INDIEGOGO.

2ND EDITION

Film Handbook

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INDIEGOGO: Where Independence Thrives

For many of us, filmmaking was once the stuff that dreams were made of. We once faced a multitude of gatekeepers, and they took myriad forms: not enough money to secure the right equipment; having to win the acceptance of a studio for production; an inability to find a proper distribution channel for the finished film.

That was before 2008. Before the dawn of Indiegogo.

Since then, filmmakers have been using Indiegogo to find the funding and support needed to bring their films from the page to screens large and small alike. And it's worked for thousands of filmmakers, like Justin Simien, who used Indiegogo to fund pre-production costs for Sundance darling *Dear White People*. Filmmakers like Amber Sealy, who raised post-production funds for *No Light and No Land Anywhere*, which had its premiere at LA Film Fest; like Ana Lily Amirpour (*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*), Keith Maitland (*Tower*), Rooster Teeth (*Lazer Team*), Alejandro Jodorowsky (*Endless Poetry*), and Jan Švankmajer (*Insects*).

And filmmakers like *you*.

The Tools To Succeed

Gone are the days of **gatekeepers**. Funding your next film can be easy. Okay, it's not "easy," but Indiegogo makes it easier by providing you with the tools to raise funds online through contributions made by backers who share your passion for independent film.

Let's first talk about why you are using Indiegogo for crowdfunding:

- Retaining **100% creative control**.
- Getting **early feedback** from fans and followers.
- **Building an audience** before and while making your movie, not just after.

While the proliferation of digital distribution platforms has been amazing for the creative industry, helping break new voices, it's also sometimes harder to be heard. Suddenly your film is premiering at SXSW or on Netflix, but how can your film or series stand out? It begins on Indiegogo. After all, what better way to gain awareness for your film than having hundreds or even thousands of people cheering you on via social media in the months leading up to your premiere or release?

Here's why using Indiegogo is the best approach to raising funds and building an audience:

- **Fixed** and **flexible** fundraising models allow you the opportunity to go "all or nothing" or "keep what you raise."
- Access to advanced tools like secret perks, referral tracking, and customizable perk options (T-shirt sizes, colors, etc.) make strategizing your campaign quick and easy.
- Learn more about your audience — how are they finding you, and how you can find more of them — with great analytical tools, including easy integration with Facebook and Google pixel tracking.
- Multiple payment options to make it quick and easy for backers to contribute.
- Access to comprehensive educational materials will help you piece together a more successful campaign.
- Continue raising money and engaging fans after your campaign with Indiegogo InDemand.

With nearly 20 million monthly visits, Indiegogo is the first step toward building the biggest possible audience for your work. Let's get into helping you run a successful Indiegogo film campaign, starting with finding your audience.

Building Your Audience Before Launch

For most filmmakers, getting a head start on building a fanbase translates to bigger crowds and more success in the long run. There are three steps to building your audience on Indiegogo. Step 1 is strengthening your community, which, depending on the size of your current network, can begin in as little as two weeks or as much as six months prior to launch. Step 2 is to get active within the film community, both through social media and offline events, especially if you want them to cover your campaign later. Step 3 is to set up a "Coming Soon" page two weeks out from launch to pull together emails.

STEP 1: STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY

The first step in building your audience is to build your **personal culture** — Steven Pressfield's way of saying **brand** — both on and off social media. The more audience you have, the more funds you will raise.

Because social media is so important to crowdfunding, here are a few quick tips to start finding and strengthening your community:

- Create your online persona and keep it consistent across your website, social media profiles, blogs, and other media.
- Find other #filmmakers and connect with related communities by following #supportindiefilm, #indiefilm, #filmmaking, and our very own #gogofilm, as well as other hashtags relevant to your particular film.

- Support other filmmakers and creators by commenting on their posts, retweeting their tweets, and sharing your resources with them.
- Start creating content that other filmmakers find valuable. If you don't have time to create that content, **curate** it, and be sure it's is relevant for your desired audience.
- Always be yourself, and never underestimate the power of **authenticity**. Let your passion shine, and you'll attract the right fans and potential backers.

It's not enough to build up your social media following or create a Facebook page for your film. You need to **interact** with your audience on each platform. Trust is a cornerstone of crowdfunding a film, so focus on building relationships rather than simply building a network.

STEP 2: BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY OFFLINE

To make the biggest splash, it's important to spend time with both your on- and offline communities. There are lots of filmmaker mixers and events happening in all the major cities where independent film thrives. Go to them. Have drinks with members of the horror film community. Go to a tweet-up and meet some of the people you tweet with. Attend an event put together by that group you're a member of on Facebook.

Film festivals are also a great place to meet new filmmakers and work your way into a larger community of like-minded creators. You don't need to spend hundreds of dollars going to the big ones, though one or two of those won't hurt; there are lots of smaller, more mid-range film festivals, including Cucalorus, Austin Film Festival, and Phoenix Film Festival, to name a few.

The fact is, no form of social media beats a handshake and a conversation over coffee, tea, or cocktails to solidify a relationship.

STEP 3: CREATE A COMING SOON PAGE

Email is the number one driver of funds to film campaigns. By creating a Coming Soon page on Indiegogo, you'll be able to build buzz and collect emails well before your full campaign goes live. This email list may be invaluable as you gear up for launch, as the earliest members of your audience are often ready to be your biggest advocates. Consider reaching out to give them a chance to back your project early, and even entice them further with a limited-time perk.

We recommend setting this up no less than one month prior to your campaign. If you set it up earlier, it would be a good idea to use MailChimp or ConstantContact to send out a newsletter to keep your budding audience engaged up until the campaign's launch, tease out perks, and even get feedback on your campaign draft.

Now that we've gotten through three of the most important aspects of crowdfunding before launch, let's talk about planning and putting together the actual campaign page.

CROWD STUDY: *Code 8*
Already have a passionate fan base? Tap into it to boost your funds. Robbie and Stephen Amell's audience came to their aid to help them make a feature-length version of their short film Code 8. Over 20,000 fans helped the cousins raise $1.7M — that's over **860% funded** on their $200,000 goal!

Planning And Creating Your Film Campaign

The next step after spending some time networking and making connections is to create your actual film campaign. The process can be broken up into six main parts:

1. **Assemble Your Team**
2. **Create a Campaign Video**
3. **Craft a Compelling Story**
4. **Offer Enticing Perks**
5. **Set the Right Goal**
6. **Set the Right Duration**

1. ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

At Indiegogo, we believe that **together** we can achieve more. Make this *your* mantra and assemble a team to help raise funds. We've found teams of two or more people typically generate **115% more funding** than campaigns run by solo campaigners.

Finding the right people is key. There are a lot of moving parts in a campaign, from scheduling social media posts to recording new videos and fulfilling perks. You should form a team the way you would put together a film crew — by finding people who can help with specific aspects of the campaign or a friend who specializes in social media or graphic design, for example.

Iron Sky: The Coming Race's Film Campaign Team
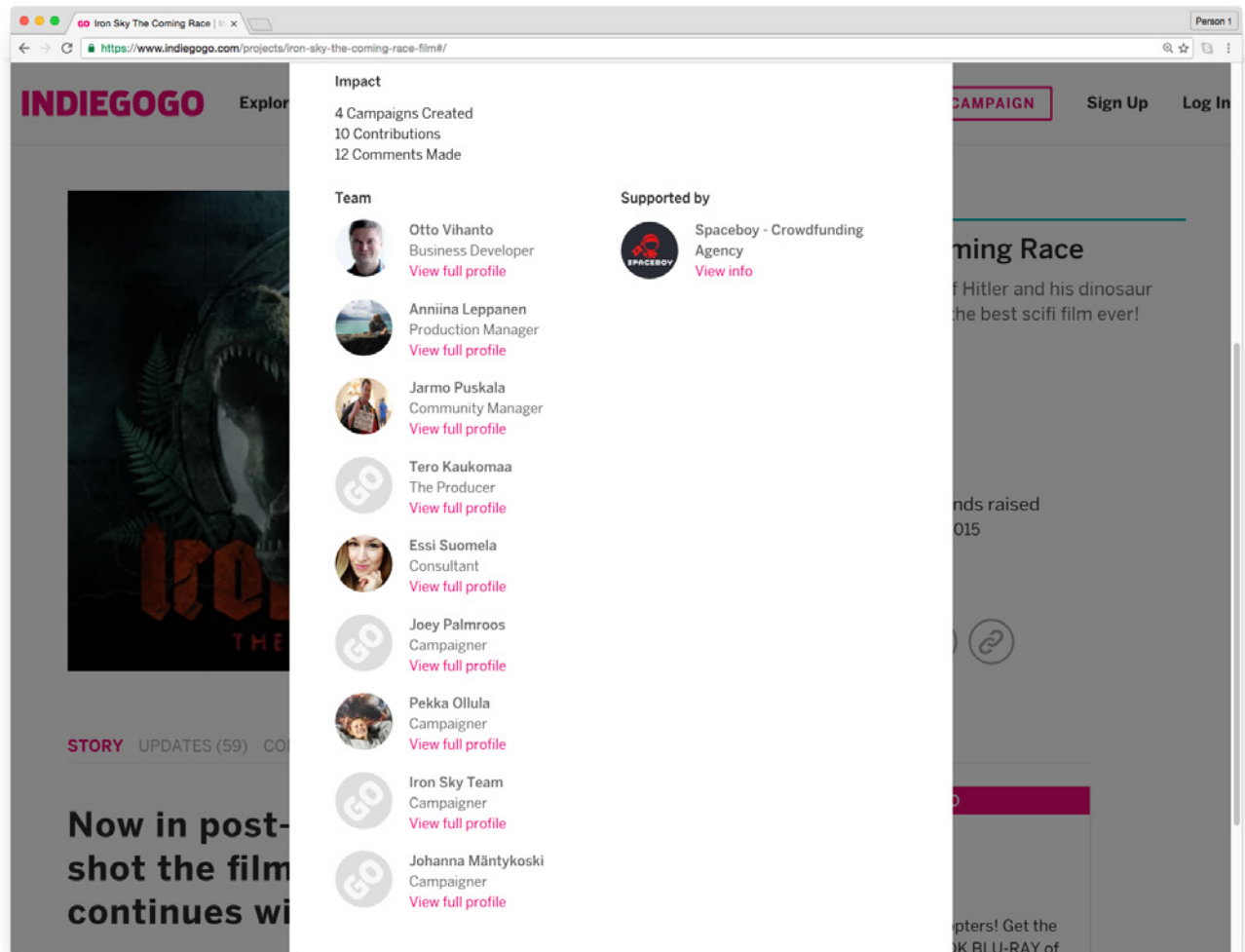
2. CREATE A CAMPAIGN VIDEO

The campaign video (or **pitch video**) is the single most important part of your film campaign. It's the elevator pitch you'd give Ted Hope on your way to the penthouse from the lobby. You've got that much time to convey who you are, what your film is about, and why people should care about it enough to help fund it. What's more, campaigns with a video raise four times as much funding as campaigns that don't. Do it — and keep your video to 2 to 3 minutes in length.

The good thing is you're *not* pitching to Ted. You're inviting your community to help make a great film with you. Here's what most campaign videos typically include:

- **Introduction** — Tell us about **you**. Many filmmakers make the mistake of *not* appearing in their videos. Make no mistake: Be. In. Your. Video!
- **Pitch** — Now, tell us about your film, and mention the following:
  - » **Logline** — What's the story in one sentence? Keep it concise.
  - » **Purpose** — Why are you crowdfunding? Is it for production funds? Post-production? Theatrical distribution? Let us know.
  - » **Perks** — What's a unique perk you're offering in return for a contribution?
- **Showcase** — Show us what you can do as a filmmaker. Share clips of your prior work or footage from the film at hand. A laurel or two can't hurt, either.
- **Call to Action** — Don't leave your crowd hanging. Tell them what to do next — which is to contribute, share, and be a part of your film.

And make it entertaining when possible. Just look at this *great campaign video* by the filmmakers behind the Indiegogo campaign for *At the End of the Tunnel*.

Here are some extra examples of great campaign videos:

- *Who Is Arthur Chu?*
- *Brown Girl in the Ring* — Prequel
- *Deported* — A Comedy Feature Film

As you probably noticed by watching the videos for these three campaigns, you can have fun and get creative with your video, but the introduction, pitch, showcase, and call to action are constant. The filmmakers behind *Deported* even worked their trailer into the middle of the video.

> **QUICK TIP: Avoid using *only* the film's trailer as your campaign video.** A trailer is a sales tool, not a crowdfunding tool. For many in your audience, backing your project is the same as backing *you*, so share who you are and how the money will be used. Say a few words about the film, and be as authentic and personable as possible, and you'll be rewarded.

WORTH THE WATCH: Ghostheads

The campaign video for *Ghostbusters* documentary *Ghostheads* begins with a trailer, but quickly *oozes* (er, eases) into director Brendan Merten talking about why this film is important, some stuff you get, and by the end calls on you to answer their call — all in just over 2 minutes.

3. CRAFT A COMPELLING STORY

The **story** of a campaign is the area of text that will go below your video. You'll want to tell your story and offer additional details about the film and campaign like a full story synopsis, brief breakdown of the budget, and cast/crew bios.

Again, keep the text concise and clear, and put yourself in your readers' shoes. Answer a few simple questions:

- **Who are you?**
- **What are you raising these funds for?**
- **How else can people support your project?**

Even if you covered much of this in the campaign video, it's smart to have it written out, too. If the video is your quick pitch, then the story area is like your script — it's where your audience expects to discover more. Tell a compelling story of why you're passionate about this film, presented in a way that makes others want to be a part of making that story.

Other sections you may want to include are:

- **Why Indiegogo** — People may want to know why you're crowdfunding.
- **Cast/crew bios** — Be brief and tell us who's part of the film and campaign.
- **FAQ** — Answer any outstanding questions you think backers might have.

In terms of graphics and imagery, you should certainly include:

- **Section headers** — Help break up large chunks of text (instead of using boldface font).
- **Pie chart** — Tell your potential backers how their money will be spent.
- **Perk images** — Show what the perks will look like, especially the merchandise.
- **Cast head shots** — So backers can see the people who are in your film.

QUICK TIP: The Overview. The **overview** is a small bit of text that quickly tells us what the film is about and what the purpose of the campaign is (production funds, post, festival submissions, etc.). Be succinct — you've got about ten seconds to capture someone's attention with the premise of your film.
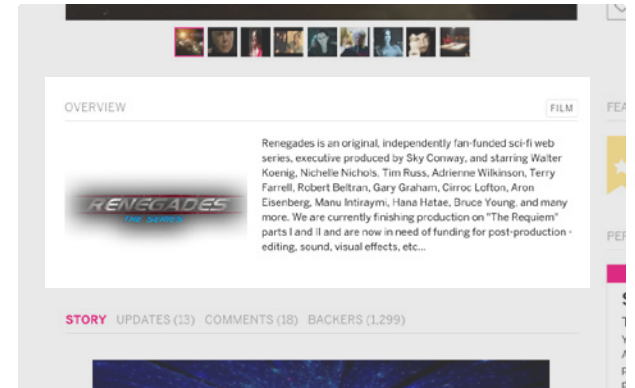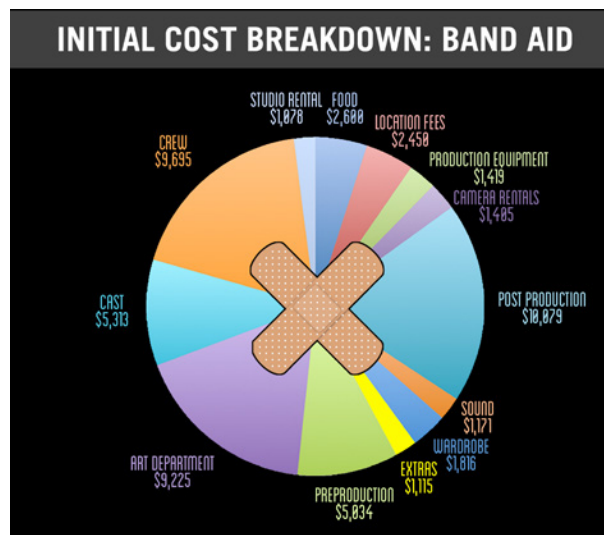
QUICK TIP: Always Add Images and Graphics. Customized section headers, additional video content, and even a well-placed infographic showcasing your perks all assist in crafting a more complete and exciting story and make the overall *campaign experience* feel more polished.

Cost breakdown pie chart graphic for **Band-Aid**

Custom campaign perk images from **Iron Sky: The Coming Race**

4. OFFER ENTICING PERKS

Indiegogo allows up to 20 active **perks** during your campaign. They can range from merchandise like mugs, T-shirts, and the film you're crowdfunding, of course, but they should also include *experiences* unique to the campaign, as well as incentives that forge a deeper sense of personal *connection* between your film and its backers.

Here are three types of perks you should include in your perks section, along with some examples and price ranges:

- **Merchandise**
  - » Postcards with a handwritten "thank you" ($10)
  - » Advance download of the film ($25)
  - » DVD/Blu-ray of the film ($35 – $50)
- **Unique Experiences**
  - » Two tickets to a screening ($150+)
  - » Cameo/speaking role in the film ($250 – $500)
  - » Associate/Executive Producer credit ($1,000 – $10,000)
- **Personal Connection**
  - » Signed head shots or props ($100 – $1,000)
  - » Voicemail greeting ($15 – $300)
  - » Call "action" on set! ($500+)

Make sure your perks are as relevant as possible, since they represent your film. The filmmakers of *Iron Sky: The Coming Race* offered many opportunities for fans to be crushed by a T-Rex in the sequel to their cult hit *Iron Sky*.

QUICK TIP: Think About Fulfillment

Remember that perk **fulfillment** takes time and costs money. Offering only digital perks (film downloads, script PDFs, producer credit, etc.) and only limited editions of "handmade" perks can help make this part of crowdfunding easier. But if you do offer physical perks, price them out first so you know you're covered when it comes time to produce and ship these items to your backers.

To help with fulfillment, you can also enlist the aid of **Amplifier**, Indiegogo's preferred fulfillment partner, who can help with everything from sending surveys to backers to helping manufacture some of those physical perks. And you save 10% off of their fees with Indiegogo, too.

5. SET THE RIGHT GOAL

Indiegogo is unique in that we give you options for how you'd like to raise funds for your film:

- **Fixed Funding** — You keep your contributions only *if* you hit your goal.
- **Flexible Funding** — You keep your contributions whether or not you hit your goal.

Keep in mind that the majority of filmmakers who choose to go the crowdfunding route do so thinking that they will raise some and not all of the funding they need to make their film. That said, you'll want to choose the best funding model that suits your needs. For production funds, where you may be able to work with $25,000 even though you set $50,000 as your target, flexible would be best. For animation campaigns or some post-production campaigns, where typically every dollar is necessary or you can't move the film forward, fixed funding would be in your benefit, since you wouldn't be able to do much with less than what you need, and you'd still have to fulfill your perks.

Now, one of the biggest mistakes filmmakers make is setting too high a goal, and even though they may have chosen flexible funding, a campaign that doesn't hit its goal doesn't look good on your permanent crowdfunding record.

Again, just because your entire film will cost $100,000 to make doesn't mean that your goal should be $100,000. To help determine what your goal *should* be, you should ask yourself these three questions:

1. **How strong is your email and social media influence?**
2. **Do you know where the first 30% of your funds will come from?** Typically, this comes from your family, close friends, and fans.
3. **Can you get that 30% within two to three days of launch?** You'll need that early *momentum*. People often don't back a film campaign until they see it's reached at least the 30% threshold.

Use your answers to these questions to set a goal you're confident you can hit. If you *know* you can get $15,000 from your immediate family, friends, and fans, and you're certain you can convince them to contribute within the first few days, then a $50,000 goal should be achievable. If there's some strong doubt, set a lower amount.

We *know* what you're thinking: *But what if I absolutely need $75,000 to make the film?*

It's important to remember that you should not only set a goal that you *know* you can hit, but one that you can work with to make your film. The other thing to keep in mind is that you can always raise *more funding* once you've hit your goal. In fact, most Indiegogo campaigns that reach their goals go on to raise around **29% more**.

And there's also InDemand, which you can read more about in our "Setting Up Your Sequel" section.

Again, crowdfunding makes up one piece of the ongoing puzzle of film finance. For no-budget films, it can be used to cover costs for an entire production. More often than not, it works best when fitted alongside film sales, private equity, and grants/tax rebates to complete the full picture.

QUICK TIP: Goal + Expenses
Research any expenses associated with producing/finishing your film, as well as the cost of any physical perks you're offering and the fees associated with Indiegogo and payment processing. Add it all into the amount you set for your goal.

6. SET THE RIGHT DURATION

Longer campaigns don't necessarily mean you'll raise more money; the longer the campaign, the harder it is to sustain its momentum. Statistically, **51% of all successful Indiegogo film campaigns run between 30 – 40 days.**

Indiegogo does allow a one-time extension for up to 60 days. This is a one-time thing, though, so be sure to give yourselves the right amount of additional days, should you need them. However, more time requires more planning, so it is best to plan out your campaign for the duration of time you need, and be sure to hit your goal in that amount of time.

FUNDING IN STAGES: *Free Cece*

Jacqueline Gares and Laverne Cox launched an Indiegogo campaign to shoot their documentary *Free CeCe*, a bold film which confronts the epidemic of violence against transgender women of color. After raising $57,308, they returned and ran a second campaign for post-production and earned an additional $37,000. The completed crowdfunded film premiered at LA Film Festival in 2016.

QUICK TIP: Disbursement Take Time

Leave about two weeks between the end of your film campaign and the date you'll need the funds to account for payment processing and disbursement. Disbursement takes up to 15 days from the date your campaign closes to reach your bank account. You will likely have your funds closer to one week, but better to be safe than sorry.

Building and Maintaining Momentum (In Three Acts)

You've got a strong campaign built, and you've just launched your film campaign. But all of the most successful crowdfunding filmmakers understand that success comes from building and maintaining **momentum**, and that takes a bit of **strategizing** for the three acts of your film campaign.

Just like a film screenplay, there are three acts to an Indiegogo campaign:

- **Act I: Soft Launch for a Smart Start**
- **Act II: Do the Hustle (Outreach)**
- **Act III: The Final Stretch**

Let's dive in a little more deeply into what all of this entails.

ACT I: SOFT LAUNCH FOR A SMART START

With a **soft launch**, you launch your film campaign quietly to your inner circle of friends, family, and fans and get them to back the project, ideally within the first 48 hours of launch. This way, when you announce the campaign officially through social media, blogs, and the like, people will see your campaign's existing momentum and back it much more quickly.

For more about *how* to soft launch your film campaign, read [this article](#) by John T. Trigonis, which outlines the steps for a proper soft launch.

Then, once you've obtained the first 30% of your funding through your soft launch, start reaching out to your wider network.

PROMOTE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Promotion is necessary to ensure a successful campaign, so aim to mobilize all of the social media communities that you cultivated during the pre-launch phase. But you're going to have to be more creative than "help make it happen for my #indiefilm" nowadays. Make every tweet and Facebook post stand out from the last one you posted, and more importantly, make it stand out from all the other film campaigns out there.

FIND YOUR INFLUENCERS

Spend some time identifying **influencers** — social media personalities with large and engaged followings — and see if they'll help your efforts by promoting your film campaign to their audiences. However, the best way to get an influencer to help is to first offer value to them and their community. Then they'll be more likely to return the gesture while you're crowdfunding.

ACT II: DO THE HUSTLE (OUTREACH)

The second act is where the **real work** happens. Here's where you execute against your planned strategy by:

- Reaching out to the widest network on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other networks by searching hashtags relevant to your film.
- Finding a proper balance between sharing your campaign and other informative content. (Nobody likes a horn blower!)
- Tweeting and posting photos, videos, and GIFs as additional promotional material.

And here are a couple key things to remember:

- **Always** include your Indiegogo link.
- Don't go nuts with those hashtags: Nothing spells #newb like #hashtaggingeverything.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT EMAIL

It's time to dig up that email list you've compiled over the years and use it. But instead of sending out a single email "blast," write a more personal message and use it as a template. Wherever possible, mention your backers by name and give an indication that you're paying attention to them, especially if they haven't heard from you in a while. (Facebook works wonders for this!)

IMPLEMENT A PR STRATEGY

Public relations is still important. Draft a press release and send it to the top film websites, bloggers, and influencers who might be interested in your film and campaign. And don't forget about local newspapers and TV and radio stations, too.

The press outlets will want to see two things:

1. That the film has already raised money.
2. That there's another story to tell besides "Filmmaker Launches Campaign."

This is also why it's so important to seek out press and PR support at the right time in a campaign's lifespan, typically once the 30% threshold is met.

Keep in mind that PR may get you more attention, but it should *not* be relied on to convert campaign views into contributions. That's the job of the campaign itself.

QUICK TIP: Secret Perks
Now, for the people whose email addresses you've gathered from your "coming soon" page, consider sending a secret perk, which they can see and select via a specific link. Make it available for the first 24 or 48 hours to entice them to contribute as early as possible. You can read more about secret perks, which can also be used at any time throughout your campaign, **here**.

STORY **UPDATES (46)** COMMENTS (3,379) BACKERS (53,893)

4 days ago

Day 2: Baby, I'm Gonna Butter Your Bread.

If Soter gets asked one thing (besides, "Say 'meow' to me?"), it's almost always, "What happened to Foster and Ursula?" Are they married? Is the passion still alive? Have they spawned little mustached babies?

Time to find out. Soter?

Foster and Ursula? The fate of their love REVEALED!
from Broken Lizard Industries

QUICK TIP: Post an Indiegogo Update
Use the **Updates** feature on your campaign once every three to five days, so long as you have something substantial to update your backers about. Updates get posted to your campaign page and are emailed to everyone who has already backed or is following your campaign. Post about the campaign's progress, a new video, or anything else you think they might find interesting.

On average, the most successful film campaigns have six updates.

ACT III: THE FINAL STRETCH

A film's third act is when we start to question whether or not our hero will succeed. The same holds true for a film campaign. People are **watching**. To convert those who haven't contributed, try creating a sense of urgency. This should occur when you have one week or less left in the campaign.

INTRODUCE NEW PERKS

It's often a good idea to add new perks to entice early backers to return. You can also help keep the campaign looking fresh by removing old perks that haven't been claimed.

And if they haven't been claimed and you know they're awesome perks, try a **24-hour flash sale** — maybe the cost is a bit too high, and that's a good way to see if there's interest in them at a lower price.

NO GUTS, NO GLORY

Don't be afraid to get funky and try a fun, strange, or downright crazy stunt. (But not *too* crazy — safety first, after all.) How about a dance-athon where you dance to a different '80s song for every $100 to raise? The *Iron Sky* team did a livestream with special guests, new perks, and lots of information for their fans about *The Coming Race*, **earning $30,000 during the seven-hour event**.

Google's "Hangouts on Air" is a great way to livestream directly through your Indiegogo page, simply by swapping out your campaign video link with an "on Air" YouTube link. Here's how to get started with **"Hangouts on Air."**

STRETCH FOR THE STARS

If you've played your cards right, you'll hit your goal quickly. Here's where **stretch goals** shine brightest. These are additional goals detailing what you can do with more funding, which will entice your crowd to continue contributing.

It's a good idea to be modest. Hitting $50,000 and then stating you want to go for $200,000 to complete the film doesn't work. Instead, after you hit $50,000, set your first stretch goal at an easily reachable number like $60,000. Then set the next one at $75,000, and with your third one, go long and try for $100,000.

For more advice on running a campaign, read about stretch goals in Indiegogo's **Essential Guide to Crowdfunding**.

Wrapping Up

Roll credits: Your campaign has ended, but it's not over yet!

Now it's time to fulfill your promises and send any perks that require shipping. Record any final thank-you videos. If you think there will be any delays, let your backers know what to expect. It's important to continue to nurture the relationships you've established with your backers, followers, and anyone else who has helped you along the way.

Now that your campaign has wrapped, you can keep raising awareness around your project. Your Indiegogo campaign page will stay up, so you can still use it as a platform to post updates to your community.

AMPLIFIER

To make fulfillment simpler, you can choose to use Indiegogo's partner, Amplifier, a full-service production and fulfillment company that produces, packages, and ships perks like T-shirts, hats, mugs, stickers, and more. Any Indiegogo campaign that uses Amplifier receives a **10% discount** on Amplifier's fees, as well as personalized support from their customer-service team, which includes coaching, a best-practices toolkit, and shipment-tracking tools.

From Film Campaign To Franchise

No, we don't mean that you should jump into a whole new campaign right after this one. But you *can* keep your current campaign open to collect more funds with InDemand.

WHAT IS INDEMAND?

InDemand is an Indiegogo-exclusive feature that makes it easy to keep raising funds after your main campaign ends. Crowdfunding is only one component of the filmmaking process; you may need post-production funds later, or perhaps you need some additional money to submit to film festivals. Instead of launching an entirely new campaign, you can just send out an update from your InDemand page and alert your backers that the journey hasn't ended just yet.

As with all fundraising, there's a strategy to turning a successful Indiegogo campaign into a veritable film franchise. Here are three quick tips to get you started using InDemand for your continued crowdfunding:

1. **Let the Stragglers In** — Keep your perks up for a few days after your campaign ends — you may attract a few latecomers who forgot to back your campaign earlier.
2. **Set New Stretch Goals** — Create stretch goals for your InDemand, unlocking new items with each goal achieved.
3. **Release New Perks** — Merchandise will prove the lifeblood of most InDemand pages, so you'll want to get creative — just because you're offering T-shirts, sunglasses, and mugs doesn't mean they have to be standard.

Campaigns like *Range 15, Iron Sky: The Coming Race,* and Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Endless Poetry* are excellent examples of how to continue raising funds with InDemand after a successful crowdfunding run.

These three will get you started. For a full range of tips on InDemand for film, read John T. Trigonis's post **"Dr. InDemand, Or, How to Turn Your Indiegogo Film Campaign into a Movie Franchise"** on the Indiegogo Blog.

READY TO GET STARTED?
Contact **film@indiegogo.com** for consultation on your idea and to start planning your film campaign.