

YOUR FIRST KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN



VILIUS STANISLOVAITIS

CONTENTS

Introduction	01
Personal Network	02
Business Network	05
Every Acquaintance Can Be Useful	07
Followers	12
Direct Contact With Potential Backers	16
Posting on Social Media, Forums and Target Groups	20
Conclusion	23

INTRODUCTION

What is the number one difference between successful and failed Kickstarter campaigns? All successful projects had a crowd of potential backers before they even launched a campaign. In this guide we will review 6 methods that will help you to generate potential backers for your first Kickstarter project for FREE.

This guide is an excerpt from a book "Your First Kickstarter Campaign", which will soon be available. I hope you'll enjoy this guide and if you find it useful, subscribe at <https://www.kickstarterbook.com> and you'll be the first to notified when the complete book is launched!



NOTIFY ME!

PERSONAL NETWORK

If you are creating something new, the first people to find out will most likely be your relatives, friends, and acquaintances. These people know and trust you, and most of them will definitely support your idea. Even if the product you are creating is completely irrelevant to them, their support is still important, because Kickstarter's algorithm takes into account the number of new backers (even if they pledge just \$1).

Most probably, you have some preferred communication channel that you use with your contacts. It can be a simple phone call, some messaging platform (Whatsapp, Viber, Facebook Messenger, etc.), social network, or email. I recommend dividing your personal contacts into a few groups, depending on the way you use to communicate with them. Prepare a personalized text and then outreach to your contacts. Make sure you specify what you are planning to do and what you want from them. You can mention that if the project is relevant for them, they will be able make a pledge and choose your product as a reward. If the project is irrelevant, but they still want to support you, they can make a symbolic \$1 pledge without any reward.

Explain to them the importance of this action. If the Kickstarter platform detects a rapid growth of backers, your project may appear higher up in the search results, which will provide additional backers from the platform. As it is a pre-launch stage, at the end of your message or email, it's enough to ask if they would like to be notified when the campaign is launched. That's all. When you get their permission, you can add them to the appropriate mailing list.

My first Kickstarter project was a book about VoIP business. It was quite specific and I knew it would be irrelevant to my friends. I had to overcome myself because pitching friends and asking for their support was extremely hard for me. Even though I had a few hundred friends on Facebook, I did not contact them all. I picked about 50 friends and sent them private messages. After explaining what I was doing, I asked if they would like to be notified when the Kickstarter campaign would start. If they said "Yes," I asked them to provide their email address. Looking at it retrospectively, this wasn't necessary, as I could have easily sent 50 private messages through Facebook without spending too much time. But back then, I thought that reaching them by email will be more effective and will save me some time.

I understood that my book wasn't relevant to my friends, so I didn't expect any of them to back my project. But to my surprise, more than half of them supported my project and not just with a symbolic amount. Some of them bought the book and one or two donated a few hundred dollars.

Recalling how difficult it was to ask for help and what kind of gratitude I felt for my friends and acquaintances who supported this project, I can safely say that all of this was worth doing. When asking for help and providing it, we make our friendship bonds stronger. If you are surrounding yourself with the right type of people, they will be always happy to help.



Fig. 1. Funding progress of the book "How to Start a VoIP Business" on Kickstarter

BUSINESS NETWORK

This list includes all people with whom you share a common activity. They can be your potential and existing clients, partners, or people you have met at conferences or seminars.

It is ideal when a concept that you want to bring to life on the Kickstarter platform is related to the area in which you have been working for a while. Because of this, you will have accumulated a number of business contacts, which will really be useful in this case. Unlucky are those who do not gather or systemize their contacts. But nowadays, it is hard to find an entrepreneur who does not use a customer relationship management (CRM) system or the business contact social network LinkedIn.

As I suggested doing with personal contacts, the same rule applies here. Choose those channels that you use for regular communication. You can send private messages via LinkedIn or you can export all contacts into a CSV file and then use this list to send personalized emails. If you use Gmail, I recommend trying Yesware or Yet Another Email Merge. Both are Gmail extensions that allow you to send personalized emails to a group of people.

Such emails will look exactly the same as if you sent them regularly. However, you can use email merge programs only if you have a relatively small mailing list. E.g. Yet Another Email Merge allows you to send up to 400 emails within 24 hours. But if you use the maximum possible limit, you risk being captured by spam filters and as a result, your email may end up in the spam box.

To make sure that your email reaches the inbox of your contact, I would recommend choosing around 150 emails per email blast within 24 hours as a safe limit. If you have a bigger list, use email merge programs only for the most important contacts, and to notify others, use email marketing platforms (MailChimp, Mailerlite, GetResponse, etc.) that are meant to handle huge lists. Also, remember to ask for permission to send emails, or else your messages may appear in spam.

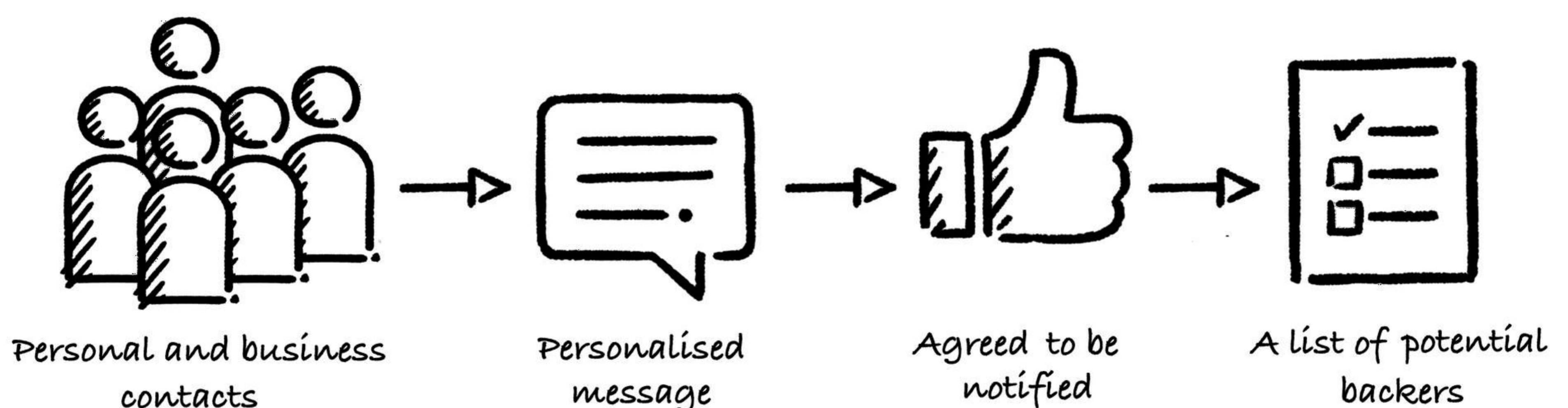


Fig. 2. How to turn personal and business contacts into potential backers

EVERY ACQUAINTANCE CAN BE USEFUL

When you meet a person, you never know in which direction the acquaintanceship may go. I will tell you the story of how one acquaintance surpassed all my expectations.

Five years ago, the company director and I were discussing how to improve our company's sales results. We had both read the book *Predictable Revenue: Turn Your Business Into a Sales Machine with the \$100 Million Best Practices of Salesforce.com* by Aaron Ross and Marylou Tyler. This book described a predictable sales process, which we thought could be adapted to our case. We thought: "Who could we consult on how to implement this process better than the authors of the book?" So we decided to give it a shot and contact the authors of this book, without knowing what to expect.

We were worried that they would respond at all and if they did, whether we could afford their consultation fees. To our surprise, Marylou Tyler, the co-author of the book, not only responded, but offered to arrange a call and discuss our case and how she could help.

The conversation shocked us even more. She said: “I only work with clients from the USA and have not yet tried remote consultations, but if you agree to be my guinea pigs, we can try working together.” I almost fell out of my chair: the bestseller author had just agreed to consult us for FREE!

We consulted with Marylou each week and tried to implement the sales process for half a year, but we were unable to create a process that would pay us back and improve our sales, so we had to give up on the idea. Nevertheless, I was grateful and kept in touch with Marylou and emailed her once in a while.

After a year, before introducing my book campaign on the Kickstarter platform, I decided to write her and tell about my old dream to publish a book. She responded and told me she was happy that I was progressing, and asked me to inform her when the campaign started. After introducing the project, I informed her once more, but to be blunt, I did not expect anything, since the book was not in her area. But something unbelievable happened...

On Friday evening, I checked the funding progress of my campaign and I was left completely shocked... Marylou had supported my project with \$800! At first I was confused and thought: "Why would such an influential person support my personal project?" But after some time, and reading one of her articles, everything made sense. This is what she wrote in one of her LinkedIn posts:

I feel it is my responsibility to share the expertise I implement for companies to those who request my assistance.

To facilitate this effort, I mentor 2-3 sales professionals on a pro-bono basis each quarter. My students reach out to me directly (since I teach this style of sales process, I applaud their efforts).

I ask little in return:

Take this mentorship as seriously as I do.

Be on time for our calls.

Do the homework I've given you.

Execute the process I'm teaching you.

Here is the sad statistic I want to share with you today. Of the 32 sales professionals I've mentored over the past 4 years, only 3 completed our sessions (9.4%). 29 (90.6%) ...

Canceled phone sessions with me minutes before our scheduled call

Did not complete the homework I assigned

Lost focus (stuck in urgent-but-not-important activities at work)

Just plain gave up

And the 3 who finished?

All 3 achieved and even outperformed the goals we originally set together:

One has written a book.

One is now a Chief Revenue Officer.

Another has gone on to become a speaker and noted authority in his field.

All have used the outreach engine to further their sales efforts.

Which one of this group are you, truly?

How to beat 90% of people who want to achieve something?

- Appear on scheduled meetings on time
- Do your homework
- Execute the process
- Don't give up

Here are few tips on developing new relationships:

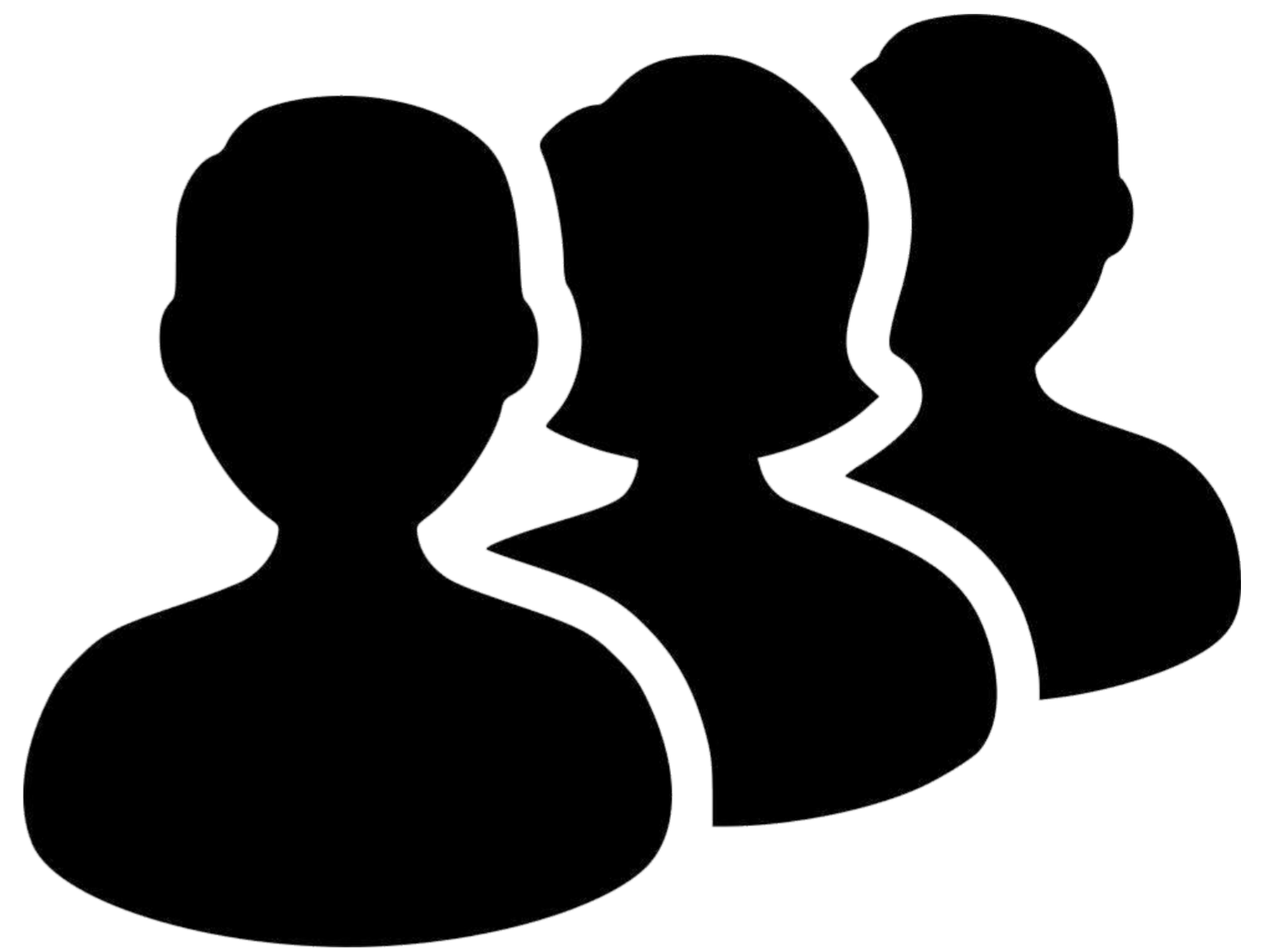
- **Compliment a person if you genuinely value what they do or if their work changed something in your life for the better.** I expect that you read a lot of interesting articles, books, listen to podcasts, participate in various conferences, seminars, or other events. If you find some content valuable, tell this to an author or speaker directly or by email. Trust me, they will be happy to know that someone is genuinely interested and appreciates their work.
- **Start making acquaintances as early as possible.** After reading a book you liked or visiting an interesting blog, instantly write to the author. When listening to a great seminar, ask the speaker a question or chat to them after the seminar. Act quickly because the more you think about how to approach a person, the bigger probability that you will never do this.

● **Think about the addressee and not about yourself.** When attempting to start a relationship with someone, don't ask for a favor instantly. If you do so, you will most likely be ignored, and your relationship will not move any further. Influential people get tons of messages with different requests, and they make a very fast decision about whom to respond to. So instead of asking for a favor, think about how you can create value for them. Commend them for the great insights in the article; tell the story of how their book changed your life.

● **Do not create excessive expectations when you start a relationship.** Do not get in touch with anyone only hoping for them to immediately support your project. Your intentions will be easily noticed when communicating. Start new relationships because a particular person is interesting to you, without expecting that they will help you in the future. First create value for them and leave everything else to the natural flow. If it happens that they return your favor, let this be a pleasant surprise rather than an expectation.

FOLLOWERS

Before getting into this topic, I will clarify the meaning of a follower in this guide. A follower is a stranger to you who has subscribed to your newsletter or follows you or



your project on social networks. Your friend or business partner may also follow you, but we have already discussed that group of people, so now, we will talk about followers who you do not know and who do not belong to a personal or business group.

You probably associate followers with an audience of hundreds of thousands of people that celebrities gather. But nowadays, even a regular person who uploads selfies on Instagram can have followers. Your project can also have followers, if you are creating something interesting and you are ready to constantly share relevant content to your target audience on social networks. That is one of the most powerful modern tools, nowadays.

You should begin by creating profiles on the channels that your target audience uses the most (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc.). After creating a profile, you have to constantly upload new and interesting content (articles, videos, photos, infographics, etc.) that would interest your followers and provoke them to engage with the information you share.

To find and periodically post interesting content on different platforms is not easy, so you can use social media management tools, such as Hootsuite, Buffer, SocialOomph, Everypost, etc. They allow you to upload content in one place and distribute it at certain times to the platforms you have picked. Do not forget that the posts should be different, depending on what site you are posting them on. But if you think that creating different posts will take too much time, just pick one social network and be active on that. For example, I used only LinkedIn to publish articles and updates about my first book and it was enough for me.

By constantly creating relevant content, your community will be more immersed and your project will gain popularity. It is even more important to constantly grow your community, who are people interested in your product. Sometimes achieving this organically is not easy, especially when social networks such as Facebook change their algorithms to reduce organic growth and companies or projects must buy ads in order to reach their audience and attract new followers.

It is also important to have your followers' email addresses, so that additionally you can communicate with them via emails. The probability that your followers will notice your email is a few times higher than the probability that they will see your post in a social network. That's why it's so important to collect emails. To request an email, you can use internal forms in social networks or point your followers to your landing page, where they can leave their contact details.

You can make the most from your followers when you share information on a certain niche, before you even consider starting a crowdfunding campaign. A great example on how to use your followers to support your project is the beauty and fashion blog *advanced.style*, which is devoted “to capturing the sartorial savvy of the senior set.” Ari Seth Cohen, the creator of the *Advanced Style* blog, together with his friend Lina Plioplyte, decided to crowdfund the film of the same title: *Advanced Style*. Since Ari’s blog had a decent number of followers, it helped the creators to not only reach their primary financial goal on the Kickstarter platform, but to also surpass it. Later, Ari Seth Cohen also published the *Advanced Style* book, which achieved success on Amazon.

So if you have any sort of hobby, are interested in a specific niche, and want to share information that could be relevant to a specific audience, start working on it as early as possible. If you create useful content on a regular basis that thousands of people start to like, you will establish a group of followers that is worth a lot these days. Once you achieve a significant number of engaged followers, you’ll be able to crowdfund a project related to your niche much easier.

DIRECT CONTACT WITH POTENTIAL BACKERS

You can also find potential backers or people that could help you directly. This process takes longer, but you will be able to easily compare the progress and results after evaluating other methods. If you see that the results of using this method are acceptable, you can describe the process and assign the job to virtual assistants who can do this at a relatively low hourly rate.

I tried to run an experiment and apply this strategy for the virtual training assistant Ovaio, whose target audience was swimmers and swimming coaches. After simply entering “swimming coach email” into Google, I found many USA-based universities and colleges that provide contact information of their swimming coaches in their website.

The structure was more or less the same on all websites, so I managed to gather approximately 130 contact details of swimming coaches and systemized the data (see Table 1) within two hours. Nowadays there are many web scraping tools that would allow to accomplish the same task even faster.

First Name	Title	Email	Country
Megan	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Trevor	Head Coach	-	USA
Fernando	Senior Assistant Coach	-	USA
Doug	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Matt	Head Coach	-	USA
Kit	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Jim	Head Coach	-	USA
Caroline	Head Coach	-	USA
Blake	Head Coach	-	USA
Stephen	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Janko	Head Coach	-	USA
Ingrid	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Geoff	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Callum	Senior Assistant Coach	-	USA
Jeff	Assistant Coach	-	USA
Mat	Head Coach	-	UK
Gary	Head Coach	-	Canada

Table 1. A sample list of swimming coaches in USA (emails are not displayed for confidentiality reason)

I used the previously mentioned tool Yet Another Email Merge to send personalized emails. Yet Another Email Merge allows inserting custom fields from the list, such as first name, title, or website. In my case, I used just the name and the website fields (from where I found their contact details) to personalize emails.

The email that I sent looked like this:

Hi {Name},

My name is Vilius and I found your contact from the {website} website.

We're developing a virtual swimming coach that helps to improve swimming performance by displaying different parameters (such as heart rate) in real time. Currently it's in the prototype stage and we're trying to collect professional feedback from swimming coaches like you to make Ovaio better.

So I'm contacting you with a simple question.

What are the key parameters that you monitor now and how do you do that?

In total, 13% of the swimming coaches responded to this email. Most answers were detailed, containing great tips and useful information. As it was just an experiment, I didn't follow up with a request about whether they would like to be notified once the project was launched. But by evaluating their answers, I presumed that at least half of them would be interested to know when the project was launched.

This experience is interesting because you can estimate the cost per potential backer. In portals like Upwork, Fiverr, Freelancer, etc., you can find lots of offers to gather contacts. For \$10 you can get 100 email addresses of a target audience. In my given example, 13% responded with an interest, so let's assume that 5% of recipients would agree to be notified once the project was launched. This means that if we hire a virtual assistant to gather 100 contacts for \$10 and 5% become leads, then each potential backer will cost us $10 / (100 * 0.05) = \$2$. You can compare this price with the cost of advertising on Facebook and evaluate which process allows you to generate leads at a lower price.

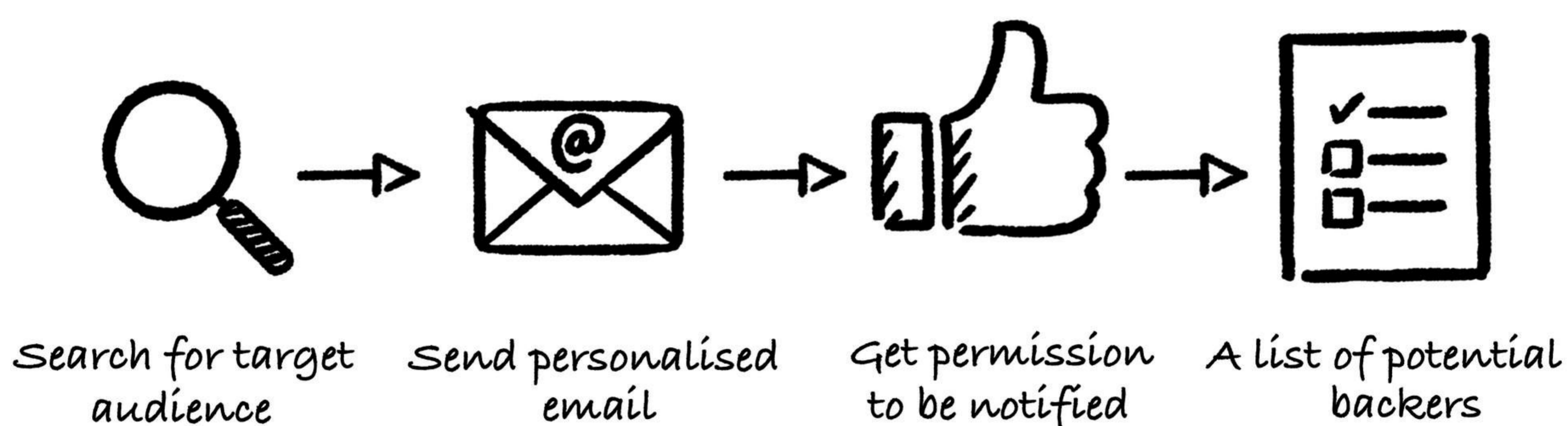


Fig. 2. How to turn your target audience to potential backers

Please note that even though a low price per lead is important, it doesn't tell you anything about lead quality, which determines how well they will convert to backers. You'll truly know this only once your project is launched. Before that, you can just make some assumptions based on their answers to your email or their messages in social networks.

POSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA, FORUMS AND TARGET GROUPS

When you have your target audience figured out, you should analyze what websites or groups they visit. These groups could be on social networks, various forums, discussions, specialized websites, etc. When you have found the right websites and groups, get acquainted with their rules, just so you do not get banned.

After joining relevant groups, try to be active: ask questions, encourage others to express their opinion, leave your comments, etc. Then create a brief and clear post on what you are doing, explaining why the members of the group or forum might be interested. At the end of your post, encourage them to register at your landing page to be the first to know once your project is launched. Some groups don't allow new members to post links—that's why it's a good practice to be more active in a group before sharing a link.

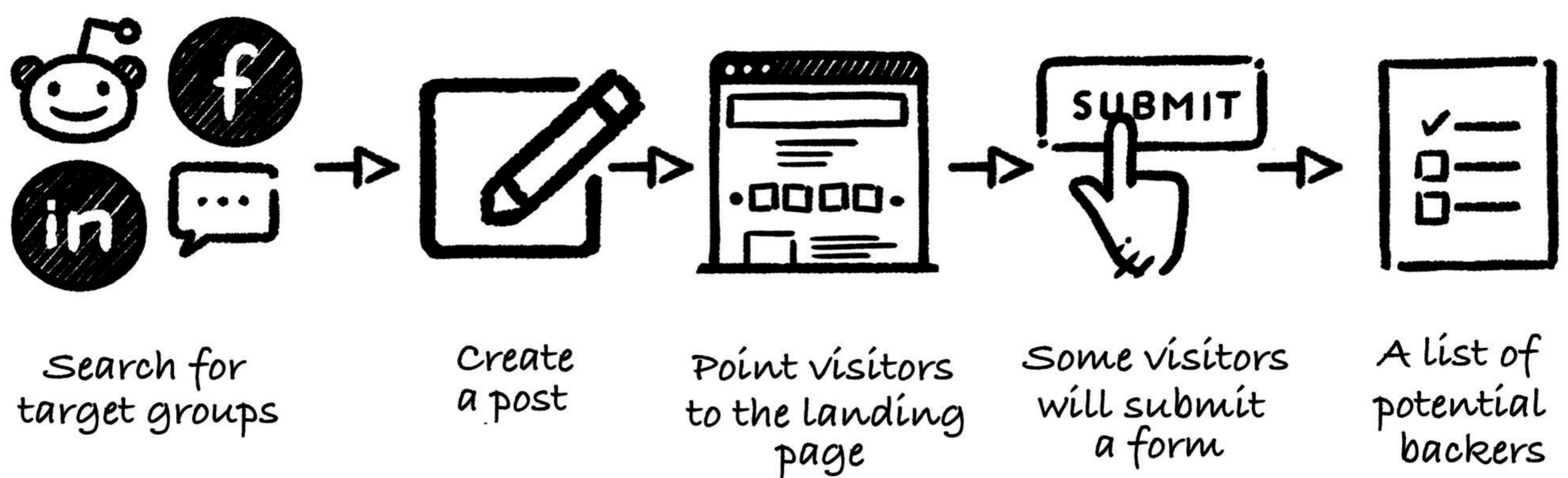


Fig. 3. How to gather potential backers from target groups

By using this strategy, the Pisound team (they developed a high-quality sound card and MIDI interface specially designed for Raspberry Pi pocket computers), gathered approximately one thousand contacts in just 24 hours! And the best part was that they didn't have to spend anything on advertising! How did they manage it? Everything started from the target audience. The potential Pisound users were people who liked high-quality audio, who knew how to solder, had a Raspberry Pi microcomputer and were interested in DIY ideas. These people are very active, enthusiastic, and are happy to share relevant information in target groups.

First, the Pisound team found a few groups that their target audience visited on the Reddit and Facebook social networks. Then they launched the beta version testing program and encouraged people to register on their landing page.

To apply to the beta version testing program, people had not only to register, but also to introduce their project and write a motivation message explaining why they should be selected.

The Pisound team post on Reddit looked like this:

For those who are into Raspberry Pi based audio projects, this may be of interest. Guys from Blokas Labs are developing an Audio / MIDI interface for RPI and what's best - they are looking for beta testers! It's a little board equipped with 24-bit 192kHz Stereo I/O and MIDI Din-5 I/O ports. Just visit their site for more info: <http://blokas.io> Cheers!

Out of all the people who registered, the Pisound team selected a few to whom they sent prototypes for testing purposes. This strategy allowed the Pisound team not only to attract potential clients, but also to improve their product. They received important feedback and learned about new examples of how their product could be used.

Let me remind you: something that works for some people will be completely ineffective for others. Never trust a single strategy, but try to experiment and see what works the best for you.

CONCLUSION

Now you know 6 methods that will help you to generate potential backers for your crowdfunding project for FREE. In my book "Your First Kickstarter Campaign" I'm also reviewing paid methods (such as Facebook Ads) to generate potential backers. In some cases paid ads are even more effective as they give fast results and are easy to track.

If you'd like to learn more about preparation for your first Kickstarter campaign, subscribe at <https://www.kickstarterbook.com> and you'll be the first to notified when the complete book is launched!



NOTIFY ME!