candlelight and chocolate cake. I'm very excited to work with legendary producer, Joe Cool, and some amazing studio musicians. I hope you can see why I'm so passionate about completing this project.)

Add extra shots to help with long sections or additional stretch goal explanations.

Part 3: Action
Tell the viewer what to do next.

Shot 7: What, exactly, the viewer should do right this minute to help you (So here's how you can help me, look at the rewards, select one that you love and pledge, then tell your friends. Thank you!)

Now that you understand the framework for crafting the perfect pitch video, it's time to dig into the nuts and bolts of actually shooting and editing your video.

Shooting Specifics
Time Frame: Newbies budget three hours for shooting. If you are experienced at video, budget an hour and expect to go over.

Equipment: Don't overcomplicate equipment. Choose a camera that you have easy access to and that you're comfortable operating. Your phone's video is completely acceptable. If you shoot on your iPhone, you can use the free iMovie app to create this video on your phone! WeVideo also has an Android

app that will let you do this on your phone or with their online editor.

Location: Find a place where you're comfortable. In front of your laptop camera, on the couch, in your car, anywhere really; just make sure the audio is crisp and clear by choosing a location that doesn't have distracting room reverb or wind which will mess up the audio.

Choosing a place with lots of natural light will also help your video quality.

A Simple Filming Process
Set up to record and then do a test shot to see what your video will look like and how it will sound. Make sure you've framed yourself nicely in front of the camera and that the audio is easy to hear.

Next, grab your completed Pitch Video Shot List and hit record for Shot 1 of 7. Do three to five takes of Shot 1 until you feel good about it. Remember, you only need to make it through one shot at a time so when you come to the end of a section, stop the camera, collect your thoughts and get comfortable before moving on.

Repeat this simple process for shots 2 through 7. If a shot is long, feel free to split it up into several shots. It's easy to piece together later when you edit.

Before you pack up**,** make sure to check each shot against these **performance guidelines**:

1. Be emotional, show your excitement, stay true, be real and authentic
2. Don't be a perfectionist, humans prefer real over perfect (just ask Dave Grohl)

Prior to Editing
Get all media assets together that you might use in your video. This includes filming any b-roll footage you'll need such as working on your project (cooking, dancing, taking photos, shooting video, singing songs, etc.), working your day job or anything else that will be complimentary to your story. You'll likely also use:

- Digital photos,
- Other video footage (such as previously recorded interviews or promotional footage) and
- Music.

EDITING YOUR VIDEO
Editing should take approximately two to five hours, which isn't all that bad in the grand scheme! It's useful to split your editing into two sessions.

Session One: Pick your favorite takes of each shot and assemble them in order

on the video time line to form the full story. Add photos or b-roll video to support your story. Choose music that matches the emotion of your story and apply as a music bed.

Session Two: Return the next day with a fresh perspective. Do you like it? Refine and polish.

After this second session, have a few friends watch it to get their feedback. They'll tell you if something is confusing. Then repeat the process:

- Make the changes you think are important,
- Review,
- Get feedback.

Our experience has been that you may need to do this two or three times. More than that can be gratuitous and usually indicates that you don't have your core purpose and mission fully defined.

Once you are satisfied, export the video and upload the final version to your crowdfunding platform of choice.

This may sound complicated, but trust me, it isn't! Each step is easily achievable. All you have to do is move down through the checklist one by one. In some ways, *making your video* will be the *easiest* part of the campaign because there *is no mystery*! All you need to do is go through the steps.

When you get to the end, you will have a video that does what you need it to do: connects the viewer to YOU and your project!

Actually Creating Your Video: the Rough Draft Challenge
Creating your campaign video is often *the biggest hurdle* in getting a campaign up and running. The reasons for distraction can be many, ranging from technical uncertainties like where to film, what camera to use, how to capture good audio, how to get decent lighting, etc. to creative uncertainty like what to say, whether to be funny or serious or how much of a "production" should be.

What we have seen is that no matter what, the best way to clear these hurdles is simply to get a first draft of your video done. That is why we advocate for you to do the **Rough Draft Challenge**!

The Rough Draft Challenge is simple and doable!

The underlying objective is to minimize over thinking, second guessing, time wasting, and tail chasing. Parkinson's Law states that "The amount of time which one has to perform a task is the amount of time it will take to complete the task." With this in mind, we will reserve all fine-tuning for the last edit.

To gain immediate momentum and tear down the walls of anxiety, you are going

to film the fastest and crappiest pitch video possible. Doing this will give you something tangible to discuss, refer to and adjust.

Improving a terrible video is infinitely easier and more efficient than speculating about one that doesn't exist. Without a first draft, you'll drive yourself crazy with speculation, what ifs, worries, and procrastination. Like Nike said that one time, Just Do It.

Scrappy, Crappy and Fast: Rough Draft Challenge in 4 Steps
Budget two hours to write your shot list, film, edit, and export. This is an extremely short amount of time to get all of this done. Expect it to be a tough challenge.

1) Use the 3 Section Pitch Video Framework as a guide for writing out your shot list. Don't script out what you want to say word for word; just write enough to remind you what you want to say. This will keep your video feeling much more natural.

2) With your shot list visible as a reference, start recording, look at the camera and perform each shot. These can take a few tries but there's no need to stop recording for each try or even for each shot. The video will be much easier to edit if you have a few large video files instead of many smaller video files.

3) Import your footage to your video editing software of choice. Select your favorite shots and put them in order on the timeline using only jump cuts (no cheesy or distracting transitions).

4) Add a music bed. Sometimes it's useful to use a slower instrumental for the Purpose & Connection section and then switch to an uplifting, energetic instrumental for your Mission at Hand section. Play around with it until it feels right.

NOTE: Don't worry about b-roll for your rough draft. If you're running out of time, skip the music bed for now too. Immediately upload this video to your crowdfunding project (no matter how crappy). Don't worry, you'll replace it with your final video later. Show it to a few people you're really close to and get their feedback.

Now you need to crack a beer because you just did something that takes most people 10 to 60 hours to do. Now you have a video to tweak, adjust and gather feedback on.

Your NUMBER ONE Time Saver
Jay Stolar was the first artist to prove to us that the Rough Draft Challenge is THE way to "hack the system". He had been going in circles for weeks about how to approach his video. I distinctly remember talking to Jay on the phone one

evening. This was one of several similar conversations but this time it had a frustrated overtone.

It was getting exhausting for both of us to continue talking about a video CONCEPT that didn't even exist. I suggested that he sit down in front of his phone or computer and start talking to the camera.

"Just make the fastest, shittiest video possible. It doesn't matter, just get something for us all to look at. THEN we'll adjust it and move forward."

One day later Jay had his first rough draft. It took him two hours to make it. The next phone conversation was completely different. I was now talking to an energized, motivated person with a clear vision.

Making a rough draft didn't just give us something to discuss and tweak, it completely changed Jay's mindset from overwhelmed and foggy to laser focused and confident about his direction.

Even if you are planning to hire a professional videographer, having a rough draft in hand based on the 3-Part Pitch Video Framework will make getting the professional shots a breeze!

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A Simple, Effective Campaign Description
Ah, the campaign description, the part of your campaign that most viewers will skim or not even look at but is still a great opportunity to build the context of your campaign!

There are a variety of effective approaches ranging from a letter-style, personal appeal to a comprehensive, several page description with infographics, budgets, personal pictures and everything but the kitchen sink. You should choose the one that makes sense to you and is consistent with your work.

That being said, here are the general sections that your campaign description should address are:

1. **Reiterate your purpose** while offering supplemental connection points by expanding on what you said in the video.
2. **Your project plans,** including what you are specifically trying to accomplish and relevant details about the process, features and final outcome of the campaign.
3. **Your money plans,** including a general explanation of how you'll use the money. Talk about the plan for your DREAM PROJECT, i.e., your highest stretch goal right from the start. For example, "My official goal is $1,000 but it will really take $10,000 to record a CD that will set a listener's ears on fire and to properly promote and tour the album."

4. **Your rewards,** including anything special you have to say about your rewards and possibly some great pictures and/or a rewards infographic (see Carsie's example that follows).
5. **Your ultimate call to action**: "Please choose a reward to the right and become a backer today." This should be set apart using font changes (size, bold, and/or italics) or, better yet, a nice image.

Here are two STELLAR examples of information that are useful, appropriate and visually appealing:

http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/carsieblanton/jazz-is-for-everybody

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1089614302/the-happiness-and-connection-project

Here are the best practices as I see them.

1) Your Purpose: Absolutely, Positively Sincere and Authentic.
Prepare to write by taking a few moments to center yourself. Close your eyes and reflect on your dreams, your vision, your purpose. Take a step back from all the planning you have been doing, forget about the obstacles and the stress and just let the energy flow.

Then, puke it out in a couple of paragraphs! See what happens and then edit away. Your overall goal is to be you, to be legit, and to say what you've said in the video in a slightly different way.

With this section, you are accomplishing two things:

1. You are saying the same thing two different ways (once in the video, once in the description) because one type of language may catch one person while different language may catch another.

2. You are social proofing the whole concept by offering two different accounts of the same thing. Even though it's actually you both times, it gives the viewer multiple repetitions of seeing/hearing/reading the same thing.

2) Nail your CALL TO ACTION
Make darn sure you get this right. Research shows again and again that people need to be told precisely *what to do* and *when to do it*. Make sure your call to action is idiot-proof. "Please choose the reward that makes sense to you and become a backer now."

Make sure it is OBVIOUSLY seen. For example, if a person *didn't* read your campaign description, they should still notice your Call to Action as they are skimming down the page while checking out rewards and/or just skimming the campaign description. It needs to be eye-catching.

Last, it's okay to include your call to action two or three times. Sure you don't want to plaster your description like a used car salesman, but it should appear at the end of your Purpose and also at the very end of the description. If you have a super-long description, you can put another one someplace in the middle that is appropriate and tasteful.

3) Justify Your Goal With Numbers

People look for justification of your goal amount and stretch goals. If they can't find it at some point, they assume you've accomplished what you set out to accomplish, and they stop contributing. Luckily, it isn't difficult to provide some numbers and an explanation of what you are doing. All you have to do is tell people. You can provide specific, line-item dollar amounts or just an overall budget and a pie chart of the costs.

Be honest and transparent and, if there is an item that looks like it eats up a large chunk of budget, go ahead and give an extra little explanation for it. Project costs can vary widely depending on what you are doing, so you don't typically have to worry about people second-guessing your numbers. (Although it can happen, you shouldn't worry about these people. Just tell them what you know and leave it at that.)

People can easily comprehend the dollars that go into creating a physical product whether it is an audio recording, a video DVD, a cookbook or a widget. But they have a tougher time understanding the value of money spent on other business actions like public relations, marketing, distribution, etc.

Give a little explanation for the necessity of those items and explain how it will be of value to your project. This will help you out as you shoot for your stretch goals. Don't make it difficult. You can simply say "$10,000 will fund a 6-month public relations campaign targeting our key demographic in Los Angeles and San Fransisco. This will help gain media exposure by assuring placement in popular blogs, magazines and newspapers."

4) Use Images

It is standard marketing lore that images help conversion rates. Can we prove it in crowdfunding campaign descriptions? No, but it won't hurt and it does a nice job of breaking up the description into digestible chunks and gives the viewer another potential connection point.

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Your Assignment

1. Create a Shot List using Shots 1-7 from the Three Part Pitch Video Framework. Spend a little time describing the shots and what you'll say but don't go overboard.

2. Film your first draft, taking several tries at each shot. Expect it to start out a

little challenging as you find the right language to use. But you will likely find improvement with each successive shot. Do what you can here without obsessing over the tiniest details (which will waste all kinds of time and is not very 80/20).

3. Edit your video.

4. Gather feedback and make adjustments. Repeat this process a time or two until you like what you have. If you find yourself creating a fifth or sixth draft, you may want to review your Purpose Worth Backing and Mission at Hand to assure that you've adequately defined both so you can effectively convey them through your video.

5. Create your campaign written description right in place in your campaign (actually within the Kickstarter/Indiegogo/Gofundme/etc. Platform)

CHAPTER NINE

STEP 6: THE PERFECT STORM

YOU NOW KNOW HOW TO CREATE YOUR PURPOSE-FILLED CAMPAIGN including goal, rewards, description and video. Now you must turn the ambiguous task of "getting the word out" into a systematic approach that won't let opportunities slip through the cracks.

There are three main sections in understanding and building your campaign's marketing plan:

- **The Elements in Play** — the four marketing pillars of crowdfunding and the psychology that will increase their leverage.
- **The Rockstar Tactics** — Facebook techniques, email list techniques and one-on-one scripts for phone, email and in-person communication.
- **The Schedule of Action** — a check list of what to do and when to do it.

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The Elements at Play
According to Dan Kennedy, the Godfather of Marketing, an effective marketing approach depends on three pillars: your *market*, your *message*, and the *medium* used to communicate your message. Lets take a closer look at each of them.

Your **market** is WHO you're going to put your campaign in front of and actively pursue for a pledge. As Dan says, knowing who is NOT your target market is just as important as knowing who IS your target market. Your target market is your Circle of Influence—the six categories that each require a slightly different message and possibly a different medium for how you'll connect with them. Your Circle of Influence inventory list will be your ***number one*** source of pledges by far. It will be the backbone of your plan.

Your **message** is what you'll say and how you'll say it. It's important to match

your message with the person it's meant for. As an oversimplified example, what you will say to your mom is entirely different than what you will say to your social media following.

The **medium** is the communication channel you'll use to get the message out. You'll use in-person communication, a phone conversation or a personal email to get your message to your inner circle. But you might use a mailing list mass email to reach the people you are less connected to.

For your crowdfunding campaign, there is a forth pillar: **timing**.

Since your campaign has a limited time-frame, there are certain time-sensitive psychological elements at play, namely **social proof** and **scarcity**. These elements come from Dr. Robert Cialdini's seminal book, "Influence, the Psychology of Persuasion" in which he created the Six Principles of Influence based on extensive research.

His principal of **Social Proof** relies on people's sense of "safety in numbers." For example, we are more likely to work late if others on our team are doing the same, to put a tip in a jar if it already contains money or to eat in a restaurant if it's busy. We are assuming that if other people are doing something then it must be good. We are particularly susceptible to this principle when we're feeling uncertain and we are even more likely to be influenced if the people we observe seem to be similar to us.

The principle of **Scarcity** says that things are more attractive when their availability is limited or when we stand to lose the opportunity to acquire them on favorable terms. For instance, we might buy something immediately if we're told that it's the last one or that a special offer will soon expire.

The mechanics of crowdfunding are built on these two psychological principles. We're much more likely to pledge to a campaign if we see that our friends or other people who are similar to us have pledged. And we're also driven to pledge because we know that if we wait too long, the campaign will have ended and our opportunity to pledge will be lost forever.

The fourth pillar of crowdfunding marketing is **timing** and it uses these two principles of psychology together to create a perfect storm of awareness and action.

Although most people have loose assumptions and understandings of these principles, we've seen very few proactively engineer their crowdfunding campaign to take explicit advantage of them. The Schedule of Action section will help you do just that.

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The Rockstar Tactics

Lets get really specific about what you're trying to do when you market your campaign. You are doing MUCH more than "getting the word out" or "getting your campaign in front of more people." Your goal is to get pledges. That's it.

You did the work to define your **market**. Now you must craft your **message** in a way that will get the most pledges possible. But before we look at how to craft the perfect message, let's explore why someone might ignore your message.

Reasons your people will ignore you:
- They are busy.
- They are distracted (lack of focus).
- They do not think it applies to them.
- They are procrastinators.

Being aware of why people will tune out your messages will help you think through each and every communication you craft, whether it's your next Facebook post or writing your next personal email. Here are two examples you've probably experienced:

My friend emailed me to say she's "getting locked up" next week in support of muscle disease and my pledge will help "set her free" if she reaches her goal.

> *Hi - I'm going to "jail" today! Local firemen are coming to arrest me at noon! Will you please bail me out in support of muscle disease! Links below to make your donations. Every little bit helps… I so appreciate your support!!!*

It's short and to the point. She's helped me out in the past so I feel obligated to reciprocate by pledging to her cause, *but I don't*. What's the problem?

She provided a nice cut and paste description of the cause below a personal request (which, by the way, I don't care to read; I already know I want to help her out by pledging). It was also very easy for me to click the link.

In this case, the problem came after I clicked the link. You see, I was on my iPhone when I checked my email and the page I was taken to required me to fill out a form and then submit my credit card number. This would have required me to squint and deal with autocorrect and then run downstairs to get my wallet and then the damn website probably wouldn't work when I hit submit. I decided to do it later.

But I've already looked at the email and so now it will be marked as read and I'll forget about it until she emails again. But she DIDN'T email again so I missed my chance to support her and now I'll feel like a schmuck the next time I see her. I wish she would have sent another reminder. It could have saved me the embarrassment of not helping out my friend.

Here is another example from my very persistent friend, Peter:

> *Our MAPS Media Institute is up for a $25,000 prize If you wanna vote for us, here's the link…*

I replied five hours later with "Will do!" And then I promptly DIDN'T. Most likely because I clicked back over to my Facebook feed and saw a video of the Foo Fighters dressed up as RUSH that I only watched two minutes of because my daughter wanted me to get her more milk which reminded me that I had to put my clothes in the dryer before getting the kids ready for bed.

T**hese two examples are not an exception.** Most people are inundated with information overload and they're busy and totally distracted 99% of the time.

I WANTED to help both of these people regardless of the cause. Friends help each other out and I could plainly see that because of their effort to email me directly with a personal message, they were both very passionate about the cause. I don't even care about the details because I trust them and if THEY care, I care too.

But that wasn't enough. I needed them to follow up with me because I was busy and distracted.

Luckily, my persistent friend, Peter, sent me another email a couple weeks later. But the reason I finally voted for his cause wasn't because it was any more convenient for me at that moment.

It was because I saw a post from a mutual friend who reminded me that today

was THE LAST DAY TO VOTE which triggered the **scarcity** principle in my brain and it subconsciously triggered the **social proof** principle which made me feel (subconsciously of course) like I needed to jump on board and help Peter like everyone else was doing.

This sent me into scramble mode. I'd been wanting to vote for weeks but I had never taken the time. If I wanted to say, "Hey Peter, I voted for you," the next time I see him, I'd better vote.

But here's the thing. My band, who had around 7500 Facebook fans this particular day, had worked with Peter's non-profit in the past. On a whim, I decided not only to vote, but I also made a substantial post to my band's Facebook page.

Without Peter's follow up, and without seeing another post on Facebook that served as a reminder and as social proof, I wouldn't have voted OR shared this cause with 7500 people.

I'm telling you these two stories because you HAVE to expect your potential backers to have the same experience when YOU hit them up to back your campaign. They DO care and they all DO want to back you. It's your job to help them do it by crafting messages that make it drop dead easy and then by following up.

How To Craft Messages That Won't Be Ignored

For the purpose of getting pledges, certain ways of communicating are exponentially better than others. Below is a list from most effective to least effective. Notice that as we go down the list, it's easier for people to ignore you, forget about you or be distracted by other things going on around them. If you call someone on the phone specifically to tell them about your campaign, they're very likely to do so. If you include someone in your mass email or Facebook post, they are not likely to take immediate action the first time.

- Talk in person
- Phone call
- Facebook email
- Traditional email
- Email list email
- Facebook post
- Mention at a performance/event

- Radio interview
- Blog feature
- Newspaper article

Widely accepted marketing lore states that your prospects need to be exposed to your offer *up to 7 times before they act*. In my experience this isn't too far off the mark. So to decrease the average number of times a person needs to see your message in order to back you and therefore increase the chances that they DO back you, you'll need to craft your message in a way that:

- Captures their attention and gets them to open the message or follow the link.
- Is easy to read and comprehend the gist (not the full story, just the summary).
- Has short but clear instructions for what they should do (call to action).
- Gives the reader a clear idea of what it will be like when they click to view the campaign.

It's very important to note that the purpose of your message—whether a post on Facebook, an email or radio interview—is simply to *get the person to your campaign page*. In other words, it is NOT to get them to pledge. Keeping this in mind will allow you to remain brief and let the campaign page do what it is designed for: to convert visitors to backers.

The Anatomy of a Crowdfunding Message
Let's run through the basics of crafting a good message.

1) Capture attention with a great headline
Here is an example of two headlines. The first is a standard, pre-Kickstarter email to around 3,000 subscribers and the second is the first email I sent about launching our Kickstarter:

26% open rate subject line: Free bootleg ends today + Big announcement

43% open rate subject line: It's here: Our biggest campaign ever

2) Make it easy for a distracted person to read and comprehend
Make it as personal as possible. If it's a one-on-one email, use their name and reference something about your relationship like I hope the wife is doing well!

Tell them WHY this campaign is important to you, then tell them what the project is. Make it a short two or three sentence summary of both.

Format for clarity by making each idea it's own paragraph with a double space

between each paragraph. Ideally, this will be three very short paragraphs (one to three sentences each).

3) Clear call to action

People procrastinate when they have to think so take the thinking out of the equation! Give clear instructions for what they can do right now to help: "Please click this link to watch the video."

Make the link bold and VERY specific. Don't just say "click to pledge" or have an ambiguous link. To keep the person curious, direct them to the video that gives them the whole story rather than selling them on pledging.

4) Clear "how this works" statement

Write a short description of the pledging process: "once you click the green pledge button, you'll select a pledge amount and then your payment will be processed through Amazon and you'll be charged once the campaign is complete on the 15th. Total pledge time? Under one minute!"

A Note on What Social Media CAN DO For Your Campaign

"…word of mouth is part of 80% of all purchase funnels. At least some of this word of mouth is occurring via social media…" [37]

In other words, it does makes sense to do some social media work.

Encouraging people to share your campaign, especially after they pledge to it or comment on it, should be standard operating procedure and will take a few minutes each day during your campaign.

Making value-added posts (not spam, be certain it's interesting) to your social media channels should be a part of every campaign and standard operating procedure. This should also take a few minutes a day but *should definitely not eat up hours of your time*.

Altogether, these actions should account for only 5-10% of your effort during your campaign.

Beyond that, direct and personal interactions should take up the vast majority of your time. Just look at the big ol' conversion rate from chapter two (25-40%) and think about racing to 100 backers. This tells you where to focus your time and effort.

Do not make the mistake of assuming or even hoping that it's all about "exposure" or "going viral." It will lead you down the path towards uncertainty and even campaign failure.

P.S. If I (or anybody else) knew how to make your campaign "go viral", you and I (or anybody else) would both be millionaires pretty damn fast ~ beware of anybody who claims they can help you do this.

P.P.S. Almost every campaign that launches gets bombarded with "opportunities" from people who can help you "get more exposure" or "go viral." Save your money and ignore them. If they could do what they claim, they wouldn't need to spam you.

■ ■ ■

The Schedule of Action

Once you have everything in place—your purpose has never felt more real and focused, you've done the work to determine your budget and ensure your campaign goal is well within your reach, you've optimized your reward strategy and you've finished your video and description—it is time to crack a beer and celebrate. Most people only sit around and daydream about getting this far!

Now here's a secret about launching and managing your campaign: it doesn't have to be the most stressful 30 days of your life like everyone says. Just reduce the next 17-30 days down to a few logical chunks of work to focus on.

■ ■ ■

The Pre-Load: Fund Your Campaign the First Week

Most of the risk and uncertainty surrounding a crowdfunding campaign for artists and creatives can be dealt with through good planning and execution. In particular, we've consistently used one method for achieving campaign goals to great success: the Pre-Load Technique.

This method matches the style of Jeff Walker's Product Launch Formula and is quite similar to the Kickstarter case study[38] presented on Tim Ferriss' 4 Hour Workweek blog. It is widely used by digital marketers such as Marie Forleo and Derrick Halpern and even internet gurus such as the legendary Tony Robbins and Seth Godin!

It works equally well whether you have a big email list or you are just starting out and don't have too many fans. Check out these examples.

Kickstarter Case Studies: Campaigns That Crush Their Goal

Take a look at the funding curves for these Kickstarter campaigns:

Funding Progress: The Happiness and Connection Project
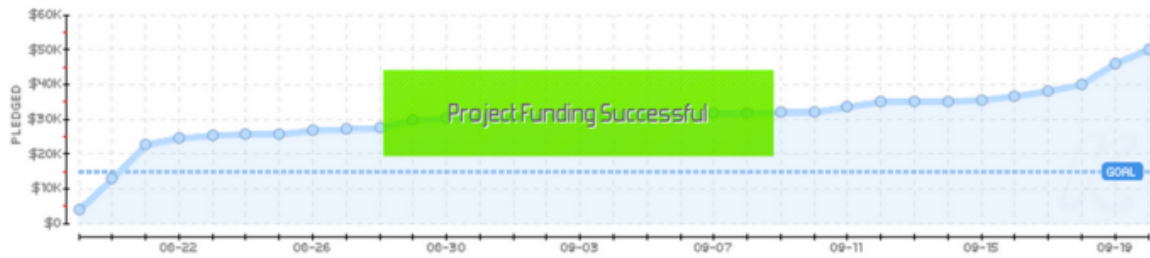
Closed at: $50,053 / $15k (333%)

Funding Progress: LA STRADA: Electronic-Classical Soundtrack by KEVIN KELLER

Closed at: $11,086 / $4,300 (257%)

Funding Progress: "Rise" – a new CD by Brett Randell

Closed at: $12,060 / $7,000 (172%)

Funding Progress: Jim Campilongo & Honeyfingers

Closed at: $16,781 / $8,000 (209%)

Funding Progress: Peter Su's Debut Album: Into the Sea

Closed at: $26,775 / $10k (267%)

What do they have in common?

- They hit 75% of their goal in *the first two days of their campaign*.
- They broke their goal amount during the first week.

- They almost doubled, and in one case more than tripled, their goal amount.

But the most significant commonality is that each of these campaigns used the pre-load technique which does not rely on exposure, PR or going viral.

Here are the five steps of the Pre-Load:

Step 1: Get Your Campaign Ready To Launch
Pre-loading cannot start until you are actually ready to launch (or at least 95% of the way there). Your campaign should be fully created on Kickstarter, Indiegogo or whichever platform you'll use. This includes:

- Having your story and purpose refined to perfection,
- An uploaded video presenting a crystal-clear purpose and mission at hand,
- Optimized rewards that are interesting to backers, have a good margin and are easy to fulfill,
- An official goal set to minimize risk plus a stretch goal strategy to shoot for the moon and
- Your campaign description is complete including images.

At this point, you'd be happy to launch your campaign but instead you take a few additional days to perform the pre-load technique.

Step 2: Send a Campaign Preview Link
Create a preview link for your campaign and send it to people to inform them of what you are up to and to get their feedback. These will be people whom you trust the most and are tightest with. The number of people you contact will depend on the size of your circle of influence.

Tell them what you're working on, not as a pitch, but as a friend telling another friend about something that excites them. Show them the campaign page, video and rewards and ask for their feedback and ideas.

One of our examples, Jay Stolar, actually contacted about 130 people in his fan club! But most people contact more like 25-50 of their closest friends and even family.

Keep in mind that when you do this, you campaign is not live and nobody can actually pledge to it. They can only comment and leave feedback.

Step 3: Consider Feedback and Make Small Changes
Take at least two days to gather comments and feedback. However, take everything with a grain of salt. People's opinions will be biased towards their personal taste and it is unlikely they will have done as much research into

crowdfunding as you have.

There will be an extremely important thing happening during this process. The people who take the time to view your campaign preview will create their own sense of investment and buy-in to your campaign. It will make them feel *involved* and it help them take *ownership*. When you hit launch, they will already have obligated themselves to your campaign and they'll be the first people to pledge their support!

Step 4: Let Your Pre-loaders Know About Your Secret "Pre-Launch" Day
You are going to start your campaign off quietly with a secret "pre-launch" day. This is one day prior to your official public launch day but your campaign will be live and can accept pledges. Only show it to the people whom you have pre-loaded in step two. Explain to them the importance of momentum out of the gate and ask for their help with your "pre-launch" effort.

You will not be spreading it by social media shares or sending it out to your email list.

Step 5: Official Launch
Your pre-load/pre-launch activity is likely to generate a fair amount of support: 10-25% of your official goal or maybe even more!

(By the way, did you know that 80%-90% of campaigns who hit 30% of their goal amount end successfully[39]?!)

With this in hand, you will officially launch your campaign following through with the launch plan you have crafted.

If you have an email list, this step will include an "Official Launch Email" that emphasizes the crazy momentum generated via your pre-launch and let people know how important a big first day is in keeping momentum and even possibly being featured or getting media placement (which by now you hopefully realize isn't likely to be a huge deal to your campaign but the thought of which will still get other people really excited).

These are the five steps of Pre-Loading which, to put it simply, creates excitement by demonstrating that other people are jumping on board like crazy (social proof). Then, by being direct with people and giving them an attainable and specific mission, you give them a quick and easy way to be a part of the fun and excitement.

What you must understand is that the average campaign doesn't need to just hope for success, you can actually *manufacture your own success* using this simple step-by-step process.

What If You Don't Have A Mailing List

Most people think they need some large audience of people in order to capitalize on techniques like this but the truth is that you don't. Most creatives who crowdfund (like the 80% of campaigns that raise under $10,000) don't have much of a mailing list, if they even have one at all!

Tony Polecastro, an acoustic guitar player from Montana, had *nothing* to work with: no email, no Facebook page or personal profile. ZERO fans.

Here's what Tony did…

> "Essentially I would bring up the preview site in front of the potential backer (at this point it was more for their feedback) and get them familiar with Kickstarter - what it involves - how it works etc. Following that I would ask them to take a good look at the rewards and ask for their honest feedback: do they feel the rewards were "priced" accurately? Is there something I was missing? Does the message come across clearly? What else would they like to see on it? This was a major factor in getting people engaged and invested prior to the clock ticking. It also allowed me to get my lingo down and see the potential pitfalls or, rather, points that needed clarification."

The mechanics of the pre-load technique were the same for Tony as they were for the funding curve examples from Kickstarter Case Studies who Crush Their Goal presented a few pages ago. The effects weren't as extreme for Tony but they were still significant!

Tony pre-loaded about 15 of his closest friends and family. During pre-launch, he raised just under $2,000 of his $3,000 goal. The morning of the official launch day, Tony began calling and emailing people from his Circle of Influence list letting them know about the exciting momentum. Then he explained how important it was to get a high number of pledges early on.

Even without a fan email list, Tony used perfectly timed psychological triggers to get his people excited about getting involved with his campaign early on.

The pre-load strategy has proven to be an enormous jump start for those who've used it. Here's why:

- You know your story and your purpose, you understand your campaign, but you've never communicated it to people in real life. This process will refine your pitch which will allow you to communicate clearly when it counts the most, on launch day.

- This campaign has been in your head for months. The process of bringing

it into the real world with people you trust is incredibly validating and confidence building. You will need this in order to confidently present your campaign over the next 17-30 days.

You don't need a bunch of fans or an email list. You may have already created the piece of art that you are trying to fund; it may even be duplicated and sitting in your garage! You can even be a shy type who doesn't like talking to people!

Go through the five steps. Don't overcomplicate things. Don't get distracted. Do this and you will be damn near unstoppable!

■ ■ ■

Four Day Launch Sequence
During the end of the pre-load (steps 4 and 5), you'll be jumping right into the 4-Day Launch Sequence. You'll want the pre-launch day (step 4 of pre-loading) to land on a Monday or Tuesday. Keep in mind that Friday through Sunday are suboptimal for getting people's attention.

DAY 1: Pre-launch to your closest collaborators to "chum the waters" or "seed the tip jar". This provides a much needed shot of **social proof** for when you begin promoting to your outer circles of influence. (This is step 4 of pre-loading.)

Directly contact the people you pre-loaded and let them know you'll officially launch the campaign tomorrow. Let them know that getting a swell of support on the first day will help create excitement and build momentum out of the gate.

DAY 2: The official launch day will likely be the highest energy peak of your campaign. (Step 5 of pre-loading)

Tim Ferriss, one of the world's most renowned launch artists, urges you to **be everywhere** in this crucial time frame. Resist settling for a "slow drip" of awareness and promotion throughout your campaign. In other words, you need to hit all **mediums** in as tight of a time frame as possible. This initial splash creates excitement, momentum, and social proof.

- If you have one, send an email to your mailing list at 7am.
- Post a Facebook update on your *professional* page at 11 or noon. If it gets comments and/or likes, consider "boosting" it (boosting doesn't do much good if the post doesn't already show signs of life).
- Post a Facebook update around 11:30am on your *personal* profile(s).
- Work through your Circle of Influence and personally email, message or

call as many people as humanly possible, starting with the ones who are most likely to pledge.

DAYS 3 & 4: These are the 2nd and 3rd days after your official, public launch. This is a time when you can be highly effective in gaining backers. Excitement is still high and you can still point out to people how important the launch window is in setting your campaign up to achieve your stretch goals. Your priorities are:

- Continue working through your Circle of Influence. You need to have contacted your entire Inner Circle and, preferably, your Intermediate Circle with a personal email, message or call by the end of this timeframe. This is a top priority.
- Make value-added social media posts once or twice a day. These posts should give new information or content - something interesting with every communication! DO NOT simply repost your campaign link with the same old "Please back!! We're almost there!!" BS. People will lose interest and tune you out quickly.
- Have any other personal or professional networks including friends who have their own large followings (Circle of Influence #5) send your campaign out via email, Facebook, Twitter, etc. (Note that these should be pre-arranged and the work done beforehand.)
- Perform any radio or local morning news appearances. (These should also have been pre-arranged so all you have to do is show up, do the appearance and then get back to contacting your Inner Circle and Intermediate Circle.)

It is *incredibly important* to capitalize on this launch window; outside of the last three campaign days, this is when people are most likely to get involved and when you will get the most backers. Definitely stay focused and keep the distractions such as trying to get press and PR to a minimum—don't let *anything* keep you from your top priorities of contacting *your Circle of Influence*.

Once your launch is over, a door has definitely closed and it's not possible to replicate the opportunity of it later in the campaign. So be sure to knock this out of the park. Failing to do so can make hitting your goal difficult, let alone trying to hit stretch goals. Launching successfully will set your campaign up to double, triple or even quadruple your funding estimate.

■ ■ ■

Mid-Campaign: Your Day to Day Work Schedule
After your 4 day launch sequence, including the pre-loading, it's likely there will be many people you have yet to contact.

Set realistic daily actions and stick to your commitment.

Divide your total number of people from your Circle of Influence who you'll be personally contacting by ten. Then commit to personally contacting that many people (likely between 10 and 30) each day of your campaign. Each person should hear from you personally at least twice during your campaign, three times if possible.

This means in the first third of the campaign you'll contact everyone, the second third you'll follow up with anyone who hasn't pledged and in the last third you'll follow up once more with anyone who hasn't pledged.

You will also need a schedule for your email, social media and backer communications:

- Email List: one short email update with call to action per week
- Facebook/Twitter: At least two value added posts per week
- Backer Updates: two thoughtful, value added backer updates with images, video, audio samples, project news, etc. per week (don't forget about your backers, especially when it's stretch goal time as you'll often see a couple of them bump up their pledge, sometimes significantly!)

These are bare minimum guidelines for your mass communications.

During the middle of your campaign, you also need to be ready to go with your stretch goals. Though you've already hammered them out, you'll need to be ready to shoot your video update, upload it to your campaign page and update your campaign description. You don't want to forget! *Because if you do, people will get the wrong idea that you have hit your goal and aren't trying for anything further.*

A quick warning: almost every campaign creator is concerned with sending too many emails, too many Tweets and too many Facebook posts. But if you do it tastefully with value added content, you shouldn't worry about offending your followers.

Also during this time, try to stay relaxed and positive. It is a nerve-racking time even for campaigns that have already hit their goal. Almost without exception, campaign creators will get discouraged through the middle of their campaign and they'll arrive at the end sequence thinking they can't possibly get any more

backers.

But it's not true! The end sequence coming up is a *very powerful* time during your campaign and you'll almost undoubtedly raise between 25 and 50% of your funds. So stay true and stay strong!

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Three Day End Sequence
Rest assured that if you put your effort in the right place during the last three days, your campaign can be a runaway success.

This is basically a repeat of the Four Day Launch Sequence without the secret pre-load day. Make sure the last three days of your campaign land between Monday and Thursday. If you need the campaign to run 18 days or 25 days in order to do this, that's ok. Set your campaign to expire at midnight.

This is **even more powerful** than the launch sequence because it invokes the **scarcity principle** which means those who want to back you need to make a move or face guilt and possible embarrassment when they see you next.

Remember, you are doing your people a disservice if you don't properly follow up in this final three day window! Your people feel obligated to pledge and they want you to succeed.

If there was ever a time to call in sick from work so you can personally call and email every single person on your launch list, this is the time!

3rd to Last Day:
- If you have one, send an email to your mailing list at 7am.
- Post a Facebook update on your *professional* page at 11 or noon. If it gets comments and/or likes, consider "boosting" it (boosting doesn't do much good if the post doesn't already show signs of life).
- Post a Facebook update around 11:30am on your *personal* profile(s).
- Work through your Circle of Influence and personally email, message or call as many people as humanly possible, starting with the ones who have said they want to back your campaign but haven't yet.

2nd to Last Day:
- If you have one, send an email to your mailing.
- Continue working through your Circle of Influence. You need to have contacted your entire Inner Circle and Intermediate Circle with a personal email, message or call by the end of this timeframe. This is a top priority.
- Make value-added social media posts.

Last Day:
- If you have one, send an email to your mailing.
- Call and email your Inner and Intermediate Circles. You will have a pretty good feel for who to focus on by this point!
- Make value-added social media posts.

Just like the launch window, it is ***incredibly important*** to capitalize on this ending window. It is truly the most powerful time to get backers as there will be many, many people who have meant to back your campaign all along who just haven't yet because they were busy or wanted to "see how it goes."

Accordingly, be sure to communicate your Purpose, your stretch goals, your excitement and your gratitude. It is that simple. Don't get sidetracked or sucked into a negative or scarcity mindset.

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Here are a few other things to keep in the front of your mind.

Phone Calls Are REALLY IMPORTANT!
This point cannot be undersold because, let's just be honest, nobody wants to make phone calls anymore. But it is critical, crucial and extremely important. One of our student's summed up why very nicely:

> *Phone calls. You are so right about that.* **You can't just send one email and hope they'll read it.** *Followup phone calls are very uncomfortable—probably no one likes doing it—asking for money. I'm calling, and I know that THEY KNOW why I'm calling. Especially if it's somebody I haven't talked to in a year. So I try to turn a negative into a positive. I don't try to deny why I'm calling. I usually start off with, "you probably saw my email." But I don't ask them to pledge. I talk about the project, and how the fundraising campaign is going. If some people we both know have pledged, I'll mention that. And I'll mention the people who pledged who were surprises.*

> *Then I'll ask how they're doing and what they've been up to. It's not necessary to beg them to pledge—THEY KNOW I want them to. Then I'll say, "I better let you go" or something, and they'll always say, "I'll take a look at it, probably throw you a few bucks" or something. I'd say at least half my pledges so far came within a day after the phone conversation.*

> *I've found that it helps diffuse the tension by saying, "no obligation, of course." Obviously, they know there's no obligation. I think it mainly helps ME. I establish that, so we can relax and just have a conversation.*

The silver lining, is, I get to catch up with people I haven't spoken to in a long time. ~ Rob R.

PR, Interviews and Appearances
Many artists feel like seeking and getting publicity is an extension of their creativity. For this reason you may decide to include this in your campaign even though it's extremely ineffective at helping you raise funds.

Schedule Kickstarter awareness shows and radio and TV interviews in your town. Take pictures and use them to post to Facebook, your email list and as campaign updates.

Although **this effort is unlikely to be a large source of pledges** compared to directly contacting your inner circles of influence, it will show backers and potential backers that you're working your ass off to make this campaign a success.

Keep an Agile Marketing Mindset
Spin on a dime; if opportunities arise, take them. If feedback gives you new ideas, make them happen if they make sense to you.

Be prepared to add stretch goals, remove stretch goals, add or remove rewards, add new events or media appearances or even change the final product.

All of your work preparing and planning doesn't mean you have to stick to that plan once you launch. This is the best time to see what's working and act on new ideas or directions.

In closing, this chapter has given tons of information to keep in mind but it can be distilled down into a few basic ideas:

- Use the Launch sequence and End sequence to capitalize on consumer psychology,
- Don't get distracted chasing PR, media or "going viral,"
- Make personal contact with people being direct yet caring in your communication.

Don't overcomplicate it. Do these things and, once you get started, you'll find a groove quickly.

With this chapter under your belt, you know what you need to know to launch. As you make final preparations, however, read through the last portion of this book to gain a full overview of what will happen during your campaign as well as the questions and problems that often arise.

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Your Assignment

1. Create a campaign calendar. Include time for pre-load, 4-Day Launch Sequence and 3-Day End Sequence.

2. Specify the actions you will take for each day in your campaign calendar.

3. Finalize each element of your campaign especially goal amount, video, campaign description and rewards.

4. Draft and finalize all email communications you will use prior to and during the first week of your campaign.

5. Draft and finalize social media updates you will use prior to and during the first week of your campaign.

6. Schedule and coordinate any PR, interviews and appearances that you will do during your campaign. Assure these will not distract you from your primary mission of personal outreach during the campaign.

7. Email your campaign link to launchandrelease@gmail.com!

CHAPTER TEN

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR CAMPAIGN

YOU'RE READY TO LAUNCH. YOUR CAMPAIGN IS CREATED: YOUR VIDEO is up, your description is written and your rewards are all set. You can't wait!

But **before you hit launch**, make sure you know what's going to happen between now and the end of your campaign. If you don't handle these things correctly, you are setting yourself up for a struggle through your entire campaign.

Most people don't want to contact people individually, so they play the wait-and-see game for the first week. If they do well, they think the campaign will take off and they won't have to contact people.

DO NOT DO THAT! You run the risk of being at Week 3 and only at 25% of your overall goal. And I've seen this happen multiple times, so here is your warning again: DO NOT DO THAT!

Here are the exact things you need to maximize the success of your campaign:

1) Have your spreadsheet of fans, friends and family that you are going to contact *completely filled out*. This is your Circle of Influence inventory spreadsheet.

2) Your **Pre-Load**. YOU CANNOT SKIP THIS! **The whole mechanism of success is built on this.** Don't forget!

3) Take your campaign live and do the **Day One Pre-Launch**. A couple hundred or a couple thousand dollars on the pre-launch day will help seed the tip jar regardless of whether you are trying to raise $2,000 or $5,000 or $15,000.

4) Continue through the **official launch sequence days 2-4,** which is when your live campaign goes public. If you follow the steps and do everything as specified, you'll likely raise 50-100% of your official goal amount during this period.

5) You will get into the **mid-campaign slump**. But it's important to keep working and have an agile mindset. It's *extremely important* to hit whatever goal is in

front of you and to have thought through your next stretch goal. This will allow you to hit your *ultimate* goal and you need to be ready.

6) The **three-day end sequence**. You can raise 20-50% of your total funds raised, regardless of whether you are coming from behind or have already crushed all of your stretch goals. The mechanics are very similar to the launch sequence; if you do the work, you can raise a lot of money in these three days!

Mindset = Campaign Outcome

A positive mindset will affect the outcome of your campaign. I cannot overemphasize the importance of your attitude, your faith in what you are doing and the tone you use to communicate. You must have an abundant mindset and confidence in what your campaign is asking for (so you can be comfortable asking).

This allows you to avoid focusing on the outcome of each individual situation. It takes away the fear of getting a "no." Instead, all you need to do is communicate and convey your excitement about the campaign and your project. The rest will take care of itself. You'll get some yes's and some no's but that's okay because you will be making overall progress towards your goal.

I've seen people launch who were not in this mindset. They were in a scarcity mindset and afraid of all the no's they were going to get. They didn't think they'd hit their goal. This is a real problem! It will undermine your efforts throughout your entire campaign.

If you haven't taken the time to think this through or feel a little bit uncertain about your excitement for your campaign, then go talk to a few trusted people about it. Work on refining what you will say and your attitude until you are 100% positive and ready to lead with energy and excitement.

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Launch Checklist

Your campaign is ready to go and you have reviewed what to expect during the forthcoming campaign. You're almost ready to hit start button! Now, let's review the steps for the early part of your campaign:

Step 1: Pre-load

Two to five days before you go live, gather a group of your closest friends. Shoot for 15-20 people on the low side or 80-100 on the high side. Most people have 20-40. It depends on the size of your Circle of Influence. Send them an email about your campaign, explaining that you are really excited and would love to get their feedback. The email should also let them know what day you are going live and that it's very important to get early buy-in because it will have a large impact on the campaign when you launch publicly.

A few things usually happen during this process that might look like a problem but they most definitely are not!

First, you won't hear back from everybody. If you contact 30 people, you may only hear from 10 or even less. That's not a big deal. No need to wait to hear from everybody before you launch the campaign.

Second, people will take you seriously and give you their feedback. You just asked them for it! But remember that they won't look at it through the lens of maximizing your backers and funding. They'll look at it through an artistic lens and the context of their personal interest in what they know about you and your art. If they come back and say, "It's okay but we need more X, Y or Z," that doesn't mean you should go insert 14 YouTube videos of you doing X, Y and Z in your bathroom. Doing so will not increase the number of backers you are going to get. People's feedback will be a function of their own tastes and preferences, not of crowdfunding mechanics.

That being said, some of their ideas will be worth considering. Maybe they'll have a great reward idea, or maybe they'll tell you they found something you said to be kind of weird and a turn-off. That's great, and you should take a look at what they are talking about. But don't feel like you have to address every point of feedback that you receive.

Now remember, the pre-load is the ***single most important part of your whole campaign process***! On a scale of 1-10, it's an 11—really, it's that important! It's what sets you up for success by giving your funding curve a big bump. And it's where you can gain a lot of your early momentum and social proof, so make sure you nail this part!

Step 2: Pre-launch
This is the first day that your campaign is actually live, though you haven't announced it to the general public yet. This is the day when you send a reminder email to the people you pre-loaded informing them of your live campaign and that it's important to get early buy-in.

Step 3: Official Launch
The next day will be your official launch day. Email your mailing list, publish a post on Facebook, then call, email and text people individually. That will happen for the remainder of the launch period. If you launch on a Monday, you are going to crush it through Thursday or Friday.

The first few days, it is VERY important to go through your Circle of Influence inventory and contact people individually. If you literally need to contact 80 people a day to get through your list, do it! You will have so much more leverage during this early part than you will throughout the rest of your campaign. That's why it's really important to clear your schedule during your launch period; you'll

be busy like a MoFo!

If you don't contact people and just hope that the campaign will take off without much personal outreach, take a look at this picture to see what will happen:
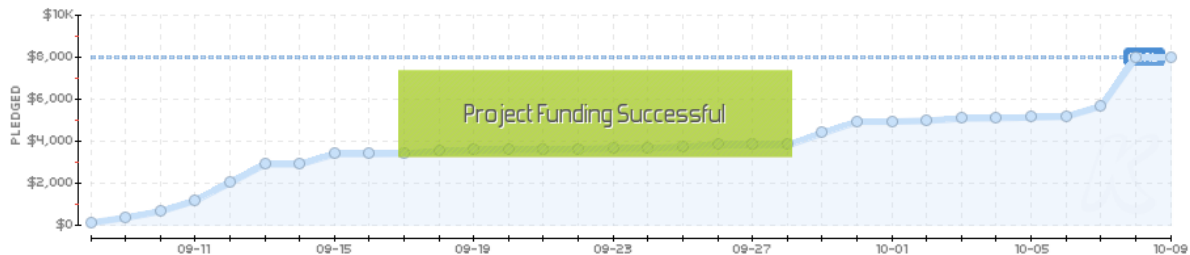
There is NO BUMP in the early part of that campaign, and *there should be*!

This is a fella who was really busy and who didn't carve out the time to contact people during launch. It seemed like he really didn't want to contact people and that he was just *hoping* it would take off on it's own. This had ramifications throughout the campaign and you can see as you look through the funding curve that it was a struggle to hit his official goal.

During the launch stage of your campaign, you want to hit 50-100% of your official goal. It's your best opportunity to raise funds and once it goes by, it's gone forever. So you have to take it seriously.

If you remember the earlier campaign creators who stuck to the plan and did their personal outreach, they all crushed it during the first few days and have that early bump in their funding curves. You can see that it really benefitted their campaign overall.

So that's what you should do during the launch phase. You have to do every step, and you can't leave any out. Get ready, do the work and your campaign will be off to a great start!

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After A Successful Launch
Your campaign is underway and you have completed your launch sequence. Now, you need to be ready for success. Hopefully this comes easily!

What happens if you hit your initial funding goal during the launch sequence? You circle back to the Fail-Proof Goal Strategy: your first one or two stretch goals should bring you closer to realizing your dream project. I often observe people achieving their initial goal but then setting a half-hearted stretch goal that they don't really believe in. This is a recipe for not getting anywhere. So the first thing you must do is be *certain* that you *want* to accomplish the stretch goals you have defined.

To announce your stretch goals, upload a 30-60 second video sharing your gratitude for hitting your previous goals and then describing your next goal, including the funding amount and what you can accomplish when you hit it. Then update your campaign description to show all of the details you mentioned in your video.

Pro tip: at the very end of your campaign just minutes before the clock hits zero, you can remove your stretch goal video(s) before the campaign ends and the campaign page becomes permanent!

Mid-Campaign Slump

After the first four days or so, your campaign *will* slow down. It's nothing to worry about; it's very normal.

When you get to this point, you are usually in one of two situations. Maybe you only hit 10-20% of your goal amount during your launch sequence, you've lost momentum and you're kind of freaking out because it doesn't feel like there is any way possible that you are going to achieve your goal. Or maybe the complete opposite happens: you absolutely nail it and you're past 100% of your goal, but you've still lost momentum and you start to wonder if you can possibly raise anymore money.

The answer in both situations is that you *can* raise more money *as long as* you follow through with the steps in this system. Either way, don't back down on personal contact! Don't give up.

There are plenty of examples of people who gave up halfway through. They thought they were completely doomed. They were convinced there was *no way* they were going to hit their goal and it shows when you look at their campaign funding graphs.

But there are also a ton of examples of artists who kept the faith, knowing it was a slow part of their campaign. They still geared up and got ready to crush it. You can tell by looking at their funding graphs that they followed the steps, and it absolutely worked!

Again, don't back down on your personal contact! Just take all of the people from your Circle of Influence worksheet, divide that by the number of days in your mid-campaign (for many campaigns, this is between 10 and 17) and then contact that number of people each day in the middle of your campaign.

Don't let this fall by the wayside! Don't be paranoid that people aren't going to want to hear from you or that they're going to be annoyed. It's actually quite the opposite. Often times it takes people several reminders before they pledge, *even if they meant to all along!* So send a little message that lets them know—they might need to be contacted 3-7 times before they take action!

Campaign End Sequence

The final three days is the second most critical phase of your campaign, just behind the launch sequence. It is when you have *the most leverage in your campaign* and, thus, is when you'll get most of your pledges.

You're going to remind everybody who hasn't pledged (even if it is the 3rd or 4th time you are contacting them), and they'll appreciate the reminder.

If you're worried that people will be sick of hearing from you, stop worrying! They want to hear from you; they honestly do. We've seen it happen, and campaign creators have told us: people don't get mad, and they actually appreciate the friendly nudge.

For the end sequence, you basically repeat the launch sequence. Send an email to your mailing list (probably the 3rd or 4th one) and let them know where your campaign is at, how thankful you are for all of the support you've received and what you want to accomplish in your remaining time. Make a last push on Facebook and social media.

Most importantly, you need to personally reach out to all of the people who haven't pledged yet. Make a list and work like a dog to contact them in the last three days. They won't begrudge a reminder as long as you're grateful for their support and lead with excitement and energy.

This is a *major decision point in your campaign*! Whatever you decide to do will affect the outcome, whether it's coasting home and hoping for the best or going all in and grinding to reach your highest goal. So pay attention to that energy in your chest. You have to believe! I've seen it happen. The mechanics do work. If you follow through, you'll see an additional 30-50% of funding or possibly more come in during the last three days.

Whether you're feeling behind and haven't raised what you wanted to or you've crushed your stretch goals and are wondering if you can raise more—either way, these mechanics work in your favor so don't back down. Have faith that you can do it,ß and go crush it!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS ABOUT A CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN ARE INEVITABLE AND RANGE FROM the should-I-crowdfund-at-all variety to more specific questions about specific campaign design. Here are the most common questions asked by campaign creators or people seriously considering running a crowdfunding campaign.

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Is crowdfunding premature for us?

I'm wondering whether crowdfunding is a bit premature for us. Except for our friends and family, we really don't have a contact list yet. Have only played 5 gigs so far (even though we have 39 songs recorded).

Most people considering a crowdfunding campaign assume that they need to get in front of "more people" to expand their Circle of Influence and maximize the amount of money they can raise. As I have repeated several times, notions of getting press coverage, PR or going viral in order to "reach new people" and "get more backers" are misplaced. The probability of any of these things happening is incredibly low and should not be part of a campaign's strategy for success.

Many people conclude that they should wait to crowdfund while they procure fans so that they can raise more money. But not only is this a potentially endless loop, there is an opportunity cost to waiting.

My observation has been that while waiting for the "right circumstances," people often end up never doing a campaign and sometimes they never even get around to creating their project. Or, if they do get around to it, it is one or two years down the road, and they have wasted a lot of time doing not much.

The risk of waiting around while you put together a fanbase is that your career momentum stalls out. And again, my observation has been that this risk is higher than most people realize.

The best strategy is to do your best with what you have in order to keep your

creativity and career trajectory moving along. That's what I recommend.

In other words, it's better to create a campaign based on your current situation, achieve success and do your project now so that you can **immediately use the resulting creative output in your career**. Then, after you have grown your fanbase and further developed your art, do it all over again in a year or two!

My assumption here goes along with the assertions of creative thought leaders like Seth Godin in his audiobook *Leap First* and Steve Pressfield in his book *The War of Art*: your primary job as an artist is to create and release.

Create. AND. Release.

The only way to do that is to move forward with your current ideas and to develop a creative cycle that doesn't put off the release of your art while you're waiting for something that may never happen.

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Can I go "straight to the public" to crowdfund? Is there a way to do it without knowing ANYBODY?
This question was sent in by a musician but seems to be a general idea out there and applies to many creative people. Here is a little more background on the question:

> *I (and many others) are really looking for ways to crowdfund without knowing ANYBODY. [You often] mention a "mailing list" which assumes artists have some or many contacts to "lean" on. A lot of artists have exhausted "friends and family" (or want to keep that a separate experience) and are really looking [for] how to crowdfund completely from scratch... going straight to the public… We all know the more friends, likes, subscribers, etc. you have, the easier it is to raise money. But most musicians are not social bees spending their hours buzzing hype on the internet, they just want to create great music and find an audience that appreciates their craft and hard work.*

This is a common sentiment, and I can completely understand it. I wish I could give you those magic keys to the crowdfunding car so you can go raise a bunch of money by getting in front of new people. That is pretty much the HOLY GRAIL in two ways:

1) It would be f---ing amazing and if we figured it out, we'd be obscenely wealthy!

2) It doesn't exist! At least not in the way people wish it did.

Though there may be exceptions in technology and consumer product

development, facts and evidence point toward one's ability to raise money through crowdfunding as being directly related to how many people you know that are already fans, friends and family.

As far as going "straight to the public," I wouldn't recommend you try it in the context of crowdfunding.

Fan/subscriber procurement is the time to go "straight to the public". That's when you have something to offer them and win them over be it a CD, DVD, book, piece of art or something else.

Going "straight to the public" with just an idea won't result in much and isn't worth your effort. The conversion rates are disastrous! Basically, when you are crowdfunding and your time is very limited, it takes way more work to get a single backer out of a pool of cold leads (the general public) than is worth it.

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Can I do crowdfunding on my own website?
Theoretically, it is quite possible to do a campaign on your own website, but in reality, I rarely see anybody pull it off without messing it up.

Most people who try to go it alone end up slacking or even quitting in which case they raise very little or nothing.

I recommend going with an established platform such as Kickstarter or Indiegogo. Yes, you have to pay the 5% commission but in the end, you get 92-95% of what you raise, versus 100% of nothing!

If you are serious about crowdfunding, simply having an established company is worth it for several logistical reasons but MOSTLY because their framework forces you to follow through instead of slacking or quitting!

Having to define your goal and your timeframe are very critical parts of a successful campaign.

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Indiegogo or Kickstarter?
Here is a list of the pros and cons for the two platforms:

Kickstarter:

- Simple and intuitive to use for both campaign creator and potential backers
- Most widely known with great name recognition
- Once in awhile (though more rarely now than a few years ago), getting verified with Amazon payments is a pain in the rear

- Fees: 5% + credit card processing = about 8%
- They don't collect pledges until the campaign is over, no matter what

Indiegogo:

- Very focused on helping out campaign creators—they have a "happiness team" and are very willing to work with you hands-on
- Fees: 5% + credit card processing = about 8%
- They collect PayPal pledges during the campaign as they come in. This means two things for you: 1) They transfer the money to your bank account during the campaign (immediately for flexible funding campaigns, once your achieve your goal for fixed funding campaigns), and 2) It removes the possibility that the pledges won't go through due to insufficient funds or credit cards expiring.

My observation is that Kickstarter is smoother, more straightforward and simple to use. Kickstarter also has a larger user base (making it easier for people to pledge if they are already users).

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I'm planning to do a really big project later this year, but I could really use money for a piece of equipment right now. What do you think would be most beneficial to raise money for, the equipment or the project?
This happens to musicians a lot where you are planning a recording project down the road, but at the moment, your van is broken down and you can't tour or somebody broke into your trailer and stole your guitar. But the idea can apply to other types of artists as well.

Crowdfunding campaigns work best when done for an actual project with creative output. When done right, these campaigns don't have an artificial ceiling. You can fund your project and continue to pile on stretch goals for things over and above the cost of the basic project, such as marketing, promotion and even equipment! Of course this depends on YOU more than anything else: how well you communicate what you need and how hard you work towards your next goal.

While you can definitely find examples of people raising money for equipment, such as bands needing a new van or journalists needing a new camera, those campaigns don't tend to raise much more than is necessary for the specific piece of equipment.

As running your campaign before, during or after your project, it doesn't make much difference. You can run a crowdfunding campaign while planning to create your project in the near future or you could have already created it, as long as it hasn't been released. Most artists do their campaign right before they do their project or possibly right after their project is done, but that's mostly

because they plan adequately to do their campaign way in advance. You could run your campaign six months before you plan to create your project and be pretty safe.

I would recommend concentrating on the creative project, and if you do a great job, you can work towards your equipment via stretch goals.

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How long should my campaign last?
Campaigns should last 30 days or less. I prefer a 24-day campaign that starts on a Monday and ends on a Thursday (though many individuals have good reason to launch or end on different days, especially for work-related reasons.)

Remember, most of the magic happens during the Four-Day Launch Sequence and the Three-Day End Sequence. Everything beyond those seven days is typically mid-campaign slump during which you'll make incremental progress. Rarely will you make significant progress mid-campaign.

Whether your mid-campaign slump lasts for 10 days, 17 days or 24 days is up to you, but I usually figure that 17 days is a good compromise between giving yourself time to do the work while not driving yourself crazy. So 24 days total is my recommended length.

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I'm not so sure about focusing on Purpose…
I have been hesitant about the approach of my video--my "purpose worth backing." Most of the examples more or less focused on themselves, and I can do that. But my project chronicles the US presidents of the 1950s and 60s, and I believe I can pull in people by getting them fired up about the "cause"… There exists a very, very large number of people--and they tend to be quite enthusiastic--who believe, for example, that JFK's assassination occurred via a conspiracy. That's not the main focus of my project, but I do touch on things like that over the course of the album--trading off between the "official" story and various conspiracy theories, and letting the listener decide what to believe. I'm leaning towards focusing primarily on the project in the video, with a *little* bit about me, how long and hard I've worked on this project/music in general, etc.

The comments regarding focusing on the Presidential Project (the what) vs. the Purpose (the why) raise a red flag. I wouldn't plan for too much success there (unless it's the sort of thing that already has a cult/underground following of some sort).

The only thing comparable I can think of is a campaign[40] for five songs inspired

by Harry Potter.

It was actually FEATURED by Kickstarter in their email newsletter, and it still didn't raise all that much. Take a look at the funding curve and you can see it limped along until the Kickstarter email—then it gained a little traction, just enough to fund.

Your plan sounds similar, and if you are okay with a lot of risk and no clear path to success, then you can do that. Either way, I'd put a lot of thought into your goal amount and I'd keep it AS LOW AS POSSIBLE, as I predict you'll have a hard time raising much for funds given what you've mentioned.

And a BIG P.S. Here: This isn't a personal commentary, but it's just the reality of the numbers you've supplied and the probabilities I've seen for campaigns over the last couple of years. You will likely increase your probability of success for your niche project by focusing on your purpose.

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Is all PR bad?
For most crowdfunding campaigns, the answer is: darn near.

Your chances of converting a general audience into backers are dismally low. At best, getting press coverage will get you a few backers but probably no more than 5% of your overall total. At worst, chasing after media or blog coverage "opportunities" will be a substantial waste of time that could put your campaign in serious jeopardy by preventing you from reaching out to those *who are most likely* to pledge to your campaign.

People always think that PR and media coverage is the magic bullet.

If you are from a big town like New York City and could get local media placement, you'd be in front of a lot of people, so wouldn't you get a lot of backers? The answer is no, there is absolutely no guarantee of that. Furthermore, odds are high that you'll get very few backers.

Or if you are from a small town like Bozeman, MT, the people who would see your media coverage would be rooting for the hometown hero and would back

your campaign, right? Unfortunately, the answer is again no, except for the people who already know you and you should be contacting them anyway.

Or if you could simply get featured by Kickstarter, then you'd be in front of people who are already proven campaign backers and who are just waiting to find the next cool thing to pledge to, right? Kickstarter features three campaigns per week, so the odds aren't in your favor. If you do get featured it will be on the merit of your idea, not on any special efforts you make to get featured.

Or if you could just get coverage in that popular blog, wouldn't those readers be likely to back your campaign? No, it isn't likely. This is probably the one category where it might be possible to get limited gains, but you must have a concept that is extremely cohesive with the readership. And you must also succeed at connecting with the author. If you are going to try this, you must set up the placement prior to your campaign so that you don't waste your time during the campaign.

Overall, the lesson here is that spending your precious time *focusing* on PR and exposure is a big mistake that will cost your campaign. Focus instead on connecting with the three F's: fans, friends and family.

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I just launched and am getting flooded with marketing offers. Are they worth it?
This happens all the time:

> *Since I launched my Kickstarter, I've been flooded with emails from crowdfunding PR and marketing firms that want to send my campaign to media outlets… in your experience, do these things work? Some of them are pretty expensive (upwards of $800) with some as low as $49… online reviews vary wildly across the board… any advice you can give would be great! Thanks!*

The short answer is NO, they are not worth it. For the longer answer, take a whack at this:

In creative crowdfunding endeavors, getting your campaign in front of more eyes is not good enough. You need to get backers. And people back your campaign because they feel obligated, they want you to succeed or your project personally connects with them.

These marketing offers are for cold traffic, people who have no prior connection to you and who have not demonstrated interest in what you, specifically, are doing. Even if these people have shown an interest in photography and you are a photographer, they are still cold traffic if they haven't seen *your* work before. Therefore, they will not feel obligated to back you, and they won't really care

whether you succeed or not. Your only avenue to turning them into backers is for your project to personally connect with them.

Personally connecting with cold traffic is *incredibly difficult*. Creative people underestimate this *all the time* due to their cognitive biases. The reality is that if you don't have some experience in this arena, you will not just jump into it and succeed. Getting the public's attention and keeping it through all of the steps between you first being seen by them and them backing your campaign is incredibly difficult, and the numbers don't work in your favor. This is why marketing agencies exist. This is why marketing plans exist.

Anybody experience in marketing will tell you, if you plan to turn a profit on your marketing efforts, you need to have real experience in the marketing realm and you need to do real work. Otherwise, the money you spend will be a waste.

So if you are new to marketing, do yourself a favor and *don't start during your crowdfunding campaign*. It will be money lost and will distract you from what you need to be doing.

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My funding estimate is for $1,000/$5,000/$10,000, but I need $2,000/$10,000/$20,000. What should I do?
The funding estimate is meant to be a check-point in your goal-setting process and I do not recommend setting your goal higher. Two things to keep in mind:

1) It is very wise to set your campaign goal at or near your funding estimate and to have a Minimum Viable Project that you can accomplish if this is all you raise. This drastically decreases your risk of failure, and, if you play your cards right and hit the official goal early, it helps generate some extra momentum and social proof that will help your campaign.

2) Most people raise more than the estimate. For some it's only 25% more but for some its two to four times as much. How that goes down depends on you, on how well you reach out to people personally and on creating an effective Stretch Goal strategy.

You should be able to double up on the estimate, but it's not a guarantee and it depends on you following the steps and doing the necessary work.

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How important is it to have a high-quality video?
Your video quality should be commensurate with where you are at in your career and what you are trying to accomplish.

If you have done a few projects and you have consistently released high quality

videos for them, then you will want to put together a good video that won't leave your fans thinking, "Wait… what?" Here is an example of an artist who has released several high-quality videos and what her campaign video looks like:

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/629885626/robyn-cage-debut-full-length-album-release-and-pro

On the other hand, here's a cat from NYC with 10 albums under his belt. He used his laptop or iPad to shoot his interview footage. Probably could've done better with the lighting but it wasn't worth going back and making perfect because he was sincere and honest and this was a good representation of himself.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/379211978/jim-campilongo-and-honeyfingers

If this is your first project, and you just started building your email list recently, then you'll be fine using your phone to shoot and edit!

As a matter of fact, while I wouldn't recommend making a low-quality, extremely mediocre video, there may actually be more risk in making too nice of a video from a fundraising perspective. If you're asking for $5,000 and you obviously spend a couple grand on your video, won't that make people go, "Wait… what?"

> *Because I come from a film background. I was initially inclined to make a big production out of my Kickstarter video. What I learned on Launch + Release helped me refocus my energy on more important things like telling my story and creating a list of potential donors. I'm really proud of how everything turned out and I owe a lot of that to what I learned from Ian and Levi.* ~ Scott Zuniga, raised over 200% of his goal amount

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How should I handle travel expenses incurred for fulfilling rewards?
I have seen this handled a few different ways, all of which are fine. You need to do what is right for you.

But I will say that the easier you make it for your backers and the more accessible you are, the easier it will be to handle travel logistics with an interested backer.

Whatever you choose to do, try to use easy-going language that says, "Hey, I'm happy to do this! It will be great! We just need to work out a few details!"

Here are some examples:

1) Specify how far (miles/km) or how long (hours) you are willing to travel.

Pledge $1,500 or more

🟢 1 backer   Limited (4 left of 5)

PRIVATE JAY STOLAR EAST COAST-ISH
CONCERT: I'll come with my guitar and play
a concert for you and whoever you want on
YOUR couch. Must be within 250 miles of
NYC. + Physical Pay-It-Forward Package +
Smorgasbord Reward

Estimated delivery: Sep 2013
Ships anywhere in the world

Pledge $3,000 or more

🟢 0 backers

"Treat Your Friends" - House Concert w/
Full Band!
(limited to area within 1 hour Brooklyn only):
Two 40-minute Sets w/Jim & Honeyfingers +
CD + Digital Download

Estimated delivery: Jan 2015
Only ships to: United States

2) Specify that you'll fulfill reward in the midst of a tour.

Pledge $1,000 or more

1 backer

HOUSE CONCERT (I will come and play a house concert for you anywhere on the west coast, must be during a time that I am in your area)
+
Your name in the credits of the album
+
The making of the album DVD
+
Physical Signed Copy of CD
+
Early Release Digital Download of Album

Estimated delivery: Jun 2015

3) Specify that backer covers travel costs. It is optional to say "more than 2 hours away" or "more than 150 miles away".

Pledge $1,000 or more

🟢 **2 backers**

ACOUSTIC HOUSE CONCERT. I will come to you. I will bring my guitar. And a sound system if you'd like. I will sing your favorites of my songs and covers that I do. I can learn your favorite cover otherwise. I will love on your and your friends' ears. These nights are always, always, ALWAYS lovely. In your living room or back yard. We decide upon the date together. If it isn't along my tour (or in Washington or Texas), I will need to add travel expenses. We can sort it out without much fuss at all. And then it will be glorious. Some people even charge a cover and make their money back. Or not. Your call. ====> Also THE WOAH-MY-GOLLY ULTIMATE SONG CLUB + HHH EP + 2 SIGNED CDs + 2 EARLY DIGITAL DOWNLOADS + AN OPTIONAL GRATITUDE PHONE CALL!

Estimated delivery: Apr 2015
Ships anywhere in the world

4) Have a whole different reward for different levels of travel.

Pledge $3,000 or more

🔩 1 backer   Limited (4 left of 5)

PRIVATE JAY STOLAR AMERICA
CONCERT - Anywhere in continental US- I
will fly ANYWHERE in the United States of
America with my guitar and play a concert
for YOU and whoever else you want! +
Physical Pay-It-Forward Package +
Smorgasbord Reward

Estimated delivery: Nov 2013
Ships anywhere in the world

Pledge $5,000 or more

🔩 1 backer   Limited (4 left of 5)

PRIVATE JAY STOLAR INTERNATIONAL
CONCERT: Anywhere in Canada, Central
America, The Caribbean, South America or
Europe- I'll fly to any of these places, bring
my guitar and play a concert for you and
whoever else you want! + Physical Pay-It-
Forward Package + Smorgasbord Reward

Estimated delivery: Nov 2013
Ships anywhere in the world

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Should the funding goals include compensation for income tax?
Your campaign funds raised are considered taxable income. You will probably even receive a 1099 form that reports the income to the IRS. But all of your expenses can be written off against this income. Typically, a project's expenses will be at least as much as the campaign proceeds if not more. Basically, here are the 3 possibilities:

1) project expenses = campaign income, tax liability of the campaign is ZERO.

2) project expenses > campaign income, tax liability of the campaign is ZERO and you can carry excess expenses over to offset other income derived from your business (like sales from your website).

3) project expenses < campaign income, you will have tax liability on the difference between your income and expenses. This is rare but possible. However, you can also use other expenses to offset this income.

All of this being said, I am no CPA, this is not "advice," and you should always check with an accountant if you are uncertain!

To really address the question, should you plan for this in your funding goals?

Well, you could do that but I would argue it's against the spirit of crowdfunding and your relationship with your fans, friends and family. Thus, I would not suggest planning taxes into your goal amounts. In reality, raising funds that outweigh your expenses is very rare.

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Should I lower my reward price to get more action?

Do I price my reward for a day-long adventure and concert on the higher end or the lower end? I'm happy to do it on the lower end... but I know you say this is a "fundraiser" and to price it higher... I just think more might bite if I keep the price lower…

Will more people choose a reward if you lower the price? In a marketplace with lots and lots of consumers, of course they will! But that's not important, and here's why: people don't come to your page to "go shopping." It's not a marketplace. They come to SUPPORT YOU!

People usually have an idea of whether or not they'll pledge and how much they'll pledge before they even look through your rewards. Your pricing scheme may subtly affect their decision one way or another but it won't make a significant difference.

So you need to look at this from the top down: how do I build a SET OF REWARDS that will help and encourage people to pledge at the level that makes sense to them? This is a very different question from, "How do I price this reward to get the most people to select it?"

The best way to do this is to follow the advice laid out in the chapter covering rewards: keep a smooth pricing curve, and be happy to fulfill the rewards at the price you set them at.

You can change the prices of rewards up or down as you see fit, but DON'T leave a big price gap in your rewards. For example, don't lower a rewards price from $500 to $100 and then leave a gap that goes from $250 to $1000.

In other words, anytime you adjust one reward, think about how it affects the overall SET OF REWARDS, and then make adjustments accordingly. Rewards pricing isn't a science; it's an art. Have fun and do what makes sense to you, but

keep this advice in mind.

And before I go, a little food for thought: the real question is, will my campaign raise more money if I keep a specific reward price lower? It's pretty hard to say, but what we do know is that you could keep ALL OF YOUR PRICES under $50 and probably get more backers but you'd also probably end up raising a lot less, like one half or a quarter as much. So be careful and make sure you've addressed the whole set of rewards while making changes.

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My crowdfunding platform of choice doesn't have a preview feature. How do I pre-load?
Though it isn't ideal, you can still apply the preload technique by adding a few days to your campaign and your unofficial launch.

If your plan was to launch a 24-day campaign on a Monday, then adjust launch your campaign length to 28 days and quietly, unofficially, launch your campaign on the Thursday prior by sharing it with your pre-load list.

In our Four-Day launch sequence, Day 1 turns into Days 1-5. This is unofficial, and you are only sharing with your pre-load list.

Official launch day (Day 2) will now be Day 6. Likewise, Days 3 and 4 will scoot back to Days 7 and 8.

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When should the big fish pledge?
A student of mine had a big fish lined up to pledge and wrote in wondering about the timing.

> *If my brother is willing to pledge a huge amount, like $500 to $1,000 - should he pledge now or save it until the end? On one hand, his pledge now boosts the number of backers and total percent pledged -> increasing chances of making it to "What's Popular" or a Staff Pick. On the other hand, if I get too close to the $10K goal too early, do you think it'll make other backers pledge less?*

This is a great question and one that comes up a lot. The short answer is to have him pledge right away and then use stretch goals to keep people pledging, but the long answer might surprise your: it turns out that it doesn't matter! Let me tell you why: the single most important aspect of your live campaign is your personal outreach and giving people a reason to pledge.

You could take away every other element of your campaign and still have success. You don't need to have a video or a campaign description or even

rewards. You could have absolutely none of that, and as long as you reach out to people and give them a compelling reason to pledge, you could raise money for your campaign in theory.

BUT, if you take away the personal outreach, your campaign will lay a big, fat goose egg.

Give people a compelling reason to pledge.

Plain and simple, start with why. Lead with your Purpose. Assuming you've done a great job of crafting it into your campaign materials, all you have to do is continue to discuss it throughout your campaign.

But you're worried that people will stop pledging once you hit your goal amount. Is there any truth to this? *Only if you fail to give them a compelling reason to continue pledging!*

The solution is as simple as continuing to provide a compelling reason, which is almost always their investment in you and your purpose. People will continue to pledge to your campaign if you:

- Have a specific plan on how to take your project/career up a notch. This could include creating a "better" project or taking a "step forward" in your career via promotion, PR or expansion of some sort.
- Communicate to people how important the next step is to you and why it matters in your project and career. The place to do this is on your campaign page.
- Continue talking to people on a one-on-one basis but now you talk about your purpose and your stretch goal (instead of your original goal). You should also send updates to your backers explaining your stretch goals, and you should continue updating your mailing list on the new goals.

Take another look at our good buddy, Jay Stolar, whom we coached through a campaign[41].

This final version of his campaign page does not show Jay's stretch goals but buried down in the campaign description is this explanation: "We are starting by raising $15,000. What we need to effectively promote the project nationally is $20,000. To truly achieve the dream and promote the album INTERNATIONALLY we need $35,000-$50,000."

Now take a look at his funding curve:

Funding Progress: The Happiness and Connection Project — Closed at: $50,053 / $15k (333%)
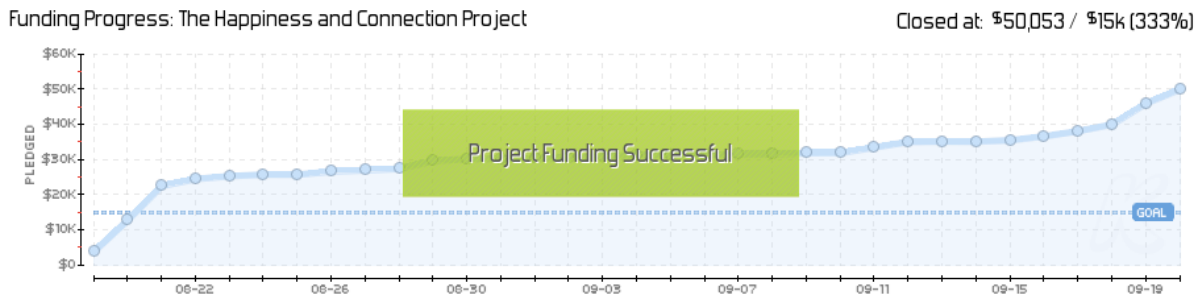
Notice that he blew past his original goal on the third day. Would it surprise you to know that we had no clue whether he would even hit his $15,000 goal at all when we launched? Though we didn't know for sure, we still planned for success. You can also tell that we launched his first stretch goal to hit $25,000 right away in the launch process, which he hit shortly thereafter.

We launched his second stretch goal of $40,000 at the end of the first week and, as you can see in the graph, we slowly crept toward it through the notorious mid-campaign slump, and we even hit it prior to the Three-Day End Sequence.

It might surprise you again to know that as we were planning his Three-Day End Sequence, the question came up as to whether we'd topped out and should just be happy with $40,000 or whether we would be able to raise more money if we introduced a third stretch goal of $50,000. We honestly weren't sure if we could go any further or not!

Well, you know by looking at the curve what we decided! And you can also be damn well certain that Jay never would have hit $50,000 had he decided to throw in the towel at $40,000.

People respond to one thing and one thing only: YOU. YOU show your PURPOSE. YOU show your DESIRE. YOU show the need and the plan to HIT THE NEXT LEVEL. Do those things and people will respond!

THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION: I would recommend having the big fish pledge ASAP, planning for success by being ready with your next stretch goal, and genuinely communicating your need and desire to hit the next goal. That's is how you double or triple your original funding goal.

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When should I introduce stretch goals?
You can include stretch goals in your campaign from the very beginning; there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, and it will not affect your campaign's overall fundraising ability. Just make sure to *announce the stretch goals* once you have passed each particular goal amount. In other words, once you've hit your goal, then announce your next goal by making your campaign update, posting to social media, emailing your list and even posting a new, simple selfie-video into

your campaign page.

Alternately, you can wait to announce stretch goals until after you've hit your goal amount. The key here is the same: *announce your stretch goal(s)* by making a campaign update, posting to social media, emailing your list and posting a new, simple selfie-video to your campaign page.
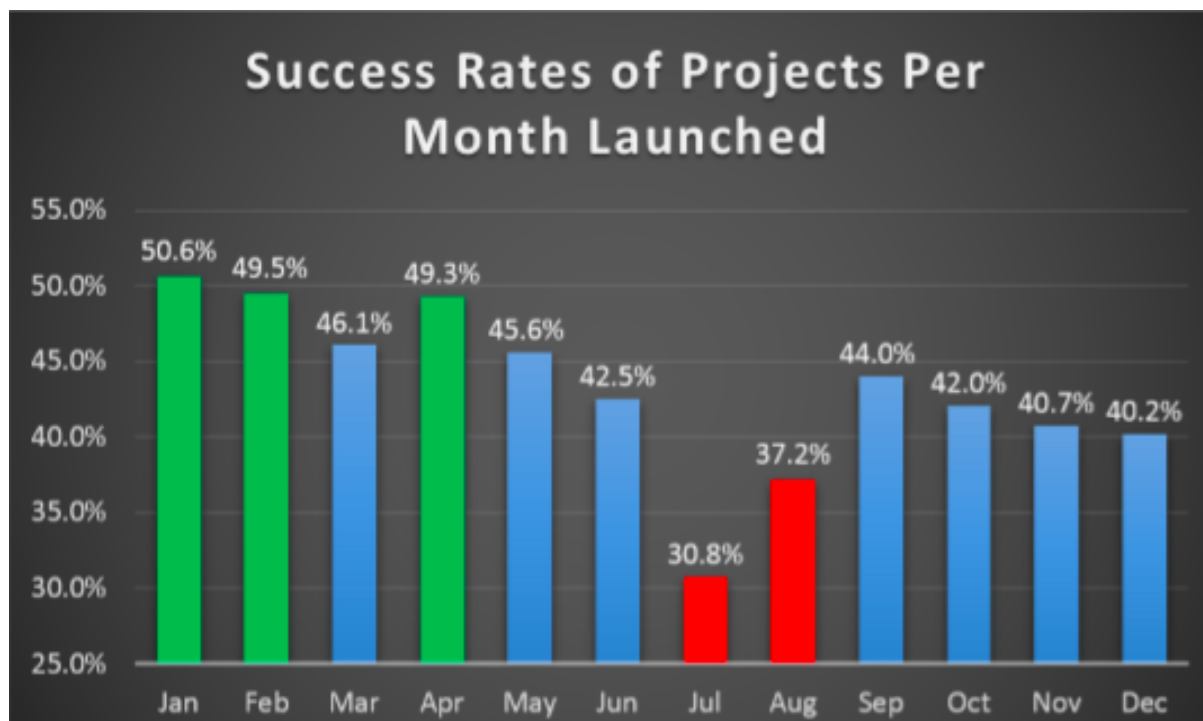
The critical part in timing is that you are prepared and make your announcement within hours after hitting your goal. If you hit your goal in the morning, announce that afternoon. If you hit your goal late in the evening, you can wait until the next day.

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Should I consider the holiday season when scheduling my campaign?
Peoples' attention spans and personal budgets are maxed out during the holiday season, and for that reason alone, I encourage campaign creators to avoid that time of year.

I also found a fantastic analysis of campaign success rates[42] by launch and end month. (Which excites me, yay fellow nerds!)

Success Rates of Projects Per Month Ended

Month	Rate
Jan	45.2%
Feb	49.7%
Mar	49.4%
Apr	45.8%
May	48.8%
Jun	48.1%
Jul	43.2%
Aug	28.3%
Sep	35.6%
Oct	42.4%
Nov	43.3%
Dec	39.5%
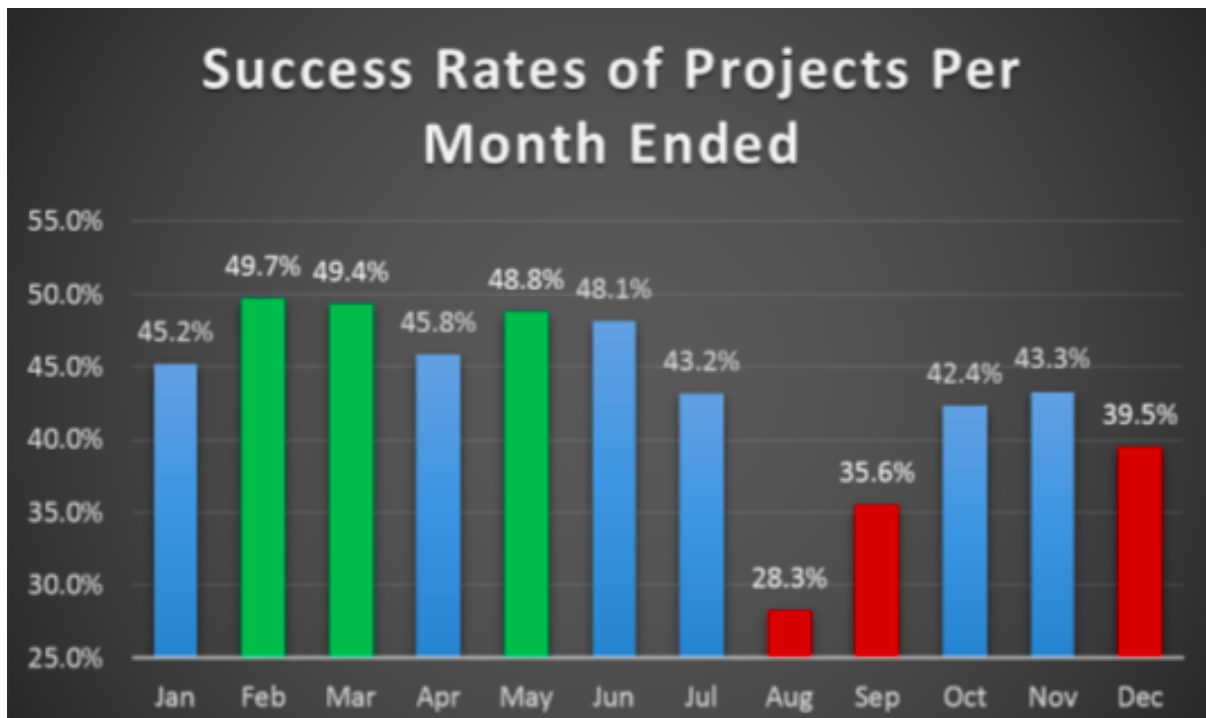
Source: gotgeniusgames.com, accessed December 2015

You can see that December isn't a great time to launch or end a campaign. I make sure the campaigns I work with launch by mid-November at the latest as long as the campaign ends no later than the first week of December.

One surprising feature of this chart is the months of July, August and September. My takeaway from it is that people are harder to reach during those months. But as long as you do the personal outreach as described throughout this book, you should be okay doing a summer campaign. We have done many and not had problems.

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How do I get featured by Kickstarter?
The assumption behind this very common question is that getting featured matters somehow, that it gives some sort of "magic" or "bump" to a campaign's funding.

But in reality, achieving What's Popular or a Staff Pick in Kickstarter doesn't result in more backers. It really doesn't. You'll be lucky to pick up an extra $50 in pledges from it. It's really just a feather in your hat and a piece of SOCIAL PROOF for you to share with your Circle of Influence as you tell them about your campaign.

If you do happen to get featured in Kickstarter's weekly email to its community, you will most likely see a good bump in funding, *assuming that your campaign is worthy*! I've observed that most campaigns featured do see a bump (I'd estimate that bump to double a campaign's funding), but I've also seen

campaigns that experience *no effect*.

The lesson from this is that "being featured" is not something you can manufacture. What matters is the core of your idea. Spend your time working on that and communicating it to your fans, friends and family. That is your number-one priority. Getting distracted by trying to get featured will result in a loss of focus and cost you pledges.

CHAPTER TWELVE

GETTING STUCK: COMMON PROBLEMS

DESPITE HAVING NOBLE INTENTIONS AND A GREAT PLAN, THERE ARE a few common problems that arise regularly in crowdfunding campaigns. You'll want to watch for signs of these problems—they're usually pretty obvious—and deal with them as quickly as possible in order to maximize the effectiveness of your campaign.

Getting stuck while creating your campaign can happen to anyone. The most common reasons often have to do with events in the campaign creator's personal life that turn into distractions or justifications for procrastination: work, breakups, busy schedules, lack of money, etc. The only real way to deal with these issues is to keep a laser focus and work hard to get your campaign to launch.

Following the six-step framework will help you avoid many problems that could arise while preparing your campaign. So let's move on to some other common problems that you may run into.

It is not unusual for people to go through all six steps of the framework in total agreement with the notion of Purpose but then lose sight of it before launch. Here are the two most common mindset problems to watch out for.

Feeling Like You Need To Justify Your Campaign
Here are some examples of things people say that are at least implicitly attempting to justify why they're asking for money:

- "things have not come cheap"
- "makes it even harder"
- "financial struggles"
- "just barely been able to support"
- "can't afford to do on my own"

This is very normal because it is uncomfortable asking for money. But the "need" for money doesn't resonate with the viewers very well. It actually ends up undermining what you're attempting to do. This has been demonstrated over and over in Kickstarter campaigns but, wouldn't you know it, it's exactly the

same trying to fundraise in the nonprofit world!

The most successful non-profits fundraise via a combination of purpose, authenticity, action and accountability. Those are the same ingredients that will help you. The psychology that will connect with your backers is your Purpose.

Your Purpose is a forward-facing mindset. It is an investment mindset. And to do that, you need to use positive imagery and communication and stay away from the woe-is-me artist mindset.

I'm not saying you haven't worked your ass off to get where you are, and I know from experience all the challenges of your chosen path, including being broke. But you cannot talk about that in your campaign!

For example, instead of saying:

> *Up until now we have just barely been able to support and make this band continue at the current level it is at, but with greater levels of this band comes greater finances that we can't afford to do on our own.*

You could say:

> *We have worked hard and gone through many challenges to get to where we're at today and we're proud of that. Now, we're incredibly excited to push it into the next gear going forward, which we can do with your help, love and support.*

These statements convey the same idea, but the vibe is completely different. Do you see the difference?

There's actually a study of the language[43] found in the written part of Kickstarter campaigns that predicts campaign success based on words and phrases contained in the campaign description. The big takeaway is that campaigns with negative language are much more likely to fail and ones with positive language are much more likely to succeed.

The more positive you are, the more your campaign will connect to people and the better you'll do.

Why Flexible Funding Is A Crowdfunding Killer
Before jumping right into the reasons why flexible funding is a crowdfunding killer, let's look at an example.

The Duhks are a country/roots/folk/Americana band that has had decent national success in the US and Canada. They tour all over both countries, get some radio play and have been nominated for multiple Junos (Canada) and even a Grammy.

In 2014, they ran a Flexible Funding Indiegogo campaign with a goal of

$70,000.

Turns out they only hit a little more than $18,000. Based on what the Duhks say in their campaign description, they view this as a success:

> *Even though we haven't reached our goal of $70,000, we are doing GREAT. We are finding alternative ways of making things happen, and everything is falling into place beautifully.*

Based on what Indiegogo says, Indiegogo would also call this a success:

> *We don't quantify the percentage of campaigns that are successfully funded because even if a campaign doesn't reach its funding goal, it can still be considered a success.*

I'm glad the Duhks are happy with their results but I would say it was not a success. In my honest opinion, the Duhks left money on the table. They even allude to this in their campaign description:

> *I am a musician and a performer. I'm pretty good at graphic art and merch design. I am not a professional crowd-funder. In fact, I've never done anything like this before. If I could go back in time, I would have set our goal at $10,000, never mind what we actually need to get this off the ground, because PERCEPTUALLY, it looks like we haven't raised that much money.*

It wouldn't surprise me if they could've hit 40-50k had the campaign unfolded differently. But instead, it appears they did what many do: set the campaign goal equal to the recording/production budget, chose flexible funding, and proceeded without a thought.

That's a problem.

There are several ways that flexible funding can sabotage your campaign. Most of them have to do with the psychology of your audience and how they'll perceive your campaign. But, perhaps surprisingly, the first few reasons actually start with you!

1) Positivity vs Negativity
Joyce Marter wrote a great article for the Huffington Post called "The Psychology of Success."[44] Here are the most important points:

> Open yourself up to prosperity. Cognitive psychology suggests that our thoughts precede our feelings and behaviors. Be mindful not to constrain yourself with self-limiting beliefs. As Dr. Joyce Brothers said, "Success is a state of mind. If you want success, start thinking of yourself as a success."

> Discover the power of intention. Wayne Dyer says, "Our intentions create our reality." Identify the primary intentions of your life, write them out, and

live by them.

Practice positive thinking. Understand that positivity attracts positivity through the laws of attraction.

Flexible funding is implicitly the opposite because it implies an expectation of not being successful. Even though doubt, fear and negativity may not overtly come through in your campaign, they will compromise it by affecting you, creeping into your campaign language and subtly influencing your audience.

2) The Campaign is Sabotaged By Your Own Doubt, Fear and Negativity
Flexible funding is another way of saying, "I'll take what I can get," which is drastically different than saying, "I'll do whatever it takes to reach my goal." If you choose flexible funding, you are basically conceding and throwing in the towel before you even start.

Think this won't apply to you? Consider an example: Let's say you have a $6,000 campaign goal and that you've raised $3,000 three weeks into the four-week campaign. If you have an all-or-nothing goal, you are damn sure going to find a way to raise that last half of your goal. I have seen many, many campaigns do precisely that, raising half or more of their funds in the last three days of the campaign.

But what are you going to do if you face the same situation with a flexible funding campaign? Do you really think you'll work as hard? Think about the economics of the situation.

In the flexible funding campaign, your incentive is basically 1:1: each additional dollar you raise gains you a dollar. But in the all-or-nothing campaign, your incentive is 2:1. To raise $3,000 more, you'll really gain $6,000, because if you don't get the last half, you don't get the first half! When you hit $4,000, your incentive is 3:1 and it just gets bigger until you hit your goal!

All-or-nothing clearly sets up a stronger incentive for you to work hard and reach your goal. The incentive to work and achieve your goal matters both to you and your audience because, as the Duhks example shows, perception matters. The remainder of this list will discuss why.

3) Flexible Funding Campaigns Appear Desperate
It may not be intuitive, but flexible funding appears more desperate by conveying that you are focused on getting any money you can from whoever will give it to you.

This is different from all-or-nothing campaigns that force you to focus on the outcome from the very beginning. Being desperate about having a successful outcome of your campaign is different from being desperate to get any money

you can.

I've previously highlighted the fact that "money follows mission" and discussed why you need to convey your Purpose, not just your need. Flexible funding undermines those ideas even, if you don't intend it to.

4) Flexible Funding is a Momentum Nonstarter
One thing that flexible funding clearly does is take away any sense of urgency that your campaign may have. It's not as important for your campaign to hit significant benchmarks ,like 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% funded because you're going to keep the money you raise no matter what.

Flexible funding lowers the stakes of your campaign. People pitching in don't get the chance to celebrate the little victories with you because the importance of hitting the benchmarks has diminished. So in the early and late stages of your campaign, when you're likely to get most of your pledges, your audience won't be as affected by any momentum that you build toward your benchmarks, funding goal or stretch goals.

Closely related to this lack of urgency and momentum is the next reason:

5) Flexible Funding Campaigns Lack Scarcity
Dr. Robert Cialdini discusses the principle of Scarcity in his widely read book, The Psychology of Persuasion. The Scarcity Principle states "that opportunities seem more valuable to us when their availability is limited."

It's a core tenet of modern-day marketing. Ever heard something like, "Don't wait, this offer won't last. Buy now! Only the first 11 viewers will be able to buy this recycled car headlight solar yard lamp…"

All-or-nothing invokes scarcity because if the goal isn't met, the project doesn't happen. In contrast, flexible funding signals that the project will happen with or without the audience's involvement.

6) Flexible Funding Weakens Social Proof
Flexible Funding would be fine if each person made their decision to pledge solely based on their individual perceptions of the campaign's value and merit, but people don't work that way. When making a choice, an individual takes into account all of the information that is available, including the behavior of other people.

In *The Psychology of Persuasion*, Dr. Cialdini also discusses the principle of Social Proof, which states that:

> [O]ne means we use to determine what is correct is to find out what other people think is correct… We view a behavior as more correct in a given

situation to the degree that we see others performing it.

In other words, we are more likely to do something we see other people doing. And, importantly, that phenomena is scalable. The more people we see making a certain choice, the more likely we are to mimic that choice.

Now, let me ask you this: Which music crowdfunding campaign do you think has more social proof: the campaign that hit 25% of its goal or the campaign that hit 180% of its goal?

I'm not trying to trick you. I would say the campaign that hit 180% of its goal demonstrates greater social proof. Now, which of these progress bars do you think demonstrates more social proof?
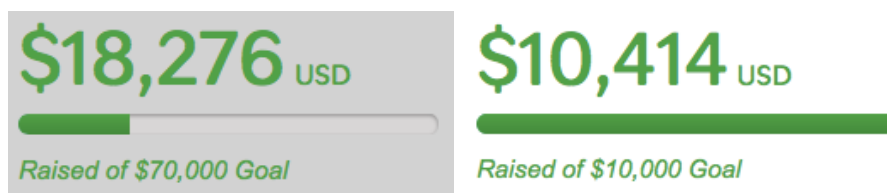
I would say the right one.

It doesn't matter if the "progress" is even comparable by being based on the same goal amount. When people look at the campaign, they'll quickly and maybe even subconsciously take in the campaign's progress without accounting for the number of backers or dollar amount.

The scientific literature shows again and again that people are more likely to make a choice supported by greater social proof. Another way of saying this is that tthe better your campaign appears to be doing, the better it will do.

7) Flexible Funding Decreases Social Currency
People want to associate themselves with things that are cool, smart, prestigious and successful. They think it reflects on them and makes them look cool, knowledgeable, prestigious and successful in the eyes of others!

Wharton School Professor of Marketing Jonah Berger calls this phenomenon Social Currency. His book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* explains how Social Currency helps things go viral and supports the idea with plenty of peer-reviewed, scientific evidence.

Greater crowdfunding success for you means greater social currency for your backers.

Ask the Duhks: is it better to hit $15,000 in pledges when your goal is $10,000 or $70,000?

Hitting your goal is success. Hitting 20% of your goal Is not.

Hitting your goal is important for two reasons. First, a portion of your audience will be swayed by whether you've hit your goal or not. If you don't hit your goal, you might not be able to tell whether you've lost individual backers, but you're likely to lose some backers in the aggregate. The research that Jonah Burger cites in *Contagious* offers support for this trend. You don't have to believe in science, but it will affect you all the same!

Second, as you get deeper into your campaign, you'll want your supporters to share your campaign. If Fred shares your project on Day 10 when you've hit 30% of your goal and again on Day 20 when you've hit 33% of your goal, do you think he'll bother to share it on Day 30 so you can try to break 36% of your goal before your campaign ends?

Unless he's seriously devoted to you, he's not going to share your campaign again. It won't make sense to him, and it may even harm his Social Currency to support a campaign that doesn't have much going on.

Ouch, I know, but it's true.

■ ■ ■

Problems During Your Campaign
Seeing those first few days' pledges roll in will be incredibly exciting and validating! If you have a solid understanding of how crowdfunding works and do the necessary work, you'll probably be A-okay. However, once in awhile you'll run into problems early in your campaign. And in almost all cases, the mid-campaign slump can cause you to lose your focus, determination or confidence. So let's talk about those problems and how you can beat them!

You Launch Your Campaign… And Hear Crickets
If you launch your campaign to the sound of crickets chirping while your total number of backers and funds raised hovers around zero, then you've obviously got a problem. Sometimes, you won't notice this until you're in the middle of your launch sequence because the pre-load technique typically gets you backers even if there's a problem with your campaign.

Either way, the problem is *almost always* the same: your campaign fails to communicate a real Purpose and focuses instead on the What: an awesome recipe, amazing video producer, this really cool opportunity or that really cool opportunity, etc.

Sooner or later, this is a campaign killer.

One way to monitor for this is to pay close attention to the first few sentences that you speak or write whenever you tell someone about your campaign. If those sentences dive right into the specifics of your project (what you're doing) and skip over the reason behind your project (why you're doing it), then you

need to reassess how you're communicating.

Examples of potential problems:

> Donnie, what's up?! Did you see my Kickstarter? It's going to be so awesome and I can't wait to record these new songs. They're my best ever!

> Hey Tim, so I have this amazing opportunity to work with Mr. Big-Time-Dude-In-My-Industry but I'm going to have to spend more than usual to work with him…

> Hey Bob, I am so jacked about my crowdfunding campaign, it is going to kick ass. You should check it out and pledge….

All of these statements focus on the What: the songs, the collaborator, the campaign, kicking ass, being awesome, etc.

But in the big picture, potential backers will not connect to this. There will always be exceptions and people who will back you no matter what, but *most* people will back you because they believe in you and emotionally connect with your campaign. They buy into your Purpose, your Why.

So, when you're talking about your campaign, be certain to spend some time setting the table with your Purpose before you start talking about the specifics of the campaign.

If you're having trouble, find a trusted friend to practice your pitch with. Ask them to be truthful with you and to help you talk about your campaign and project in a manner that is authentic and excited but not cheesy, overpowering or a turn-off.

You Set Your Official Goal Low But Still Didn't Hit It During Your Launch Sequence
Let's say you set your official goal absurdly low and don't hit it during launch. And, to make matters worse, you really need twice as much to do what you want to do! This feels like a big problem but it's a fairly normal spot to be in and shouldn't be a concern *as long as you do what you need to do going forward*! The focus at this point becomes taking small, incremental steps to hit your goal amount ASAP.

For most campaigns that finish with between 100 and 200 backers, this means doing whatever is necessary to find between five and ten backers per day, which will likely be between $250 and $1000 per day depending on your average pledge per backer. For campaign creators who are just starting out, you're likely to be on the lower end of that range (which is completely okay).

You need to reach your official goal amount for very important psychological

reasons.

First, you have to show people that your **true goals** are your **stretch goals**. And that you are going to do whatever it takes to reach those goals. As long as you maintain a little momentum, you'll be surprised at how it adds up over the campaign. Getting into your stretch goals by mid-campaign will help you raise more funds by (1) giving you something to talk about ("We hit the goal, yay, I'm grateful!"), and (2) giving you something to shoot for ("And I'm incredibly excited to shoot for the next goal, it would be awesome because x, y and z").

You can't take time off mid-campaign and leave your official goal and stretch goals for the end. It doesn't work that way! If momentum stalls and there isn't progress, "the crowd" tends to notice. People will interpret this as complacency and mirror that complacency. You'll need to raise most of your funds at the end of your campaign, and you'll end up leaving money on the table.

So, if you are struggling a little bit and trying to get started again, you need to do two simple things. First, talk to people and, second, leading with your Purpose— experiment with phrasing to figure out what resonates the most with people.

Call people, text people and send them personal emails or Facebook messages. You can do some cut-and-paste, but always add some personal detail and reciprocal care. Be sure to come from a place of positivity and gratitude. Also, go ahead and explain why it's so important for you to get support today and that you'd really appreciate the help!

Remember, you're simply letting people who you care about and who care about you know what's going on in your life. If they decide to pledge, great! If not, that's okay. You are just thankful for their willingness to take a look at your campaign and consider supporting it.
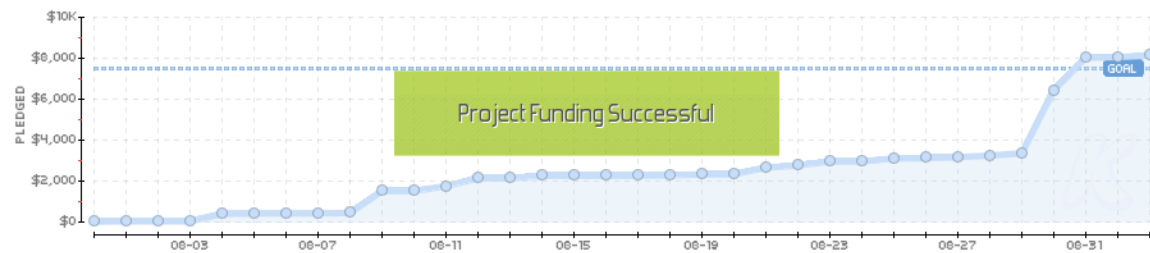
Once you've got this down, you have a template to follow for the rest of the campaign without having to second-guess or start from scratch every day. Continue working through your Circle of Influence on a daily basis.

Keeping the needle moving with individual successes and hitting your official goal are absolutely required if you hope to achieve your stretch goals later in the campaign.

Getting and Keeping Momentum is Key
If you don't generate some MOMENTUM, it will impact you and the people viewing your campaign. This happened to a fellow I worked with named Gerry. Look at his funding curve and notice how low and flat it is for the first 10 days.

Funding Progress: Everything's Jake - Songs to uplift and bring us together.
Closed at: $8,140 / $7,500 (108%)

For the first 25 days of his campaign, he had a little support but not enough to generate momentum.

After the campaign, Gerry said that he was literally willing to QUIT and throw in the towel as of five days before the end, at which point he had just barely hit 50% of his goal. This would never have happened had he taken it more seriously from the very beginning and managed to hit some crucial benchmarks.

Fortunately, he received a pep talk near the end of his campaign encouraging him to do everything we've talked about: reach out personally, be positive and thankful and know that YOU CAN DO THIS!

You can see how it turned out.

The Power of Steady, Incremental Progress

Contrast Gerry's experience with Layne, whom I was working with at the same time.

Funding Progress: The "My Oh My" Album!
Closed at: $8,212 / $7,000 (117%)

Notice how consistently her funding curve moves upwards a little bit every day. She commented on her early realization that she would have to fight for pledges each end every day. Yes, it was hard work, she said, but she also enjoyed the process and simply worked at contacting 10-15 new people per day as well as following up with prior contacts each and every day.

Gerry said he worked 20 hours per week. Layne probably worked more like 30. It's not easy but it's possible!

In the end, it doesn't matter if you've set a low goal and are only 25% there or 50% or already at 100%. The fact is that your campaign is fine. It's exactly where it needs to be, which is live and getting in front of people. All you need to do is simply take care of your end!

Mid-Campaign and You Have No Momentum
You made it through the first week and things probably went pretty darn well. Even so, not much has been happening lately. You've called, messaged or emailed everybody on your Circle of Influence list. Pledges have come to a stop, and it feels like everybody who would pledge has already done so. It seems like you have no shot at getting any further without reaching new people or having some miracle occur. You probably feel discouraged and worried that you won't hit your next goal, whether it's your official goal or a stretch goal.

This feeling comes around like clockwork. When it does, come back and read this section again. Here's what you do:

The *number-one thing* you should do from this point on is to **contact people individually**! I've repeated this often throughout the book and now I'm going to repeat it again because it is super important: Call people. Or email them (not spam). Or talk to them in person!

Marketing research shows that you may need to contact a potential customer up to seven times before they will take action. So don't feel like your job is done just because you've talked to someone once.

If you ever have the question, "What can I do today that will have the most impact?" the answer is always to contact people individually!

Games Don't Work; Talking To People Does
My campaigns have received blog placement, newspaper coverage or radio interviews. They have planned special concerts and events. They have received tweets from people like Amanda Palmer and Spike Lee that have gone out to millions of people.

And exactly none of these things were as effective at getting backers as reaching out to people on an individual basis.

You can't be complacent nor can you expect miracles. Just sit down and reach out to people one by one.

Remember Gerry? Here's a little more background: as I worked with Gerry to create his campaign, he seemed to "get it" and have everything in place. But you can see by looking at his funding curve that he didn't do the work.

I had a come-to-Jesus talk with him a week into his campaign and you can see that it got him going a little bit. But even then, he only progressed to about half

of his goal for most of the remainder of his campaign. He would say all the right things to me, but he wasn't truly buying it himself. It wasn't until a second serious talk that Gerry realized the work requires, started doing that work and then hit his goal.

Momentum Starts When Complacency Stops
So, Gerry's story illustrates a few things. First, if you are complacent, nothing is going to happen. Fortunately, if you set your mind to it, amazing things can happen at the end of a campaign. Remember Neva from the beginning of this book, who raised $6,000 in the last two days? Or Jay Stolar, who raised another $10,000 the last three days even though *we didn't think he could possibly raise more?*

Let me show you what happens when complacency persists throughout the entire campaign.
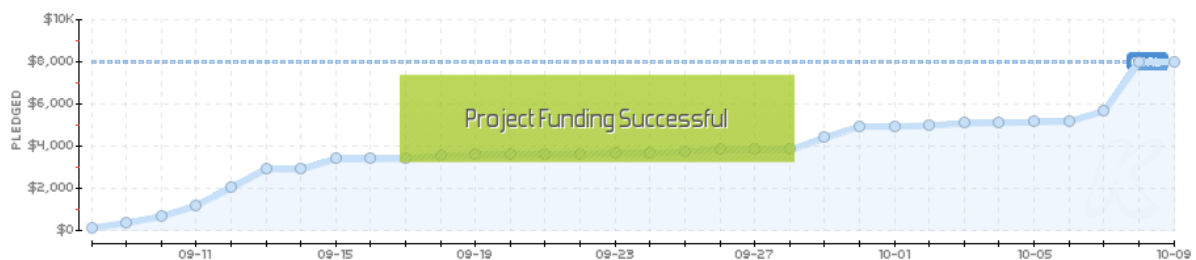
This fellow made very incremental progress the first several days of his campaign: about 5% per day for the first four or five days. But if I hadn't gotten ahold of him on Day 3 or 4 and lit a fire under him, he still might be at $1,000! After the first week of his campaign, he accomplished very little during the mid-campaign slump—he raised maybe $1,000 in 20 days.

You can see in the graph that he waited and waited and waited and pulled out his goal amount only at the very last possible second. And I'm here to tell you that it was all fight to even accomplish even that.

Here's the thing: the mid-campaign slump happens to ***most*** campaigns. But what people don't seem to realize is the amount of choice you have in the matter. Even if you don't raise very much and things go pretty slow, you can stay positive and excited about your campaign, or you can feel negative and defeated.

This campaign creator was not in a good place mentally, and you can see that his campaign paid the price for it by barely hitting its goal. The campaign DEFINITELY did not hit any stretch goals. The creator never put himself in position to do much better than limp past the official goal so he really didn't

have a shot at more.

The campaign did not consist of much, if any, personal outreach. It was mostly uninspiring Facebook posts and group emails. Which obviously didn't result in progress.

Staying Positive Is Critical
Contrast that with another fellow we worked with. His funding curve looks not that different. Just like the previous campaign, this campaign was also at around $4,000-5,000 as it went into the last week.
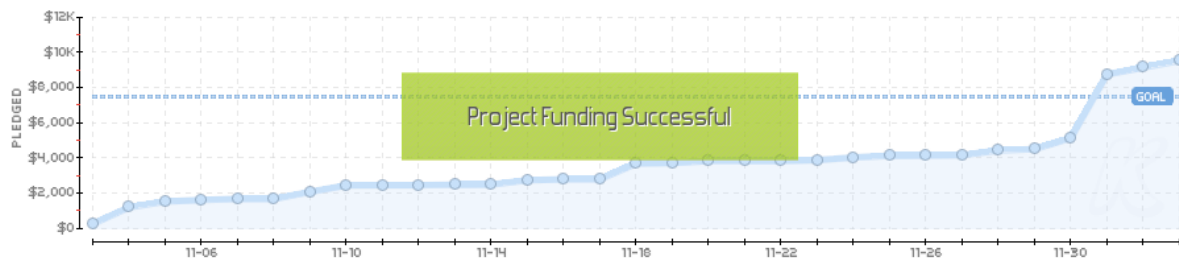
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But this guy kept faith in himself, kept working and followed through with the mechanics of the Three-Day End Sequence and you can see that not only did he break his goal with time left to spare, he went on to raise a couple thousand more!

Mid-campaign is a crossroads, and you can go either way. If you are complacent and don't work hard at contacting people, you risk leaving real money on the table and not having a shot at reaching your stretch goals.

But the rest of your campaign is in front of you and YOU get to choose your destiny!

Going forward, contact part of your Circle of Influence every day. You should try to contact everybody on that list a minimum of three times during your campaign and, hopefully, at least twice during the middle of your campaign.

I obviously don't know what number you are trying to reach sincerely, honestly and with your-complete-soul-and-being. But you have the opportunity in front of you and work to do! It's possible. It all depends on you.

SO THERE YOU HAVE IT. CROWDFUNDING.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN. This system has proven to be successful. My goal in this book has been to show you the process and to help you understand what works and what doesn't.

But the key to making this work is for *you* to take the first step.

You may be ready to hit launch tomorrow or you may be contemplating an idea for the future. Either way, once you hit go, expect the process to be a roller coaster. You'll be exhilarated and inspired. Sometimes you'll be frustrated and even demoralized. But once it's all said and done, you'll be ready to move forward towards your dreams! And that fact alone is priceless, worth any cost that you have to bear to get there.

Email me at launchandrelease@gmail.com and let me know how your campaign goes. I want to hear your success story!

Sending you luck and best wishes.

~Ian

SPECIAL THANKS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WITH A MEMORIES OF A FORMER LIFE as a touring, broke musician and an insatiable curiosity to understand why crowdfunding campaigns succeed or fail (with data to back it up), Ian Anderson left a lucrative (albeit nerdy) career in Economics to start Launch and Release with his friend, Levi James. Within a year, they had created the Advanced Crowdfunding System which has achieved an incredible success rate of over 96% and raised millions of dollars for their clients' campaigns.

Since then, Ian has amassed volumes of hands-on, crowdfunding experience with an understanding of how to best help creative people and artists fully maximize their crowdfunding experience. Today, he offers training and consultation for creatives and artists at all levels, whether they have legions of fans or are just starting out.

Ian resides in Bozeman, Montana where he pursues his passion for outdoor fun. He lives with his wife Leah and their (human) critters, Kieran and Freja.

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