

Non-league football club fans used crowdfunding to buy new players for their team

Crowdfunding is extremely flexible and can be applied to many situations and circumstances. Here is a UK example where fans donated money for their football club to buy players.

At the end of the 2014/15 season non-league Grimsby Town narrowly missed gaining promotion to the English national Football League. After the season ended, club supporters and fans launched a crowdfunding project to finance buying some new players.

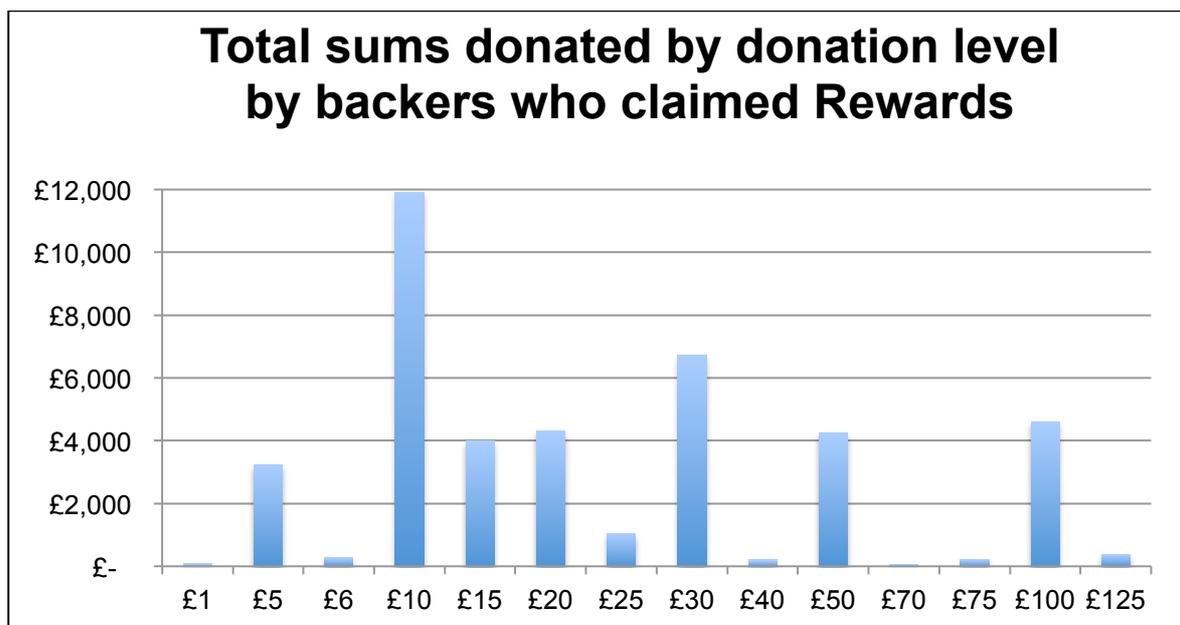
The project ran on Crowdcube from June 1 to July 25 2015.

There was not a crowdfunding video for this project. Remember, it was a group of fans that created the project, not the club itself.

The target was £20,000, though they actually raised £80,693 from 2,004 individual backers. To put this in context, the average crowd for home games in the 2014/15 season had been 3,683 people.

A Grimsby Town fan had won some money a few years earlier in a lottery and offered to match the first £20,000 donated by other fans. This immediately gave the project added media coverage and strong early momentum.

There was a wide range of Rewards offered, from mugs, t-shirts and signed player photos to corporate hospitality at matches, signed team shirts and even opportunities to socialise with some of the players. Of course some of these items would be highly prized by supporters though be low cost for the club to actually deliver. 51% of the £80,693 raised directly through crowdfunding came from backers who did not claim a Reward, 49% came from people who did.



Further post-crowdfunding donations took the overall total to £110,000.

Beyond raising immediate funds, crowdfunding projects can also work longer-term as very effective marketing campaigns. As well as a relationship at a strong emotional level of club loyalty the crowdfunding had also allowed over 2,000 people to make a personal financial investment in the club's future (though not one that involved any equity), possibly increasing their likelihood to turn up on match days, buy goods from the club store, and anything else fans could do to show their support.

As at 20 March 2016 the average home attendance figure for the 2015/16 season was 4,587, an increase of almost 25% on 2014/15. The club is currently third in their league and are likely to contest the end-of-regular-season playoff games to again compete for promotion. And on 22 May 2016 the team will play at Wembley Stadium in the final of the FA Trophy.

Here are some links to use. A summary of the Grimsby Town story in a national UK newspaper is at <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/jul/28/operation-promotion-grimsby-town-fans-crowdfunded-110000-transfer-manager>.

Operation Promotion: how Grimsby fans crowdfunded £110,000 for their manager

When Grimsby missed out on promotion to the Football League in May a few fans decided to set up a crowdfunding campaign to help their manager buy new players. They hoped to receive £20,000 but ended up with over £110,000



If you are considering your own crowdfunding project please follow me at @Cliveref and get in touch to see what I can do to help via clive@comcomms.com.