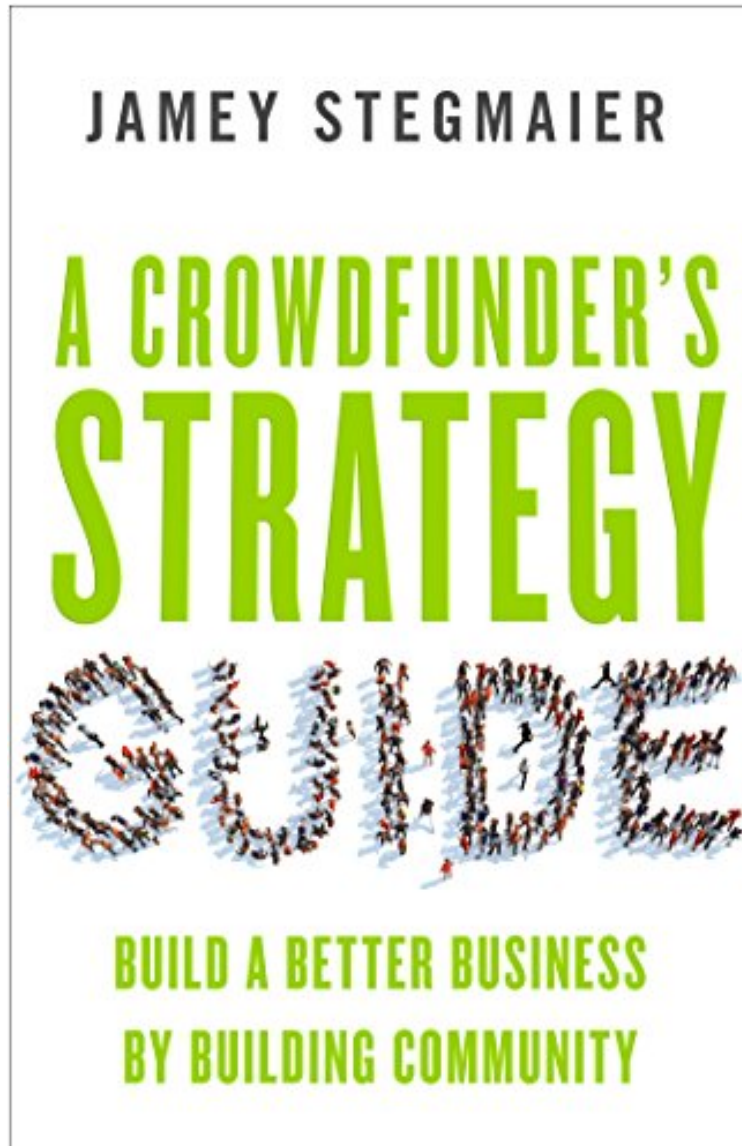


# A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide: Build a Better Business by Building Community

Jamey Stegmaier

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**Jamey Stegmaier : A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide: Build a Better Business by Building Community** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide: Build a Better Business by Building Community:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Valuable Crowdfunding Insights in Entertaining and Accessible Package - High Recommend if Crowdfunding is in your Future By bouldercomom I appreciate that Jamey Stegmaier is

a concise and clear writer. This book is one of the rare few that walks a delicate line between "beginner" and "advanced" - the content is accessible, even to a newbie in the crowdfunding world, but also has enough rich insight and detail to be a valuable read for someone with a lot of experience already. Jamey's stories are entertaining and also illustrate in concrete ways how seemingly small choices in crowdfunding implementation, can make a very big difference to the success (or failure), of your campaign. Some of his lessons learned have been painful ones, and some of his ideas are counter-intuitive, but when I understood his logic, it changed my view completely. There are some curious choices from an organization perspective (the organization of the book, I mean), but overall I found it a good read, chock full of important ideas that were followed with evidence to back them up. I am already recommending this book to several friends, and I am keeping it by my side while I create my product and design my strategy for going to a crowdfunding platform.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is an awesome guide, and if you are serious about crowdfunding, THIS BOOK IS A MUST! By Philip Redhead I first downloaded: "A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide: Build a Better Business by Building Community," on Kindle. It has been such a positive help and guide for a total newbie like me, in fact today I bought the paperback version as well. Jamey Stegmaier knows crowdfunding - having now done 8 Kickstarter projects - starting off small in which 17 backers pledged \$305, to Jamey's latest project of 17,739 backers who pledged \$1,810,294 to help bring his Scythe game to life. So clearly - this guy knows his stuff. Some of the things I like about the book: - THIS IS A VERY READABLE BOOK, full of practical tips and advice - and above all - he keeps it real with a writing style that is easy to read (or skim); - Based on his blogs, he takes the reader through the crowdfunding process step-by-step; - The blogs are summarized in bullet form - making them SO EASY TO READ! But, if you are like me with an eye for detail, you can go online and read the full version of that particular blog; - Jamey constantly emphasizes the importance of creating community - before, during and after a Kickstarter campaign. He shows how to do it; - He shares some of the mistakes he's made, and how to avoid them; - There is a one-week checklist prior to a Crowd-Funding launch; - There are a heap of links INCLUDED to more Crowd-Funding advice/information; - Jamey Stegmaier is the closest thing you will get to an in-house Crowd-Funding expert! I am now currently immersed in the prep work for my first crowd-funding project, for which I am feeling a growing confidence about - for that I must thank Jamey Stegmaier and his well-written book. So I give "A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide: Build a Better Business by Building Community," A BIG FIVE STARS - AND IT IS HAPPILY RECOMMENDED!

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Required reading for anyone interested in Kickstarting a project! By J. Ward I started backing Stonemaier Games projects with Euphoria, so I've had a chance to watch Jamey Stegmaier at work on several Kickstarter projects, and have always enjoyed reading his updates and blog posts. This book goes back to the very beginning, and discusses issues important to anyone who is interested in breaking into the crowdfunding game. Even though all of his projects have been games or game components, this book should be required reading for anyone about to embark on a Kickstarter or Indiegogo campaign, whether it's for a game or for a new style of can opener. There will be something you learn in this book that will be worth more than the price of admission, I assure you!

**More Than Money** Jamey Stegmaier knows crowdfunding. He's a veteran of seven successful Kickstarter campaigns (and counting) that have raised over \$3.2 million, and he's the proprietor of the widely read Kickstarter Lessons blog. In this book he offers a comprehensive guide to crowdfunding, demonstrating that it can be a powerful way for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses by building community and putting their customers first. This book includes over forty stories of inspiring successes and sobering disasters. Stegmaier uses these examples to demonstrate how to (and how not to) prepare for a campaign, grow a fan base, structure a pitch, find new backers, and execute many other crucially important "nuts and bolts" elements of a successful crowdfunding project. But Stegmaier emphasizes that the benefits of crowdfunding are much more about the "crowd" than the "funding." He shows that if you treat your backers as people, not pocketbooks - communicate regularly and transparently with them, ask their opinions, attend to their needs - they'll become advocates as well as funders, exponentially increasing your project's chances of succeeding.

"While many small businesses turn to crowdfunding to raise funds, not many attempts are successful. Stegmaier's seven successful Kickstarter campaigns, and the successful and failed attempts of others, helped him create a crowdfunding template for increasing the odds of success." - Jim Pawlak, - Biz Books, Syndicated Columnist and member of the National Book Critic's Circle "A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide is authoritative and comprehensive, yet easy to read. This book should do much to answer basic questions about crowdfunding and provide those interesting in using crowdfunding with a valuable playbook." - Foreword Magazine (Barry Silverstein, Winter 2016) Stegmaier (founder, Stonemaier Games) uses his experiences funding a game company through Kickstarter to offer a fun and readable guide to running a crowdfunding campaign. He treats a Kickstarter campaign as a serious business requiring planning, thought, and networking. Stegmaier's approach encourages building trust with buyers and suggests that crowdfunders secure support and a strong community online well before launching any funding initiative. He bolsters his recommendations with statistics and stories from other

crowdfunders and advocates running a campaign centered on the patrons. The book includes advice about how to tackle specific challenges along with a good dose of business philosophy. Although this title could be used for running campaigns on other sites, it concentrates on working with Kickstarter. A more personal, succinct read for anyone who enjoyed Sherwood Neiss et al.'s *Crowdfunding Investing for Dummies*. VERDICT: A must-read for any aspiring game designer, this is also a well-organized, enjoyable, and useful book for anyone considering crowdfunding a project." -Library Journal (Jessica Spears, Monroe Coll. Lib., Bronx, NY) "Even after twenty successful crowdfunding projects and over \$1,500,000 raised, I turn to Jamey if I have questions. He knows his stuff." -Michael Mindes, founder and CEO, Tasty Minstrel Games "A crowdfunding campaign gives an entrepreneur the opportunity for a very public success or a very public failure. Jamey Stegmaier reveals his proven playbook for success." -Clifford Holekamp, Senior Lecturer in Entrepreneurship, Washington University in St. Louis "You would be hard-pressed to find anyone who has contributed more to creating a formula for a successful tabletop Kickstarter campaign than Jamey Stegmaier." -James Mathe, President, Minion Games

**About the Author** Jamey Stegmaier is a writer/blogger, game designer, entrepreneur, publisher, and crowdfunding enthusiast. Jamey has run six successful crowdfunding campaigns, raising over \$1.2 million from over 17,000 backers. Jamey shares his insights and mistakes on his *Kickstarter Lessons* blog ([www.kickstarterlessons.com](http://www.kickstarterlessons.com)), which is read by thousands of crowdfunders from a wide variety of categories. He is extremely passionate about making crowdfunding a better place for creators and backers.

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**PREFACE** This book was supposed to be a young adult dystopian novel set in the year 2094. In March 2012, I was six months into the design and development of *Viticulture*, the game that would later become the cornerstone of my company, Stonemaier Games. I was burning out. The game was in a pretty good place, but it wasn't ready for Kickstarter, and I had neglected my other creative passion, writing, for a long time. I had also started to understand how big a commitment it is to design and publish a game, and I was worried that once I went down that path, it would be really difficult to accomplish my lifelong goal of writing a novel. I'd tried to write novels before. Two of them, specifically. I approached both as epic projects that would take years to complete. I got about halfway through both before I gave up. Other things took priority. However, I have writer friends who write multiple novels a year. Writer friends with kids. And jobs. And other passions. So in March 2012, I gave myself two months to write a novel from start to finish. It was my sole focus during that time, other than my day job, eating, and sleeping. The strategy actually worked! Two months after I started, I put the finishing touches on *Wrinkle*, a novel in which overpopulation results in a significant number of people electively traveling to the future. As you can see by this book's cover, you're not reading *Wrinkle*. But this book wouldn't exist without *Wrinkle* for several reasons: First, completing a novel after thirty-one years of not completing a novel felt like a full-body cleanse. (That's an assumption - I've never tried a full-body cleanse, unless you count Taco Bell.) I felt unburdened by that long-overdue personal goal, and I was free to go all in on my Kickstarter campaign for *Viticulture*. Without a successful campaign for *Viticulture*, it's likely that none of this - the games, the company, the blog, this book - would exist. Second, completing *Wrinkle* helped me realize that I was the only person or entity holding myself back from the joy of creating something new. That is the difference between an imaginative person and a creative person - a creative person actually creates things. Crossing that threshold prepared me for the creative process that goes hand in hand with being a crowdfunder. Third, after writing and revising *Wrinkle* in the summer of 2012, the novel came up in conversation with a literary agent I knew through some contacts in the publishing world. Jennifer Chen Tran read the manuscript, gave me some good feedback, and encouraged me to keep working on it. I stayed in touch with Jennifer over the next year, during which time I ran two successful Kickstarter campaigns and built a strong audience on my blog about crowdfunding. One day, she e-mailed me and asked, "Have you ever thought about writing a book about crowdfunding?" I had entertained the idea but hadn't seriously considered it. In terms of total content, I had already written a book - all of my blog entries up to that point could fill a large tome. Jennifer pointed out that the blog is pretty technical - it is mostly a step-by-step guide on how to create a successful crowdfunding project. It doesn't read as a cohesive whole. It doesn't tell a story. More important, she added, my blog reaches only those who happen to stumble on it. It's a limited audience, mostly tabletop game creators. "Think of the other people you could help by telling your story - and the stories of innovative crowdfunders - in a book," Jennifer said. (I'm paraphrasing here - in reality, about twenty e-mail messages were needed before I fully grasped the concept.) She was right. The whole goal of the blog was to help other creators, and I was reaching only a very small subset at that point. So I started writing this book for all types of entrepreneurs who are intrigued by the idea of crowdfunding, particularly those who are open to the idea that creating something is less about them - the creators - and more about others - the backers, customers, fans, and supporters who share a passion for the thing the creators are trying to make. If you like this book, you can thank Jennifer Chen Tran and my readers for inspiring and encouraging me to create something for you. If you don't like it, you can blame its existence on the popularity of the YA dystopian genre.

**INTRODUCTION** I've run seven successful Kickstarter projects that together have raised more than a million dollars, and I've consulted on and backed countless others. The success of those campaigns has allowed me to run my board game publishing company, Stonemaier Games, full-time. Throughout this book I refer to Stonemaier Games in

terms of "our," since I'm not alone in this endeavor. I have a business partner (Alan Stone), an advisory board, hundreds of "ambassadors," and thousands of backers (crowdfunding customers). I designed three of our games—Viticulture, Euphoria, and Tuscany—as well as a game accessory, the Treasure Chest, all four of which have a total of nearly fifty thousand copies in print. To put it in perspective, that's really good for a small publishing company that has been around for about two years and really bad for, say, Hasbro. I write a crowdfunding blog where I share my insights, mistakes, research, and observations to provide a detailed template for how other crowdfunders might, I hope, achieve success. When I refer to "the blog" in this book, I'm talking about the Kickstarter Lessons website, not my personal blog.<sup>1</sup> That blog is mostly about my cats. The crowdfunding blog serves as a complement to this book, but the two are very different. The blog is a step-by-step guide to creating a crowdfunding project and running a campaign. I've been told that it contains an almost overwhelming amount of information. So for the readers of this book, I've condensed those 125 lessons down to 125 sentences (well, I tried to limit myself to one sentence per lesson), found in the Resources section of this book. They're not a replacement for the full entries, nor do they explain the logic behind the lessons, but if you trust me by the time you reach the end of this book, they're there for you to consider. A Crowdfunder's Strategy Guide is much more anecdotal than my blog. Whenever I read a book like this, I find myself skipping over the pedantic parts to get to the concrete, real-life examples. So I've tried to fill the book with stories, not lessons. Several projects I feature in this book fall into the category of "megaprojects." These are projects that wildly overfunded. You can learn a lot from these projects, but it's important to remember that correlation does not equal causation, especially when comparing your project with these. Just because megaproject A launched on, say, July 8 and raised \$10 million does not mean that if you also launch your project on July 8, you will raise \$10 million, too. When you research megaprojects, dig under the surface a bit before drawing any conclusions. Read the project updates, poke around for a postmortem or lessons-learned post, look into past or future projects to see how their creators' methods changed over time, and so on. Megaprojects are often successful despite their flaws and deviations from best practices, and it's up to you to distinguish how they deviated and the resulting impact. The one common thread between the blog and this book is my belief that you will significantly increase your odds of crowdfunding success if you focus on building community, empathizing with supporters, and developing trust-based relationships. Whenever you're faced with a decision—big or small—simply ask yourself, "What's the right thing for my backers?" I will systematically prove to you in every chapter of this book that by putting your backers first and connecting with individual backers, you will be a better, happier, more successful creator. Even though the stories and lessons in this book will increase your odds of crowdfunding success, nothing is guaranteed. This is actually the great thing about crowdfunding: the crowd will vote with their dollars to tell you whether there is demand for whatever it is you're trying to create. If you put in the legwork and present your idea well, but it still doesn't successfully fund, that's a sign that the world isn't interested. And that's okay. It's a lot better to determine what the demand is before you invest thousands of dollars to make something. Last, it's important to note that a lot of the examples in this book are tabletop game projects. I run tabletop game projects and own a board game company, so it makes sense that I pay more attention to that category and hobnob with other tabletop game creators more than others. However, the vast majority of the examples I use can apply to any category, and I've made sure to include plenty of stories from other categories, not just to reach various types of creators, but also because these stories fascinate me. I've learned just as much from campaigns unrelated to games as I have from those that are. Now, my friends, it's time to make this book all about you.