Kickstarter Campaigns Analysis

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Looking through assembled data from Kickstarter on these 4,114 different campaigns reveals for us a few interesting things about the fundamentals of running a successful Kickstarter campaign. Hopefully if the intent of the reader is to understand by what criteria one might create their own campaign then hopefully this information and report could help them get as a much an edge as possible in finding their success. In brief the biggest take-aways involve the types of campaigns that see the highest success rates, which kinds of campaigns had a 100% success rate, and the how a campaigns goals can affect the outcomes.

By far Music campaigns have the highest rate of success, with 77% successfully funded it beats out the second most successful category of Theatre at 60%. The least successful campaigns are Journalism based campaigns, without a single success of the 24 that are featured on this chart. Those familiar with Kickstarter would likely be aware of it’s use in funding new Technological startups, it’s use in funding independent films (movies, TV, so on) as well as funding new games (video and otherwise.) However, the results are mixed for these projects as far as funding goes. Film & Videos campaigns have a 57% success rate, little better then a coin toss. Technology and Gaming campaigns both roughly sit at 36% success, with interesting results within both categories. Technology campaigns by far have the highest rate of cancelled projects with 178 of the 600 total campaigns ending prematurely. Though Kickstarter is an incredibly popular spot for would-be video game developers of the selected data 100% of all mobile and video game campaigns have failed, however of the 220 gaming campaigns that are represented 80 were tabletop games (such as board, card, and roleplaying games) all of which were successful.

Further breaking down the categories can provide a more nuanced view of the data. Of the music categories several sub categories see a 100% success rate, and likewise two notably have a 0% success rate. Specifically, if your music project involves religious, “faith” music or is a Jazz project of some kind; according to this data you may want to try another website for your crowdfunding altogether. Every other genre performs spectacularly well however, classical, electronic, pop and metal see a 100% rate of success. Indie rock projects are overwhelmingly successful with 87.5% of the campaigns successful. World Music projects however are best left considered “inconclusive” as all of those campaigns were cancelled. Theatre campaigns have the second highest rate of the success, but there are only three sub-categories offered; Musicals, Plays, and Spaces (which is to say, theatre spaces for companies.) Of those three, the campaigns for Musicals and Spaces presented around a 40/40/20 split between success, failure and cancellation, meaning the overwhelming amount of successes is due to the campaigns for Plays, which boasts a 65% success rate.

One notable factor that seems to play into the success of a campaign is likely the most predictable one; money. Ultimately one thing that separates most successful campaigns when compared to their failed counterparts is the goal. Theatre as a category has the most detailed data, and thus reveals the best details for comparison. Comparatively successful plays have an average goal of $4,100.83 while failed campaigns have an average goal of $9,826.69. The differences between those averages are mild when compared to the other two categories [formatted as; successful avg.:failed avg.] Musicals - $4,340:$84,728.33; and Spaces - $15,772.64:$227,388.63. There may lie the secret to the rate of failures in those two categories, the exorbitant difference in goal amounts from their successful counterparts. Likewise when looking at the most successful category, Music, we see a similar story to the success average to fail average rate seen in the Plays sub-category. At an overall average goal [successful:failed] $4,695.80:$8,420.23. Another category which illustrates this disparity very well is within the Games category. The wildly successful table-top games sub-category has an average goal of $8,405.33 while the total failure of the mobile and video games category had an average asking price of $26,375.75 and $60,816.74 respectively. The lesson here is staggeringly clear; keep your goal as low as feasible for the project you are working towards. The only exceptions for this rule seem to be with documentary films and handheld technology both with an average goal amount over $20,000 and still boast a 100% success rate each.

Of course, the limitations of this range of data are clear when looking at the individual sub-categories success/fail rates. The simple fact of the matter is, nearly every category presents 100% success rates or failure rates, the sole exception to this rule is Theatre which is the only category that shows any kind of functional diversity and range. This may have something to do with the size of the data we have been presented with, 4,114 total campaigns represent barely 1% of the 426,294 campaigns that Kickstarter.com itself boasts. It is reasonable to presume that a different sample of campaign data could provide a more diverse and better representation within each category and sub-category. Perhaps instead it would be better to attempt to choose a more representative sample sizes of each category, or simply utilizing a larger sample size altogether. Another thing we could look at the success/fail rate by campaign length, a comparative graph could be used to better illustrate these differences.

Despite the limitations presuming the sample used is an accurate representation there are some clear pitfalls to avoid here, certain categories seem to have a better success rate then others, most of which seems to be tied to goal amount. Categories that seem to lend themselves to higher financial needs; the more likely your campaign is to fail. From the data presented here; somewhere between the $3,000 and $5,000 range seems to work best of most categories.