

PROCEEDINGS

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Note: Detailed location data of indigenous orchid and endangered species sightings presented at the Conference have been removed from the papers in these Proceedings as a precautionary measure. Should you require access to this information please contact the respective speakers.

Crowdfunding as a funding source for conservation

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The SRC Case study

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Abstract:

A crowdfunding project was conducted by the Sugarbush Ridges Coalition as an experimental exercise to assess whether this model would be effective as a method of fundraising for purposes of conservation. An overview of the process, successes, failures and lessons learned are discussed.

Introduction

The Sugarbush Ridges Coalition (SRC) is a conservation group focused on conserving the remaining habitat surrounding the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden and includes all natural areas which constitute western sections the Ridges of the Roodepoort and Krugersdorp ridge ecosystem (hereinafter referred to as the Sugarbush Ridge). The SRC was formed by the coalition of several conservation groups (listed below see Figure 1) who came together to focus on their common mandate which is the conservation of the remaining Sugarbush Ridge. Current projects were identified based on need, the SRC decided that the ecological security of the ridge was a major cause for concern due to generalized ecological degradation caused by anthropological pressure which needed to be addressed (Hankey et. al. 2018). SANBI had already been approached by the Proteadale Conservation Association to provide rangers that would patrol the ridge sections of their property, unfortunately at the time SANBI was not in a position to provide such guards on a full time basis due to financial constraints, however they did manage to provide guards over weekends on a limited basis for as long the available budget would provide. Funding was therefore urgently needed to support such patrolling activities, as well as various other interventions to improve the general ecological security of the ridge system. The PCA together with the Black Eagle Project Roodekrans had already proposed the establishment of a volunteer corps of field rangers from the community, however a limited budget would be needed to provide training and administer the operation. It was realized at the outset the advantages of operating as a coalition rather than as a single NGO.

The decision process

A suggestion was tabled by the SRC to explore a Crowdfunding model and a proposal to investigate the feasibility was proposed. After initial investigations the SRC decided to proceed with and run a project to raise funds for the objectives listed above, as an experiment to determine how effective this platform may be for an urban conservation based fundraising. The platform chosen was www.Thundafund.com as it was a South African based company and it was envisaged that interaction with the company would be easier since they were based in South Africa.

The creative process

A task team was established from the SRC who would run the project and an account was opened on the Thundafund web platform. Images and text was structured and uploaded to the test platform which was only visible to persons with the username and password. During this development phase the interaction with the host company was very important, they provided useful advice and guidance while structuring and developing the front page of the campaign. Simultaneously a short video need to be developed which was planned and executed by members of the task team (D. van den Berg 2018).




It was decided at the outset that the Black Eagles and the Albertina Sisulu Orchid would be used as the flagship species to promote the




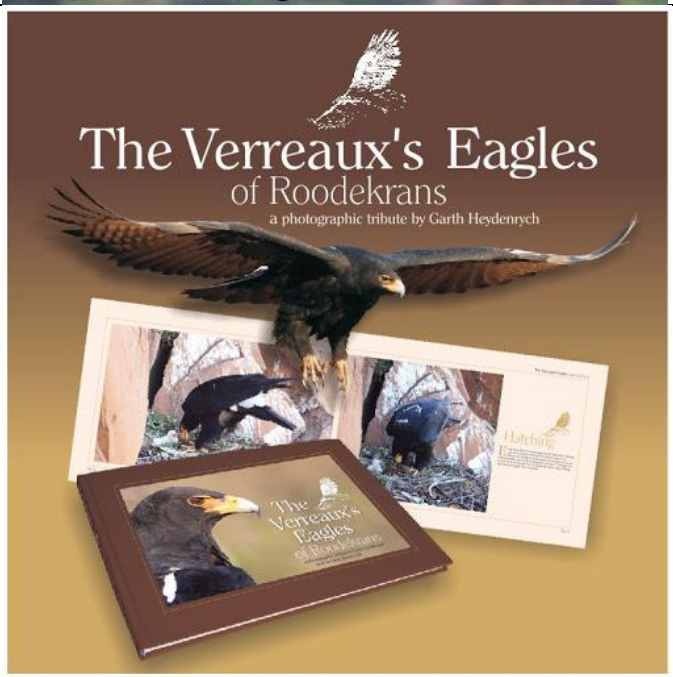
campaign in the interests of promoting the conservation of the entire ridge system.

How it works

On viewing the campaign the viewer is presented by the short video first, scrolling down provides progressively more detailed text about the project, detailing how much money is aimed at being raised (ultimate goal) and what the money will be used for. The campaign has a “tipping point” set by the beneficiary, which must be reached within the 60 day campaign period. If the tipping point is not reached then the campaign is cancelled and all the money goes back to the supporters. Once the tipping point is reached the campaign is validated and supporters will receive the reward they had opted for. Unlike a regular donation, crowdfunding campaigns offer the supporter various forms of rewards to recognize their contribution to the cause (Figure 1). Rewards vary from no reward to the supporters’ name being listed on a webpage or Facebook page to various other physical rewards as shown in Figure 1. Post analysis of the rewards shows that most supporters opted for no reward (Chart 1). The costs of the rewards comes out of the funds raised. After the 60 days period has lapsed, Thundafund take a small percentage which is their administration fee, the balance of the funds is paid out to the beneficiary who then takes the responsibility of ensuring the rewards are delivered to the supporters. A complete record of the screen shot was recorded and is shown in figure 3.

Figure1. Rewards offered on the SRC Thundafund campaign 2018.

R200	Building the nest	Letter of thanks from the SRC	
R500	The Egg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of thanks from the SRC • Name (company name) mentioned on BEPR Facebook Page 	
R1000	Hatching – Hello Daddy	Photo quality print (A4 size) photograph of the Black Eagle chick on the nest soon after hatching.	 <p>Hello Daddy - <i>Carole Henderson</i></p>
R2000	First flight	Photo quality print (A4 size) photograph of the Black Eagle chick	 <p>First Flight - <i>Carole Henderson</i></p>
R3500	Learning to hunt	Photo quality print (A4 size) photograph of the semi-mature Eaglet	 <p>Learning to Hunt - <i>Simon Jones</i></p>

R5000	What a wonderful world	The full collection of all 4 (A4 size) photographs of the Black Eagle	 <p>What a Wonderful World -  </p>
R10,000	Flying free	A copy of The Verreaux's Eagles of Roodekrans, a photographic guide by Garth Heydenrych (text by Libby Wodcock) signed by the photographer.	 <p>The Verreaux's Eagles of Roodekrans a photographic tribute by Garth Heydenrych</p>



R15, 000	Protected	Signed and numbered limited edition print of a painting of the Albertina Sisulu Orchid by botanical artist Daleen Roodt.	
R25, 000	Benefactor	All of the above rewards except for the limited edition artwork. As well as being listed as a sponsor on the coalition members websites. Plus the final photo to complete the collection. As well as a hand penned thank you letter from the Chairman of the SRC	

Figure 3 Screenshot of the campaign

Project

Already have a project?
[Sign In](#)

Keep The Eagles Flying



Ensure the long term survival of the Black Eagles of Roodekrans and the Albertina Sisulu Orchid as well as the natural beauty of the Sugarbush Ridge Ecosystem that supports them. This entire ridge is highly threatened by rapid urbanization, it is home to several red data plants and animals as well as other wildlife. The project seeks to establish a protected environment for the ridge ecosystem for sustainable use and enjoyment by the community for the long term future.

Gauteng Community

TWEET SHARE

R76,180 pledged so far

30%

R250,000 Dream Goal

1 Days Left

84 Backers

FUND THIS PROJECT

This project will only be funded if at least R30,000 is pledged before 15 Dec 2018.

Get in touch with this project

[✉ drapergerald@gmail.com](mailto:drapergerald@gmail.com)

The Project

Comments (18)



Keep the Eagles Flying and the Albertina Sisulu Orchid Blooming

The Black Eagles of Roodekrans are a world famous breeding pair of urban Eagles that live on the red cliffs (Roodekrans) in the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens next to the Witpoortjie waterfall. Several generations of these Eagles have lived here for about 80 years and are followed the world over. Should the urban pressure become too much to bear and the birds can no longer find sufficient food to raise their annual offspring, it is feared that they would vacate the site in search of more fertile breeding grounds. Then this iconic pair could be lost to the community for ever.



The Albertina Sisulu Orchid is an incredibly beautiful and very rare orchid which occurs on public and private land adjoining the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens in City of Johannesburg. It is a very rare orchid and is

Rewards



R200

Building the Nest

A Letter of Thanks from the SRC

Est. delivery date:

February 2019

R500

The Egg

A letter of Thanks from the SRC, plus your name (or company name) mentioned on a posting of thanks with link (if company) on the BEPR Facebook Page.

Est. delivery date:

February 2019



R1,000

Hatching - Hello Daddy

Photo quality print (A4 size) photograph of the Black Eagle chick on the nest soon after hatching.

Est. delivery date:

February 2019

Delivery:

Worldwide

Marketing

Marketing is probably the single most important aspect of the success or failure of any such campaign, simply being listed on the crowdfunding platform does not mean the money comes rolling in. A tremendous amount of promotion and media exposure is needed to get the campaign going and to maintain momentum during the period for which it is live. Making use of free opportunities on the internet as well as through the local press is invaluable as no marketing budget was available for this exercise. Although somewhat limited, free advertising opportunities do exist on social media, although one needs to invest the time as well as have some experience of how to access them to leverage the most from those opportunities.

The SRC was able to facilitate several newspaper and online media articles during the campaign period, this is important as social media alone does not lend as much credibility to the campaign as does independent media.

Analysis

The support received was significant with many people commenting and showing their support on the various social media platforms, total amount raised was raised R78,180 (R77,180 via Thundafund + R1,000 direct eft). The total administration fee charged by the facilitator was R3, 197.30, hence the final figure received by the coalition was R73, 982.70. A record was kept of the growth of the fund over the 60 period (see Chart 2).

Chart 1 – Split of rewards selected by supporters

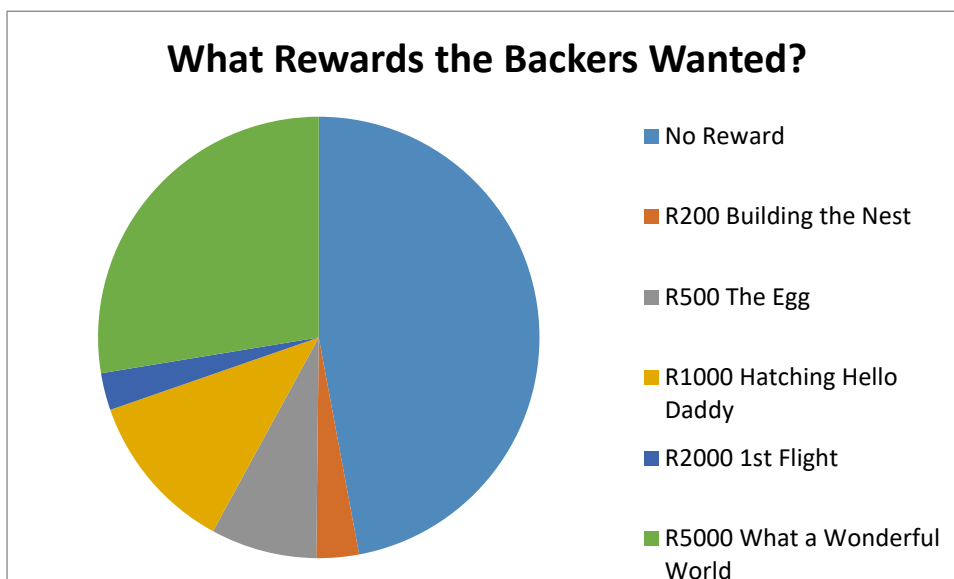
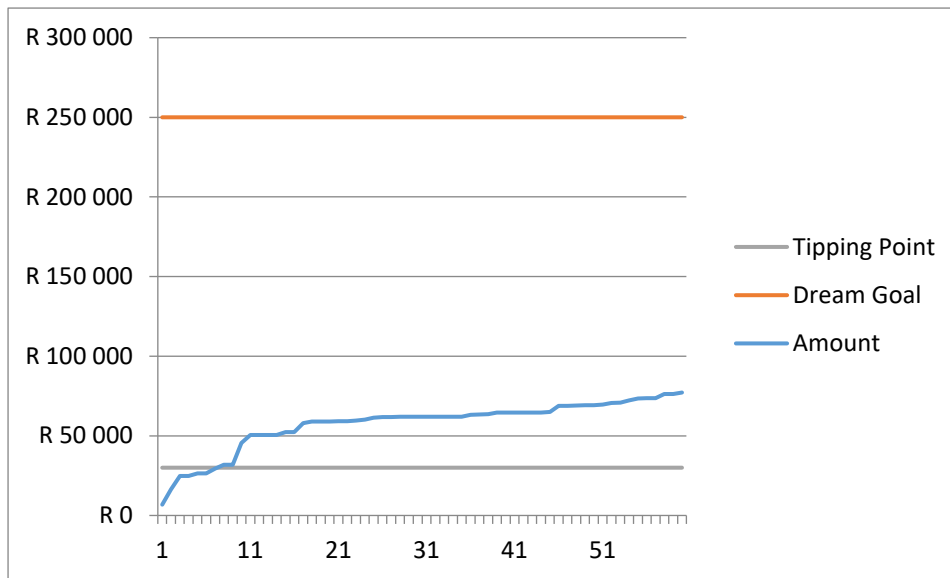


Chart 2. – Tracking the growth of the fund over the 60 day period



Successes, failures and lessons learned

Overall the campaign was a resounding success since we had no idea going in how much may be possible to raise using this platform. Apart from time there were no upfront costs involved, all costs incurred were therefore paid out of the funds raised. The fact that the campaign offers multiple levels of support allows everyone to make a contribution that suits their own pocket.

The final packaging of the campaign was very professional and provides a good product image to the public. The development of the short video should ideally be done by a director/ producer after being given a clear and concise narrative from the committee. The video production is a creative process that requires a good deal of independence. A lack of such terms of reference and interference by the committee can potentially result in delays and frustrations to the director/ producer. Production of the video could have been a costly affair and should be well planned before embarking on such a project. In this instance the video was produced with no up-front cost to the SRC, for which they are grateful.

In retrospect the SRC could and should have planned their marketing campaign better, we were poorly prepared for the sheer volume of media that was needed and the impetus required to promote such a campaign over the 60 day period. It is essential that a structured social media campaign and budget be set up to run for a predetermined period, as this keeps up the interest while at the same time prevents “bombarding” followers with the same repeated message and images. Some analysis of the timing of the funds raised is important, in this instance the SRC timed the campaign to run together with the fledging of the eaglet on the nest, however due to unforeseen delays the timing was not exactly as planned.

Due to the amount of work required to set it up such a campaign, the coalition team of volunteers worked well. It took 3 and half months to put the entire project together from start to launch. Some members on the SRC were of the opinion that the man hours invested and the reward received were not worth the effort.

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