

Notes on Running a Crowd Funding Campaign

There are many reasons why people and organizations need to go through crowd funding as a means of support for their endeavours. In my case, I have wanted to help support the publication of a visual poetry anthology and to pay contributors for AngelHousePress online publications.

Grants have not been an option in the latter case because we publish contributors from all over the world who work in all kinds of genres. These notes are based on my experience, and there may be many things missing. This is a work in progress and I'm happy to add more information as I learn more. If you have any advice to add, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

Background

I have been involved in three crowd-funding campaigns so far:

- Judith: Women Making Poetry by Timglasen Editions
- AngelHousePress Caring Imagination 2022
- AngelHousePress Caring Imagination 2023

Here is my advice for those who wish to run crowd-funding campaigns.

- Choose a **platform** with good support.
- Give yourself a lot of **time** for organization and development of materials.
- Ask for a greater **target amount** than you think you need.
- Find ways to involve the **community**.
- Figure out **shipping**.
- Offer enticing **perks**.
- Accept **money outside the campaign**.
- Use **social media** rigorously.
- Use your own **name** as campaign creator.
- Have **fun**!

PLATFORM

I have had great experience with IndieGoGo, which has always answered my questions within 24 hours.

I always choose flexible funding, which means that I receive all of the money, even if we don't meet our goal. I am not sure why one would choose fixed funding, meaning that if you don't achieve your target, you receive no funding.

Some crowd funding campaigns are run on the crowd funders' own sites, rather than through a platform. Collusion Books has run at least two campaigns this way. If you have skill in web development, this is a way to avoid paying the fees of the platform. IndieGoGo charges 10% of the total amount, and holds back a small amount until payment has cleared. I received all of my funding about two weeks after the campaign ended.

TIME

I like to run campaigns for 40 days. In my experience a short campaign keeps the excitement going, and was as much time as I had to devote on the high level of promotion I needed to do to generate excitement and meet / exceed the target.

rob mclennan of above/ground press has a 60-day campaign in progress now and is raising much more than his original goal. the main thing i suggest is that you match the duration of the campaign to your needs and to your own time requirements.

I begin working on campaign content two months before its start. This gives me time to write the text and generate promotional images. Platforms have character and image size limitations that you have to work within. This can be an exercise in editing and working with an image editor.

TARGET AMOUNT

For the AngelHousePress campaign I don't seem to be following this advice so far. I ask for \$2000 so that we can pay forty contributors \$50 CAD each; however in both cases, and in the case of Judith, we exceeded our target significantly and were able to pay more to each contributor. I give all of the money, minus charges from the platform and from the payment method: Paypal or bank to the contributors.

ROOM Magazine raised over \$21000 for its recent campaign.

COMMUNITY

For Judith, Joakim invited our contributors to offer items for the crowd funding campaign and they generously did so, beautiful art work, signed copies of their publications and visual poetry. This was a great way to introduce patrons to their work.

For the AngelHousePress campaigns, small presses, magazines and artists have generously donated publications and merchandise. I really love this because this is also a way to introduce potential patrons to the great presses and magazines and artists in the literary, small press and visual poetry community.

I have not included artists too much because my goal is to pay artists and not to ask them to donate material, plus presses and magazines are used to handling shipping while artists may not be as able to afford shipping costs or estimate the costs if they are charging the backer.

SHIPPING

For the perks (things you are offering as rewards for supporting the campaign), you can either charge shipping or include it in the perk. I have learned this lesson the hard way. I sent a bundle from Ottawa to Victoria, BC last year and it costed me \$30 in shipping. One press was able to offer free shipping in Canada alone. There are many different choices for shipping. Unfortunately this is something you should spend time on to ensure that you don't lose money rather than make money in your fundraiser. If you are the one sending out the perks, you can control costs by choosing items that are light or by choosing e-books. Or by asking the backer to pay for shipping. You still have to estimate the cost of shipping in that case, and you run the risk of making the backer not choose the perk.

PERKS

I offered a lot of different choices for the backers, with about 50 perks. I find that limited edition chapbooks, handmade objects and merchandise such as tote bags are snapped up quickest, but as the campaign goes on, many other perks are chosen as well. Subscriptions have been a bit more difficult to sell, but I think they are also worthwhile because they help to raise awareness about publications.

I also include some of my own work, signed copies of existing books and chapbooks, pre-orders for forthcoming books, limited edition, handmade ephemera. I try not to include more than a few of these because the campaign isn't about me, but rather about community support.

In most platforms, there's an option for the backer to donate money alone, which I have found quite helpful and successful. I also add a "support one contributor" perk as a separate item to remind the backers that the money is going to be used to pay contributors.

MONEY OUTSIDE THE CAMPAIGN

Some people don't want to go through the platform and that's understandable. It won't help you achieve the platform's target, but it will help you to raise money that you need, so don't turn it down!

SOCIAL MEDIA

Promote, promote, promote. Follow the instructions and advice from the platform. I promote the campaign every day through social media and my Substack newsletter. It means that I lose a few, understandably annoyed subscribers, wary of receiving e-mail from me daily, but I've also gained subscribers because I do so. I do this for only forty days. I devote this time very much to promoting the presses and magazines that support the campaign.

NAME

The platform has to verify your bank account information and your identity. This means that unless you have a business bank account in the press or organization name that you are raising money for, and documentation that is accepted world-wide, it's probably best to use your name and bank account. Keep good accounting records. This money is taxable in Canada, and I don't know what the rules in other countries are. I am no expert on tax, so it's best to talk to an accountant to ensure that you don't run amok of tax rules in your location.

FUN

Have fun with the campaign. Know that you are doing something worthwhile.

CONCLUSION

I don't know anything about running a personal campaign for my own work, just for community outreach. If you wish to run a crowd fund for your own work, take a look at other similar campaigns on the platform of your choice to get an idea of what works.

If you have more questions about my experiences with crowd funding, I am happy to chat with you.

Thank you to all who've supported crowd funding campaigns for literary, small press and visual poetry endeavours, especially for AngelHousePress and Judith.

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