Women outperform men when raising money for their companies through rewards-based crowdfunding.

- Geri ‘Women Without Ceilings’ Stengel
  small business expert and entrepreneurial influencer

Dear doers, creators, innovators, change-makers, and thought leaders,

So you have your big idea, and you’re ready to take it from dream to reality. Now what?

Well, you’ve already taken one giant leap on the path toward success by strategically choosing to launch your crowdfunding campaign on Women You Should Fund.

BRAVA.

From this point forward, you’ve got your work cut out for you. But as Shonda Rhimes said, “...dreams do not come true just because you dream them. It's hard work that makes things happen. It's hard work that creates change.”

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES.

But you don’t have to do it alone. As a platform built on the foundation of women supporting women, we’ve put together this step-by-step guide that will give you some things to think about, help you navigate the crowdfunding waters, and keep you on track and accountable to yourself and your backers.

READY. SET. LAUNCH.
Your social circle (a.k.a. anyone and everyone you know) is a rich resource of potential campaign backers. They are people who know you and believe in you; now you need them to step up and support you and your idea through the most direct form of investment. Beyond that you need to recruit them as PR ambassadors who will spread the news of your campaign through their social networks.

So before you launch, map out your personal network (family, close friends, not so close “friends”, classmates, co-workers, colleagues, etc.) and make sure you have current contact information for all.

Continue to cultivate your social circle by networking, in-person and online.

Get social on social media (some people are not, and we don’t judge). Social media is a critical means of sharing your campaign and story. Consider this from a recent Pew Research study...

“Facebook continues to be the country’s most popular platform, engaging nearly eight in 10 of America’s online users. That’s more than double the share commanded by Twitter (24 percent), Instagram (32 percent), Pinterest (31 percent) or LinkedIn (29 percent).”

Once you’re on social, build your following. A great place to start is by following and engaging with influencers in your space. You can also join group pages that may be interested in your campaign.

Already on social? Get active, really, really active.

If you think your campaign is newsworthy, source and add media contacts to your outreach list. All it takes is a simple Google search to find almost anyone you want to reach. Twitter, which almost every reporter, producer, and editor uses, gives you access and the means to pitch them directly (in 140 characters or less, of course).
The goal of any crowdfunding campaign is to get your project funded. Yep, we know we’re stating the obvious, but this step is paramount to your success.

In order to set a realistic crowdfunding goal, you need to know how much money it will take to get your idea off the ground. That sum is not an arbitrary number and can’t be the product of guesswork. It takes serious number crunching to determine your working budget.

For this critical calculation, take into consideration the size of your network, campaign and project expenses, and be sure to include the costs of rewards and reward fulfillment. Once you've budgeted that all out, add a cushion so you're covered for any surprises... and there will be surprises. Life, especially entrepreneurial life, is full of them.

Determine the length of time you’d like to run the campaign. Research shows 30 or 45 day campaigns are typically the most successful.

Note: It’s wise to consult with an accountant or tax professional for guidance on tax implications and budgeting of any crowdfunding campaign.
CREATE YOUR CAMPAIGN

Your campaign should be the greatest story you ever tell, so develop it carefully. There is a fine line between impact and information overload.

Words matter.

This is your story, so make it personal, authentic and honest, and give your potential backers a reason to connect with you. Let them know why you are a woman they should know... who you are, what you’re about, and why they should fund you.

Use powerful, compelling and engaging language, but make it simple, concise, and memorable. Yes, it’s a delicate balancing act, but doable.

Explain what your product or service is, what problem it solves, how it compares to other products on the market, and why it’s important or better.

Don’t forget... you must explain how you plan to use the funds you raise. Be as specific as possible (imagery such as a pie chart, graph or infographic works well).

A picture is worth a thousand words.

This is so true, now more than ever. Human attention spans are narrowing (thanks digital world), and people respond to images more than words. So use a lot of good quality images.


“If you are serious about your crowdfunding campaign, you absolutely have to make a video.” - Catherine Clifford, Senior Entrepreneurship Writer at CNBC, wrote in a May 2016 Entrepreneur article

And that’s because research shows that crowdfunding campaigns with a video component succeed at a significantly higher rate than those without.

In fact, in her March 2016 Forbes article titled “Crowdfunding Is A Female Founder’s Best Friend”, Geri Stengel, founder and president of Ventureneer, notes that by making a pitch video, “You’ll raise four times more money than a company that doesn’t.”

But the final decision is ultimately up to you.

Keep in mind, you don’t need to make a professional video or use fancy equipment, but be sure to pay attention to lighting and sound; you want people to be able to see and hear you. Keep it concise. The first 30 seconds matter most.
Women You Should Fund is a rewards based crowdfunding platform... you have to give something to get something.

In addition to creating a compelling campaign, dig deep to come up with great stuff to offer your backers. After all, these individuals are the key to your success and growth.

There are countless rewards to consider, just be sure to choose rewards that are related to your project.

- Pre-orders (sell pre-orders of whatever you are raising funds to produce)
- Digital (a download of book, music, or whatever it is you are creating)
- Experiential (provide a service, arrange a meet and greet, offer a film set or studio visit, etc.)
- Swag (button, poster, postcard, or other item related to your project)
- Personal recognition for support (credit, thank you on website, etc.)

Once you know what you can give, you need to determine your reward levels. Think about the value of each reward and make the corresponding contribution dollar amount fair. Take shipping and fulfillment into consideration and budget for shipping in the pricing.

Don't forget to estimate delivery dates and come up with a system for fulfilling your rewards. Think about what you can handle regarding production and fulfillment and make sure you don’t oversell and under deliver.
Rome was not built in a day, nor shall your campaign be. So make a schedule and leave yourself ample time for everything you need to do.

And before your campaign goes live, put a strategic outreach plan in place. Now remember that social circle we talked about earlier? This is where they come in to play in a big way. Think of your family/friends/colleagues (the ones you can rely on most) as teammates, teammates who will help you score a huge win.

In order for them to do their part, you need to give them an “exclusive” (people get excited when they are the first to know) on your big plans to change the world (or your corner of it) and how they factor in. So know who you want to contact first and what you want to say.

A week before launch, plan to send your “team” an “I’ve Got Big News And You’re A Part Of It” pre-launch email with the goal of getting them psyched up. It should include a clear call-to-action that spells out (briefly... remember “impact vs. information overload”) what you’re asking them to do once your campaign is live. And let the games begin.
3... 2... 1... launch.

Your campaign is live, you (and those you've recruited to help) have blanketed the world (via social media, emails, media pitching, sky writing, etc.) with news of your campaign. It’s getting initial traction, the pledge bar is starting to move, and now you can kick back and relax, right?... Wrong.

There’s much more critical work to be done for the duration of your campaign. Everything you put into those 30, 45, 60 days is an investment in yourself, an investment in having a seat at the table.

Crowdfunding is like any relationship. Communication is key, and you have to put time into it. So here are some tips on what you can do to keep your campaign fresh and exciting:

- Provide updates to backers on goals achieved and any new information about the campaign (e.g. "Whoa! We’re already halfway to goal. I have the best backers in the world!" “Ok. Are you sitting down? Our campaign was just featured on BuzzFeed!”) Research shows the more updates a campaign sends the more funds it raises.

- Be (pro)active on social media! Post on the fly, but also plan out your social media engagement so that you’re never left scrambling for content or things to say. Think of creative ways to present your campaign so that it looks fresh with every post.

- Determine stretch goals, so if you are fortunate enough to exceed your set goal, you are prepared and can share with your backers how the additional funds will be used.

- Respond swiftly to comments and questions posted to your campaign page.
YOU DID IT!

NOW THAT YOUR CAMPAIGN IS FULLY FUNDED, YOU’VE GOT A NUMBER OF BIG RESPONSIBILITIES BEYOND BRINGING YOUR PROJECT TO LIFE.

You must keep in touch with your backers. Send thank you notes, updates on the results of your campaign, details on the delivery of the rewards, project progress reports, etc.

You must deliver whatever it is your campaign set out to get funded.

You must deliver the pledge rewards owed to your backers.

You must celebrate the fact that you set out to do something and kicked ass!

Note: If your campaign does not reach its funding goal, do not let it discourage you. Not all campaigns do. But be sure to send a campaign update and thank you note to each of your backers. You are not responsible for delivering pledge rewards on campaigns that are not fully funded by their end date.