Kickstarter, Inc.
“A Place Dedicated To Helping Create Projects Come To Life.”

Mat Leroy
Communication in Organizations
What is Kickstarter?

Kickstarter is an online-based, independent organization that focuses on crowdfunding to bring creative projects to life with the help of donors. These projects go through a broad range of media including films, music, stage shows, comics, journalism, video games, and food-related, to name a few. Kickstarter is currently made up of only 93 employees where half work on designing and coding the site, and the other half work with the community. Although they retain less than 100 employees, the company is still able to function as efficiently as any other successful organization due to several factors outlined below. Since its introduction on April 28, 2009, Kickstarter has grown miraculously into a widespread organization both globally and financially, reaching over $1 Billion in pledges and going international by supporting projects in more than 5 countries, respectively, in just 5 years. They have expanded their site to be able to support projects within the United Kingdom (October 2012), Canada (September 2013), Australia and New Zealand (November 2013), and, most recently, Norway (September 2014). While they support projects in countries other than the United States, Kickstarter is still based in New York City.

Kickstarter’s headquarters, previously known as the Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory, is located in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, just off New York City’s East River. This is a great location as it is not set directly in the big apple, where they were previously located, but is offset enough to be able to feel the inspiration that New York City brings to many of its businesses. This is great for Kickstarter employees as they will not be distracted by the surrounding area but will have a view of what they know is near them. Income is great, location is stable and inspiration is always available.
What do they do?

Kickstarter has a very clear and firm mission statement that truly expresses their true ambition—to help bring creative projects to life and build a community around it. They have two very distinct jobs at their facility—making their site as intuitive, functional, attractive and, most importantly, fun as possible and helping the community, and their projects, reach their financial goals. “Back ing a project is more than just giving someone money, it’s supporting their dream to create something that they want to see exist in the world” (Kickstarter). Kickstarter makes it all about the community and their work, they are just there to assist creators in getting a headstart in reaching their goals. All projects on their site are independently created by the people behind it from start to finish while having complete control and responsibility over their projects. People create their project pages, get backers (individuals who pledge money to the product in return for a specialty that the project offers), and wait for their goal to be reached. Kickstarter just makes it as simple and effortless as possible for the user to reach create their project, organize their page, and reach their goal.

Kickstarter is not, however, a non-profit organization. Their funding comes directly from successful projects on their site. This means that the project must have reached its financial goal before their deadline, if not, then funds do not transfer to the project creator nor Kickstarter itself. “If a project falls short, no one is charged. Funding on Kickstarter is all-or-nothing” (Kickstarter). If a project does succeed, the creator receives 95-97% of the all funds pledged and Kickstarter receives 3-5%. Up to today, Kickstarter has over 1 billion dollars pledged in projects that total up to at least 30 million dollars in potential profit that Kickstarter may have obtained.
Organizational Structure and Culture

One very attractive feature of Kickstarter is their strong organizational structure and culture. Although they are an online-based company, all their work comes from inside their physical headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. Nonverbal communication is present since it is a small number of employees in the entire building. Not only that, but relationships have been built to create trust between each other, another key factor in running a successful organization.

Besides being in the same building, Kickstarter’s structure is best known as a flat organization because of its few hierarchy levels. This means messages move faster through the organization, especially since they have less than 100 workers. Kickstarter begins with its CEO, Yancey Strickler, at the very top and moves down to its second hierarchy level positioned for its Vice Presidents of each focal area—product (VP of Operations) and community (VP of Community). Thereafter, the third hierarchy includes the managers and directors of each focal area, followed by their team of staff members right after. Kickstarter is big enough to get small information going separately through each department but small enough to be able to communicate information to the rest of the organization to keep everyone information quickly and efficiently, regardless of hierarchy level. This means that although Kickstarter clearly has a vertical communication system by sending information from the top down or the bottom up, a large part of their corporation is also communicating horizontally, or within the same hierarchy level, because of how small Kickstarter is. They would be best defined as having a network structure; a very important part of this is how much of a team they are.
Working at Kickstarter

Kickstarter has an entire page on their site dedicated to what it is like to work with them. The way the page talks about the environment and workplace on an everyday basis is what makes the employees feel like they are working with the company rather than for them. Each section of the page separately outlines short information with a quick title to showcase the benefits of working with the team, including how your work matters, the team’s primary goal, significance of headquarters location, who Kickstarter is recruiting—those who match their vision—and, most importantly, how fun it is to work with them. “We love what we do, and who we do it with” (Kickstarter) exclaims their passion for their work.

Kickstarter has grown a lot since its launch in 2009; it has expanded, it has moved, it created a very efficient, familial team, and it has helped back many projects that came to life. Kickstarter has a true passion for what they do. In such a short amount of time, they have accomplished so much both internally and externally. This is due to two very important aspects of their organization, creating a clear goal and building a team that wants to help reach that goal.

Have a creative idea in mind that you want to bring to life, but don’t have the tools to establish it? Whatever it is, Kickstarter’s got you covered.
Work Cited


Kickstarter employee, Yancey Strickler, was recently interviewed earlier this year, by Liz Gannes at Recode, on his new position as CEO. One particular question that stood out was, “How is Kickstarter different with you as CEO?” Strickler immediately began his response with “We’ve always been a team.” That’s an important part of an organization, knowing that no matter what position each person holds, remember that you all will always be a team, especially in a very small organization.