



Kickstarter

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Last month, I mentioned that the Pebble watch had been the most successful Kickstarter campaign ever. When I wrote that, you might have wondered – what is Kickstarter? Kickstarter is the leading example of a crowdfunding site. In ministry, we know all about the need to raise funding, and we likely have a sense for crowds, but...

What is crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding websites provide a mechanism for a large collection of individuals (a crowd) to contribute money (funding) for a project they are passionate about. It is [estimated](#) that crowdfunding sites raised \$2.7 **billion** in 2012 and will raise \$5 **billion** this year. Types of projects commonly funded include new products by startup companies, new recordings by musical artists, new books by authors, new movies by independent film makers, and even scientific research.

More than a million projects were crowdfunded last year.

Often, the folks seeking funding will promise special treats to those willing to fund them, with bigger and better offers going to those who promise to provide the most money towards the goal. For example, last year I participated in the funding of a double-disc CD of children's music by the Christian folk duo, Alatheia. Those pledging \$15 would receive a digital download of the music; those pledging \$25 would get an



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autographed copy of the CD; while those pledging \$100 or more would receive “THE COMMUNITY BREAKFAST BASKET: with CD, homemade blueberry jam, eggs from our chickens, fresh local bread, and a personalized morning prayer.”

What is good about Kickstarter?

Many ministries seem to always be raising support. Whether it be for a missions trip or a building fund, it seems that being in ministry means becoming a part-time fund raiser. And what does that mean? Usually it means finding people who care enough about the end goal to prayerfully contribute a few dollars in support. It sounds like Kickstarter is a perfect fit!

Kickstarter makes it easy to set up a page to describe the project. They make it easy to accept a variety of forms of payment. They track who pledged support and send receipts on payment. They make it easy to send supporters updates as funding and the actual project advances. In short, they simplify many of the tedious aspects of fundraising.

What is wrong with Kickstarter?

The biggest issue with using Kickstarter for ministry fundraising is that, for many ministry needs, using Kickstarter is not allowed. From the Kickstarter website: “Kickstarter cannot be used to fund charity projects or causes. While there are countless causes worthy of support, we believe that creativity deserves its own space.” Kickstarter is for “creative projects only.” That means that your music ministry can use Kickstarter to raise funds to record a CD, but Kickstarter cannot be used for a missions trip.

Another concern with Kick-

starter is that it follows an “all or nothing” philosophy. Kickstarter campaigns have a clear goal for how much money will be raised in what timeframe. If the funds aren’t raised by the deadline, none of the money gets collected and none of it gets distributed. That’s a different model than most of us like to follow when raising money for ministry activities.

Kickstarter backers also tend to get something directly from the project in return for their money. Again, that’s not the way we typically work when we’re raising support for our ministries. Sure, sometimes we’ll hold a bake sale, or sell coupon books to our neighbors, but mailing tangible rewards to supporters is beyond our normal mode of operation.

Are there better alternatives?

Thankfully, alternatives have emerged that combine what’s good with sites like Kickstarter with the specific needs of non-profits and even specifically Christian ministries.

FaithLauncher is one of the more prominent Christian crowdfunding sites. It operates similar to Kickstarter in many ways, but:

- It’s not “all or nothing” – ministries get however much is pledged, even that amount doesn’t meet the goal
- It doesn’t limit what can be funded – “FaithLauncher provides a platform to raise funds for any Christian inspired project.”
- It doesn’t require providing tangible incentives for folks to support the project.

FaithLauncher also introduces new concepts that don’t fit the Kickstarter model. In addition to asking for money, you can use FaithLauncher to ask for help – volunteers and for prayer support.

In addition to FaithLauncher, other alternatives include DonationTo, fundraise.com, CauseVox, and Fundly. While these sites aren’t specifically Christian, they are designed to meet the needs of non-profit fundraising.

We have certainly come a long way since the days of Paul, when it was really hard for people to get money to the ministries they were passionate about. Consider this passage from Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth: “Now it is

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superfluous for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints, 2 for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year. And your zeal has stirred up most of them. 3 But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—for being so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.” (2 Corinthians 9:1-5)

It is my hope and prayer that these articles on the power and danger of technology will encourage you in your daily walk with Christ. Whether it is crowdfunding, the printing press, radio, television, personal computers, the Internet, the Cloud, smartphones, or augmented reality, new technologies continue to advance our ability to know God and to serve Him, wherever we go.

Russ McGuire is an executive for a Fortune 100 company and the founder/co-founder of three technology start-ups. His latest entrepreneurial venture is CX-friends (<http://cxfriends.com>), a social network for Christian families which is being built and run by four homeschooled students under Russ' direction.