



CASE STUDY

Downlights

Total Raised: \$166k
Number of Investors: 234
Age of company: 2 years
Annual Revenue: \$122k in FY20
Sector: Homeware
Country: New Zealand
Campaign link: [Downlights' campaign](#)

Downlights is a soy-based candle company which employs young people with Down Syndrome and other learning disabilities.

Downlights





BACKGROUND

How Downlights started

Downlights was founded when Tony Sykes and Jennifer Del Bel teamed up. Tony's daughter Emma, who has Down Syndrome, was finding it impossible to find a job. Tony decided that making and selling candles could be a solution. However, he lacked the industry expertise. A friend in common introduced him to Jennifer, who already had six years of candle manufacturing experience behind her. It was an ideal match and Downlights was born, a company with a goal to enrich the lives of young people with Down Syndrome and other learning disabilities through employment opportunities.

“We want investors who believe in our vision and will be champions for our existing crew” — Tony Sykes and Jennifer Del Bel,
Co-founders of Downlights

TIMELINE

Apr 2018

Jan 2020

Mar 2020

5 May 2020

20 May 2020

Downlights is founded when Tony Sykes and Jennifer Del Bel team up to provide employment to Tony's daughter, Emma, by selling soy candles at a local market.

Downlights begins preparing for their equity crowdfunding campaign, including running through PledgeMe's crowdfunding education programme, CrowdfundingU.

Downlights launches their equity crowdfunding campaign on the same day that Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces New Zealand's imminent move to Alert Level 4 due to Covid-19.

The campaign is extended at the 45% funded mark. The economic climate during Covid-19 is very uncertain, and raising investment is hard. However, the Downlights team doesn't give up.

Almost 50% of pledges to the campaign come in during the last day and a half. It closes with almost \$17k more than its minimum target of \$150k!

**“Just like
puzzles, we are
all different
pieces which
together make a
whole”** — Jennifer Del Bel,
Founder of Downlights





WHAT WORKED WELL

Recommendations for future campaigners.

- **The Downlights crowd shared the campaign** - Although not all their supporters could pledge, they spread the word (the campaign was shared 126 times in one Facebook group!)
- **Good communications** - They never let up on the communications with their crowd, posting regular updates on the campaign page, hourly updates on the last day, and participating in over 10 Facebook Lives and interviews, including with [Manaaki](#), which resulted in a spike in pledges. The Downlights Facebook page and website featured a banner about the campaign too.
- **Their sales spiked dramatically** - Online sales for April 2020 were 92% higher than projections, and generated 3x more online sales than projected for May just halfway through the month!
- **They were flexible** - A few extensions gave their crowd a little more time to consider pledging in uncertain times. They also introduced a lowered minimum pledge.



WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Recommendations for future campaigners.

- **Have a Plan B in place** - Allow more time than you think you need to mitigate against unexpected events. Elections, natural disasters, and significant global or national events can all affect your campaign and the way the media responds to it.





The Silver Bullet

The Downlights campaign launched the morning that Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the level 4 lockdown, a move to protect Kiwis from the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 6 people pledged on the first day of the campaign. To say that the timing of Downlights' launch was unlucky is a gross understatement.

However, **they never gave up and got the message out as far and wide as possible.** They approached new groups of people who could join their crowd, and kept trying new things to push their campaign, despite the unprecedented global climate. They worked all their existing resources and explored all angles right up until the campaign's final hours.

CONCLUSION

Downlights raised \$166K and has 234 shareholders.





YOUR ACTION PLAN

Putting it into practice

Form a passionate and dedicated team

The Downlights case really highlights the importance of having a team that's willing to work tirelessly to grow your impact and ensure you have a successful campaign. Form a team so dedicated that not even a pandemic can stop them.

Have an exceptional communications plan

It was impossible to visit any page operated by Downlights (their website, their social media), and not know about the campaign. Constantly reminding your crowd that they could become a co-owner of your company keeps the campaign awareness high, resulting in a greater likelihood of engagement with the campaign, whether that's a share or a pledge.

Be prepared to put in the hard yards

Equity crowdfunding requires a lot of hard work. Ensure you have measures in place to allow you to work on it.

Get in touch

If you're considering an equity crowdfunding campaign, we're ready to help.

[Contact us for a chat.](#)

You can also learn more about [creating a crowdfunding campaign in Australia](#) or in [New Zealand](#) on our main website.

