



FORTUNE KOREA

For Creators By Creators (FCBC) Movement to Help Entrepreneurs Grow Big

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It's difficult to start a conversation on any important topic without reflecting on how it relates to or is affected by the ongoing global COVID-19 crisis. In the case of entrepreneurship, there is an optimistic sentiment. We have not yet seen the worst interruptions of global supply chains and business relations, but they are coming. What's going to happen to the world economy currently dominated by major corporations?

And this is where entrepreneurship has the upper hand – in agility and fast reactions to changing supply-demand and market situations. There is significant opportunity on the market to establish new players, especially local ones who don't require extensive global supply chain support and massive operations.

Can small local brands from Asia become more global during this time of crisis? The only thing they need is a platform to do it on and a process that's going to make them successful.

Entrepreneurship as Economy Engine

Entrepreneurship has always been the key to economic growth. Several international reports and studies have shown the correlation between economic growth and development/innovation.

Innovative entrepreneurs quickly find open fields of opportunity and new markets, exploring them and creating value by attracting capital to what are potentially the most profitable new segments of the economy.

Korea and Singapore are at the forefront of global product innovation (number 2 and 3 respectively, as ranked by the Global Innovation Index, 2020). This leadership does not guarantee market domination because in order to be commercially successful, the innovation needs to be coupled with a

strategic go-to-market plan, aimed at finding the right market, creating and marketing a product that is appealing to buyers, and building a brand.

How can they build on product innovation and translate it into going global, supported by brand building, all with limited resources? The answer is: with crowdfunding and the For Creators By Creators (FCBC) community.

Crowdfunding: A Stepping Stone to Success

Crowdfunding is the easiest way to build an enterprise with small starting capital and in times of crisis. Established crowdfunding platforms offer good exposure, a reliable way to collect payments, and a tried-and-true venue to reach potential customers before you have invested into actually producing the product. Crowdfunding reduces the risk of failure for good ideas and weeds out bad ideas that are not commercially viable: anywhere between 70-90% of solicited products fail to reach their fundraising campaign goals.

Brands we all know and love like Peak Design (camera bags), Oculus (VR gaming goggles), PopSockets (phone grips/fidget) and FidgetCube (a toy that helps enhance focus) all had their humble beginnings in crowdfunding, exploding with millions of dollars collected on Kickstarter and Indiegogo and an abundant customer network.

Crowdfunding can even lead to profitable collaborations and acquisitions after successful crowdfunding campaigns: Pebble Time, a smartwatch company, was sold to Fitbit in 2017 for \$23M, and Ouya, a video-game system, was sold to Razer in 2015.

Crowdfunding is not just a path to success for small companies. Large enterprises also use it to strategically introduce new products and to enter new markets, especially as foreign entities on their target market. For example, Rodmi Tech, a subsidiary of Beijing Xiaomi Technology, Inc, is a company with an almost \$40 billion market cap. It consistently uses crowdfunding to successfully launch its new consumer electronics products.

In search of the “next big thing,” large crowdfunding platforms have come to Asia where the culture of crowdfunding is just developing and has high growth potential. Backing crowdfunding campaigns has yet to go mainstream in Korea and neighboring countries in Asia but in the past seven years, local, country-specific crowdfunding platforms have been flourishing.

However, platforms are just that: the place to fundraise and trade. Finding backers, buyers, and building a brand doesn't come with it. Any new crowdfunding creator will tell you that creating a campaign promotion page and video, building interest, finding backers and so on—all need to be done now by professionals—and it's an expensive and overwhelming task. **What can a small entrepreneur do to enter and win the crowdfunding game?**

Crowd is Good. Community is Better

Matt Higgins, co-founder and CEO of RSE Ventures, a Guest Shark on SharkTank, FCBC speaker, and pitch competition panel judge explains, “Crowdfunding can be important in obtaining approval from your customers before you are ready to launch your next product.”

However, crowdfunding is only the first step of the process and even with a great idea for an amazing product comes the daunting task of promoting the brand, attracting backers, and the pains of designing, producing, packaging, shipping, and delivering the product. For new entrepreneurs, running a business like this and being successful in all aspects can be very challenging, if not impossible.

For small entrepreneurs to avoid the 90% chance of failure, they must learn complex and comprehensive skills of running an enterprise. At first, it usually comes from outsourcing partners; when the company can prove its viability, it hires internally for all necessary functions. Survival long-term will largely depend on smart strategic planning before and after the campaign, as well as the flawless execution of the strategy.

Later on, becoming successful, especially on a global scale, will take an enormous amount of know-how and a community of a variety of experts. A team of skilled managers, trusted suppliers, and partners is needed. Where can entrepreneurs find them all quickly? And how can they afford all these experts when they are just a startup? Where can they learn everything they need in order to succeed in crowdfunding? **That's exactly the problem For Creators By Creators (FCBC) was created to solve.**

For Creators By Creators (FCBC) Movement and Collaboration Community

“FCBC is a crowdfunding-centered movement and community that connects people, helping entrepreneurs, and sharing the knowledge, experience, and resources to make them successful. At FCBC, creators can learn from the most successful crowdfunded brands, well-known experts, and FCBC founders how to create a successful business with a long-term horizon, prepare and run a successful crowdfunding campaign, and use it as a stepping stone towards achieving a bigger goal—global brand growth. The FCBC slogan, ‘Exhibit, Sell, Grow - Crowdfunding Going Global Made Possible’ means that we provide the most needed resources and opportunities to crowdfunded businesses.”

FCBC Co-Founders, Jay Kang, CEO of We The People, and Suzy Im, former SVP of TribalVision Worldwide & Founder of Business Development & Marketing Transformation (BDMT) Global.

FCBC was founded in 2018 to be a global movement and collaboration community of crowdfunded entrepreneurs and resources that support them. FCBC was created by two groups of entrepreneurs dedicated to and passionate about helping international startups grow and enter new markets: We The People (WTP) and Business Development & Marketing Transformation (BMDT) Global.

WTP is the world's only multichannel crowdfunding retail chain and Global Crowdfunding Product Accelerator from Singapore with retail stores in multiple Asian countries and the U.S. The team of co-founders includes former crowdfunding entrepreneurs Ryan Sim and Joel Liew creators of Kisetsu, a company that makes slim, leather, RFID-protected wallets, and Nison Chan, the creator of Talking Toes Socks, which designs and sells bright, inspirational socks. Sim, Liew, and Chan see their mission as beyond growing sales, though this is an important part of WTP and what Jay Kang, a successful businessman from Korea and co-founder, oversees. Kang, the CEO of WTP, sums it up, "Creators are in need of business support along with a way to link up around the world. We are excited to provide exclusive comprehensive opportunities and support for creators to connect globally."

BDMT Global, an FCBC co-founder, is headquartered in Boston, MA and combines the best of digital growth skillset and their own unique expertise in global expansion to help international (especially Asian) entrepreneurs break into U.S. markets. BDMT Global leads entrepreneurs in planning and succeeding beyond one campaign and one product. BDMT Global is widely recognized for helping growing companies with the comprehensive development & implementation of go-to-market strategies, global marketing outreach, digital transformation, and new market/new product launches. BDMT Global is the FCBC Community's brand and growth strategist assisting FCBC brands with global expansion.

Power of For Creators By Creators (FCBC)

An ecosystem of the supporting partners and knowledge comes from a variety of FCBC speakers, participants, partners, and sponsors. No expertise is overlooked: FCBC brings to the table community relations from leading crowdfunding and selling platforms (Kickstarter, Campfire, Alibaba, etc.), investors, distributors, retailers, brand and growth strategists, marketing and legal resources, product designers and manufacturers, warehousing and shipping experts, etc.

In addition to resources that make a direct impact on the success of the crowdfunding campaigns and brand growth, FCBC involves community leadership organizations that help forge valuable relationships and position the entrepreneurs for global expansion. The larger community includes representatives from international investment programs (International Labor Organization), local accelerators and SMB empowerment centers, women leadership organizations (WEDO), bloggers, and publishers.

And of course, the most valuable advice comes from past crowdfunded entrepreneurs, the superstars whom FCBC invites to share their wisdom with the next wave of creators. Mega-successful brand owners answer questions from the audience and help judge in a sales pitch competition, where teams compete for prizes such as a pitch in front of the VCs, an invitation to sell in retail stores.

These critical lessons and networks are explored at their high-profile events. The FCBC community has had, so far, four successful community events in the U.S. (Boston, St. Louis, Las Vegas, and New York). Recently, it had its largest event yet, a virtual expo “FCBC Go Global”, that was quickly

transformed from a Singapore-based trade show into a virtual show within less than 30 days, due to the global novel coronavirus outbreak.

"FCBC is all about connecting people, helping entrepreneurs, and sharing the knowledge, experience, and resources to help each other. At FCBC, you can learn from the most successful crowdfunded brands and from FCBC founders how to create a successful business with a long-term horizon, prepare and run a successful crowdfunding campaign, and spring to the global brand relatively quickly compared to brands who try to do it on their own. Global brand growth beyond running a successful crowdfunding campaign was the theme of our fifth FCBC Event - this time it was a global event and we appropriately gave it the name 'Go Global,'" said Suzy Im, in her opening speech at FCBC Go Global.

The global virtual event was timed for the opening of a new, crowdfunded products-only WTP store, FCBC's global marketplace ecosystem that just opened in Silicon Valley, CA to best support the creators soon to be showcased in that prime U.S. location.

Livefunding™

Companies that found success by working with WTP, FCBC's marketplace, in the past, including expanding into new countries, will continue to grow using another one of WTP's services, Livefunding™. This is a proprietary service that pairs an online crowdfunding campaign with an in-store campaign that features a prototype of the product. During a Livefunding™ campaign, potential backers can visit a store and interact with the product, increasing backers' trust for the product and brand.

"WTP is the first global product accelerator to provide 360 degree online and offline support for crowdfunding creators to launch and expand globally," says Jay Kang, CEO of We The People. "With growth in the popularity of crowdfunding, it is hard for consumers to see which products are ready for the market and more interesting for them to invest in. As part of the FCBC ecosystem, WTP sales channels will be dedicated to put crowdfunding projects directly in the backers' hands."

Global Business Expansion with FCBC & BDMT Global

Here are some specific examples of how the FCBC ecosystem provides entrepreneurs with the resources to build their brand, expand their operation, generate local media attention, and the opportunity to sell globally. For example, FCBC can connect entrepreneurs with local manufacturers and high-quality designers at lower costs. The FCBC co-founders are dedicated to creating a community that fosters collaboration between entrepreneurs and experts to explore the numerous ways a business can expand, as long as it has access to the right resources. With FCBC co-founder BDMT Global's custom strategy, their expansion can go beyond a conventional growth model in a direction they never would have thought was possible. The huge market changes and perturbations of today will need to be accounted for while repositioning some previously successful products that are becoming irrelevant to today's economic situation.

Think Board and Rocketbook

Two years ago, Think Board and Rocketbook, Boston-based successful crowdfunded businesses, entered the FCBC ecosystem. Think Board created a dry erase film that transforms any surface into a whiteboard. Rocketbook created a smart notebook where handwritten notes could be transferred to the cloud allowing users to erase and reuse the physical notebook.

Both companies secured many B2B orders with corporate companies in two Asian countries and built independent distribution channels. In addition to growing sales, the two companies created a successful collaboration—a dry erase film that connects to Rocketbook's app allowing notes to easily be scanned, saved, and shared before they are erased.

A conventional business plan would have suggested replicating the same B2B model in other countries. However, better opportunities may lie in different markets in the same countries, for example, remote education can be the next target market because education is a national priority in

these two countries. Affordable remote educational solutions could be effectively propelled by FCBC's educational mission and network.

Large Segment of the Travel-Focused Business

Crowdfunding attracts many people who like to travel – there is a large number of new travel brands and products coming to market thanks to crowdfunding. FCBC and WTP had supported a surge of these companies in Asia and the U.S. Some high-profile brands include Cori Traveller (a compact travel pillow), Zendure (a portable power bank), and The Mogics Bagel (portable universal power adapter), for all of whom WTP became the largest reseller in Singapore and other Asian countries, finding additional selling channels, enabling access to more distribution and supporting fundraising with Livefunding™.

All these products will have less demand during the global pandemic crisis, when travel, especially inter-continental, is so restricted. By partnering with FCBC, these brands could reposition to sell to home-office workers who might want to alleviate inconveniences of working from home for prolonged time periods.

Some products, for example, Travis (a Dutch maker of portable global languages translator) could pivot its model completely. Being Travis's top reseller in Singapore, WTP sold their product to a reputable hospital. This one-off sales can be a perfect solution in assisting overloaded hospital systems of many countries with real-time translation of dialogue in the emergency departments and doctors' offices during a global pandemic. BDMT Global, the growth engine of FCBC ecosystem, could help these entrepreneurs drive demand in support of business development and sales activities, and to pursue growth objectives in the most attractive marketplaces around the world.

HYPHER by Sanho Corporation

Daniel Chin has Kickstarter campaigns down to a science. The crowdfunding formula Chin and his company, Sanho Corporation has developed led to campaigns that regularly surpassed \$1 million. While it is a challenge for many startups to get their products placed in big box retailers, the buzz around HYPHER's products and their successful campaign that crowdfunded \$3.1 million caught the attention of consumer stores like Target and Best Buy.

Chin started his first company in Singapore six months after graduating. After building successful global sales, he still wasn't able to sell into the U.S. market, and thus moved to Silicon Valley to solve this problem. His business took off in the U.S. after focusing on high-end Apple accessories.

"We invest a lot into our brand: customers know that when they buy HYPHER they are buying the best product on the market," Chin said.

To accelerate HYPHER's aggressive growth strategy, BDMT Global, as part of the FCBC ecosystem, would be helpful in building a B2B model or a franchise model, which would help capitalize on HYPHER's brand name and allow for higher sales volume as opposed to continuing with B2C sales exclusively.

FCBC Central Mission - Creator Education

In FCBC, the founders and participants value above all the educational aspect of the unique community. This is partially due to one of the co-founders, Suzy Im, who has been teaching Marketing at Emerson College since 2004. "We love seeing the next generation of entrepreneurs being inspired and learning valuable insight from successful Creators and Founders," Im emphasizes.

The FCBC co-founders are in the process of expanding the next FCBC event and are planning to collaborate with Gadget Flow, an online crowdfunding content publisher. "I want to educate as many creators as possible so ultimately there are more successful campaigns in the tech/design category than failures," Evan Varsamis, the CEO and founder of Gadget Flow, said.

Gadget Flow focuses on crowdfunded products giving their readers a place to easily find crowdfunding campaigns from a variety of platforms that have been curated by its editors. The collaboration between FCBC and Gadget Flow has the potential to provide even more opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Gadget Flow is not just another sales channel. It reaches over 28 million people per month between its website and apps and helps promote live Kickstarter campaigns. To date, the company has worked

with over 4,000 crowdfunding campaigns by increasing their exposure and generating backers. Gadget Flow is listed on the Kickstarter Experts page and is the second-largest Indiegogo partner. It offers a service called Crowds Insight that provides feedback from real users about their crowdfunding campaign, online store, and Amazon listing. Gadget Flow also provides free advice about creating a successful crowdfunding campaign on its blog.

Proceeds from FCBC community events go to support another educational goal of FCBC: local schools. FCBC is sponsoring charter college prep high schools primarily located in low-income communities that successfully educate students at risk.

For the FCBC Junior educational events, the team invites and sponsors high-school and middle-school students in an effort to demystify and present entrepreneurship as a possible career option to younger generations.

Success Beyond Crowdfunding

Brand growth, even via a crowdfunding path, doesn't just start and stop with the crowdfunding campaign. FCBC founders and partners help entrepreneurs develop a more mature and comprehensive vision of their global potential and realize it via FCBC and beyond, helping them enter new markets and launch new products and turn initial success into momentum-building power: it takes about the same amount of time and investment to do it right as it takes to do it wrong. Participation in the FCBC community definitely decreases the risk of failure.

FCBC Shapes the Future Blending Virtual Store Experience with Local Showrooms

FCBC will continue to bridge the gap between online and offline commerce and business growing opportunities by organizing virtual expos of new and established crowdfunded brands and connecting them to extensive market places and sales channels the co-founders and their partners will provide to entrepreneurs.

"The combination of online expos and offline showrooms, in the world threatened by a pandemic and retail decline, will provide ample opportunity for an augmented eCommerce experience. Selling crowdfunded products is different from nameless products: entrepreneurs not only sell features and functionality, but also a story of their brand. Conventional stores are not typically equipped to do that, and crowdfunded products get lost on the shelves among hundreds of big-name products." .” said by FCBC Co-founder & We The People CEO Jay Kang.

Virtual expos don't carry the same expense and risk as physical stores. WTP's retail stores will function as showrooms for crowdfunded products to fill in the gap for buyers who prefer to interact with physical products, for increased local relevance, and for segments that buy little online.

In the next several months, FCBC is set to launch an innovative business model, a virtual expo with sales support. This model is positioned to become an alternative, an insurance of authenticity and a personalized sales vehicle to bring trust back to eCommerce, weakened by the rise of counterfeit and low-quality products on popular shopping platforms such as Amazon and eBay.

Growing Crowdfunding, Growing FCBC

FCBC slogan is “**Exhibit, Sell, Grow - Crowdfunding Going Global Made Possible**” and that translates into a strategic plan for the next 3 years.

At FCBC's virtual expo, “FCBC Go Global,” attendees were educated by successful crowdfunding creators, such as Daniel Chin, the CEO of HYPER by Sanho Corporation, and Hanson Grant, the founder of Think Board. Along with the creator perspective, attendees also heard from FCBC co-founders and industry experts about how FCBC can help entrepreneurs grow their business. The expo's focus was global expansion post-crowdfunding. Industry experts who spoke at the expo included Maria Ishii, who is in charge of cross-border business development at CAMPFIRE, Japan's largest crowdfunding website, and Evan Varsamis, the CEO and co-founder of Gadget Flow. "A core value of For Creators, By Creators (FCBC) is to bring together people who can provide knowledge to crowdfunding creators that will help them with selling and growing. Our focus at FCBC Go Global was growing your brand," said Jay Kang, FCBC Co-Founder and CEO of WTP.

Their local community events in key consumer markets will continue to bring the hottest, innovative crowdfunded brands to buyers—sometimes before they hit the stores. Livefunding™, an exclusive opportunity offered by We The People, FCBC's international marketplace, overcomes the trust

barrier between crowdfunding campaigns and backers, bringing future products into the stores for backers to experience and allows them to get assurance of the product quality and functionality.

Entrepreneurship to Capitalize on Innovation

“Too often, we see a great product entering the market confident that having an innovative and superior product will be enough for market domination. We also see that crowdfunded companies don’t have a plan for how to build up to the campaign and how to build on the success of the campaign for faster growth after it’s over. Don’t start without a plan that goes beyond the campaign. Get help: move beyond product orientation, build a brand, and go global. “
Suzy Im, SVP of TribalVision Worldwide & Founder of Business Development & Marketing Transformation (BDMT) Global.

As mentioned above, the Korean economy has been recognized as the second most innovative in the world, with Singapore being a close third. The relatively weak entrepreneurship factor, however, slows the country down preventing it from capitalizing on this innovation: Korea ranked #24 and #27 respectively by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index in 2018. [Source: <https://thegedi.org/global-entrepreneurship-and-development-index/>]

Outside of crowdfunding, brands need to pay a high price for new market entry. This cost and lack of know-how about foreign market entry holds Asia back from fully capitalizing on its innovativeness.

With relatively small internal markets, export and global growth should be on the forefront of national economy stimulation policies. With the pandemic of COVID-19, stimulating local talent to grow global via crowdfunding seems like a logical, small, and sure bet that can bring a large upside to individuals and the economy weakened by lower Chinese exports and the epidemic crisis.

Entrepreneurs with the desire to grow their company with a strategy involving a crowdfunding campaign can join the FCBC movement and community for support and guidance. FCBC works with companies around the world to help them move beyond product innovation, build a brand, and go global.

Written by Suzy Im, former SVP of TribalVision Worldwide and the Managing Partner of BDMT Global. Suzy is an internationally recognized name in global BD (Business Development) and MT (Marketing Transformation) as well as marketing faculty at Emerson College and a co-founder of the For Creators, By Creators (FCBC).

