



THE FINK SCHOOL FOR HUMANS SERIES

SOCIAL MEDIA CHARM SCHOOL

JULIE KECK & JESSICA KING

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Social Media Charm School

A Guide for Filmmakers & Screenwriters

| Julie Keck & Jessica King

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The Charm School Series

The Internet is sometimes referred to as the Wild West, an apt metaphor not only because of the web's rapid expansion into and definition of uncharted territories, but also because of the crassness that, in the Wild West, was a sign of strength and machismo and, on the Internet, springs from anonymous human interaction.

Despite avatars, which announce our identities, and the increasing surveillance by employers, which should give us pause, we find that people's behavior, their expression of themselves online, often leaves a lot to be desired.

Our Charm School Series is an effort to address not so much the uncivilized and wild expressions of self online, which can be quite fun, but rather the lazy expressions of identity. All too often we find that the veil of anonymity allows people to resort to selfish, un-self-aware, default behaviors, instead of putting forth their best selves. It's as if people think no one is watching, when, in actuality, everyone is... or, at least, anyone can.

The charm schools of old - often called "Finishing Schools" - were designed to train young women in the art of etiquette so that they would be agreeable wives and enchanting dinner party hosts. This is not, however, the sort of charm we advocate in any way; "unladylike" is not in our vocabulary.

Instead, we take the word "charm" back to its origins, where it signified a song or an incantation able to cast a spell over its listeners. When we talk about charm, we mean delight and enchantment, the sort of delight that allures and attracts.

We often compare the art of social media to the art of the burlesque dancer. Perhaps the most adept charmers in our culture are burlesque dancers, who specialize in the art of the long tease, who take pleasure in the slow dance that leads, still, to only *almost* revealing it all.

Burlesque is instructive because it is the opposite of stripping. While burlesque dancers take their time, slowly bumping and grinding towards the finale of their act, strippers (who we also have tremendous respect for) are aggressive in their seduction; they move quickly, show it all fast, and leave the stage quickly to make room for the next dancer.

Burlesque dancers, on the other hand, seem to be made of patience, passion, and joy. There's a lot of smiling, a lot of winking, and, sometimes, a lot of feathers. What we admire about burlesque dancers is that they lead you on a journey where you already know the destination, but you still enjoy every step along the path.

This is what good creatives do, one tweet at a time, with social media.

Why You Need This Book

Because you're not charming enough.

(That wasn't very nice of us, now was it?)

(But we're not kidding: you really aren't. But we weren't at first either. And we're going to tell you how we figured it out.)

More practically speaking, you need this book because you're an independent filmmaker or screenwriter or creative person and you want to support yourself doing what you love. Social media is a largely free and incredibly powerful tool that allows you to connect with potential collaborators, business partners, and fans of your work, with a long game of selling or trading services, enabling you to support yourself, if not in whole, in part. Using social media isn't going to create an instant avalanche of cash, but if you're good at it, it can create a respectable trickle that pays your latte bill, your car payment, your rent, or the fees associated with your craft.

What Social Media Can Do For You

CONNECT YOU WITH COLLABORATORS AND BUSINESS PARTNERS

When we first joined Twitter in 2009, we had no idea what we were doing, no idea who to follow, who to connect with, or what to say to them once we found them... whoever they were. The first people we found were primarily other writers and filmmakers, people who were trying to make it just like we were, people who posted helpful articles about how to get the most out of the film festival circuit or how to self-distribute a film. We could have seen these people as competitors, but instead we considered them allies. As a result, we soon found an entire community of like-minded and incredibly supportive filmmakers who helped us promote our work, connect with festivals, and exchange tools of the trade.

These Twitter connections eventually spun into real-life, collaborative connections. When a filmmaker in Brainerd, MN, liked a short film we submitted to his festival, he asked us to write a feature thriller for him. Since writing for others was our dream job, we jumped at the chance. Although we weren't getting paid (and expected to see no money from the project), it did help us achieve our goal of having something we wrote produced. There was also an added benefit: for the first time, we had a team to help us do the heavy lifting. Collaborating with others in this way was a turning point in our career.

Prior to this, we did everything: the writing, shooting, producing, editing, marketing. Now, we had a director, cinematographer, and others dedicated to seeing the project through. Sure, there were some bumps in the road, but at the end of it, we had our first full-length feature, funded by an incredibly innovative crowd-funding campaign, which pushed us to up our social media game and brought us a ton of attention, which eventually led to, well, pretty much everything we're doing now, including this ebook that you're reading. Not too shabby.

Our point is, social media is not just a place to shout out from the rooftops that you exist; instead, social media is a networking tool that allows you to meet (and potentially work with) people who you'd never run into or meet in your daily life. You have access to producers. You have access to actors and actresses. You have access to Sarah Silverman, for Christ's sake. You've got this in the can!

Whatever you're into, there's already a community out there for it, and there are already people having conversations that you can get in on. Find them. Talk with them. Engage.

CONNECT YOU WITH AN AUDIENCE FOR YOUR WORK

Collaborators are great. Except for when they suck. (And some of them, truth be told, will end up being total assholes. Make sure you cut those people out of your life as soon as you realize they're no good. We could write a whole ebook just on this. Hmm... maybe we will.) But you're not only on social media to connect with collaborators. Yes, having extra hands on the deck of your project is an essential step toward making more robust work, but at the end of the day, you still need to be connecting with people, connecting with someone who wants to see what you make. And not just someONE, but lots of someONES: you need an audience.

Of course, before you build an audience, you have to understand why it's important to build an audience. We're not trying to go all Gertrude Stein on your asses here (but we kind of are.) You're reading this book because you're an artist who has something to put out in the world, PLUS this: you're not independently wealthy. If you were, you would be paying for your own productions and four-walling them out of your own pocket rather than looking for ways to connect with people over social media. It's very likely you're not a trust-fund baby who went to Yale and made all sorts of big-wig connections in Hollywood. Instead, you're here, with us, starting small (and smart, because you found us), and you're growing outward, one fan at a time. It all starts with one. And it starts here.

At first, the process of defining and seeking your audience / social media base is horrible. Just think about it: if we ask you who your audience is, you're likely going to think what we thought in the beginning: "Well, my audience is EVERYONE IN THE WORLD, obviously. Because my stories are universal and everyone will love them." Hm. We have no doubt your work is amazing and your ideas are stellar, but no one is everyone's cup of tea. Even Steven Spielberg has critics.

When you first start building your audience on Twitter or other platforms, you're going to feel horrible and bad and awful. You'll check your number of followers each morning in the beginning, only to find that there are still only three and that one of them is still your mom, which sort of makes you feel like you can't be your true self. (Ignore that impulse.) However, if you're persistent and engaging, you will find your audience, and they will support your career. Don't give up.

One thing no one tells you is that the first step to finding fans is being a fan. Who are the people / artists / entities that you admire? Follow them on Twitter, and watch what they're doing. How do they interact with followers? How often do they post? Do they use humor? Do they mention other Twitter entities and, if they do, do you trust them enough to check out the new guy? Find out the Twitter practices and styles that influence you to click on things, like things, explore things. And then, as you get a sense for what works on you, start to emulate that. Obviously you're not going to steal and reuse anyone else's tweets or Facebook posts; you're going to create your own, reflecting your own personal style.

As with all endeavors, there are crass shortcuts you can take in an attempt to get to your goal. And since the internet is a wild, somewhat uncontrollable place, it is filled with snake oil salesmen and con artists. It's possible that, during that early grueling period when you're filled with self-doubt, when the droves of fans you want to recognize you for your work haven't found you yet, you may be tempted to buy fans, followers, or views to make yourself seem bigger than you are in the hopes that other people will see you and think you're the next Lady Gaga. We strongly advise against this. If no one is finding you naturally, if you're not building that authentic fan base, you need to change your social media engagement practices (which we'll talk about in a later chapter), not purchase dead weight. Because that's what fake fans are: dead weight.

Purchasing fans and followers is like doing stand-up for a stadium full of mannequins (and your mom, of course, because she's always going to be a real fan, and she's in the front row, you lucky dog you). Sure, you can buy 10,000 followers on Twitter, but what happens when you

finally make a movie, schedule a screening, complete a screenplay to sell, or have a service to offer? You'll be tweeting the link of your amazing accomplishment to 10,000 followers who aren't really looking at you. You're singing to an empty night club.

We once agreed to do social media for an indie singer who we really admired and who had a Twitter following that was way bigger than anything we'd ever gotten our hands on. She asked, and we jumped at the chance to see what social media marketing was like with a massive Twitter fan base.

Once we had access to her account, though, we realized that something was amiss: almost all of the singer's followers appeared to be teenagers from foreign countries, many of whom had locked accounts. They weren't actually her fans, were not interested in buying her album, were not interested in interacting with her. As a matter of fact, they probably had no idea who she was at all. We were devastated. Whoever had been running her social media prior to us had purchased followers to make her look big, but she had no chance of selling anything to them. It was a waste of time and, ultimately, a waste of money.

The bright side was that she also has a modest but true Facebook fan-base, which had grown over the years out of her own personal Facebook account. Here, she connected with friends, family members, and fans of her music who had been following her for years and years. On Facebook, people were extremely excited to hear about her new album and, later, a crowdfunding campaign to pay for it. We raised \$12k for her in 30 days because of the contributions and word of mouth generated from only 4k Facebook fans. Luckily for this artist, she'd diversified and kept a true fan base on Facebook. But imagine if she'd also had a fake Facebook fan base. You would have heard the sound of no one knowing about her new album and no money being made for anyone. You'd have heard us advising her to start over. From square one.

What Social Media Can't Do For You

MAKE YOU INSTANTLY FAMOUS

If your goal is to be famous, you should pick a different goal. Right now. Fame is not a pursuit; it is a result of talent, hard work, and, most importantly, luck. Sometimes it's the result of being in the right place at the right time, sometimes the wrong place at the wrong time, and sometimes it's the result of having a rich dad and a sex tape. We're not saying you can't be famous, or that you won't be one day; what we are saying is that it is a mistake to make it either your sole goal or your sole measure of success.

We meet tons of young — and not so young — artists who think that their new ebook is going to be the next runaway hit on Amazon, that their new short film or web series is going to get millions of views on YouTube and get them a deal with a major Hollywood studio, that the right tweet is going to get the right attention, and then they'll be on the road to fame and fortune. We always tell the truth, and the truth is that this is probably never going to happen. Moreover, it's not something you can actually work toward, but it sure can distract you from honing your craft and working towards more tangible results.

There are other things, besides achieving Kardashian-level fame, that you can shoot for and that will allow you to work, step by step, toward a sustainable creative life. Our goal, after we gave up the out-of-nowhere recognition dream (also known as the 'surprise you got into Sundance with your first short' dream) was to sustain ourselves with our creative work. In practical terms, this means paying our bills with filmmaking or writing. And we've done it. Feel free to borrow our goal; it's pretty satisfying.

MAKE GOOD WORK

No matter what, your core goal should be to hone your craft, to make the best work possible so that when people do find you (whether to whisk you off to Sundance or option your new screenplay), you're worth exploring. This can sometimes be difficult when you are mixing the promotion of your work via social media with the daily work on your craft. Anyone who's been on Twitter or YouTube or Facebook knows that it's easy to get sucked into a labyrinthian k-hole of cat videos, 'which *Mad Men* character would I be' quizzes, or 'cutest baby ever' pictures...not that this has happened to us.

Okay, fine. Confession time: In the beginning, one of us MIGHT have gotten a little obsessed with social media, specifically Twitter, and the other one MIGHT have had to put the first one in "Twitter jail" in order to ensure that other writing, besides Twitter-writing, was getting done. It sounds silly, but the now-ness of Twitter can be very addictive. "What are they doing, my Twitter friends? Are they talking about me? Are they saying something funny? Are they having fun without me? Will someone respond if I say something funny? I should check..."

One might compare social media, when it's done right, to a bit of a sugar rush. Put a tweet out, get a tweet back: instant gratification. And just like that, you have verification that you're funny or relevant or amusing or inspiring or loved or enjoyed in some way. How can you

not like that? We're lucky to have had a chance to build a very active and supportive Twitter community, so when we tweet, we invariably get responses from super-fun people, and if we allow ourselves to do it, we can easily lose an hour or so playing with them. This is fine, mind you, as long as this is your plan. However, if your plan was to finish the draft of your screenplay today so that you can turn it in to your producer, so that they can greenlight it and start pre-production so that you can actually get something made...this is more important than the instant gratification of your friends/followers on Twitter. Turn off Hootsuite; they'll be there when you get back.

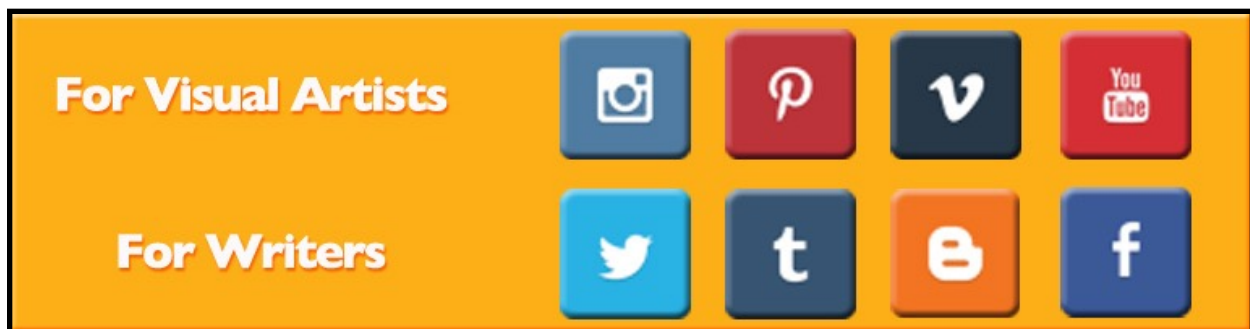
Choosing Appropriate Platforms

DON'T GO OVERBOARD

There are many social media platforms, and new ones are coming down the pipeline hoping to be the next big thing every day. Therefore, you have to filter. You can't be on all the available platforms, or you'll never have time to do the work you got on social media to promote in the first place. We recommend choosing one or two platforms based on the following criteria:

A. Choose platforms that pair well with your artistic medium.

A true foodie might spend all afternoon preparing the night's cheese plate. If she wants to please her guests' palettes, she has to spend time choosing the perfect citrus-infused fig jam to pair with just the right nutty, artisan parmesan. This is the lens you should use when selecting which two platforms you'd like to focus your primary promotional attention on.



By the time we release this ebook, there will be even more options, even more social media platforms to tempt you, as well as tools to juggle them. Don't be dazzled by the massive accounts of others; find the one or two that you respond to most, that make the most sense to you, and use those. Once you get a handle on them, you can consider adding another one.

B. Choose platforms where you know you'll be able to tap into your audience.

Of course, the best way to know which platform is best for you is by mucking around in each one, and while you're there, be sure to study the types of interactions occurring. This is where you may find the audience for your work.

As you explore, take note that some platforms really are geared more towards artists than fans. Behance is a great example of a place that's great for showing off your portfolio and connecting with other designers, photographers, etc., however, it's not geared toward the laymen, so it's not really a place where you'll gain fans. By taking the time to play around on and study the different platforms, you can make an educated decision about whether it is a good place to use your valuable energy/time on.

For every new writer/filmmaker, getting feedback from respected peers is important, so a platform like Behance may be a good investment of time after all. Be honest about where you are

in the development of your craft, and seek guidance and feedback as needed. This will only make your work stronger.

C. Choose the ones you simply like the best.

While having access to an audience and choosing the platform that best matches your artistic medium are tremendously important, so is your sanity. If you're a writer, but don't feel like you have the time or the energy to devote a solid portion of your writing energy to daily blogging, don't start a blog. It will only result in frustration and disappointment, which will interfere with your ability to be charming and engaging. If you resent your time using social media, it will show.

We started with a blog back in the day. There were many mornings where one of us realized it'd been a week or more (or five) since we'd blogged and that we needed some new content. And that always felt awful. Already we were starting from a deficit, a place of failure, and often what we posted, while entertaining, had nothing to do with the project we actually wanted to be focusing on at that moment. So eventually, although we'd accumulated plenty of fun, engaging blog posts, we yanked the blog because that wasn't where we wanted to spend our time. Instead, we opted for Twitter, because it fit our needs: it was fast, we had assembled a community, and we knew it was something that we could easily incorporate into our daily routine.

Another benefit to Twitter for us: it was a way to convey our style and our attitude with fewer words than a blog. We take our writing seriously, so crafting blog posts often took longer than was probably necessary. There was much writing and re-writing, agonizing over wording, checking in with the other one about whether the content was something we wanted to have out in the world. And then we had to pick the right images because everyone knows that no one reads your entire blog, that they mostly look at the pictures and read the captions...don't even get us started.

The bottom line on choosing a platform: time and preference matter. Social media marketing is hard work, so give yourself a break and use the platforms that are easy for you, that you find joy in, and where you already know how to connect with people.

Crafting Your Social Media Personality

TAKING THE TIME TO ESTABLISH A VOICE

(Hat Tip To Aristotle)

As artists we know the importance of having a particular style of expression that puts our unique mark on our work. It's something we're constantly refining and altering to suit the subject matter we're exploring or the end-goal of a project. We must approach social media with the same finesse that we put into our artistic expression.

Are you funny? Thoughtful? Political? Caustic? Your tweets, photos, blog posts, etc., should reflect that. The whole point of social media is for you to be yourself and connect with other people like yourself.

“But what if my followers don't like me for who I am?” Then those are not YOUR fans. Your style should be pervasive throughout your social media in the same way that your style is inseparable from your screenplays, films, etc.

When we started using Twitter, we were terrified, and our tweets were stilted, boring, and lacked engagement of any kind. We didn't want to offend anyone, didn't want to scare anyone away, held our emotional and creative cards close to the chest. As a result, our tweets were sterile, stale, and thoroughly forgettable. If you don't give someone something to engage with, laugh at, disagree with, what's the point? So, one night we were on Twitter a little late, and, our defenses down, put out an actual opinion about a movie or TV show we were watching. The tweet was funny. The tweet was honest. The tweet was ours. And then, seemingly out of nowhere, we got a string of responses. We heard from people who agreed with our opinion, people who disagreed, and others just thought the way we stated our opinion was funny. The interaction was fun, and we were hooked. Oh...THIS is the point.

Show your true self in your tweets, FB posts, Pinterest pins, Instagram grams, etc. You won't get everyone, but you will connect with some, and those are your core followers/fans.

Are there exceptions to this? For sure. Sometimes you have to put the needs of your project above your personal opinions, because the former serves your professional goals. We have taken on social media clients that we had to adopt completely different Twitter voices for. In 2010 we worked on a documentary about friendly fire. Not a funny subject. We had to think carefully about how we were going to tweet, what we were going to tweet about, who our audience was. So when we tweeted from that account, we were much more austere, news-focused, informative. And that tone worked for that account.

CONSIDERING THE SPEAKER

It's Monday morning, and as if it's not bad enough that you have five days of work ahead of you, you haven't had any coffee yet, and your partner has just finished the last of the cereal. You're not sure if you're going to cry or wreak havoc in the kitchen, because making an egg seems like a feat requiring Herculean effort, and it's too early for that.

Whatever you do, do not tweet at this moment. Don't take a passive aggressive photo of the empty cereal box and post it on Instagram with a snarky critique of your partner's insensitivity. This is part of you - yes, for sure - and we don't judge you for it. It's 5:45 am for chrissakes, and that's much too early to have to conjure up one of your better selves! However, try to have some restraint. Because people are watching. Always.

At any given moment, we have many possible selves we can invoke. We - Julie & Jessica - are women, daughters, sisters, lovers, writers, filmmakers, aunts, teachers, pop-culture junkies, Chicagoans, pancake-makers, pancake-eaters, etc. But when we present ourselves online, we must make a conscious, deliberate effort to be a very particular self, a particular persona.

We've seen a wide-range of personas expressed through social media: the drunk, the pimp, the curmudgeon, the provocateur, the philosopher, the expert, the nerd...you name it, it's happening online. And any one of these can be successful, even the curmudgeon. The key is to do it consistently and in an engaging manner.

Some people's whole shtick on Twitter is their persona. They're not selling anything; they are just being a personality, and, as a result, they have many followers. For instance, @IamEnidColeslaw, who bills herself as a "roly poly little bat-faced girl," (hat tip to Paul Simon) tweets hilariously crass and demented things.

"Everything I know about interior decorating I learned from porn" ~
1/25/2014

"How come every time I try to hit on a pretty girl I swallow my tongue
and shit my pants?" ~1/18/2014.

As a result, as of this writing, she has 148K followers. She's not selling anything. She's not trying to make the world a better place. She's creating a cult of personality. And she's able to do that because she has a distinct voice, because she knows who she is, the self she wants to project, on Twitter. Because of her particular brand of morbid sass, we can smell an @IamEnidColeslaw tweet a mile away, whether we see her handle first or not. This is what you want to aim for — a distinct voice. But that's not all. Someone like @IamEnidColeslaw only needs to think about voice because she isn't promoting anything but that voice, and she doesn't seem to care that much about who her audience is, though she definitely knows that they're there:

"A little message to all my haters: I AGREE 100 PERCENT" ~
1/22/2014

Cultivating a distinct voice is essential when you're trying to garner support for your work, but, because you're an independent artist who must also be an entrepreneur, you need to think about your subject matter and audience, as well.

CONSIDERING THE SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

When we write or make a film, we're focused on a particular subject that we wish to explore. Although the exploration of subject matter can seem like an end in itself, it never is. Often our goal in mining a particular topic is to inform or entertain. Other times our exploration of subject

matter is designed to achieve a greater purpose. Documentary filmmakers know all about this. You should watch them.

The filmmakers behind the recent documentary *The Invisible War* (@Invisible_War) aren't content only to inform the public about sexual assault in the military: they want the film to influence military policy towards *ending* sexual violence in the military. As a result, the messaging and tone of their social media campaign is tactfully aggressive, with most posts putting out a call to action: "Call your Senator" and "Give survivors access to an impartial legal system!" Winning an award at Sundance didn't hurt their cause, certainly, but the way in which they further their message through their solid, resounding social media voice is touching the lives of many and garnering further support for not only *The Invisible War*, but whatever future projects are on their slate.

Philosopher and writer Alain de Botton (@alaindebotton) is another great example of someone whose tone is clearly linked to his purpose and subject matter. De Botton's primary goal as a philosopher is to help us think about everyday things (love, sex, social status, the news) in new and ultimately therapeutic ways. To suit this purpose, his tone on Twitter is one of the pithy, approachable sage. He offers quips of wisdom that give a sense of the topics he explores in his books along with his overall purpose in writing about them: to help people live better lives.

"Love your children reliably and they'll outgrow you. Ignore them, and they'll be obsessed with you for life." ~2/8/2014

"Aim to have a better grasp of your own awfulness than your worst enemy ever could." ~12/18/2013

If De Botton were to take a more sarcastic, aggressive, or purposefully provocative approach, he'd risk alienating his audience, or at least the audience he's been cultivating. Sarcasm, aggression, and provocation aren't particularly therapeutic or helpful, and he promotes himself as someone whose purpose as a philosopher is to help people. If your tone and your purpose are not in alignment, you risk alienating and confusing people, which means you won't develop a long-term audience.

CONSIDERING THE AUDIENCE

You also have to think about who's listening or watching, or who you hope will be listening or watching. If you know the audience you're targeting in advance because you create work that occupies a niche, you want to put the needs of your audience first in deciding how you will promote your work on social media.

For instance, if you're primarily a writer of young-adult, dystopian fiction, you may not want to be the crabby, crass curmudgeon online. It wouldn't be appropriate or appealing to your audience. (Don't worry: you can still sometimes be that guy in real life). So what are buyers of adolescent dystopian fiction looking for in an author they trust? They probably want to see someone who's fairly hip but not overly political. They want to see someone with a sense of humor and irony, a clear view of what's happening in the world. You can use what you know

about your audience to determine both the content of your social media output, as well as the tone.

A great example of a company who uses social media for a particular audience is @GoPro, the makers of the GoPro camera, which is a versatile, light-weight, video camera that can be strapped on your body to film amazing point of view shots.

The GoPro people are very in touch with their audience, who are not only filmmakers, but adventurers and enthusiasts: bungee-jumpers, mountain climbers, surfers, skaters, BMX bikers, drummers, and the like. They are people who live active lives and enjoy capturing their passion from unique and dynamic perspectives. As a result, the GoPro social media strategy is one of relentless enthusiasm. Sentences are often punctuated with exclamation points; they use words like ‘sick’ and ‘epic,’ and they post pictures and videos taken by users in almost every post.

Because GoPro focuses their social media strategy on photos/videos taken by people who use their cameras, they are able to do one of our favorite things: let the audience market the product for you.

When you have an enthusiastic audience and you know how to tap into their creativity and passion, you no longer need to spend time making the hard-sell because your fans, just by being excited about what you’re doing, will do it for you.

We learned this early on in our filmmaking career when we crowd-funded for our first feature film, *TILT*. We teamed up with two Brainerd-based filmmakers and wrote a dramatic thriller focused on how a tragic event allows an estranged father and daughter to reconnect. The crowd-funding campaign for the film had one particular perk that was the primary cause for the campaign’s success. For \$15, we offered to write magical-realist biographies of our backers to insert into a fictional universe called TILTtheTown. Each contributor at the \$15 level earned a place alongside the real characters of *TILT* in our online virtual town, hosted by Google Maps. We had backers who were time travelers, ice-sculptors, taxidermists, etc. Further, each backer bio contained the real-life Twitter handles and relevant web-connections for each person. This allowed the ‘characters’ in the virtual world to see who they were linked to in the town.

Eventually what started to happen was that our backers, tickled by their bios, began to play together online as their TILTtheTown characters. For instance, the Mayor of TILTtheTown was in a fictional feud with the head of the Housing Authority over the issue of garden gnomes. Over Twitter, the two men role-played the feud, adding to the story, bringing other people into the game. It got to the point where we no longer needed to ask for money because our audience was making our campaign appealing through online play. We then shifted our focus from making the hard-sell to extending the TILTtheTown story-world over Twitter, inviting the townspeople to play and spread the word through storytelling.

Here are the bios that started the fake feud and led to real crowd-funding results:

Justin W. Hedges didn't become the president of the TILTtheTown Home Owners Association because he wanted to contribute to his community or because he likes the lime light. He did it out of spite. Why? Mostly because he hates garden gnomes. (By the way, Garden Gnome is his pet name for TILTtheTown mayor Paul Barrett.)

Justin is convinced that it was Mayor Barrett's garden gnomes that brought down his property values last year (rather than the large candy corn sculpture in his back yard), and he's not going to rest until he unseats him. His first step towards usurping Barrett: banning garden gnomes, which he accomplished last week. His second step: unseating Barrett as mayor.

Other issues Hedges has tackled since assuming his HOA presidency: trying to designate David Branin's monastery and Karen Worden's nunnery as private residencies so that they have to buy the standard TILTtheTown HOA-approved brick mail boxes (built by Justin's kids, who have an exclusive contract with Justin); banning advertisement of Lisa Vandever's Spice Rack North of Washington Ave. (for the sake of 'the children'); and trying to convince all home owners to get the same locks for their front doors so that beloved cat burglars Jeff Lyman and Becki Reade could spend less time picking locks and more time swapping valuables. See? He's not a totally bad guy.

Paul Barrett is the mayor of TILTtheTown and rules with an iron fist. Actually, he rules with a wooden fist, a prosthesis passed down from generation to generation in the Barrett family. Paul's great-great-great-grandfather was the 2nd mayor of TILTtheTown after shooting the 1st mayor in a duel. As soon as the first mayor fell over dead, the new mayor Barrett pumped his fist in the air, and the dead mayor's wife shot it off - she was a little sore. Later, Paul's g-g-grandfather (also a mayor) lost his hand in a hunting accident, his g-grandfather (a mayor as well) lost his in a train accident, a his grandfather (also a...oh, you get the picture) lost his, along with his heart, in San Francisco. Paul's father never needed to employ the wooden fist as a replacement for his hand, but he told Paul on his dead bed that it was his biggest regret. Since then, Paul has spent most of his time obsessing about ways in which he might lose his hand. And time is running out.

Recently Paul appealed to town doctor Gregor Collins to see if the hangnail he had was reason to amputate. Dr. Collins said no and is now keeping a close eye on him. In TILT the Town meetings, Paul still uses the wooden fist to call the residents to order, usually having to slam his hammy gavel to get Mari Kivisto to drop the urban chicken issue already. Today he has a meeting with business woman Lisa Vandever about the goings on in her new warehouse off of Washington. He has no idea what he's in for; this one might just distract him from his hand obsession.

Of course, not everyone has an enthusiastic, active audience to tap into. And that's okay. Another way to gear your strategy towards your audience is to be a fan yourself.

In order to be someone who gathers fans, you can also be a fan. (Déjà vu, right?) So, if you're a new writer trying to gather a fan-base for your new YA novels that you want to eventually turn into scripts for a major movie franchise, you should probably follow and shine some love on (or at least show some respectful appreciation to) the other authors who came before you. Were you inspired by *Harry Potter*? Did you like the *Hunger Games* books but hate the movies? Are you hopeful that the *Divergent* movies will bring the books to life in a satisfying way? Talk about these things, and show your potential fans that you know what you're talking about. You become not only a potential source for future books, but someone with whom they can discuss what's already happening in the YA world.

Become a trusted part of the group, not just another person selling something.

CONSIDERING THE MEDIUM & CONTEXT

The last thing you may need to consider is medium of expression and the social behaviors that surround it. Online communities express themselves in unique ways on each of the various social media platforms. Be aware of and sensitive to this.

Pinterest and Instagram users, because they exist in a primarily visual realm, tend not to add a lot of copy to their posts. So don't share narrative content on those sites expecting to start a conversation. Expect, instead, sharing and liking on Pinterest, and hashtag and emoji responses on Instagram - that's the language people are talking there: learn it!

Considering context is something you should do even before you start using social media, although there's no shame in trying something out, changing your mind, and changing your approach. Like we said earlier, we tried doing a blog for a while, but it didn't work with our interests or our schedules. We weren't interested in becoming professional bloggers; we wanted to make movies, and we found that it was just as easy to get our aesthetic across via tweets, which were easy for us to construct and share, as it was to do so in blog posts, which were cumbersome (for us), stressful, and, ultimately, a poor use of our time. Blogging works VERY well for people who enjoy communicating in long-form content and creating communities of conversation in the comments section. You might be one of those people. If so, our hats are off to you.

5 SOCIAL MEDIA PERSONALITIES TO AVOID

It's easy to say, "Get on social media, and be yourself!", but that's not actually easy. Presenting yourself, and a message, and an aesthetic in 140 characters or less (minus hashtags, links, twitpics, etc.) can be quite difficult, and you might be surprised how quickly your heartfelt message about your pièce de résistance turns into a whiny, beggy no-no.

Before we get into how to present yourself well on social media, let's talk a little about pitfalls and characters you want to avoid. Please note: throughout the following guide, we primarily refer to Twitter, as it is our platform of choice, though these lessons are easily translated to other mediums.

THE BRAT

Whether it's on the playground, in the office, or in the middle of the mall, we all know *The Brat*. This is the person who wants it her way, right now, and she's going to hold her breath (and everyone else hostage) until she gets it.

On social media, *The Brat* can project her self-obsessed wrath in a number of ways. She can unleash a series of negative, depressing tweets that beg for attention. She can tear other people down to build herself up. She can focus on everything that's not working instead of asking for help.

Example tweets:

"I knew no one was going to watch my movie. Why bother? Here's a link in case you get bored: www.NoWay.com."

"Seriously, Lena Dunham has a career and I don't? Let's just end it now."

"Hard work, at the end of the day, doesn't work. Apparently the only way to get ahead is to blow someone."

The Brat shouldn't be condemned for her self-confidence; a little of that can go a long way. The problem is in the presentation. If you're feeling bratty, turn it around and share your accomplishments in a proud or confident way instead of sounding like a jerk. Because if you keep it up, people are going to turn you off and tune you out.

THE BULLY

The Bully is a bolder version of *The Brat*. Just as whiny. Just as much complaining, but with a louder, rougher, meaner demeanor. *The Bully* will also often call people out specifically, publicly shaming them into doing what he wants.

We see people's inner bullies come out often in the final, desperate phases of a failing crowdfunding campaign. We'll talk about this more later, but when all of your hard work doesn't seem to be working, you stop appreciating all of the people who have chipped in and start listing all of the people you know who haven't stepped up yet. Resist the urge to name them and blame them on social media. It only makes you look like a toolbag.

Example tweets:

“I guess people like @TedHope don’t have time to watch my 10 minute video: <http://greatintroduction.com> #notgonnahappen”

“Hey, @FlywayFilmFest, I’m lookin’ at your lineup. Pretty weak. You should have programmed me: www.SourGrapes.com”

“I’m not sure why people like @MindiKahling get all of the attention; my work is better: www.TeamPlayer.com”

We’re not saying that *The Bully* doesn’t get results; sometimes bullies can get other people riled up about negative goals. We all have bad days and frustrations that can easily spill out on social media. We’re not saying you can’t vent once in a while, but if you find yourself constantly cutting down others in order to boost yourself, you might want to take a second look at your social media motives.

Additionally, think about what happens when you bully people into doing things: you get them to do something begrudgingly, perhaps out of shame or guilt. Is that person a fan of yours now? No. Is that person going to recommend you to others? No. Just like that kid who stole your lunch in grade school didn’t have kids lined up around the block to hang out with him on the weekends.

THE MONOLOGIST

Me. Me. Me. *The Monologist* simply cannot stop talking about herself. Maybe her mom didn’t teach her to play well with others, but she’s grown into a social media user who just goes on and on and on without stopping to ask anyone else a question. She’s that chick at the party who corners you to talk about her ‘big idea’ and how she hasn’t had the right breaks yet. And she’s probably a close-talker, too. And a spitter. And she has bad-breath. It’s rare to find such a poor conversationalist with all these faults, but the point is *The Monologist* is unpleasant. If only she’d shut up for a minute, you’d have a chance to inhale some fresh air and forget about her sour spaghetti breath.

The Monologist isn’t mean-spirited in her solipsism, mind you; she’s not out to tear anyone else down or break anyone’s spirit. Instead, the monologist is probably hopeful, possibly earnest, and 100% self-obsessed.

Example tweets:

“If you haven’t seen my movie yet, here’s your chance:
www.MeMeMe.com”

“If you haven’t been wowed by my movie yet, see it now:
www.MeMeMe.com”

“Everyone’s telling me my movie is the best they’ve seen this year; do you agree? www.MeMeMe.com”

Any of the tweets above would be fine on its own and once in a while, but *The Monologist* puts out tweet after tweet without thoughtfully interacting with others or showing interest in anything anyone else is doing. This person sees social media as a bullhorn rather than a magical flute.

THE BRAGGART

The Braggart is a special version of *The Monologist*. Perhaps *The Braggart* is *The Monologist* with a few awards and some notches on his bedpost. This walking social media no-no not only constantly pushes his agenda...he rubs your face in it. Constantly.

Example Tweets:

“Check out my award-winning script here: www.NoThankYou.com”

“Twelve script readers have given me the thumbs up on this script. Your turn: www.NoThankYou.com”

“Join the fight to produce my award-winning script: www.NoThankYou.com”

Again, some of these tweets, sprinkled into your feed here and there throughout the week, aren’t that bad. But constant invitations to be a mere spectator to your genius can be wearying for your audience, especially if they’re not all producers or script-readers.

THE TEASE

The Tease tries to entice his audience by constantly alluding to what’s around the corner; however, he very rarely delivers.

Example Tweets:

“Have another meeting with [can’t tell you yet] today. #CrossYourFingers #AndToes”

“Working on my new secret script today. Can’t wait to share it with you. #SoExcited”

“Wish I could tell you about the amazing call I just got. #NotYet”

Again, building a little anticipation isn’t a bad thing, but when you’re constantly promising that good things are just around the bend but never actually getting around the bend, the excitement fades and you just seem like someone who can’t get the job done.

The Tease’s intentions aren’t malicious, nor is he trying to annoy anyone. What *The Tease* doesn’t understand is the art of seduction, which we’ll cover in the next section. For every project there’s a window of time where you can build and maintain excitement. Through practice and experience, you have to learn when it’s time to entice your audience and how long you can string them along before satisfying the promise you’ve made to them. As producers, we are constantly juggling new projects in various stages of development. However, we don’t start talking about our projects on social media (or even in real life) until we’re actually on set. And even then, we have a spurt of activity while we’re in production, and then we cool it during post-production, until

finally we have a release date and images, posters, trailers, etc. to share. While the editing, color correcting, and sound work are extremely important parts of the production process, they're not very exciting to see on Instagram. So rather than trying to sustain a tediously long tease that will wear our audience out, we entertain them in other ways until we know we have something to share.

So what can you do during that lull in glitz and glam between production and the release of the project? Use that time to build your audience. Share the work of others. Engage your Twitter followers (and those you follow) in conversations. Participate in Twitterchats about related topics. And above all, be yourself.

CHICKEN LITTLE

Ah, our little *Chicken Little*. Poor *Chicken Little* is a sad, wimpy, scared version of *The Bully*. She's *The Bully* without the teeth. *Chicken Little* unleashes her anxiety on Twitter when she's feeling like she's losing control (which is often a sign of poor planning).

For example, when *Chicken Little* is approaching the end of a crowdfunding campaign and doesn't seem to be making her goal, she might resort to something like this:

“ONLY TWO DAYS LEFT TO FUND MY MOVIE OR IT DOESN'T HAPPEN! www.FreakingOutMovie.com”

“DON'T LET ALL OF MY HARD WORK BE FOR NOTHING! CHIP IN! www.FreakingOutMovie.com”

“IN FOUR HOURS WE'LL KNOW IF MY MOVIE'S BEING MADE OR IF I GO BACK TO WAITRESSING!!! www.FreakingOutMovie.com”

Here's the thing: We all freak out once in a while. Whether it's a tanking Indiegogo campaign, a comedy show that isn't selling any tickets, an eBay auction with no bids, etc., the feelings of anxiety increase when we approach a possibly disastrous deadline. And like any feeling, it's fine to feel it, but it's not okay to express it online, not if you're trying to cultivate trust and respect, anyway.

How can you avoid this “sky is falling” tone? Step away from the computer (even we do this sometimes), take a deep breath, and think about what you can actually accomplish in the time before your deadline. If it's not likely that you're going to meet your crowdfunding goal, are you learning some valuable lessons? Who are the people who have already supported you, and what can you do to make this an enjoyable experience for them? Is it time for you to reassess your overall goal (movie, event, etc.), or did you just misjudge the time you needed in order to do it? Do you need to reassess your social media strategy overall?

Making mistakes is unavoidable - we make them every day. But learning from them will make you better at social media.

Okay...now that we've told you about ways not to be, let's talk about good social media etiquette.

5 SOCIAL MEDIA PERSONALITIES TO EMULATE

THE CLASS ACT

The Class Act is just that: classy, elegant, smooth. *The Class Act* is focused on recognizing the good in others, highlighting accomplishments, and celebrating successes. Don't get us wrong: *The Class Act* still has his own goals; however, he isn't overt in pushing them. In fact, he may present them in a way so calm, casual, and alluring that you are only too happy to oblige, if only to say that you once helped this pillar of social media society.

Example Tweets:

"House of Cards. Devastating. And @KevinSpacey is simply divine. I highly recommend: www.SmoothOperator.com"

"Holy cow. How does @Grking keep churning out the hits? www.SmoothOperator.com"

"It's quiet. The kids are asleep. Here: let me entertain you: www.SmoothOperator.com"

The Class Act acknowledges and spreads love without brown-nosing. He catches the eyes of others by using charm. It's a lost art. Relearn it...and use it in real life.

THE ALTRUIST

The Altruist just gives, gives, gives. She is the Mother Teresa of Twitter, endlessly sharing the accomplishments of others and shining her light on fun, informational, or functional things. *The Altruist* is here to serve you. And through this service, she becomes a trusted, beloved, and much anticipated part of her followers' social media streams.

Example Tweets:

"The latest from @ChuckWendig on #TerribleMinds. Devour it. You won't regret it: www.AnythingYouSayLady.com"

"You know that @AVAETC directed a (stellar) episode of #Scandal, but have you seen her @MiddleNowhere yet? www.AnythingYouSayLady.com.com"

"Another great post by @jon_reiss, chock full of things you thought you knew but could use reminders of: www.AnythingYouSayLady.com"

The Altruist, like *The Class Act*, still has an agenda. Maybe she works with these people. Maybe she's trying to cozy up to them. Maybe she's ramping up to releasing a blog or other online resource with a membership. Perhaps she's planning to sell an ebook like this one. Regardless, by pointing her followers to the products, resources, and entities, she's conveying her aesthetic and

priorities, while establishing herself as a trusted resource. When someone seemingly spends all of her time doing you favors, when she finally asks for something back...people step up.

THE FLIRT

Wanna know a secret? We are flirts. ‘Flirting’ on Twitter has gotten us to where we are today. No, we’re not millionaires. We started in 2008 as independent screenwriters and filmmakers looking for resources and inspiration; by flirting with, learning from, and engaging with peers, influencers, potential collaborators, and fans, we now 100% support ourselves with our work. All because we know how to entice.

Example Tweets:

“We’re not going to lie: we have the hottest Kickstarter backers around. And you look like you should join them. www.WhereDoWeSignUp.com”

“It’s true: we have a crush on @jeannevb, and we’re not going to hide it anymore. Check her out on @ScriptMag”

“Ain’t no sunshine when @ChristinTello’s gone. Guess we’re gonna have to follow her to LA.”

No, we’re not actually planning to date and make out with everyone we flatter on Twitter, but we ARE fans of lavishing flirtatious attention on those we admire. It’s how we met our current business partners. It’s how we get all of our consulting gigs. It’s how we get invited to speak at universities and conferences.

Imagine if we tweeted like this:

“We know a lot about #crowdfunding. Bring us to your conference: www.YawnYawnYawn.com”

No, thank you. This works much better:

“There ain’t no party like a @Cinekink party. Let her know you’d like to see us on opening night!”

These things work. And they’re fun. And who doesn’t need a little more fun in her life?

Full disclosure: Flirting when you don’t mean it can lead to unwanted attention and uncomfortable situations, so we advise that you always be sincere in your social media. Don’t promise something you don’t have; don’t pretend to be someone you’re not. Authenticity is key.

Lastly, if flirting isn’t your thing, just play. There are many ways to delight and engage, and people are way more likely to respond to your tweets if they make them smile.

THE PROVOCATEUR

The Provocateur instantly demands the attention of everyone when she walks into the room...or enters the Twitter or Facebook stream. She’s well-read, would never pass on a link she hasn’t

clicked and explored, and has thoughtful, if controversial, things to say about the items she passes on to her followers.

The Provocateur could just be interested in starting conversations, but she might also have a tendency for pushing limits, for creating dissension or agitation. She may do this through humor, sarcasm, or, perhaps, off-color language or imagery designed to get people riled up.

Example Tweets:

“Venture philanthropy should be considered a crime:

www.WannaArgue.com #read #discuss #SchoolReformFail”

“Dear puritans: stop saying the sex in *Blue is the Warmest Color* is controversial. #TameTameTame”

“The massive success of *Bridesmaids* has finally confirmed that Americans have no taste. #WhatIsWrongWithYouPeople”

The Provocateur is looking for engagement, stimulation, and conversation. She is like the late, great Christopher Hitchens, the unabashed atheist and essayist whose searing social commentary delighted his fans and enraged his detractors. Her main goal: to establish herself as a subject matter expert or to display her aesthetic. Either way, there are people who will agree with her and disagree with her, and without a doubt they’ll have an intense time doing it.

THE ENTHUSIAST

The Enthusiast stays on top of whatever is his ‘thing.’ Does he see every new movie? Does he read every best-seller? Is he a news junkie constantly sharing links to the breaking headlines? Is he obsessed with the latest election, with health and nutrition, with personal finance, with celebrity gaffs? *The Enthusiast* is an easy go-to resource for whatever his topic of choice is, and most people end up following him because, through his passion, he curates the types of information they’re seeking.

Example Tweets:

“Obama’s at it again. The transcript of today’s speech about the NSA:

www.HotNewsHere.com”

“Just finished Jennifer Egan’s latest. Review here:

www.HotNewsHere.com”

“Beautiful opening at MOMA. Pictures here: www.HotNewsHere.com”

The Enthusiast can have strong opinions (like *The Provocateur*), but he might also just be a passive stream of great articles, information, etc. Again, the aim here might be to drive traffic to his website or to gather a following that might be interested in the documentary or screenplay he’s working on, but by establishing himself as a trusted-source on a particular topic, he’s establishing himself as a content expert, and creating a hunger for his next tweets.

So - how do you identify YOUR social media personality?

Most people aren't just one social media personality or another. Instead, you combine the types above (and other types), becoming a unique hybrid that suits your needs. Additionally, you might change your social media personality according to your immediate goals.

For example, you might be *The Altruist* and *The Enthusiast* when you're in production on your latest film, but you might become more of a *Flirt* as you get closer to crowdfunding.

Lastly, if you accidentally become a *Bully* or a *Brat* on a bad night, it's okay. We all have bad nights. Just start the next day by laughing it off, coming clean, or just ignoring it. The good thing about social media is that it flies by quickly, so one flub won't mar your reputation permanently. However, if you start seeing a pattern of brattiness or some extra Chicken Little-ing, step back and reassess.

Financing A Project Through Crowdfunding

Note to first-time crowd-funders: we sincerely hope that you are not planning to first-time crowd-fund on your first-time project. Whether you're making a feature film, a short, or a web-series, one of the keys to successful crowdfunding is being able to show a track record of past work. This does several things: 1) it helps you get fans, 2) it allows your potential donors to see what you can do, and 3) it demonstrates that you have the grit and gumption to follow through on your dreams.

The first short films we made were 100% funded by ourselves. Also...they were very cheap. We believe in this philosophy, of scraping by while you practice your art. Those awful (and awfully hilarious) short films we made with our friends back in the day allowed us to figure ourselves out as artists, helped us hone our skills, and gave us a chance to 'build our pile,' so that when we started building an audience and (later) asked them to help us fund a bigger project, they had something to judge us on.

We see a lot of film students and first-time filmmakers crowdfunding their early projects, and the budgets (and pitches) make us cringe: "Help me make my first short for \$15k!" Really? You've never made anything, and you want me to give you enough money to buy a car to fritter away and experiment with? Strap on your boots and get dirty, young filmmakers! Shoot guerrilla-style! Take on different roles for each other. Star in each other's films. Beg your parents to let you shoot in their house for a weekend. You don't need to use a Red camera for your first film. You don't need to pay someone to color correct your first film. Get the basic tools, teach yourself how to do everything, and make your shit. It will make you stronger later.

However, if you've already established a reputation and built up somewhat of a following, it might be time to invest the effort in a crowdfunding campaign. But only if you're ready...

WARNING: CROWDFUNDING WILL RUIN YOUR LIFE

Here's what no one will tell you: Running a crowdfunding campaign is really, really hard. It will make you crabby. It will steal your sleep. It will make you a fuss and a frump, and you might drive away everyone who loves you...but it's only a month!

Experienced crowdfunders will tell you that crowdfunding is a full-time job, and they're mostly right. Without proper preparation, you can end up spending 12+ hours a day trying to find backers and figuring out how to entice them. However, with a little pre-campaign prepping, you can make the workload manageable, giving you time to work on the project that you're actually crowdfunding for. The money isn't the point; you getting to make your project is.

BEFORE. THINGS TO THINK ABOUT PRIOR TO LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN

Crowdfunding isn't magic. Money isn't going to start falling from the sky just because your campaign goes live.

BE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We firmly believe that you cannot have a successful crowdfunding campaign without having been on social media. You have to take the time to gain followers, find your audience, and rope in your supporters. You have to let people get to know you before asking them for money. Crowdfunding isn't about sitting in a subway station playing your clarinet and hoping that strangers will drop coins in your hat; it's about inviting a bunch of people over to see a very cool thing and then asking them if they want to be a part of it. If they've known you for a while, they're way more likely to say yes.

Think about it. Who are you more likely to give \$5 to? A stranger on the street or your best friend?

BUILD YOUR AUDIENCE

The reason why many crowdfunding campaigns fail — and why much great writing and filmmaking — goes unseen is this: **NO ONE IS LOOKING FOR YOU.**

We apologize if that sounds harsh, but we like to tell the truth. You are certainly amazing at what you do, no matter what it is. But no one is flitting around on the Internet looking for a stranger to give \$25 to. In order to have a successful crowdfunding campaign, you have to have people to campaign to. The reason PBS and NPR funding drives work is that they are well-established, highly-respected media entities with **HUGE** audiences. And **STILL** they have to campaign a couple of times a year, because people don't just give to them unasked.

You, on the other hand, are not PBS or NPR, thus you have to go out and find your unique audience. Your work isn't meant for everyone; it won't appeal to everyone's taste. In fact, some people might really abhor it. And that's fine! Focusing on the people your work speaks to is the key.

GIVE TO GET BACK

If you're going to ask others for crowdfunding support, you need to have a record of giving it yourself. If we find a crowdfunding campaign and then see that the people who are running it haven't bothered to support anyone else, we decline. Partly, it's just good manners. Independent artists are often on shoestring budgets, but we can all afford to share a little cheer to a crowdfunding campaign we like. And you don't have to be a millionaire to be a supporter. If you have a spare \$10, support ten campaigns with a buck.

In addition to showing that you're a team player, backing the crowdfunding campaigns of others gives you a great chance to research how others are doing it. You learn the process of backing, which will be handy when people have questions about your campaign (and they will). You get to see how others use 'Backer Updates' to keep their supporters in-the-know. You might even get the very valuable experience of backing a project that doesn't deliver what they promise, or a project whose creators drop off the face of the earth once their campaign is over. Being an experienced backer will make you a better crowdfunder. We promise you.

HAVE A GOOD PITCH

Your pitch video is your one shot to hook your potential backers, so you have to make it a good one. People's time is valuable, so we recommend that good pitch videos time out at 2 minutes or less. You don't want to drone on and on about what the project means to you or list everyone who's been an inspiration to you. Instead, you want your video to tell your audience who you are, what your project is, and why they should trust you with their money.

Additionally, your pitch video is your chance to show people what you can do. If you're a filmmaker, show off your editing skills and have good sound; if you're a dancer, make sure there's dancing in your video; and so on.

The days of "Please give to help me make my dream come true" are over. Everyone on social media has seen a million crowdfunding campaigns already, and you really need to step up your game to get noticed. Be creative. Be engaging. And be yourself. Because, at the end of the day, people aren't investing in your project: it doesn't exist yet; they're investing in you.

PICK YOUR PERKS

A central component to crowdfunding campaigns is that in return for your backers' support, you give them 'perks.' These are basically thank you gifts for their generosity. Remember, your backers don't receive a cut of whatever money you make on your projects and, generally, they cannot use their contribution to your project as a tax write-off. So, your perks are a special way to show appreciation for their support, as well as a way to keep your project (and you) in their minds between the end of your campaign and, likely, the completion of your project.

What makes a good perk? Good perks are unique to your project. Anyone can offer a t-shirt or a DVD. So many offer 'digital thank yous.' But what can you do to set yourself apart? We encourage those interested in crowdfunding to really take a look at their project and related resources and figure out what they have to offer their backers that is truly exciting and inspiring.

We once saw a friend write poems as thank yous for backers; this was perfect for him because he was an accomplished poet, and his backers received these well.

A secondary bonus to his poem plan: sending a backer a poem via the crowdfunding platform or email is completely free. We definitely recommend that crowdfunders search for perks that do not have to be specially manufactured (t-shirts, for example) and mailed. Postage can eat up a surprising chunk of your crowdfunded moolah, especially if you succeeded in gathering hundreds of backers. It seems like a good idea to send everyone who contributes \$5 or more stickers before your campaign starts; it seems like a terrible idea when you're addressing 250 envelopes and figuring out international postage for some.

One exception to this is when you're using your crowdfunding campaign as a way to pre-sell something. Perhaps you have a new album coming out, a new book, a new kitchen gadget; in those cases, you will probably want to offer physical copies of these items to your backers. However, make sure you consider the cost of production as well as postage when you select the perk price.

One popular option for sharing perks: keep it digital. Consider offering ebooks, digital downloads of your film, pictures, PDFs of signed scripts, Skype sessions, etc. Technology is amazing - (it helped you raise your money online for your project, didn't it?) - so use it.

LINE UP INFLUENCERS

You may have a good social media base, but it's also important to reach out to influencers prior to your campaign. These are people in your network who also have established social media presences and who can help you spread the word. Retweets and Facebook postings by influencers are just as valuable as monetary contributions to your campaign, as they get more eyes on your pitch. The ripple effect: it works.

SET A REASONABLE GOAL

Lastly, make sure you set a realistic and reasonable goal. If you have a smallish social media base and no name actors in your short film, setting a goal of \$50,000 is probably way overshooting it.

One more thing: your crowdfunding campaign is not going to go viral. Everyone has this dream that if just the right person saw their work, they could be catapulted to fame. However, we have never seen a crowdfunding campaign go viral. The only way we see crowdfunding campaigns run by people who aren't our friends is when people we follow on Twitter or Facebook share a link. When someone you trust shares something and says it's worth a watch, you're more likely to click, right? The same goes in the opposite direction; if you don't have followers on Twitter, there's no one to see your campaign and spread the word about it. This is why it's worth it to put in the time to build your social media presence beforehand.

DURING. MANAGING A CAMPAIGN

Okay. So now let's assume that you have built your social media base, reached out to influencers, who are actively spreading the word about your campaign, and your pitch video is stellar. Hooray! Now what?

TELL PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

The first thing you want to do is spread the word on all of your social media outlets and through email. This is not the time to be timid. Make everyone you know aware of the fact that you're running a crowdfunding campaign for a specific amount of time and invite them to be involved.

THANK EVERYONE

You need to publicly thank every single person who contributes to your campaign, whether they are on social media or not. Why? Because thanking them shows that you have appreciation and generosity of spirit. It also shows that there are people investing their money in you, and you want everyone on your social media networks to know that there's a team building up behind you. People love joining teams. Show off yours.

One more thing: don't make a 'thank you' a perk in your campaign. A 'thank you' to each backer should be a given. Save your perks for something cool and unexpected.

BE YOURSELF

It's important once a campaign starts that you don't only tweet about your campaign. You have to be yourself.

Don't think that the moment your crowdfunding campaign starts that you have to become a used car salesman or a carnival barker. Keep being yourself. If you were flirting with people before, flirt during your campaign. If you were sharing the work of others, continue doing that. Keep doing the things that helped you build your social media audience in the first place; that's what they're here for.

TAKE A BREAK

Crowdfunding campaigns can be stressful, especially when things aren't going the way you hoped they would. When you start to get stressed, or obsessed, take a break. The campaign will still be there when you get back. Take a walk. Talk to a friend. See a movie. Work on the actual project that you're hoping to raise money for: your movie, your painting, your genius gizmo. Do something that revitalizes you so that you're ready for the next leg of your battle. It'll keep you from becoming a Brat, a Bully, or Chicken Little.

REASSESS WHEN NEEDED

If your campaign isn't gathering backers the way you had hoped for, consider changing your approach.

Once you start your campaign on Indiegogo or Kickstarter, you can't change your goal, so that's not an option. Instead, see if you need to change the tone of your tweets. Perhaps there are some influencers you can reach out to. Or, maybe your pitch video isn't engaging or clear enough; ask some trusted friends for their honest opinion, and consider adding more information (or more fun) in a new video.

You'll evolve and adapt quite a bit during your first campaign. As we've said before, there's nothing wrong with making mistakes; just make sure you learn from them.

AFTER: WHEN ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN

Now let's assume you have hit your goal: we'll talk about what to do if you don't hit your goal a little later.

SHOWER THE PEOPLE WHO GAVE WITH LOVE

First, congratulations - you did it! What are you going to do now? First, keep thanking people. Sure, maybe you thanked each of your backers individually on Twitter or Facebook, but it wouldn't hurt to do it again, would it? I mean, these people just made it so that you can do your dream project. Do you really not have time for another heartfelt showing of appreciation? For people who contributed large amounts (we'll let you determine what this means for your campaign), perhaps consider sending them messages via the crowdfunding platform you used or through email.

PERK PREP

Indiegogo and Kickstarter each give you the option of surveying your contributors according to their contribution level in order to gather information about the perks you need to deliver. Perhaps you need addresses. Perhaps you need t-shirt sizes. Maybe you need to know how they'd like to be listed on your website or in the credits of your film. For each perk level, think carefully about the information you need, then gather this information. Understand that it may take people a couple of days to respond. You may have to follow up individually for people you don't hear from.

GET ORGANIZED

Once you gather your perk info, download a spreadsheet of backer info from the crowdfunding platform you used. Once you've downloaded it, we recommend that you reorganize your spreadsheet in the way that's more helpful for you. All that you need for this are simple Excel spreadsheet skills. We highly recommend that you do this sooner than later, because when you're finally ready to send out your perks, you're not going to want to stop and figure out your spreadsheet info. It'll also be easier to organize things while your campaign (and your backers) are fresh in your mind. Once you organize your backer spreadsheet, create a system for keeping track of your perk delivery.

KEEP COMMUNICATING

To us, one of the worst things a crowdfunder who hits goal can do is cease communication with her backers. It's rude, and it's tacky. Certainly you can take a break from daily promotion now that your campaign is over, but you should continue giving your backers updates about milestones related to your project and the delivery of perks.

What do you do if your project is going to take longer than you anticipated? Tell your backers. What do you do if your perks are going to take longer to deliver than you said in your campaign? Tell your backers. What do you do if it turns out you can't complete your project at all? Tell your backers. Everyone appreciates honesty, and it'll help you down the line in the event that you decide to crowdfund again or want to rally your troops around another cause or activity. Of course no one wants to let people down, but trust us: it's much better to be upfront about bumps in the road than to drop off the radar and have upset backers come to look for you.

FUNNY STORY ABOUT A CRAZY STEP-DAD WHO FANCIED HIMSELF A GANGSTER

About 6 months after our crowdfunding campaign for *TILT*, the director dropped off the face of the earth. He no longer communicated with his collaborators or backers. Because of this, it took us much longer to make the film than if he'd stayed involved, or was at least willing to answer an email about how we could get the footage. Thankfully, our editor, Jeremy Doyle, was incredibly persistent, got all of the footage, and finished the film. But it took a long time. And during that long time, Jessica's mother got increasingly irritated with the director's lack of initiative and lack of communication. She had given a sizable contribution and feared that the movie would never be finished. And it made her mad. Like really mad.

After sending the director several emails that got no response, her husband got involved. Now, Jessica's step-dad is an old-school sort of fellow. He has friends with names like Lenny and Tony and "No-Nuts-Capone." They're wise-ish guys who are debt-collectors of the knuckle-breaking variety, who wear their un-ironic fedoras and McMurphy fisherman caps slightly askew, and who call all waitresses "honey."

When Jessica's step-dad called the director at his new restaurant, the director refused to take the call. Jerry, however, was undeterred. He had a few questions for the waitress who'd answered the phone.

"Hey, honey. How's your boss? How's his family? His kids doin' okay? And how 'bout the man, himself? Did I already ask about him? How's he doin'? How are his legs? They working alright? I'd really hate it if for some reason his legs stopped workin'. You know what I mean? I mean, what a tragedy it'd be if he couldn't walk right. How 'bout his arms? They workin' okay? Is he able to use 'em to make the...ah...pasta salad or whatever such shit you serve there? Glad to hear it, honey. I'd really hate it if suddenly, one day, for no reason, his arms stopped workin'. Can you tell him that for me, sweetheart? I'd be forever in your debt."

Two weeks later, my mom got a check in the mail refunding the money she'd put up for the campaign.

Now, hopefully you're not related to Jessica's step-dad, because what he did was completely inappropriate and slightly criminal. (He's like 10,000 years old and cries during Lifetime movies, though, so we mostly just found it amusing and embarrassing, rather than dangerous.) But you never know who might contribute and how they might respond to your ability to communicate effectively and deliver on your promises. Bottom line: respect your backers enough to tell them the truth in a timely fashion.

WHAT IF YOU DIDN'T HIT YOUR CROWDFUNDING GOAL?

Not every crowdfunding campaign hits its goal, and there's no embarrassment in a campaign that falls short as long as you gave it your best.

Common reasons for failed campaigns include the lack of a strong social media presence, a goal that's too high, a pitch video that is unclear or unmotivating, or perks that don't grab people's attention. So what do you do when it seems like all is lost?

CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES

Instead of declaring that crowdfunding is stupid, your friends are jerks, or that you're giving up your dream, give yourself credit for what you did right and what you learned. So maybe you realized that you should have maybe waited until you'd built a stronger social media base. Perhaps you shouldn't have asked for \$50,000 to make your first short when you didn't have anything to show anyone as a sample of your work. It's okay. Why? Because next time, you'll do it smarter.

BE GRACIOUS

Even though you didn't hit your goal, you probably still had a nice number of backers who showed you some support: thank them copiously. Show them that you are graceful and reflective, and continue to give them updates on the progress of future projects. If they were willing to support you this time, they are more likely to support you in the future, as long as you are gracious.

COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN

In the event that you raised money through Indiegogo's flex-plan (they sent you the money you raised through the duration of the campaign) but did not reach your entire goal, let your backers know what your plan is. Are you still going to do your project? Are you going to modify it? Are you going to seek alternate funding? Are you still going to be able to deliver the perks you promised? Again, it's important that you choose to communicate to your backers before they come asking you questions ("How are your legs workin'?"). Ultimately, they still trusted you with their money; the least you can do is be honest with them. You are not defined by a failed crowdfunding campaign; you show your true colors in how you handle it.

SUMMARY

Crowdfunding is difficult. It takes up a lot of time and requires an insane amount of preparation, and even then...sometimes it doesn't work. But it's also a great way to raise money

to do your projects without having to pay investors back. When you do it right, it's really rewarding. When you fall short, you've still learned valuable lessons.

WANT MORE?

Come play with us on Twitter at [@kingisafink](https://twitter.com/kingisafink) or visit us at kingisafink.com.