

Issuer Guide: Creating Your Equity Crowdfunding Campaign Page

Provided by 

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This publication is designed to provide information in regard to equity crowdfunding. The information provided herein does not contain all information available on the subject and is provided "as is". Every effort has been made to make this book as accurate as possible but it should serve only as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of subject information. This book contains information that might be dated and is intended only to educate and entertain. The publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional opinions and makes no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, consult with the appropriate professional.



A Note on Compliance

The content of this guide represents information about marketing collected from research and interviews with industry experts, and does not reflect specific suggestions, advice, or requirements from StartEngine.

Issuers should use this guide at their own discretion.

Who Should Read This Guide

This guide is for everyone that is involved in launching an equity crowdfunding campaign. The success of your campaign depends on your whole team getting the right message to the right people in the right ways.

What Is Included

This guide is an overview of the steps needed to design a compelling campaign page. It includes best practices, tips, and resources. Check out our [blog](#) for more in-depth information.

About StartEngine

Founded by serial entrepreneurs Howard Marks and Ron Miller, StartEngine has a mission to help entrepreneurs achieve their dreams, innovate, and ultimately change the world for the better.

We support entrepreneurs and companies by providing an avenue for them to connect with investors that can provide the capital business owners need to scale their dreams.

Our equity crowdfunding platform eliminates middlemen in order to give entrepreneurs a way to engage their customers and fans like never before.

Learn more at www.startengine.com.



Table of Contents

3	Things To Consider Before You Launch
4	Building Your Team
5	Doing the Pre-Work
5	Set Goals
5	Do Your Homework
6	Define Your Audience
7	Craft Your Message
8	Creating Your Campaign Page
8	Create Your Narrative
10	Create Your Visuals
11	Create Your Video
13	One Last Look
14	What's Next



A successful crowdfunding campaign depends on both creating a compelling story around your product or service, as well as planning an effective digital marketing strategy. Providing the best product or service in the world means nothing if no one knows about it, and having everyone know about your product or service means nothing if your audience is not compelled to your call to action.

This guide will help you build a campaign page that follows best practices from industry experts for success.



Things To Consider Before You Launch

It's safe to say that the majority of the hard work should be done before your campaign launches. In our experience, it's best if you do the following things before you go live:

- Put together your team
- Set goals and benchmarks
- Research and evaluate other crowdfunding campaigns
- Define your audience
- Craft your message
- Create video and visuals
- Create a marketing plan
- Determine the channels you'll use
- Prepare your family and friends

As you can imagine, these things take time. And the more work and planning you put in during this time, the better your campaign is likely to go. Consider starting this process at least 30 days before you launch.



Building Your Team

Make sure you gather a group of people who are passionate about the company and the work, and are willing to do what it takes to build a successful campaign.

Engaging in an equity crowdfunding campaign is a lot of work. You may want to consider hiring an outside firm with experience in crowdfunding to run your campaign or other experts to help you fill in gaps that exist on your current team. Regardless of who you hire, you will want an internal person to manage the process.

When building your team, consider these questions:

- Who will be responsible for engaging, monitoring and responding to social media?
- Who will write content for your campaign page, blogs, and other collateral?
- Who will create visuals?
- Who will put together a video?
- Who has industry connections?
- Who will actively seek press opportunities?
- Who will be responsible for responding to press requests?
- Who will be the point person for managing your plan?

Everyone on your team should understand their roles and responsibilities and be held accountable for completing their work. A weak link can affect your outcome.



Doing The Pre-Work

Gathering and creating the right material before you jump into a campaign is critical to having a smooth launch and a successful campaign.



Set Goals

Think about what you want to happen with your campaign and set some goals. Are you purely looking to reach a certain dollar amount? Are you also looking to increase sales of your product or grow your email list? Having goals in mind before you start is a great way to make sure you're doing all you can to be successful.

Answer these questions:

- How much are you looking to raise?
- What would you be willing to walk away with?
- What will this round of funding allow you to do?
- How many people will need to participate to reach your goal?
- How many people will need to see the campaign page in order to get the numbers you need?
- What additional brand equity benefits can I get from crowdfunding?

Did your answers get you thinking differently about your goals?



Do Your Homework

If I asked you to make me a bowl out of clay, you'd likely be able to make something resembling one, even if you didn't have great pottery skills. That's because you've seen a bowl, you've used a bowl, you know what it's for, and you generally know the best practices for bowl-making (not too shallow, not too deep, etc.)

But if asked to build a crowdfunding campaign, would you know what that looks like? Would you know the difference between a good



campaign page and a bad one? Would you know how often an issuer should update their backers? Do you know anything about a campaign from a backer's perspective?

Before marketing your campaign, check out platforms like Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Kiva, StartEngine, and other crowdfunding sites to analyze existing campaigns. Whether it is a product launch strategy, a rewards-based campaign, or an equity crowdfunding campaign, many of the marketing principles are the same. There are certainly lessons that can be learned from campaigns of all types. When looking at these campaigns, ask yourself the following questions as though you were a potential investor:

- Do I like the structure of the campaign page? What catches my eye?
- Where do I seem to be focusing most of my attention when looking at a campaign?
- How long is the video? Did it keep my attention? Did it provide a compelling call to action? Why or why not?
- What do the campaign pictures look like? Are they clear, fuzzy, distorted in size, placed in a spot where they add to the compelling message?
- What is the word choice and structure of the writing? How do the words that the company uses make me feel? Do they compel me to take action?
- Is there too much text and not enough images/illustrations? Do the images selected enhance the story?
- Can I immediately tell what this company does?
- Does this company have a clear personality or brand?
- Would I invest/fund this campaign? Why or why not?
- Would I tell my friends about this campaign? Why or why not?

These questions should help you think about the best ways for you to see what works, what doesn't, and ultimately connect with potential investors.



Define Your Audience

Before you jump too far into a campaign, you have to know who it is directed towards. Who are the people that are most likely to be excited about your company, or to tell others about you? These are the people you should focus on.

In the case of equity crowdfunding, you are dealing with two target audiences: people who are interested in your product or service,



and people who are interested in investing (there will be overlap between the two). This is a great reminder that your messaging needs to explain why your company is useful, but also why it's likely to grow and be successful.

Create a [buyer's persona](#) for your target audiences. It should include:

- The demographic (age, ethnicity, gender, etc.) of your ideal customers
- Their goals and challenges
- Information about how your company can help with their goals and challenges
- Common objections they would have about interacting with your company or using your products
- An elevator pitch that describes a solution

You can find a template and more information about buyer's personas at [Hubspot](#).

**IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START BUILDING AND GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE LAUNCHED YOUR CAMPAIGN.**



Craft Your Message

While a stellar website, style guide, pitch deck, or media kit will provide a great foundation for your core messaging, you simply cannot rely on that material transferring directly over to your campaign. You will need to think critically about how your materials relate specifically to equity crowdfunding before drafting off of those items. It is important to allow yourself the time to really craft the message and imagery that will resonate with potential investors. This may be the most important part of creating your campaign.

Take the time to create a concise summary document prior to working on your campaign materials. Not only will this document help you shape your thoughts, but it will help all of your team members get on the same page. It will also provide an underlying roadmap for all other marketing materials within the campaign.



Consider providing written answers to the following:

- **Background:** What do you need to say or show to explain what you're trying to do and why? Identify both rational and emotional pain points for your product or service. Share the history of how your company came to be and any creative or historical events behind the origin of your business.
- **Differentiation:** How is the landscape evolving and what do you does your company do better than the competition? Keep it simple and avoid generalities.
- **Market Opportunity & Traction:** Provide evidence of what you've been able to do thus far. Don't assume that potential investors know what the potential market is for your product or service, show them.
- **Your Plan:** Share your goals, what you need the funds for, and how are you plan to get there. What makes your team uniquely qualified to execute this vision?
- **Audience:** Everything should be written from the perspective of a potential investor. What do they think now, what do we want them to think, and what are the most compelling reasons to think this way? And most importantly, don't forget to answer the question, what is in it for them?
- **Taglines:** What slogans should be used or avoided? Create a list of major copy points and ideas for visual evidence in order of importance to your audience.

It's important to start with the why of your company. As [Simon Sinek says](#), "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe."

Keep it handy. You will be coming back to this document often, especially when creating your narrative.

For more information and examples on crafting your message, visit www.messagehouse.org.



Creating Your Campaign Page

Having an engaging campaign page is important to your success. This page is your chance to shine and to prove to potential investors that you have an interesting product or service, an audience for it, and a team that can make it successful.

FOR COLLABORATIVE PURPOSES IT IS ADVISABLE TO CREATE YOUR CAMPAIGN AS A WORD OR GOOGLE DOCUMENT SO YOU CAN TRACK CHANGES AND RECEIVE SUGGESTIONS.

ONCE IT IS COMPLETE, COPY AND PASTE IT -- BEING CAREFUL TO REMOVE ALL OF THE FORMATTING -- INTO THE STARTENGINE EDITOR.



Create Your Narrative

Now that you have a summary document, you can synthesize it into a compelling pitch. Ideally this should hit no more than two or three key points. The power is not in the details but in creating enough interest that the person wants to know more. Think of this as your elevator pitch and something that will be used most often to describe your equity crowdfunding campaign.

When writing your narrative, remember the acronym WIIFM. What's in it for me? Think from the backer's perspective and weave the WIIFM into your entire story.

Your copy will need to be clear, concise, and easily readable. Concentrate on sharing only the pieces that matter, and make good use of sections, bolding, and bullet points.

Using your summary document as a guide, extend your elevator pitch into a full campaign page that effectively communicates your message and persuades visitors to join the community around your equity crowdfunding campaign.



While there is no structure required for your page, consider dividing your page into sections that answer these questions:

- **Why are you doing this?** Let people know why your company exists, what problem you are trying to solve, and what passion drove you to launch it. Remember that while the reasoning needs to make logical sense, it also needs to hit people on an emotional level.
- **What makes you unique?** Explain why your company is better than other similar solutions out there. Include concrete, proven reasons.
- **Is there a market for this?** You might have developed the best product in the world, but that won't matter if nobody wants it. Share your research and proof of market opportunity.
- **What traction have you had so far?** Show potential investors the draw you have had so far.
- **What do you need this money for?** Explain your goals, what you need the funds for, your plan for achieving those goals, and how you and your team are uniquely qualified to be successful.
- **Why should I be a part of this?** Explain why a potential investor should make the leap and invest. You'll want to hit on several points here, including why it's a good financial bet, why they should be excited on an emotional level for your success, and why they should invest right now.
- **What should I do now?** Make a clear call to action.

Remember, in crowdfunding it's personal. People root for people, not products or services. Humanize the campaign and form an immediate bond with your viewer.

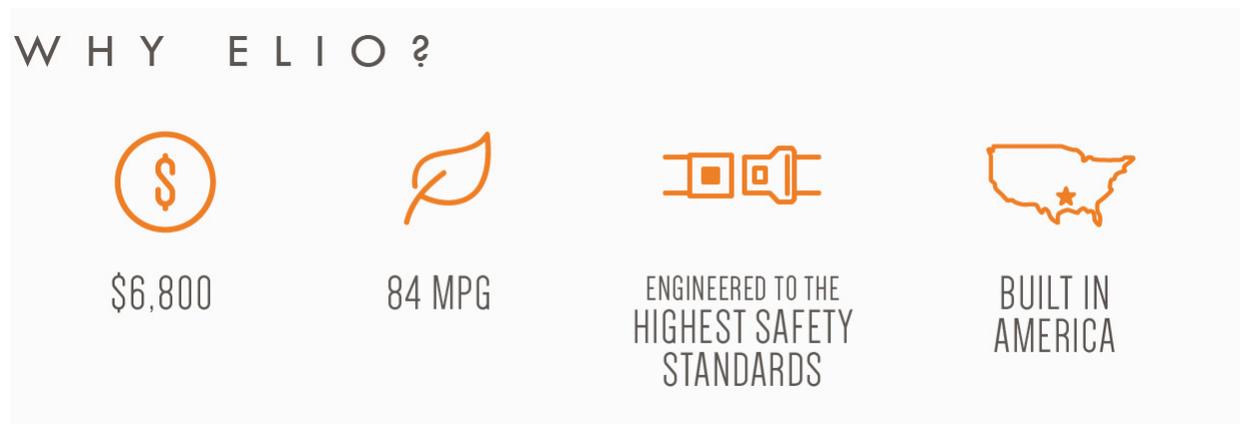
Create Your Visuals



As important as it is to have strong messaging and copy, it is equally if not more important to have engaging visuals. Images draw a viewer in and evoke emotions in a different way than text. And make no mistake, you want to evoke emotions. If potential backers don't leave your page feeling excited, awed, happy, etc. then they aren't likely to back you or revisit the page. Even emotions like hate and anger are better than nothing. Strong emotions get people talking, and is the best way to get buzz going around your campaign.



Images are also a good way to easily explain difficult content or highlight key takeaways. Consider the Elio Motors campaign. The point they want to drive home is about mpg, price, safety, and manufacturing. They mention all of this in the text, but notice how simple and bold it is when put into an image:



Think about texture, color, ease of viewing, font, and clarity of the picture when deciding which images/illustrations to use.

Don't skimp on this part of your campaign page, even if your budget is small. It's worth the money to get expert graphic designers and video producers involved.

Some additional tips for your visuals:

- Create graphic headers to break up text descriptions into small manageable, easy to read sections.
- Avoid text-heavy images and remember to think about how your images will appear within the campaign on mobile devices.
- Pay attention to images sizes and try to select images that work with the full width of a 1080p computer screen. From a design perspective you'll want every image to be full width (landscape style) and set at 100% width within StartEngine so that they scale nicely on different devices.
- Use images to explain or eliminate the need for copy.
- Need help creating images? Consider [99 Designs](#), [CrowdSpring](#), and [Elance](#). Submit a description of your needs and designers will pitch you their work. You pay for the submission you like best.



Create Your Video

Videos are processed by the brain 60,000 times faster than text. They are also a better tool for creating an emotional attachment. Filming a strong video will help potential backers get a better sense of who you are. Additionally, videos are easily shared.

The purpose of your video should be to increase excitement around being a part of your company, not simply to let people know what you do. If you have a video for your company already but it does not appeal specifically to potential investors, you may want to consider filming a new one.

When creating your video, consider these best practices:

- Keep it 2-3 minutes; any longer and you will most likely lose your viewer even if they are interested in your product/service.
- Use quality equipment to capture video and audio. Remember that the person who captures the content doesn't also have to be the person who edits the content. You can bring in a separate team for either or both.
- Be clear about what you want to capture and use this opportunity to inspire your audience. Showing is always more powerful than telling. Start with a story, then introduce the company. For example, talk about the problem that exists, then who you are and why you are qualified to solve that problem, then your company.
- Have the CEO as your speaker, and make sure he/she looks directly into the camera; this creates a conversational feeling and eye contact draws people in emotionally by building trust. Your campaign video is the perfect opportunity to humanize your story and share why you are so passionate about your product or service.
- Do not wing the script. Write it down and then say it out loud to make sure it sounds conversational and relaxed, and fits within a 2-3 minute time limit. The video does not have to be the CEO talking the whole time. You can show b-roll of people using your product or service. Be creative!



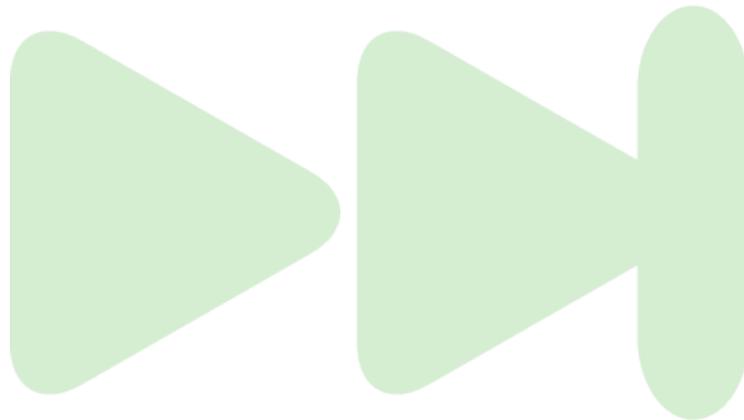


One Last Look

Now that you have your video, your text, and your images ready to go, take a look at how they work together. Ask yourself the same questions you asked of other campaigns in the “Do Your Homework” section:

- Do I like the structure of the campaign page? What catches my eye?
- Where do I seem to be focusing most of my attention when looking at a campaign?
- How long is the video? Did it keep my attention? Did it provide a compelling call to action? Why or why not?
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- Would I invest/fund this campaign? Why or why not?
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It's also worth showing to some people that have not worked closely on the project to get an objective view.



What's Next?

Thank you for reading this guide. Whether you are creating your campaign in-house or hiring a consultant to help you, having this basic framework should help you understand the various components and the work waiting for you ahead.

Consider reading [Issuer Guide: Marketing Your Equity Crowdfunding Campaign](#) next.

The StartEngine team is here for you if you have any questions. We are happy to provide referrals if you'd like help building your campaign.

Good luck!

StartEngine Capital is the premier equity crowdfunding platform, connecting investors with tomorrow's progressive companies. Based in Los Angeles, the company was created in 2013 by Howard Marks, co-founder of Activision, and Ron Miller. StartEngine Capital aims to revolutionize the startup business model by helping individuals invest in private companies on a public platform for the first time in history, thereby helping entrepreneurs achieve their dreams.

Learn more at startengine.com