
How to kick-start your Kickstarter campaign



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The crowd funding phenomenon has changed the way that support can be garnered for innovative ideas. Through this method, swathes of people, who wouldn't have otherwise got the opportunity, have become entrepreneurs. There is plenty of competition for financial backers, however, so it is important that you do everything possible to make your project stand out.

The 'daddy' in the crowdfunding arena of course is Kickstarter, outperforming the likes of Indiegogo, RocketHub and GoFundMe. In the 5 years since its inception, Kickstarter has raised a staggering \$1.9 billion worth of investment for all manner of different projects (with nearly 10 million contributors getting involved). 15,000 technology related projects are now embarked upon each year via this crowdfunding platform. Projects in this particular sector have a higher than average failure rate though - with only about 20% of them hitting their target (as opposed to the 33% that projects generally manage).

So what should you be doing to attract would-be investors and to secure the funds needed?

In reality you are not going to persuade someone to part with their hard-earned cash if you can't convince them that your project is a viable one. In order to succeed, you need a carefully orchestrated and well executed marketing strategy. Simply relying on the Kickstarter site to do all the work for you is not going to be enough. A passive approach will mean that your project's chances of prevailing will be marred. You need to be proactive, and what's more you need to be prepared.

First of all your Kickstarter landing page needs to be skilfully laid out - it should give a good summary of what your project is all about, covering all the key points and also showing where to go to get further details on specific facets. You need to have a number of different calls to action - as well as encouraging visitors to pledge money, it is also important to get them to share information on your project with their social media connections - with the objective of creating a snowball effect.

Key Promotional Methodologies

Blogging - This is a powerful tool when it comes to making the world aware of your venture. You need to blog frequently and the content should be as varied as possible. Do not overplay the sales pitch element here. If you are totally one dimensional in your style then you will soon put readers off. Look to broaden the scope of your blog content as much as possible. Reference market research, give your opinion on current news items that relate in some way to your project. As a rule of thumb, only one in 4 or 5 of your blog posts should directly discuss the product you are developing.

Video Content - People often shy away from creating videos, but this can be one of the most effective promotional conduits at your disposal. If the idea of talking straight to camera doesn't appeal to you, then you should look at alternatives. Transforming PowerPoint presentation into video, then adding a voice over is very simple to do. Ideally you need to go a lot further though. There are animation creation tools that are readily available and through use one (or preferably several) of these, you can produce more compelling content that will arouse greater interest.

Press release - The drafting and subsequent distribution of a press release to the relevant media outlets has a great deal of value too. This needs to be done properly though. Drafting a good release is not as easy as it may first appear. You have to strike a balance between being concise but still informative. The text needs to be straightforward rather than unnecessarily convoluted, an eye-catching title should be included and the core messaging needs to be correctly defined.

Email shots - These can also be of considerable merit, but there are certain provisos that anyone using them needs to be aware of. Firstly, as with the other promotional channels discussed, the content needs to have a high degree of quality. Secondly the call to actions must be well defined. Thirdly it is simply pointless creating a good email shot (or series of email shots) with stimulating content and well thought out call to actions, to then just send it to an inferior list, which is either not big enough or does not have a large proportion of contacts that are applicable.

The Social Media Aspect

With social media it is important not to spread yourself too thin. There are a multitude of different platforms out there, but it is better to concentrate on doing a select few of these rather than trying to cover a wide array of them and doing it badly. The social media content you create must be of a high quality and updates should be made on a regular basis.

Twitter can be an especially proficient way of engaging with your prospective audience. Interesting, thought-provoking comments are the key. This will increase the probability of getting retweets, and it is through this that you'll be able to spread your net across a much wider number of potential investors. Don't just keep banging on about the same thing. If all your posts are repetitive - i.e. your basic project pitch with a link to the landing page, then you aren't going to get far (though it always amazes me when I see companies who are convinced they have Twitter covered, are actually just doing this). Be more imaginative. Update followers on the progress being made on funding the campaign, the technical challenges you've faced and how you have overcome them. Raising your Twitter following is critical, good posts will help with this. There are other tricks of the trade that are worth learning though.

Having a presence on LinkedIn is also likely to be of benefit. Set up LinkedIn page, then seek out appropriate groups and try to start dialogues on these. If you have already creating content for the other promotional channels mentioned here, then you should have a good resource from which to draw material for posting on LinkedIn groups. It's all about repurposing content to suit specific objectives and specific audience types. This can often be difficult without experience, but help is available.

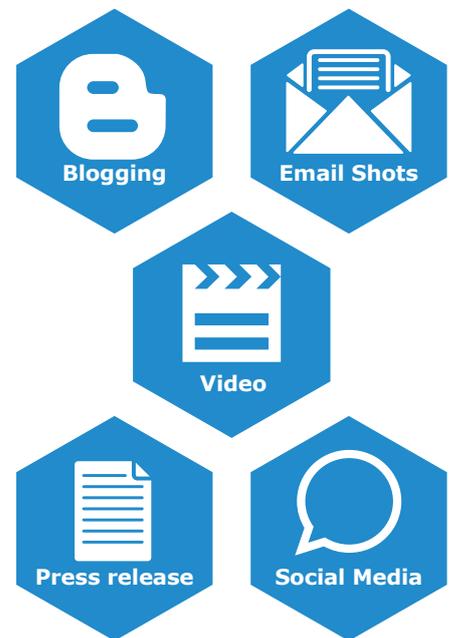


Figure 1: Promotional Methodologies

The validity of Kickstarter (and other crowdfunding sites) for acquiring financial support for new product concepts is beyond any doubt. The sheer number of projects that have come to fruition via employing this strategy gives conclusive proof of this. Reaching a target threshold is, however, far from easy. Timing is key. Often projects fail to get off the ground because the associated promotional activity is started far too late. Momentum needs to be built up, so the promotional element of any project should commence at least 4 (if not 6) weeks before the project goes live on Kickstarter. By then it ought to have been possible to gain substantial attention. If you haven't done this then you are going to need to put a lot of effort into playing catch up.

Not organising things in advance, a lack of the necessary expertise and limited resources to do the job properly can all contribute to badly implemented Kickstarter promotion. So gaining some expert advice where you can is advisable. Working with a PR agency that has crowdfunding experience will mean that you can get more done a lot quicker. It will enable you to obtain first class content, it will also help you to get it out - putting it in the places where it will be seen by the right people. Using a professional PR operation has additional advantages, for example in tracking your progress - going way further than what basic Google Analytics can deliver. They will be able to give you access to sophisticated software packages that can support your content marketing activities, monitor your audience engagement and help to increase the chances of converting potentially interested parties into fully-fledged investors.

Conclusion

PR agencies who are adept at promoting crowdfunding projects will be able to offer different business models to suit your individual needs, thereby making things totally cost effective. With only a comparatively small outlay, the rewards can be significant - allowing the odds of crowdfunding triumph to be pushed more in your favour.





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