AN EXPLORATION IN FUNDING INDEPENDENT FILM

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Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Motivation and Process

Much like the art forms that we champion, arts administrators need to be multifaceted in order to be effective. Becoming a successful producer or supporter of the arts requires inventiveness, flexibility, determination, and constant education to stay current on developments in not only the art form, but also the non-profit sector at large, the market, patron practices, industry trends, and more. In my personal aim to become a well-rounded arts administrator, I have taken on the role of fundraising manager for a short, independent film entitled *The Bakery Boys of Fairfield County*. The film is an ongoing project, both written and produced by Kyle Preston Forquer. Forquer has been an acquaintance of mine since our days in high school, and this project presented me with a unique opportunity: hands on experience in applying fundraising practices for the arts in a real world setting.

Though familiar with the basics of non-profit fundraising (specifically for dance, theatre, and museum organizations), I found that my knowledge of the film form was lacking. However, by supplementing my existing knowledge of the principles of solicitations, special events, grant seeking, and use of social media marketing and crowdfunding with exploration on the film form, as well as standard industry practices
and emerging trends, I hope to be instrumental in bringing *The Bakery Boys of Fairfield County* from words on a page to images on the big screen.

Current State of Film Funding

Some people still do not think of film making as an art form because of its mass entertainment qualities. Though we envision glamorous movie stars accepting awards for their exceptional performances at lavish ceremonies, an entire world of film exists outside of that notion. This is where independent film exists. Typically, this faction of cinema is not backed by a studio, does not receive wide exposure, and does not bring in big money compared to Hollywood “blockbusters.” For example, the top-grossing film of 2013 was *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, which had an estimated budget of $130 million and grossed over $413 million that year (“*The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*”). Conversely, the top grossing independent film, *Instructions Not Included*, grossed slightly over $44 million and cost an estimated $5.5 million to produce (“*Instructions Not Included*”). The problem is that, like all other art forms, independent cinema still costs money to produce, despite what may be limited financial returns. In fact, filmmaker and author John Trigonis states that typical independent film budgets range between $500,000 to $1 million (8). Trigonis further explained the increasing cost of filmmaking in this way:

At one time, costs were limited to lights, camera, film stock, the acquisition of rights if the film was an adaptation, and above-the-line expenses covering the director, writer, and actors. Studios still have to manage these costs nowadays, plus the costs of visual effects artists for films like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, which have budgets that can soar to near $300 million per picture. And these numbers just reflect the cost of production and do not include the costs of distribution, marketing, and promotion. (4)
As filmmaker and writer Carole Lee Dean writes, "Budgets separate the fantasy of film from the reality of filmmaking", and that reality is expensive (265).

In his essay, "Budgets: Production Glue," Norman C. Berns explains the need for film budgeting, and just how many facets of a film must be considered when fundraising. He states:

Making movies takes money, whether you're counting in thousands or millions. When you produce a film, you're not only in charge of the art you hope to deliver; you're responsible for the cost of getting it on screen, too. If you're the producer, it's your job to make the most of every dollar. Maybe even turn a profit. To do that, you have to know how much to spend, and, most importantly, where to spend it. You'll need a plan for the cost of things. That operating plan for your film is the budget. (qtd. in Dean, 259-260)

In other words, filmmaking does not end once a movie is "in the can," but long after it has been shot, produced, distributed, and marketed. Each step requires funding, and therefore, fundraising.

While major motion pictures can rely on the financial support of an established movie studio or wealthy investors, independent films often operate on a "shoestring" budget, or lack the money even to come to fruition. Sadly, if donors are not interested or the director has not saved his own money for the project, sacrifices must be made. These facts are what create a need for fundraising strategies tailored specifically to independent films.

Currently, the film industry is experiencing growth in opportunity. Film production is no longer solely reliant on large film studios. A large contributing factor to the most recent ways that films are made, distributed, and watched is technology. John
Trigonis described this as a “Do It Yourself Revolution” in his book, *Crowd Funding for Filmmakers: The Way to a Successful Film Campaign* when he said:

The dawn of the digital camera has spawned a new breed of truly independent, DIY filmmaker rooted in the ideals of guerilla filmmaking. The advent of HD and 3D technology has given rise to a “Do It Yourself Revolution,” granting these innovative moviemakers the same quality and versatility that Hollywood’s Stevens Spielberg and Soderbergh achieve in their big-budget blockbusters. So it’s only natural to think that if these filmmakers were granted even the smallest fraction of a studio-sized budget, they might be able to create quality indie films at Hollywood caliber, but not at Hollywood costs. (11)

Similarly, filmmaker Tom Malloy stated, "You have an opportunity now to even take $100,000 and make a great movie that looks like it will cost $2 to $3 million. That was impossible even three years ago," (qtd. in Dean, 97). Advances in technology mean that quality products and equipment can be acquired for reduced costs as compared to filmmaking of previous years. These advances have also allowed filmmakers greater access to audiences, supporters, and funds. With the success of these developments, even seasoned writers, directors, and producers are turning to less conventional methods to fund their films.

New opportunities seem to present themselves daily as more people explore and navigate the various online resources and applications of existing programs. The introduction of online crowdfunding, also known as crowdsourcing, to the world’s vernacular has put decision making and fiscal responsibility in the hands of everyman, if he so chooses and has access to a computer. As Trigonis explains, crowdfunding allows filmmakers to “play it smart, be ahead of the time, and raise the funds you need for your film while at the same time build an audience for and awareness of your finished product,” (10). Similarly, popular social media site Facebook has grown out of a simple
social networking service for college students into a nearly essential marketing tool for large and small businesses alike.

Alongside these advances still exist the traditional means of fundraising used in non-profit and for-profit businesses. These include solicitation of donors, special event fundraising, and grant seeking, to name a few. However, producers and filmmakers must be careful and clear in distinguishing between donations and investments. The latter requires partial ownership of the film, and must be treated as a transaction much like one in the for-profit sector. On the other hand, a donation is simply giving money without further action needed other than a tax receipt or previously offered perks, which is the common practice for non-profit organizations and charities. By intelligently using a mix of approaches, film makers can turn a dream and a budget into funds and, ultimately, the film they imagined. This thesis explores how this mix of traditional practices and new trends can be combined to effectively raise funds for independent films.
CHAPTER II

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL FUNDERS

Before approaching any source for financial support, background work must be performed in order to enhance the chances of fundraising efforts resulting in actual funding. While unincorporated organizations or individuals behind a film may lack a “mission” or similar statement, a film project must first have a clear vision. This is necessary in order for all parties involved to effectively articulate both the project and its needs to potential donors. Similarly, this type of plan creates a starting point for identifying those funders most likely to support the project. Once this mission has been agreed upon and adopted by the producers, fundraisers can then seek support through funding channels including individual donors, foundations, and businesses.

Individuals

When faced with a large budget and few funds, it may be tempting to forego making requests to individuals, asking instead for large amounts of money from organizations. However, that thinking becomes flawed when considering that, according to Granspace.org, “individual donors typically account for more than three-quarters of charitable giving each year through donations and bequests,” (“Cultivating Individual Donors”). When thinking of individual sources of funding, the most apparent group of potential funders is those closest to the project itself. This includes cast, crew, and
producers. The network then extends through the inner circles of those people including their family members, close friends, and colleagues. The next step is to then reach out to farther connections and even strangers.

In order to make the most of one’s time and effort, filmmakers seeking funds must begin with prospect research. This entails gathering detailed information on potential donors, such as their interests, connections, and charitable giving habits. To aide in prospect research, the Foundation Center offers a “Prospect Worksheet” on its website (see figures 2.1 and 2.2). These sheets, or similar resources, can help fundraisers keep an organized record of potential funders for both current and future opportunities.

While there is a wealth of individual donors in the world, it is not always easy to target the correct ones for a given film or project. Through its service entitled GrantSpace (grantspace.org), the Foundation Center offers advice to fundraisers aiming to do just this. The center warns that individual donors can be difficult to find, given that they are not required to report their charitable giving, unlike foundations. Some of their suggestions for finding individual donors include the following:

- Search local media for stories about people who have prospered in their professions and are active in civic affairs and charitable causes. Your public library probably has databases to search many news sources at once.
- Network with your prospect’s acquaintances. This may yield valuable information, perhaps even an introduction.
- Prospect research Web sites link to multiple online resources to learn about a person’s giving potential and interests.
- Foundation Center libraries and some Funding Information Network locations subscribe to the following databases that can be helpful in prospect research (check your nearest location for availability):
  - Marquis Who’s Who on the Web
  - DonorSeries
Once an ideal donor is identified, the work begins, and film makers are tasked with presenting the opportunity to the potential donors.

![Prospect Worksheet—Institutional Funders](http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/wrksheet/)

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**Figure 2.1 (a). Prospect Worksheet from the Foundation Center – page 1**
(http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/wrksheet/)

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<td><strong>Financial Data</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Grants Paid</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Grant Ranges/Amount Needed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Period of Funding/Project</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Is Funder a Good Match?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Subject Focus (list in order of importance)</strong></td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td><strong>Geographic Limits</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Type(s) of Support</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Population(s) Served</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Type(s) of Recipients</strong></td>
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<td><strong>People (Officers, Donors, Trustees, Staff)</strong></td>
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When approaching individual donors, it is best to have established a personal relationship. This can mean contacting individuals that are closest to the project and its mission, or making strangers aware of and passionate about the project. The Grant Space website recommends building relationships with affluent and well-connected local
community members. They are more likely to have a personal connection to and interest in your community, and therefore may be more inclined to donate and get involved in your cause (“Cultivating Individual Donors”). Film writer and producer Tom Malloy expressed a similar sentiment in an interview with Carole Lee Dean for her book *The Art of Film Funding: Alternative Financing Concepts*, when he said:

> I encourage you to take your script and analyze it and think, "Who wants to invest in this?" Is it a World War II story? There are World War II veterans or kids of World War II veterans who have become very successful and might want to invest in your film. You can always find some kind of vested interest. If your screenplay is so strange and far out, then attack it a different way - try to find someone who wants their daughter to play a role or wants their son to be mentored. This is what you have to offer them. Understand this: to any investor outside the film industry, which is where I tell people always to look for investors, you are the conduit to let them into the film industry because you're making films.

(90)

If common interest alone is not bringing funders to the table, it may be time to employ the help of other team members and supporters. To this end, Malloy suggests offering a 5% finder’s fee and associate producer credit to individuals who bring, what he calls, “high net worth donors” to the project (qtd. in Dean, 94). Technically, the 5% is payment for the producer role, though it is based on the amount given by the attracted donor.

In short, individual donors can be difficult to find, but ultimately can lead to substantial support for a film. It is important for filmmakers to find the unique connection that a potential funder has to the film, and then present the project to them upon establishing a relationship with the person. If individual support alone will not fund a film, another option is to apply the same technique to organizations and foundations.
Foundations

Though individual supporters can be difficult to find, foundations exist to support nearly any project. Foundations (also known as charitable trusts, endowments, or public charities) are non-profit organizations designed specifically to disperse support, in the form of grants, to organizations and individuals. This category can be further broken down into private and public foundations. Dean explained the difference between the two in this way, "Private foundations are usually funded from one source, typically an individual, family, or corporation. Public foundations are built from multiple sources, including grants from private foundations, government agencies, and donations from private individuals" (149). It is important for grantseekers to note that the majority of grants are awarded to recognized 501(c)3 organizations, which are designated as tax-exempt by the IRS. This can make grant seeking difficult for individuals not associated with a charitable organization, for-profit organizations, and non-profit organizations who have yet to qualify for 501(c)3 status. Through the Grant Space website, The Foundation Center offers this information to be considered regarding grantmaking:

Grantmakers typically fund organizations that qualify for public charity status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. These are organizations whose purposes are charitable, educational, scientific, religious, literary, or cultural. Other types of exempt organizations also exist, like social welfare organizations, trade associations, social clubs, and others. In rare instances, some foundations may give grants to these types of organizations if the funds will be used for a charitable purpose. In such cases, the foundation must demonstrate expenditure responsibility to the IRS, a process in which the foundation must file several reports certifying that the funds were spent solely for charitable purposes as described in the grant proposal. Due to these additional requirements, many foundations will not make expenditure responsibility grants. (Can non-501(c)(3) organizations get foundation grants?)
One way around such restrictions for entrepreneurs or individuals working on a for-profit venture is through Fiscal Sponsorship with a tax-exempt organization (which is discussed in Chapter V).

At the heart of each foundation is a mission, and it is the job of the foundation to be sure that funds are granted in accordance with these guidelines. Simply put, foundations exist in order to fund projects. As Dean puts it, "it's their job to give these resources away. Your job is to make sure your project matches their criteria and guidelines" (153). The task for fundraisers and filmmakers then becomes finding the foundations that are the best fit for the project at hand.

Much like seeking individual supporters, time is best spent searching for foundations with missions that align with the film. Grant writing and application is time consuming, so applicants will make the most of their time by carefully reading the guidelines for each grant and applying only to those that fit. Similarly, it is wise for applicants to learn as much about the foundation and its funding tendencies prior to submitting a proposal. A good source of information is the organization's IRS Form 990. These forms can be obtained directly from an organization, through the IRS, or through various institutions, including Guide Star (guidestar.org). Through this form, 501(c)3 organizations are required to supply a variety of useful information including mission statements and charitable dispersions. An IRS 990 form can be helpful in compiling a list of potential donors by revealing information such as a foundation's charitable donation amounts and recipients, donor names and amounts, and even members of the organization's Board of Directors. Figure 2.2 is an image provided by
the Foundation Center illustrating where specific information can be found on the 990 form.

The Associated Grant Makers (AGM) website suggests looking at several areas of a foundation in order to find one (or more) that is well-aligned with the film project, and therefore, more likely to grant funds. These areas include:

Program Interest. Program Interest refers to the kinds of nonprofit services a grant maker is interested in funding and, fundamentally, the kinds of issues for which the funder is interested in finding solutions.

Population Focus. Population Focus refers to the types of people served by programs and organizations that a grant maker prefers to fund. Populations can be categorized by age (Elderly, Children, Youth, etc.), Ethnic Group (African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, etc.), and other distinguishing characteristics (i.e. Women & Girls, Low-Income, Disabled, Veterans, Offenders & Ex-Offenders, etc.).

Geographic Focus. Although some grant makers are national or even international in the geographic scope of their funding, most focus more narrowly on a particular area. Some corporate foundations and corporate giving programs make grants only in those communities in which they have facilities or do business.

Types of Support. Nonprofits can apply to grant makers for funds to support different aspects of their operations. But not all funders provide every type of support. Types of Support can be divided into several categories, such as General Operating Support, Special Projects, Seed Money/Startup, Equipment/Computers, Building/Renovation, Capacity Building, etc.

(—Guide to Grant Maker Research”, www.agmconnect.org/rcp/guide2.aspx)

Matching these factors of a foundation to the film exponentially increases the likelihood of the being awarded support.
In addition to individual research, filmmakers can also gain information on foundations and their giving habits through a number of industry directories. These include the AGM Grant Maker Directory and its electronic counterpart, the AGM Grant
Maker Database. The Foundation Center offers a database service called FC Search available on CD-ROM, as well as annual directories of grant makers broken down by genres and types of projects funded. GrantSmart (GrantSmart.org) offers a similar resource. Another source of information is corporate giving directories, though the AGM warns that since corporate giving programs are not required to file reports with the IRS, it is more difficult to uncover information about them (“Guide to Grant Maker Research”). However, worthwhile corporate giving directories do exist, including the Corporate Giving Directory, National Directory of Corporate Public Affairs, and Giving By Industry (“Guide to Grant Maker Research”). Additional resources include numerous location-based directories, such as the Funding Directory of Ohio. While these directories do not plainly state if the foundation will be a good fit for a given project, they are an excellent resource to begin further investigation and research.

Though it is easy to find foundations, work is required to find the right foundations to support a project. Dean suggests seeking to establish the project's "Strategic Alliances," which are large organizations that are closely aligned to the project and/or its target market, and therefore critical to its success (111). For example, a documentary chronicling the struggles associated with bulimia would do well to connect to the National Eating Disorder Information Centre or the National Eating Disorder Association. These Strategic Alliances can be formed by offering gifts or special privileges to members in exchange for exposure in the organizations print materials, newsletters, website, or social media. It is key to remember that an alliance really only exists if both partners are benefiting, so organizations must be enticed by what they will gain through teaming with the project.
Businesses and Other Organizations

Outside of granting organizations and individuals, businesses can be an excellent source of funding. By approaching business owners for donations, a filmmaker continues to grow their community of support, while also spreading the word about their film. Similarly, a company with connections to the people or places involved in the film will likely feel more compelled to give to the film, as opposed to someone all-together unfamiliar with the project. Also, any time saved on establishing a brand new relationship with a funder is time that can be spent seeking funds elsewhere.

While small businesses or organizations may not have money to give the film, they can be an excellent source of in-kind donations. These donations consist of items other than money that are needed to complete a project. The Community Tool Box from Kansas University defines them this way:

In-kind resources, or non-cash contributions, might be things you'd otherwise pay for, or they might be things that money just can't buy. When someone volunteers to give you a service, supplies, or free help, you're receiving in-kind support. You can look for in-kind support both from within your organization's members, and from your local community. (“Soliciting Contributions and In-kind Support”)

The article further explains, “In-kind support should not be seen as a second best to direct monetary donations, but as an equally important part of the resource pool available to your group.” This support is integral to producing a project, and is likely readily available.

In-kind donations can take on many forms. The three basic types of in-kind donations are goods, services, and people. Common examples include free copies from a printing business, food or beverage from a restaurant, café, or grocery store for an event
or to be used as craft services, or even donations of time by volunteers. In order to make the most of in-kind donations, filmmakers must know the needs of their film, and then go about obtaining those goods, services, and people.

For goods, filmmakers can approach a business known for those specific items and ask for the donation, or if that is not possible, ask for a discount. Production pieces such as props, wardrobe, or set pieces can be donated by individuals or businesses. If locations are needed for filming or rehearsing, filmmakers should consider the resources near-by and approach the managers of those sites.

For services, consider the following suggestions: "Small businesses, vendors, colleges, other nonprofits, individual professionals, and tradespeople all have services to offer. Everyone providing services for a fee is probably also providing it free, or at a discount, to some worthy cause," ("Soliciting Contributions and In-kind Support"). For example, a budding artist may be willing to donate their service in the form of designing logos, taking photographs, or composing music for the film.

For people resources, filmmakers can look anywhere from professionals to family members, but should strive to make the most of people’s volunteered time and skills. If all of these possibilities were not enough, organizations such as Partners in Kind (partnersinkind.com) exist simply to connect donors to nonprofits, events, and causes.

In addition to using in-kind donations for production, promotion, and distribution purposes, these donations can also be used to proliferate further fundraising. Donated goods can be used as incentives in a crowdfunding campaign. Goods or services can be auctioned or raffled at a fundraising special event for the film. These functions should be
considered for donations that are available, yet seem to not fit within the filmmaker's production needs.

Regardless of how the donations are used, what form they take, or who provides them, all donors should be acknowledged. At the very least, they should be issued a thank you letter and/or tax receipt if the receiving organization is a 501(c)3. For more advanced support and relationships (such as a Strategic Alliance), donors may receive recognition in the forms of sponsorship credit, product placement, film credits, or cross-promotions. When fiscally convenient, filmmakers may wish to provide funders with a copy of the finished film. All of these efforts not only show appreciation, but also foster the relationship with the funder and leave the lines of communication open to approach funders for future projects.
CHAPTER III

SOLICITATIONS

Once a sufficient list of potential supporters has been assembled, the true work begins: the "ask". There are a number of ways to approach potential supporters, and online solicitation methods are becoming increasingly popular as more people become familiar with and adept at using internet services. However, there will always be a faction of the population who cannot be reached online or who do not choose to interact in this way. This fact is what keeps print and verbal solicitations essential to any fundraising campaign.

As previously mentioned, a fundraiser must have an established relationship with the potential funder before a request can be made. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the fundraiser to ensure that the person being approached knows and understands information not only about the film, but also about the individuals behind it. This relationship can be established by getting the donor involved in elements of production or asking for advice prior to asking for monetary support. The other side of this relationship coin is knowing the donor; what they do, what they like, their skills, their associates, etcetera. This allows the fundraiser to know when the fit is right so that a pitch can be confidently made.
Once a relationship is established, the fundraiser must approach the potential funder with the "ask." This proposal "has to have their interest at heart, it has to benefit them in some way," (Dean,131). By taking the time to establish a relationship, rather than just asking for a donation, the door remains open for future donations and support.

As Dean explains:

Finding and developing relationships with funders is hard work, but take heart. The hardest part is going after your first funder. Once you get that out of the way you will build your portfolio of funders and other funders will follow. Before long you will create your own network of funding sources. Remember, if you are honest and professional it will be a positive experience and your funders will be there for future projects. (141)

These relationships can lead to other connections through the donor's family, friends, and colleagues who share similar interests or philanthropic tendencies, as well as additional funding for future ventures.

The Pitch

One of the best ways to approach asking for any sort of support, whether it is in-kind donations, time, or plain cash, is to be upfront and honest with the potential funder. By explaining the project, its limitations, and the budget succinctly and in a manner that can be easily understood, the likelihood of success increases. In his book *Crowdfunding: A Comprehensive Guide for Beginners* Steve Woods explains the steps that he believes are necessary to, in his words, get "cheap stuff cheaper, and cheaper stuff free.” His guidelines are: 1. Ask. 2. Avoid emails. 3. Get to the point. 4. Don’t get cocky. 5. What’s their base line? (What requirements must be met to make the deal happen).
These five points can be explained in the following manner: If you never ask, you'll never know; a personal interaction is always better than being lost in the shuffle of other asks; time is precious and wasting ones time does not bode well when asking for favors or support; being honest about the project will help potential funders to have faith in you and your work; a deal can always be struck if you are reasonable. Woods further explains that — ‘the movie industry wouldn‘t exist without the ability to haggle, negotiate, barter or trade… at the end of the day, what‘s the worst that can happen if you try and haggle for some discount?’” When considering and implementing these points, the solicitation itself seems less intimidating.

Verbal Solicitations

Approaching individuals, organizations, or businesses requires a verbal pitch accompanied by a tangible proposal. As such, fundraisers should have an –elevator speech‖ prepared and ready to be used. It should be a few sentences explaining the filmmaker and their work that compels the listener to seek more information and/or get involved in the project. Suggested elements of the –elevator speech‖ are the filmmaker's name, their medium, the name of the project, a synopsis of the project, and what makes it unique (Rosenberg, 138). The careful formulation and thoughtful application of such a pitch can be invaluable. As Rosenberg states:

When you use a good elevator speech, strangers become potential audience members, donors, and referrals. They’ll attend your reads, buy your books, crowd your gallery openings, and pack your performances. Some will even write you a check. But they can only do this if they know what you do. Your elevator speech makes this possible. (141)
It is never certain when an opportunity to connect with a funder will arise, but having a prepared elevator speech allows a fundraiser to make the most of any situation. Once a pitch has been carefully crafted it can be used in person, or over the phone, with both established connections and strangers. One specific opportunity to use the verbal pitch is to contact the operations officer for a grant and speak on the phone. In this way, the verbal pitch serves as the personal contact behind the formal application.

Print Solicitations

An easy way to increase exposure for a project, while also presenting the financial needs of the project, is through distribution of print materials. The nature of the medium allows for a “soft ask” of sorts. By including links to campaign pages or contact information along with basic information on the project or film, fundraisers can create a standard pitch for any interested party. By having these printed materials, such as business cards, postcards, or one page fact sheets (often referred to in the film industry as “one-sheets”), fundraisers have something tangible to back up their initial contact when networking, as well as a reminder for potential donors after they have been approached for a donation. These materials should include succinct information on the project, as well as contact information for all of the various social media and online sources related to the project. Pledge cards can also be implemented to lessen the chance of unfulfilled pledges.

Dean suggests the following as key parts of a written proposal to potential funders, specifically for film:

- The story synopsis
• Why the filmmaker is making the film
• Precisely what the needs are and why
• Who benefits from the making of the film
• The value of the donation to the filmmaker
• What the donor would receive in return (121)

It is also recommended to include information regarding any fiscal sponsorships that may exist. Also, while each proposal should contain this standard and pertinent information, each proposal should be tailored to the receiver.

Another potential feature of printed solicitations is a QR code. A QR code is similar to a barcode image that can be scanned using a reader on a smart phone in order to direct the user to a desired website. While the codes are often used by organizations to take users to the company’s homepage, for the purposes of fundraising, a QR code could be used to direct individuals to a crowdfunding campaign page. The codes can be generated through the use of any one of numerous free websites, and then the generated image can simply be saved and added to print materials. It is an easy addition that encourages immediate donations.

Follow Up

The work for a fundraising filmmaker does not end once a request is submitted. If an answer is not given, fundraisers are encouraged to keep in contact with the donor until a definitive “no” is given. A good way to do this is to keep them updated on the project and its progress. Additionally, applicants are encouraged to keep notes on the funders, as well as track their correspondence with them. This should include a thank you note for their time in listening to the pitch, and well as updates throughout the project that will further validate the project and keep potential funders interested and intrigued.
Regardless of which individuals express interest, or what foundation grants seem like a perfect fit for a project, wise producers should not rely solely on one source of funding alone. Rather, an intelligent approach is to adopt a strategy of a healthy mix of funders from all categories when possible.
CHAPTER IV

GRANT WRITING AND APPLICATION

The most common form of financial support from foundations comes in the form of grants. In the world of non-profit business, grants are an important source of needed income. The process of preparing and writing a grant is both time consuming and highly regulated. However, when done correctly, grant writing can supply large financial returns that greatly supplement a fundraising plan and improve a fundraising profile.

Background Information

As previously stated, prospect research needs to be done before a grant proposal can be made. After finding grant makers that fit the film project, filmmakers must be certain to have the following information for the foundations, according to Associated Grant Makers:

Basic Information. Grant maker name, address, and contact information; background of key people (officers, donors, staff, trustees)

Grantmaking Philosophy/Program Emphasis. Grant maker history; mission; program interests, population focus, geographic focus, and types of support provided; recent grants.

Financial Information. Assets/market value; contributions reported in past years; range of grants and typical grant size.
Application Process. Application guidelines; application forms/common proposal format; initial approach; deadlines; meeting dates. (“Researching Individual Grant Makers”)

Verifying the accuracy of this information is essential not only to eligibility for the available grant, but also to ensure that precious time and effort are not wasted by the applicant. Once this information is in place, the application and proposal writing process begins.

Proposal Outline

There are many elements to construct when developing a grant proposal. Though different sources may have different names for these elements, the information needed remains the same. When possible, grant writers are encouraged to use existing information used for previous grant applications and tailor them to the proposal at hand.

The Foundation Center offers a graphic of the necessary elements of a general grant proposal (see figure 4.1). Writer Gigi Rosenberg gives a general outline for artists, which is expounded upon in her book *The Artist’s Guide to Grant Writing*. She says:

In your proposal, you have to explain why you want the money, why the granting organization should support your project, and how you intend to spend the funds. You are expected to include a detailed budget and samples of your work. Your application is judged by a panel of your peers – that means other artists – in a competitive process. (2)

Carol Lee Dean suggests using the following outline for grant proposals specifically for films: Log Line and Title; Introduction/Synopsis; Background and Need; Approach, Structure, and Style; Audience, Marketing, and Distribution; Budget; and Filmmaker’s Statement and Biography (36-45). Through the use of these components grant writers can provide grantors will a complete picture of the project to be funded.
The first two elements to construct are the title and log line. Ideally, the title of the film is already in place, brief, and memorable. The film’s log line is simply a short description of the main aspects of the film condensed into a single sentence. By reading the log line, readers should get a sense of what genre of film it is, as well as the main characters, what they do in the story, and how they do it. It should call to mind a visual of the film and include the pertinent information of the storyline, while also being interesting enough to engage readers/viewers/funders to want to learn more. The log line, however, should not be confused the film’s tag line, which is used on promotional pieces (most often the movie poster) to entice potential audience members to see the film. The log line is simply a short summation of the script. The key for both the title and log line is to be clear, interesting, and concise.

Next, the introduction or synopsis of the film is likely the first place a grantor will look to get a more complete picture of the film project and its worth. Dean emphasized the importance of the synopsis when she wrote:

I consider the introduction or synopsis to be the most critical element in the proposal. It is the first thing I read when I pick up a new film proposal because it tells me how compelling the project is and reveals how passionate the filmmaker is. It should tell me a visual story of the film. Sponsors use the synopsis during the selection process as a way of categorizing and separating one type of film from another. If your synopsis is dynamic and is strategically placed on your application, it will remain active in the sponsor's mind. (29)

An effective synopsis will expand the log line by giving readers the details of what the film is about and what viewers will see when viewing the final product. These few paragraphs, like the log line and title, need to draw grantors in and illustrate how the project is interesting, original, and worthy of their time and money.
Once a grantor has been teased with the information found in the previous parts of the proposal and their interest in the project has been piqued, the reader can move on to the background information and description of the film’s needs. This section should include brief character information, an explanation of how the film will be made, the importance of the film, and the target audience/market. Additionally, the grant writer must be able to demonstrate how the film aligns with the grantor’s mission or requirements. It is the goal of the writer, in this section, to convince the grantor that the film is not only worthwhile, but that it must be made now and with the support of the grantor.

Now that the question of “Why” has been answered, the grant writer must answer the question of “How.” By outlining the project’s approach, structure, and style, a writer shows grantors that a plan is in place, and that granted funds will not be frivolously spent. This section covers not only some of the techniques and technical aspects that will be used in the film, but also how the story will be told. Conversely, as is often the case with documentaries, if a specific resolution is not present the writer should explain the projected outcomes and how they will be addressed. In essence, this section illustrates that the vision for the film is accompanied by an action plan.

Then, writers describe how their film will reach its potential audiences by addressing the size of that audience, marketing strategies to reach these people, and distribution. This includes identifying how the finished film appeals to the people in that market, as well as whether it will simply be made available to close relations and donors, or for world-wide distribution through theatres and rental organizations. To summarize, writers are working to show what will happen with the film once the product is finalized.
As is the case with any project seeking support from others, an honest and realistic budget should be created and used. For grant application purposes, the budget should reflect how the production elements will translate into dollar amounts. This section should do more than simply outline the money being sought from the grantor, but also plans for how the money will be used (specifically mentioning how the granted money would be used in accordance with organization’s goals), and what course of action will be taken in the event that the budgeted money is not raised. Additionally, grant writers are encouraged to include creative fundraising techniques that will be used for the project. This shows not only determination to obtain the necessary funds, but also sets the project apart from other applicants.

Lastly, the grant writer creates a picture of the people behind the project through a filmmaker’s statement and biographies of the key people involved. By sharing biographical information such as previous work, awards won, and grants earned, grantors gain a sense of the legitimacy on the part of the filmmakers. As Dean suggests, “Winning one grant leads to success with future grants, so mention prior grants that you have won in your cover letter and any awards anyone on the crew has won” (30). The filmmaker’s statement is the chance to add a personal element to the information already shared, as well as to display the passion behind the film.

Recognizing that no two applications are the same and that some grantors do not provide an application to be filled out, but rather request a list of materials, Rosenberg considers the following to be commonly sought by grantors who do not provide applications. First, a letter of inquiry that is a summation of the project and why it is a good fit for the grant; and a cover letter, which Rosenberg suggests writing last (though it
is the first piece presented to and read by the grantor). She says that it is "both an invitation to join you in your project and a summary of what you intend to create" (50). This single page includes information such as what is needed, the importance of the project, and what is contained within the rest of the proposal. Next, an executive summary or abstract that serves as a one to two paragraph summary describing the proposal as a whole should be prepared.

Similar to Dean's list, Rosenberg also suggests bios and resumes for key production staff. These items include background information such as the filmmaker's education, awards, previous work, etcetera, that is written in the third person. The resume, which likely will already exist, should be tailored to fit each application, and serve as a one-page fact sheet for the filmmaker. A more personal compliment to this factual information is the artist statement. This can be thought of as a personal manifesto or philosophy in terms of the filmmakers approach to film, written in the first person using simple yet descriptive language.

As mentioned before, a budget is necessary in any proposal. It should be a detailed and realistic list of proposed expenses and income, including not only what is needed and for what, but also other available sources of income for the project. Working hand-in-hand with the budget should be a timeline or schedule for the project. This should come in the form of an outline, including dates for when aspects of the project will occur if funding is granted. These events should then be referenced throughout the proposal.

The print information can be supplemented by tangible elements. These include work samples, which can come in the form of high quality video, text, and images, as
well as an accompanying list detailing each sample, all of which exhibit the caliber of previous work by the filmmaker. As Rosenberg explains, “In addition to gripping the viewer, your work sample must relate to the project you’re proposing” (110). Though not necessary, and at times explicitly asked to not be submitted, other supplementary materials can include press coverage, promotional pieces, or other documentation of one’s work. Letters of recommendation may not be requested, but if they are, they should be prepared by those familiar with the filmmakers work. Ideally, the writers will also be of interest to the grantor.

In addition to supplying these components that are often explicitly requested, there are additional pieces of information which grantors are looking for within those answers. The following are questions that Rosenberg suggests may not be overtly asked, but should be answered in an application:

- How is your project unique?
- How is your project tried and true?
- How is your project needed?
- Why does the world need your project right now?
- Why are you the perfect person to undertake this project?
- How does your team support your big vision for the project and ensure its success? (56-57)

It is the task of the grant writer to exhibit not only what is asked, but also to convey the personal nature and passion behind the project, as well as the distinctiveness of the film.

Recommendations

Aside from compiling the necessary information, grant writers need to think beyond the information being supplied. Other considerations include format, editing, length, and time constraints, among others. As Rosenberg explains:
These organizations and others like them need you to complete their work in the world. Your job as a grant-writing artist is to make the review panel’s job as easy as possible: Follow the application instructions to the letter, demonstrate that you understand the goals and missions of the granting organization, and convince the decision makers that your project is the perfect way to manifest their vision. When writing your proposal, remember that the organization you’re applying to already believes in what you do. (10)

Following these recommendations not only gives grant writers a sense of confidence in their proposal, but also allows their application to rise in the ranks.

First, consider both the writing style and tone of the writing. This can be difficult because “What makes grant writing challenging, especially for the individual artist, is that you need to write about your work as if you didn’t create it,” (Rosenberg, 36). Writers should use strong, confident language in the future tense. By conveying that the writer believes in the project, the reader likely will too. Writers should remember that they are telling a story, the story of themselves and their film. To this end, the writing should reflect personality, while at the same time avoiding jargon, colloquialisms, and unprofessional speech. It should be the best possible, professional representation of the project and the human elements behind it.

Additionally, Rosenberg suggests, “To ensure that your application rises to the top of the heap and doesn’t get cut in the first or second pass, evaluate your proposal from the funder’s viewpoint” (80). The way to do this, when writing about a project that is highly personal to the creator, is to get others involved. This can happen in a number of ways, including have outside readers submit pieces, conduct research, brainstorm, edit, or just proofread the finalized product. Grant writers can seek help and clarification from colleagues, team members, previous grant winners, or even the granting organization.
itself. This should result in a more objective evaluation of the project. Assuming that the grant writer has done his or her prospect research carefully and knows what the grantor is looking for, this process should result in a more successful match between applicant and grantor.

While the writing needs to be hopeful and confident, it should also be realistic. Grantors read applications for a living, and can likely see through an implausible proposal. Goals that are stated in the application should be clear and attainable. This does not mean for a writer to short-change themselves, but rather to present goals that are in line with the project, their experience, and their resources.

Next, writers should consider the length of the proposal. As Dean says:

Remember that grantors or investors are usually under a deadline to read and make a decision on something that should never be judged: your art. Your potential funder is probably reviewing hundreds of proposals, one right after the other, so find a way to make your proposal unique. (29)

The most easy way for an organization to narrow the large number of applicants is to immediately cut applications that do not follow instructions or do not fall within the mission or fit the grant. Therefore, grant writers should follow each application’s individual instructions and criteria explicitly. Applicants must pay attention to deadlines, noting if they are to be in the grantors hands at that time, or post-marked by the date. Given this date, filmmakers should be sure to give themselves enough time to research, compose, edit, and send the completed proposal. Depending on grant writing experience and available resources, this can take between one and two months. No grant writer wants their hard work wasted or the application thrown out simply because instructions were not followed.
By thoughtfully and thoroughly preparing these elements of a grant proposal, grant seekers take a large and important step towards reaching their budget. Even if the money is not granted on the first attempt, the grant proposal may be resubmitted after modifications are made, or the same material can be tailored to different grant applications. Though the process of preparing a grant is certainly time consuming and, at times, arduous, the returns upon that effort have great potential.

Follow Up

Whether money is granted or not, a filmmaker must follow up with the granting organization. If nothing else, they will receive a definite answer on the status of their application. Through follow-up correspondence and conversations, applicants can also glean information on how subsequent applications can be improved, and foster the relationship with the foundation for future interactions. Regardless of the outcome, a thank you letter should be sent to the foundation for either their consideration or their contribution.
### Components of a Proposal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary:</td>
<td>umbrella statement of your case and summary of the entire proposal</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Need:</td>
<td>why this project is necessary</td>
<td>2 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Description:</td>
<td>nuts and bolts of how the project will be implemented and evaluated</td>
<td>3 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget:</td>
<td>financial description of the project plus explanatory notes</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Information:</td>
<td>history and governing structure of the nonprofit; its primary activities, audiences, and services</td>
<td>1 page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion:</td>
<td>summary of the proposal’s main points</td>
<td>2 paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1. Components of a grant proposal provided by The Foundation Center
CHAPTER V

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP

While grant seeking has great potential to be a profitable endeavor for artists, the large majority of foundation funding is granted to organizations rather than individuals. Nonprofits must obtain approval prior to distributing funds to individuals, and this extra step often means that foundations would rather grant funds to organizations. Without 501(c)(3) status, individuals and organizations lose out on the largest majority of available granted funds. However, through fiscal sponsorship individuals and organizations are able to reap these benefits by affiliating with trusted and established 501(c)(3) organizations.

Definition

Through the Grant Space website, the Foundation Center states that:

Fiscal sponsorship is a formal arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) public charity sponsors a project that may lack exempt status. This alternative to starting your own nonprofit allows you to seek grants and solicit tax-deductible donations under your sponsor's exempt status. (―What is Fiscal Sponsorship?‖)

The Foundation Center also went on to explain the roles of the sponsors themselves this way:

Sponsors have been defined as "groups, agencies, and institutions with established performance in your field, a record of solid visibility, accomplishment, and thus high-quality credibility." To put it more succinctly, sponsors are third-party
groups that collaborate with you to meet funders' requirements. You provide the idea and the manpower; the sponsor provides the track record and credibility. Together you form a kind of symbiotic relationship. (―Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship)

Carol Lee Dean further explains that, "Fiscal sponsors receive and administer funds and provide various levels of organizational support to individuals." (149) The IRS allows this arrangement as long as the fiscal sponsor retains the right to voluntarily determine how to use the contributed funds (―Fiscal Sponsors). In many ways, a fiscal sponsor serves as the "middle man” between financial supporters and the producers of the project, creating a mutually beneficial situation for all parties.

Ultimately, the decision to become affiliated with a fiscal sponsor is up to those behind the film project. However, the Foundation Center offers things to be considered when making this decision:

Determining whether or not you need a sponsor is up to you. The decision rests on whether you as an applicant can make it on your own, whether you want to go it alone, whether your idea lends itself to development by just one individual, and whether support services are required. There are as many types of sponsors as there are ideas for grants… The choices concerning what kind you need and how structured or loose the relationship should be are also up to you. The individual grantseeker can and should create a sponsoring arrangement that benefits him and his grant idea, while not losing sight of the motivation of the funder. (―Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship”)

Before making the decision to affiliate with a sponsor, both pros and cons should be measured.

Cons

Most obviously, any fiscal arrangement should be beneficial to both parties.

Though fiscal sponsorship increases the number of granting sources available to the
filmmaker, it can also mean more work and restrictions. The following facts should be considered when contemplating the advisability of seeking a fiscal sponsorship.

Time spent establishing the sponsorship takes time away from other areas of the project and other fundraising efforts. Finding an appropriate sponsor, preparing a proposal, and then formulating a written agreement that both parties are comfortable with can take as much time as grant writing. Filmmakers should be sure that the financial returns of the relationship are worth the effort put towards establishing it.

Also, a film project may not benefit from a tax-exempt status. It is possible that donors may not be interested in their donations being tax-deductible, especially if they do not plan on claiming the deduction on their taxes or the donation amount is small. This fact would make the process of aligning with a 501(c)(3) organization inefficient.

From another financial standpoint, the filmmaker may lose money due to the arrangement. Administrative costs charged by the sponsor to the filmmaker can include an application fee, a percentage of the money raised, and additional charges for credit card donations. The work done by the filmmaker to raise the money will likely be the same, yet the money that is raised will be divided between the fundraiser and the sponsor.

Pros

According to the Foundation Center, “fewer than one out of ten foundations and very few government agencies are willing to consider proposals from individuals without institutional affiliation” (“Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship”). Additionally, the center reports
that it takes as much administrative time and work to award a $5,000 grant to one individual as a $500,000 grant to a university” (Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship”). Thus, time and money are saved by simply granting funds to a parent organization for further distribution to smaller groups and individuals. Considering this information, fiscal sponsorship opens individuals up to greater eligibility for grants. Also, aligning the project with a reputable organization with a proven track record implicitly gives more credibility to the project.

From a donor standpoint, funders tend to be more confident in funding a project through a reputable non-profit organization; and since the donations are being given to an established 501(c)3 organization, they are tax-deductible. Filmmakers are able to receive these donations through the organization without having to incorporate and apply for 501(c)3 (non-profit charitable) status. This arrangement should be most attractive for single projects. As Danea Ringelmann, cofounder of Indiegogo, explains: "By connecting online with a fiscal sponsor you give your donor a tax deduction. Additionally, your donor knows that your film is being monitored and supported by people who can guide the production to completion." (Dean, 105) In the case of IndieGogo, no fees are charged to organizations with 501(c)3 status, nor the individuals for whom they provide fiscal sponsorship. Lastly, the sponsoring organization receives conducts work in line with its mission through services to the sponsored project.
The decision to form a Fiscal Sponsorship has the potential to not only affect the actions of the filmmakers and the sponsoring organization, but also the decisions of grantors. As the Foundation Center explains:

A grants decision maker employs one major criterion when evaluating a proposal — the strength of the individual grantseeker's roots in the community in which he or she works. Hence, the unaffiliated grantseeker must stress those aspects of his or her grant project that enable him or her to cooperate, instruct, or help others in order to make the idea more attractive to funders. (―Guide to Fiscal Sponsorships‖)

The ability to work with a Fiscal Sponsor exhibits engagement in the community, in addition to credibility on the part of the filmmaker, making the grant seeker more desirable to grantors.

The National Council of Nonprofits offers the following additional reasons why a fiscal sponsorship may be desired:

- Fiscal sponsorship can be used by newly formed charitable organizations that have the need to raise money right away, before they are recognized as tax-exempt by the IRS.
- Fiscal sponsorship might be chosen by a newly formed nonprofit that seeks to test-drive its ideas, or operate less formally than what is required of groups that make the commitment to apply for tax-exempt recognition from the IRS.
- Some organizations remain in a fiscal sponsorship relationship for a long time, deciding that their mission can be achieved in that structure without the need to be recognized by the IRS as an independent tax-exempt entity.
- Finally, some organizations - including those that are tax-exempt - find that utilizing a fiscal sponsor to outsource administrative responsibilities, whether back-office tasks, or those relating to fundraising and disbursement of funds, is the right business model for them. (―Fiscal Sponsors‖)

Similarly, the Foundation Center offers the following list of instances, based on the project at hand, when a sponsorship may be advantages:
• If your idea for a grant requires access to a laboratory, studio, classroom, accounting, financial or computer services, you may find you need an institutional sponsor.
• Should your idea be controversial or involve some element of risk, funders might shy away from it unless you find a reputable sponsor to endorse the idea and lend you credibility.
• If the idea you have in mind will have substantial projected impact on your community, then you probably need a well regarded community agency as your sponsor. It will serve to reassure funders about the changes you may bring about in your own backyard. (―Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship‖)

When weighing these options, the filmmaker should keep in mind the goals of the film to ensure an optimal affiliation.

When approaching an organization to become a fiscal sponsor, filmmakers must convince the chosen organization that the arrangement would benefit both parties and is, therefore, worth their time and effort. While each arrangement will vary, the following is a list of potential advantages to the sponsor, provided by the Foundation Center:

• By sponsoring your grant project, the organization in question may attract new funders to its own programs, thereby making it possible to bring to the attention of potential funders other services in addition to your grant project that the sponsoring organization may provide.
• The grant money you bring in may help to spread the sponsor's own overhead charges and defray some indirect costs.
• If your project is successful, the sponsoring organization shares the honors or benefits from your ideas.
• Serving as a sponsor for your grant project may enable the organization to expand its own services or programs with a minimal financial outlay from its own annual budget. (The desk, phone, laboratory, and so on are already there.)
• In some instances a sponsor may pre-empt the competition that you might present to them were you to go elsewhere with your ideas. (―Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship‖)

If the benefits are clear to both parties, then filmmakers are encouraged to make a connection with the potential sponsor.
Establishing the Sponsorship

Potential sponsors can be found through individual prospect research or by using databases such as The Fiscal Sponsor Directory (fiscalsponsordirectory.org), or by searching listings in publications such as the *Encyclopedia of Associations*. Fractured Atlas is one example of a non-profit organization that often serves as a fiscal sponsor for artists. Filmmakers can also consider already-existing partners, as well as local organizations and leaders in the film industry, or an industry closely related to the film.

A fiscal sponsor can be any organization with a 501(c)3 status, though it is wise to choose an organization which fully understand the sponsorship relation and which has goals consistent with those of the artists involved in the project. Grantors may reject an application if the fiscal sponsor’s mission does not align with the foundation’s mission. To protect the tax-exempt status of the sponsoring organization, it is important that the mission of the film match the fiscal sponsor’s mission.

In addition to the organization’s mission, other elements should be considered when choosing a fiscal sponsor. One important aspect is the work the organization does and the services they offer. Filmmakers should also note the organization’s public perception and reputation in the field. By partnering with a well-respected and successful organization, filmmakers stand the best chance at a successful relationship.

A formal affiliation must be established once a potential sponsor has been identified before funds can be transferred. It is up to both the individual and the organization as to what the arrangement will entail. It is important to have the terms spelled out explicitly in a contract drafted by a lawyer and signed by both parties to avoid
unfortunate surprises in the future. Once established, both parties can look forward to reaping the benefits of their work.
CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET MARKETING

An ever-growing faction of fundraising for both non-profit and for-profit business is social media. The rise in popularity of social media has not only influenced the way that organizations do business, but also increased their scope, exposure, and opportunities in exchange for relatively minimal costs. Previously, businesses were considered advanced if they possessed a well-conceived website. Now, organizations are challenged and expected to not only operate a website, but also be present on a myriad of other social media forums including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and more.

While it takes work and research to create and maintain worthwhile and effective social media pages, the returns can also be great. Social media outlets have the ability to become invaluable tools for individuals or organizations with little to no upfront funding, due to the medium’s minimal start-up costs and potential for wide exposure. In his book, *Crowdfunding: A Comprehensive Guide for Beginners*, Steve Woods explained the need for social media for filmmakers in this way:

In tangible terms, you’ve simply got to use all the different resources at your disposal; Facebook, Twitter, website, a regular blog, etc. I’m not talking about bombarding people 24/7 with posts asking people to ‘Like’ you, I’m saying that this is where you need to encourage and entice potential donors and investors into taking the journey with you. It’s about selling yourself before anything else. Don’t ‘hide’ behind your project, stand tall and let people know who you are and what you’re about. People need to engage with you before they engage with your dreams.
These sources not only serve as inexpensive marketing tools, but also gauges of the available and interested audience for a film.

A website for the film can act as a first step, a place where followers are referred from other platforms and outlets to get official information. An ideal website, for film or otherwise, is easy to understand and navigate, yet also exciting and representative of the project as a whole. Production of such a site can be affordable with the use of free or inexpensive hosting sites, or by using the talents of a web designer in exchange for promotion of their services and work. Additionally, some web hosts allow for a "subscription" function that allows page managers to collect e-mail addresses from interested parties, which can then be used to distribute an informative e-newsletter, other updates, or solicitations.

Projects with little start-up money can be further legitimized through the use of an official Facebook account. Facebook remains the preeminent social media tool. The site’s large scope of users allows for broad exposure, and can be updated regularly to keep supporters involved. The page can also be used to share videos or photos, and to build a community of supporters. Additionally, a Facebook account for either the film or the production company can bring much needed interaction from the potential audience and funders. This free service can be used to ask questions, take polls, share multimedia, create events and invite guests, and get people talking about and sharing your project.

Wise users can also utilize the search functions of Facebook to find users who are likely to enjoy or support their projects, based on users ‘Likes”, and then engage those users to make them familiar with the film and its needs. Marketing efforts can even be
tailored to target these specific audiences through sponsored advertisements. Similarly, by joining independent film groups, "liking" other films or filmmakers, or engaging in other ways, a film’s networking ability increases and the pool of interested potential funders broadens. With all of these possible functions, it is important to remember that this medium, possibly more than any others, must be kept interactive and engaging in order to attract users to visit regularly, which is essential for it to be a successful tool in the filmmaker’s marketing and fundraising arsenal.

Twitter grants users functionality similar to that of Facebook, but in a much more succinct and up-to-the-minute manner. A "tweet" can be used to announce the casting of an actor, the countdown of a crowdfunding campaign, or other short musings regarding the film that are worth noting, and hopefully worth sharing by the films "followers" to their social media connections. Author, writer, and director Steve Woods suggests that the most useful application of Twitter is to engage the backing of a "name," a famous person with their own following, in the hopes that their support will lead to more followers and interest in the project. With the prevalence of celebrity Twitter accounts and the relatively small commitment of time needed to utilize them, this seems the best choice for enticing high-profile supporters.

Another option is to create a Twitter account (referred to as a "handle") for just the film. Once that is established, the account manager should strive to use relevant hashtags (searchable phrases preceded with "#") in the posts to reach supporters that may be interested in the project. It is also suggested to leave space for 15 additional characters of text (the current limit for tweets is 140 characters) so supporters can easily "re-tweet"
the post to their followers and friends without losing part of the original message (Trigonis, 139).

Blogs are yet another option in the realm of social media that can be used to keep interested parties informed and updated on not only your project, but the team behind it as well. Websites such as Reddit, Tumblr, WordPress, and Google Blogger allow writers unlimited space to share thoughts, musings, pictures and more. Blogs allow interested parties to delve more deeply into topics, and fill the information void left by the immediate and condensed nature of other social media outlets. The information that is teased through more succinct social media mediums like Facebook of Twitter can be explored and explained in detail in a blog post. A blog could successfully be used to introduce the cast, crew, and producers of the film, or to follow the behind-the-scenes aspects of film making. Overall, the sharing of information leads to a more complete picture of the project, and hopefully more confidence in the filmmakers, leading to more financial support.

The key to successfully using social media in the promotion and fundraising of film is integration. Though the information found on the sites should be able to stand alone, the various platforms are all tools in creating a larger picture of the project. All of the mediums must be linked to each other and share a common and clear message of what the group/project is and does, what is needed, and how others can get involved and help. Links to the project’s main page should always be included on social media outlets posts to make it easier for potential supporters to get more information and donate. As author and non-profit marketing advisor Kivi Leroux Miller suggests:
Use the same messaging in social media that you are using when you are asking for donations in direct mail and email. You can also use social media to add a "soft" ask — like signing a petition or a card, or sharing a photo or story — to the "hard" ask for a donation. ("How Social Media and Fundraising Fit Together")

All avenues of not only social media and internet marketing, but also any print marketing pieces, should serve to promote one another and the overall message of the project.

It is not enough, however, to simply plug the film ad nauseam. Social media managers should strive to create original posts with personality, rather than bombarding followers with daily solicitations for donations. Instead, it is better to show people what is great about the project so they will be compelled to play a role in producing the film. Also through social media, efforts should be made to build a community and gain further support for your film, as well as awareness for the independent film industry through the support of other films and filmmakers. Additional ways that social media outlets can be put to good use include using it to stay in touch with the donors you are already have by providing more frequent updates, as well as publicly thanking them for their support and reporting back on the results brought by their generosity (Miller, "How Social Media and Fundraising Fit Together").

There is no denying the prevalence of social media for personal use, and now research is proving its significance in the business world as well. A recent article on socialbrite.org entitled "What Social Fundraising Means for Your Nonprofit" explored this idea. Figure 6.1, originally from the Share This website, illustrates that sharing through social media accounts for more than 10% of all internet traffic, and that Facebook is the largest contributor with 38% of sharing. The article further attests:
When fundraisers share their fundraising pages to their social networks, giving increases. Blackbaud recently issued a report and created an infographic about the power of peer-to-peer sharing. Blackbaud found that Twitter and Facebook posts convert 0.25% of impressions into donations. It also found that Twitter users increased donations nearly 10x more than those who did not use Twitter. FirstGiving found that for every share to Facebook, 5 people returned to a fundraising page. FirstGiving also found that the value of a share to Facebook was worth $10.87 in donations (Askanase).

The same sentiment can be found in an article from Entrepeneur.com regarding the importance of using and integrating social media devices. The article states,

Research from IndieGoGo has found that profiles with four or more external links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube or the company's own website - raise twice as much money as those without. Building a following and communicating via tweets, Facebook updates, e-mail and text is critical to creating momentum and keeping potential backers informed of the project's status. (Moran, –How to Raise Cash with Crowdfunding”)

Additionally, an article from Nonprofit Tech for Good illustrates interesting facts regarding social media use and its returns for non-profit organizations. These facts include that 55% of those who engage with nonprofits via social media have been inspired to take further action (see figure 6.2), 15-18% of donations are referred directly from Facebook in an average peer-to-peer fundraising campaign, and that using Twitter during fundraising events can result in 10X more money raised online (see figure 6.3).

Overall, these tools should be used to create a network of support for the film project, as well as to supplement other communications in a larger message to potential and current supporters.
Figure 6.1. Social media sharing statistics from Share This (http://www.socialbrite.org/2011/09/12/what-social-fundraising-means-for-your-nonprofit/)
More than half of survey respondents (55%) who engaged with causes via social media have been inspired to take further action.

**Figure 6.2.** Actions by non-profit supporters following social-media engagement ("Nonprofit Tech for Good")
Figure 6.3. Average increases in fundraising when using Twitter
("Nonprofit Tech for Good")
CHAPTER VII

CROWDFUNDING

In addition to social media, online crowdfunding is also experiencing a surge in popularity. As author and filmmaker John Trigonis explained in his book *Crowdfunding for Filmmakers: The Way to a Successful Film Campaign*, “Crowdfunding is not a passing fad, but a burgeoning revolution.” (13). Considering this, any fundraiser would be wise to become familiar with the practice, and skilled at its execution.

One must first know what crowdfunding is in order to use it well. Bernadette Tansey, in her article for xconomy.com, defines crowdfunding as “the social media phenomenon that has helped thousands of innovators raise money through many small contributions”. More specifically, author Steve Woods describes it as “an online platform which allows you to pitch your project to (potentially) hundreds of thousands of would-be investors and donors”. Trigonis added further detail when he said:

Crowdfunding, one of the most popular alternatives to conventional methods of financing a film, is a form of online fundraising, in which a person sets up a project page, uploads a pitch video, offers some rewards, and reaches out directly to the audience through email and the social networks, as well as the more traditional modes of fundraising like word of mouth. (xiv)

No matter what the definition, the basic premise of crowdfunding remains: collective fundraising from a community of people through donations.

With the help of hosting websites such as Indiegogo and Kickstarter, individuals, groups, or even established businesses can fund projects through the help of an online
community of supporters. Though fees are associated with the use of services from either of these websites, crowdfunding presents a unique opportunity for producers to raise money and for individuals to get involved in a project at relatively low cost to all involved. Additionally, fundraisers benefit from having a single source collecting the funding, while funders can give confidently through a reputable web host.

Crowdfunding also presents a unique advantage to filmmakers in the early stages of film production by gauging audience interest. The failure of a well-crafted campaign may very well mean that the audience simply is not present for or interested in a particular project. As Jeff Steele explained in his article *Highlights from the 3rd Annual Film Finance Forum: Part 2*, “If they can’t get past the IndieGoGo round, then the audience has spoken”. This could potentially save filmmakers from investing the highly sought-after funds in weak areas of the project, and ultimately create a higher-quality finished project.

Indiegogo vs. Kickstarter

New platform sites seem to emerge daily, though Indiegogo and Kickstarter remain the top two contenders in the world of online crowdfunding. While there are many different options for campaign platforms, including Donald Trump’s Fund Anything, used by celebrities including Adam Carolla and Penn Jillette to raise funds for their film ventures, it seems wise to use one of the two most popular. Not only are the sites already common household names and recognized in the media, but also likely to have more familiarity among users and donors than other, less well-known platforms.
Both Indiegogo and Kickstarter share a basic functionality and similar capabilities. Each homepage features specific campaigns, while also highlighting successfully completed campaigns. Both platforms also allow users to search for campaigns by title or browse categories, while at the same time suggesting specific projects that are new to the site, performing exceptionally well, or nearing the campaign deadline. The two sites are easily navigated, whether a supporter is looking for a particular campaign, or just wants to explore.

The similarities between Indiegogo and Kickstarter continue when looking at campaign pages. Key elements of the campaigns include name, category, monetary goal, team members involved, brief synopsis of the project, and campaign video. Users can also see how much money has been raised, the percentage of the campaign's goal that the amount represents, the location of the campaign, the number of funders, and how much time is left in the campaign. Interested individuals can then explore the campaign further through project descriptions, pictures and other videos, suggested donation levels, and descriptions of the perks received for varying contribution levels.

After considering that information, supporters can then choose to "contribute now" for Indiegogo or "Back This Project" in the case of Kickstarter, select their donation level, and indicate whether they would like to be anonymous or, if appropriate, for their donation to be completely tax-deductible. Users are also afforded links to easily share the campaign page or its video through e-mail or social media avenues. Lastly, individuals can follow the campaign to receive updates on the progress of the project. The only notable functional differences of the two sites are Kickstarter's lack of a
“Gallery” function for images and media, and the option to use analytics offered by Indiegogo through its use of social media integration tools.

Where the two platforms differ most is in the dispersal of funds raised. Indiegogo operates under an “All or More” model, as Trigonis calls it, and offers an option of “Fixed Funding” or “Flexible Funding.” With “Fixed Funding” the campaign manager is charged a fee of 4% of the total amount raised if the established monetary goal is met, or if the goal is not met the campaign manager receives none of the pledged funds. Conversely, with “Flexible Funding” unsuccessful campaigns must pay 9% of the funds raised, and successful campaigns still pay only 4%. Either option must be established before the campaign is launched.

Kickstarter, on the other hand, follows what Trigonis calls an “All or Nothing” model. Campaign managers are not given an option, but rather will either receive all of the contributed funds (minus a 5% fee) that are pledged to their campaign if the goal is matched or exceeded, or nothing in the event that they do not raise the designated amount. Though it seems that this model offers greater risk, the risk can be leveraged to encourage supporters to give higher amounts since it adds a sense of needed immediacy (Trigonis, 36). Additionally, campaigns with exceedingly large budgets may benefit from Kickstarter where as a film project with a smaller budget could possibly still "make ends meet" if they do not reach all of the necessary funds through Indiegogo (Trigonis, 37). Conversely, a pro to the "All or More" model of Indiegogo is that campaign managers immediately receive the funding once it is donated, as opposed to Kickstarter where funds are not received until after the campaign ends.
Another difference to be considered by campaign hosts when choosing a crowdfunding platform is who can use either site. While the creators of Indiegogo invite all projects, including those hosted by established businesses, nonprofit organizations, or individuals, Kickstarter stipulates that projects must be of a creative nature. As the Indiegogo website states, “People all over the world use our industry-leading platform to raise millions of dollars for all types of campaigns. No matter what you are raising money for, you can start right now with no fee or application process” (“Learn How to Raise Money for an Idea”). Kickstarter, on the other hand, stipulates that:

We host projects from the worlds of Art, Comics, Dance, Design, Fashion, Film, Food, Games, Music, Photography, Publishing, Technology, and Theater. We built Kickstarter to serve creative projects and the artists, designers, and creative people who make them. (“Start your project”)

While film projects are supported by both platforms, this distinction is a consideration that should be noted for any project, and one that could possibly affect exposure to the target audience.

Whatever platform is used, it should be chosen carefully after considering the budget, marketability, and time available for the fundraising campaign. On the subject of campaign platforms, Trigonis said:

It's your hub, your Grand Central Station and every train you send out along the rails of the Internet-the Twitter express, Facebook local-will ultimately direct potential contributors back to that starting point. A crowdfunding platform is a website that aids in the fund raising process by offering crowd funders a space to host their campaign and supply them with the tools necessary to present on the Internet. (35)

The campaign may be the first representation of your film to potential funders, so filmmakers should consider the message they are presenting and how that interacts with various sites and their users.
Steps to a Successful Campaign

It takes more than simply designing a campaign and releasing it to the world to secure desired funds through online crowdfunding. Successful online crowdfunding takes smart design, networking, and lots of interest. Whether it is five donors giving thousands of dollars each, or thousands of supporters each pledging $5, the money will only be given if people know about the need and are excited about getting involved in the project. While there is no guarantee that any one course of action will produce a fully-funded campaign, experts in the field have found commonalities among successful campaigns, as well as pitfalls to avoid, when designing and maintaining a campaign.

First, filmmakers should consider the team behind the campaign. Much like any other aspect of creation and production, one must assemble a strong team that not only supports the project’s vision, but that is also strong where others are weak in order to create a quality product. Additionally, showing wide support from the beginning and from the people closest to the project gives the project legitimacy. The "crowd" starts with those closest to the project, though the people attached to the project should be passionate and skilled and not just simply names on the campaign page. Another consideration is the size of the team. According to an article on Mashable.com, Indiegogo co-founder Slava Rubin stated that if a campaign has four or more people on its team, it will raise 70% more money than a team of one (Matt Petronzio, —A Look Back at Indiegogo’s Successful Year in Crowdfunding").

Time is another important consideration for a campaign. This encompasses the time commitment needed and available from all members of the team, as well as finding
an optimal time to launch the campaign, keeping in mind the length of the campaign.
Before launching, campaign managers should also consider the time of year, including holidays, high spending times, tax season, etcetera that may affect the financial charity of the target audience.

Before a campaign is designed, a plan should be in place. From the beginning the fundraising team should be focused on a target audience (those who will watch the film, fund it, and promote it), decide who those people are, and then find how to reach them. Additionally, the team should have a strategy and stick to it. Though the primary focus of a crowdfunding campaign is raising money, project managers must also keep supporters engaged and fulfilled while at the same time attracting new supporters and keeping the campaign invigorated. Part of this ultimate plan is the budget and allocation of funds, which should be shared (even if not in full detail) with potential donors. Having a clear course of action not only gives team members a guideline for reaching the project goals, but also affords clarity and peace of mind to supporters.

Within this plan should also be room for change. Not every project goes as planned, and the same can be said for even the best crowdfunding campaign, so flexibility is essential to its success. For example, in his book *Crowd Funding for Filmmakers: The Way to a Successful Film Campaign*, John T. Trigonis explains that, "Crowdsourcing means reaching out to the crowd to obtain anything at all, not only the money you need to make your film," (117). If the donors are interested in the project and want to help, yet are unable to give the money needed, they can be asked to instead donate their talent. As stated previously, in-kind donations can always be used, and supporters can help the film by promoting it and attracting other donors. Finally,
potentially the most important aspect of flexibility in a crowdfunding campaign is figuring out what to do if the goal is not met.

Filmmakers must also consider the essential components of the campaign. The most important of these for an online crowdfunding campaign is the video. Research indicates that Indiegogo campaigns with videos will raise 114% more money than those without (Matt Petronzio, “A Look Back at Indiegogo’s Successful Year in Crowdfunding”). The pitch video is not intended to be a trailer, but rather an introduction to the filmmakers and the film project. It should include an introduction, a pitch for support, and a description of the perks that are being offered for contributors. An effective campaign video will also highlight aspects of the current film, or exhibit previous experience by the production team, while also remaining in a succinct time frame. Studies have shown that campaigns with videos less than five minutes long were 25% more likely to reach their goal than those with longer videos, as well as that successful campaigns had an average video length of three minutes and 11 seconds (Matt Petronzio, “A Look Back at Indiegogo’s Successful Year in Crowdfunding”). Additionally, the filmmaker should be featured in the pitch in order to drive home the fact that the project is driven by passionate individuals.

Another important aspect of crowdfunding sites such as Indiegogo or Kickstarter is that they allow donors to receive incentives for their donations. While most donors ultimately give because they believe in the project or its producers, this offering of rewards allows campaign managers to encourage potential donors to give, or even give a larger amount, with the promise of something in return. This can be as simple as a mention on one of the film’s social media outlets or credits in the film, or as elaborate as
tangible goods themed to the film. Perks should be applicable to the film, as well as personalized when it is possible and fiscally responsible to do so.

While it may seem tempting to offer elaborate rewards in an effort to entice better donations, campaign managers must be careful to not make a crowdfunding campaign more expensive than its returns. On the subject of crowdfunding rewards, Steve Woods warns:

Your rewards have got to be pitched in such a way that they maximize potential for income, while minimizing the cost to the production. When looking at the different types of reward you can offer for your project, your first thought should be ‘What can I offer that costs me little or nothing?’…The rewards, incentives, or perks are simply a bonus, a way of saying thank you… The key is to make it personal to the project, attractive to the donor, and inexpensive to supply.

Simple and inexpensive perks can include signed memorabilia, opportunities to visit the set during filming or an invitation to attend a screening, or a free download of the finished product or aspects of it (music, scenes, artwork, etc.). The point of perks is to encourage donations, not waste the budget on the development of the perks themselves.

Possibly most importantly, the message that is being presented in the campaign should be honest and specific. Obviously a crowdfunding campaign is a way of telling the masses, ‘We need money’, but that statement alone is not enough to encourage confident or abundant donations. Campaign managers should be specific about where funds will go and how they will be spent. It is important to show potential funders that a plan exists and that it will be executed, as well as that their money will be responsibly spent. Campaign managers should also be prepared to explain what the project’s top priorities are and what the money will be spent for first, as well as how any additional
funds over the budget or goal would be spent. An effective campaign page explains the need, for what it will be used, and how others can get involved.

Throughout the life of the campaign, it is essential to maintain communication. The campaign should not just be launched and left, but rather serve as an evolving hub of information. Filmmakers must remember that the point of crowdfunding is to engage the crowd”. Managers would be wise to update supporters throughout the campaign to reassure them where their money is going, and after it ends to show the film's progress. Additionally, filmmakers must be perceived as actively and publicly supporting their own projects. Similarly, campaigns should advertise support from businesses and organizations, both as a way to develop credibility as well as publicly acknowledging the generosity of donors.

Lastly, in all marketing, it is good to remember that politeness and “good” manners are essential to the success of these efforts. In terms of online communication, this translates into acknowledging and thanking not only those who give money but also those who offer nonmonetary support, which would include such things as tweets, Facebook "likes", and "shares" of your campaign. Furthermore, the liberal use of "please" and "thank you” in pitches should go without saying.

Notable Successes

Crowdfunding has grown so useful in the film industry that well-known and well-established celebrities have turned to sites like Indiegogo and Kickstarter to fund their own projects. Even with their experience in high-dollar projects, celebrities recognize the powerful potential to raise not only funds, but also awareness and support, for their film
projects with crowdfunding. The following are examples of individuals who found success through this medium.

Actor, director, and writer Zach Braff gained much attention when he sought the use of Kickstarter to fund the follow-up to his first film, Garden State. Braff, along with producers Stacey Sher and Michael Shamberg, launched a campaign in May of 2013 seeking the funds to produce his newest film, Wish I Was Here. The film budget was estimated between $5 and $5.5 million. Braff was said to be contributing his own money for an undisclosed amount, and the campaign was able to raise $3.1 million from 46,520 fans (Goldstein, and Morris). At the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, Braff stated that the crowdfunding route allowed him to make the film he wanted, and marveled at the campaign’s success, saying “The goal was a month — and in 48 hours it was funded by my fans, 47,000 people,” (Dickey, and Shaw). If the film meets the standards of Braff’s previous work, it will be a dramatic example of successful fundraising for the film genre.

Similarly, noted director Spike Lee sought to raise money for the filming of a vampire movie through Kickstarter in the Summer of 2013. The campaign surpassed its $1.25 million goal, ultimately reaching pledges of $1.3 million pledged in fewer than 30 days (McNary). Though not much detail was given on the project in the campaign page, Lee was able to secure the funds, largely due to his reputation and interesting offering of perks including dinner and a New York Knicks game with the director himself.

While the use of crowdfunding by celebrities may help raise awareness for online crowdfunding in general, it is not a guaranteed success by any means. Moreover, a campaign does not need a celebrity connection in order to be successful. One impressive example of non-celebrity crowdfunding success is the story of college student
Monica Zinn, who set out to raise production funds for her documentary, “Self-Inflicted”.

By using a mix of Social Media marketing along with an Indiegogo campaign, Zinn was able simultaneously to raise funds and awareness about the film from the public, topping her $7,000 goal with a total of $7,240 raised from supporters. Her success further illustrates that a fundraising campaign’s success is not based solely on the names attached, but rather how the campaign is designed, used, and communicated in combination with other tools at the fundraiser’s disposal.

With new websites constantly being developed, and more people engaging in online giving, crowdfunding is sure to continue to grow into a valuable and significant part of any fundraising plan.
CHAPTER VIII

SPECIAL EVENT FUNDRAISING

Much like grant writing, fundraising events take on many forms. When it comes to special event fundraising, there is no “one size fits all”, nor is there a magical affair that is sure to raise all of the necessary funds. Though this type of fundraising lacks clear parameters or outcomes, it opens fundraisers to nearly all possibilities and allows them to put their creativity to use. With that being said, fundraisers can benefit from exploring approaches that have worked in the past, and work to apply these guidelines to their own unique occasions.

A special event seems like a fun way to raise money for a project or group, but it can be a pitfall in a project’s fundraising plan if not planned well. The event should fit with the project and the team producing it. Team members must be willing to spend time, effort, and money to make the event a success, and as the size of the event increases so does the amount of planning and resources needed. Even with these investments, a special event is not guaranteed to make a large profit. In fact, special events are often thought of as “friend-raisers” rather than fundraisers, since they are more likely to bring exposure rather than substantial monetary profit. Based on what kind of event is being hosted, money may be needed up-front, and this can be problematic for new organizations or groups. However, if a team is dedicated to bringing the event to fruition,
it can serve as not only a modest fundraising venture, but also help to build the community of support behind a film.

Event Planning

Before an event can be planned, the team behind it must have clear goals for the event. This includes target audience, time frame, and desired outcomes. Daniel Gonzalez of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention provides the following list of questions to be considered when planning a fundraising event:

Who (audience) – are you ultimately trying to reach, lure, honor, convince, or cultivate a relationship with?
What are the demographics of your target audience?
What is the age range? Gender?
Economic status?
Level of Responsibility?

What (message) – are you attempting to convey?
Celebration or Commemorative Event?
Press Event?
Training Experience?
Advocating for a certain issue?
A night of fun with the goal of fundraising?

When (date & time) – is it most timely to do this?
Time of year connected to the issue?
Other events around that time?
Weekend vs. Weekday/night?
How often is it feasible to have the event?

Where (location) – are the “who’s” that are interested in you “what”?
Accessible – public transportation? Parking? Centrally located?
Venue that reflects your goal – Glamour? Professional? Academic?
Stately?
Cost – place that is affordable and builds in a minimal amount of cost.

Why (purpose) – is an event needed to reach your goal?
Visibility?
Your constituents expect it?
The occasion calls for it? (Gonzalez)

In this case, the “What” will be a fundraising event, though the “Who”, “When”, “Where”, and “Why” will vary by project.

Similar to these considerations, author Ilona Bray offers her own list of concerns for a fundraising event. In addition to the above, Bray suggests the following:

- Choose Add-Ons to the Main Event
- Consider Giving Out Awards
- Make a Separate Pitch for Support During the Event
- Keep It Green: Pay Attention to Environmental Issues
- Develop a Realistic Budget
- Plan and Pace Event Activities
- Define Committees and Assign Leaders
- Plan for Promotion and Publicity
- Deal With Risks and Liability Issues
- Attend to Last-Minute Tasks (“Special Events 101 for Nonprofit Fundraising”)

Add-ons can include things such as auctions or raffles, or other devices that encourage attendees to spend money beyond the central event of the fundraiser. Giving out awards not only increases attendance by enticing those being honored and their loved ones, but also encourages a sense of community. In regard to making a case for contributing to a project at a special event, it is recommended that a well-respected person who is knowledgeable of the film make a presentation and act as a co-host for the event (Rosenberg, 162). The filmmaker should also be prepared to make a presentation on the work to be funded. As with any fundraising venture, a realistic budget needs to be developed, keeping in mind expenses beyond the event itself such as promotion and legal costs. When feasible, organizers should delegate tasks to reliable team members, and
with all involved parties should be working off a basic plan for the event to ensure that all areas are covered.

Types of Events

The number of different kinds of fundraising events is limited only by one's imagination. Nearly any event can be tailored to a fundraising situation, though common types of special events held by for-profit and non-profit organizations include dinners, auctions, fairs and festivals, lectures, benefit concerts, and contests (Bray). While other event planners will have tips and guidelines to ensure the success of these types of occasions, one must be careful not to plan an event that will be lost in a multitude of similar events. This risk increases when considering that a fundraising event for an independent film project probably will be hosted by a group or individual that does not have a highly public profile.

There are, however, ways to avoid this pitfall. One option is to design the event as part of a larger event. This could be done by teaming with other organizations or filmmakers, or even a fiscal sponsor. By using the umbrella of an already existing event, filmmakers may reduce the price for things like venue rental or marketing, as well as the need for volunteers or a target audience. Specific examples for film could include a short screening before another movie at a local movie house, or as part of a film festival. In these instances not only is fundraising an option, but also marketing and networking, so filmmakers should be prepared with promotional materials such as postcards or business cards, an elevator speech, and other information for donors.

For adventurous and well-connected filmmakers, another option is to host their own special screening. Organizers could charge a set dollar amount per person for
admittance to the event, or leave it up to attendees by providing a suggested donation amount. In addition to getting a first look at the film, attendees can also engage in "add-on" activities. These can include such things as a raffle or silent auction of in-kind donation items. A local eatery may also provide refreshments for a nominal fee or in exchange for free publicity. Event space could be acquired for a nominal cost by partnering with a local cinema, or even a park for a *plein air* showing. Though all of these pieces of the event can be purchased, the goal should be to raise money rather than spend it.

Dinners and cocktail parties are common special event fundraisers, and can be easily arranged. Rosenberg suggests that funders may be willing to host parties in their homea. With this type of event, the willing funder supplies the space, resources, and even interested attendees in the form of friends and family. The filmmaker simply needs to be prepared to speak about the film and the project’s needs. For this type of event, Rosenberg suggests the following, “To ensure your house party is successful, make it an event people want to attend and be clear in your invitation that it’s a fundraiser. This ensures that everybody attending is open to making a donation,” (163). A similar, but less personal approach is to host a fundraiser at local restaurant or bar, where fundraisers receive a portion of the business’s profit for the evening in exchange for enticing people to come to the establishment for a meal.

Special events do not have to consist of in-person soirees. In fact, filmmakers can pair their efforts on social media and crowdfunding with event planning to produce online occasions. Obvious opportunities include the launch of a crowdfunding campaign, where filmmakers can offer incentives for the first few donors in various levels. Such an
“Official” launch creates a sense of urgency and encourages a strong kickoff to the campaign, which can then translate into convincing others to give through the campaign’s early success and may include offering an incentive at a lower price for a limited time. The same techniques can be applied if a campaign experiences a lull in activity, or near the end of the campaign to ensure that the goal is met.

Ultimately, the event should reflect the audience and the film. Fundraisers should think about the target audience in terms of what they like to do and where they like to go. For example, if a film was made by the graduate of a particular school or a member of an association, it would be wise to think about how to reach other alumni or members and what they would enjoy and be likely to attend. Filmmakers should also consider what is unique about the film. Is there a theme in the movie that presents an obvious event pairing? A film set in Italy may work nicely with a wine tasting event, or a “charity game” could benefit sports themed films. If a film is set in a particular city, filmmakers would be wise to hold an event in a recognizable public space. The event should be enticing and original, as well as profitable.

Whatever the occasion, a special event should always be used as a way to cultivate interaction with potential funders. Common examples include collecting contact information to add to mailing lists, or encouraging connections through social media to keep funders updated. The event can also be used to publicly thank those who have already supported the film. The goal is to keep the conversation going long after the event has ended.
CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The current state of growth in the field of independent film, both in production and reach, is increasing opportunities for filmmakers. By strategically coupling both traditional methods and new avenues for fundraising with ever evolving technology, independent filmmakers have the potential to produce Hollywood-caliber films. Efforts such as these raise the standards for independent film making, making it a true art form, as well as creating increasing numbers of opportunities for future filmmakers. As acclaimed actor Forrest Whitaker has explained:

Until film is just as easily accessible as a pen or pencil, then it's not completely an art form. In painting you can just pick up a piece of chalk, a stick or whatever. In sculpture you can get a rock. Writing you just need a pencil and paper. Film has been a very elitist medium. It costs so much money. It doesn't allow everyone who wants to tell stories tell stories. The great storytellers however are going to rise to the top, no matter what. That's why independent film is very important to me. (Horn)

However, this increased opportunity comes with competition, meaning that filmmakers must be well prepared and knowledgeable. By staying current on industry standards, as well as emerging trends, filmmakers can create a logical and useful fundraising mix tailored to their specific project. By utilizing the same passion, determination, and attention-to-detail that is used to create the art itself in designing a fundraising plan,
filmmakers set themselves well on their way to seeing their masterwork on the big screen.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


