

—BOARD GAME—

# Kickstarter Advice

FROM THE  
BEST IN THE WORLD

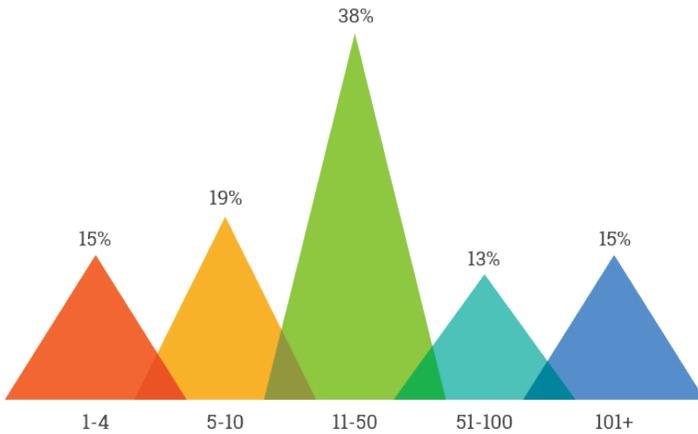
GABE BARRETT

# Backer Survey Data and Analysis

The best way to know what your customers want is to ask them directly. So, through this survey, I was able to ask a little over 1400 Kickstarter backers what they think is important and what they want most from a Kickstarter campaign.

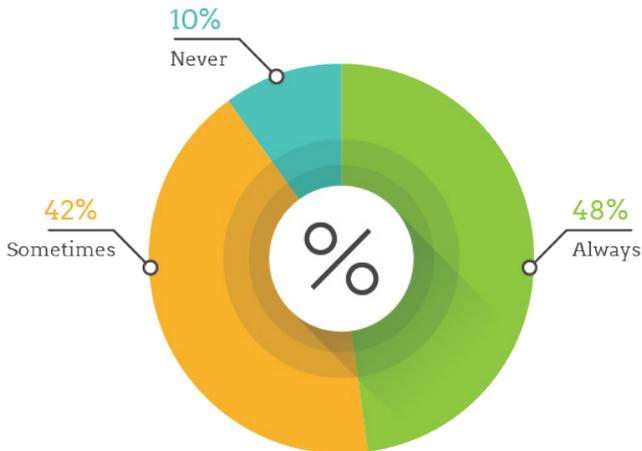
Below, you'll find the data from the twenty-five questions I asked and some brief analysis on what to take away from the results.

## 1. How many projects have you backed?



Based on this data, you can see that most of the people who took the survey have backed quite a few games. These are people who are very familiar with Kickstarter as a platform.

## 2. How often do you watch the main campaign video?

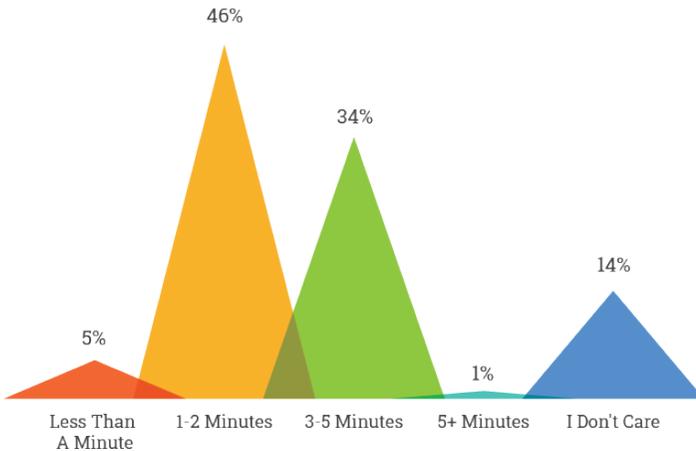


The main video at the top of your campaign is obviously important. (Kickstarter will tell you that 80% of successful projects have a

video.) But yet, over half of backers only watch these videos sometimes or not at all.

This is something to think about before sinking a ton of money into the video. That money may be better spent on a different aspect of your campaign. However, if you have a subpar video, it automatically suggests to backers that you may also have a subpar game. So, it's really about balance. You want to spend just enough to hook people in and show them how great your game is but not so much that you're neglecting other important things.

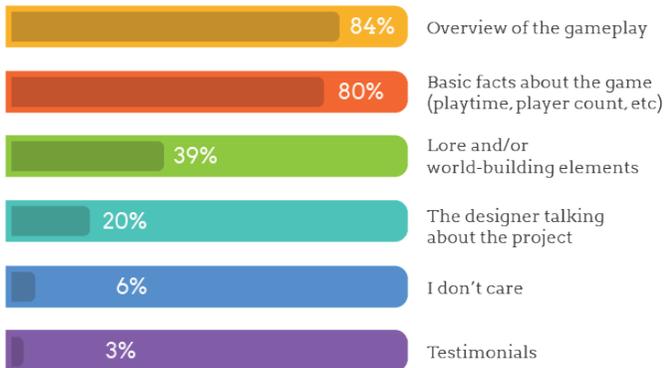
### 3. How long should the main campaign video be?



There's a pretty strong consensus here: Definitely keep the video under five minutes, and keep it under two minutes if at all possible. People have a tendency to scroll through Kickstarter campaigns very quickly, so you have a very limited amount of time to turn them into backers.

Make sure you get right to the point. Don't waste the first ten seconds of your video with an animation of your logo. If there's anything in it that's even the slightest bit erroneous, you may want to cut it.

#### 4. What should the main campaign video contain? (multiple answers)



Here's another question with some pretty obvious takeaways. The main things people want to see are the game's basic details and how it plays. If it's a game for 3-6 players, tell them that as soon as possible. And whether it's through digital graphics or a video of you moving cards around, potential backers want to get a feel for how the game works.

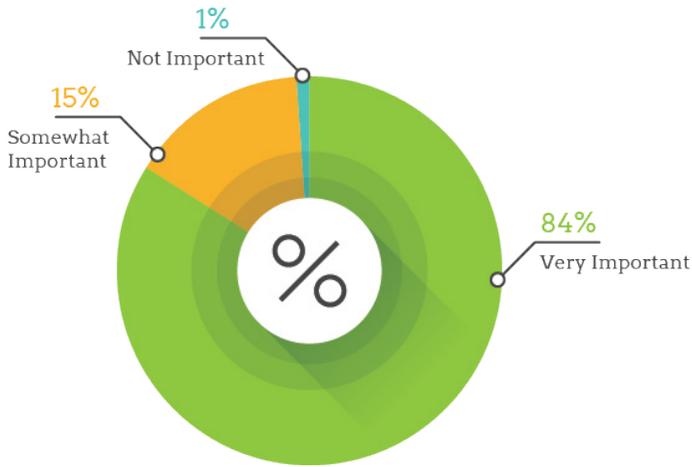
You obviously don't have time to show everything about how your game plays (unless it's a really quick game), so just focus on the high-level explanation, and make sure to emphasize the best parts of the experience your game provides.

A lot of people also enjoy being drawn in by lore and world-building, so if you can weave those things into the overview and basic facts, you'll have a video that appeals to a large group of possible backers.

#### 5. How important is it for a campaign page to have an image showing all the components in the game?

Basically everyone agrees that it's important to have an image that highlights everything that comes in your game. Backers want to know exactly what they're getting for their money, and whether creators like it or not, people tend to compare the components to

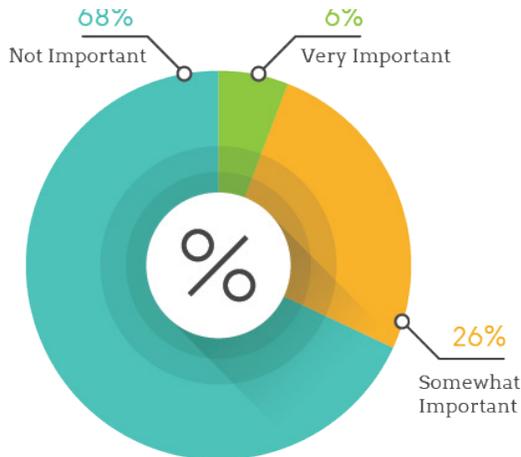
the price and make a snap judgment about if it's worth it.



Typically, you want to put this image right at the top of the page. Don't make backers have to scroll too far to find it. Again, they're looking at it and the reward tier prices, so if you put them side-by-side, it means they can process the information with less hassle.

And since this image is so important to backers, you want to make sure it has some really attractive images and graphic design.

## 6. How important is it for a campaign to have a print-n-play option?

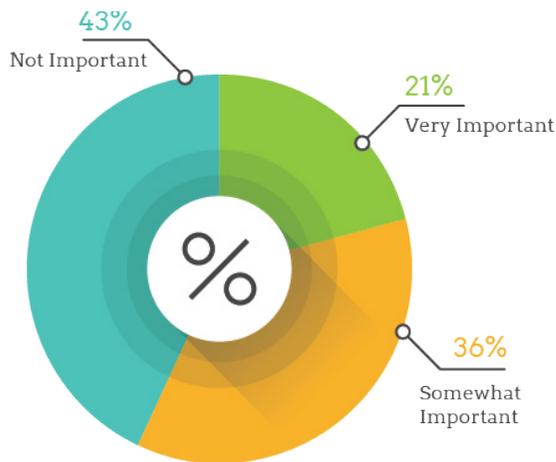


The print-n-play community has grown by leaps and bounds over the last few years, but it's still a pretty small subset of gamers. You definitely won't lose any backers by offering a PnP, and there's a good chance you'll pick up a handful of supporters, so there's really no reason not to include it as an option.

Many campaigns offer a free downloadable PnP version of the game that's often a scaled-down or streamlined example of the cards, boards, components, etc, and you'll get a decent percentage of people checking it out. A lot of them will just download it to see what everything looks like, but some will actually take the time to print everything out, put it together, and play it.

If you do decide to have a print-n-play option, make sure your files look good and are easy to actually print out and put together. To find out the best practices for this, you can check out the podcast episode I did with PnP Grand Master Martin Gonzalvez here: [www.boardgamedesignlab.com/martin](http://www.boardgamedesignlab.com/martin)

## 7. How important is it for a campaign to have a solo mode option?



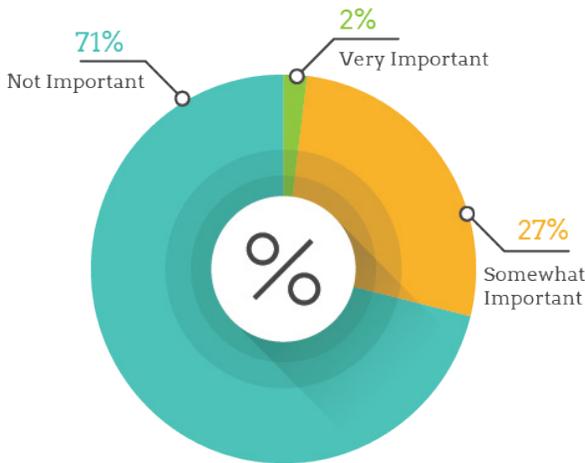
The solo community has grown a ton in the last several years, and based on these numbers, over half of backers are open to playing

your game by themselves -- assuming the solo mode is actually fun.

Single-player modes have developed a fairly negative reputation for being tacked on afterthoughts, so you definitely want to show backers how it works and prove to them it's at least close to as good as the multiplayer game. A video and rules document showcasing how the solo game works will go a long way here.

A lot of campaigns offer solo play as a stretch goal, but this has a tendency to make solo gamers think it's not any good. If you truly have a fun solo mode for your game, it looks a lot better to have it inside the box from the beginning. And if you don't have a fun solo mode, there's no shame in not trying to shoehorn one in.

### **8. How important is it for a campaign to have a digital version for you to check out? (Tabletop Simulator, Tabletopia, etc)**

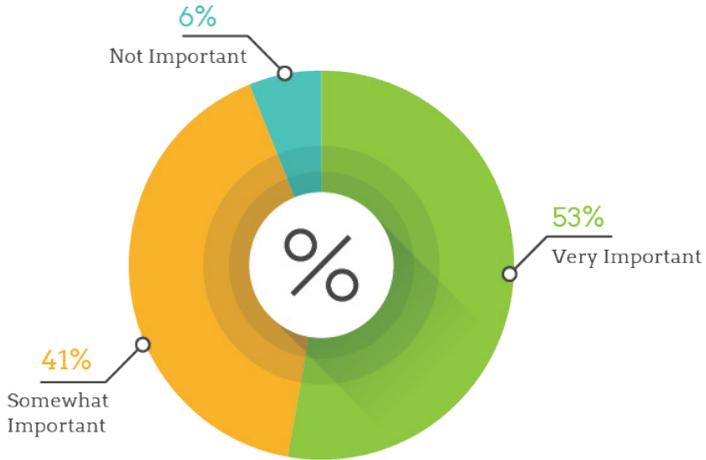


Tabletop Simulator and Tabletopia are wonderful tools to play-test your game or play it online, however, based on the data, if you're not already skilled at creating a digital version of your game, it may not be worth the time to figure it out

This is another situation where you won't lose backers by offering a link for people to see the game on a digital table, and a certain

percentage of people will definitely check it out. But your time may be better spent in other places leading up to launch.

### **9. How important is it for a campaign to have reviews/previews?**



The bottom line is that backers want to see more people than just you talking about your game. Most people have go-to Youtube channels and websites that they trust for information about Kick-starter games, and even if they know it's a paid preview, having a video and/or testimonial on your page from someone they trust will go a long way in getting them to back your game.

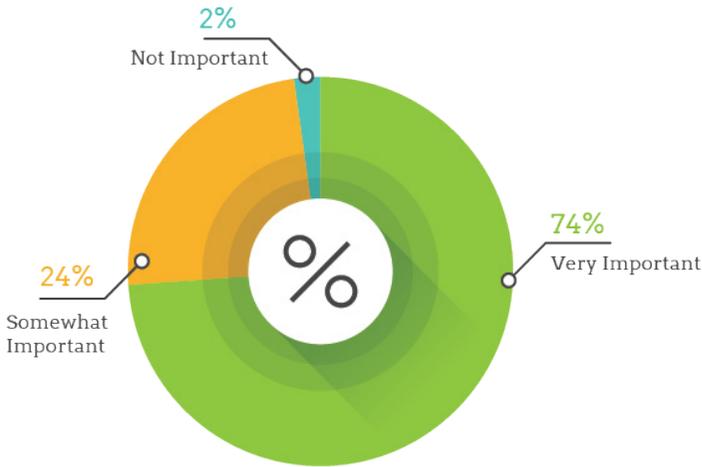
I recommend having at least three review/preview videos if you can, and having more is even better. Not only does it build trust with potential backers, but it also acts as a marketing tool to get your game in front of more people.

You can find a lot more details about reviews and previews in chapter 8.

### **10. How important is it for a campaign to have a gameplay overview video?**

If your campaign page doesn't have a nice, clean, and streamlined

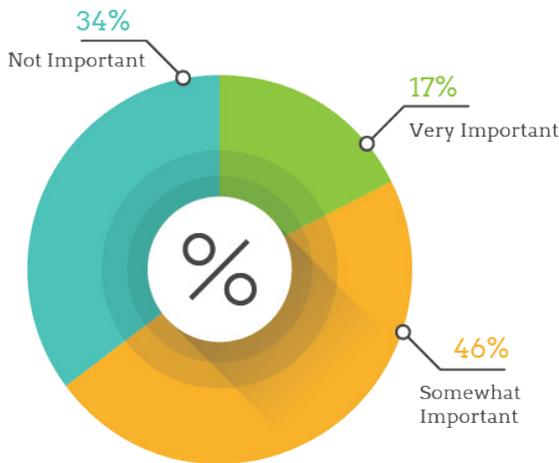
gameplay overview video, you're leaving a lot of money on the table. Many people won't even think about backing a game if they don't have a relatively good understanding of how the game plays.



If you're going to produce this video yourself, make sure you at least look like you know what you're doing. But honestly, this is an area where you may want to hire a professional. It's just that important.

You can learn more about this in chapter 9.

### 11. How important is it for a campaign to have GIFs showing gameplay?

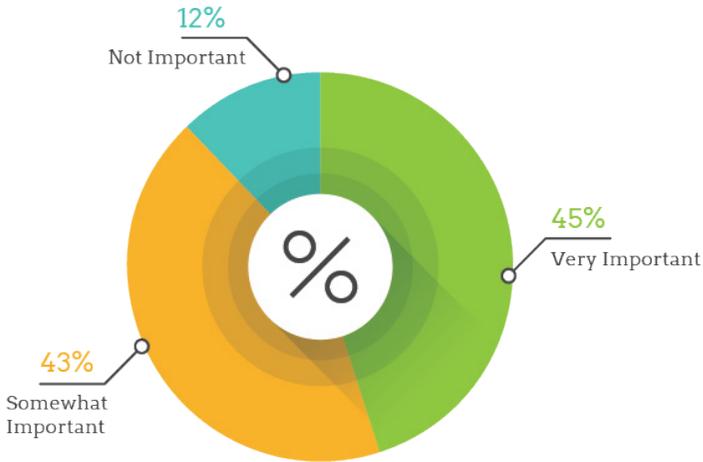


Having a section on your project page that shows people how to play your game through animated GIFs has become pretty common. If you have a complex game, you want to be careful not to have an overwhelming number, but a lot of people find them very helpful when it comes to learning the basics of how a game works.

There are a lot of people who would rather learn about the game from GIFs instead of videos, so you definitely want to consider including them on your page. Just make sure they look good.

I talk more about GIFs in chapter 9.

## 12. How important is it for a campaign to have a playthrough video?

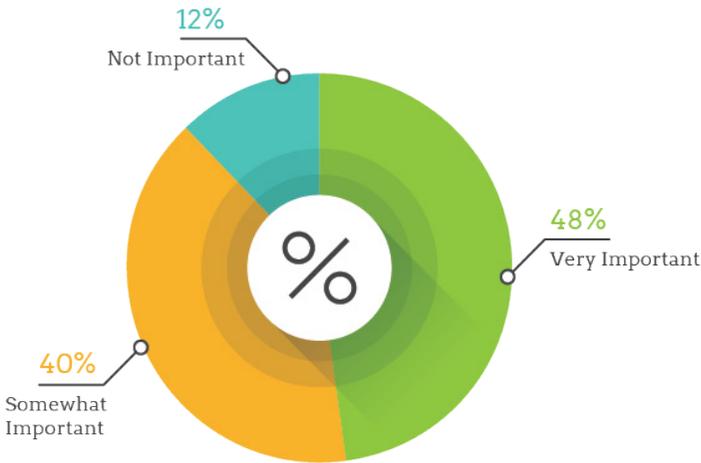


Whether you have a solo runthrough of your game to show off the gameplay or a video of a full-length multiplayer game session, a lot of backers want to see the game in action. They want to see what turns are like and what kinds of decisions they'll get to make.

And since 90% of backers said it's at least somewhat important, you'll want to set aside some time to film and edit a video that can be on your campaign page from day one.

For more about campaign videos, check out chapter 9.

### 13. How important is it for a campaign to have a downloadable rulebook?



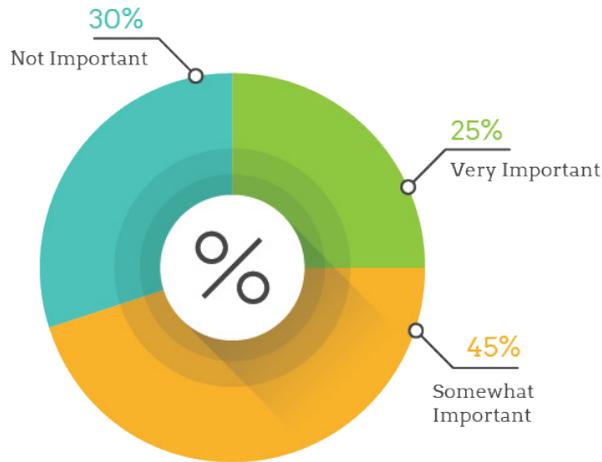
A lot of people will scroll directly down your campaign page to find a link to your rulebook. If you don't have a link, you're going to have a much harder time turning those people into backers. So, you definitely want to have a nice, big button for them to click to be able to easily access your ruleset.

And it's totally fine if the link takes them to a Google doc. Just make sure it's well-written and edited. And make sure to have pictures and diagrams. You can even generate some goodwill by giving backers the ability to comment and ask questions. And this will also provide you with some great feedback on how to make the rulebook clearer.

However, if you have a finalized PDF with awesome graphic design to link people to, it suggests your campaign is more polished and professional.

Learn more about this in chapter 9.

## 14. How important is it for a campaign to offer stretch goals?



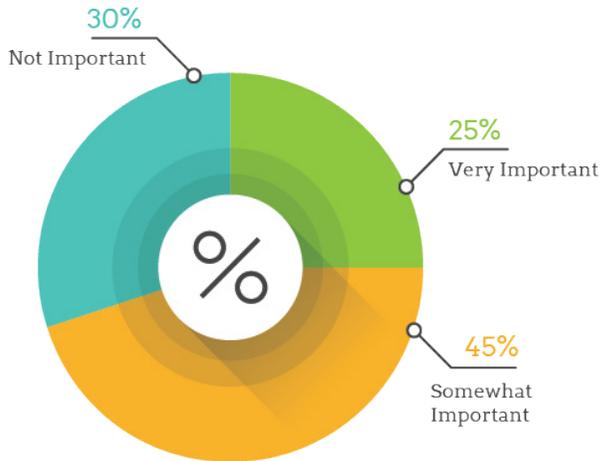
Thanks to stretch goals that got out of hand, there have been a lot of campaigns that wildly overfunded and the creators ended up losing a lot of money in the process. So, you definitely want to do the math before adding more stuff to your game.

But based on the numbers, backers, for the most part, are still big fans of creators adding shiny, new content to the game, so make sure to have a plan in place long before you launch about how you're going to approach adding content and upgrading your game. (Just keep in mind that not all stretch goals are created equal.)

For a lot more details about stretch goals, check out chapter II.

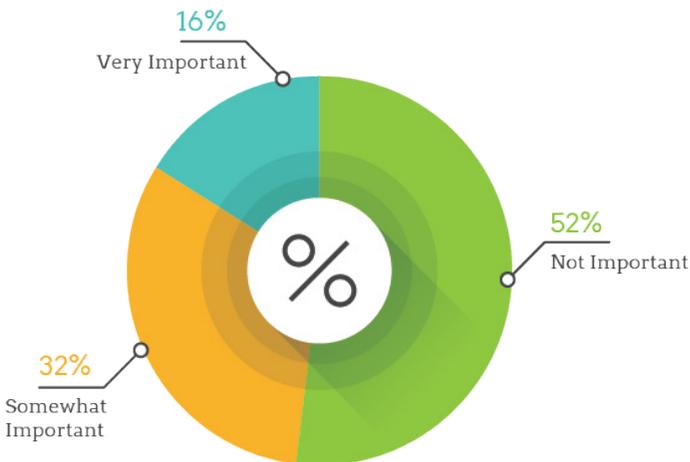
## 15. How important is it for a campaign to offer Kickstarter exclusive content?

Having a bunch of Kickstarter exclusives can go a long way in getting people to back your game now instead of waiting for it to show up in retail. However, a little less than half of backers said that exclusives aren't important to them, so take some time to really think through whether or not you want to have them.



There are a lot of backers out there who absolutely hate Kickstarter exclusives and refuse to back games that have them. Plus, there's a good chance that people who missed the campaign will feel like their game is incomplete if they aren't able to get all of the content.

**16. How important is it for a campaign's creator to have backed other Kickstarter projects?**

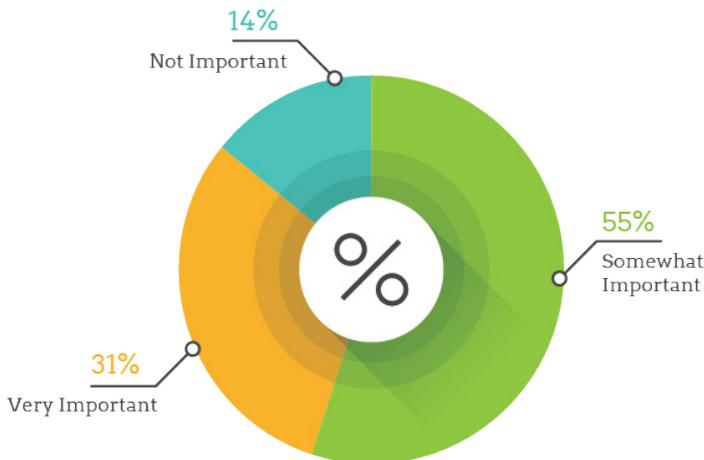


Many potential backers want to see that a creator has been an active member of the Kickstarter community. It's a small thing,

but it's something else that builds trust and makes people more inclined to give you money.

For a lot of folks, it's not a big deal if your profile says "first created - zero backed." But for others, it'll be a barrier that makes them skeptical of your ability to actually deliver a game. So, create a Kickstarter profile long before you launch and back other campaigns (even for just \$1). You'll likely learn a lot from other campaigns, and you'll build trust with future backers.

### **17. How important is it for a campaign's creator to have successfully fulfilled other Kickstarter projects?**

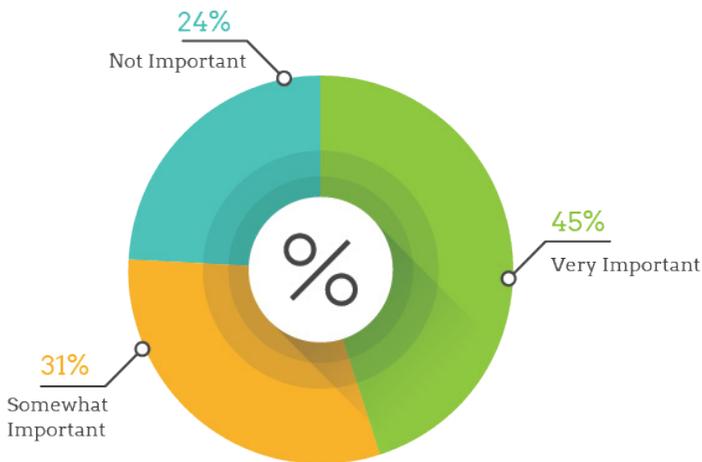


When you have no track record, you have a huge obstacle to overcome when it comes to people opening their wallets to give you money. It's a catch-22 situation in which you need backers to deliver a campaign, but to get backers you have to have delivered a campaign.

So, the best thing you can do is start off with a smaller campaign that is able to fund with a smaller number of backers. Then deliver the game (preferably on time or early). Then build up to a bigger campaign for your next project. And repeat.

Doing so will build trust, and it'll build an audience. And if you do things well, it'll build a crowd of raving fans.

### 18. How important is it for a campaign to offer “friendly” shipping to international backers?



At this point, with so much information online about how to do shipping and fulfillment right, there's really no reason to have shipping rates that cost backers more money through taxes and customs fees.

This is a huge issue for many international backers, and don't expect many backers from other countries if you don't offer a “friendly” option to get the game to their region.

You can find out more in chapter 16.

### 19. Have you ever backed a campaign for \$1 just to get access to the pledge manager later?

As pledge managers have become more normal, so has people backing games for \$1 just to get access. Some people do it because they're still on the fence about getting the game and they're afraid of missing out. Some do it because they don't currently have the money to pay for the game.

Just think of the \$1 backers as potential buyers who have one foot in the door. And then think in terms of what can you do to get them all the way in. Maybe it's a personal message to thank them for backing the game. Maybe it's posting some cool updates about the new stuff you're adding to the game. Be creative.



And even if they don't end up backing the game at full price, just remember that when someone backs your game for any amount of money, all of their Kickstarter followers are notified which is free advertising for your campaign. And just because they didn't go all-in for this project doesn't mean they won't be on board for the next one.

Learn more about pledge managers in chapter 15.

## 20. Have you ever backed a campaign after first seeing it through a Facebook ad?



With 2.5 billion monthly active users, Facebook is the king of op-

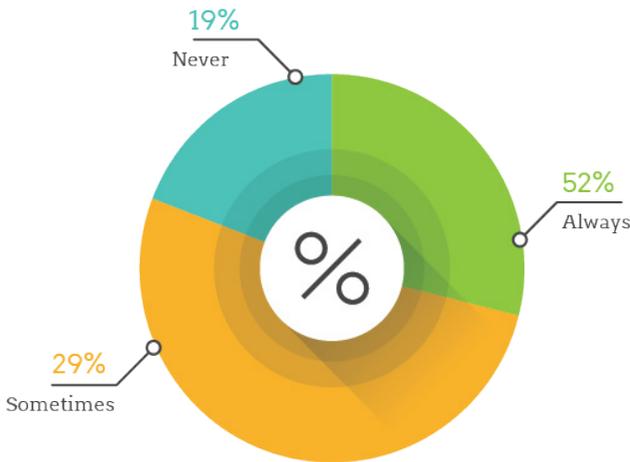
portunities when it comes to advertising your game on social media. And the data shows that lots of people are clicking on ads they find appealing and backing games.

Facebook ads aren't a magic bullet, and they likely won't save a failing campaign. However, if done well, they can lead to lots of new people finding out about your campaign.

So, learning the ins and outs of how to use Facebook's ad system will likely be time well spent.

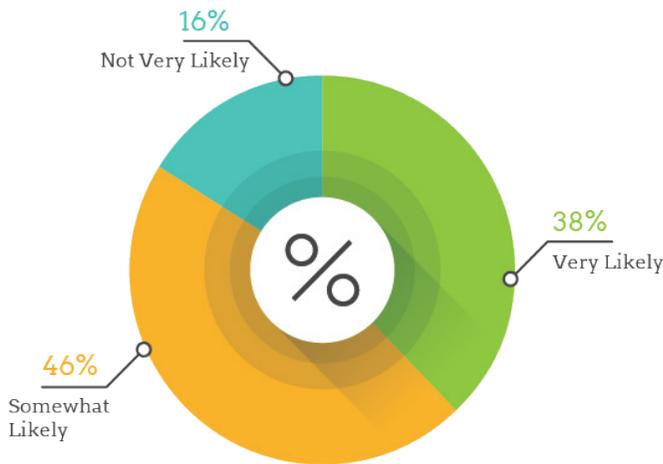
Find out more about Facebook ads and other marketing options in chapter 4.

## 21. Do you read the "Risks and Challenges" section of the campaign page?



The risks and challenges section at the bottom of your campaign page is a place where you obviously want to be honest about the possible obstacles you may have to overcome, but don't overthink it. Some creators basically write a book about all the many potential problems and setbacks they might encounter, but this is largely a waste of time. Get to the point, and go work on something more important like your rulebook.

## 22. If a campaign offers a “deluxe” version of the game, how likely are you to buy it instead of the regular version?



If your game can have a really nice, deluxified version, and you opt not to offer it, you’re missing out on what could be a lot more money. The Kickstarter community LOVES to get their hands on decked-out versions of games, so it’s in your project’s best interest to have a reward tier with things like upgraded components, metal coins, a wooden box, etc. if you can.

Not all games can do this, of course. Eurogames are a lot easier to deluxify than simple card games, but give it some thought and try to be creative. Many backers enjoy having a special edition of a game, and they feel special when they know few others have it.

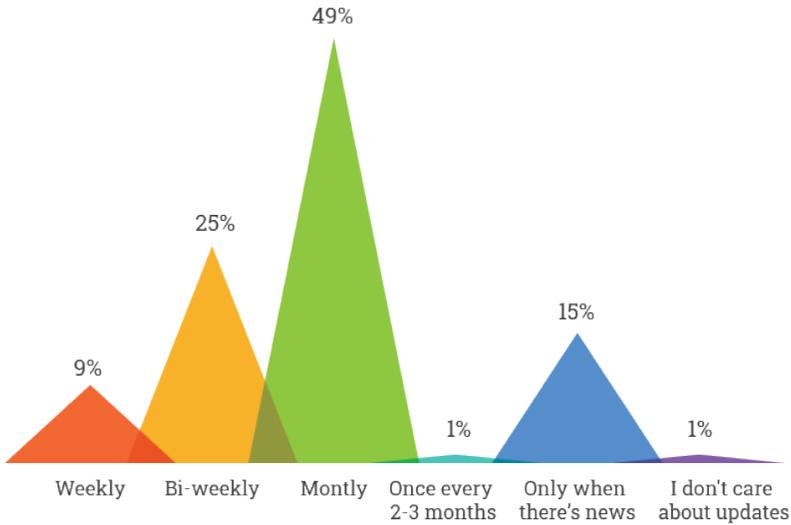
Just make sure to really do the math for how much your deluxe version costs, and price it accordingly.

## 23. How often should a creator post an update after a campaign successfully funds?

A lot of people use Kickstarter as basically a store, but the truth is that backers are more than just buyers; they’re also investors in your game. And as investors, they like to know that they’re money

is being spent effectively. And the best way to communicate that is through regular updates.

The majority of people want to hear from you once a month, and even if you don't have anything new to report, a quick update to say things are going well but there's nothing new to report will go a long way in maintaining backer trust.



Post pictures. Post charts and graphs. Post videos of you play-testing one of the stretch goals. Everything is content, no matter how big or small. They just want to hear from you. And remember: Bad news doesn't get better with age.

Learn more about crafting project updates in chapter 10.

## 24. When would you prefer to pay for shipping?



During the campaign

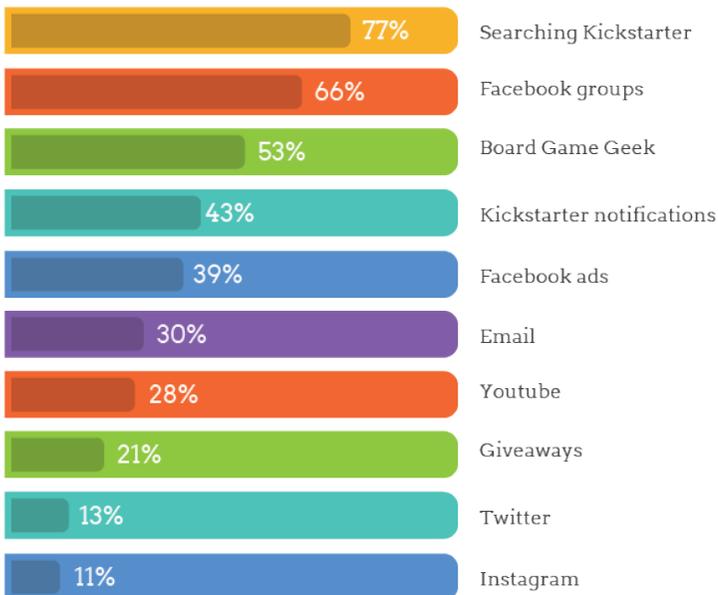
After the campaign

Backers are becoming more and more accustomed to paying for shipping after a campaign through a pledge manager, but the majority still prefer to pay through Kickstarter when they initially back the game.

There's not necessarily a wrong answer here. Do what's best for your project.

Learn more about charging for shipping in chapter 16.

## 25. How do you find projects to back? (multiple answers)



Based on this data, most people find games through Kickstarter itself, so you want to make sure to have an enticing campaign image and a tagline that really hooks people in.

Backers also use Facebook and Board Game Geek to stay informed about new projects which is something to consider when determining your marketing budget and deciding on where to focus your efforts.

Learn more about marketing your game in chapter 4.

# Successful Creator Survey Data and Analysis

I'm of the opinion that the best way to be successful is to find successful people and do what they do. Want a happy marriage? Do what happily married people do. Want to be wealthy? Do what wealthy people do. Want to run a successful Kickstarter campaign? Do what successful project creators do.

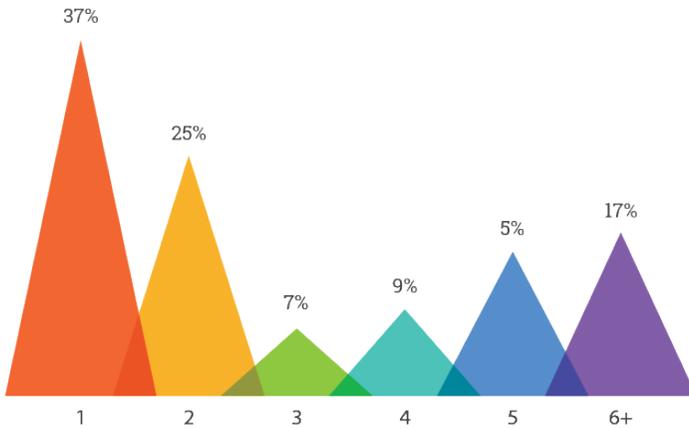
This is obviously common sense, but nowadays common sense isn't so common. You can go to Kickstarter's website right now and find dozens of campaigns that make it obvious their creators did no research at all before launching.

But what are successful creators doing?

To find out, I created a survey with nineteen basic questions to see if there were any trends or similarities among people who had successfully funded a campaign. Nearly one hundred people took the survey, and here is the data and my analysis.

Please note that most of the questions refer to a creator's most recent campaign.

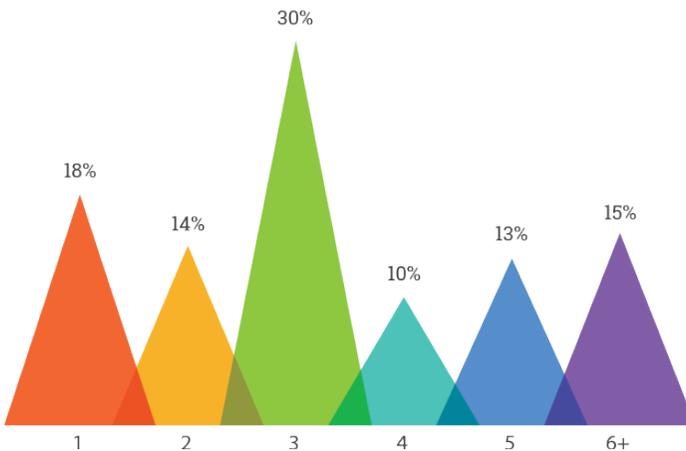
## 1. How many campaigns have you run?



Roughly two-thirds of this data comes from creators who have run one to three Kickstarter campaigns. And the other third has run four or more. So, just keep in mind that this data won't necessarily make you a million dollars on your next campaign, but it will give you an idea on what some of the common best practices are, especially among newer creators.

And if you're a new creator yourself, it hopefully gives you some hope and a bit of a blueprint on how to successfully fund your game.

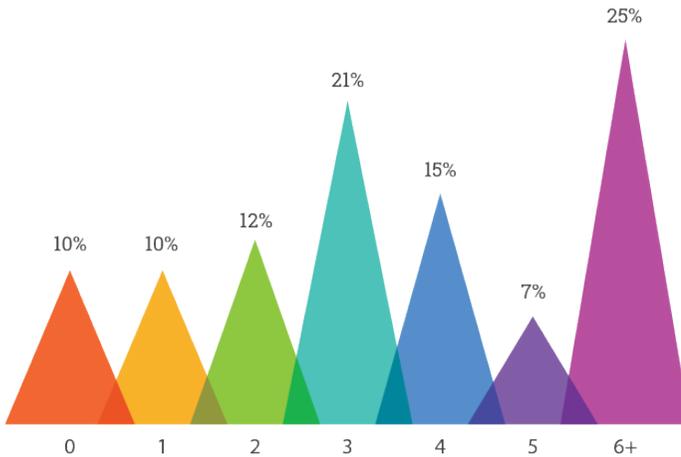
## 2. How many manufacturers did you get a quote from?



When you shop around, you're typically able to find a better deal, and getting price quotes for your game is no exception. However, about two-thirds of successful creators who took the survey only reached out to three or fewer manufacturers. Now, this could be because they had already run projects in the past and were so happy with their manufacturer that they didn't bother reaching out to others.

Or it could just be that a lot of new creators just aren't aware of the dozens and dozens of options that are available. In any case, it's generally better to reach out to quite a few companies before making a decision. And it's not only about price but also about where you fit into their printing schedule.

### 3. How many reviews/previews were on your campaign page?



Here's another place in which less is definitely not more, and it seems most creators are aware of how important it is to have lots of reviews/previews on the campaign page. Two-thirds of creators had at least three with the biggest percentage having six or more.

Not only does having lots of reviews/previews on your page build more trust with potential backers, but it also serves as a great way to market your game and get it in front of more people. Der-

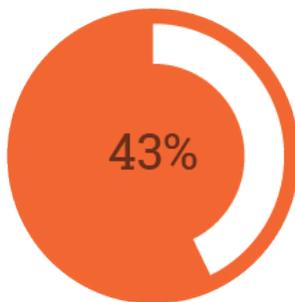
ek Funkhouser, from the Board Game Spotlight, often talks about how important it is to “unlock audiences,” and this is a great way to do it.

Learn more about reviews and previews in chapter 8.

#### 4. When did you charge for shipping?



During the campaign



After the campaign

If I had asked this question just a couple of years ago, the results would have been much more skewed toward during the campaign. However, with the days of “free” shipping largely behind us and the costs of shipping continuing to climb, creators are more and more charging postage after the campaign through a pledge manager.

When I asked Kickstarter backers what they prefer, the numbers were almost identical with 59% preferring to pay during the campaign and 41% preferring to pay later. And I think these numbers will continue to move closer to even as the practice becomes more commonplace.

There are pros and cons to both methods, and I go into more detail in chapter 16 when I discuss shipping and fulfillment.

## 5. Did you use a pledge manager?



Here's another big change in what has become normal for Kick-starter projects. Not too long ago, it was only the really big campaigns that were using pledge managers, but now they've become normal for campaigns of all levels of funding.

And the pledge managers themselves have also come a long way now providing a lot more than just a way to keep track of backers. You can find more details about these systems in chapter 15.

## 6. Did you promote your campaign at a convention either before it launched or while it was live?



Conventions are a great way to network, create fans of your game, and market your project. And it seems the majority of creators have realized this. Demoing your game at a convention is like airing a television commercial exclusively to people in your target audience.

It takes a lot of work, and you can easily overspend, but if done well, the result can be a lot more backers for your game (and names on your email list). You can find more info about marketing your game at a con in chapter 4.

## 7. Did your campaign have Kickstarter exclusives?



I was surprised that the majority of creators avoided Kickstarter exclusives. They can be a great way to get people to back now instead of waiting to buy the game after it is printed and shows up in retail.

However, based on the feedback from the backer survey, I think avoiding Kickstarter exclusives is the smart way to go. 44% of backers said that exclusives weren't important to them at all, and only 22% said they were very important to have.

I also received quite a few emails from people who wanted me to emphasize how much they absolutely hate Kickstarter exclusives, and several people told me they won't back a game that has them. Having content that is only available through your campaign can cause latecomers to feel frustrated and like the game is incomplete.

## 8. Did your campaign have a "deluxe" version of your game as a reward?

Deluxe versions of games have become increasingly popular over the last few years. This is especially true with Eurogames that have upgraded resources and metal coins. A lot of games don't lend themselves to being "deluxified," but based on the backer survey, a lot of

backers will gladly pay extra to have a nicer version of the game.



With 38% of backers saying they were very likely to get the deluxe version and 46% saying they were somewhat likely, it makes sense why nearly half of creators make sure to offer a deluxe reward tier.

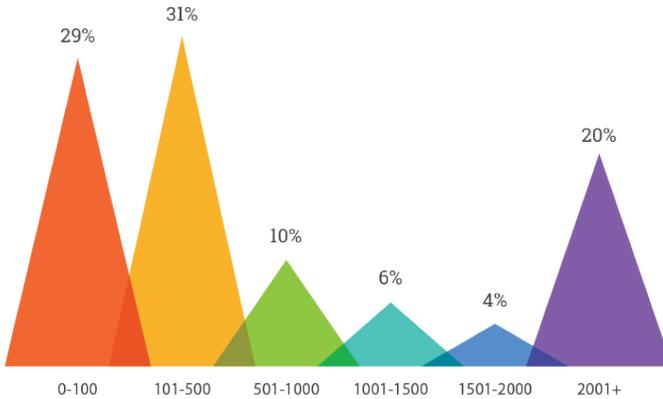
### **9. Did you run a giveaway for your game leading up to or during the campaign?**



Giveaways are another great way to market your game and unlock online audiences. They can help create awareness for your campaign before it launches, and they can help you overcome the mid-campaign slump. Many board game Facebook groups offer opportunities for creators to run giveaways for their members, and considering that many of these groups have tens of thousands of people, it may be something you want to consider.

You can learn more about the value of giveaways in chapter 4.

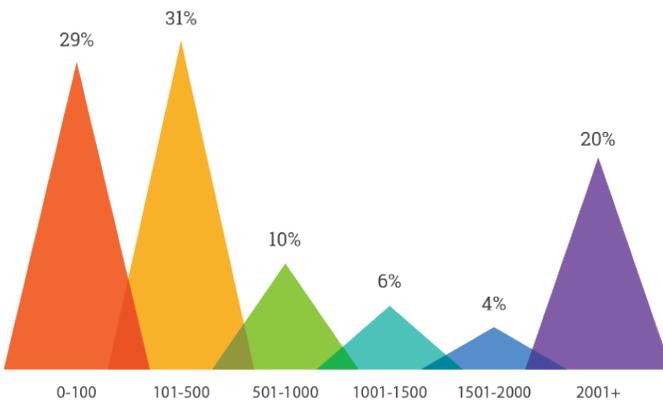
## 10. How big was your email list when you launched your latest campaign?



If you're just starting out, it should be encouraging that 60% of successful creators had 500 people or fewer on their email lists when they launched. However, I'm willing to bet that the campaigns that made the most money were in the 20% that had over 2,000 people on their lists.

Email is still the best way to market to people directly, so building your list needs to be a top priority in the runup to your campaign. You can learn more about list building in chapter 4.

## 11. Roughly how much did you spend on marketing leading up to and during the campaign?



I was surprised at how even the results for this question turned out to be. Almost a quarter of creators barely spent any money at all while the rest spent many different amounts. The main thing to take away is that it's not about how much you spend as much as it's about how well you spend it.

See more about how to budget for your marketing in chapter 4.

## 12. Did you use Facebook ads to market your campaign?



With over 2.5 billion monthly active users, Facebook is easily the biggest social network in the world, and the platform makes it really easy to get your ad in front of just the right audience. So, it's no wonder that more than three-quarters of creators used Facebook ads in their last campaign.

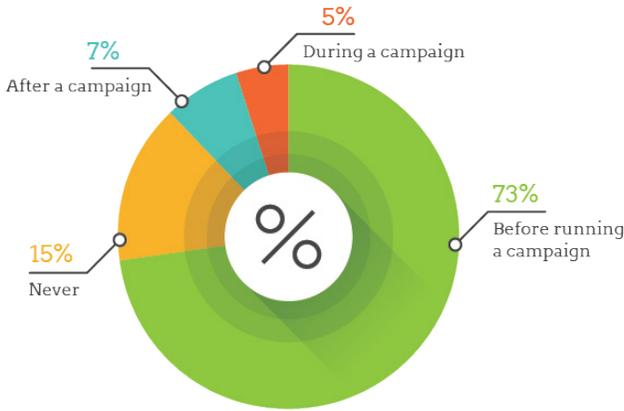
Creating Facebook ads that convert on a high level can be a bit of an art form, but if you can figure it out, you stand to bring in a lot more backers, especially since over half of backers said they've backed a game after seeing it through a Facebook ad.

Learn more about Facebook ads in chapter 4.

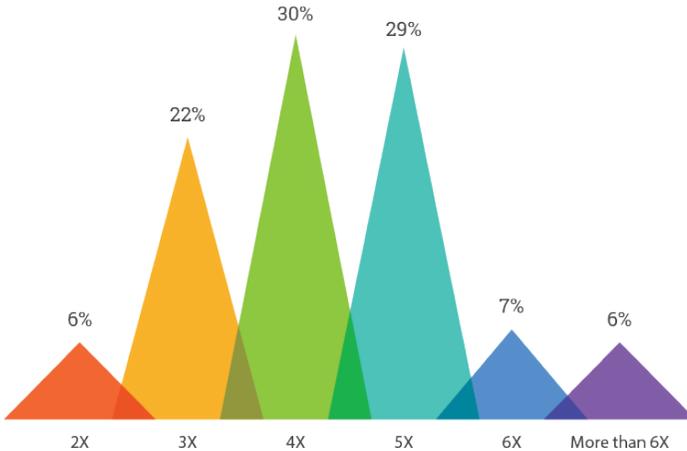
## 13. When did you start your publishing company?

It's good to see that the vast majority of creators are planning ahead and filing all the paperwork to become an actual company before they launch a campaign. Running a campaign means you're running a business, so you want to make sure everything is squared away when it comes to taxes, liabilities, partnership agreements,

and everything else. And the sooner you get it done the better.



#### 14. How much did you charge for a copy of your game compared to the manufacturing cost?

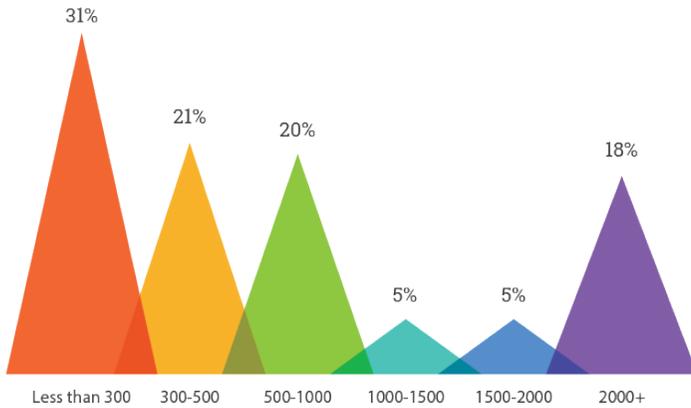


There are several things to consider when pricing your game. Many backers are looking for a deal and want to pay less than MSRP. If you're not planning on printing very many copies, your manufacturing cost per game is going to be a good bit higher. If you're subsidizing the shipping cost, that's going to eat into your

profit per sale. And you have to think about backer psychology - \$19 looks a lot better than \$20.

But as long as you're able to price your game at 3-5 times what it costs to manufacture, you'll be in line with the vast majority of creators.

### 15. How many backers did you have?

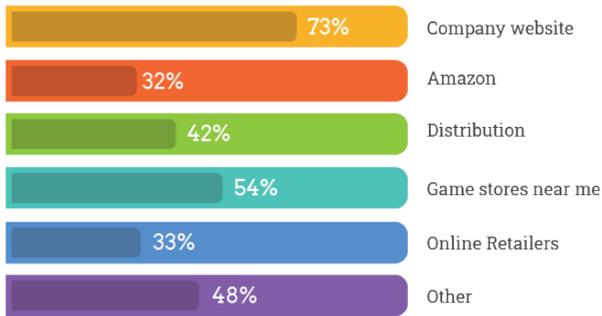


As Kickstarter has become more crowded, we're seeing campaigns with much lower funding goals. This is partially due to creators trying to manipulate backer psychology (people like to back a winner). And creators are more willing to put down their own money to bring a game to life. I also think that more first-time creators are starting off with a small, inexpensive project just to get their feet wet, and they hope to launch a much bigger campaign down the road.

According to the data, very few campaigns get more than 1,000 backers, but once you do, there appears to be a critical mass that occurs that will probably take your campaign above 2,000 backers by the end.

A good rule of thumb for your first project is to do a campaign that only needs around 300 people or fewer to fund, and this seems to be supported by the data.

## 16. How did you sell your game after delivering it to backers? (multiple answers)

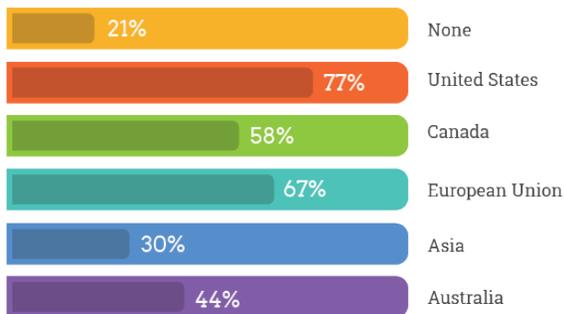


It's important to remember that Kickstarter is only one of many venues to sell a game, and since your print run is likely to have a lot more copies than just what goes out to backers, it's vital to have a plan for what to do with your excess games.

Whether they're taking up all the space in your garage or you're having to pay a monthly storage fee at a warehouse, you need to figure out how to get them onto more people's tables. After all, you didn't run a Kickstarter just to store the game.

Learn more about what to do after your campaign is over in chapter 14.

## 17. Did your campaign have "friendly" shipping rates to any of these zones? (multiple answers)



Based on the backer survey data, this is a rather important issue for most backers. A lot of people won't back your game at all if they can't get it without paying extra taxes and customs fees.

As board games have become more popular, lots of fulfillment companies have sprung up to ship your game from inside regions like the European Union so your backers can avoid any added costs. And if you don't offer "friendly" shipping rates, you're likely leaving quite a bit of money on the table.

Learn more about "friendly" shipping in chapter 16.

### **18. Did you add certain stretch goals based on backer feedback?**



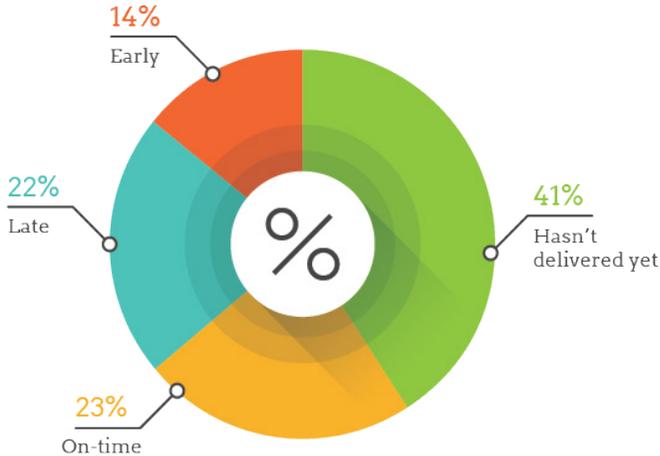
One of the best parts of running a campaign is having the ability to engage with your biggest fans and provide them with something they helped bring to life. And that's why over half of the creators in this survey have offered stretch goals based on what their backers were asking for. (I'm a little surprised the number isn't higher.)

You have to be careful not to overdo it as stretch goals can absolutely tank a project if you're not really doing the math on things. But when done well, they provide an opportunity to turn backers into raving fans and create a great deal of trust between you and them.

### **19. When did you deliver the game?**

Another great way to build trust with backers long term is to de-

liver on time. Of the creators who have delivered their latest game, almost a quarter delivered late which will undoubtedly make people skeptical for their next project.



Now, sometimes a situation is completely out of your control, and delivery gets pushed back due to some unforeseen circumstance. So, you want to make sure you build in enough buffer to be able to absorb any delays in production and/or shipping.

The following pages are excerpts from the interview section of the book. I interviewed 50 of the most successful project creators in the world to get their thoughts and insight on a wide range of Kickstarter related topics. Collectively, they've raised tens of millions of dollars for their games, and I was blown away by their wisdom and advice.

If you want to go from zero to funded, this is a great place to start.

# Jamey Stegmaier

Stonemaier Games

---

7	38,471	\$3,246,341
SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS	TOTAL BACKERS	TOTAL FUNDING

Scythe, Between Two Cities, Euphoria

POPULAR CAMPAIGNS

---

## **What's your best advice for someone wanting to run a Kickstarter campaign?**

The best research I ever did leading up to my first Kickstarter project was to back a variety of other projects and follow them closely from start to finish. I paid close attention to the strategies used on their project pages and updates, and I compared them to each other in a big spreadsheet.

## **What is the best Kickstarter campaign page (or pages) you've seen and why?**

A few recent Kickstarter project pages that I think did an excellent job were Unsettled and Return to Dark Tower. In my opinion, both did a great job at explaining the unique and exciting elements of their games via text, images, and video. Both had a streamlined set of reward levels, including a retail pledge. Unsettled didn't have stretch goals but instead engaged backers by building a planet together with them, and Return to Dark Tower had an exciting set of stretch goals.

## **What was the biggest mistake you made before, during, or after a campaign, and how did you overcome it?**

I made a lot of mistakes, but perhaps the biggest was offering

Kickstarter exclusives in the Euphoria campaign. At the time, I thought exclusives were the primary way to encourage backers to act now instead of waiting for later. However, I later found that I had designed/created all this cool stuff for Euphoria that I couldn't offer to people who weren't backers because of the exclusive label, and that didn't feel good at all. I want to create cool stuff and share it with as many people as possible for as many years as possible -- not just the people who learn about the game for the few weeks it's on Kickstarter. I overcame it mostly by deciding to pursue a strategy of inclusiveness from then on, and for the items I most wanted to share (the realistic resources), I created new versions of them and sold them instead.

### **What's your best advice for creating campaign updates?**

I receive so many project updates these days that I really appreciate updates where the very top of the update summarizes all of the most important points, followed by a graphic/photo, then all of the details. I think I'd read a lot more updates (or at least part of them) if they were structured that way. Beyond that, I appreciate consistent updates (any news is better than no news) and transparency. Backers understand that not everything is going to go exactly as planned; it's how you present it, respond to it, and fix it that matters.

### **What's your best advice for the fulfillment process after the game is manufactured?**

The method Stonemaier Games introduced to the Kickstarter community back in 2013 is an approach I still recommend today: When your products are manufactured, send them directly to regional fulfillment centers (we work with fulfillment centers in the US, Canada, Europe, and Australia) and ship to backers from there. This is often much more cost-effective to both you and backers (especially when factoring in customs/taxes).

# James Hudson

Druid City Games & Skybound Games

---

9	90,491	\$6,056,065
SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS	TOTAL BACKERS	TOTAL FUNDING

Trial By Trolley, Tidal Blades, Wonderland's War  
POPULAR CAMPAIGNS

---

## **What is the best Kickstarter campaign page (or pages) you've seen and why?**

Roxley sets the bar. Gavan and his team are the best. (The company behind Dice Throne.)

## **What was the biggest mistake you made before, during, or after a campaign, and how did you overcome it?**

The biggest mistake I made recently was letting our communication with backers slack after the campaign. It was around the holidays. I was stressed, overworked, and had planned on taking some time off. And on top of that, the project (Tidal Blades) had hit a lull. I was waiting on freelancers to finish several small parts of the project like tweaks to graphics and the rulebook. We were also waiting on some final playtesting notes to come in for the solo mode. So overall, just really small stuff. There wasn't much of an update to share other than, "we are waiting" and "it's the time of year people slow down and take time off." I went into the comments to let backers know those things, but we didn't put out an official update. At the time, I was trying to keep the updates reserved for substantial milestones because if your updates aren't meaningful, some people will unsubscribe, which means that they miss the important fulfillment updates. Inevitably, they end up missing essential info, and

they forget to fill out the pledge manager.

What this boils down to is that because I was trying to keep the updates reserved for “important” milestones, it now looks like there was a 3-month lapse in communication. This caused some backers to be understandably concerned. Moving forward, we’re dropping everything into the updates. As creators, the little things can seem inconsequential to us, but I think it’s important to remember that backers aren’t in the trenches with us. So even those little things can be engaging to someone outside of the process.

It’s a really odd system we have to balance on Kickstarter. There are norms that have surfaced over the years. At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter whether you think these norms are good or bad, they’re here, and your backers know them. You have to play by those rules or you will let your backers down.

### **How do you maintain your health and sanity during a campaign?**

I don’t, haha! I make sure to leave some time after the campaign ends to recharge and rest, but during the campaign, there isn’t much you can do about the amount of time and energy it takes to run a campaign really well. It is a 24/7 situation. The best thing you can do is surround yourself with talented people and lean into them for help and support.

### **What makes a game a good product for Kickstarter?**

It needs to be unique above all else. There are over 5,000 games a year coming out. Making a game that is just a slight variation on another game isn’t going to cut it. It will fail. Game art, graphic design, and theme are also at all-time highs, so if your game doesn’t meet some extremely high standards, it will struggle to find an audience.

But the hardest part is that you may not be unbiased enough to judge these yourself. You should seek critical feedback on your project in these areas. It can be really hard to hear at times, but it is vital to making a great product. Getting this feedback early can save you a lot of heart-ache in developing a project that no one really wanted in the first place.

# Scott Gaeta

Renegade Games

---

6	13,974	\$1,474,750
SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS	TOTAL BACKERS	TOTAL FUNDING

Power Rangers: Heroes of the Grid, Terror Below, Scott Pilgrim Miniatures the World

POPULAR CAMPAIGNS

---

## **What's your best advice for someone wanting to run a Kickstarter campaign?**

Only do it if you can afford the risk. Kickstarter is not a guaranteed platform for success. You need to have some funds to invest in your own success. Things like marketing can make all the difference. Make your entire game on paper before you launch. Be ready to wrap up the last 20% when the campaign ends and go to press. That's the best way to avoid mistakes that will surprise you later when it's too late.

## **What did the marketing plan look like leading up to your most recent campaign's launch?**

It's extensive and begins three months prior to launch in most cases. In some cases, we take up to a year building community.

## **What would you tell someone who just ran a campaign that failed to fund?**

Go back and evaluate how you performed in different areas. Did you do enough pre-campaign marketing? Did you build an audience? What makes your game stand out? How is your art? How does your value proposition look to a buyer?

## **How do you maintain your health and sanity during a campaign?**

It's a full-time process if your campaign is doing well, so as long as you have the time to devote to it, it's not unlike any other workday. Make sure you are prepared for the time it will take. Bring on help and take time off from your day job if you have to. But make it your focus. If your campaign is well thought out and your pre-marketing was going well, you can expect to be busy. If your pre-marketing is not getting a response, postpone and regroup.

## **How do you deal with the mid-campaign slump?**

Don't stress about it. We try to keep content flowing, but it is inevitable. The people sitting on the fence still pay attention but will not pull the trigger and make a decision until closer to the end.

## **If you've run multiple campaigns, what did you do differently and why?**

Over time we have become less interested in stretch goals and lean more towards putting everything in the game we want from the start. It's a trade-off of upfront honesty for ongoing excitement. Some people have a hard time grasping that concept and do prefer the stretch goal experience. Instead, we've tried to fill that space with reveals and content that shows off the game over the length of the campaign.

## **What makes a game a good product for Kickstarter?**

It should do something new – either mechanically or thematically.

## **What's your best advice for the fulfillment process after the game is manufactured?**

Don't undercharge for shipping. Shipping is a serious cost that you can't absorb and be viable long-term. Be ok with losing the backer who says they don't want to pay shipping. Also, don't set unrealistic expectations. If you're new to making a game, it's going to take longer than you think. If your print run is small it's going to

be a lower priority at your factory. Hire someone who understands shipping and logistics before you launch your campaign. Don't try and figure it out afterward. It's too late to make changes by then.

**Looking to the future, how do you think Kickstarter is going to change? And what can future creators do to adjust?**

I think it will continue to be crowded, but more campaigns in our space will not fund. Consumers are blessed with overwhelming choice and your game really needs to stand out.

# Table of Contents

1. 50 interviews with successful creators
2. What backers want (survey data and analysis)
3. What successful creators are doing (survey data and analysis)
4. How to market your project like a pro
5. The “kitchen sink” checklist
6. Launch day checklist
7. When to launch a campaign
8. The importance of reviews and previews
9. Campaign page must-haves
10. The art of the KS update
11. How to stretch goal
12. What to put on the box
13. When to cancel and relaunch (or not)
14. Post campaign to-do list
15. The pledge manager (and a list of options)
16. Shipping and fulfillment
17. Online resources
18. Kickstarter Service Providers
19. **More to come! (Backers decide what else goes here)**