

The Crowdfunding Handbook



from **SEED & SPARK**

ABOUT SEED&SPARK

Seed&Spark is an entertainment platform where filmmakers and audiences join forces to fund, promote and watch incredible movies and shows that increase representation in front of and behind the camera. Seed&Spark's film-specific crowdfunding tool — the "Wishlist" — allows supporters to buy or loan specific items to a production. Our fees are the lowest in the business, and our success rate is the highest (75%!). Crowdfunding on Seed&Spark can additionally qualify for distribution on our streaming platform where filmmakers get a 60/40 revenue share and subscribers get to watch daring, diverse movies and shows.

INTRODUCTION

CROWDFUNDING FOR INDEPENDENCE

In this handbook, we're going to share with you the building blocks that have helped hundreds of filmmakers fund their work on Seed&Spark, including: how to find your audience, how to talk to them, who should be on your team, picking the right goal, making a kick-ass pitch video, how to enact an effective communication strategy, and much more.

The only proven path to true independence as an artist is a direct connection to your audience. Crowdfunding is becoming a fundamental piece of most financing plans for independent film. However, many filmmakers miss the opportunity to turn their film funding campaigns into audience-building opportunities that can last an entire career – and provide the groundwork for distribution that you control. Seed&Spark is invested in building the future of independence for independent film with you. These materials for film-related projects will provide the crowdfunding and distribution action plan most likely to create a lasting, flourishing, direct relationship with your audience.

Creating Your Campaign

These resources are an excellent place to begin your journey:

[7 Things We Look for When Reviewing Crowdfunding Projects](#)

[Social Media Charm School \(duh\)](#)

[Community Capital: an Actionable Crowdfunding Timeline](#)

[Crowdfunding: Asking the Hard Questions](#)

[Approaching Indie Filmmaking As An Actual Business](#)

[Crowdfunding as an Introvert](#)

Now, some things to keep in mind:

- A successful crowdfunding campaign will ignite (or further) the process of expanding the audience who will support you throughout your entire career. This process involves learning how to talk to your crowd so they become your evangelists.
- Momentum really matters. Your campaign pre-production is where you figure out how to ramp-up to launch with a lot of momentum on day one. Your social media outreach cannot start the day of your campaign - your months and years of social media presence can be leveraged for your campaign. Organization will help you accelerate throughout the campaign.

- Audience building doesn't stop when the campaign is over. In fact, the campaign should simply teach you how to engage your crowd for life. The larger your audience, the better your returns on distribution, for this film and the next...and the next....

There are 8 essential elements to a great campaign. These building blocks will serve you for crowdfunding and for a lifetime of audience building.

Chapter 1: Audience Building

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

It seems obvious, but this is THE question you must ask yourself before your campaign starts. The more specific you get pre-launch, the better your campaign and audience growth will be.

Remember: Your audience is not a demographic. Your audience is made up of real people with varied interests. All men between the ages 45-70 do not like the same things!

Think about real people, with real lives:

- Who are the real people who will watch your film?
- Where (in the world and online) are they?
- How do you get their email addresses?

Social media is not a means unto itself. Getting thousands of Twitter followers only proves you are good at getting Twitter followers. Your end game is getting your movie made and seen: that means you need people to fund your project, watch your film, show up to your screening. Email addresses have a 3-5x conversion rate over social media platforms in getting people to take actions like funding and buying tickets. Getting people's attention on social media is great, but you've got to get them to get one level more deeply involved with you (ie, getting them to sign up for your mailing list) before you can really reliably ask them for stuff and expect them to help out or show up.

Start by identifying five people who you think would like your film. No, seriously. Five real people. Begin with people you know, or chat up your project at the next film screening you attend, and see who gets excited. Make sure you're not only talking to relatives or other filmmakers. These people will give you your first most important data points about crafting a relationship with an audience who really cares about what YOU want to make. You'll need this data to conjure the next element.

List them here. Just do it.

MESSAGE TESTING

Message testing is how you learn to most effectively communicate with your audience. “Your audience” will be made up of a big group of people who are excited about what you’re making who you have reached one at a time. That means you’ll have to learn how to reach lots of different people and attracting them to the same project using different tactics. How? By asking some important questions of these five real people you have already identified.

MESSAGE TESTING INTERVIEW #1

Interview your five key people:

- Where do you hang out online? (What social media platforms do you frequent?)
- Where do you get your news?
- What music do you listen to?
- What blogs do you read? Who influences you online and in life?
- Where do you spend your free time?
- Do you belong to any organizations?
- Where do you watch the things you watch?
- What attracts you to the films you watch?
- No, really. Ask five real people these questions. Write down what they say.

Their answers will help you learn:

- **WHAT** you should be saying;
- **WHERE** you should be saying it, and
- **WHO** (people/organizations) you should be contacting right now.

If four of the five people say they spend more time on Twitter than Facebook, you might want to spend more time trying to reach your crowd on Twitter than on Facebook. Read the blogs they are reading, pay attention to how their favorite bloggers talk to them. Share songs that your key five seem to like. Did they all say they like to watch things by streaming to their computers? Maybe you don't need to shoot in 6k raw. You're about to learn a lot of essential things not just about how to talk about what you're making but how to make it in the most efficient way for your audience.

Start conducting experiments:

- Try 5 different messages on your friends and colleagues.
- Try 5 different images w/the same text on social media.
- Pay attention when your audience responds to your outreach!
- Post articles that inspire/interest you from publications your audience likes, start conversations.
- Ask open questions about your characters or plot points in your story you're still working on.

Pro Tip: Social media is a tool for storytelling experiments! Review your social media every few days and see what's performing well,

and what isn't. Chances are, you'll find a lot of inspiration from your growing crowd. Get good at this. This will serve you forever.

TONE

Message testing also helps you find out HOW best to say something. This is your TONE: the intersection between WHO YOU ARE and WHO YOU ARE TRYING TO REACH. You want your tone to effectively communicate your project with your audiences.

Through your experiments, you may find that humor or drama works better with your crowd. They may 'like' posts that include certain images and not others. They may be more likely to retweet you when you relate your fictional film to real world events.

If you truly invest in this process, you will start to learn from your audience what they respond to – and what they don't. You can use message testing an opportunity to grow your own familiarity and interaction with the world of the film. As you open up your circle of influence to include your audience, it might just change the movie you're trying to make for the better – and it might also make you a more empathic artist!

Part of the reason this is important to do BEFORE you launch a crowdfunding campaign is so that you train yourself to message about the world of your film, NOT just about getting money. The world of your film and your process as an artist is what you have to offer. Get people excited about what you're offering before you ask them for anything.

Do NOT ask for “help” with a donation. Ask your audience to JOIN you with a PLEDGE. You contribute, they contribute. Together you make beautiful films!

9:1 (THE GOLDEN RATIO)

The best social media feeds have about a 9:1 ratio of posts about other people/ideas/articles to self-promotional posts. What does that mean? Your social media is where you become a hub of interesting information about your project. Don't panic. You're already gathering materials in your research, reading articles and books, taking photos of cool potential locations. This is your world of inspiration. It's what you share with your audience to make them feel like a special part of your process.

An example

“F*ck Yes” is a series of shorts created by a female team that shows consent can be sexy. The filmmakers identified their audience as adults interested in that topic as well as adults in sexy content that wasn't romcoms or pornography. In addition to sharing about their campaign and series, they shared news and articles about reproductive rights and sexual agency and also shared things about other sex-positive projects.

Same series, different audiences, both engaged by the 9:1 rule.

Pro Tips on Tone:

- Don't plead. (PLEASE! PLEASE DON'T PLEAD!)

- Offer things beyond just your film. (Ideas, articles, content.)
- Altruism goes a long way. (Support others' work.)
- Engage (If someone responds to you, respond back!)

Chapter 2: Crowdfunding Team Best Practices

THE TEAM

Your crowdfunding team might be made up of:

- Your filmmaking team
- Your friends & family
- A few key influencers
- Partner organizations

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS CROWDFUND ALONE.

Putting together a crowdfunding team is crucial for a campaign. It's hard work, and one person's network alone usually isn't big enough to grow a broad audience for a film. Your crowdfunding team is typically made up of some the same people who are working on the film. You will find more creative ways to engage with audiences the more brains you bring to the task. Do you have a Twitter or Tumblr expert? Someone who loves to make schedules and spreadsheets? These people are gold! If you happen to have a celebrity involved in your campaign, or if you are crowdfunding for a documentary, make sure you have permission to use their names/images/stories in your outreach. It's important to walk celebrities or doc subjects through what they can expect. You will need their investment in the campaign if you really want to leverage their brand/popularity. Two

tweets will not be enough!

The more of your filmmaking team (from both sides of the camera) you can get involved, the greater reach you have for your campaign. (Duh.) Think of it this way: it's good for EVERYONE on the team to maximize the audience for your film. Make it clear when hiring people that they will be expected to be a part of the audience building process.

Below are tips on working with non-profits. Most of these tips can and should also be applied to getting any influencers involved. Make sure you know what's in it for them when you ask them to get involved.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Our friends at Picture Motion – who help social impact films connect with the organizations best positioned both to benefit from a film and to help a film – offer a few things that are crucial to know when hoping to turn them into terrific partners.

1. Get there early.

Organizations often take a loooooooong time to come aboard. Be patient, but also be prepared to be persistent (one cold email won't typically do the trick! Pick up the phone! Try and take someone to coffee!)

Don't go to the Human Rights Campaign and say "I've been working on a film about LGBTQ rights for two years. It's finished and we

would love for you to spread the word.” Non-profit partners MUST be engaged as soon as possible! DEFINITELY before the film is ready to be released. Every non-profit will need to see something more than a trailer to know if they can support your project. So, have an extended clip or rough cut ready share so you can immediately send it after your first call or meeting with them. You should know what their organizational priorities are for the next 12 month and how and if your film can fit in. Invite them to a rough cut screening. And most importantly, if you want to offer ways for your audiences to get involved, interview them! (Are you sensing a theme?)

- What are your organization’s priorities for the next 12 months?
- What kind of content would be best for your own outreach?
- What are this organization’s thoughts on the most meaningful things your can audiences to do?

If you have a social impact film, experts in the issue space should be among the first 10 people you call. You may be able to offer campaign rewards in partnership with them.

2. The Horse Trade

Non-profit organizations also have to raise money and build audiences for themselves. Writing to ask for a favor will often not be well-received. (Imagine: I know you are shooting your film this week but can you come PA for me?) No organization wants more work, so think about how can your film really help them accelerate change, further engage their community and reach a new audience

themselves. When reaching out to non profit organizations, Picture Motion always sends a partnerships one-sheet which outlines exactly how the film and the organization can collaborate - how they can support the film and how you (with your film) can support the organization. The one-sheet outlines clear and thoughtful examples written with the organizations' perspective in mind.

(A perspective you've learned because you've researched and asked.)

3. The Brain Trust / Heart Trust

Bring together stakeholders at 8-10 non-profit organizations in the space. Offer them a light meal to watch the film (rough or fine cut) and get their thoughts both about the film and how they can imagine including the film in the work they do, at an upcoming conference, sharing it with their community etc. Get them to make commitments in the room! Then start following up ASAP. Prepare a small questionnaire that will get their honest feedback as well as their thoughts about how they can leverage your film.

Pro Tips on Team:

- Do your research. Just because an organization seems interested in your film doesn't necessarily make them a perfect partner. See what else they're doing in partnerships. Make a thoughtful approach – or don't waste your time!
- Get a lawyer. Seriously. Not only do you need expert advice about chain of title for your film (if you ever want to make money on distribution), lawyers often have broad and deep

networks with which they may be willing to share your campaign.

- Consult a tax professional. Don't act like you know everything. The IRS doesn't respond well to that attitude. Consult a tax professional!

Chapter 3: Setting Up For Campaign Success

THE BUDGET

The big question: How much do I ask for?

Answer: Enough to deliver on the promises in your pitch.

There are a few considerations:

- What do you need to advance your project to the next stage
- Could you raise money in stages?
- What is the size of your current community?
- What can you get for free?
- How do you want to distribute your project?

A VERY important part of audience building is actually trust-building. You want your audience to trust you're going to make cool stuff (you learn how to build that trust in message testing) and also that you will do what you say. Your audience will want to see that you made leaps and bounds with their money: or at least, that you advanced the project exactly as much as you promised in your campaign. The money you raise should AT THE VERY LEAST be able to move your project to the next phase, and the USE OF FUNDS needs to be clearly communicated to your audience. If you are raising money for production, your campaign should raise enough money to

guarantee you will be able to complete production.

Understanding your goals for distribution, and specifically how you wish to reach and eventually engage your audience, is important to consider during your campaign(s). Your fans will support your distribution goals – they want to watch your film! Budget for the costs of theatrical runs, non-theatrical screenings, and premieres. You may need a DCP, Blu-rays, and DVDs of your film. If you want to distribute on a streaming platform (including Seed&Spark's), you will need to deliver closed captioning files to comply with FCC accessibility precedent.

Many filmmakers fully finance their films through crowdfunding, but most run multiple campaigns to do so. Seed&Spark offers integrated “staged financing.” If you successfully complete a crowdfunding campaign and advance your project to the next stage, you can launch a new Wishlist inside the same campaign page at the next phase of your project – building on all the followers and supporters you gathered along the way. Check out Fog City and WATCH THIS on how a recent film school grad raised close to \$50,000 over three campaigns for his short film.

MOMENTUM & THE FIRST 30%

The size of your current community matters, too. While it's not an exact science, we do know that typically the first 30% of your campaign will come from your team's friends, family, and community! (This is why your team is so important, and why building your crowd in advance matters to your campaign.) Why? It goes back

to trust: people who don't know you need to see that a lot of other people already trust you. Momentum is the key.

If you have a small network, you may want to run a smaller campaign to start to build that network before going for the big bucks. In fact there are very smart crowdfunding consultants who won't work with you until you have commitments for 30% of your crowdfunding budget. That's how important it is for your success!

The Seed&Spark Wishlist tool works like a wedding registry: you break down your crowdfunding ask into the individual items you need to make the film. We believe it is essential for your audience to know EXACTLY what you plan to spend their money on (to the best of your ability to predict beforehand). The Wishlist tool is not just for crowdfunding but also crowd-sourcing. Your supporters can contribute money towards the items that most interest them, or if they own the item, they can loan it to you directly. Examples of frequently loaned items: cameras, locations, lights, post-production services. If you need locations, services, and rentals to make the film you really want, think about what part of your outreach can be for in-kind loans and gifts. Seed&Spark is the only platform on which these kinds of loans and gifts count towards your crowdfunding goal. (Hey now!)

Pro Tip:

Educate and engage your audience with the Wishlist by showing them exactly what you need to make this film happen! This is a storytelling tool to communicate what it will take to make your film:

Chapter 4: The Wild World of Incentives

IDEATING YOUR INCENTIVES

Since you've spent all this time figuring out who your audience is and what they like, you've probably learned something about what will motivate them to get involved. The best incentives help to deepen your supporters' engagement in your film!

- What do you have to offer that you can DO rather than manufacture? Is your audience really interested in another t-shirt or tote bag? Those items are expensive to ship, and don't engage your audience further in the world you are trying to create—the way that a postcard from set, a TRIP to set, or an on-screen shout-out in the credits might.
- You will be distributing the largest quantity of \$10-25 incentives. These should be free for you – something you can make. If they are fun, personal, visual, and sharable on social media, you can turn your incentives into more crowdfunding power.
- What is **uniquely** yours/in the story world of your film?
- A "Pre-Sale" of your film is **boring**. (That's what iTunes is for.) "Early Access" is much sexier! People who contribute to your film want to see it. There are lots of ways to make that happen but make sure you reward these early supporters.
- Invites to wrap parties, premieres, walk-on extra roles, meals on set – things you take for granted might be your most valuable

incentives.

- Do you or anyone on your team have a special skill you can offer as a service or coaching?
- Make sure to consider the implications of your incentives for a potential distributor. Most (but not all!) distributors are okay with early access screenings, temporary private online viewings, or even day and date releases, but often won't pay for the DVDs you promise. You have to budget for those. DELIVERY MATTERS.

So, yes - Budget for delivery! Packaging and shipping is a real cost!

ADVANCED INCENTIVES

- **Matching contributions:** If you know someone in your community might give \$500 or more, run a "matching campaign" for a period of time in which all contributions will be matched by this generous supporter.
- **Contests:** Can you get cities competing for your premiere screening by which city has the most contributors? Can you get folks competing with their contributions for the chance to name a main character? Or for the chance to shoot the pivotal scene in their home/neighborhood?
- **Short term incentives:** The middle weeks of a crowdfunding campaign can be very slow. In order to combat the doldrums, offer short-term incentives like "This week only, a \$10 contribution will get you a personalized limerick from the

filmmaker's father!" (This is a real short-term incentive that was very lucrative.)

PERSONAL, VISUAL, SHARABLE IN THE STORY WORLD OF YOUR CAMPAIGN

"Time Signature," a short film about time travel, offers this \$25 incentive: Pick a moment in history and the filmmakers will transport you there:

It created COMMUNICATION: Sean Mannion wrote to his supporters right after they contributed to find out where they'd like to be transported. They responded back. Relationship deepened.

It was SHARABLE: He made a delightful image and shared it publicly, turning each supporter into a potential amplifier.

It created MOMENTUM: He also created a gallery of the images on his film's Facebook page, which drove traffic to the page as contributors were checking back in to see if more fun images had been added. He turned contributors into evangelists and created momentum.

He delivered IMMEDIATELY: He also delivered these incentives immediately so at the end of the campaign, he had less work to do!

Chapter 5: Perfecting Your Pitch Video

PLANNING YOUR PITCH VIDEO

Watch this first.

This is film. Your video has to be good, even if it's very simple. A great pitch cuts through all the competing noise and convinces people to care enough about your film to join your journey (by opening their wallets and contributing RIGHT NOW).

The pitch video is your audience's first interaction with your filmmaking skills. Give them confidence in those skills. DO NOT open with your face or a direct address to the camera. We won't care about you until you have made us feel something.

- The tone of the video should match the tone of your film. If it's a comedy, it should be funny! If it's a drama, we should feel something!
- You have 90 seconds before most people turn off your video. They decide in the first 15 seconds if they'll watch the rest. Those first 15 seconds should be for the film's audience, not for your family.
- Make sure to cover WHO you are, WHAT the project is, and WHY it needs to be made.
- A personal appeal is essential. Your audience needs to know

who they are supporting. Make an offering: why does this matter to you? Why should it matter to them?

Pro Tips on Pitch Videos:

- **Show don't tell!** If you realize you've asked your cinematographer to talk with her mouth instead of with her camera, you're doing it wrong.
- **Write a script.** Yes, like you're making a small movie about the much larger movie you're asking your crowd to join you in making.
- **Edit creatively.** It's starting to feel like you have to treat your pitch video like a film unto itself. Huh.
- **Get good sound.** We don't know why we even have to say this, but sheesh.

This is an important 90 seconds!

When a pitch video goes viral:

Take a look at REZ, a pitch video viewed 60,000 times in the first 24 hours after its release.

The video accomplishes WHO, WHAT, and most importantly WHY very elegantly. Director Dominique DeLeon shares a very personal story about why this film needs to be made by him, and why he needs the audience to get involved. The quality of the filmmaking instills trust that the finished product will be good, but more importantly, DeLeon connects his narrative film to real people in the world. He knew his audience. The hip-hop song that supports the

latter half of the video was a key to the virality: the vast majority of the HUNDREDS of YouTube comments are about the music.

Chapter 6: The Feedback Process

VIDEO YOU'VE SUBMITTED YOUR CAMPAIGN FOR REVIEW, NOW WHAT?

Seed&Spark has the highest success rate crowdfunding for filmmakers for many reasons, but the primary factor is our dedication to making sure filmmakers are prepared before they hit the launch button. How do we prepare them? With world-class education via live events and free resources (like the one you're reading now) and our customized, one-of-a-kind, completely free feedback process.

How much does this feedback support cost?

On Seed&Spark, it costs you exactly zero dollars. It's just what we do. Because we like you. Keep in mind not all crowdfunding platforms provide personal feedback, so if you're looking for feedback outside of our platform, there may be a request process or a cost for an independent consultant.

We believe (and have the data to prove it!) that the best feedback to help your campaign be successful comes from working filmmakers who have been exactly where you are and crowdfunded for their own films. And that's who every member of the Seed&Spark crowdfunding team is. You can meet them on our *Who Are We* page. (Add LINK to the S&S *Who Are We* page)

Feedback Timeline

Because getting (and acting on) campaign feedback from our team adds a little extra time to your crowdfunding process, we highly recommend that you allow at least a month for your crowdfunding preparation, from first day you start your project to the launch of your campaign.

Your timeline might look like this:

- **One month prior** to preferred launch date: start building your campaign
- **Two weeks prior** to preferred launch date: submit your campaign for feedback
- Within **2 business days** receive feedback from a real live Seed&Spark crowdfunding specialist
- Make adjustments per feedback, then resubmit as soon as you are able
- Be aware that you may get more than one round of notes
- Barring any major issues, your project will be approved for launch
- You set the launch date
- And then you're off!

What will I get feedback on, specifically?

Glad you asked! Here's a great post about that, but here are some of the basics:

- **A reasonable and reachable monetary goal**

Evaluating this involves comparing the network you report having (social media following, email list, relationships with organizations and influencers) with the monetary goal you've set to make sure you have a shot at reaching your goal. For example, if you're trying to raise \$100k, and you only have 5 Twitter followers and zero emails, we might talk with you about what a more reasonable goal might look like.

- **An effective pitch video**

Time matters. An effective pitch vid is shorter than 2 minutes, and the first 15 seconds should be the most compelling. Be sure to answer the primary questions someone watching a crowdfunding pitch video would ask: what is your movie/show about, why should this story be told, why you are the one to tell it, why they (the audience) are the ones to help you get it made, and what you're going to do with it when it's done.

It's important to know in advance that you're likely to get some guidance on your pitch video in the feedback process, so make sure you and your pitch video editor can be nimble and ready to make adjustments. Your patience (and hard work) will be rewarded.

- **Reasonable and effective incentives**

If you have too many incentives, your incentives seem a bit cookie-cutter, or they seem too expensive compared to what you're raising, we'll raise a red flag. Remember to keep your incentive delivery costs low so that you can spend more of your money on your actual movie or show.

- **Honest and informative inclusion statement**

Every filmmaker who funds on Seed&Spark creates an inclusion statement about who is involved in their project, on camera and behind the scenes. Why? Because it is our collective responsibility to ensure that the future of film reflects the diverse perspectives of our world. The best way to do this is by having a team that reflects multiple POVs in our world. Does your team include people of different gender expression, race, religion, birthplace, social class, ability, sexual orientation, etc? This is your chance to let us (and your potential backers) know!

Be aware that, depending on adjustments made, your crowdfunding specialist might offer more than one round of feedback. When the Seed&Spark team gives feedback, our goal is to make sure your campaign is as strong as possible at launch to help you succeed. While it might be frustrating to get more than one round of notes, know that we're here to help, and that our team is basing their feedback not only on their years of personal experience with crowdfunding, but Seed&Spark's more than 5 years of data regarding what works for crowdfunding movies and shows (and what

doesn't.) Stay open to notes and try not to take them personally — we're on your side!

And if you've hired a crowdfunding consultant or manager, cool! It's always a bonus to have someone on your team who knows the ropes of crowdfunding, whether it's a paid consultant or a valued friend. Regardless of whether you have a paid consultant on board, our team still provides feedback on your campaign to give you the best chance at success. (More brains are better than one, right?)

You might be thinking, but what if I don't like the feedback?

We totally respect that, though we do ask that you treat crowdfunding specialists with kindness — they have a tough job. And if you wanna tell us to take a hike, that's cool — just please do it professionally.

Does this mean we've ever not approved a project for launch? Yep. And we stand by that. Why? Because we want you to have a good experience (and be able to make your project!)

Crowdfunding is a challenge under the best of circumstances, and if you don't have the network to support your goal, the incentives to drive contributions or the pitch video to inspire confidence, we're going to do our best to help you work through those issues. If you're not interested in making adjustments to your campaign, we'll respect that, but we also reserve the right not to approve your project for launch.

We're living in an amazing time where you have a multitude of options for crowdfunding your film (and finding funding offline as well), and if you wanna use a platform where you can just plug in the details and launch, we wish you all the luck in the world.

At the end of the day, our free campaign feedback is just one more way we support you on our filmmaker-focused platform in order to help you raise the funds you need to make your film. It's not easy — but it's worth it.

Chapter 7: Organizing Your Way To Success

Organization is crucial to a big launch and to maintaining momentum. This is your time to geek out with spreadsheets and calendars. Before you launch, your whole team should organize their contact lists and make a plan of attack:

A. DIRECT OUTREACH

- Who on your list(s) are you sure will contribute? Notify this group before the campaign even launches. Ask them to contribute on day 1.
- Is there anyone you think will contribute larger amounts?
- Who might be willing to organize a matching campaign?
- Who will partner with you to help share the project with their communities? (Organizations and individuals)
- How many people can you reach via direct-messaging on Facebook? Twitter?
- Who would you invite to an event?
- Who might be willing to host a screening and spread the word when your theatrical/release campaign begins?

Create a template with engaging language about the project for email, Facebook, Twitter, and any other social platforms you plan on using so that everyone on your team is using consistent messaging

(and so the lazy ones can just copy and paste).

Following through with your outreach plan – and doing it right the first time – will create a template for success that your entire film team can lean on and revisit as they move through each phase of the film’s lifecycle. The same organizational outreach in the crowdfunding stage can be put forth prior to your distribution outreach. Organizations can screen your film to fundraise, create buzz, or just have a fun movie night!

B. UPDATES

Turn Current Supporters/Followers into Amplifiers!

When you post a project update to your campaign, it gets emailed directly to everyone who has already supported and followed your project. It’s easy for anyone to share an update via social media. Good updates tell your growing crowd if they can trust you to send them cool stuff, of the inevitability of your success, that they will feel cool sharing your campaign. Bad updates will tell them to ignore everything else you send. Auld Lang Syne was masterful with every update. Funny, shareworthy, delightful.

Think of every update as creating more forward momentum for your project.

Some examples of what to share:

- Casting announcements

- Progress updates - you're hitting your milestones!
- Press - but don't just send a link! Include an image and the best quote from the article
- Fun additional videos with cast and crew
- Interesting articles, press related to the world of your project
- Festival, theatrical and VOD distribution announcements
- Offer a new incentive, brag about the ones that have sold out

You should plan for around 2 updates each week during your campaign. Become a hub of cool ideas!

Every update should include these two elements:

- Visual, sharable content (at least one video or image)
- **Exact** Twitter and Facebook language that followers can copy and paste to share your project (make sure to shrink the links!)

An Example:

Would you take a few seconds today to share one of these posts??

- **On Facebook:** HALF LIFE needs your help to bring their story to life. Support a short film that's actually shooting on FILM! bit.ly/1Ma4X4E
- **On Twitter:** I supported a film that I actually want to see! Let's get HALF LIFE fully funded! Only 6 days to get there #TheTimelsNow bit.ly/1Ma4X4E
- **On Twitter:** Final days of @OhioPictureCo campaign for HALF

LIFE. #IndieFilm actually #ShootingOnFilm You can make it happen! bit.ly/1Ma4X4E

- **On Twitter:** The @OhioPictureCo has partnered with @TuggInc to bring HALF LIFE to theaters across the country! Learn how to host: bit.ly/1Ma4X4E

Pro Tip: Think Funny. Intriguing. What would you be delighted to receive in your inbox in the middle of a work day?

C. SOCIAL MEDIA

Read this even if you think you already know.

Social media is a place for conversations - a two way street. The goal is to reach people beyond your immediate network and create conversations that explore the world of your film, gather audiences, and generate excitement. (FOMO, anyone?)

If you have done the work of identifying your audience and your messaging, you are already on the path to social media domination! You have a starting point of where these people are online and how they like to be engaged. Different styles work differently on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, Pinterest etc. so now is the time to get to know these platforms and have a voice in the conversation. Reminder: It's really important to spend time cultivating your audience before asking them for cash.

If you are a social media newbie then please check out our Social Media Charm School from the amazing ladies of King is a Fink. The

link is on page ONE of this document. That's how essential this is.

There are lots of great examples of filmmakers who have mastered social media for building their audience.

Some of the great practices they utilize are:

- Humor- it goes a long way!
- Cats. No, seriously. Cats. Puppies too.
- No pleading! Offer something awesome to the world.
- Public and sharable Thank You's.
- Altruism: promote your friends work! Give to the community.
- Make exciting announcements.
- Entice and Tease.
- When promoting, always include the link to the campaign page.
- Tag others as much as possible.

We are big believers in the power of Twitter. Rather than creating a new Twitter account for your film, consider putting your film's unique hashtag on your call sheet so that all the Twitter & Instagram traffic coming off your set from the social media accounts of the entire filmmaking team can be organized on a single thread. Create a Storify for your film and share it.

Pro Tips on Social Media:

- Every time you post about the campaign it should include and @ mention of at least one person who you think will share. If you include @seedandspark we will retweet/post it! We love to share!
- Use scheduling programs like Hootsuite and Facebook's scheduler so you can still have a IRL life AND it will help keep the desperate tweets to a minimum!
- Put all of your planning into a schedule—either via a shared spreadsheet or calendar—and then stick to it! Chances are, you are a freelancer. If you have to step away from the campaign for another job, a schedule allows for someone else on your team to keep the momentum going. Leave room in your schedule for new elements you'll discover along the way. Plan to learn from your growing crowd.
- Don't stick to a failing plan. If nobody's getting on board, go back to message testing. Ask people what's up.

NOW GET READY, YOU'RE ABOUT TO LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN.

Chapter 8: Must-Dos During Your Campaign

Congratulations, you've launched your campaign...now what?!

1. EXECUTION MATTERS

You have strategized and scheduled your outreach: Now stick to your game plan! It's just like production itself: there will be plenty of surprises, but you don't want to let them get you behind schedule. Leave time in your calendar to review your messaging EVERY DAY and make adjustments throughout the entire campaign. As you go along, you may find one angle of communication more effective than another. Follow the path of least resistance!

2. GATHER ALL THE DATA

Contributor Interviews:

Before your campaign, you found out as much about your audience as possible. Don't stop once the campaign is under way! Use the campaign as a way to engage and learn from your crowd. Use your thank you notes (which you will send out gleefully and immediately) as an opportunity to find out as much information from your actual audience and where you can find more people like them. Set up a Google form or survey for people to fill out - their answers are neatly gathered in a spreadsheet just for you!

Ask your first contributors:

- What made you contribute?
- What kind of things would make you feel cool if you shared them with your friends?
- Where did you hear about the project?
- Ask them the first interview questions while you're at it in case you missed something.
- Where and how do you want to watch this film?

Ask those who (much to your surprise) haven't contributed:

- Have you heard about the project? (This may reveal gaps in your outreach plan.)
- What would you like to see that would appeal to you more?
- What kind of things would make you feel cool if you shared with your friends?
- If you're broke - no problem! - would you follow or share the campaign?

Filmmaker Dashboard

On your dashboard, you have two progress trackers: one for funders and one for followers. This kind of data will start to tell you where your outreach is working and where you need to make adjustments: below you can see this campaign had a rough start, and their progress tracker revealed that their outreach wasn't working and

they needed to make adjustments. They focused on gaining followers - engaged audience members - and their funding progress increased along with the audience growth.

Learn how to understand your data, and create action items.

3. ONGOING PLANNING

To keep the campaign moving, it's important to keep your outreach fresh and to pay attention to your crowd. Use campaign feedback to find new ways to engage your audience.

- Continue **message testing**, and see what your audience is responding to! If you tweet one thing everyone responds to – respond back! If you tweet something that no one responds to, listen to that feedback, too. Make sure all your social media loops in others: @mentions, references to members of your team – constantly expanding the folks who want to share your posts.
- Research new elements and organizations to contact during the campaign. Did someone you didn't expect retweet your campaign? Did your alma mater share your Facebook post? Look into getting them more involved in the outreach! **Create more momentum.**
- Create more opportunities for updates, social media, ancillary content, and the onboarding of new **partners**; this means you need to go to physical events, shake hands, exchange business cards, and make new friends! Put networking to work for you.
- Gratitude: Use thank yous as an additional outreach technique.

Shout out your supporters on social media so the whole world can see how many people love your work.

- Altruism: **support others**. Don't let your social media outlets slip into the vortex of "Everything is about meeeeeee!" Continue to engage in conversations with others. When thanking a supporter, can you also direct your audience to that person's projects/films/websites?

5 steps to boost your campaign in 5 days

1. EMAIL

Drop the ego. Send 10-20 personal emails per day.

- Don't ask for money! Tell people about what you are making and why it's exciting- then they will want to support you.
- Send short, passionate emails giving each person a unique chance to JOIN you.
- Compose a tweet/FB post the recipient can copy and paste easily.
- KEEP IT SHORT, people are busy!

2. RESEARCH

Find out more ways to reach out. Every day.

- Research 5 articles, videos, images in the world of your film and share different things about them on your social media channels a few times a day. Make sure to tag the authors or creators when possible.
- Research 5 brands, bloggers, organizations, influencers (people with a lot of followers), or hashtags that seem to fit your project. Reach out to them. YOU WON'T KNOW IF YOU DON'T TRY.

3. UPDATES

Plan & execute five campaign updates that include these elements.

- Image or video that someone would like to share (meme? listicle? funny video?). Remember how Auld Lang Syne does it awesome?
- Use the uploader tool to attach links, upload photos and embed videos (use the embed link from Youtube or Vimeo rather than the video webpage link). Tip: When you embed a video, always include a clickable link to make sure people have a back up incase they can't play it on their device.
- Pre-composed tweetable language. Like this!
- Demonstrate the momentum and inevitability of success of the project. Try something like this!

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

It's about engagement.

- Give people a reason to interact with you on social media. Create an image, contest, or question and reach out directly to people, asking them to participate. On a deadline.
- Number your contributors and thank each one by name. "Supporter #33! Thanks to @emilybest for the coffee breaks we are sure to enjoy!"
- Reach out directly on Twitter and Facebook with a personal ask

in each outreach. “You love food, we need food. Join us for food?”

5. PLAN & EXECUTE SOMETHING FUN

- Contest. This worked really well.
- Event. Throw a party! Like this one in Chicago.
- Matching contribution campaign. Get the \$\$s flowing like this.

Other Pro Tips:

- Review your messaging every day. See what’s working, scrap what isn’t. (Have we said this enough yet? It’s really important.)
- When you tweet about the campaign, include @seedandspark so we can retweet it! We want to share & spread the word!
- In your outreach language, avoid the words “help” and “donate” and instead use words like “contribute” and “join.”

Chapter 9: Post Crowdfunding Essentials

You have successfully completed your campaign and crowdfunded your project! Congratulations! And no, you're not done yet. This is only the beginning!

MATERIALS TO COLLECT

Don't let the momentum stop now! You are a master of outreach at this point, and you have built a crowd that's hungry for more of what you got. In order to keep feeding the beast, make sure that you have a plan during production to collect:

- **EPK** (Electronic Press Kit)
- **BTS** (Behind the Scenes)
- **Personal Videos** (Thank You's, Surprises, Outtakes!)
- **Clips** (from the finished film)
- **Stills** (all part of the tease)
- **Incentive Fulfillment** (related to on-set visits, etc.)
- **Feedback/surveys**

Pro Tips:

Collect quotes that you can use on your Seed&Spark page, on social media, in outreach emails, for potential funders on this film and others.

You can use Survey Monkey, Google Forms, or even put together a handout for screenings. Collect as much information as you can about how your film makes people feel, think differently, perhaps change behavior. It will make you better at talking about your film, your audience and the impact of the relationship between the two.

KEEP GROWING THAT AUDIENCE

You have not only raised your funds, but now you also have a crowd of fans. If you keep them updated about your progress, you can add followers to your crowd every week. The same plan you developed for your campaign can be modified for your post-campaign outreach. Send them:

- Progress updates during production via Seed&Spark and social media
- Incentive fulfillment (don't waste all that momentum by not delivering on your promises)
- Festivals: Q&A's are a real opportunity to grow and engage your audience! Meet everyone, shake hands, kiss babies, add emails to your list

A NOTE ABOUT FESTIVALS...

You are going to submit to them. What is your strategy? The point of festivals is NOT getting distribution, the point is building audiences. The best audience-building can be at regional and local festivals

where you can connect to the die hard film fans in cities you'd never otherwise visit. A distributor is less interested in what festival you got into than how much of an audience you have built. The festival cannot be the end game! Here are four ways to succeed in building audiences at festivals:

- Have something to offer at the festival that goes beyond just your screening. Have an interactive marketing campaign/EPK. Provide everyone who interacts with your project through social media, through postcards they pick up, through your email list a way to interact with your film beyond "watch the trailer" - can they unlock something when they come to a screening? Can they get special content if they sign up for your mailing list? Make it so people want to dive one level deeper anywhere they find you (whether on social media, poster or postcard.) Send stuff in advance and have a local college student plaster all the local businesses with your posters. This is WTF Craigslist is for! Or, connect with the local film department, engage the students there. If they feel involved, they will show up and bring people to your screenings!
- Go to panels and events and live-tweet the good stuff. The more you can share the privilege of film festival experiences with your social community, the more they feel like you're an access point to a creative world for them.
- Give a GREAT Q&A. It is a huge honor to be able to screen your film and participate in a Q&A at ANY festival. Those people have paid good money for their badges and put their

butts in seats to see your film, AND then stay after to hear YOU talk about the experience. This is your chance to speak directly to your audience and to turn them into amplifiers. If you are generous and gracious with your answers, it will pay off. If you are hungover and dismissive your audience won't like you and then chances are they retroactively won't like your film. Yes, you will get asked the same 5 questions at most Q&A's. Answer them like it's the first time, every time.

- Have a plan to collect email addresses at parties and ESPECIALLY at screenings. Use the text-to-join mailing list plugin for Mailchimp so that after your Q&A, the audience can text to join your mailing list. Plan a reward for them for doing so. You should be able to gather hundreds of new email addresses at each festival!

DISTRIBUTION

The whole point of this whole thing is **distribution**.

If you have a huge email list, tons of Twitter followers and rabid fans hungry for the finished product, do you know what you also have? Leverage at the negotiating table with distributors. You also have the choice to use all this delicious data you have gathered throughout your campaign to leverage Seed&Spark's wide distribution pipeline. Don't lose momentum! Keep building so you and your network can turn social interest into action and bring screenings to movie theaters and community venues.

Even if you get picked up by a distributor, your job isn't done when

you hand off the film! No one will sell your film the way you can. So make sure your core engaged audience knows where to find your movie, and help them help you spread the word using your mastery of messaging, outreach, and engagement. Be available for Q&As, Skype discussions, Facebook Live and connect with your event hosts.

(Interested in distributing with Seed&Spark? [Learn more!](#))

CONCLUSION

SO, YOU READY?

Now that you have a little more knowledge in your noggin, we hope you'll give crowdfunding a spin on our site. It's going to be intense. It's going to be a lot of work. There might be tears, BUT – at the end of it all, you'll have the funds to make your movie or show AND a crowd of people ready not only to watch it, but to spread the word about it.

And then here comes the bad news: you'll want to do it again. And maybe again.

We'll be here for you when you're ready.

R

5 STEPS TO START ON SEED&SPARK

Here's how crowdfunding with Seed&Spark works, step-by-step:

1. Start a project: Fill out the details for your campaign.
2. Submit for review: Our crowdfunding experts have helped hundreds of campaigns raise millions.
3. Get personalized feedback: You'll get tips within 2 business days on how to make your campaign a smashing success.
4. Finalize campaign: Projects that implement our feedback have 4 times the success rate of those who don't.
5. Get approved to launch: Time to take your campaign live!