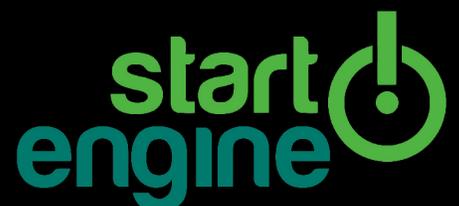




# Issuer Guide: Marketing Your Equity Crowdfunding Campaign

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. Marketing is the job of everyone, not just those in the marketing department.

## **What Is Included**

This guide is an overview of the steps needed to draw a crowd to your crowdfunding campaign. 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.



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Equity crowdfunding is a whole new ballgame. Done right, it could change the face of funding as we know it. But as Benjamin Franklin once said, “Failing to plan is planning to fail.” Use this guide as a starting point to build your path to success.



## Preparing for Your Campaign Launch

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Your work is not done once you have created a campaign page. Note: If you have not created your campaign page yet, please check out our Campaign Page Guide.

Having the best story in the world means nothing if no one knows about it. Creating a strategy for getting your message out into the world is an incredibly important part of your equity crowdfunding campaign.



### Structure Your Plan

A marketing plan should have the following components:

- Goal(s) - what you'd like to accomplish overall. They should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
- Strategy - a plan of action to reach the goal.
- Tactics - actions you'll take to achieve the goal.

A sample (and incomplete) plan might look like this:



<b>Goal: To raise \$1,000,000 from backers on StartEngine in 60 days.</b>		Deadline	Person Responsible
Strategy 1: Grow our email list by 30% in the 30 days leading up to the campaign			
Tactics:	Get an influencer to cover our product on their blog/YouTube channel/etc.		
	Participate in discussions on Facebook/LinkedIn groups relevant to industry		
	Etc.		
Strategy 2: Have 3 well-known news outlets cover our launch on the first day			
Tactics:	Identify 6 most desired publications		
	Identify any team connections we have at each place		
	Create press release		
	Etc.		



### Create Goals and Strategies

By the time you start creating your marketing plan, you should have your goals in mind. If you need help, check out the Set Goals section of our Campaign Page Guide.

The strategies you choose will depend on your particular campaign, but will likely involve:

- Maximizing your current network and customers
- Building and/or growing your audience
- Reaching out to various media outlets
- Getting influencers involved
- Building interest
- Identifying how and when you will communicate with your audience

Consider what has worked for you so far (and what has not), your budget, and your goals when determining strategies.



**FOR A REGULATION CF CAMPAIGN, THE MARKETING BUDGET USUALLY RANGES FROM \$10,000-\$50,000, AND FOR A REGULATION A+ CAMPAIGN THE BUDGET USUALLY RANGES FROM \$25,000-\$200,000. THESE NUMBERS WILL OF COURSE VARY AND ARE DEPENDENT ON THINGS LIKE MEDIA BUY BUDGET AND THE COST OF OUTSIDE VENDORS.**



### **Determine Marketing Channels**

Part of your marketing strategy will include connecting with your audience in a variety of ways over a variety of channels. While you might think it best to just blanket the entire landscape with your message, it's actually best practice to focus on your target audience and hang out where they hang out. For example, if your audience is stay-at-home moms, you should focus your efforts on platforms like Pinterest and mommy blogs. If your audience is white collar business men, you should spend more time on LinkedIn.

If you are not sure what channels to use, ask your current audience what social media platforms they use most, what blogs they read regularly, what websites they view everyday, what podcasts they listen to, etc.

Consider some of the more popular channels:

- Blogs
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, etc.)
- Advertising (Google Adwords, Facebook ads, LinkedIn ads, TV, and radio)
- Email and email signatures
- Events
- Forums and groups
- Influencer outreach
- Presentations and webinars
- Press releases
- Push notifications

For a list of marketing channels, [check out this blog](#) (and corresponding Google doc) from Smart Insights.



## Find Tactics That Work

Owned, earned, and paid media are all important parts of a robust digital strategy to help you build your audience and ultimately secure investors. Take a look at the following three sections and decide which make the most sense for your campaign and where to allocate your resources.

Note that tools are likely to change over time as new technologies pop up and the popularity of platforms change.

**Engage Your Community.** Your current audience, no matter the size, is a powerful tool for you. Get organized and create a spreadsheet with contact information of everyone you know. Prioritize your contacts by those you think will respond to your call to action quickly. Do your best to know which people in this group are likely to reserve/invest, how much they will spend, and when they will do it. Ideally you will be able to launch your campaign with immediate momentum. The general rule of thumb is to try to obtain 20-30% of your funding goal in the first week.

Next, evaluate members of your community with tools like [Klout](#) and [Followerwonk](#) to measure their online influence. Prioritize your friends and family that have a large community of their own. Getting them to spread the word about your campaign is a powerful way for you to extend your reach.

Regulation A+ - If you are allowed to notify your community before launch, get them prepped and ready for action. That way when you launch they can reserve/invest and share information about the campaign as soon as you go live.

Regulation CF - If you are not allowed to tell anyone about the campaign before you file your form C, activate them in a different way. Create anticipation by letting them know something big is coming, to “be on the lookout,” and that you’ll have a favor to ask of them soon. Then once you’re allowed to share, they’ll be primed and ready to invest and share your campaign.

In either case, make it easy for them by creating ready-to-go copy and visuals to share via email or on social media. When possible, make your messages personal, say thank you, and remember to acknowledge them for helping make your dreams come true.



**CONSIDER ADDING AN INVEST NOW BUTTON ON YOUR WEBSITE THAT LETS PEOPLE KNOW YOU'RE RAISING CAPITAL.**

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**CONSIDER DOING A URL REDIRECT FOR A PERIOD OF TIME WHEN YOUR CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES. THIS WILL DRIVE TRAFFIC FROM ALL YOUR NORMAL VISITORS DIRECTLY TO YOUR CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN.**

**Earn Additional Exposure.** Expanding your efforts beyond your existing community is an important way to get additional coverage for your campaign. However, it isn't just about bringing traffic to your campaign, it is about bringing the right traffic.

Begin by identifying outlets (traditional press, magazines, blogs, YouTube channels, podcasts, influencers, etc.) in your industry that you think will have the most likelihood of bringing you potential investors. Next, choose a few other ancillary markets where you can identify additional outlets. For example, instead of selecting solely the automotive industry, Elio Motors also identified potential outlets in technology, environment, and transportation.

If you need a few resources to identifying outlets, feel free to check out the following:

- [HARO: Help A Reporter Out](#) - Provides journalists with a robust database of sources for upcoming stories
- [PressRush](#) - Includes media contact database, media lists, and journalist search
- [PProfNet](#) - Connects journalists to experts
- [SourceBottle](#) - A free online service that connects journalists with sources
- Websites like [Alexa](#) and [Compete.com](#) that measure popularity of websites such as blogs

Once you have a large group identified, it is time to prioritize while keeping the following in mind:

- **Relevance.** Will their audience be excited about your company?
- **Traffic.** Do they have a large audience?
- **Connections.** Can anyone on your team make an introduction?
- **Reach.** Are there opportunities for social and email sharing?



Consider the 80/20 rule. Eighty percent of your time will be spent on the top twenty percent of your list. For these, you will want to create very personal and customized outreach that focuses on building relationships. Even if they cannot provide coverage now, they may be very valuable resources who can provide access to their community in the future. Here are a few things to keep in mind when pitching your story:

- Send them a personalized, direct email: Keep it short and sweet, but try to convey why you think that writer, specifically, might be interested in your project.
- Send them a link to any press photos or additional assets you have. Better yet, create a digital media kit for your campaign.
- If a writer posts a link to your project, send a short thank you note. As we mentioned above, these relationships will come in handy in the future.

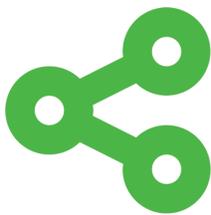
In addition to obtaining coverage from outlets with the efforts outlined above, you should also consider some of the following marketing activities to earn additional exposure and grow your audience:

- Capture emails and incentivize sharing through social contest using software like [Gleam](#) or [LaunchRock](#). This is an excellent way to acquire emails before your campaign launches and incentivize people to take particular actions, like sending a tweet with your language or liking your Facebook page. It's a tiered structure that rewards those that are most interested in your products, which is a perfect list to tap into. Tip: create a contest around something that people can't buy, like a unique experience.
- Host a webinar, broadcast on Facebook live, or host a [Reddit AMA](#) where you allow potential investors to ask you questions. Think about creating a series of content where people can get to know your team or hear your thoughts on an engaging topic. Set a schedule and do it consistently throughout the campaign.
- Submit your product for [Product Hunt](#). This site is "a place for product-loving enthusiasts to share and geek out about the latest mobile apps, websites, hardware projects, and tech creations." Note that this is a user community, and only users can "hunt" a product. You must become a user or find a user that is willing to "hunt" your product or app. Also note that you can't be pre-production to make it on the site.
- Hang out where your audience hangs out. Become a part of the community. Post, comment, like, etc.
- Identify and join additional communities for your industry that you are not yet directly affiliated with.
- Look for online communities and groups in your key verticals and try to connect with them. Join these communities and post about your company.

- Check out people who've invested on [AngelList](#) in categories you think fit your company. Identify any you would like to reach out to and send them a personal note.

**Promote Content With Paid Media.** Another great way to drive traffic directly to your campaign page is with promoted content or paid media. A few tactics to consider for your campaign can be found below:

- **Facebook Ads.** Facebook allows you to reach a variety of audiences by creating custom groups and [lookalike audiences](#) based on things like email addresses of your current audience and interests. Be sure to follow their [advertising policies](#).
- **Search Engine Marketing.** Check out pay-per-click options like Google AdWords.
- **Email Lists.** Evaluate organizations that have access to your target market and are willing to send a message for you. Check out [Gogostarters](#) and see if purchasing a list of backer email addresses would be beneficial in either direct marketing and/or in building an audience on Facebook.
- **Influencers.** Consider compensating influencers who have access to your target audience and you think will be particularly beneficial to your campaign.
- **Online Databases.** Check out sites like [Krowdster](#) which provides databases and the ability to search for people who have contributed to rewards-based campaigns by industry.



### Prepare For Distribution

Prior to the launch of your campaign, you should have copy and visuals prepped, channels lined up, and a schedule prepared for your content. In addition to the main campaign page, you will also want to create all of the content for the following items:

- Press Release & Media Kit
- Pitch Emails (personal networks, press, bloggers, purchased lists, influencers, etc)
- Social Media posts announcing the launch (LinkedIn, Twitter, FB, etc)
- Suggested posts for others to share
- Copy for anticipated milestones (emails, social media, press releases)
- Graphics to go along with emails, social media, milestones, etc.



## Launch Week

The culmination of all your hard work happens during launch week. The success of this week sets the tone of your campaign. It is incredibly important to show momentum quickly and to drive the perception of that momentum. As we mentioned earlier, the general rule of thumb is to try to obtain 20-30% of your funding goal in the first week. This will show the general public that you are well on your way to reaching your goal and create a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out).

**THE DAY YOU GO LIVE SHOULD BE WELL-CHOREOGRAPHED IN ADVANCE. EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR TEAM SHOULD HAVE THEIR MARCHING ORDERS AND BE PREPARED TO EXECUTE.**

Launch day should be well planned, because something unexpected is bound to happen. You will notice a grammatical error on your page, a world event will steal everyone's attention, or someone will get sick and back out of their responsibility. Or on the positive side, your campaign will go viral and you'll get an influx of invitations to give comments or appear on TV. Queue everything up and do not pack the day with pre-ordained activity. Instead, prepare for activity to come and find you.

- If possible, have press lined up to coincide with the launch date (note: this may not be possible with Regulation CF)
- Send pitch emails (personal networks, press, bloggers, purchased lists, influencers, etc)
- Post on social media and initiate social tools like Thunderclap which helps amplify your message by having a large group of people share it at the same time.

A few additional items you may want to do on launch day:

- Ask your family and friends to scrutinize your page when it goes live and let you know ASAP if there are any errors or confusion.
- Update all your personal profiles to include a description of the campaign and a link directly to the campaign page. You can also add a campaign link to email signature and chat status and annotate YouTube videos with campaign links.



## Throw a Launch Event

Consider holding a launch event, although make sure not to promote your launch event until you're allowed to talk about your offering. This serves as a good way to create community, build momentum, and celebrate your hard work.

A launch event is an opportunity to come out with a bang, notify your entire community of what's going on, and give them the opportunity to get in first. People want to see momentum and be a part of something.

There are many reasons to host a launch event:

- **You can directly engage with potential investors.** Prospective contributors may be more likely to invest after meeting with you, and may feel more connected with the company on a personal level. Being invited to an event may make them feel important, and therefore more likely to tell people about you.
- **You can get people to invest on the spot.** Have the technology available for people to log in and reserve or buy shares while they are at the event and share on social media. While rewards-based crowdfunding is different than equity, there is a lot of data from rewards-based projects that says reaching 20-30% of your goal early on is an indicator of success. 80% of Kickstarter projects that reach 20% of their goal end up being successful.
- **You can capture contact information.** While not everyone who attends may sign up to invest on the spot, you will have a room full of people that were interested enough to show up. Follow up with them after the event.
- **You can share information about your company and your campaign.** Give a short presentation on your company and the goals for the campaign. Don't forget to impress the importance of spreading the word.
- **You can make it personal.** Let your guests meet the people behind the company. People give to people, not products.
- **You can spread the word.** Telling people about your event is newsworthy and can help get the word out not only about the event, but also your company and your campaign.

Traditional launch events are in-person, however it doesn't have to be. A digital launch event, like a webinar or Q+A, can have value as well.



## Ongoing Marketing Activities

After your first week, most of the hard work will have been done and now you are subject to the natural lifecycle of crowdfunding. Most campaigns will get a majority of their traction in that initial week or two and traffic will naturally taper off over time.

Now is the time to manufacture spikes in activity by having planned events like webinars, interviews, and live events to bring awareness to your campaign. If you did all your homework, you should feel confident in your plan and marketing materials that include activities to keep the momentum going.

Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your marketing efforts post launch.



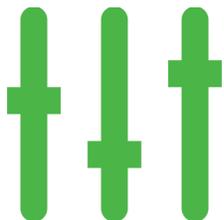
### Increase Engagement

One of the best things you can do once you are live is to be a part of the conversation. Get to know your investors.

For Regulation A+ issuers, respond to their tweets about you with personal messages. Answer the questions they post on Facebook. Let them ask you anything on Reddit.

For Regulation CF issuers, become an active participant in the comments section of your page. Encourage people to ask questions and respond to them in a timely fashion.

Because at the heart of crowdfunding is the crowd - a mass of individual human beings that want to be a part of something. While your company is just a legal entity, do not be afraid to show the people that make it go. Being genuine is the key to increasing engagement. You are excited and nervous and you are hoping for the best - why should you have all the fun? Let your audience go on that journey with you.



### Track and Adjust

Make sure you have key performance indicators (KPIs) that you can analyze and follow during the course of your campaign. They can be simple, like unique traffic to your campaign page, conversion rate of campaign visitors, and social follows and shares. Whatever metrics you track should be actionable.

Take advantage of the Google Analytics integration with StartEngine. Be sure to view traffic by source and determine which outlets are bringing in the most traffic and the most reservations/investments. Also consider using tools like [Bitly](#), a URL shortener, to track who clicks on the links to your campaign.



### Improve Social Listening

Pay attention to what people are saying about your company, your CEO, and your competition through [Twitter Search](#), [Google Alerts](#) or even a reputation management system like a [Radian6](#). This is a great way to stay on top of current news and see who is spreading the word about your campaign.

This is a great way to stay on top of current news and see who is spreading the word about your campaign.

Keep an eye out for Evangelists - the people that are saying great things about your company often and without being asked. These people are key to your success.



### Write Backer Updates

As a general rule backer communication is an incredibly important part of crowdfunding. Equity crowdfunding is no different and it is important to keep them engaged throughout the entire process.

Regulation A+ - Reservations during Testing The Waters are non-binding and can be cancelled at anytime. Additionally there are often a few months between filing a Form 1A and becoming authorized by the SEC to sell shares. This gap makes it incredibly important to keep backers engaged so that they convert from reservation holders to investors.

Regulation CF - Remember, any investor can cancel their investment up to 48 hours before the close of your offering.

Backer updates can be done via email (Regulation A+ only) or through the updates section on StartEngine (Regulation CF). Personal backer outreach is great for sending a thank you for investing or providing backers with specific rewards or information that makes them feel like an insider. Public updates are great for general announcements that you want everyone to see. Note: Regulation CF requires all backer communication to be public so personal emails are not allowed.

**YOU ARE ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH BACKERS THROUGH THESE UPDATES AND ARE SETTING A PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE COMMUNICATION. THINK ABOUT WHAT YOUR LONG TERM COMMUNICATION WILL BE WITH THEM, AS THEY WILL LIKELY BE YOUR MOST LOYAL FOLLOWERS AND PEOPLE YOU CAN TAP INTO FOR FUTURE ROUNDS OF FUNDING.**

Backer updates typically include information about progress, goals reached, and pertinent news, but they should also include an ask or a call to action. Now that you have their attention, what do you want them to do? Share your campaign? Increase their reservation/investment to help you reach your goal? Leave a comment? Provide feedback or testimonials you can share? Whatever the ask, make it easy for them and include shareable buttons, text, and graphics so they do not have to do the guesswork. Tools like [Hrefshare](#) are great for this.

**WHEN SHOOTING YOUR CAMPAIGN VIDEO, GET EXTRA PICTURES AND VIDEOS. IT IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO CAPTURE MEDIA TO PUT IN BACKER UPDATES.**

For Regulation A+ campaigns, which are often over 30 days long, consider sending an update once or twice a week. You want the information you send to be current, pressworthy, and to keep backers engaged so that they follow through with investing. Remember that many updates can be pre-drafted before you launch. Have copy ready for when you hit milestones or reach a manufacturing date.

Please note that if you are running a Regulation CF campaign, you cannot email investors directly, so updates are public announcements posted on StartEngine's page.



## Tap Into StartEngine Resources

We are not allowed to feature an individual issuer over another. Exposure has to be fair and objective. But we do have several resources to help you get the word out about your campaign:

- We send a weekly newsletter to our list of 50,000+ people that includes information about our issuers.
- Every issuer is featured the week that they launch, when they transition from Testing the Waters (TTW) to live, and the week they close on [StartEngine.com](http://StartEngine.com).
- The campaign with the most momentum is featured each week.
- We provide a robust backend view of your campaign at all times as well as the ability to add Facebook and Twitter tracking pixels.
- We offer a launch webinar to our community and yours.
- We provide helpful resources to issuers like this guide, blogs, and webinars.

## 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.

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](http://startengine.com)