Fifteen years ago, I had the idea of a lifetime. I was wandering through a wooded area in the mountains wondering how many other people had stood exactly in the spot where I was standing throughout history when a gigantic moose appeared from behind a large rock and walked right past me. Suddenly I saw it – my shot at the big time. An idea for a TV show exploded out of that encounter. A big city doctor is sent to a small, quirky town in Alaska. I could see it all, from the residents to the love triangles to the moose walking through the streets during the show’s opening credits. To my dismay, however, I ran into the roadblock that many a great idea person before me has hit head on – no funding. I was crushed, until years later I learned that my idea had already been made in the early 90s. It was called “Northern Exposure”, and it’s likely my inability to secure funding prevented me from getting sued out of existence by Paramount studios.

Of course, the days of brilliant ideas going unfulfilled are waning, thanks in large part to the company Kickstarter. According to the website Statista, from its inception through November 2020, over 5.43 billion USD has been pledged to projects looking for funding through Kickstarter[[1]](#footnote-1). Why pitch your idea to one studio big wig who reeks of cigars and brandy in the morning when you can pitch your idea to anyone with internet access? Kickstarter has revolutionized how many independent projects come to fruition. Below are a few observations of Kickstarter data taken from the included spreadsheets.

**Three Conclusions Drawn About Kickstarter from the Data Provided**

1. Overall, of the 4,114 Kickstarter projects we looked at between May 15, 2009 and March 13, 2017, 2,185 were noted as successful with the remaining 1,929 campaigns being noted as either failed, canceled, or live (meaning that the campaign was still running at the time this data was collected). So, a little over half, or 53.11%, of the campaigns raise enough funds to be labelled as successful. That’s more than I was expecting, given both the nature of crowdfunding as well as how totally awful some of these projects sounded. The United States is the largest contributor to Kickstarter campaigns, being the home of 3,038 (about 73.85%) of the campaigns[[2]](#footnote-2).
2. It’s amazing how successful campaigns involving the theater are, with plays being among the most successful sort of campaigns in our provided data set. They make up 1,066 of the 4,114 campaigns we looked at (25.91%) and have about a 65% success rate. I’d be curious to delve deeper into this trend. Have plays always been crowdfunded by local communities? I was under the impression that it was a small number of elites backing the larger productions. Either way, this was the most surprising thing I noticed within the data set[[3]](#footnote-3) .
3. Over the span of time that our data set covers, if you want your Kickstarter campaign to succeed and the public to see your brilliant dog-to-human translator, it’s best to avoid launching your campaign in December. December is the only month where failures outpace successes in terms of campaigns reaching their goal amount. If I were a betting man, which I totally am its sort of a huge problem, I’d wager that December isn’t a great time to launch a crowdfunding campaign as most people don’t ask for a contribution to a Hannibal fan festival for the holidays[[4]](#footnote-4).

**Limitations of Our Dataset**

The most notable limitation of this dataset is that it may not be an accurate representation of Kickstarter campaigns overall. The instructions included with the data mention that roughly a third of all campaigns end in success, however this dataset shows that over half of these campaigns were successful. Also, theater related campaigns seem to be overrepresented in this dataset. Maybe most of the campaigns whomever collected this data were from New York or London, communities with strong ties to local theater.

Also, these campaigns were deemed successful because the amount pledged reached or exceeded their goal amount. However, that’s not really that great of an indicator of success when it comes to a Kickstarter campaign. Oh, that’s amazing you raised the amount of money you wanted to raise – that’s fantastic, really – how did the project actually turn out? Were contributors stoked with the final project or were they disappointed with it? I think that would be a better indicator of whether these campaigns were successful or not. Were the creators able to actually come through with their projects after receiving funding is something that I would definitely want to uncover.

Finally, Kickstarter was founded in 2009, and as the earth has rotated the sun eleven times while falling through the galaxy in that time, the number of campaigns and the variety of projects has exploded. Over time, this increase in the number of users could have an effect on not only the success rate of projects meeting their goal but also on what types of projects meet their goals.

**Other Tables or Graphs We Could Create Using This Dataset**

Using the data provided, there are two additional tables/graphs that I would like to see. The first would be whether or not we could determine a relationship between a campaign’s success and whether or not they were selected as a “staff pick”. Does having a Kickstarter staff member highlight your campaign have any bearing on success? Second, and related to the first, is whether or not a campaign being “spotlighted” is an influencer on its success. We could also determine which currencies are going towards which types of projects. Are the Aussies into boardgames? Are the Brits into a new Pho restaurant? Are the Americans into my latest Buffy the Vampire Slayer fan fiction? Using a few more of the columns provided, we could be a step or two closer to finding out.

1. https://www.statista.com/statistics/310218/total-kickstarter-funding/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “category” worksheet in the included Excel document [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “sub\_category” worksheet in the included Excel document [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “oucome\_line” worksheet in the included Excel document [↑](#footnote-ref-4)