Community Fund

Part 3

Running your project

Marketing basics

Now that your project page is looking good, you need to build a plan to connect with your Crowd.

Take another look at your network map. Now think about which communication tools are best for each group. For example, who do you usually reach via email, who's best to reach by phone or on Facebook? Add these notes to your network map.

When spreading the word about your project, always start with the people closest to you, before engaging with others. People who already know you are more likely to support your project than those who don't.

Similarly, people who are already aware of your organisation are also more likely to engage than those who are not. As your project starts to gain momentum, it'll begin to look more attractive to people outside of your own network. Be patient – get some pledges before posting publicly on social media.

Remember that you need to win people over. Take the time to start conversations and engage with people personally. Spamming doesn't work.

Start from the middle and work your way out
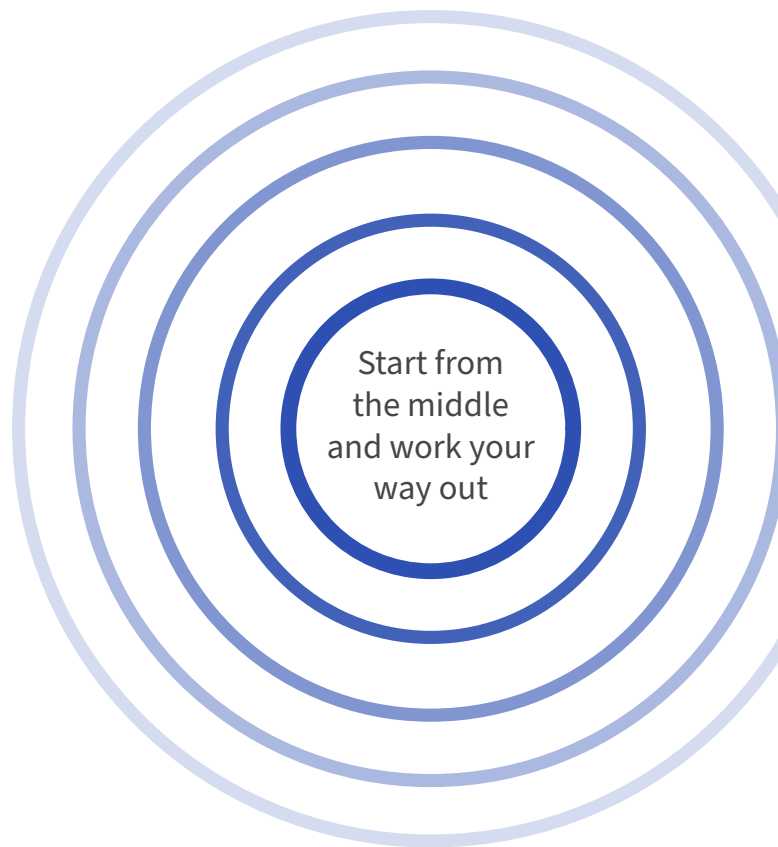
Be personal. Be direct.

"Have a plan for how you're going to get funded. It doesn't need to be a perfect plan, just a plan!"

Sami Mauger,
Head of Coaching, Crowdfunder.co.uk

"Have a member of your team available to respond to questions, feedback or concerns during and after the campaign."

Christine McCormick,
Customer Support, Crowdfunder.co.uk

Counting down to launch

Save the date

Make sure that everyone has your launch date marked on their calendar..

Set up a virtual event on Facebook, send out messages or even postcards to start getting people excited.

Prepare images

Check that you have plenty of new images that you can use to promote your project. Photographs of people, places, events and rewards are all great.

Bright, bold images make creating, flyers, posters and social media posts much easier and effective.

Review the plan

Make sure that you are clear on the plan to promote your project from the first day to the last.

Check which messages you're sending out to which groups, when they're being sent, and how.

Getting off to a good start

Launch day can be both exciting and nerve-racking. If you've put in the work and followed your plan, it could be one of the biggest and best days of your crowdfunding campaign.

There are three main ways of getting off to a good start. If you want to get off to a great start, do all three. From the first day to the last.

Check which messages you're sending out to which groups, when they're being sent, and how.

Line up the first 10 pledges

The hardest part is getting off zero, so aim to have secured at least 10-20% of your target in promised pledges before going live. Make sure those people know exactly when your project is launching and encourage them to make their pledge in the first couple of hours.

Getting a strong number of backers early on will give your project credibility and make it look much more attractive to wider audiences.

Pick up the phone

Call, text, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger – all give you access to your friends and family at the touch of a button. Drop them a line to let them know that the big day is here as soon as your project goes live.

Try not to stress if people don't reply immediately. Give them a gentle reminder in a day or two, be persistent and they'll probably still pledge in the first week.

Celebrate together

A great way to get everyone excited about your campaign is to celebrate the launch with those people who have helped to get you to this point.

You could invite them over for tea, meet for coffee or head out for a drink at your local pub. It doesn't matter what you do, it's about taking a moment to regroup and remind yourselves why you're doing this.

Key action

A project without any pledges does not look credible or attractive to people outside of your own close network. Because of this, it's important to secure your first few pledges from people you know before promoting your project to everyone else.

Communication check list

Next, a quick inventory check.

Run through the list below to get a better idea of which key communication tools you have ready to go and which you need to spend some time prepping. Decide which ones you need to focus your time on.

Email and Facebook are the two biggest drivers of pledging

Channel	# of people	Plan
Personal emails		
Professional emails		
Facebook		
Twitter		
Instagram		
LinkedIn		
Press		
Blogs		
Website		
Events		
Printed materials		
Partnerships		

Sending emails

Around 40% of pledging on crowdfunding projects is driven by emails, so don't neglect your inbox during your campaign.

Before sending out any messages, make sure you have the correct permissions to do so in line with GDPR. There's more information on that [here](#).

5 email essentials

1 If your organisation already has a larger email database, there are some fantastic tools like MailChimp that can help to lighten the load. It's handy to be able to check open and click rates on your emails so that you can specifically target those who didn't engage the first time.

2 If people don't respond to your first message, don't panic! You can always follow up with them again later on.

3 Make sure that you use each person's name in your message - nobody likes a 'Dear Sir' email. One-to-one is always more effective.

4 Think carefully about what to write as the subject of your emails – make it interesting and unique, avoid using lines like 'please pledge' or 'help me' as they can look spammy and will put people off.

5 Include an image and link to your crowdfunding page in your email signature so that everyone will see it each time you speak with them.

> "Use your database before the launch of the campaign to get people interested. Then keep them informed throughout the campaign by sharing your success and providing regular updates. Say thank you, let people know that there are new updates on your Crowdfunder website so that they go there, get inspired and donate, or donate again having already done so."

**Andy Walker,
F.C. United of Manchester**

Using social media

Social media is another heavy-weight crowdfunding tool that can hugely impact your campaign's success, if you use it well.

Most of us are pretty familiar with various social media platforms and use it to stay in touch with friends, share photos, find jobs or even just stay up to date with the latest news.

| Facebook is one of the best platforms for generating pledges | Twitter is brilliant for generating awareness | LinkedIn is a great place to look for corporate support | Instagram is best suited to organisations with strong visuals |

Make some noise
If you already have an established Facebook page for your organisation, this will be your key social media platform for generating pledges as you already have a captive audience

Ground rules
A good rule to stick to is one Facebook post a day. Look at when your audience is most likely to be online – that's the time to post! Your Facebook posts should always include an image, video or link – posting with plain text alone is a big no-no. Prepare a bank of good quality, vibrant, eye catching images.

Content
Post lots of different things such as: stories, testimonials, videos, infographics, stats, progress towards your target and behind the scenes updates. You could also highlight your best rewards with a stand out post.

Share
A great way to reach people outside of your existing audience is by asking your friends to share your posts on Facebook.

Events
It's a good idea to hold at least one event either before, during or after crowdfunding. You can easily create an event on Facebook to connect with your online audience in an offline way.

Facebook Live
Facebook Live is the best way to interact with your audience in real time. Answer any questions they may have. The engagement levels on Facebook Live are much higher than a generic Facebook post, so be sure to plan a few of these through the duration of your project.

"Facebook is one of the biggest drivers of pledging so it's worth doing your homework."

**Bertie Herrtage,
Senior Coach, Crowdfunder.co.uk**

"Make your messaging varied, funny, full of stats - change how you talk about it or people will get bored! Don't forget to keep posting on Facebook - reminding people that you are crowdfunding - and tag Crowdfunder so they can help you share your project!"

**Sarah Bentley,
Founder & Project Director, Made In Hackney**

Press & blogs

If you're hoping to reach a wider audience, having your project featured in the press or on blogs should be high on your priority list.

Don't be disheartened if you don't get any coverage straight away – be persistent and try a different angle.

Go local

Unless your project has a big national impact concentrate your time on local media. Local news outlets love publishing stories with local angles, so make the connection clear in your press release.

Timing

Wait until your project has started to gain some momentum before pushing out a press release It needs to be 'newsworthy' to catch journalists' attention, which is usually just after launch, when it hits a key milestone or closes successfully.

Images

Attach a selection of vibrant high resolution photographs with your press release. Include real people, not just product images and a mix of portrait and landscape.

Focus

Make sure all press coverage mentions your crowdfunding campaign specifically. Include your project URL and check the spelling carefully – ask for it to be included in the piece.

Make connection

Ask if anyone you know has any contacts in the press or blogging world. An introduction can massively improve your chances of getting coverage.

Look through newspapers to find the name of journalists who are writing about stories like yours – address your press releases to them personally and follow up with a phone call. It's usually quite easy to find journalists on Twitter too.

"Start small. Local media love publishing stories about great ideas with local angles. It's easy to get hold of journalists, through Twitter especially. Once you have a contact, share your great idea, and present it clearly and concisely. Be persistent."

**Bertie Herrtage,
Senior Coach, Crowdfunder.co.uk**

Going offline

Although most activity will take place online, you can still go out into the offline world to share your idea in person.

This is particularly important if your project is rooted in a particular place – if you're opening a new playground or upgrading a community space for example.

Conversation

Talk to people face to face. Drop it into conversations. Let people know that you're working on something super exciting at the moment.

Events

If your project is very relevant to locals, attend as many community events and networking opportunities as possible to meet more people and spread the word. You can also research any relevant industry events or conferences and be sure to attend.

Posters

Create a simple poster that you can put up anywhere and everywhere including noticeboards, local shops, libraries, community centres, bus stops etc.

Make connection

A launch event is a great way to showcase your idea, bag a few pledges and generate some interest, but it's not the only opportunity for a knees-up.

Celebrate the half-way point of your campaign with a few drinks or nibbles. Invite along everyone who has pledged on your project so far to make them feel valued and give everyone a fresh burst of energy.

Gather everyone for an event an hour before the campaign closes. You can rally for some more pledges from around the room and get to celebrate the moment with your Crowd.

Focus

Make sure all press coverage mentions your crowdfunding campaign specifically. Include your project URL and check the spelling carefully – ask for it to be included in the piece.

> "Have business cards printed with details of your project and the URL. They're easy to keep on you at all times – remember to give them out whenever you talk to someone about your campaign."

Sami Mauger,
Head of Coaching, Crowdfunder.co.uk

Sending project updates

From your project page you can send 'updates' to keep your supporters in the loop.

It's the best way to keep in touch with everyone, make them feel valued and excited about the campaign. Include a shareable graphic or bit of text that you can ask your backers to re-post to their own contacts.

It's also a brilliant way to show newcomers that you're active and engaged – make them want to join your Crowd!

Each project update you send out will be emailed to every supporter that has opted to receive them. It will also then appear in the updates section on your project page. Try to send one or two updates a week.
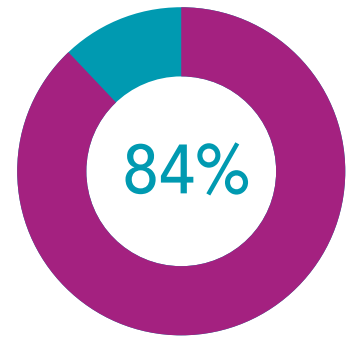
It's fine to send a few more at the end when things can move very quickly – keep on top of the excitement. Use a mix of text and images to encourage your backers to share the message.

84%

In a recent survey, 84% of crowdfunding supporters said that receiving project updates is important to them.

Keep your supporters up to date and build stronger relationships for the future.

Updating your website

For the duration of your campaign, your website should aim to funnel all traffic over to your crowdfunding page.

If your website has a great big image on the home page, replace it with a graphic that links straight to your project.

You also have the option of using your own unique widget. This is a little piece of code that you can use to embed on web pages. If you're not sure how to do that, get in touch with a techie friend or whoever helped you to set up your website.

Embed your campaign widget on the website and disable any other donate buttons for the duration of the campaign.

Reading dashboard stats

Your project dashboard is packed full with useful data that tells you how well your project is performing. What's working well? What's working less well? Which rewards are most popular? Where are your pledges coming from?

Use this information to make decisions on where to focus your time and energy.

Expect a lull in pledges in the middle – stay positive, it's normal. Some people will always wait until the end to contribute and most projects see a big surge in pledging in the final two days.
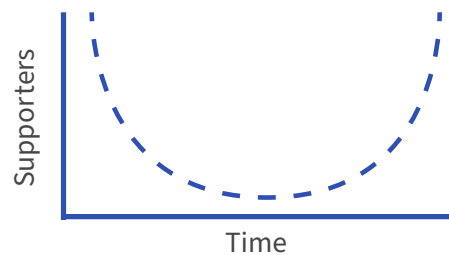
The aftermath

Once you've made it through your successful crowdfund, it's time to pat yourself on the back and think about what's next:

Take a breather and celebrate with your team, you deserve it! Remember thank everyone as loudly and publicly as you can.

Send out Tweets and Facebook posts with the results and acknowledgments.

Keep your backers updated with any developments, firstly when they can expect their rewards and later how the project is progressing.

If you offered rewards, make sure you deliver on them.

Important

If later there are hitches along the way, make sure you let everyone know. It's important to be transparent. If rewards are going to be delayed, keep your backers updated.

You should now be ready to **launch your project** and **start collecting funds.**

Good luck!

Any questions?

Don't hesitate to ask, come along to one of the weekly <u>Q&A Drop-in sessions.</u>

Summary

Let's recap what we've covered in this pack:

- ✔ Marketing basics
- ✔ Counting down to launch
- ✔ Getting off to a good start
- ✔ Communication checklist
- ✔ Sending emails
- ✔ Updating your website
- ✔ Using social media
- ✔ Press and blogs
- ✔ Going offline
- ✔ Sending project updates
- ✔ Reading dashboard stats

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