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The Grand Gleaners Project Analysis

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The Grand Gleaners Project Analysis

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Abstract

The Heartside Gleaning Initiative (HGI) is a Grand Rapids based non-profit organization that collects unsold produce from the city's two farmers markets and distributes it to the low-income residents of the Heartside Neighborhood. Through their efforts they increase access to healthy and local foods as well as combat food waste in the Heartside Community. Seeing the value of this work, we, an interdisciplinary team of Grand Valley State University students, sought to further the mission of the HGI by focusing predominantly on two vital aspects of any non-profit business: promoting and funding. In the winter semester of 2015 we established three courses of action. Our first course of action was to create a crowdfunding "how-to" guide for the HGI. By illustrating how to proficiently utilize crowdfunding platforms this "how-to" guide will also aid other nonprofits. Our second course of action was to develop a storyboard intended to be used in the creation of a short promotional video for the HGI. Finally, we contacted local film professionals to aid HGI in completing a promotional video during its 2015 gleaning season. It is our hope that these efforts will increase the exposure for the Heartside Gleaning Initiative and provide them with the tools to efficiently utilize this exposure.

As society advances, new technologies emerge, culture transforms, the quality of life (for some) improves, and the amount of problems increase; as society “advances” and grows more complex, our problems tend to grow more complex as well. Many of our shared problems today – problems like climate change, poverty, GMO’s, and terrorism – have no simple, straight-forward solutions. Research on these problems indicates that effectively addressing them requires cooperation from a multitude of backgrounds (Freeman 2000). These complex problems should be addressed by all of the possible stakeholders since “one man’s solution is another man’s problem.” Scholars suggest that the scale and scope of many of these current problems can best be defined as wicked (Freeman 2000). Wicked problems tend to be intractable in part because humanity not only fails to address them systematically, but also because humanity tends to be the root cause of them (Batie 2008).

The wicked problem of food scarcity has always been a critical issue, and it has led to dire nutritional consequences for the residents of low-income areas. The current agricultural system that is in common practice today leads to the wide distribution of highly processed, genetically altered, hormone treated, unethically acquired, unhealthy foods. An emphasis on quantity, rather than quality, has resulted in the distribution of cheap and often poisonous foods (Pollan 2008). As a consequence of a poor diet, preventable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and cancer are all leading killers in America. Increased awareness of this wicked food system has led to more sustainable and healthy food movements. In response to this, farmers markets and organic food sections at grocery stores seem to be popping up all over the country. While this growing trend has positive effects, inner city residents often still lack access to healthy food options.

The food problem is wicked because possible solutions require a multidisciplinary approach. Community members and leaders, policymakers, farmers, food producers, soup kitchens, food pantries, schools, local businesses, a variety of experts, and other stakeholders with a strong desire to help should come together in order to address the complex problems surrounding our local food system. As Wicked Problem Scholars notes, we need to draw on all our intellectual resources, valuing other ways of constructing knowledge, and integrating across our differences (Brown 2010). Simply framing the problem is a difficult and tricky task. “Embedded in such apparently ‘objective’ models are personal biases, value judgments, hidden paradigms, and different worldviews.” Choices “that aim for wisdom over mere technical efficiency, are made only if these taken-for-granted values and assumptions are explicitly addressed” (Stefanovic 2012). Even if a consensus about how to address the issue is generated in such a diverse deliberative group, there is no assurance that the choice made will yield only the results hoped for, nor can we assume that a decision made in one location should be made in other areas (Batie 2008).

The Heartside Gleaning Initiative (HGI) works with local farmers and farmers markets, acquiring donated produce and redistributing it to food pantries and soup kitchens in the Heartside area. Many food pantries and soup kitchens primarily provide unhealthy or processed food options for their low income and homeless patrons; in contrast, HGI hopes to inspire

healthy eating habits that lead to a better quality of life through providing healthy food options for the people of the Heartside community (Sisson 2015). To make their work sustainable and secure HGI needs an executive director and a full time staff member.

Saying running a nonprofit is a full time job, our community partner stated that an executive director was one of their biggest needs. With this in mind our team decided that it would be beneficial if we helped the initiative fulfill their work through increasing their access to sustainable funding. Since the chair of HGI is also a professor at Grand Valley State University, it is hard for her to find the time to sustain the HGI (2015). Operating under the belief that it is best to come alongside those already seeking to ameliorate the current situation in our local community, we decided to help HGI in their efforts. According to Brown (2010), the only way to move forward is to do so together, working with others also seeking change. The main roadblock to acquiring an executive director is funding. Thus, our goal was to raise enough money to employ a full time director for HGI through successfully implementing a crowdfunding project. Crowdfunding is “the use of small amounts of capital from a large number of individuals to finance a new business venture” (“Crowdfunding Definition | Investopedia”, 2012). We chose Crowdfunding because it is an increasingly popular and option for raising funds. It provides an opportunity for nonprofits, small businesses, political candidates and even someone just trying to make a potato salad to get connected with passionate people from across the world and receive the funding they need.

Action Plan

Our action plan was focused around our goal of raising funds for the HGI. Initially, our plan was to choose a platform for crowdfunding, create a promotional video for the campaign, and implement an array of incentives to offer to those who donate. However, due to certain limitations, such as time constraints and lack of resources, we needed to redirect our course of action. We ultimately chose to focus on (1) providing insight to non-profit organizations such as HGI on how to best utilize crowdfunding platforms and (2) creating the foundation for a promotional video that can then be utilized for HGI’s crowdfunding campaign.

To provide guidance on crowdfunding for non-profits we created a comprehensive manual on how to most efficiently utilize crowdfunding platforms. We decided this manual should highlight topics such as: which website is best fitted for individual types of organization, what sort of incentives should be offered, and strategies for the accompanying promotional videos that go along with many of the crowdfunding campaigns. To lay the foundation for the Heartside Gleaning Initiative’s own promotional video, we decided to create a storyboard (a series of key thumbnails that show the breakdown of a future video). Along with this, we contacted four local film professionals and asked them to join us for our Sustainability Day Showcase at Grand Valley. This was in hopes that they would be able to provide the assistance that the HGI needs when it comes time for filming the video. These professionals include:

- Toni Perrine: a film professor at GVSU who studies films and their meanings.

- Kim Roberts: a film professor at GVSU who studies experimental film and encourages her students to get involved in community development work.
- Susanne Zack: a film professor at GVSU who works intensively with her younger film students to help them gain a more significant audience. She has accumulated 30 years of experience in corporate and commercial post-production work.
- John Schmit: a film and documentary professor at GVSU who is passionate about issues surrounding sustainability and has used these themes throughout his body of work.

We believe that our course of action will provide value for numerous reasons. First, through the creation of the manual for crowdfunding we came to realize its value extended beyond the confines of HGI. Other nonprofits could receive the benefits and insight that this manual will provide. Second, we believe that focusing on more specific elements of promotion and fundraising will allow us to go more in-depth than we would have been able to otherwise. Such elements include the creation of crowdfunding video, promotion of a crowdfunding campaign through social media, how to incentivize your crowdfunding campaign, and efficient goal setting in promotion and funding.

Our action plan does not directly address the aspects of the wicked problem of food insecurity, urban malnutrition, or gentrification. Rather, it provides aid to existing operating plans of action that are directly addressing these wicked problems. Heartside Gleaning Initiative, for instance, addresses these wicked problems by providing access to local and healthy foods that the Heartside residents would not have had access to otherwise. This access creates an awareness of healthy lifestyles in the Heartside neighborhood. On top of that, HGI is working to combat what Lake, Sisson, and Jaskiewicz refer to as “top-down decision making”, as well as the gentrification that so often plagues this neighborhood. They are combating this by directly involving the residents of the community in their efforts. In contrast, Vanbueran, Klijn, and Koppenjan note that a “lack of interaction between actors whose resources and cooperation are indispensable for tackling the problem” is a key reason why effective efforts to ameliorate our challenges fail to take root and become sustainable. Nevertheless, our efforts are supported by the realization that working with organizations already seeking to address local wicked problems can begin to make blockages visible and thus areas for co-action visible (Bueren, Klijn, Koppenjan, pg. 211).

Unfortunately, isolated and top-down decision making is all too common. A recent and local example of this is seen in the development of the Grand Rapids Downtown Market, a 30 million dollar innovative food-hub. In the article “Local Food Innovation in a World of Wicked Problems” by Lisa Sisson, Danielle Lake, and Lara Jaskiewicz, the authors stated that the developers of the Downtown Market failed to operate inclusively when planning for the market. Many of the residents felt as though those behind the creation of the downtown market were seeking to displace them (Lake, Sisson, Jaskiewicz). Noting the problems that arrive from innovative, top-down practices, our action plan sought to instead come alongside those already working with the community so we could support them in their efforts.

We also chose to focus our courses of action around already existing projects for two further reasons. Given the limitations of time within any one semester, we wanted to aim for a plan that was feasible so that the likelihood of tangible and helpful results were high. Secondly, in Professor Sisson's (The chair of the HGI) informed us that many organizations in the Heartside Neighborhood are at times suspicious and wary of new organizations trying to change their community or "step on their toes" (in-class lecture). Confirming the wisdom of this approach, Stefanovic suggests that "a rational environmental decision procedure must reflect not only narrowly logical reasoning processes but also essential elements of moral virtue, wisdom, and ultimately, a respect for a sense of place" (Stefanovic, pg. 12). Thus, we ultimately respected our "sense of place" by working with the community, instead of working on the community or "stepping on their toes."

While our two plans of action do not directly combat these wicked problems, they are focused on extending the work of the Heartside Gleaning Initiative and increasing its sustainability. One of the more significant goals for the initiative is to hire a director who will be able to give their all to the initiative. We hope that our efforts in both informing the initiative on successful crowdfunding tactics, as well as laying out a framework for their promotional video will provide the assistance they need in raising these extra funds for a new director.

Process

Creating an appropriate crowdfunding manual for HGI required secondary research. In order to provide the most useful information we sought to first understand the complexity of the wicked issue the HGI was seeking to address in the Heartside district.¹ HGI needs a successful crowdfunding campaign in order for the general public to take notice of the importance of food insecurity in the Heartside neighborhood. Not all crowdfunding websites work identically; some of these sites have different terms and conditions that may not be beneficial for HGI. Our mission was to research different websites that would benefit the HGI by researching issues that make or break online crowdfunding campaigns. These elements included: processing fees, success rates, and other additional requirements for each website. Through creating this spreadsheet (see Appendix A) it became clear which crowdfunding website would work best for HGI.

On top of our crowdfunding research, we took into consideration the mission of HGI and a wide-range of stakeholders in order move forward with our storyboard concept. In their own words, HGI says "we find that there is a limited access to healthy food in the Heartside neighborhood. We came together to empower the Heartside community to develop food systems that can redirect, or *glean*, unused healthy food to residents in need" (Mission- Heartside Gleaning Initiative). Recognizing that empathy is critical for designing solutions to problems that

¹ Important context about this area made the value of HGI's work clear. Almost half of the residents in Heartside are "minorities, 30% black, and 42% live in poverty." In fact, "this neighborhood has been known as the "skid row" of Grand Rapid, inhabited by the poor and homeless, many living in transitional living shelters... Many social service agencies and food distribution sites are located in the area to serve the needs of the homeless and marginalized people residing there (Sisson, 2011).

affect many others, we sought out a diversity of perspectives. In an attempt to better understand the scope and scale of the problem, for instance, many team members attended events surrounding sustainability. Emily Miotke went to a partnership showcase, and Kara Cook attended a sustainability symposium. During the partnership showcase Miotke was able to speak with committee members from the HGI, as well as community members that are directly affected by the work done by HGI. At this event the stakeholders involved discussed the benefits the HGI created in the community as well as in their individual lives. Local residents also highlighted the potential improvements that should be considered. Most important, this dialogue helped us to see how much value the HGI added to the participants' lives. Clearly seeing the transformative power of this initiative encouraged us to find a means to support their efforts, ultimately leading us to create the Crowd Funding 'How To' guide.

Our idea could not be made possible without the help and insights of many different people. Our biggest collaborator for our project was the HGI chair, Lisa Sisson. Without Sisson's input, our group would have no direct plan of action. Our group has been in contact with her throughout the semester trying to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to support her mission for HGI. Another substantial collaborator has been our Professor, Danielle Lake. Her helpful critiques have furthered our action plan and kept us on track while addressing the wicked problem of food insecurity in the Heartside community.

Results

The journey of working collaboratively as the Grand Gleaners has been rewarding for every member. Each pupil has deepened their understanding of what a wicked problem is, how all the individual facets of life are connected, the importance of collaboration, and the necessity of approaching issues from an empathetic standpoint. These lessons were also confirmed through our research.

In a more tangible sense, the community partnership between the HGI and the Grand Gleaners has resulted in a manual entitled "A Non-Profit's Guide to Successful Crowdfunding", and is available to anyone with Internet access. This crowdfunding guide can be found in Appendix A. The Grand Gleaners created a poster illustrating our plan which was submitted to the national Wege competition. The poster illuminated what a wicked problem is, framed the local food desert issue, illustrated how the HGI is addressing the issue and how its work contributes to a circular economy, and, finally, why crowdfunding was our chosen course of action (see Appendix C). The Grand Gleaners also created a storyboard which can be found in Appendix B.

During the course of the semester many minor obstacles arose that caused our plans to shift as they developed. These minor obstacles included seasonal delays, scheduling conflicts, a lack of resources. For instance, we were unable to complete the crowdfunding video for HGI due to seasonal restrictions. The director preferred that the video be done in the summertime given that the HGI only operates in the summer. We thus proposed that the filming be postponed in order for HGI's process to be filmed and their beneficiaries to be interviewed. Our lack of film

contacts also caused delays. No students in the Grand Gleaners have film experience, and we thus did not have the knowledge or proper equipment for a high-quality video. As a consequence of these two limitations, the Grand Gleaners decided to create a storyboard for the video outlining how the video could be crafted. This storyboard can be utilized by those who complete the video this summer.

Future Considerations

Ideally, in the future there will be a video created for the HGI and a successful crowd funding campaign so that the organization will have the means to hire a director. This is a great opportunity for film majors who are looking to gain experience in producing, filming and editing. Hopefully our storyboard will help convince a film major that this project is attainable. Not only would this expand relevant skills for their future, but it will have a large and lasting impact for the HGI and consequently the Heartside community. The opportunity to work with a community partner can be extremely fulfilling when there is a measurable impact.

In the future we also hope that our PDF can help other nonprofits or startups to understand Crowd Funding. Our decision to eventually put the PDF online was to maximize the use of this resource and make it available to anyone who may need it. This PDF also could help other non-profit organizations in the Heartside area. The PDF is a comprehensive collection of advice regarding Crowd Funding. If nonprofits use this resource in the future we are hopeful that we will see the positive effects within the Heartside community.

Another future consideration includes working with the community to make the PDF resource available to as many local companies that would stand to benefit as possible. This would hopefully result in community development as nonprofits and other local startups take advantage of the research we have compiled for them. If the companies use the resource our community will reap benefits. With the intention of making connections and disseminating our work we have sent a published version of the PDF to GVSU's Sustainability Community Development Initiative, the Johnson Center for Philanthropy, local nonprofits, and other community members.

Finally, we have contacted Guerilla studios, Loeks theatre, the Grand Valley State University film department, and submitted these findings to scholar works so future students, interns, or film producers at the businesses mentioned have the possibility of working on the promotional video for HGI. Our efforts with the storyboard were intended to make this project less daunting for future collaborators. Our hope is that our efforts contribute to the viability of HGI, fostering a more just and equitable community around food justice in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Appendix A: A Non-Profit's Guide To Successful Crowd Funding

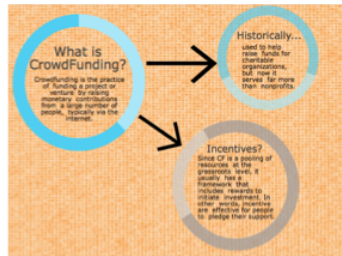
A Non-Profit's Guide to Successful Crowdfunding



What is Crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is:

1. the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, typically via the internet.
2. the collective cooperation by people who pool their funds to support an organization's efforts, via the internet.
3. Historically used to help raise funds for charitable organizations, but now it serves for more than nonprofits.



Incentivizing Your Crowd-Funding Campaign

For many crowdfunding websites, the various rewards, or incentives, play an enormous role in enticing donors, as well as motivating them to donate more than they normally might. In an article published by the business magazine *Forbes*, it's reported that the predominance of donations come to an average of approximately \$25. That's important to consider for several reasons. Firstly, you can shift your focus away from your incentives for less than \$5 or \$10. Most people who choose to donate that amount aren't highly concerned with what reward they receive, as it's not that substantial of an investment.

Secondly, you can focus on providing as much value in your reward for \$25 donation as possible. You know your largest base of donors will fall into that bracket, and you want them to feel satisfied with what they receive as an incentive. It's important to look beyond just raising an initial capital, and to look to the future as well. Many businesses using crowdfunding are start-ups, and need to focus on the image they're creating for their business with this campaign as well.

For the incentives themselves, there is a wide variety of those most commonly offered, that have proved to be successful. After researching many different successful campaigns, we've come up with a recommended set of styles of rewards to offer, displayed on the next page.

In 2015, the crowdfunding market is expected to grow by 92%.

Deciding Which Crowdfunding Platform Best Suits Your Non-Profit



While Kickstarter is the most prominent in the U.S., RocketHub and IndieGoGo have a stronger international presence.

While crowdfunding is still a relatively new form of raising money, there is already a multitude of different platforms available to use, such as Kickstarter, Go Fund Me, and Indie Go-Go. Each different platform has its own unique characteristics, which can aid your business if chosen wisely, or serve as a detriment if not. Variables such as the website's **processing fees, user fees, success rates, and flexibility in keeping your funds raised** are all examples of such

Before making your final decision in which website or platform to use it's important that you do more thorough research on the all of the intricacies and fine print that is has to offer. As an initial overview, we've created a matrix highlighting these points for 10 of the most commonly used crowdfunding platforms, and have displayed it below:

Website	User Fee	Processing Fee	Success Rate	Requirements	Additional Notes
Go Fund Me	5%	3%	\$740 million raised total	No substantial requirements	85% of those that reach their goal do so on first day
IndieGoGo	4%	\$25 wire fee, 3-5 processing fee	34%	No substantial requirements	
YouCaring.com	0	0	n/a	Must be charitable cause	Used for smaller campaigns
Causes	0	4%	n/a	n/a	More of a social network
CrowdRise	5%	3-5% processing fee for charity	n/a	n/a	
FirstGiving	5%	4.25%	Over \$1 billion raised total		
CrowdTilt	2.50%	2.55 processing	91%	none	Lowest fees in the industry, CrowdTilt raises 192% of its goal money

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What to Offer

Recommended Crowd Funding Incentives



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Setting Realistic Goals for Your Campaign

There are many different aspects to consider when setting your initial goal for your crowdfunding campaign. Probably the most significant of these is whether you choose to use an "all-or-nothing" platform, or a flexible platform. An all-or-nothing campaign means in short that if you don't raise the entirety of your goal, you will not be able to keep any of the raised money, and it will all be returned to the donors. The most prominent of example of this is Kickstarter. A flexible platform, on the other hand, allows you to keep the funds raised even if you don't reach your ultimate goal.

While this flexible funding may sound initially more appealing, it has its drawbacks as well. Various flexible platforms, such as IndieGoGo, require 9% of all of your funds raised for you to be able to utilize their flexibility in funding. Another drawback to flexible funding is that with an all-or-nothing campaign, businesses usually have more motivation and drive to promote and raise for their campaign, which translates into the donors having more motivation as well. This is not to say that you cannot have a successful campaign with flexible funding, but it is important to consider nonetheless.

The average successful campaign on Kickstarter raises approximately \$7,000



The first Tuesday of December is #givinguesday, which is an online crowdfunding day. In 2013, there was an average of \$142.05 donation, as opposed to the average \$88.22 donation.

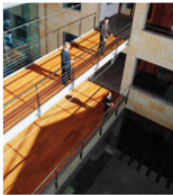
Creating Your Promotional Video for Your Campaign

Both expert and amateur investors tend to look for the same signs of quality. The brand, the team, the plan & the pitch must convey quality, competitiveness, credibility, preparedness and success.

Common desire & trust are the most important driving factors for participation. A mastery of sharing and communicating the vision is what can set you apart.

Methods for making an awesome promotional video!

- A mastery of sharing and communicating the vision is what can set you apart.
- Common desire & trust are the most important driving factors for participation.
- The brand, the team, the plan & the pitch must convey quality, competitiveness, credibility, preparedness and success.
- Both expert and amateur investors tend to look for the same signs of quality.



While crowdfunding campaigns do have a global reach, friends, family, and local consumers always play an important role in garnering early traction.

Maintaining an Effective Social Media Presence

Creating a well-constructed crowdfunding campaign is only half of the battle in raising funds. In the technologically based environment we live in, social media plays a huge role in promoting your campaign. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube all service as excellent outlets to promote your cause. In promoting your campaign through social media, there are several things that are important to consider.

Firstly, while you do want to sufficiently promote, you should not do so incessantly. You also want to make sure to promote your campaign on a variety of platforms, so as to reach as wide of an audience as possible. Other helpful tactics are to post your promotional video on these social media sites, and garner support from other business's social media pages.

Maintaining a Social Media Presence

Crowdfunding relies heavily on social networks and online communities.

Funding can come from all over the globe, so it is important to take advantage of every social media platform!

Final Words

While this guide does contain many of what we think are essentially helpful recommendations in creating and utilizing crowdfunding for your non-profit business, it's incredibly important that you do research on your own, specific to your own business. Every non-profit is different, and there can be no end-all be-all guide for each individual one.

We hope that if nothing else, this guide serves as a motivation for your non-profit business to utilize crowdfunding methods. It's an ever-booming industry, having raised \$2.1 billion for businesses in 2012, and \$5.7 billion in 2013, with the numbers continuing to grow annually.

We thank you very much for your reading of this guide, and hope it helps you with funding your non-profit.



The above images are all pages taken from our crowdfunding manual entitled "A Non-Profit's Guide to Successful Crowdfunding".

Appendix B: Promotional Video Storyboard



(Shots of Heartside District)

Narrator: Finding affordable healthy food is an issue in many communities across the nation, communities with this problem are known as food deserts.



(Narrator walking around Heartside)

Narrator: Grand Rapids' Heartside is no exception, 45% of its residents are under the poverty line and 80% suffers from food scarcity. Luckily, there is an organization



(Shots of Gleaning Efforts on Farms)

Narrator: The Heartside Gleaning Initiative works with local farmers to not only feed the Heartside district, but educate them on benefits of a healthy diet.



(Shots of Gleaning at the Farmers Market)

Gleaning is the gathering of leftover crops after a harvest, by collecting unused produce from farms and farmers markets, HGI is able to distribute it to the community.



(Shots of distribution to soup kitchens)

Narrator: Grand Rapids Heartside District is home to most of the soup kitchens in the city, which are often filled with highly processed unhealthy foods. Much of the gleaned



(Narrator in a soup kitchen)

Narrator: What we are need from you is funding, HGI is a newly certified non-profit that is lacking the funds for a full time executive director, please help us solve this

Pictured above is the storyboard we created for the promotional video. Each different frame of the storyboard is a different “scene” of the video.

Appendix C: Wege Poster

