

Getting a Creative Project Done on a Budget

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when trying to get your dream project off the ground.

Network! Network! Network! Many of us hate to do it, but the simple truth is that your network is the surest way to get your project off the ground. You'll be surprised how much the people around can help you. Expand that group. In fact, if you just tell someone what you're up to, they'll often offer their support. Of course, people who are involved in the same activities are often in a better place to help one another. So, wherever people who do what you want to do go, you should go too. People who love to paint usually like to talk to others about painting. Ask them questions; talk shop. Ask them for a favor and do them a favor in return. If they can't do a favor, ask if they know anyone who might. Thank them profusely. You don't have to be a fake or sell your soul. What you're doing is helping yourself and others in your network do what you all love. Freely mix business and pleasure.

Make it look official. Draw up a poster, flyer, website or a photo album describing your plan. It doesn't have to be the Mona Lisa, but it should communicate to people that you're dedicated. Telling about your project is good, but showing them something that excites their imagination works wonders. If you convince others that you are serious about the project, they will be more likely to help you.

Keep potential donors/investors informed. Potential donors/investors want to be in the know. Explain exactly what you are doing and how it will affect you and the wider community. Tell how your project fits into what other artists are doing and what is the next step artistically for you. Be an expert in your artistic niche.

Do something crazy in exchange for money. Get your friends and family to sponsor you. In exchange for cash do something spectacular: run a race, shave your head, sing karaoke on a busy street. Think of yourself as a charity or non-profit. Often a donating to a charity or non-profit will get you a gift bag or coffee mug. There's a reason for this. Give donors something in exchange for their money. Also, doing something embarrassing or crazy shows you're driven and willing to go the distance.

Do it yourself. We all want the presentation of our art to be perfect. We don't want viewers or listeners to be distracted by a noisy recording or a plywood picture frame. However, there are a few things to be said for doing as much as possible yourself. Firstly, you may find that producing a play in your parents' garage allows greater freedom and flexibility than renting a theatre. Also, make a point of telling people how you found one of the frames in a dumpster. People enjoy hearing about art done on a shoestring budget. If your art is great, people will forgive a few rough edges. What people want to see is a presentation that is careful, neat, and original. Doing it yourself also forces you to learn more about your art or craft. You'll be a better for it. Lastly, being frugal about your project will spur your creativity. Your brain will be working overtime solving problems and generating new ideas. Necessity is the mother of invention. Now get out there and do it!