The ultimate Kickstarter and Steam Greenlight guide

For indie game developers

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v 1.1

This is the second time I'm working full-time setting up a crowdfunding campaign. The first time it was for our charity game Ace Tales on Indiegogo. This time it's for our new PC game called *Battlestation: Humanity's last hope* on Kickstarter. *built using this guide:*

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1190981065/battlestation-humanitys-last-hope

There is a ton of information on the internet, **but it's all scattered around and there are some truly insightful ideas hidden in many places.** For these reasons I started making a document and collecting every gem of information I could find, so that we would have them all in the same place once we started setting up the campaign page.

The idea is to package every piece of information to this document, so that anyone who reads this will have a good picture of what to do to have the best chance to succeed. There are so many great ideas and games out there, and many of them deserve a good chance to be succeed. I truly hope that this package will guide you to success. I'm also very happy to help you on your way and give you feedback, so don't hesitate to contact me! You can find me on Facebook or through our home page at http://bugbyte.fi.

This document consists of information taken from various sources, my own thoughts and interviews I did with successful Kickstarter creators. I have tried to give a reference to the sources every time I take texts from blogs and so on, if you do find something without a reference please contact me and I will fix that right away.

This document is meant to be the full package for indie game developers to understand what it takes to be successful with Kickstarter. **Its purpose is to allow indie game developers to find all the essential information from one place, and to free up time to create the actual campaign.** It has a collection of materials from several sources, and I want to give them all the credit they deserve. I spent so much time searching the internet for good information, there is no need for everyone to do the same thing over and over again. **This document will not be perfect, all feedback and additional information is very welcome.** If *you have input to give please don't hesitate to contact me!*

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What is needed for an indie game to succeed in its Kickstarter campaign?

Why do some indie games do so well on Kickstarter while others barely raise anything? There are several factors that contribute to an indie game succeeding in its Kickstarter campaign. The biggest reason for success can be contributed to:

1. *The product is key and the starting point.* The material you present has to appeal not only to end customers, preferably to media as well. The better the product, the easier it will be for you to market it.
2. *A community has been built for the game a long time before Kickstarter.* There is a fan base already, whether it is likes on Facebook, followers on twitter or a mailing list with subscribers.
3. *The video is awesome.* It's not about the graphics or effects, it's about the video being able to get the viewer excited or not. It's about the feeling the video gives. Will it get a viewer excited and interested?
4. *The overall campaign set up is top notch and doesn't look amateurish,* everything fits together seamlessly.
5. *Once the Kickstarter is live,* the campaign receives a good amount of coverage from big press sites or other media outlets.
6. *It helps if you already have something awesome to show from the game*, and can hand out demos.
7. *Luck.* One of your reddit posts flies off or a YouTube sensation like TotalBiscuit decides to talk about you in a video.

Most of the successful indie game Kickstarter campaigns have done a lot of work on marketing previous to the Kickstarter campaign. Thanks to this they have a following, that is immediately ready to help once the Kickstarter is live. This is crucial because:

1. *You will get a good start for the campaign,* which will help you get articles from press since they can see someone is interested.
2. *You will have a chance to rise on Kickstarters own popularity lists,* getting staff picked and gaining more visibility for the campaign.
3. *People like to donate to campaigns, which they can see are popular.* If others want it, it must be good.

The big checklist

1. Build a community

1.1   Create your own web site

1.2   Create a Facebook page

1.3   Create a Twitter account

1.4   Create an IndieDB page

1.5   Start a Tigforums developer blog

1.6   Create a Steam concepts page

1.7   Start a YouTube channel

1.8   Update your channels and market your game

2. Prepare all material

2.1   Set up your Kickstarter campaign page

2.2   Create a video

2.3   Create illustrations and picture

2.4   Plan out and write the text

2.5   Plan out your pledges

2.6   Plan the goal for your campaign

2.7   Plan your updates for your campaign

2.8   Plan when to launch, date and specific time

2.9   Write down all possible marketing channels

2.10   Find and write down individual journalists

2.11   Create great marketing material (Press kit, Press releases etc.)

2.12   Notify your friends and existing fans

2.13   Set up your Kickstarter campaign page

2.14   Plan out your marketing, a great start and keeping the momentum

2.15   Prepare your demo if you have one

2.16   Set up a Thunderclap with a custom end date preferred.

2.17   Get a final set of feedback before you launch

3. Launch simultaneously

3.1   Finalize your Kickstarter campaign page

3.2   Set up a Steam Greenlight page

3.3   Launch Kickstarter

3.4   Launch Steam Greenlight

4. Market (Campaign live)

    4.1   Execute your own awesome day 1

    4.2   Blast off your Thunderclap

    4.3   Contact press and notify other marketing channels. (Remember links!)

    4.4   Update your campaign with any good information

    4.5   Encourage people to comment on Kickstarter and follow/vote on Greenlight

    4.6   Start a new Thunderclap with two weeks left to blast off the last 3 days

    4.7   Cross-promote with other campaigns

    4.8   Encourage people to up their pledges one step if you haven't met the goal.

    4.9   Add a "Missed us on Kickstarter" option for people to back in other ways

    4.10   Be active and don't give up

5. Evaluate re-iteration

    5.1   Analyze what went wrong if you failed

    5.2   If you think there is a chance to succeed a second time keep working

    5.3   Launch a new Kickstarter with new better material

The big picture
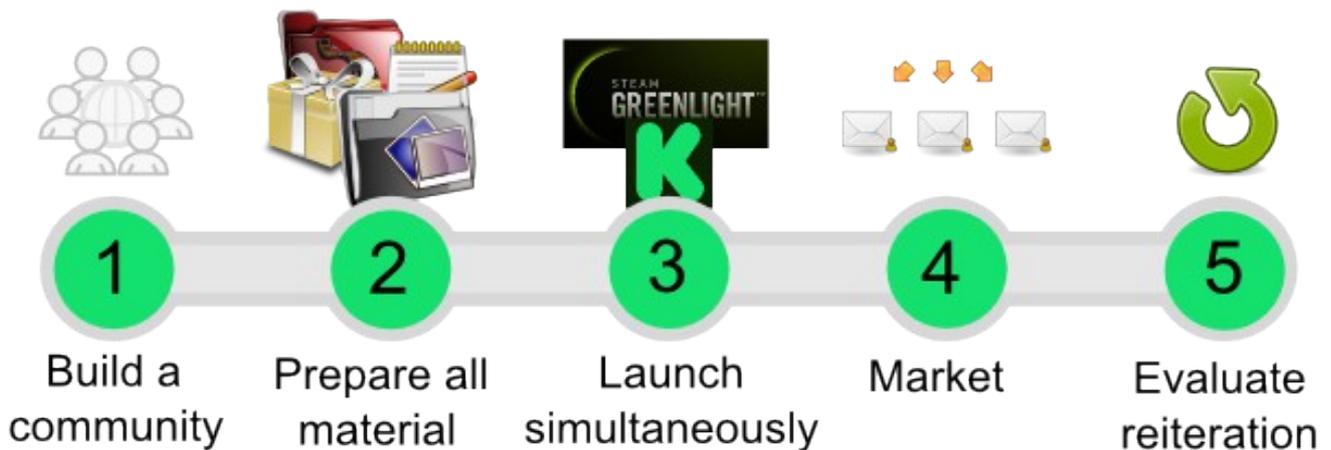
I have simplified the whole process into one big picture as can be seen above. There is a detailed description of how to execute every phase of the big plan in this document, and by reading the different sections you should be able to put together a good campaign. Let me explain the phases a little more in detail:

1. **Building a community**
   If you don't have any people that know about your product when you start the campaign it will be hard to get enough traction for success. Everything starts with an interesting game, but you should start creating interest from early on and not hold on to your material. When you launch your campaign and have an e-mail list, Facebook page and Twitter account with followers your campaign has a much better chance for a good start.

2. **Preparing all material**
   It takes a lot of time to make a good campaign. You need to create an appealing video, illustrations and pictures that are of quality and a text that speaks to the audience. You also need to plan the rewards. Start early and get feedback from different people, this will help you create the best chance for success. Gathering marketing channels and finding out which journalists could be interested in your game belongs here as well.

3. **Launch Kickstarter and Steam Greenlight simultaneously**
   Kickstarter and Steam Greenlight work great as cross-promotion to each other, run them side by side if you can.

4. **Marketing your campaign**
   Use your list of channels and journalists in step 2 to spread the word about your campaign. Much of the preparation should have taken place in step 2, here you execute the marketing plan.

5. **Evaluate a reiteration of your campaign**
   Even if your campaign fails the first time there might still be a reason to try it again later on. Running a Kickstarter campaign is part of building a community. If you think there is hope you can work on your game and try again with new material and a bigger community than before.

1. Building a community

The best way to do this is to set up a central hub for your game, a home page. You should update it constantly and also set up a forum, so that fans can create their own content to the hub. It's very hard to get people to come back to a web page they have recently discovered. So you have to provide appealing content and freshness as best you can.

Having a forum with registration enables you to collect e-mails in a great way, you will get users to the site and an e-mail list to utilize later on. Remember to update members of the site of new content, but don't spam their e-mail boxes too often. The key is to build a following that will be ready to help you the moment you launch your campaign. Other central hubs for your game are Facebook and Twitter.

Now that you have the central hub you need to drive traffic to it in every way you can. Set up pages for the game at:

Your own web site
http://donthavearidiculousaddress.com

Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/

Twitter
https://twitter.com/

IndieDB - A place to showcase your game
www.indiedb.com

Tigforums Developer blogs – A place to talk about your progress
http://forums.tigsource.com (Devblogs)

Steam concepts
http://steamcommunity.com/workshop/browse/?appid=765&section=concepts

You can create a steam concepts page as soon as you have enough material to convey a good looking image of your game. You don't need to have a video yet, illustrations and concept art is enough, as long as they look good. Add links to your Home page, twitter, Facebook etc. (We got 2000 unique visitors to our Steam Concepts page before it faded away, this was really positively surprising)

Steam Greenlight
http://steamcommunity.com/greenlight

Launch your Kickstarter and Steam Greenlight campaigns simultaneously, and add links both ways to maximize cross promotion. Read all about the details in the "Steam Greenlight tips section".

Press sites
http://www.pixelprospector.com/the-big-list-of-indie-game-marketing/
http://www.pixelprospector.com/the-big-list-of-indie-game-sites/

Being featured on different press sites will give you much needed visibility and help you build a community. Be careful of when you contact the press, you don't want to have big press sites write about your game before your Kickstarter is up, if you can't replicate success once the Kickstarter has gone live.

If you don't have a plan then focus on writing big press when you have a Kickstarter link to provide, this way you won't miss out on potential backers if you do happen to get an article written of your game.

YouTube channel
http://youtube.com

Create your own YouTube channel and start creating videos of your game. Combine these with marketing to Reddit for example and you have a way to gain new fans.

Keep updating your websites and other channels. Visit different game industry events if you have the chance and you have material to show. The goal is to create a form of contact to your fans, so that you can utilize them when you need their help. Remember to always try to get an e-mail or some other form of contact and engage with your fans in various ways.

Your home page and press kit

I won't go into too much detail on what to have on your home page. But I will mention the essentials:

Create a home page that looks stunning and has good text, clearly explaining what your game is. Try to think of content that could peak the viewers interest. If you have some demo or videos be sure to have them there.

Create the home page and press kit with journalists in mind. You want to make it as easy as possible for them to do their job. If your material awakens a "Hell yeah! I will get a good story from this in no time without frustration." reaction, then it will surely help your chances of being featured in the press. Here is the home page we created for Battlestation:
http://battlestation.fi

The press kit from Rami Ismail has become somewhat of a standard, I would recommend using it: http://dopresskit.com/

A good Kickstarter campaign has a great video, great pictures and illustrations, great text and awesome pledge alternatives. You are selling your idea and your dream, and you need to convey it to your viewers in the best way possible. Something looks amateurish or something doesn't make sense? The viewer will see it and a sense of doubt will start to creep in on him.

Many Kickstarter campaigns have failed to fulfill their promises in one way or the other, this has brought a sense of general doubt with it. It's your job to convince people you are the real deal, you won't be able to do that with a campaign that is hastily put together. The project, product and the team has to look good and *feel* good, that's what gets a viewer to become a backer.

Create your Kickstarter account well ahead of your planned launch date and start working on the campaign page right away. *Discuss the pledges with your team, try to think of the best possible pledges you have to offer.* Remember, people have a desire to be part of something, to get their name somewhere. Custom pledges where they can be a character in the game work great, physical products like T-shirts are also good ones. *Look at successful campaigns and what they have offered as pledges.* Study the prices and which pledges has been most wanted, this will give you a good idea of what to offer in your own campaign. (We decided to have a pledge where anybody could become a commander in the game by handing us a picture and letting our graphic artist create a resembling character)

Show your Kickstarter campaign page to people who can offer you valuable insights. It's not necessary to publish the campaign, you can share the *preview link* of your Kickstarter campaign page. Iterate the page, change pictures and text until you are happy. Do the same with your video if you have time, as it is the most important thing of your Kickstarter project.

Make all promo material distinctive and cohesive

You want your marketing material to catch the eye of the viewer. But one thing that I noticed looking at the *After Reset marketing material* was that it was always distinctive and cohesive. The yellow background and the graphic style is very distinctive, and easy to spot when posted on reddit or other places. Once you have seen it a couple of times you will instantly remember what product it belonged to.
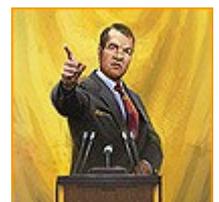
Setting the goal

Be realistic with your goal and see what other types of campaign similar to yours have managed to achieve. Set the goal to be the minimum amount you need to fulfill your promises to backers. You need to take the responsibility to calculate what it takes to make your product. You don't want to fail here and lose your credibility forever. **Explain why you need the money and where it goes.** Explain the whole budget if you have additional money coming from investors or elsewhere. Below is the graph from William Dubé:s campaign Jotun:
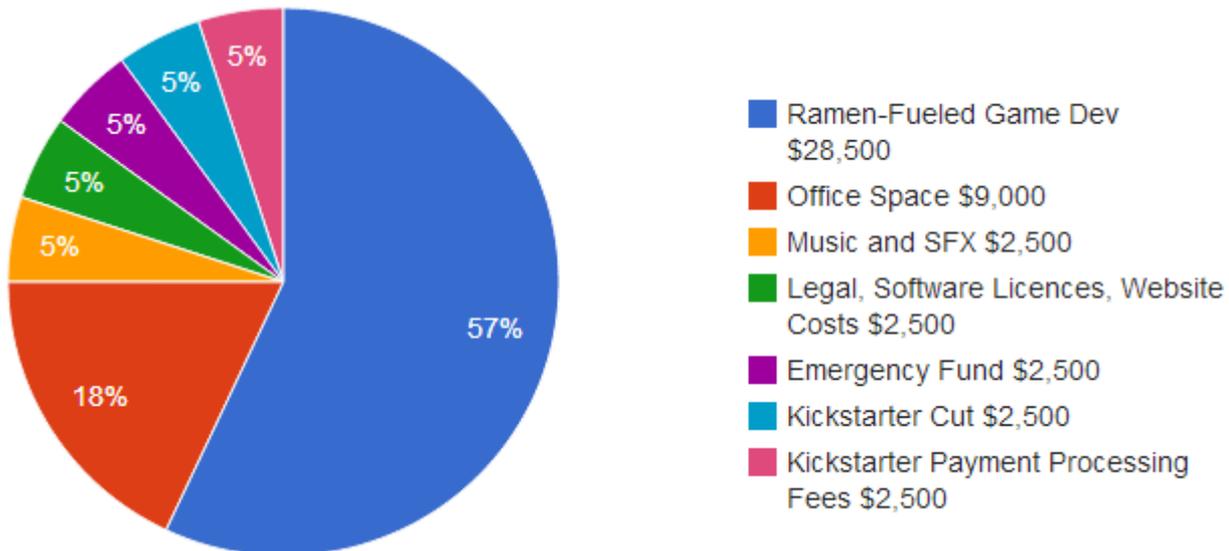
Taxes seem to be missing, for us living in Finland this would be an additional thing to keep in mind. But otherwise the graph looks good and explains how the money in meant to be spent. As you can see 10% is already lost to Kickstarter fee and a payment processing fee.

Stretch goals

One might think that there are only positives to stretch goals, more money! But this isn't necessarily the case. **There is a lot of controversy around stretch goals.** For the campaign creator the idea is to have something more to offer should the initial funding goal be achieved. Often game campaign creators set a stretch goal of: "If we get $x we will make the game available for PS4 as well".

While this gives an additional goal for the campaign it might also cause problems. What if someone wants the game on PS4 but doesn't know if the campaign will reach that goal? This might cause him to lurk and wait to see if the campaign is going to reach that goal, and back when it looks good. Well what if there is a lot of these people waiting to see if the PS4 stretch goal is going to be reached? And what if someone backs the project in the beginning hoping to get it on PS4, forgets about it and comes back later only to realize the stretch goal wasn't met?

Expanding a projects scope might make it cloudy for backers while a one goal project is very clear, either there is a product or there isn't. So there are pros and cons to both. Stretch goals might give you more potential customers and funding if done right, or they might make the whole project messy and confusing for a backer.

The Faster Than Light campaign (https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/64409699/ftl-faster-than-light) proves that stretch goals aren't necessary for a campaign to gather additional funding. If the game/product is good people will want to buy it regardless.

9,818
backers

$200,542
pledged of $10,000 goal

Most campaigns have stretch goals, it has kind of become the norm. ***You have to decide for yourself what stretch goals you want to make, if any.*** Try to keep in mind how they might affect backer behavior. It might back fire if you have a stretch goal, which makes people wait to see how it progresses before they back the project. You want your potential backer to back you right away, otherwise you might lose him altogether in the end. (We decided to leave stretch goals out completely with Battlestation – Humanity's last hope and keep the campaign goal clear)

Your campaign rewards

Think of rewards that would be most appealing to your audience. For indie games good rewards include:

- ***Early access. Players love to be the first to try out things***. You get an additional bonus of gathering feedback and developing the game with your community. You can make this slightly more expensive than the normal game pledge.
- ***Digital Bundles.*** These are nice packages that doesn't require you to do a lot of extra work to fulfill them. Put everything digital you have into this package, including the game, soundtrack, wallpapers and more.
- ***Custom characters or the backers name in the game.*** People love to get their own customized stuff, so if you can try to include pledges where backers can become a NPC in the game or something similar.
- ***Designing own events to the game.*** Let people design something of their own to your game. This one works much in the same way as custom characters.
- ***Collectors edition physical game boxes.*** There are still a lot of old-school gamers out there, who value getting something physical for their effort. Collectors boxes including, the game, posters, hand books etc. is a good reward to have for the really hard-core fans.
- ***T-Shirt and posters.***

It might be worth taking a look at the Double Fines Kickstarter campaign and see which pledges were the most popular ones. The data set is huge!
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doublefine/double-fine-adventure

Add-ons

If you come up with new pledges during the campaign you can create add-ons for new and old backers. Add-ons are additional rewards that people can purchase in addition to whatever tier they have chosen. Encourage people to choose an add-on from a list that you have assembled, and notify them that you will contact them personally later on through a survey to ask which add-on they selected. ***A step-by-step to explain to your backers and potential backers on how it works:***

1. Ask your backers to go to the right hand side of the page, and click "Manage your Pledge" under the "Days remaining" header.

2. Ask them to add money to their pledge equaling the amount of the add-on value they want.

3. Give them an example case

4. Tell them not to change the pledge itself, and that you will contact them in the end with a survey.

This will cause a bit of extra work for you but could prove to be very beneficial in the end.

Early bird and exclusive rewards
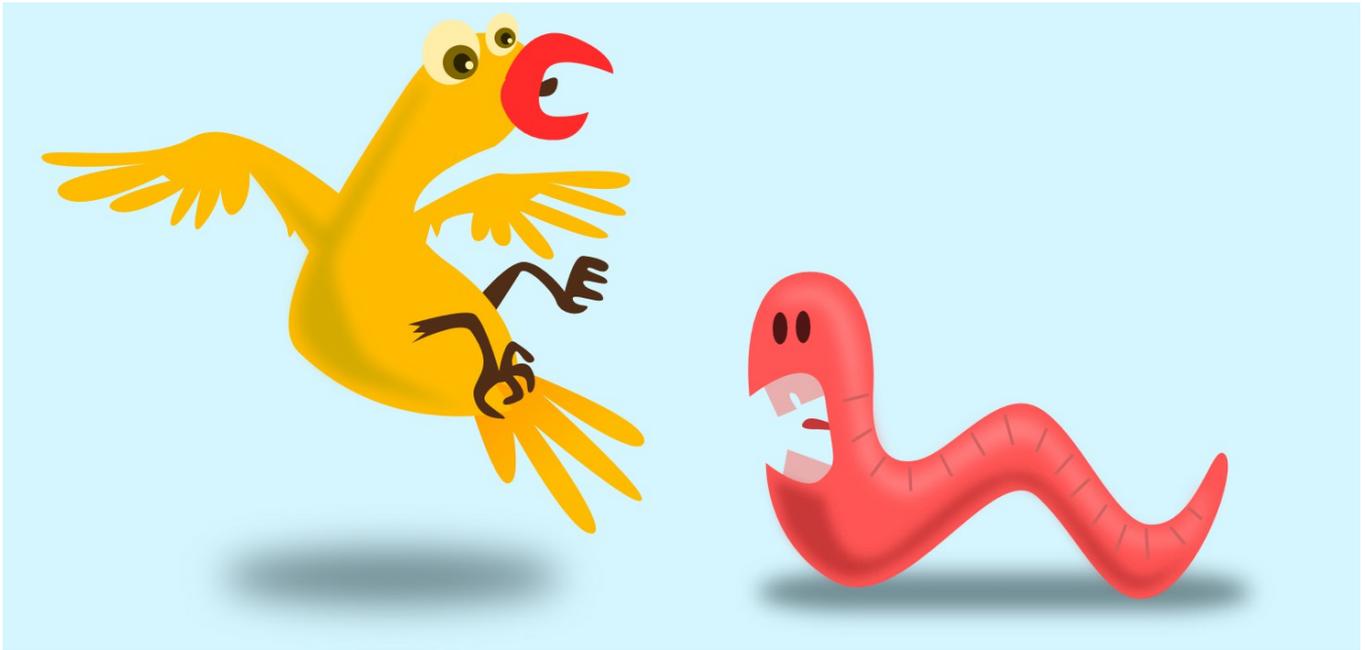
You want to maximize the reasons for a viewer to become a backer. Why should he back you now instead of waiting until the game is done, see it and then decide if he wants to buy or not?

One trick is to give the game cheaper for backers, but try to think of exclusive pledges that won't be available later on. *These will help motivate backers to react now instead of later.* Additionally, by having early birds pledges you may encourage backers to act even faster. Offer rewards that are awesome and limited to a certain numbers, first come first serve! This might prevent some people, who are on the verge of backing or not, from lingering and possibly forgetting the campaign later on.

The project page

Start on your project page early on. Y*ou should create your Kickstarter account well before the campaign starts* and iterate the project page to perfection. Remember, it needs to look and feel good for viewers, get them excited.

- Emphasize all your cool stuff
- Get feedback on your page before you launch
- Make an awesome video
- No wall of texts, combine pictures and text
- Skimming through the pictures of your campaign page should give a good idea of the game.

The backbone of your project page are the illustrations and pictures. After the video has impressed your viewer the next step for him is to skim through the pictures. The text that you create works as a support for the pictures to further create interest. *This means that in order to create the best possible image all aspects of the project page (video, pictures and text) must work well together to give the viewer a good feel of the game.*

Your campaign text (Make it about them as much as you can)

Make it as descriptive and interesting as you can. Avoid having dull text and grammar mistakes. One guy at reddit told me my grammar is terrible, so if you think my text in this document is bad I apologize. I will, however, make sure my campaign text is the best it can be. Oh, one more thing: **Combine your text with pictures and avoid wall of texts.** Nobody likes wall of texts.

Direct your text at your backers, like you would be talking directly to them. Emphasize all the good things THEY will receive, and leave the me stuff to a minimum. Yes, you need the money to make the game. But they aren't interested in you, they are interested in the game/product (hopefully) and what they will get for their effort.

The following is taken from this blog post by Robert Dellafave:
http://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/a-no-name-developers-guide-to-succeeding-on-kickstarter--gamedev-10892

Your game's project page is likely the only page potential backers will view before making the decision to contribute to your campaign. It should be informative, well-structured and highly visual.

- **The project description:** When writing a short blurb that sums up your game, be sure to include the game's genre and any feature that differentiates your game from the masses. For instance, it's not enough to say, "Hiro Fodder is a game where the player assumes the role of the traditional villain." Instead, try something like "Hiro Fodder: A Blue Hope is an uproarious yet heartfelt and story-driven JRPG that follows the journey of one rambunctious slime on his quest to redefine the definition of easy XP."
- **Graphics:** One quality graphic is worth more than a dozen mediocre ones. If your funds are limited - and they probably are, otherwise why would you need Kickstarter? - commission an artist for one or two pieces of high quality concept art specifically for your campaign. Better yet, have the artist create a mock-up of your game. That way, potential backers can at least see your vision of the final product. Along the same lines, create graphical sub-headers that capture the feel of your game. These go over better than simple text headers. Echoes of Eternea game designer Ryan Harmon did an excellent job of selling his concept to the masses by littering his project page with impressive visuals and eye-catching sub-headers.
- **Budgeting section:** At the very least, include a section that spells out, in detail, what the funds will be used for. Better yet, use a graphical display. Backers are more inclined to scan a visual aid than to read a wall of text, especially if they only have a passing interest in your project.
- **Platforms:** Don't forget to mention what platforms the game will be released on. If one of your stretch goals is to release the game on additional platforms, mention that.
- **Demo:** In order to show off your game, you're going to have to create some sort of demo. Like with graphics, it's more beneficial to create a very small portion of your game and create it well, than to slop the entire thing together and have it comes across as being made by a bunch of hobbyists. If you're on a super tight budget, base your demo around one facet of game play (like combat, exploration, or puzzles). Avoid programmer art, stock music, and boring aspects of the game, like menus, whenever possible.

If big press sites write about you be sure to add some quotes to your campaign page from them, this will increase your credibility.

The anatomy of a great Kickstarter project page
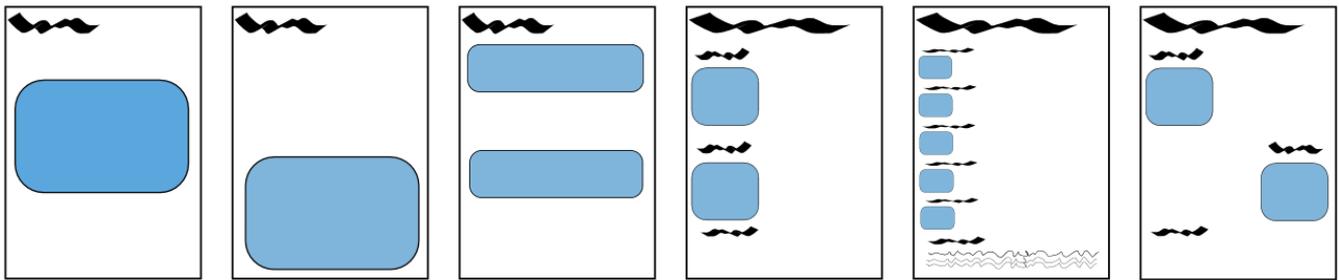
I found this following blog post from stonemaiergames.com. It had many of the essentials covered so I wanted to include it in this guide package.

The following text is taken from:
http://stonemaiergames.com/kickstarter-lesson-39-anatomy-of-a-greater-kickstarter-project-page/

The Top 3 Project Page Mistakes

1. **Too much text.** This usually falls into two categories: One, the balance between text and images is off. For every section of text, there should be an accompanying image to balance it out. Two, the text is in big chunks, which is very difficult to read online. Most people encounter a big chunk of text and either skip it or skim it. No paragraph should be longer than 3 lines, and each item of a bullet list should be no longer than 2 lines.
2. **Bad art and design.** People only get one first impression of your project page. If that impression is of bad, placeholder, prototype art and design, they aren't going to back your project. You're probably on Kickstarter so you can raise the money to afford good art and design, but you need to spend something up front to have a few eye-catching, appealing images to give backers an idea of the quality and style of the project.
3. **Poorly written/constructed reward levels.** Backers need to be able to quickly and easily find what they want. They need to be able to tell the difference between reward levels at a quick glance. If your reward level is more than 8 lines long, you're doing it wrong (I'm guilty of this too). Reward levels should be clear, concise, and non-repetitive. List the most important/unique aspect at the beginning of each reward level's description. If every reward level gets the same thing, you don't need to say it over and over again. Either mention it on the project page or on the first reward level.

Overarching philosophies

1. **Share your passion and personality.** Your project page should be clear and succinct, but it doesn't need to be dry. Give your project page a human side by adding small personal touches and flourishes, but don't tell backers how they should feel about the project. Let them decide on their own. I'm sure you've seen this on project pages. "This will be the best book you'll ever read!" or "This is the most fun you'll ever have playing a game!" There's a difference between enthusiasm for your project and projection. Let backers figure out for themselves how they feel about your project.
2. **Put the best selling points at the top of the page.** What is the most effective pitch for your project? Is it a really compelling image? The huge number of components? Something unique among Kickstarter projects (like free shipping or a money-back

guarantee)? A great third-party review? A new game mechanic? Whatever it is, it should be at the top of your project page. And then the second best selling point should be next. And so on. You may not even know the best selling point, so make sure to get feedback on this. Your top selling point may change over the course of the project, so feel free to shift things around.

3. **Only put what's necessary on the main page.** Sure, you want all the core questions answered up front on the project page–backers shouldn't have to hunt around for shipping subtleties and why you're on Kickstarter. But you have several resources at your disposal for linking to ancillary information elsewhere: The FAQ, your blog/website, and your project updates. Xia did a great job with this by listing the project updates on the main page (the titles of each one help you find what you're looking for). Nanobot Battle Arena also did this in an interesting way by posting multiple updates immediately after launching the project and linking to each one of those updates to give backers the scoop on shipping, badges, reviews, etc. The only downside of doing that is that you can't edit project updates (but you can always post new updates and link to them).

Visual Aspects of a Project Page

1. **Spectacular Project Image.** If you're going to spend money on art before a project (which you should), this is one of the key places where it's needed. The project image is used at the top of the page–it's what you see when you're not watching the video. It's also used as the project thumbnail. It should be distinctive, iconic, and attractive. You can change it over the course of the project (you might want to use this space for special announcements), but keep the core image the same.
2. **Infographics.** Infographics are often much better at explaining concepts than long lists. For example, instead of showing what's in the box, show it on an infographic (there can be text on the infographic). Or if your project has a concept that would take paragraphs to explain, use an infographic. Soberdough does that quite effectively (see image on right).
3. **Use a mix of real photos and digital renderings.** Digital renderings often look sharper than photos of your prototype, but I've found that photos of games often look better than their digital counterparts. I think part of an actual photo is that a backer gets a feeling for the tangible aspect of the reward–"That's something I'll have in my house someday."
4. **Landscape-ify images.** If you put an image on your Kickstarter page, it will fill up the entire main column. Image width isn't an issue, but if an image is too tall, it'll take up too much precious real estate. Cut down the height in an image editor so it has a 3:1 width to height ratio. You can see some examples of this on Euphoria (some, not all, of our images were cut down to that ratio).
5. **Illustrated headers.** Custom illustrated headers are much more thematic and visually compelling than standard text images. They'll take a lot more work, but they're worth it. I always like TMG's custom headers–see Dungeon Roll for a good example.
6. **No step-by-step reward level graphic.** I've changed my stance on this since Viticulture. More often than not, this image is completely redundant. Backers know what it means to get two copies of a game–they don't need an image to explain that to them. If you really feel the need to do it, Mars Needs Mechanics has a very compelling reward level graphic.

Core Components that Every Project Page Needs

1. **Description:** The three lines under the project video should tell backers exactly what the project is.
2. **What's in the box:** Tell backers what they're getting. Use an infographic.

3. **Third-party reviews:** Tell backers what unbiased professionals think about your project.
4. **What's unique:** Give 3-5 reasons your project is different from anything anyone has ever seen. If it's a board game, link to the rules (having the rules ready before the project begins for a board game project is imperative. It's okay if they're in Word. They just need to be written).
5. **Explanatory video:** Give backers an in-depth look at your project (much deeper than the 2-minute project video allows).
6. **Why pledge now:** List a few compelling reasons why backers should support you now on Kickstarter, including why you need the funds to make the project a reality.
7. **Stretch goals:** List a few stretch goals to compel people to share your project. You can add more as the project continues to overfund.
8. **Add-ons:** People need to know how they can add multiple copies to their pledge (among other add-ons, which I recommend limiting to items that can be included in the game box by the manufacturer).
9. **Risks and Challenges:** Be real in this section. By giving examples of what could go wrong, you show that you've done your research and know what you're talking about.

The Inside Scoop

There are a few things you won't realize about the project page until you actually start to make one (which I highly recommend you do–anyone can start building a page at any time) or until it's too late. Here's the inside scoop:

1. *The preview link to your project page will automatically forward* to your final campaign page when you go live.
2. *You can't create an FAQ before the campaign begins*, so type out questions you anticipate before the project so you can create the FAQ the minute you launch.
3. You can revise the project page during and after the approval process before you launch, and any time during the campaign.
4. *You cannot revise the project page after the campaign is over.*
5. The "Risks and Challenges" section is mandatory–it's part of the project page template. It's text only.

Examples of Great Project Pages

1. Euphoria
2. The Agents
3. Dungeon Roll
4. Soberdough
5. Bluebird Man
6. Mars Needs Mechanics
7. Xia
8. Guts of Glory

Before you launch

You can get additional feedback from this great facebook group here: https://www.facebook.com/groups/KickstarterBestPractices/

Show your campaign page, extra set of eyes are always helpful and they might catch something you have overlooked.

“...gorgeous art style...”
- Luke Plunkett, *Kotaku*

“...a lovely looking homage to the 16-bit era consoles...”
- Alasdair Duncan, *Destructoid*

The following is taken from this blog post by Robert Dellafave:
http://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/a-no-name-developers-guide-to-succeeding-on-kickstarter--gamedev-10892

While your campaign is running, be sure to provide frequent updates. Listed below are a few ways to get the most mileage out of them:

- *Do not encumber your backers with updates:* One or two updates per week is more than enough. Any more and your backers may become frustrated. As much as I liked the idea behind SpaceVenture, 50 updates in a 30 day period was far too many, and probably had a negative effect on their campaign.
- *Save a few pieces of content for your updates:* Updates need to be meaningful. Just checking in and letting backers know you're still alive isn't enough. Instead, reserve some artwork, music, concept art and game play footage specifically for your updates.
- *Link to press coverage:* Doing so might impress your backers enough to start spreading the word about your game in their own social media circles. It may also encourage other media outlets to cover your campaign.

If you get press coverage or manage to achieve some stretch goals go ahead and update your campaigns main page. Add them into the top section so that people can immediately see that your campaign has:

1. Managed to get press coverage
2. Already is funded and now you are aiming for the next stretch goal

The video

I find that Scott Stephans quote from the interview with Aegis Defenders (In the end of this document) wraps up the point about a good video:

> "Your trailer video is a commercial for the rest of your page. We really focused on making ours more like a movie trailer. Some people prefer the talking head style video but, by and large, they don't seem to fund as well. Sell people the idea first and yourself second."

The main purpose of your campaign video is to make the viewer *feel* something. It's not about convincing them of how professional you are, or how hard you have been working on something. If the video doesn't make the viewer feel joy, excitement, sympathy or some other emotion they will be less likely to take the energy and back your campaign.

So many campaign creators decide to introduce the team and have them talk about the project. *If you aren't funny or can otherwise provide something engaging you simply risk losing the viewer to boredom.* Let's face it, most of us indie developers are pretty bad in front of the camera. Start strong and show off your product instead, try to make the video engaging. We decided to go with a cinematic video for Battlestation, using narration to engage viewers with the story for our game. Some pointers to a good video:

- *The first 10-20 seconds are crucial.* Show at least some of your best stuff to keep the viewer engaged.
- *Try to keep it short (2-5min).* People are very busy and impatient, seeing that the video is 10 minutes or longer already deters a lot of people.
- *A good video is like a good story with a beginning, a middle and an end.* Begin strong, show what your game is about in the middle and have a call to action at the end.
- *If you are bad in front of the camera there is no need to film yourself.* Show your team through pictures or other material in the story section.
- *Communicate your game or concept as clearly as you can.* Stick to the point and leave everything non-relevant out of the video.

When should you launch your Kickstarter campaign?

Graph from: http://indieconquest.com/2014/02/09/when-is-the-best-time-to-launch-a-kickstarter/
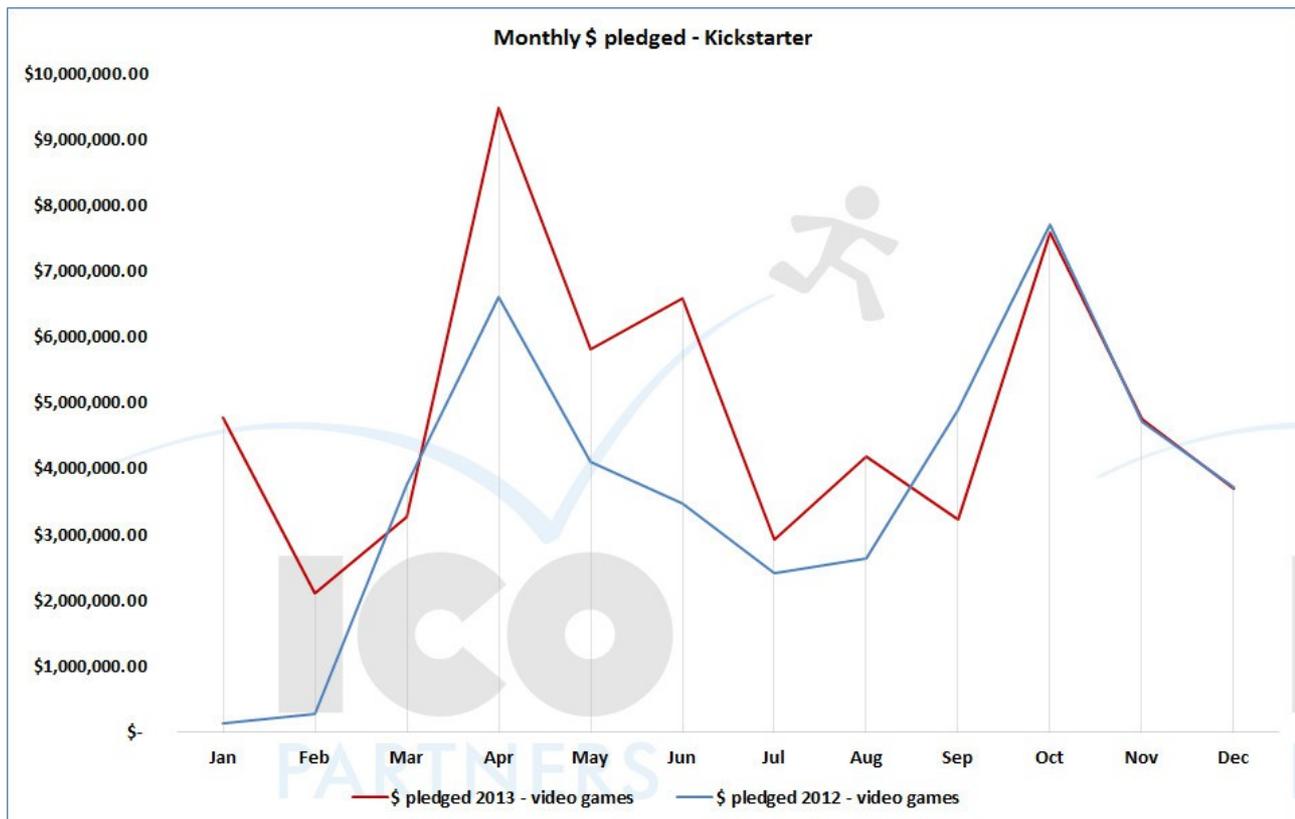
The above graph shows the amount of money pledged at different times of the year. We can see the best peaks in April and October. Here is an explanation from the blog author (Indieconquest.com):

"The peak in April certainly has something to do U.S. backers getting their tax returns and the fact that Christmas "overspending" is months in the past. There is also another peak in October? This one is a bit harder to put a finger on, but I would wager that there are a lot more campaigns running this time of year. People are trying to launch before Christmas closes in on people's minds."

So that gives us the best months of the year, April or October.

Let's dive deeper and see what time of the month is best. The blog author explains:

"This one I have no data to support, but only logic. The vast majority of people have to pay rent, mortgages, and utilities bills at the end of the month or on the first of the month. *This would indicate that launching in the middle of the month is a good idea.* If running a standard 30 day campaign your launch and end dates will happen at about the same time each month. However, if you are running one of the newer and "trendier" 15 or 20 day campaigns, you should map out just when your campaign will start and finish to avoid the end of the month."

"One other little thing to think about is how people are paid. Many are paid weekly, but a lot of companies pay their employees on the 1st and 15th. *So a launch on the 16th-20th seems the most logical, as people are likely not thinking too much about bills at this point."*

That gives us the best date of a month for a standard 30 day campaign: 16th to 20th.

Then finally the blog author explains the best time of the week, which is either Tuesday**, Wednesday or Thursday.** Monday is bad day universally, everybody are unhappy. Weekends are quiet since people have other stuff to do. Launching on a Friday means your campaign will be idle over the weekend, receive no press since journalist don't have time to write about you before the weekend.
All of this leaves us the three days mentioned above.

What about the perfect time of day? The author explains:

"My preferred launch time is in the early evening. This is when most have finished dinner and might go on their computer to check their email and such. I have been launching at 7pm CST for every Kickstarter and I have noticed the most action in the evenings as well."

Remember that your campaign will end the same time it started, so it's good to plan ahead and set the time such that people are active when the final hours are counting down. The final stretch of a campaign is where most campaigns fare well, so it is good to maximize this.

So the perfect recipe becomes:

April or October – 16th thru 20th of the month – On a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday – In the Early Evening

3. Launch simultaneously (All about Steam Greenlight and Kickstarter)

Steam is the place to be if you want to reach our audience, and Steam Greenlight is the way to get there. I stumbled upon this great blog post from Petrucio Stange. I recommend reading the whole post, but let's take a look at the main ways to get traffic to your Greenlight campaign(The following text is from:
http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/PetrucioStange/20140504/216928/Greenlight_Forever.php)

There are three ways a Greenlight entry can get views: through the 'Most Recent' button, through the 'Your Queue' button, or through a direct link.

- *The 'Your Queue' method is the best one,* as it will net a very large percentage of a entry views and votes.
- *The 'Most Recent' method also brings in a lot of traffic,* but you have to fight harder with other projects for a click, with a good attention-grabbing thumbnail. And by the way, due to a basic fact of human evolution, animated thumbnails will grab a lot more attention than great looking logos - in my humble opinion they should not be an option.
- *The third method is to be directed to the project's entry by a direct link.* And other than some trickling views coming in from queues, that's your main weapon to get votes after the first months.

Be careful of launching your Greenlight campaign too early or you might get stuck for a very long time. Here is Petrucios takeaway from his experience:

All this means that getting in early on Greenlight is a huge, HUGE, mistake. The 'Concepts' area of Greenlight didn't exist when we got in. It sure was the place our project should be before we started our kickstarter. My advice to new projects is to stay there as long as possible, polish your trailer and your screenshots with very good stuff, get a good voice-actor for the trailer, make an awesome (and animated) logo/thumbnail, and keep licking that entry until you have a very nice ratio of likes-to-dislikes, as those views you get via the Greenlight system itself in the initial period will probably be the bulk of what you get, and it will only get a lot harder after that.

Steam Greenlight theories by Shark Punch

Picture taken from Sharkpunchs home page: http://sharkpunch.com/press/themasterplan.html

I was referred to a blog post of a Steam Greenlight experience and found it to be too good to not include in this guide. The following theories are taken from Shark Punch:s blog, which can be found here: http://blog.sharkpunch.com/

Theories

We do have a few theories on what happened, but unfortunately they're mostly based on gut feeling since it's hard to get any concrete data from Greenlight.

If you have a high % of yes votes, Steam will push the game to more people. We had several people warn us that traffic drops drastically after a couple of days. It did, but nowhere close to zero - and then stayed pretty stable.

A really engaging icon helps in getting traffic. Our "promo guy" has worked well this far, and we think adding animated cigarette smoke to the icon really helped it pop out even more.

Showing a lot of interesting game play scenarios in the trailer is crucial. We wanted to give people a good idea of all the things you can do in the finished game, and we think the trailer really succeeded in this.

You should have an interesting theme / subject. *"Would you play a game about bank robberies in the 70s?"* Maybe or maybe not, but we think many people vote for originality even though they might not actually end up buying the game.

Summer sales might actually have helped. We have no way of verifying this, but we think the Steam summer sales might actually have helped us, by making much more people open the Steam client than usually.

Be in the Action category. Anecdotal evidence from many people familiar with Greenlight strongly indicates that being included in the Action category is a very good idea if you want to get a lot of visitors.

A little steam greenlight trick that can make all the difference

The problem with sharing your standard Steam Greenlight link is that it opens up your browser instead of the Steam client. What happens is that most often the user has to log in and even do a security check before he can place a vote. A huge amount of votes are lost because of this, I have experienced this first hand when I myself have wanted to vote on something.

So this great guy (Developer of Black Annex) right here came up with a solution:
http://creditworthy/r/gamedev/comments/1dejg1/have_a_game_on_greenlight_a_little_tip_to_make_it/

Here is his tip on how to create a link that opens the Steam client directly:

Anyway, you know how you can link people to your Greenlight like this: http://steamcommunity.com/sharedfiles/filedetails/?id=112030991 Which takes them to the page in their browser? It's cool and all but they have to log in to SteamPowered.com and usually do the steamguard thing which deters some voters (I had some complaints on Twitter which is why I decided to work on this).

And you know how you can use Steam to open certain embedded urls by going Start->Run->steam://url/SomethingHere/SomeIdHere?

Well, there's an undocumented (I had to hex-examine Steam to find it) embedded URL you can open that opens Steam directly to your Greenlight page on a users' computer, with them already logged-in so they can vote in 1 click. It's like this:
steam://url/CommunityFilePage/112030991

So that URL will open Steam and take someone straight to your Greenlight. One problem is that you probably want to share it on Twitter and Facebook, but social media sites don't consider things starting with steam:// as links so they're not clickable. Instead. put a file on your website called something like greenlight.php and put this code in it: **<?php header('Location: steam://url/CommunityFilePage/112030991'); ?>**

Now, send someone a link to that .php file you created, and when they click it, Steam will open on their computer directly to your greenlight page!

Combining Kickstarter and Steam greenlight

Steam Greenlight will give you free visibility for your project right in the beginning when you launch your game to be greenlit. Below is a graph from Shark Punch:s Masterplan game, the first days it was on Greenlight (http://blog.sharkpunch.com/).
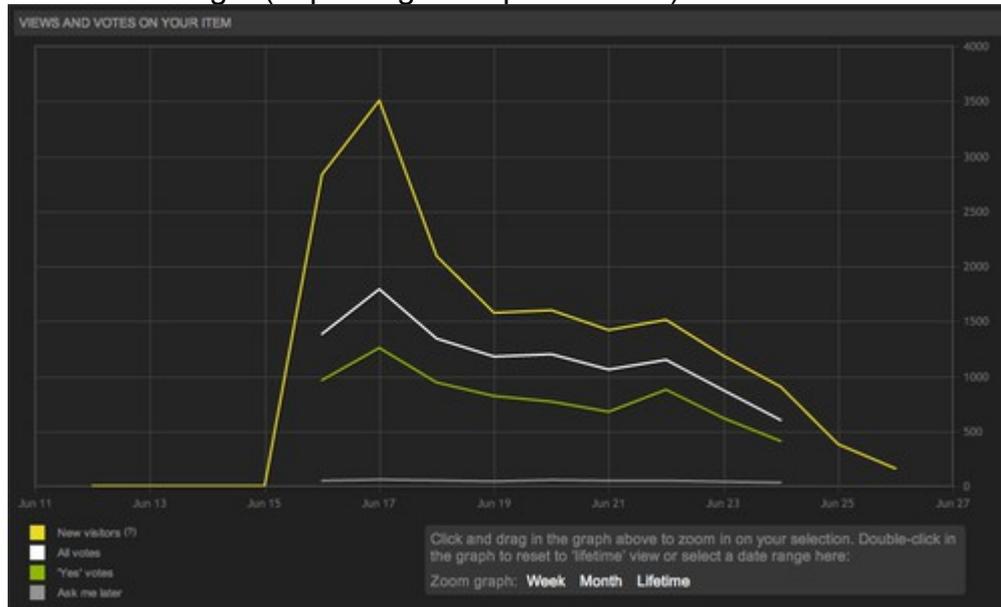
They say they got around 10 000 new visitors during the first days. Getting 10 000 unique visitors is huge, and will definitely boost your Kickstarter campaign. Be sure to launch your Kickstarter first, and then go ahead with launching the Greenlight. Add a link to your Kickstarter in the most visible way you can, to ensure best exposure.

I found an excellent blog post by **Robert DellaFave** here: http://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/tips-for-getting-greenlit-on-steam-greenlight--gamedev-13938

He explains some of the possible pros and cons of different Kickstarter and Greenlight cross-promotion scenarios. *I recommend you read his post in full but here are the key points:*

Kickstarter and Greenlight

It seems that nearly everyone who runs a Steam Greenlight campaign is either in the midst of running a Kickstarter campaign, has already launched one, or is about to do so. Running a successful Kickstarter can do wonders for your Greenlight effort, and vice versa—but don't think that just because your Kickstarter met its goal that your game is guaranteed to get Greenlit. In fact, launching Kickstarter and Greenlight campaigns simultaneously can potentially cause more damage than good.

Let's examine the pros and cons of three different scenarios:

Launching Your Greenlight and Kickstarter Campaign Simultaneously

Pros:

- ***Visitor traffic from Greenlight and Kickstarter will peak at the same time.*** *By highlighting your Kickstarter campaign on Greenlight, you'll drive a ton of traffic to your Kickstarter page. The reverse is also true.*
- ***Early popularity on Kickstarter tends to lead to sustained popularity,*** *as you'll be featured on the site's "Popular this Week" section.*

Cons:

- ***Maintaining two major campaigns at once is a ton of work,*** *and may prove overwhelming.*
- ***Some games that are Kickstarter-ready aren't necessarily Greenlight-ready.***
- ***After your first several days on Steam and Kickstarter,*** *it's possible that your visibility will wane considerably.*

Launching Your Greenlight Campaign During Your Kickstarter

Pros:

- **Sustained visibility on Kickstarter:** *Historically, Kickstarter donations fall off considerably during a campaign's second and third weeks. Launching on Steam Greenlight may provide your game with the added boost it needs to get through the trough. Along the same lines, Kickstarter campaigns in danger of not reaching their funding goal would do well to launch on Greenlight, if only as a desperation tactic.*
- **Existing backers will be excited to check out your Steam Greenlight page***.*
- **You'll have received valuable feedback from your Kickstarter** *backers that can be applied to your Greenlight.*

Cons:

- ***You'll miss out on an influx of Steam Greenlight users during*** *the pivotal early days of your Kickstarter campaign.*
- ***It's difficult to run two concurrent campaigns.*** *Not as difficult as if they were launched simultaneously, but arduous nonetheless.*
- ***If your Kickstarter isn't doing well, it may deter Greenlight users from voting "Yes."***

Launching Your Greenlight After Your Kickstarter Has Ended

Pros:

- *It's less stressful.*
- *You'll have more time to focus on your game, making it better and working out flaws before submitting it to Steam. In turn, your presentation will be more representative of a final product.*
- *Your game will benefit from two distinct exposure peaks.*
- *Kickstarter backers are very likely to vote "Yes" for your game.*

Cons:

- ***Failing to meet a Kickstarter goal doesn't necessarily spell doom on Greenlight,*** *but for some voters it's a major red flag.*
- ***Your Kickstarter won't benefit from the extra traffic*** *wrought by launching on Steam Greenlight.*

As you can plainly see, there is really no right and wrong answer to the Kickstarter vs. Greenlight question. Well, maybe one wrong answer: I wouldn't recommend launching a Greenlight campaign before a Kickstarter. Why? Quite simply, it'll be exceedingly difficult to convert the 10,000 or more Steam users that view your page during your campaign's first week into potential Kickstarter backers if your Kickstarter isn't live. Seems like a waste.

Releasing on Other Game Portals

It might be worth it to mention that you will release the game on other platforms as well, or at least try to. Robert Dellafave explains:

http://gamedevelopment.tutsplus.com/articles/tips-for-getting-green lit-on-steam-greenlight--gamedev-13938

In may seem counter-intuitive at first, but releasing your game on sites like Desura and GOG.com may actually increase your chances of getting Greenlit. Historically, the bar for entry on these and other like-minded sites is far lower than it is for Steam.

On a side-note. It's not always just about the votes, other things matter as well when determining if you get greenlit or not.

http://rival-games.com/blog/?p=176704372

Here is the conclusion from Rival Games Jukka Laakso: As for a conclusion, like so many others have said it before me, it seems getting greenlit isn't just about the numbers. Getting the attention of the press, the players and the community is as important as the amount of "yes" votes generated at the end of the day.

Picture from: http://www.pixelprospector.com/how-to-contact-press/

Write down all the channels you can possibly find in a spreadsheet document. Keep track of who you have contacted. You can find many venues to spread your message, but I will list some of the good ones here:

- Facebook groups related to your product/game
- Twitter (Use hashtags #indiedev and #gamedev)
- Reddit
- IndieDB (Make a good news post and hope you get featured on their front page)
- Traditional media (Crowdfunding campaigns can be interesting to them)
- Games press and blogs (Find the individual authors, who could be interested in your campaign)
- Forums
- Friends
- Youtubers

It is more effective to find out the individual journalists that have written about games/products similar to yours. Search for their twitter accounts or e-mail addresses and contact them directly. Your chances of them noticing and being interested is much more higher than just shooting a mail to a web sites general mailbox.

Write a good press release to send to journalists, send it to someone you know has experience and get feedback. Remember to include your Kickstarter link, press kit link and general information of your game

Here is an excellent "How to contact press" from pixelprospector.com:
http://www.pixelprospector.com/how-to-contact-press/

Cross-Promotion with other Kickstarter campaigns

on April 25

Unsubscribe.

on April 24

Robert,

I don't think cross promoting via product updates is a good idea. It devalues the really great work you are doing.

on April 24

Keep the cross promotion to yourself. Tantamount to spam.

It's possible to do cross-promotion with other campaigns by both parties agreeing to mention the other campaign in a project update. There are pros and cons to this:

Pros:
- You will get more visibility through other campaigns

Cons:
- A number of your backers might see it as spam, and even decide to back out.

My take on this is to **_carefully choose which campaigns to do cross-promotion with_**, best would be to find campaigns that have similarities to yours. Campaigns that you think your backers would be interested in because they backed yours. So if you have a sci-fi game, other sci-fi games are good ones.

My second advice would be to explain in the update why you are doing this, if the goal hasn't been reached yet it would be good to mention that you are trying to make it to your goal + you really like this other campaign and thought your backers would like it as well. Try to offer value to your backers and not simply spam them in hopes of collecting as much money as possible.

From what I have read it is very recommended to do cross-promotions with other campaigns, the overall result should be positive. But don't do them too much.

Also:

DO NOT ask for cross-promotion in comments section for other campaigns, as it has been rumored that Kickstarter might remove your campaign altogether for doing so.

There are some tools on the web that might help you find good campaigns to do cross-promotion with. I have no personal experience from them yet so I can't say if they work well or not.

Kicktraq.com is a web site, which tracks Kickstarter campaigns and continuously predicts the outcome for campaigns. There is a lot of analytic that can be found here, such as daily backers and average amount pledged. Kicktraq seems to have decent traffic so by putting in some effort to rise to their hot list might be worth it.

Kicktraq.com has a hot list showing top ten on the front page and top 25 once you click to open the hot list. How do we get our campaign on the Kicktraq.com hot list? This is what Kicktraq.com writes about how to get there:

"The Kicktraq Hot list is based on the popularity of Kickstarter projects within the *Kicktraq* community. "
And a step by step explanation by Kicktraq.com:

1. *Share one of our dynamic charts and/or show your users how they can embed Kicktraq* charts for any Kickstarter project (including yours, of course) on any website where they think your potential backers may find it

2. *Link to your Kicktraq project page*

3. *Share your project's latest funding status* through our social sharing features right within your Kicktraq project page

4. *Encourage your users to install the* Kicktraq plugins *for Chrome or Firefox,* which embeds one of the charts for each project right on the top of its Kickstarter project page, and encourages users to visit your Kicktraq project page for additional news and statistics.

Based on their recommendations we can add these:

5. *Try to keep your momentum positive from day to day.*
6. *Be active and chat a lot in the comments section.* This will help get your campaign higher in the Kicktraq hot list.

You can read all about how to get to the hot list here:
http://blog.kicktraq.com/kicktraq-hotlist-heroes-vs-villains/

Additional ways to get visibility

You can use whatever forums and other channels you find, but you need to learn what is accepted to post on them. Many forums want you to be a contributing member, so joining as a newcomer and posting your game will most likely get you banned.

- Spread the word at local developer gatherings
- Find and join all Facebook groups that are related to your campaign. Facebook has a variety of indie gaming groups.
- Reddit
- r/indiegaming – Quality over quantity when posting
- Whatever channels you can find that are related to your project.

Thunderclap

https://www.thunderclap.it

Thunderclap is a great tool to use before the Kickstarter to gather a following ready to spread the message the second your Kickstarter is out. Thunderclap posts 1 message on Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr on behalf of a user if the user has decided to help spread the campaign.

You can use Thunderclap much before the Kickstarter begins by using the Kickstarter preview link. The Kickstarter preview link automatically redirects users to the campaign page if the campaign has gone live, this is essential to be able to use Thunderclap before the campaign.

I got an idea and don't see a reason why this shouldn't work. *To maximize the effect of Thunderclap do one Thunderclap campaign before the Kickstarter campaign and time it to a day in the beginning of the Kickstarter.* When there is 1-2 weeks left of your Kickstarter start a new one and time it to the end of your Kickstarter campaign. This way you can do a Thunderclap campaign twice and utilize friends and fans the first time before the Kickstarter and then the backers you have managed to acquire to help spread the message a second time!

To arms picture!

You want to engage your community as if you were going to war. People are so busy and lazy these days that you have to really engage them if you want them to do anything. Statistics have shown that most people are so called lurkers, they just like to look at things and be entertained. You need to involve your community and tell them that you need help, you need their help and they are important to your success. I found **Aegis Defenders** did this very well simply with one picture.

This strikes a chord with the viewer, we are going to war and we are the underdogs. Everyone loves an underdog and wants them to succeed. So make your own "to arms" picture, and tell everyone you need their help.

Create your own awesome day 1

You want your first campaign day to be awesome, because it will affect everything that happens afterward. Now I'm no journalist but I do know that Kickstarter campaigns with a good amount of backers look much more appealing than campaigns with none, especially if the creator is someone nobody knows.

How to create that awesome day 1:

1. *Have a community ready to charge.* This includes all your friends and fans you have managed to get behind you.
2. *Have press write about you from day 1*. This isn't easy to do, read more from the interviews section. It's possible by contacting press with a link to the Kickstarter preview.
3. *Launch your game on greenlight the very same day as your Kickstarter,* and do cross-promotion.
4. *Have thunderclap fully supported by the launch day* and let it blast off your message.

The last 48 hours

Time to get busy. This is the time to engage your community to help you with the last push.
If you haven't reached your goal yet here is one good tip that will get you closer: Post an
update, where you have calculated that if everyone raises their pledge by a nominal amount we
would be so much closer to the goal!

If you haven't done so yet, emulate this Reset video (See interview with Alpo for more
information):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj1j-cJABsw

r/games is now allowing you to remind about your campaign.

Before the Kickstarter ends

Your last update on the main page can be a notification to people that missed your campaign to
go to your home page and back you that way. There is a possibility that many will find the
campaign afterward so it's good to be able to give them an option to back you as well.

It is also possible to add a last update, which enables people that missed the campaign to back
them using Paypal or the humble widget. This is great because the campaign page is likely to
drive some traffic in the future. I'm not 100% sure this is allowed, since in order to make the
final update it has to be done while the campaign is still running. Kickstarter doesn't probably
like that there is an alternate way to back the campaign. Proceed with caution.

Remember to not give up

Most postmortems I have read have stated that they had a good start, had a slump in the
middle and then finished strong. It seems this is the case for most campaigns, keeping that
momentum from the beginning will prove to be difficult. But don't give up!

You have to remember that the end will most likely be strong, if you have a plan for it. Read the
interview with Alpo and their game called Reset. They managed to raise most of their funding
during the last 7 days, it was a true Christmas miracle.

According to this study: http://www.slideshare.net/elephantsandventures/10-figures-you-need-
to-know-before-a-kickstarter 66% of the total funding was received during the first and last
week of campaigns.

5. Evaluate re-iteration

Many Kickstarter campaigns have succeeded on their second try. What happens is that the community grows with the first campaign, and later on it will be bigger and ready to support you again. By being active and taking care of the fans you managed to get from the first campaign it can be worth it to try again if your product seems to generate enough interest.

It will be up to you to decide if you want to try again later, maybe you need to spend some more time perfecting the material you have, correcting the mistakes you did during the first campaign. When you have more to show you can try again, now ready with a bigger community. It's recommended to work on the project enough so that you have something truly new to show, and that it is evident the project has progressed.

The following is taken from an excellent blog post by Henry Smith, succeeding second time:
http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/HenrySmith/20140805/222583/Two_Kickstarters_Later.php

The two campaigns were extremely similar on the surface, but I did more work behind the scenes on the second attempt. While it's impossible to tell exactly what tipped the scales my best guesses are:

- Existing momentum combined with more aggressive outreach
- The Tournament helped keep the buzz going for the duration of the campaign
- Some unexpected exposure near the end

I think the experiment as a whole was an important precedent but I'm not sure how easily it could work for a brand new team/creator. I believe a large part of my success was because I already had an existing audience, from a game that I self-funded, and spent the last 2 years gradually building that audience.

Interview with William Dubé, creator of Jotun. $64,265 raised.

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/682108903/jotun
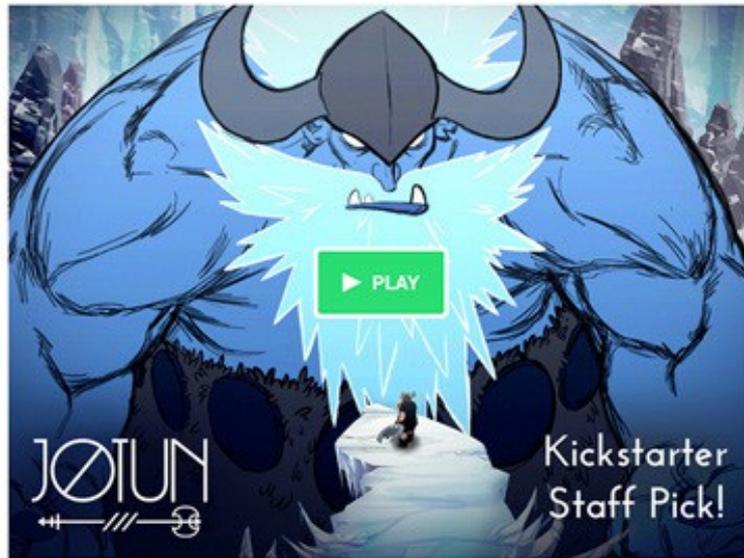
William Dubé's blog post about his strategies for his campaign:
http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/WilliamDube/20140814/223358/How_An_Indie_Nobody_Raised_400
00_On_Kickstarter.php

William had a lot of great information in his blog post, so be sure to check that out. Since he had so much information in the blog post already, I decided to keep it short and ask him how he approached the press.

Did you contact press before the campaign or did you wait until the day your campaign went live? Also, did you choose just one person to contact from a bigger website or did you send to many working at the same site?

Before using our campaign preview link, but most of the press came at the beginning of the campaign from the announcement of us being on Kickstarter. I've tried to send as many emails as possible to as many people as possible (hundreds and hundreds).

Sorry for sounding like a broken record but you mean you sent mails to all journalists @ kotaku for example?

It's best to target people who you think will be interested in your campaign.

Ok. A developer does his background research and finds out multiple persons at Kotaku could be interested in the campaign. Would you:

   a) Send a mail to one of them
   b) Send a mail to all of them
   c) Send a mail to all of them stating that you have sent it to others @ Kotaku as well

b) and repeat until you get an answer- which could be mean if you spam them like crazy. Don't be stupid or impolite, the press are people like you and me :)

Interview with Dylan Browne, creator of Caffeine sci-fi horror game.

Dylan unfortunately didn't succeed with his original indiegogo campaign, but his indiegogo trailer video has over 50 000 views. It was evident that while the campaign had failed Dylan had done many things right and could give valuable insights.

Do you think it's possible to get media to write articles of a game without having a playable to give yet? Have you succeeded in that?

I think it is possible, a trailer perhaps would help, i found that most of the time the news sites talk about Caffeine is when a trailer is released

Ok, but didn't you always write to the press sites, when you had something new to offer? Or did they sometimes pick up stuff by themselves?

Yeh what i do usually is when i have some news or a new trailer, I send out a press release to as many video game websites as possible and also made a gamespress.com account and sent it there, usually at least some smaller websites may pick up on it, every so often a bigger site will and then it kind of spreads to other big sites sometimes, so far the only sites i havent had it on is gamespot and ign.

Do you get a lot of answers, or do they leave unanswered but may still perhaps do an article?

**And if I'm interpreting you correctly you got articles without sending them a playable?
Or did you always send a version to play as well?**
Not many answers but usually articles go up.
Yeh I get most from when i sent out trailers, eventually a demo was avaliable.

Did you get kotaku, rock paper shotgun and other big sites to write about you when you had your kickstarter going? Just wondering what kind of impact these bigger sites can give.

Kotaku was the first big site to wirte about Caffeine and then RPS and Destructoid but that was a while before any kickstarter talk was around, I found I peaked too early and the bigger websites did not write about caffeine during the kickstarter, only small to mid range sites.

Do you have any idea on how to have better chances of getting covered once you have a kickstarter up and running? I'm sure press is pretty fed up with everyone bombarding them to cover their game because they now have a kickstarter going, but that is essential to have any chance of the kickstarter succeeding...

Its quite an interesting topic aha, from what I have heard, is that the first week of a kickstarter is vital, o if I were to do it again, I would wait untill I have an amazing trailer ready, then send out the press release, and then use social media to help spread the word, I think that all you need is one big site to pick it up because the others will often follow, but yes it is really hard to get through to the press when talking about kickstarter aha, reddit may also me a good way to spead the word.

Once you have the trailer. Would you first create the Kickstarter campaign and then send to press. Or would it be better to do it a week before the kickstarter is up and running, stating to the press that "A kickstarter will be live x.x.2014". And then hope they pick it up?
I have noticed many of successful kickstarter campaigns have gotten an article written about them the very same day as their kickstarter went live, or in the couple of next days.
Yeh, I would have the Kickstarter ready to go, but i would release a teaser a week before announcing the date, true and that is why it is best to go for a big push on the day it launches, and the main good trailer will generate interest by being shared everywhere, (twitter Facebook, indieDB etc, because you will find that the mroe people that back your kickstarter the better it looks and in return more people should back it.

Mine i think suffered from too many articles early on way before the kickstarter and as a result not many sites picked up the kickstarter.

Would you recommend contacting big pc game sites before the Kickstarter and tell them about the idea? My fear is that if I contact them now and they do write something about us, will they write again in about 6-8 weeks time when we launch a kickstarter?

hmm i would maybe do some of the smaller sites now, and bigger when you have good trailer?

Interview with Alpo Oksaharju, creator of Reset game. 71,398€ raised.

https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/reset--4

The campaign for reset was in a dire condition for a long time, but then something magical happened during the last 7 days. They managed to get 40k in backer money during those 7 days, and the Reset campaign was a success. Here is the interview with Alpo.

What are your general recommendations?

A video is the most efficient way to get people aboard, whatever the video is.

Make all of your illustrations and pictures available, no use to keep them hidden. People remember and give attention far more to pictures than to text.

I have been thinking, my campaign is coming up in about 2 months time. Should I be writing to big press sites like Kotaku, RPS and so on already? And just hope that they will write again when our Kickstarter goes live?

I would not recommend this, it was our biggest mistake. We released the trailer before the campaign was live. Publish all your stuff at the same time.

Ok! Would it be best to write a few days before the campaign goes live, stating that they could release the article once the campaign goes live or wait til' we have a Kickstarter link to put in the mail?

Have the link ready, no question about it. You have to assume that everyone will see the material only once, if the link isn't there ready to be clicked they will miss it.

About your magical final sprint, where did it all come from?

We managed to get a big enough media impact for the last stretch. We did a "7 days video" (The video can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj1j-cJABsw), which managed to wake up people. Then we sent out mails and messages to all possible places and the campaign went viral. We got

a few bigger perks sold, which pushed the overal sum upwards. After this people started to believe in a positive outcome again.

So bigger press sites wrote about you in the end?

Yes, Kotaku, Polygon and IGN among others.

And you sent them that "7 days" video?

I sent a mail to the people that had wrote about us before, and gave them the link as well.

***Interview with Scott Stephan of team Aegis Defenders,* $145,815 raised.**

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1798022489/aegis-defenders

Team Aegis did many things right. I remember seeing their post of their Kickstarter campaign on one of the Facebook indie game channels. I clicked the link to have a look, watched the video and found myself thinking "Impressive...". The rest of the campaign page looked awesome as well so I really wanted to contact them to get some pointers.

Stephan was very kind to offer some great advice, here are the questions and answers:

How much time before the Kickstarter did you start preparing?

About 2 months, almost full time. That counts production time on the trailer as well as market research and designing, pricing and sourcing our reward tiers. There was also close to 2 weeks of work for assets just for the Kickstarter page- Banner graphic etc.

Did you build a community before your Kickstarter, what were your main channels for building it? (Twitter, Facebook, own home page, something else?)

We did 2 anime conventions (Anime Conji and Anime Expo) that built our mailing list up to close to a 1000 people. We were somewhat active on Twitter, Screenshot Saturday etc. We got a few mentions, but nothing big. We could have probably done a better job with this, but it didn't seem to hurt us.

Have you gotten articles in big press sites? If so, did you interact with big press before the Kickstarter or did you wait until your Kickstarter was live?

We sent out about 200 emails to press, Twitch & YouTube streamers and other press contacts BEFORE the Kickstarter, starting about 3 weeks out. A lot of the response was, "E-mail us again when you're live", but at least we had a person to email. The press letter that you send is

a BIG DEAL and writing one is a dark art. Keep it short and make sure you have a press kit! The less work someone has to do, the more likely they'll cover you.

What in your mind are the main channels that have driven traffic to your campaign, how have people found out about you?

Not just in our mind- The stats speak pretty clearly. Facebook and Twitter were HUGE drivers. We got a lot of referrals from our Greenlight page. Kotaku et. al. were big traffic drivers, but their average pledge was MUCH lower than other referrals. Find your 10% and focus on them!

What would your advice be to someone who wants to succeed just like you?

There's a lot of advice we could offer here, but the biggest is this: Your trailer video is a commercial for the rest of your page. We really focused on making ours more like a movie trailer. Some people prefer the talking head style video but, by and large, they don't seem to fund as well. Sell people the idea first and yourself second.

Other than that: Do the work. It takes so,so,so much time to prepare a good Kickstarter. My grandfather used to say, "If you can't find the time to do it right, how will you find the time to do it again?". That really applies here. Block out the time, give yourself some breathing room and really do it right. People are giving you their money- That's a HUGE responsibility.

Interview with Matt Donatelli from Graphite Lab, a story of failure and success. **$58,675 raised.**

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/graphitelab/hive-jump-0

The case of Hive Jump is really interesting because they both failed and succeeded within the same year. A perfect example of a re-iteration and succeeding by doing the Kickstarter twice. Matt Donatelli provided excellent information regarding ***Graphite Lab:s*** campaigns.

1. You launched your first campaign early 2014 and managed to acquire 221 backers. Then you did a campaign again about 6 months later acquiring almost 2000 backers! What were the key issues you were able to recognize and focus on to make the second campaign better?

After canceling our first Kickstarter campaign 2 weeks in, we realized we needed to improve 3 parts of our campaign.

1.1) Pre-marketing: We failed to properly pre-market our Kickstarter campaign and raise awareness for Hive Jump. We made some pretty rookie mistakes, like creating our Facebook and Twitter accounts the day we launched the Kickstarter campaign. For our second attempt, we worked to grow our audiences on social media, as well as becoming more active in online communities like Reddit (r/gamedev) and TIGSource.

1.2) Visuals: We spent 5 months between campaigns improving our game art and marketing art. We went from an 8-bit style, which we still think has its own charm, to a 16-bit SNES style that appeals to a wider audience. We also worked on improving all of our marketing art materials, including contracting a well-known concept artist to make our Hive Jump poster and splash art.

1.3) Goals and rewards: We decided to focus our campaign goal from $75K to

$50K. We also added EFIGS+R localization and a Wii U port to the core offering. Additionally, we totally redesigned our backer reward tiers. Our lower end tiers, $75 and below, focused on all digitial content and rewards. Our higher end tiers, $150 to $2,500, focused on allowing backers to design elements of Hive Jump. $150 allowed a backer to enter the game as an NPC. $300 allowed backers to design a collectable relic and the puzzle room surrounding it. $500 allowed backers to design a weapon for the game's arsenal. $1000, and $2500 allowed a backer to design an alien type and mini-boss respectively.

2. Were you able to retain some kind of community from the first campaign? How did you do it and how much did your 221 backers help you during the first days? How did you contact them once your campaign went live?

Our 221 backers were invaluable in restarting our campaign. Before we canceled our first campaign, we let all of our backers know why, and that we'd be returning. Thankfully, Kickstarter allows you to continue sending updates to backers of cancelled projects.

As we continued to improve on all the above, we showed our backers our new game art, marketing materials, and let them all preview the new Kickstarter page. We encouraged everyone to return on Day 1 of our new Kickstarter campaign in order to help get at least 10% of our goal on day one. Thanks to our former backers, and our friends, family, and gamedev colleagues in St. Louis, we were able to reach 12% of our goal on Day 1 of our new campaign.

3. It seems that in the second campaign the game and the campaign page looks much better, you focused heavily to improve aesthetics?

We decided up uprez our game art from 8-bit to 16-bit. We also spent a long time studying other successful Kickstarter pages and determining how we could make our marketing art and Kickstarter layout more compelling. We simplified our banners, improved our infographics, and took brand new screenshots and animated .gifs using our new game art.

4. Do you think having moving .gifs in a campaign page is important and helps a lot?

Animated .gifs are a fantastic way of showing off small portions of gameplay, as well as adding some life to your Kickstarter page. We created several gifs showing simple maneuvers like players using the jetpack or firings weapons, as well as more elaborate .gifs that mocked up portions of the game that were still conceptual like the strategy mode. The goal of any Kickstarter page is to communicate as much information to a potential backer as quickly as possible, and animated .gifs are a great way of achieving this.

5. What kind of effect do you think your RPS and Destructoid articles had on your success?

The Rock Paper Shotgun article was far and away our most successful press coverage in terms of money raised for the campaign. We had about a $3000 day when the article launched, and that bump trickled over slightly to the next day as well. We actually had 2 Destructoid articles published about us over the course of the campaign, and we were able to achieve getting a second article written by giving exclusive details about the strategic campaign game mode to Destructoid before publishing them on our Kickstarter page. One should expect their Kickstarter to change and evolve over the course of the campaign, if your Kickstarter page stagnates, so will your campaign numbers. Adding content during the campaign is a must, and

sharing this new content with the press is a great way to gain more coverage.

6. Did you send big press sites a demo to play? And did you contact them before the campaign went live or just after? Why do you think they decided to write about you during the second campaign and not the first? (If this is the case)

We actually began our second campaign before we had a full demo experience ready to share. I don't recommend anyone do this, as a demo should be an essential part of any Kickstarter campaign. We quickly realized this, and put together a really solid 2 minute demo of one of the smaller gameplay experiences in Hive Jump, an ambush room. 1-4 players could hold out against increasing numbers of aliens, and had to survive the ambush and escape after 2 minutes. This demo showed off our player movement, combat, AI, and dynamic per-texel lighting via Sprite Lamp. This allowed press reviewers to really see the potential of the game, as evidenced by our favorable press quotes. We were sending this demo out a week or two into the campaign, and we decided to take it to PAX PRIME as well.

7. What channels (Facebook, Twitter, Kickstarter, press, Youtubers etc) were the biggest traffic drivers to your campaign?

Referrer	Type	# of Pledges ▲	% of Pledged	Pledged ▲
Direct traffic (no referrer information)	External	593	32.04%	$18,800
Search	Kickstarter	181	10.24%	$6,008
Twitter	External	179	10.42%	$6,114
google.com	External	111	5.84%	$3,429
Video Games (Discover)	Kickstarter	105	5.50%	$3,229
Advanced Discovery	Kickstarter	98	4.38%	$2,572
reddit.com	External	83	2.68%	$1,575
Kickstarter user profiles	Kickstarter	61	3.49%	$2,047
Facebook	External	61	3.31%	$1,946
rockpapershotgun.com	External	50	1.95%	$1,146
48-hour reminder email ❓	Kickstarter	49	1.39%	$818
hivejump.com	External	48	2.08%	$1,223
twitch.tv	External	28	1.41%	$826

Kickstarter newsletter: The Coolest Data	Kickstarter	24	1.01%	$591
google.ca	External	21	1.35%	$790
nintendolife.com	External	20	1.12%	$660
Popular (Discover)	Kickstarter	20	1.41%	$829
siliconera.com	External	20	1.20%	$703
forums.somethingawful.com	External	16	0.49%	$286
indiegames.com	External	12	0.36%	$210
attachment.fbsbx.com	External	12	1.44%	$845
kicktraq.com	External	11	0.60%	$350
wiiudaily.com	External	10	0.36%	$210
gonintendo.com	External	9	0.20%	$116
destructoid.com	External	8	0.21%	$122

8. Anything I forgot to ask that you think made all the difference between campaign 1 and 2?

A couple more things to share that could be helpful to others!

8.1) Timing your campaign is very important. We made sure not to end during a large gaming convention, but instead the week after. This was very fortuitous, because we ended up attending PAX PRIME and showing off our game there. We were able to afford to do this because we shared a booth with a friend and fellow developer, Delver's Drop. PAX Prime gave us a big boost, as people returned home after the conference, they remembered Hive Jump and backed us during the last 48 hours. We also made many important contacts at PAX which helped promote us in our last few days. These contacts included other Developers, Press Contacts, and Twitch Streamers! I truly believe any Kickstarter with a demo that attracts the Twitch.tv crowd will have a successful campaign.

8.2) Kickstarter is more collaborative than competitive. Cross-promotions amongst successful campaigns are becoming more frequent. We cross-promoted with Aegis Defenders and other Kickstarter campaigns, and it's a great way to get a good funding boost. From our experience, backers are generous folks and are more likely to back multiple ongoing projects than jumping ship from one project to another. Being afraid of campaigns is counter-productive, instead cross promote!

8.3) Be sure to maximize your post-kickstarter revenue by opening up a PayPal donation option once your campaign reaches 100%. Also, services like BackerKit offer a great way to keep track of information for fulfillment, as well as allowing for backer upgrades and add-ons. Since ending our campaign, we've raised another ~$1500 via PayPal and ~$2000 on BackerKit.