



PARTNERSHIP ABSTRACT

Opportunity

Students from the University of Texas at Austin wanted to produce a documentary of their participation in the U.S. Department of Education's Solar Decathlon in 2015. They needed to raise funds for the film, with the added incentive of a \$10,000 matching gift if they raised that amount.

Partnership

UT Austin used the ScaleFunder crowdfunding platform to engage donors online, boosting participation by also partnering with multiple academic departments on campus to promote the campaign.

Results

The group raised \$21,422 overall, crossing the key \$10,000 threshold to receive their generous matching gift.

SEE SCALEFUNDER IN ACTION

Visit <http://www.RuffaloNL.com/ScaleFunder> for a free demonstration

Ruffalo Noel Levitz ScaleFunder Case Study

The University of Texas at Austin Solar Decathlon Team

Opportunity

The University of Texas at Austin was selected as one of just 15 teams to compete in the U.S. Department of Energy's 2015 Solar Decathlon, which focuses on how to use solar technology as part of creating sustainable housing. Students involved in the project spanned six different schools within the university, providing an opportunity to showcase not only cross-campus collaboration, but also generate diverse interest and excitement throughout their entire communities.

Project leaders wanted to document their experience throughout the process in order to help teach relevant lessons to students in classrooms across the entire state, but needed funding to do so. In addition to the grassroots donations, the group was able to secure a \$10,000 matching gift challenge opportunity from an anonymous donor.

This particular campaign was also a perfect opportunity to leverage suggested levels and gamification, with specific perks attached to each level. The project group settled on 10 different levels ranging from \$10 to \$1,000, with four of those 10 levels set at \$100 or less.

Partnership

UT Austin began utilizing the ScaleFunder platform late in 2014, giving numerous entities throughout campus the opportunity to fund a wide range of research projects, student initiatives, and activities of interest to alumni and the community. As part of its efforts to promote crowdfunding throughout its community, the university branded its platform as "Hornraiser," a nod to their popular Longhorn mascot.

The project's students also formed strong partnerships with the university's academic areas, especially the School of Architecture, to promote the campaign to their constituents.

Results

The group surpassed its donor and dollar expectations, generating \$21,422 from 99 donors (including the anonymous matching gift donor). The median gift for this campaign was \$50.

This campaign began a little later than expected, launching in mid-November 2014. However, that launch date also enabled the group to overlap its campaign with the calendar-year-end giving period. The timing aspect became an important part of the campaign success as significant CYE reminders and pushes resulted in approximately half of the gifts being received during the final week of December 2014. Those final-week gifts also put the group over the threshold required to receive the full \$10,000 matching gift.

In addition to emails and a handful of direct mail letters sent to personal networks, social media was utilized extensively in this campaign. The university's official School of Architecture Twitter feed was especially active, either directly tweeting or retweeting information about the crowdfunding effort more than 50 times – with many of those coming between December 26-31. This was in addition to the School of Architecture's Facebook posts as well as any posts throughout the team members' social media feeds, including personal Facebook posts which could have been a significant motivator as the campaign's page was accessed nearly 700 times through a Facebook link.

Gamification was incredibly influential for this campaign as nearly 90 percent of the gifts fell directly on one of the 10 suggested amounts, including three-fourths of all gifts being on one of those four \$100 or under levels.

The most popular level was exactly \$100, where the donor incentive was receiving a digital copy of the documentary to be created through gifts to the campaign. This level's popularity is not surprising given the campaign's case for giving was the creation of that

specific documentary video. However, as those \$100 gifts were double the average gift for the campaign, this can serve as a great example of using recommended levels in order to motivate donors to make larger gifts.

About the Ruffalo Noel Levitz ScaleFunder platform

The Ruffalo Noel Levitz crowdfunding platform, ScaleFunder, makes it easy for you to leverage online fundraising efforts to engage with supporters, motivate prospects, and acquire new donors. ScaleFunder features a custom branded platform for your organization; enables supporters to see and feel the impact of their gift; dynamically showcases projects and the impact of giving; allows donors to easily share the campaign through social media; and includes tiered giving impact levels. All of this is integrated with your payment processing system to deliver funds within your existing business process framework.

“The Solar Decathlon team had the perfect blend of ingredients to execute a successful crowdfunding project on a university level. The project was compelling and relevant to the mission of the university, while the team had both faculty and student fundraisers who were willing to actively solicit their personal networks for support. But the thing that really put the Solar Decathlon team over the top was support from their college development office. In our university environment, we're seeing that projects receiving even a little support from their department's fundraising professionals are performing at a higher level. The added professional advice and/or the willingness to share the project with alumni or other constituent bases provide a significant boost in both resources and return.”

Adrian Matthys
Director of Annual Giving

Learn how to engage donors through crowdfunding at www.RuffaloNL.com/ScaleFunder