Bring out the crowd in crowdfunding: Growing your campaign audience

Your audience size determines your crowdfunding campaign’s success. We know that the more people you have on your email list when you launch, the more money you will raise. But that kind of attention doesn’t come without work. No matter how great your product or your vision, you have to fight for a large audience.

We know that getting supporters takes strategy and dedication. But there are plenty of outlets to get the word out to people who are interested. Take advantage of the trail blazed by campaigners that came before you. In this guide, we present tested strategies that will help you build a successful campaign and foster a passionate audience for your product — both during your campaign and beyond.

1. LEVERAGE YOUR NETWORK
You may not realize it, but you already have an audience right in front of you. Don’t underestimate the power of starting with the people you already know. Your personal network of close friends and acquaintances is the foundation of your audience, and this is your starting point for getting the word out about your campaign.

MAKE A LIST
You and your team members should start by making a list of everyone you know personally: your friends, your family, your friends of friends, your coworkers, your acquaintances. Facebook is helpful for jogging your memory about who you already know. (It’s also helpful for getting the word out, but we’ll get to that later).

Once you’ve made this list, add your outer community to it: referrals from your friends, contacts from networking events, industry leaders, relevant and related businesses. LinkedIn is a good place to go for inspiration. Work those 2nd and 3rd tier connections!

CREATE A SOLID FOUNDATION EARLY ON
The benefit of starting here is that it validates your campaign for strangers. They’ll be able to see that others trust you and believe in your project.

PRO TIP: Most campaigns that reach their goal raise roughly 30% of their goal from their own network before attracting outside attention.
2. BUILD A LANDING PAGE
All of this audience building should be happening months before your campaign, so you’ll need a place to drive traffic for people looking to learn more. The benefits of having a landing page are threefold:

- It gives you a central place where people can learn more about your campaign.
- It lets you collect emails.
- It gives you a link that both you and your network can distribute on social media, to the press, and in your email signature. (You can’t link people from a Tweet to an email!)

You can create a “Coming Soon” page on Indiegogo, or build your own using a website-building tool. Just make sure that it has an email capture form for building your email list.

Eight: Sleep Tracker (originally called Luna) launched a teaser landing page to capture email addresses before they started their Indiegogo campaign. They kept it simple with concise information, a single image and a clear call to action. They then enhanced their page by running A/B tests for different versions of their landing pages using Optimizely. They discovered that offering a 15% off signup incentive got a better conversion rate. The tests also helped them narrow down what copy and images to use.

TELL YOUR STORY
Campaigns are built around stories. You aren’t just selling people a product. You’re selling them your vision and your mission. In a sense, you’re selling them on you. And that’s a big part of why backers are attracted to crowdfunding in the first place. Many backers say that the reason they back a campaign is because they want the person or cause to succeed. Don’t be afraid to make your story central to your campaign.

What’s in it for me?
A successful campaign shouldn’t benefit just you — it should benefit your audience, too. Most people won’t give you money unless it’s clear what your campaign can do for them. They want discounts, early access, or exclusive accessories in exchange for taking a risk backing your campaign. Consider asking yourself, “So what?” as you read over your text. Someone should be able to immediately understand why becoming involved in your campaign — both emotionally and financially — will help them personally.

Keep in mind that you don’t just want people to contribute; you want them to champion your campaign to their own networks. The more compelling you make your early offers, the better your success.
MAKING IT PERSONAL MAKES FOR GREATER CROWDFUNDING SUCCESS

The Danish brother and sister team behind MATE eBikes was one of Indiegogo’s biggest success stories of 2016 and they made sure their backstory was front and center.

“We learned that we shouldn’t hide ourselves behind a campaign page. Introducing ourselves and making ourselves visible and real was as important as branding our product,” explained the MATE founders. “When backers trusted us and empathized with us, it was easier for them to feel passionate about our project.”

They decided that the best way to tell their story was through their campaign video. “The video tells a personal story, about how we are siblings and were raised here in Copenhagen where everybody bikes,” they said. “Passion is key for a good video: We highlight our background and our motivation, and you can feel our enthusiasm for the product in the video.”

3. REACH OUT OVER EMAIL

Campaigners usually find that email outreach is their most effective way of gaining attention, growing their audience, and getting contributions. It’s the best way to get in touch with your network and to get the word out about important updates, special deals and major milestones and events.

But what constitutes a healthy email list? Every campaign is different, and to get an idea, you should figure out what your average contribution will be (probably your product price) and what your goal is. We recommend assuming a conversion rate of 5%. You can then use this rough calculator to get an idea of what your email list should be. Having a good email list before your campaign launches will help it get off to a strong start.

USING EMAIL TO GET EARLY MOMENTUM

You can compel your network to contribute early by offering a secret deal to those who contribute in the first 2 days of the campaign. You can replace it with a similar perk at full price later. The key is to remind your audience that they only have a limited time to redeem their perk and to encourage them to share news of the deal to others.

You can continue to offer deals throughout your campaign, like a final deal once your campaign is about to end. But it should never be quite as good as your initial deal. You don’t want to upset your early backers who made sure they were among the first to contribute.

START WITH YOUR HOST COMMITTEE

Regardless of your starting email list size, your first step should be forming your Host Committee. A Host Committee is a group of people who are passionate about your project and are committed to contributing and/or emailing their networks on your behalf. (They’re also the ones you can count on to raise your first 30%). Your first step should be reaching out to your closest networks.

Divide your network into two groups. Take a look at the list you made of your extended network and identify 10-15 people that are ready to support your goals and help you get a fanbase. These are the people that are going to get your first email: an invite asking them to join your host committee. No matter how big or small your campaign, a Host Committee is crucial to getting your campaign to your goals. The rest of your network is your Early Supporter Network. An Early Supporter Network is a much larger group that includes anyone who might be interested in your project. Both of these groups will be the recipients of your earliest email outreach.

Help! My email list isn’t big enough

Building an audience takes time, which is why it’s important to start building an audience well before the launch of your campaign. Make sure you have a way to capture emails on your landing page so that you can add them to your email list. Then, you and your network can drive traffic to it in email signatures and on social media. You can also participate at events and get people to sign up for your email list in person. There are many resources available online to help you build your email list. Check out these guides from Helpscout, Copyblogger, and Harry’s Razors to get started.

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**THE ANATOMY OF A GOOD CAMPAIGN EMAIL**

**Open with a personalized greeting**

News about a big milestone right at the top and in the subject line

**Relevant graphics make it visually pleasing, organized and easy to read**

A community update comes first. Celebrate the people that have helped you get where you are

**A shareable link makes it easy for backers to get the word out with a single click**

An update on new features lets your community know what you’re working on and helps them feel involved

**Be transparent about your timeline so backers know when to expect perks**

Closing with kindness and sincerity makes it personal

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**Hello Kira,**

The “Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls” team just posted:

**ONE MILLION DOLLARS!!!**

Dearest backers,

140 days after the launch of our campaign, Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls hit $1 MILLION in pre-orders!!!

![Image of money]($1 MILLION!!!)

In this update:
- Data about this unbelievable community
- New cool features of the book
- A timeline!

**Let’s go!**

**1. COMMUNITY**

Let’s be clear about this. You did this. You made this a record-breaking, history-making, mind-bending success. And you know who you are. But who are the others? How many of them are out there? Where do they come from?

To date, between Kickstarter and Indiegogo we are a community of

![Image of globe](19,445 people living in 71 COUNTRIES)

WOW! It sure sounds like a revolution in the making, doesn’t it?

75% of you have filled out the surveys! Oh yeah! This also means that there are about 1,250 backers who still have not completed their survey. If you’re among them, go ahead and fill it out! You can also add more copies of the book or more posters or tattoos...

Have you lost your survey? Click HERE to find it!

For those of you who need to update their address, you can do it until the end of September!

**2. NEW COOL FEATURES OF THE BOOK**

You rebels showed us so much love that we just can’t stop adding awesomeness to the book.

So here’s what’s new:

- The book will be slightly bigger: 7 x 0.5 inches! We just realized it would be better to give more space to the amazing portraits the artists created.
- It will have a ribbon!! (Red, double sided)

- The cover will be debossed!
- The paper we chose is a super fancy one! Lynx #400 uncoated. Just awesome to touch (rouglier than the coated one) and great with the colors.

**3. TIMELINE**

We had told you we were going to be in Italy on a creative retreat to finish the book. Well, the book is finished and now we’re back in LA. (Shoe our flight to LA got canceled, we finished reviewing the layouts at the airport and on the plane!)

We are about to send the pdf to the printer for the 1st pass! On September 19th we will send the final file to the printer in Canada!

The book will be all printed by October 25th and by October 31st they will arrive to the fulfillment center in Chicago. From there, they will start shipping. All the books will be shipped within the first two weeks of November, so that you’ll have them by end of November, as planned.

This is all for now!! Let your friends know about Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls.

Click to tweet about the milestone: 1 MILLION backers!

Thank you and take care of each other.

Sincerely yours,

Elena & Francesca

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INDIEGOGO
4. USE SOCIAL MEDIA
Social media and crowdfunding go hand in hand like peanut butter and jelly. After email outreach, it’s the second most effective method of driving traffic to campaign pages on Indiegogo. Roughly 30% of campaign traffic is driven through social media. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your social media promotion.

CREATE ACCOUNTS AND PAGES EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOUR PRODUCT
You may have put a lot of yourself into your product, but you are not your product. So why should you just talk about your campaign on your personal social media pages? Give your product its own social media real estate to explain what it is and why it will benefit people.

LAUNCH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN MONTHS IN ADVANCE
Remember what we said earlier about how your campaign should already have generated interest before launching? Social media is a great way to do that. It gives your Host Committee and your email list a way to easily share your campaign. It’s an ideal place to generate support and interest before your launch.

TARGET YOUR AUDIENCE
You’ll get better results from social media by targeting your audience. Think about your target audience. Who would use your product? No matter how universally appealing your campaign might be, you’ll do better by narrowing your focus. Your innovative smartwatch may be useful to everyone, but it’s probably going to gain the most traction among tech-savvy early adopters. Do some research to figure out where your audience hangs out on social media and then concentrate your efforts on that channel.

CREATE A HASHTAG FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN
Make a hashtag and use it when you post about your campaign. It’ll help people categorize content about your campaign on social media. But don’t make them overly long or too clever. No one wants to be bothered typing a long hashtag, and you ultimately want people to find your hashtag via search. It shouldn’t be hard to use or find.

POST COMPELLING CONTENT
A great way to get and keep subscribers is to post content people actually want to read. Roccbox, a portable pizza oven, maintains a fun tone on their Twitter feed. They intersperse product announcements and company updates with pizza recipes and dog photos. Don’t be afraid to let your company’s personality shine through!

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5. CONTACT THE PRESS
A good public relations strategy not only spreads awareness of your campaign to new audiences, it also builds trust with potential backers. The media can be a voice of authority about your campaign. If journalists are talking about your product, there must be something to it beyond your own word.

CREATE A MEDIA KIT
If a reporter replied to you immediately and said they wanted to cover your product, what would you send them? Would you be ready?

Before you begin reaching out to reporters, put some time into creating a media kit. This should include information about your product, your personal story and mission, user testimonials, frequently asked questions, pricing information, contact information and high-resolution images. This way, when reporters respond to your email asking for more information about your product, you’ll have something to ready to send them. It’s also valuable to link to it on your landing page. Most companies have press kits on their websites in case journalists want to put together something about them. Why should your product be any different?

FIGURE OUT WHAT PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTERS ARE LIKELY TO BE INTERESTED
Before you can start contacting the press, you need to do some homework. What does your target audience read? Keep in mind that reporters are ultimately trying to write about things that their readers will find interesting. Start reading these publications yourself and taking note of what reporters cover. This will also help you understand how to pitch and contextualize your campaign. What’s valuable to your target audience? What are some industry trends? How does your product compare to the competition? Is it filling a hole in the market?

START SMALL
You might have better success reaching out to small and/or local media outlets. You’re more likely to get coverage from smaller publications, and you can use this coverage to gain momentum and credibility. Also, don’t forget to reach out to influencers and bloggers. They can have huge followings that will bring attention to your campaign.

HOW TO PITCH
Pitching the media is similar to applying for jobs: you need to tailor your pitch to each reporter and publication. This is where understanding what each reporter has written about comes in handy. It will help you choose an aspect of your campaign to focus on. Maybe you’ll choose to focus on how you reached your crowdfunding goal within 24 hours. Maybe you’ll highlight that your educational toy helps foster an interest in science and engineering in girls. Maybe a product you made in your basement just got a huge order from a major retailer.

Highlighting what makes your product stand out will help a reporter craft a story around your campaign. More importantly, that story will help compel people to get involved, which is ultimately what you want.

ANATOMY OF A PITCH EMAIL:
1. A subject line that spells out exactly what the news is.
2. A personal salutation
3. A pitch that is specifically tailored to that journalist and their beat
4. A text that’s written in plain English, or better yet, bullet points. Just like the rest of us, reporters are trying to get through their emails as quickly as possible. They don’t want to dig through dense text for information.

FOLLOWING UP
You can follow up after a week to see if a reporter got your email. Maybe they saw it but didn’t get a chance to respond yet. Maybe they overlooked it entirely. In your follow up email, you should repeat your offer to send them more information. Better yet, you might have new information to share. Perhaps there’s been a major development since your first pitch.

If you haven’t heard back after a couple of emails, you can probably assume that you won’t be getting coverage by that particular outlet for this release of your product. But don’t get discouraged! It doesn’t mean that reporter or publication won’t cover a later product release, or that there might be a different publication out there that will show passion for your project. There simply aren’t enough reporters to cover everything happening in the world at any given moment.

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PITCH EMAIL AND A PRESS RELEASE?
A press release is meant to discuss a timely milestone. A personalized pitch email is the best venue for getting the word out about your campaign. Save press releases for major announcements. Did you just score a partnership with a major retailer? Is today the day your film will be premiering? Are you starting to take orders for the second iteration of your product? These are all potential reasons for sending a press release. Otherwise, stick with a pitch email.
6. HOST AN EVENT
Sometimes a great way to get interest in your campaign is by meeting potential backers firsthand. This is a great way to put yourself out there and garner attention, both from backers and from your fellow entrepreneurs in your space. Become a part of your community of fellow makers! Any event is an opportunity to get contributions and email list sign ups on the spot. Personal experiences with your campaign are a great way to keep momentum going and inspire the hearts and minds of potential contributors.

LAUNCH A KICK-OFF EVENT
Kick-off events are a great way for potential contributors to meet you and your team. You can tell them in person why you’ve chosen crowdfunding and why their help is so critical for getting your project off the ground. It’s also a great way for them to see your product in action. If you’re raising money for a product, bring a prototype and let people test it out to see how useful and amazing it is. If you’re raising money for a creative project, sample some of your work with a film screening, an art show, or a book reading.

ADD A SECRET PERK FOR EVENT ATTENDEES
Reward your event attendees by adding a secret perk just for them. You can showcase a particular bundle at the event or advertise special pricing for attendees. Use Indiegogo’s Secret Perk feature to generate a unique link that will let them see the secret perk on your campaign page and send it in a follow up email to people that attended.

USE EXCLUSIVE EVENTS DURING YOUR CAMPAIGN AS PERKS
Everyone likes being invited to an exclusive party. Invite contributors to have a special experience in honor of your campaign. If you’re raising money for a performance or a screening, contributors can get backstage access, a visit to your set, VIP seating, or a chance to meet the performers. If you created a new cooking tool, you could throw a dinner party where you cook food using your gadget. If you’ve built an innovative new toy, host an entertaining children’s party where parents can bring their kids to play with your toy and each other. You can also use this opportunity to give your contributors an inside look into how your campaign is going.

HOST AN AFTER-PARTY
Once your campaign is wrapped up, you can host a party celebrating its success. Share testimonials at the party illustrating how your campaign has impacted people. Bring your campaign to life by celebrating with everyone who made it possible. Crowdfunding is an emotional journey for both campaigners and backers. Let your backers have a chance to feel included in your success.

CONCLUSION:
Crowdfunding is all about getting people involved in your product’s success. Remember that the most important thing you can do for your campaign is grow your audience. It starts long before your campaign does but it pays dividends afterwards, whether your campaign will continue to live on as an Indiegogo InDemand campaign or move off platform. You’re not just growing an audience for a campaign, you’re assembling a community around a budding business, creative project or community program that will live on long after your crowdfunding campaign ends. It takes time and hard work, but with a dedicated strategy, every campaign has the potential to grow their audience and become a success.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Your own network is the foundation for your campaign
• Tell your story on a pre-campaign landing page
• Email outreach builds momentum before your campaign even starts
• Use social media months in advance to promote your campaign
• Tailor your press pitches to individual publications and journalists
• Host events to connect with your backers personally

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