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Kickstarter Charts & Analysis

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1. Given the provided data, what are three conclusions we can draw about Kickstarter campaigns?
2. What are some limitations of this dataset?
3. What are some other possible tables and/or graphs that we could create?

With the data provided for us, any number of conclusions are readily apparent. For example; within the ‘monthly’ chart, we see May and June were the months with the largest number of successful campaigns- but those are also the months with the most campaigns overall. This could imply that Kickstarter receives more overall traffic in the summer months, or it could mean that individual donors are more giving in the hot weather- it's difficult to draw a solid conclusion. For another example of this we could look at the table labeled ‘parent categories.’ Here we see theater handily dominating the other categories in terms of number of campaigns- but if we isolate just the successful campaigns, their lead over the music campaigns shrinks from roughly double to only a few hundred more. This means that, proportionally, campaigns in the music category were most likely to be successful. Once again though, there are multiple external factors which could have caused this to be the case, such as more selective marketing, or more loyal fans. One of the most dramatic elements of the ‘parent categories’ graph is the dismal showing for campaigns in the journalism category. Along with having the fewest number of campaigns, only 24, they were all cancelled. This is surprising, given the massive surge of interest in news media that followed the presidential campaign of Donald Trump- an event which took place during the time this data was captured.

One limitation of this dataset is that it is incomplete- with more than 300,000 campaigns and counting, one might wonder if 4000 is enough to be representative. Further, without access to a more complete dataset, it’s impossible to determine that one way or another. Another issue which was hinted at above is the massive number of externalities at work on each of these campaigns. Perhaps most relevant of these is that Kickstarter campaigns can be started by anyone. However, that does not make it an equal playing field. Any public figure, or people working with a team or any sort of marketing budget, would be able to gain far more exposure than someone relatively unknown fundraising by themselves. The effect this has on any given campaign cannot be overstated, as they literally live or die based on exposure. An interesting piece of data which we’re missing is the number of unique page views to compare with the number of backers for each campaign. This would show us what sort of reach each campaign had. We could parse that further if we knew how many people navigated there from external sites compared to clicking through within Kickstarter, starting to form a picture of how much was external marketing versus someone just browsing Kickstarter looking for something to donate to.

With this many categories of data there are probably hundreds of graphs we could put together. There are a few in particular that pique my interest. The first would compare the relative success of campaigns with or without the Kickstarter ‘spotlight.’ The second would do the same, but with Kickstarter’s ‘staff picks’ versus not. Also, I would compare the staff picks to the spotlighted campaigns to see which form of institutional support was more effective. Lastly, and this might not be a graph exactly, but I would like if there was a way to find out if there were any commonalities in the blurbs of high performing campaigns versus poor performing. If a Kickstarter is being shared externally, this blurb could be the deciding factor in whether or not someone donates to a campaign.