

Coffin Works' Crowdfunding Campaign: Successes, tips and challenges



When we closed our doors to the public on 18th March because of Covid-19, we knew that we would lose at least 70% of our income. Initially we anticipated being closed for a month, so trying to make a month's takings was a good place to start; it also meant that the figure was an achievable amount to fundraise for. Covering these losses would give us a 'bonus month' in effect.

As much as we wanted to make £10,000 because that's near enough what it takes per month to run the museum, we knew that we realistically we wouldn't. There are so many worthy causes and acknowledging that this was a difficult climate to try to fundraise in was the first step. Being realistic was the second. The third was starting with the people who 'get us' most and what we're about. They are the foundation of any successful fundraiser and communicating our message to them effectively and emotively would be key. We also knew that setting realistic targets would work better psychologically than trying to raise a huge, potentially unobtainable figure. People like to see their contribution making a difference.

Here's what we learned

We had no experience of crowdfunding prior to this, but we had what we believed to be a great cause, fuelled by a lot of passion and people we knew we could turn to at a time of need.

As of the 20.04.20 we have raised £4,089, and hands down we could not have done that without our social media platforms, in particular Twitter. We've built up this following over the last seven years and we have a good relationship with them; it's social and it's consistent.

That's why we knew we could turn to them for their support. But there is a point at which you can exhaust this avenue and in the current fundraising climate, I'd say that we pretty much have done that with social media, so for us, it was also appreciating the shelf life of a campaign too. We nearly chose a six-week crowdfunding campaign, but Crowdfunder themselves, suggested four weeks. Four weeks was the right choice.



Our key tips summarised:

1. Make it personal to you and heartfelt! Don't just copy the words of another organisation. It took us a few hours to draft our message; it was about what it meant to us, pitching it right and making sure that our followers would connect with
2. Great images with good resolution are key, as they'll help to tell your story. As we take images regularly, we had plenty to choose from. Dig out your best images.
3. Use images of people, as they receive more engagement than those without and will help others make a connection quickly and get them excited about your project.
4. Produce a short and simple video, as projects with videos are more than twice as likely to succeed on Crowdfunder. We're used to producing videos, but as Crowdfunder says, *"Your video doesn't need to be a Hollywood blockbuster. Keep it short and sweet, your phone camera is good enough because it's you and your idea that your supporters care about."*
5. Be realistic with your target. Remember that you can always 'stretch' your target to a bigger number once you hit 100%. We did this. It also gives you something to celebrate on social media and drum up more support.
6. Choose a realistic rewards scheme and don't over promise or ask too much.

Watch the Crowdfunder video [here](#)

We chose Crowdfunder because of the reward system. Our most popular reward was our £20 membership. This is the first time we've ever offered a membership and we limited it to 40. Memberships are a great reward because they build an extra layer of support into your future resilience and they can be bought in advance. Although they get free entry to the museum, they'll be more likely to engage in other events you offer and introduce others to the museum too.

Rewards should be good value for money. It costs £7.50 for an adult to visit the Coffin Works, so an annual individual membership of £20 at a time like this seemed very reasonable. Here's what Crowdfunder suggested:

"Limited rewards are also a fantastic way of securing early support. Having just a small number available is a good way to get your crowd motivated. In terms of pricing, have a few rewards priced at around £20, as this where a good chunk of pledges are made, and spread them evenly across different price points from £10 to £100. And don't just stick to numbers that end in zeros – odd numbers imply that your rewards have been thoughtfully costed."

Membership Card

Members get free entry for guided tours at The Coffin Works, 30% off other events plus exclusive member offers.
www.coffinworks.org

Valid to Name



 coffin_works  thecoffinworks  @CoffinWorks

Give extra life to your Fundraising

After looking at the list of supporters who had donated to our campaign, there were really touching messages. Use them! We had so many, but one spoke to us especially, which is why we got permission to contact that person. It was from a woman called Patricia Barnes. She knew Joyce Green, former owner of Newman Brothers and the struggle she went to save the building:

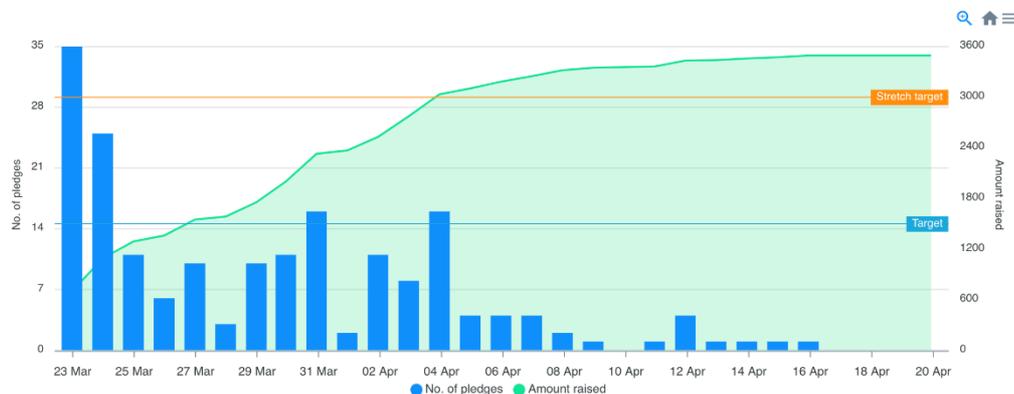
"I knew Joyce Green and know how much Newman Brothers meant to her. What you are doing is amazing and I am glad to be able to support you."

We asked Patricia if we could contact her and she agreed. She also allowed us to record the conversation, which we used as the basis of a second video to drive momentum of the Crowdfunder. It breathed new life into the campaign one week on, after donations had slowed down.

Amount raised £3495.00 (233%)	Supporters 181	Days left 4	Trending towards £3,864
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Project timeline

Your conversion rate is 8.0% this is calculated from the total number of pledges vs the number of unique visits to your project



Use the stats

Crowdfunder produce some really useful stats for your project. We could see, for instance, that because we made over £1,000 in the first 24 hours, our project was trending towards making around £11,000 over the course of the month. But, this wasn't realistic, as donations do, and did slow down. 24 days on, we were trending towards £3,843, which was more like it. Keep on top of these trends, because they tell you if your project might be losing momentum too quickly. We definitely used the stats as a guideline of when to tweet or to post online.

Knowing where to focus your efforts – don't flog a dead horse.

The stats are also great insofar as they give you insights into where your donation traffic is coming from. For us, we could see that Twitter was our most successful platform, raising over £1,500 of all pledges. But there were some surprises in there too; we didn't expect Crowdfunder itself to be such a driver for us, helping us to raise nearly £1,000. After looking at our pledge sources, here's how we maximised those findings:

1. We had no donations initially coming via our website, which is why we added a link to our homepage. This was an initial oversight, and in the end has accounted for £215 worth of donations. That's the fourth most successful source.
2. It may be worthwhile boosting your posts through paid promotions. We did this on Facebook, spending a total of £30 over the month, which helped it gain some momentum. But again, it's only worthwhile if you have an engaged following who normally interact with you.
3. Most of our donations came from platforms where we had an existing following. Of all our social media platforms, we have the most followers on Twitter, Facebook and then Instagram. It's perhaps no surprise that we received most of our pledges in that order too.

- Some of our donations didn't come through Crowdfunder, but they were spotted via our promotional posts of the project. An ex-trustee, for instance, saw our post on Facebook and generously set up a monthly direct debit to help us.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the Crowdfunder project dashboard. The URL is crowdfunder.co.uk/user/claire-mcgibbon/projects/eWoeRRBy. The dashboard includes a navigation bar with 'Explore projects', 'Stories', and 'How it works', and a 'My projects' button. Below the navigation, there are two tables: 'Reward breakdown' and 'Pledge sources'.

Reward breakdown

Amount (£)	No. of pledges	Price	Reward
£2,404	123	avg. £19.54	Donation
£190	19	£10	Thank you!
£495	33	£15	Limited Edition Pin Badge
£800	40	£20	Coffin Works Membership for a Year
£100	2	£50	Vintage Tea and Tour for Two
£100	1	£100	Unique Private Tour for Six

Pledge sources

Amount (£)	No. of pledges	Source
£1,575	77	twitter
£1,033	51	crowdfunder.co.uk
£550	36	facebook
£215	11	coffinworks.org

Challenges and insights

- Be resilient and positive. Be sure to not take it personally if you don't get the responses you think you'd get from people. Some of the people you think are a sure bet to engage with your project won't, and some people you never expected to, and don't even know will turn out to be your biggest supporters. But, nevertheless, don't be scared of going to the people you know as they are one of your best assets.
- Be grateful! There will be highs and lows and there will be some days that you don't receive any pledges, but a month is a long time.
- It does take effort. For a museum our size, we couldn't afford to set up a page, tweet once and expect magic results. You have to keep going.
- Realise that in the circumstances, this is a huge achievement. You're up against tough competition, so we've realised that the £4089 that we've made is an incredibly huge gesture.
- Don't just rely on social media. Send emails too; not all of your allies are on Twitter and Facebook. Trustees should also have some useful connections, so use them. This is something we'll push harder next time.
- Remember to Gift Aid! On top of the £4089, we've made, we can expect at least another £800 in gift aid.



Crowdfunding isn't always as easy as it looks, but if you have a great cause with an existing pool of supporters who you know can drive momentum for the project, you're already onto a winner. Don't do it by yourself; get support from whatever colleagues, trustees, friends and family you can. Ask them to share and donate, show them how much you care, and remember that there is never any shame in trying to save something you love.

Thank you to everybody who has contributed to saving something that we love. As of 20th April 2020, 188 people pledged to our campaign, and those 188 names will be recorded on the walls of the Coffin Works, and in its history.

Sarah Hayes
Museum Manager