

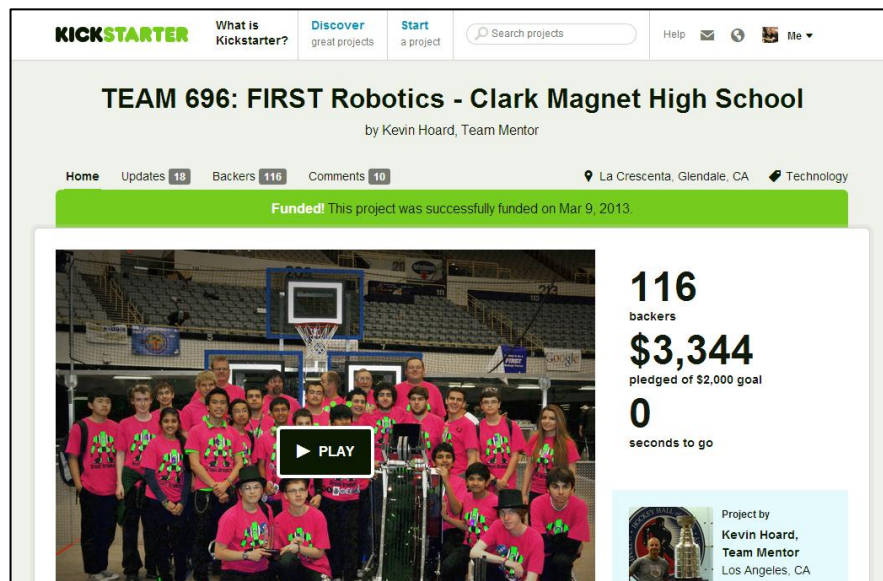


FIRST® Fundraising Toolkit

Team Crowdfunding Campaign Interviews

The interviews below give an overview of FIRST Team Crowdfunding Campaigns. Questions include how teams picked their funding goals, the pros/cons of the crowdfunding campaign and the best practices used to run the campaigns. These interviews cover campaigns created using the crowdfunding sites [Kickstarter](#), [GoFundMe](#), and [Piggybackr](#).

FRC Team 696 - [2013 KickStarter Campaign](#):



- **How did the team pick the monetary goal they wanted to reach with the crowdfunding campaign?**
 - The first year we went for \$2,500 and got about \$3,100. I think the \$2,500 was just a shot in the dark. Last year, we lowered our expectations to \$2,000. We discussed the slow economy as the main reason. We felt that the average donation would be \$25 and we would need 80 backers at that level. As our team has 30 students, we felt each student could find two \$25 backers if pressed and the rest would come in from backers that found us on the site.
- **What challenges did the team run into when trying to reach this goal?**
 - It seemed that the kids didn't network as well as we would have liked. I had hoped that each student would have reached out to more friends, family and parent's co-workers for support. Getting responses from backers, tracking rewards and mailing the rewards was also difficult.
- **How long was the campaign?**
 - 45 days

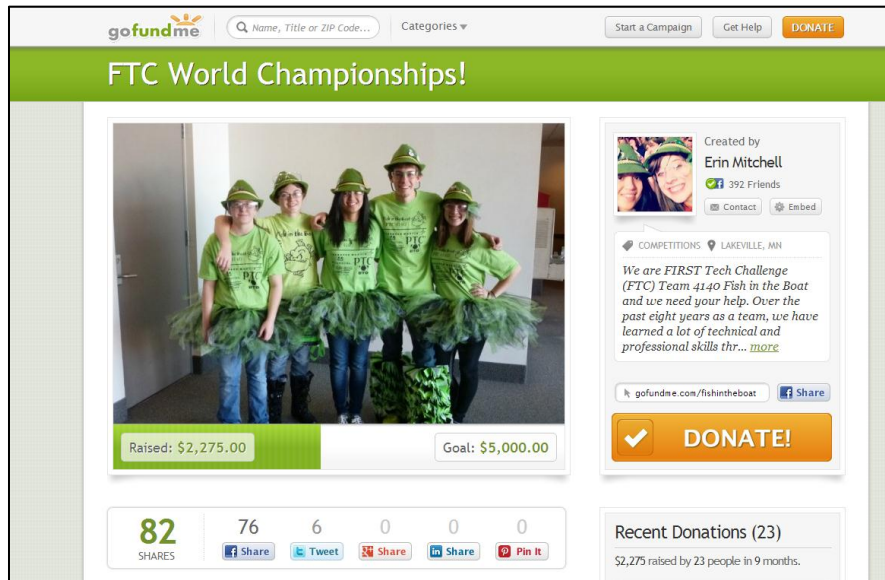
- **How did the team choose the different levels of sponsorship for the campaign?**
 - We looked at other projects, both *FIRST* teams and other Kickstarter projects that had been funded. We wanted to have a few low levels, under \$25, and just a couple over, \$100+. We tried to create rewards that matched the pledge. \$25 got you a T-shirt; \$100 one of our sponsor plaques. These levels match our standard sponsorship levels.

- **Did the team run into any challenges doing this fundraiser?**
 - Tracking rewards and mailing the rewards. Getting responses from backers was also difficult.

- **What are some of the pros/cons associated with running a crowdfunding campaign as an FRC team?**
 - **Pro:** Easy way to get all members involved in fundraising, not relying on just the business team. We were able to use some of the video for other uses as well.
 - **Cons:** Getting more students to reach out/network was difficult. Many students assumed that money and pledges would just show up because we were online.

- **Are there any best practices you followed when running the campaign?**
 - Reward levels that matched the value of the pledge.
 - Frequent updates to the project. We got a lot of positive comments on our updates.

FTC Team 4140 - [2013 GoFundMe Page](#):



- **How did the team pick the monetary goal they wanted to reach with the crowdfunding campaign?**
 - We wanted to raise about \$2,000 from GoFundMe. We figured we would set it high and see what happened. We found GoFundMe from FTC team 'Geeks' in just their underpants who were trying to raise money to get their team to Championship in 2012 (no longer in existenc—I believe they all aged out) Their goal was \$7,250, which I believe was all of the funding they needed to get to Championship. We thought that was too high and outside the realm of possibility for us to raise in a month and a half, so we set it at \$5,000 to see what happened.
- **What challenges did the team run into when trying to reach this goal?**
 - We did not meet our goal of \$5,000, but we did meet our personal goal of \$2,000. One of our biggest problems running the campaign - and for our team in general - is talking to our community and getting outside the *FIRST* community. Many contributors were relatives or already part of the *FIRST* community, and there were only a few who donated because they saw our news article. We also had the challenge at the end of the fundraiser to send letters and pins to all the contributors, given that we just got back from Championship and were exhausted and just wanted to curl up and die.
- **How did the team promote the campaign?**
 - 'Fish in the Boat' used our 'ins' in social media to promote our page. We posted the page on our Facebook page, tweeted about it and put 'DONATE' buttons on our website. We also contacted our local newspaper and news station. Though the news did not air anything, the newspaper put an article in the news and we found our largest GoFundMe sponsor through the article.

- **How long was the campaign?**
 - We started about a month and a half before Championship and posted about it regularly up until going to Championship. I think the page is still open, but we don't expect anyone to donate at this point.

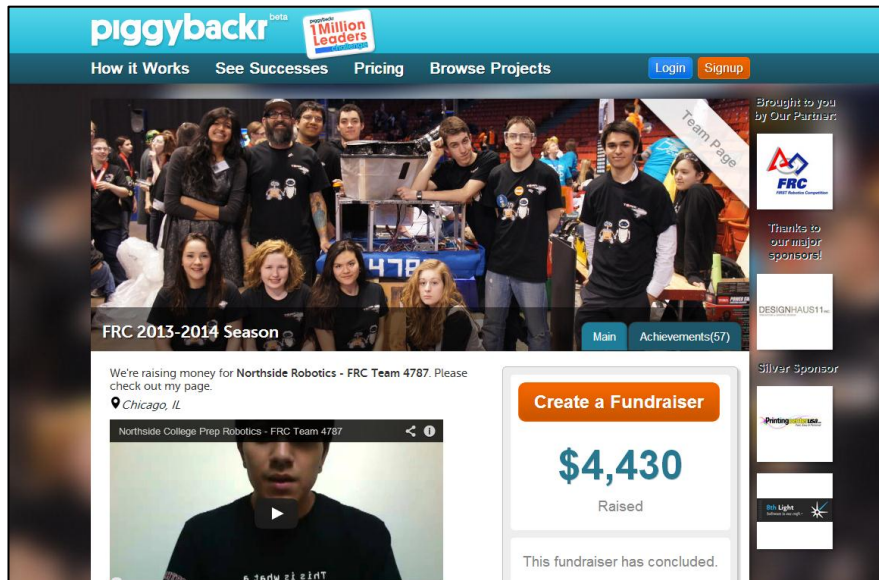
- **How did the team choose the different levels of sponsorship for the campaign?**
 - We picked numbers that we thought people would choose, ranging from \$5 - \$750+. Now after using the fundraiser, we would have removed the \$15 level and added a \$50 level but kept it generally the same.

- **What are some of the pros/cons associated with running a crowdfunding campaign as an FTC team?**
 - **Pros:** Relatives you wouldn't think would donate may end up doing so (my second cousin donated \$100 from Alaska). It's easy and doesn't take much maintenance. There is always that little surprise when you get that ping in your inbox saying "Hey, someone supports you!"
 - **Cons:** GoFundMe takes a small percentage of all contributions as does PayPal, so a \$100 donation is actually about \$92. It is beneficial to have a large media following or contacts into the media so more people are aware of your campaign. Not having that hurt us a bit.

- **Are there any best practices you followed when running the campaign?**
 - Post it all over your Facebook/twitter/website/tumblr. Tell your friends and family to post it everywhere. Get people to know it exists and that your team needs help.
 - I like that we didn't count on it as a source of funding because I think it was a more hit or miss activity than most of our corporate sponsors. I would NOT use it as a main source of funds, but if you're looking for a little extra, this is a good place to go.
 - Things we should have done: Kept the page updated with our activities and not just left it alone.

- **Did you have any project supporters that surprised the team?**
 - Our local Knights of Columbus chapter donated to us after seeing the news article. We didn't think that many people would donate because of the article but they were our largest supporter!

FRC Team 4787 - [2013 Piggybackr Campaign](#):



- **How did the team pick the monetary goal they wanted to reach with the crowdfunding campaign?**
 - My team had previously decided upon our optimal budget for the year, which is where we came up with the monetary goal for our campaign.
- **What challenges did the team run into when trying to reach this goal?**
 - We did have some trouble reaching our goal. We were not able to reach our set goal, which was quite high, but we were able to make ample process to start our season off on a good foot.
 - Piggybackr is a great platform because it allows you to work as a team while fundraising. We did run into some issues when there was a lack of communication on the behalf of team members and we lost touch with the sense of teamwork. However, we were able to work to work through this in order to continue to make progress toward reaching our goal
- **How did the team promote the campaign?**
 - We used social media to promote our campaign. Our team has both a Facebook page and a twitter account on which we promoted our campaign on a daily basis. Additionally, each of our team members shared our campaign on their individual social media pages. We are large believers in the power of social media to reach out to the masses.
- **How long was the campaign?**
 - Our campaign was just about 2 months long, which is a large time gap for a campaign. We wanted to give ourselves a good portion of the summer to focus on our campaign.

- **How did the team choose the different levels of sponsorship for the campaign?**
 - We decided upon the different levels of sponsorship based on how we would advertise our sponsors. Different levels specified whether our sponsors would be listed on our banner, robot and/or T-shirts.

- **What are some of the pros/cons associated with running a crowdfunding campaign as an FRC team?**
 - Piggybackr is a great resource for FRC teams because it does allow you to work as a team, allowing every team member to be active and involved in the process of fundraising. Piggybackr is youth friendly and provides teams with the resources they will need to run an active campaign. I am ultimately very happy with my team's campaign on Piggybackr, however, teams do need to be aware that it takes great team communication and collaboration to be successful.

- **Are there any best practices you followed when running the campaign?**
 - One of the best practices when running a campaign is to stay active. Make sure that you post updates and send emails. Staying in contact with sponsors and potential sponsors is very important. Staying active also entails staying active outside of Piggybackr. For my team, this meant social media. Spreading the word about what you are doing is your best bet of finding sponsors.

- **Did you have any project supporters that surprised the team?**
 - We were definitely surprised when students from our school who were not members of our robotics team supported our campaign. Having their support meant a lot to our team and demonstrated just how much of an impact our team has made on our school.

Contribute to the Toolkit:

Did your team run a Crowdfunding Campaign last year? If your team would be willing to add information to the *FIRST* Fundraising Toolkit, please contact Renee Becker, the *FIRST* Fundraising Toolkit Coordinator, at rbecker@usfirst.org