



Crowdfunding for voluntary arts and cultural groups

At its heart, crowdfunding is a really simple concept – showcasing your group’s activities online to attract small donations from a large ‘crowd’ of followers... and offering unique rewards in return for their support. These rewards can be anything from a keepsake associated with your project, to a unique participatory experience, or any other (non-financial*) way of celebrating each and every one of your funders.

One of the major benefits of crowdfunding is it allows you to build a two-way relationship with your supporters – you are asking the funder to support a specific project and get something valuable in return, rather than to donate to your organisation in the conventional way. As such, crowdfunding can be a great way to raise money for experimental, small arts projects.

During a crowdfunding campaign, you can build deeper relationships with your current and future supporters by asking them to get closer to your work.

**Note: There’s a growing movement in the US to change the law so as to allow crowdfunders to offer a small financial return on small investments into their projects – but here in the UK and Ireland, for now at least, this is impossible – so it’s important to stick to non-financial rewards.*

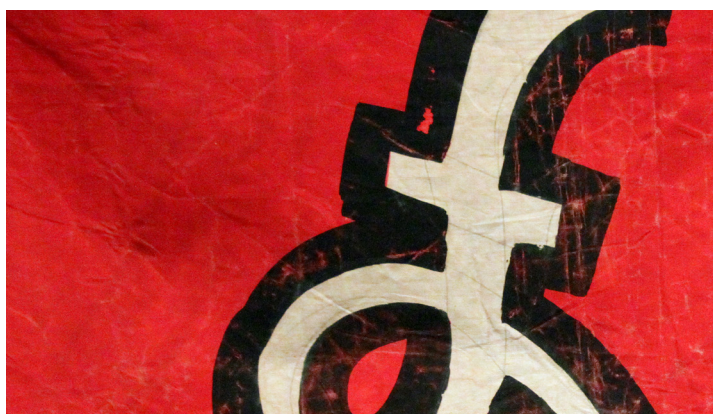
A. Background

Crowdfunding has been around for a number of years now, gaining prominence with websites such as Kickstarter – a site that began in the US in 2009 and expanded to the UK in 2012. It has now successfully funded over 100,000 projects. These pioneers have now been complemented by a wider range of smaller and newer sites, including Crowdfunder.co.uk, GoFundMe, and JustGiving, which focuses on charitable giving.

How crowdfunding works

Most crowdfunding websites feature an ‘all or nothing’ funding approach. This means that when funders donate to a project, they put an authorisation on their debit or credit card which is only charged if their project reaches its goal. This policy is based on the belief that it’s important for projects to be fully realised in the way they were described on the site – something that would be difficult with incomplete funds.

Some websites allow flexibility and provide options for projects to be awarded partial funding or to raise their target if the original goal is reached early in the set period of fundraising. It’s important to think about what works best for your project and set a realistic target that makes sense for you.



B. How to crowdfund

Getting started

Applying to launch your campaign is easy – most crowdfunding websites have an easy-to-use registration form to upload your pitch and get you started. You’ll need to prepare:

- Your project pitch – you should describe what your project will consist of and achieve, in around 200 words. Remember, it’s not a funding application but a direct conversation with your supporters, so be clear and compelling about what you’d like to do, and why anyone should fund it. Make sure you include some simple but important details like when and where the project will happen, and how you’ll use the money raised.
- Your rewards – come up with a set of different incentives for your funders. Be as creative as you can – remember that ‘a free ticket to our show’ is unlikely to be an incentive that anyone’s going to talk about to their friends, but ‘an exclusive performance of our play in your living room’ might well be! Putting together some small illustrative images for each reward that will be used to adorn your pitch page is also helpful in convincing prospective funders.
- A pitch video – this is a really important part of your campaign – make a short video telling people why you think they should back your campaign. The more direct your pitch, the better – the best videos are very simple, and are often filmed on smartphones, so don’t worry too much about doing anything too polished!

You will not succeed by simply putting up a pitch and standing back and waiting for funders to come to you – crowdfunding is about building support and momentum behind your project, and using that to win over new audiences and supporters.

Any great crowdfunding campaign starts with your own networks – to get your project fully funded you’ll need to be ready

to ask everyone who's been involved with your group (members, participants, audience members, volunteers etc.) to support your campaign, and you'll need to ask them personally and directly to do so – both face-to-face and through emails, newsletters and social media.

Hints and tips

So what makes a great crowdfunding campaign? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Plan well, plan early

- Who are the likely suspects? – before you start, think about who your likely funders are, and write your pitch with them in mind. Who are the people you know who have gone to every show you've done, or commented on every one of your Facebook posts? These are the fans you'll need to fund you if you are to succeed.
- Put yourself in the pitch – pitch videos featuring the creatives leading the project are much more likely to succeed, so get in front of the camera and tell everyone why they should back your project.
- Set an achievable funding target – remembering that you'll only receive the funds raised if you hit your funding goal. As a guide, £500 to £1,000 is a good start for a 30-day campaign, and raising more than £3,000 from small donations in this timeframe will take something a bit special.
- Offer some memorable rewards – the difference between crowdfunding and traditional fundraising is that every funder gets something back in return for their donation, so give them something they'll remember!

Get your story out

Your project's going to create something beautiful, so why not tell everyone about it? Think about local press, arts blogs, businesses and others who might want to talk about what you're doing. Then make it easy for them by giving them information, press releases, videos and photos telling your story.

Share the love

Look at the services offered by each crowdfunding platform to help promote your project and connect with others. There may also be local or national networking opportunities for sharing your crowdfunding pitches. Try to find ways to link up and work with other similar organisations or funding networks.

Further Resources

Kickstarter

www.kickstarter.com

Crowdfunder:

www.crowdfunder.co.uk

GoFundMe:

www.gofundme.com

IndieGoGo:

www.indiegogo.com

JustGiving:

www.justgiving.com

Phundee:

www.phundee.com

CultureCrowd

'Equity Crowdfunding for the Arts & Creative Industries' report, June 2013.

<http://www.culturecrowd.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Equity-Crowdfunding-for-the-Arts-June-2013.pdf>

Osborne Clarke

'The regulation of crowdfunding in the UK', December 2014

<http://www.osborneclarke.com/connected-insights/publications/regulation-crowdfunding-uk/>

Nesta

'Crowdfunding good causes', report, June 2016

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/crowdfunding-good-causes>

Do you need this publication in an alternative format? Telephone 02920 395395 or email info@voluntaryarts.org

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