



Pay it Forward

CROWDFUNDING GUIDE

Powered by  Crowdfunder

Introduction

Businesses might be welcoming back customers but that doesn't mean they came through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic unharmed.

Through the second round of the Back to Business Fund in partnership with the Greater London Authority (GLA), Crowdfunder is providing the tech and tools for small UK businesses to introduce new ideas or changes to make their businesses more resilient.

This fund will help ensure that London's businesses can build back better and adapt for the future so they are here for years to come, no matter what happens.



Rob Love, CEO
Crowdfunder.co.uk

How crowdfunding works



1.

[Click this link](#) to create your unique project page, set a target and how long you need to reach it.



2.

Spread the word to friends, customers and others in your community, telling everyone you know about the project.



3.

People who like your idea donate or pledge money in return for a reward that they'll receive in the future.

Benefits of crowdfunding



Crowd validation

In times of need, this is an excellent way to engage with your customers and harness the power of your crowd in a very real and productive way.



Marketing boost

Running a project on Crowdfunder can raise your profile in a big way, especially in these very uncertain times that we are facing. Think of the funding period as an intensive marketing exercise and an opportunity to celebrate the incredible business you have while drawing people's attention to the plight that we are facing and educating them about how they can help.



Advocates

Crowdfunding is for life, not just for fundraising. The people who support you on Crowdfunder become your customers, volunteers and members. Your supporters take part in the journey, meaning they make incredible ambassadors for you in the future.

Making a plan

We appreciate that time is of the essence and therefore you may not have as long to plan this campaign as you'd like.

What you can do is put a simple checklist together and work through it to make sure you've covered all of the key bases before you start.

What's important is to have put a good page together which tells your story well and a decent 4-week plan to back it up with consistent promotional activities to reach your intended audience.

Checklist

Find others to help and assign roles

Shoot the footage

Draw your network map

Brainstorm rewards

List influencers

Refine rewards list

Identify super-backers

Set your target

Nurture Crowd

Plan project timeline

Develop your social media following

Warm up your Crowd

Bullet point key messages

Plan launch

Choose title

Line up first 10 pledges

Add project image

Get funded

Write description

Add visual content

Plan your video

Skills you'll need

Crowdfunding is a very social exercise which gives you the opportunity to connect with your audience and those who you believe can help you on this journey. We would recommend that you ask for help by building a small crowdfunding team of colleagues, employees or friends, to share ideas with and to start the conversation. During these unprecedented times, there may be others who can help and we find that it's crises like these that can bring out the best in people. Crowdfunding is all about building a community and therefore it's important that you start one of your own.

If you can get a few friendly faces to assist on some level, you'll automatically be expanding your network because between a team the reach becomes much greater.

Have a look at the skills below that we'd associate with crowdfunding, where are the gaps and who can be the plugs? If you're not a social whizz, then maybe you know someone who is.



Project leader



Videographer



Content writer



Networker



Industry expert



Social whizz



Creative



Marketeer

"Gather your team together for group brainstorming sessions on telling your story, offering rewards and spreading the word."



Si Walker, Head of Coaching
Crowdfunder.co.uk

"People can fill more than one role if that's where their skillset lies."

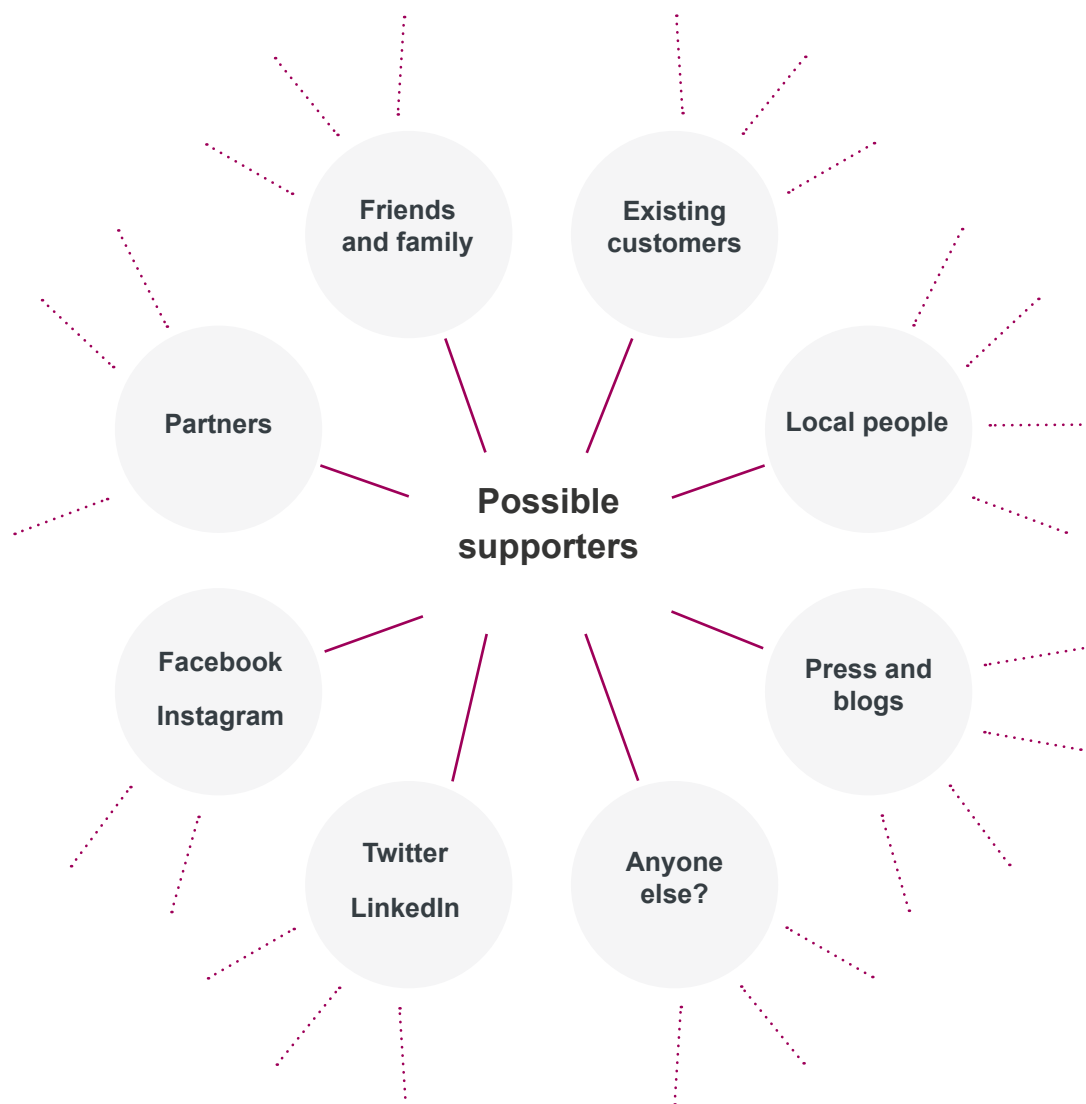
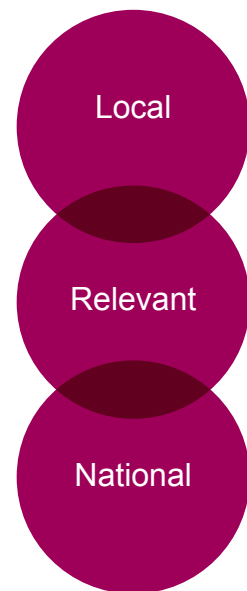


Sami Mauger, Head of Coaching
Crowdfunder.co.uk

Identifying your Crowd

You will need to engage with your personal and professional contacts to make your project a success. Usually your friends and family will be the first to pledge, with new audiences coming later. Let's look at the big picture first.

The best way to start is to gather your team together and start drawing a map of your network. Using this network map template will give you a much fuller picture of the shape and size of your Crowd. Your unique network map will be the basis for all the key elements you'll be creating next, so leave nothing out.



Nurturing your Crowd

Who's missing from your network map? Identify any groups or individuals you'd like reach, but haven't yet connected with.

It's also important to make sure you engage with everyone already on the list, so your channels of communication are open and active. If you haven't spoken to a particular group in a while, now is the time to get back in touch.



Personal contacts

Speak with your friends and family to tell them about your upcoming project launch. It'll make them feel valued and will save you time explaining what you're up to later.



Existing customers

As these people have already engaged with your business, they're a fantastic group to nurture.



Social media

Get active and build your audience on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram before going live – don't wait until you launch to start engaging.



Relevant groups

Become active in forums and online groups that are used by your target audience. You can find lots of groups on Facebook and LinkedIn. Remember to engage with comments and ask questions, don't just talk about your project.



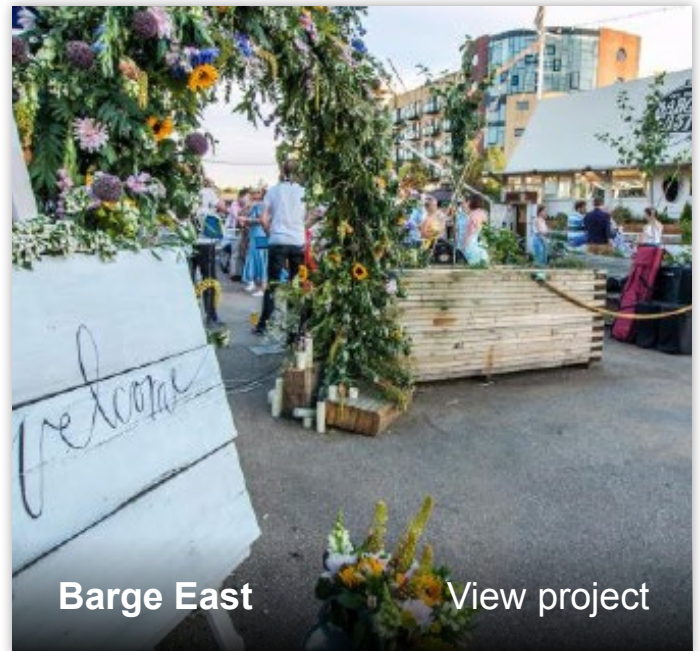
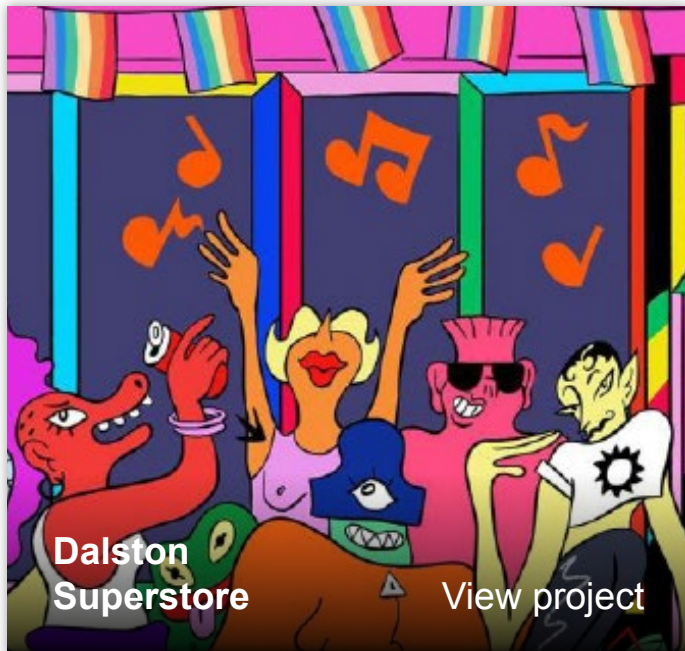
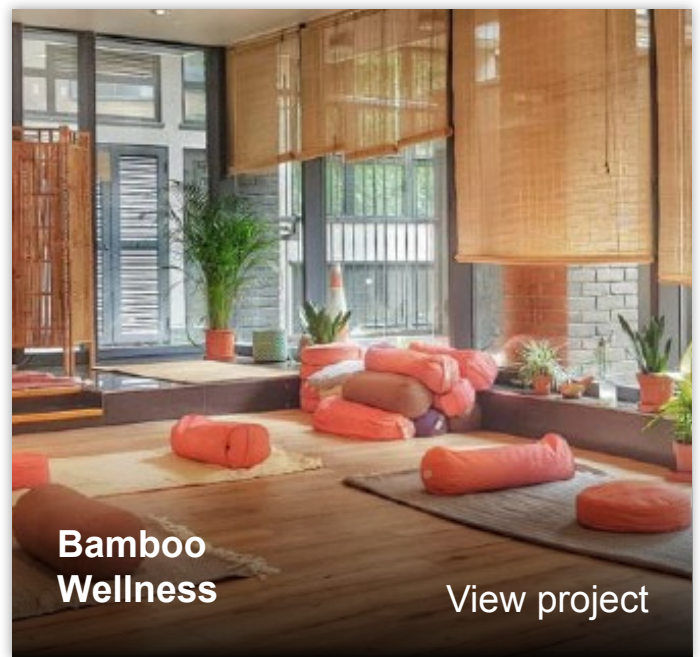
Website

If you've got a website, make sure that you update it to let any visitors know that you're crowdfunding.

Getting started

Have a look at some other pages to see how other people are telling their story and how they are dealing with the current situation.

Be a critic. What do you like? What don't you like? What would you do differently?



The perfect page



Writing your description

When visitors land on your project, you need to make a connection quickly and get them excited about your project. To do this well you'll need make sure your description is structured, concise and engaging. Add some images and testimonials to give it a professional-looking finish.

Structure

Opening

Briefly summarise your key points in two or three sentences. Keep it simple.

What are you trying to achieve?

Explain the problem you are trying to solve and what the solution could be.

Why is this so important?

Introduce your project and all the key facts. Focus on what makes it unique. Why is it necessary? Why should people support it?

Who are you?

Introduce yourself to establish a human and community connection with your audience.

Tell your story

Explain how your business was started, where it is and what you do. Talk about your journey and inspiration. What the future holds and how can people help.

How is the money being spent?

Outline what the money raised will enable you to do.

Rewards

Offer vouchers and pre-sell your meals, events, hotel bookings etc. for cash now on a promise people can redeem the services at a later date. Meaning people can book and look forward to future activities while supporting their favourite small businesses to stay afloat.

FAQs

Anticipate common questions that people might have about your idea, organisation or crowdfund.

Creating your video

It's becoming more and more important for organisations, charities and businesses to use video to connect with their Crowd. Stay ahead of the curve and create something bespoke for your Crowdfunder project. It doesn't have to be professionally made, shooting it with your phone or camera is fine!



Short and sweet

Less is more when it comes to video. Keep it short, 1 minute maximum. Make sure you get the key information into the first 30 seconds - who, what, why, how?



Script

If you're struggling to think of what to say, write a rough script but let people ad-lib and speak from the heart, honesty will always win people over.



Get personal

Getting in front of the camera will help you to build a rapport. Don't be afraid to include others too.



Setting

Choose a place where your voice can be clearly heard on record - wind, traffic and crowds will drown you out.



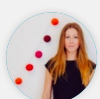
Avoid using animation video makers or image montages

They often come out tacky and won't get across your unique personality.

Watch the The Made In Hackney video [here](#)



"Include your campaign's URL at the end of your video to direct external traffic onto your project page."



Sami Mauger, Head of Coaching
Crowdfunder.co.uk

Giving rewards

On Crowdfunder you can offer rewards in return for pledges, as well as simply collecting donations. Rewards are a great way of increasing the amount of money a supporter will pledge as well as a great way helping your community know how they can help you.. Think about the kind of people who will be making the pledges and offer rewards that you yourself would want to get. Consider the four main types of reward that you can offer:



Products
and services



Experiences
and events



Sponsorship



Thank you

7 top tips for rewards

- 1** Rewards should be good value for money. If one of your rewards is available elsewhere, 20-30% discount it a great way of making it attractive to your Crowd.
- 2** Offer exclusive 'behind the scenes' experiences, tickets to events, masterclasses or special editions – things that aren't available elsewhere.
- 3** Limited rewards are a fantastic way of securing early support. Having just a small number available is a good way to get your Crowd motivated.
- 4** Offer authentic mementos or opportunities to leave a legacy in some way.
- 5** Have a few rewards priced at around £20 – this where a good chunk of pledges are made.
- 6** Spread your rewards evenly across different price points from £10 to £100 and include some sort of sponsorship at the top end to attract support from businesses or large organisations.
- 7** Don't just stick to numbers that end in zeros – odd numbers imply that your rewards have been thoughtfully costed.

No rewards? No problem.

You can run a project with donations only.

Example rewards

Pledge £10

A coffee and a piece of cake with a friend at a time of your choosing

Pledge £40

A hamper of goodies (fresh bread, wine, artisan chocolate, pesto, home made spaghetti and many other treats) for a night in at home with the family or friends

Pledge £500

We'll get our team of chefs to deliver a three course dinner service to your home for up to a group of 10 friends

Setting your target

Your crowdfunding target needs to be a balance between what you need to raise to make your idea happen and what you think you can raise from your crowd. Be realistic - remember that you can always raise more and stretch your target to a bigger number once you hit 100%.

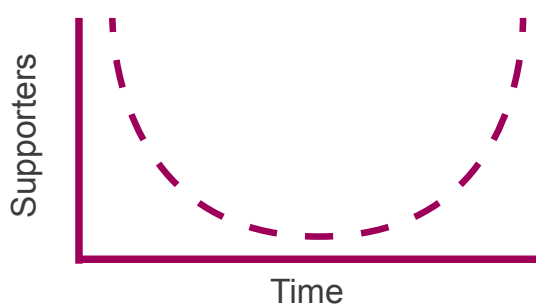
Calculate the minimum amount of money you need to deliver your project and fulfil your rewards.

How big does your Crowd need to be to reach your target?

Here's some facts to note:

£50 The average pledge on Crowdfunder is £50

1/20 On average, one in twenty people who view a project page will make a pledge



Choosing your project duration

Your campaign can last anywhere from one day to eight weeks, but more time doesn't necessarily mean you'll raise more money. Four to five weeks is the sweet spot.

Choosing a short and sharp campaign means you can get your crowd excited and maintain a sense of urgency. Longer campaigns can start to lose steam and might actually end up becoming annoyingly repetitive.

"All or nothing can work better as a motivator for backers to help push your project - it has to reach target for them to get their reward."



Simon Deverell, Creative Director
Crowdfunder.co.uk

"Most pledges will come in at the beginning and the end of your project – so you'll want to make sure you've got a great plan to keep engagement high the whole way through."



Sami Mauger, Head of Coaching
Crowdfunder.co.uk

Funding method

You have two options to choose from on Crowdfunder:



All or nothing

This method means you need to raise 100% of your target to receive any money. If your project does not reach its target, no money is taken from your supporters and your project will not be funded.



Keep what you raise

This method does what it says on the tin! This is a flexible funding method where you still receive the money, even if you don't reach your target. This is a good option where any contribution can be put to good use.

Marketing basics

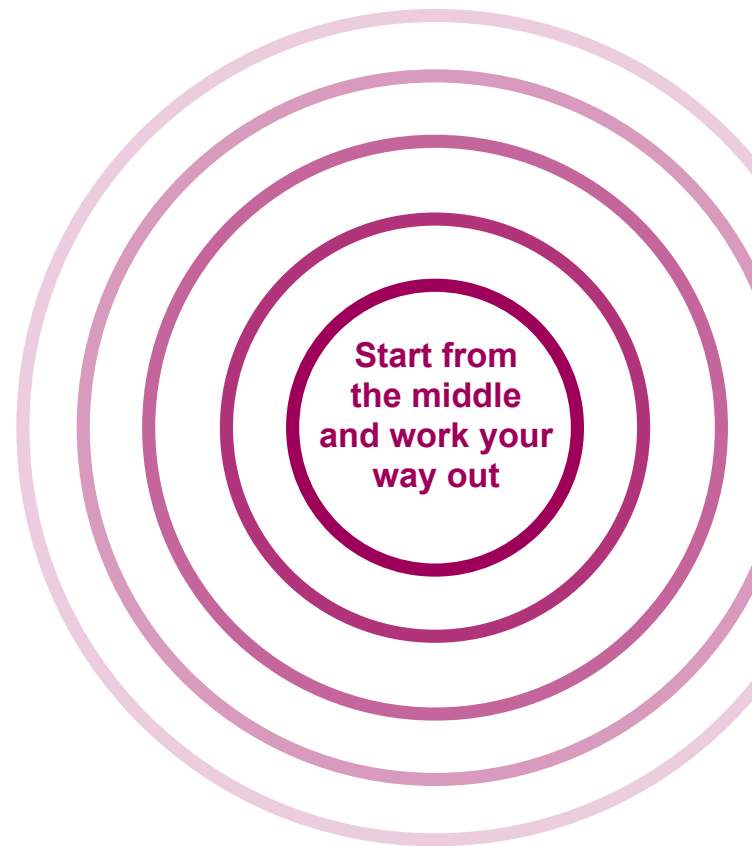
Now that your project page is looking good, you need to build a plan to connect with your Crowd.

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 Crowdfunder, 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 business are also more likely to engage than those who are not. As your project starts 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.



Be personal. Be direct.

“Plan plan plan! Know who you're going to promote to, how and when. Ask people to review your rewards and the campaign before posting it ”



Ilana Taub, Co-founder
Snact

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



Si Walker, Head of Coaching
Crowdfunder.co.uk

Counting down to launch



Save the date

Once you've decided on a launch date, make sure everyone has it marked on their calendar. Set up a virtual event on Facebook, send out messages or even postcards to start getting people excited.



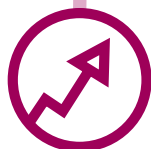
Prepare images

Check that you have plenty of new images that you can use to promote your project. Photographs of people, places, events and products are all great. Bright, bold images make creating content, 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 Crowdfunder 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 Crowdfunder 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. Crowdfunder 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.

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 by speaking directly to people you know before promoting your project to everyone else.



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.

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		
Business emails		
Facebook		
Twitter		
Instagram		
LinkedIn		
Press		
Blogs		
Website		
Partnerships		

Sending emails

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

6 email essentials

- 1** Contacting personal contacts directly with personal messages is key – nobody likes a 'Dear Sir' email. One-to-one is always more effective.
- 2** If your business 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.
- 3** Emailing your personal and business contacts should be high on your list of priorities when your project goes live. If people don't respond to your first message, email them again a few days later.
- 4** When sending follow up emails to your contacts, name drop people who have already pledged on the project – don't forget to say thanks and celebrate together!
- 5** 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.
- 6** Include an image and link to your Crowdfunder page in your email signature so that everyone will see it each time you message them!

Updating your website

For the duration of your campaign, your website should aim to funnel all traffic over to your Crowdfunder page. If your website has a great big image on the home page, replace it with a graphic that links straight to your crowdfunding project.

You also have the option of using your own unique crowdfunding 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.

Press and blogs

If you're hoping to reach a wider audience, having your Crowdfunder 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 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.

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!

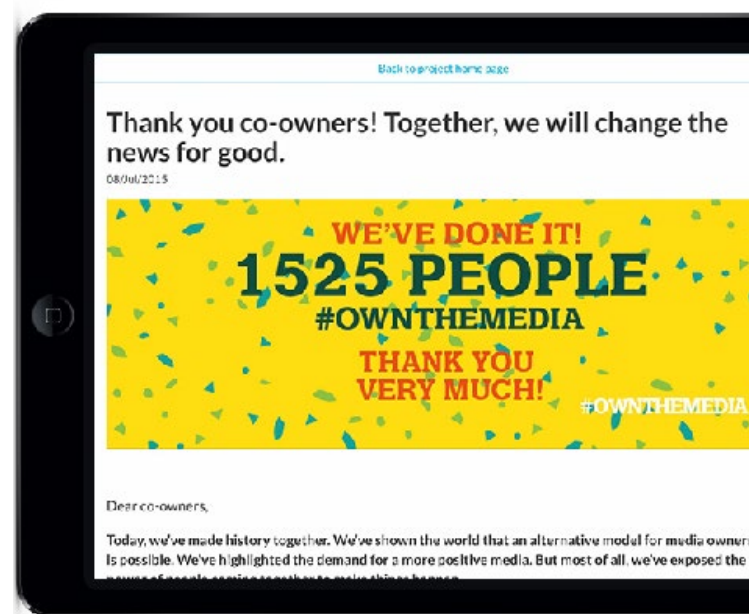
Each project update you send out will land in every backer's email inbox, so try to keep to sending just one or two updates a week. It's fine to send a few more at the end when things can move very quickly – keep on top of the excitement. Use a mix of text and images to encourage your backers to share the message.

Focus

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

Make connections

- Ask if anyone you know has any contacts in the press or blogging world. An introduction can massively improve your chances of getting coverage.
- Bloggers are contacted every day by strangers who only want publicity, without offering much in return. To stand out, think about out how you can help them out – don't rush straight in with your request.
- 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.



In a recent survey, 84% of supporters said that receiving project updates is important to them. Keep your supporters up to date and build stronger relationships for the future.

Reading dashboard stats

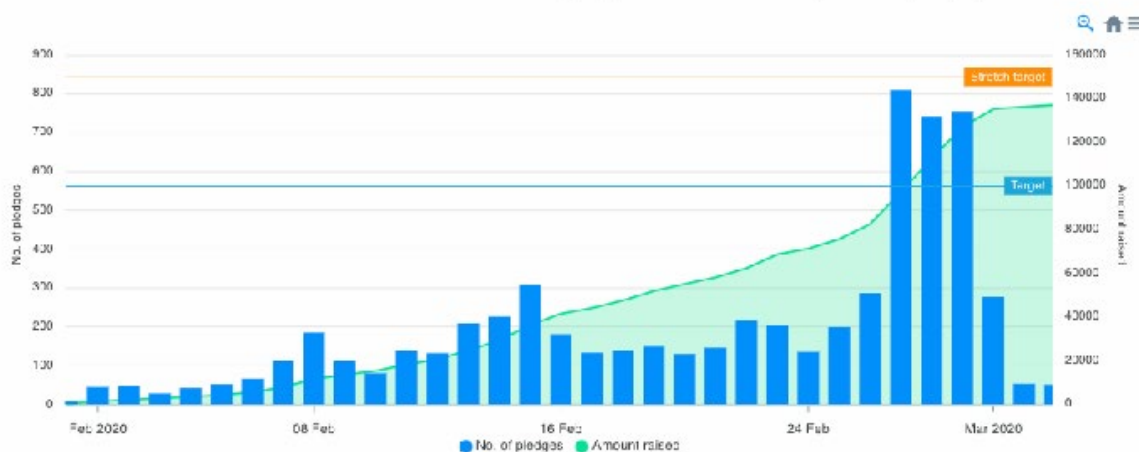
Your project dashboard is packed full with useful data that tells you how well your campaign is performing. What's working well? What's working less well? Which rewards are most popular? Where are your pledges coming from?

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.

Project timeline

Your conversion rate is 5.3% this is calculated from the total number of pledges vs the number of unique visits to your project



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

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.

Next step

You're now ready to launch your project on and start collecting funds. GOOD LUCK!

Start crowdfunding

payitforward.london.gov.uk/apf/project-add