



MONEY

8 Hacks For A Killer Kickstarter



9 MONTHS AGO

MATT RAY

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Travelling with hand luggage only can be liberating. But if you are heading to a C-level meeting, jamming a suit into a shoulder bag, or wearing one and becoming a canvas for drink stains, is unlikely to impress.

That was the problem entrepreneur Patrick Tatham set out to solve with the PLIQO bag, which claims to let you fold your suit down into a laptop-sized bag and keep it crease free. He bootstrapped the company by learning how to sew and producing a prototype, but his real success came when he ran a Kickstarter campaign and was able to start shipping product within six months – RSNG asked him to reveal the hacks he used to do it...

**RSNG Tell us how you first developed your idea for PLIQO?**

PATRICK TATHAM, ENTREPRENEUR ‘The idea for a super-compact suit bag came to me many years ago when I worked in finance and was a frequent flier myself. I had several scrapes travelling in my suit – including having to address an industry conference with wine stains on my trousers. I thought then: “there has to be a better way.”’

‘However, it was only after I had left the finance sector – with its relentless work and travel schedule – that I had the time to develop the PLIQO bag.’

‘You need a videographer who is more like a ‘partner’ in the project than a contractor’**RSNG What was the next step, once you had the idea – did you test it?**

PT ‘I tried to do as much of the product development as possible myself –

machine. As a result, I made the first 20 prototypes literally 'in house'. I started making the hangers out of balsa wood and plastic components.'

'It was only when I reached the limit of my capabilities that I researched my design consultant partners to help with the technical and factory drawings. Fortunately, these partners have been great. Researching and finding the right partners is really important, and can be make or break for your product – so invest time in this step.'

'I also tested the concept with a number of friends, and friends of friends who travelled a lot on business. I more or less pestered them to take my prototypes on their real-life trips, and the feedback was very useful in refining the final design. Fortunately, it worked pretty well from the start and I didn't get too many complaints about crumpled jackets from my mates!'



RSNG Did you develop a story behind the product, to better communicate the concept?

the type that fold across the bridge.'

'That got me thinking, 'what would happen if you applied the same folding principle to the humble garment hanger?' And in essence, it's the folding garment hanger in the centre of the bag that makes it possible to fold down suit to the size of a laptop bag.'

RSNG Give us an example of a C-level meeting in which the product enabled you to work better or faster?

PT 'As well as product design, I have a business as a commercial writer, and my main client is based in Geneva. I go for meetings every two months, and always use a PLIQO bag to stash my suit in my carry-on luggage – meaning I can travel as comfortably as I like, knowing my suit will be in pristine condition for the client meetings.'

'It hasn't failed me yet – and happily, quite a few of the client's people have now bought bags of their own.'



‘Work hard on your elevator pitch to make sure you get your foot in the door’

RSNG How did you go about perfecting the design?

PT ‘Very important this: know your limitations, and get professional help before

‘The problem was more persuading them to work with me on my unproven concept. It took a fair bit of persistence. I guess the moral is: work hard on your elevator pitch to make sure you get your foot in the door.’

RSNG What were the three successful things you did to launch a good Kickstarter campaign?

PT ‘Most obviously perhaps, find a really good videographer. This isn’t just about the main video pitch – although that is incredibly important. You want someone on hand who can edit your main video into shorter chunks to post to social media during the campaign. And to record video shorts to thank backers at various milestones along the campaign trail. In short, you need a videographer who is really more like a ‘partner’ in the project than a contractor.

‘Second, don’t be afraid to tell all your friends about your campaign. This might feel distinctly ‘un-British’ but you’ll probably find most of them get really excited about what you’re doing. Maybe they contribute only 5% to your campaign, but they probably share what you’re doing with family, friends and colleagues who then share on with others – and so on.’

‘Third, be gracious to your backers. Try to thank them personally – if you have an email template, it only takes a few seconds to personalise. I found many of my backers have come back after the campaign to buy more PLIQO products for family or friends. And they have given me some tremendously helpful, and often complimentary, feedback.’



RSNG What did you learn from the campaign?

PT 'Get help! Not the obvious sort you can arrange before – video making, photography and creating that perfect Kickstarter page. If your campaign starts to exceed your expectations, you'll need plenty of 'administrative' help with thanking customers, answering emails, posting to your social media accounts and liaising with suppliers. Fortunately, my sister-in-law had just retired from her job as a conference organiser – the perfect background – and stepped in to help. She basically saved my campaign – and my sanity.'

'Somewhat related to 'help' – as your campaign takes off, you will get bombarded with unsolicited offers from digital marketers offering to take your campaign to 'the next level'. This is the kind of help most crowdfunders can safely do without.'

discovered to my horror that my EU Trademark was separately owned by Walmart in the US. As I always planned a big push into the US market, this was a disaster – you do not want to cross the world’s largest retailer. Basically, I had to organise a complete rebranding to stay on track – not just all the obvious logos on the bags and the printed stuff, but also the website, social media, and even buying new urls and setting up new email addresses.’

‘I learned from this to avoid using ‘real’ words for an emerging product. These are much more likely to be already trademarked somewhere in the world. PLIQO is basically a made-up name, loosely based on the Italian word ‘plico’ meaning an envelope or small package (which is sort of what the bag is).’

RSNG In hindsight what was the most important thing you did in the whole process?

PT ‘Probably the best thing in hindsight was having all the factories ready to go the moment the crowdfunding ended. A lot of crowdfunders use platforms like Kickstarter to ‘market test’ an idea that hasn’t had any real development monies invested in it. Personally, I think this is a bit of a cheat. And it can result in long, long lead times ahead of delivering rewards, which I think is one of the most annoying things about backing crowdfunding campaigns.’

‘Even with the inevitable production delays, we were able to ship our PLIQO bags within six months of the crowdfunding closing, which I was pretty happy about.’



RSNG Was it important to make the most of the Kickstarter success and not lose momentum – if so how did you do this?

PT 'In fact, the crowdfunding period tends to take over your life while it's on – then suddenly everything stops while you wait for your product to arrive. As you don't have any product to ship at this stage, doing a lot of marketing doesn't really make sense. So, I did feel that everything was put on hold for six months, and then I had to start trading again like a 'proper' company once my stock arrived.'

'Nonetheless, crowdfunding has enduring benefits. Kickstarter – and friendly rival Indiegogo – both have enormous influence, and are used continuously for product discovery, as an alternative to search engines. People are still coming to my website two years after the crowdfunding because they discovered the PLIQO bag on my now-retired Kickstarter project page.'

WHAT NEXT? Want some marketing tips for your Kickstarter campaign or new brand? Then check out the [RSNG review of Seth Godin's 'This Is Marketing'](#) now.

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