**Creating a dynamic crowdfunding pitch**

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The importance of your crowdfunding pitch video can not be understated. In a media saturated world, where everyone from marketers, to politicians, and now your friends clamour for your attention, our focus has become a finite resource.

What’s more, the web has whittled our attention spans to barely more than goldfish. From the moment a stranger lands on your pitch page, they first thing they do is click ‘play’ in your video. That’s if you’re lucky. Many potential contributors to your fundraising campaign are likely watching your pitch directly from their Facebook walls or Youtube directly.

Your mission: make the case that your creative, social, or entrepreneurial endeavour is worth their dollars. If that feels challenging, you’re right. But there are specific strategies to convey your story in a compelling and convincing way – and it can mean the difference between failure or a million dollars (just ask [Amanda Palmer](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/amandapalmer/amanda-palmer-the-new-record-art-book-and-tour" \t "_blank)).

I’ve spent the past 4 years studying and experimenting with crowdfunding – including raising over 80 thousand dollars between two campaigns for the feature documentary [Occupy Love](http://occupylove.org/" \t "_blank). I’ve also assisted a variety of other campaigns, from connecting geeks to the uncovering the [meaning of life](http://www.indiegogo.com/lifemeanswhat?a=28156" \t "_blank). Now I travel widely [giving workshops](http://www.ianmack.com/crowdfunding-web/workshops/) on crowdfunding strategy and filmmaking. I firmly believe that crowdfunding represents one of the key pillars of the emerging economic paradigm, and that [crowdfunding creativity is just the beginning](http://www.ianmack.com/why-crowdfunding-creativity-is-just-the-beginning/).

In order to accelerate the paradigm shift, (and for those that can’t make it to my workshops) I’ve compiled 7 of my key tips for crafting an effective crowdfunding pitch video. Enjoy!

**1. Make it short**

First there was film. Then came television. Then came Youtube and the web video. Each of these formats have their own aesthetic, optimal length, and storytelling form. Pitch videos are a unique mutation. They are not quite an advertisement, not quite a viral video, but they do demand brevity. The optimal length is less than 3 minutes. This should allow you enough time make your case, and build an argument, but not enough to bore the viewer. No problem, you say? Try condensing an hour of footage and get back to me, especially when trying to include all the elements listed below.

**2. Make it clear**

One of the most common issues I see with crowdfunding videos is they lack clarity. After the first 60 seconds, if the viewer still doesn’t know what your project is about, or what you’re asking for, go back to the editing room. Sometimes with complex ideas, we feel a tendency of over-explain, but it’s more effective to focus on the most compelling aspect. In Hollywood, when trying to pitch a film, this is known as the “it’s like \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_” factor. For example: “it’s like Blair Witch meets Superbad” to which you’ll likely get a nodding studio executive.

Here’s a crowdfunding example: [Peace Geeks](http://www.indiegogo.com/peacegeeks?a=28156" \t "_blank) is organization that connects tech savvy “geeks” with free time and a desire to help with social organizations doing important work in other countries. While there’s much more to the logistics and how it actually works, that was the most important part to state up front. It worked.

**3. Make it authentic**

Amanda Palmer is a rock star. You can tell because she stands outside in a kimono flipping rockstar cards and wearing a keytar. Watch her video and pay attention to how you feel:

I’ll bet nearing the end, you felt a camaraderie with Amanda, in the same way many musicians endear themselves to the audience with their stage banter and presence. The pitch video above raised over 1 million dollars, making it the most successful campaign by a musician to date. Yes, she likely had an existing fan base that helped her out of the gate. But I believe she was successful also because she showed up on camera. She shared her story, her dreams, and her passion. And passion is contagious.

My recommendation: appear in your pitch video. Contributors don’t like funding a faceless organization. They fund people. People they can relate to and find commonality in their stories. Still don’t feel up to the task? Then find someone in your project that can speak with passion about the mission of your campaign.

**4. Make it about them**

Imagine you’re at a party. (A cool party. Let’s make it a loft in Brooklyn. And there’s at least one guy with a fu-manchu). Imagine someone walks in and immediately launches into all the reasons why they are amazing. You probably wouldn’t last very long before excusing yourself to head for another craft beer. Jonah Sachs, author of the excellent [Winning the Story Wars](http://www.amazon.ca/gp/product/1422143562/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=15121&creative=330641&creativeASIN=1422143562&linkCode=as2&tag=ian08-20)http://www.assoc-amazon.ca/e/ir?t=ian08-20&l=as2&o=15&a=1422143562 says this is the sin of puffery, and traditional advertisers fall for it all the time. These are the ads that speak only about themselves, their product, and their accomplishments.

Instead, watch this great video by [“Who Gives A Crap”](http://www.indiegogo.com/whogivesacrap?a=28156" \t "_blank) and see who they paint as the hero:

Very clever. Not only do they effectively use humour (and toilet puns), they paint a compelling invitation for the contributor to help fill their warehouse with the first run of toilet paper. They even went so far as to show an empty warehouse behind Simon which you can picture physically filling once they are successful.

Remember: in the story of your fundraising campaign, it’s not about you. It’s about them. They are the hero in your story. You are the one allowing them to participate in a project with an impact in the world.

**5. Make it professional**

Today, it seems like everything has an HD camera. Therefore, it’s natural to feel you can shoot your pitch video with anything. While this is technically true, an HD camera does not replace basic shooting and editing skills. (Nothing says ‘amateur’ like bad sound and shaky footage).

Thankfully, there are a myriad resources online to teach you basic shooting skills. [Vimeo Video School](https://vimeo.com/videoschool" \t "_blank) is a great place to start. There are also numerous places to find high-quality music at very low cost (and often no cost, or Creative Commons). Again, [Vimeo Music Store](http://vimeo.com/musicstore" \t "_blank) is an excellent destination.

The cost of high-quality video cameras has dropped, making professional-looking filmmaking much more affordable. For example, I shoot entirely on the [Canon 5D Mark II](http://www.amazon.ca/gp/product/B003F2NT2Q/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=15121&creative=330641&creativeASIN=B003F2NT2Q&linkCode=as2&tag=ian08-20)http://www.assoc-amazon.ca/e/ir?t=ian08-20&l=as2&o=15&a=B003F2NT2Q and [Canon 7D](http://www.amazon.ca/gp/product/B002NEGTTW/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=15121&creative=330641&creativeASIN=B002NEGTTW&linkCode=as2&tag=ian08-20)http://www.assoc-amazon.ca/e/ir?t=ian08-20&l=as2&o=15&a=B002NEGTTW, both part of the DSLR “revolution.” And even if you can’t afford to buy gear, depending on your city, there are likely a variety of low-cost rental options on a per day basis. And finally, many low-cost editing programs like iMovie are entirely adequate to craft your pitch video.

In short, there is absolutely no reason to skimp on the quality of your video, especially if you’re campaigning for significant chunk of cash.

**6. Make it transparent**

Nobody throws their money down a black hole. But that’s potentially what you’re asking of your contributors if you fail to share how the money will be spent. For filmmakers, this doesn’t mean sharing the lunch budget during your film shoot, but it should include a general breakdown of the biggest costs: flights, accommodation, gear, post-production, music, and more.

Watch “Taking My Parents to Burning Man” for an excellent (and hilarious) example of outlining the costs involved with the production:

**7. Make it a call to action**

Many people, especially creatives, have a love/hate relationship with money. On the one hand, they often consider it a poison that can taint the purity of any artistic work. On the other hand, many artists struggle to make ends meet and continue being creatives. In pitch videos, if the campaigner appears at all, they can seem aloof or hesitant. You have to get over that hump. As an Indiegogo rep recently told me, “crowdfunding is not pan-handling. It’s shared passion.”

You must be passionate in your crowdfunding video. After all, if you’re not, how can you expect a potential contributor to be? And you must outline a clear result you’d like them to take (also known as a ‘call to action’). Use phrases like “contribute now”, “share on your Facebook wall”, “tweet it to your followers”, “email friends and family who may be interested.” You get the idea.

After all, you’ve come this far, you might as well just go for it. Ask for the money. And finance your dream