

Kickstarter suspends privacy router campaign

October 20 2014, by Nancy Owano



Kickstarter has suspended an anonymizing router from its crowdfunding site. By Sunday, the page for "anonabox: A Tor hardware router" carried an extra word "(Suspended)" in parentheses with a banner below stating "Funding for this project was suspended 2 days ago."

Kickstarter generally suspends projects if they break Kickstarter's rules. The device, anonabox, would have brought easy access to those wanting anonymity by encrypting traffic using the Tor service. Nick Mediati in PCWorld said anonabox had already raised almost \$600,000 in contrast to its modest \$7,500 [goal](#). (Ars Technica reported that out of that fundraising goal of \$7,500, in five days it raised \$585,549 from nearly 9,000 backers.) A wide audience of takers was evidently drawn to this

opportunity to own a portable, reasonably priced, easy to set up, device to leverage Tor for staying trackless online. The Tor-based home networking product was priced at \$51. You could just plug it into your router, and it would send your Internet traffic through the Tor network, erasing your online footprints. What happened? Critical reactions from some responders that were relayed back to Kickstarter took issue with the project. They raised points including what they said could be a security problem, making users vulnerable to spying, and they also complained about the source of components used. Critics questioned how "custom" was the hardware used for the device. Andy Greenberg in Wired wrote detailed reports of what happened with an impressive campaign that ended up being suspended. Some of the people who complained said the router's hardware which was claimed as custom-designed could be found for sale from Chinese suppliers. The creator clarified to Wired, said Greenberg, that the anonabox prototype was built from an off-the-shelf [case](#) and a nearly stock board tweaked to add more [flash memory storage](#), both sourced from a Chinese manufacturer.

Kickstarter provided no details about which particular rules were violated and how they were violated; Cyrus Farivar and Sean Gallagher of Ars Technica reported that a Kickstarter spokesman, declined to [detail](#) why the fundraiser was pulled, citing company policy.

Why in general would a project be suspended? According to Kickstarter's rules, a project violation may take numerous forms. These include, among others, "Misrepresentation or failure to disclose relevant facts about the project or its creator" or "The creator provides inaccurate or incomplete user information to Kickstarter or one of our partners."

In the aftermath, some Kickstarter visitors applauded the move by Kickstarter, but some users, wrote Greenberg, "were dismayed to see that the project was cancelled and wrote that they would be willing to fund a similar attempt to create a hardware-based Tor device if it were

restarted elsewhere."

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