

# How to grab the attention of an investor at a tech fair

Taking a stand at a tech fair is a significant financial and human investment for a startup, but there are many ways to make it worthwhile. One good reason is to use it to attract potential investors.

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Knowing that one single conversation with an entrepreneur lasts about 10 minutes, the investors doesn't want to engage in more than 30 for one day. At an event like Vivatech where I was faced with more than 1,000 startups and their stands, I had to choose which ones I wanted to meet. The challenge for the entrepreneur is to actively make their stand attractive to an overwhelmed investor.

So why would an investor go towards a startup instead of the other way around? Here are several recommendations (some are just common sense) that I hope will be useful to you.

## **The first impression - A simple and direct introduction**

At Vivatech in particular, under the logo of each startup, there is a small description of their business. It is crucial to be able to understand in the blink of an eye who you want to meet with...

A young startup often launches vertically and with only one product. As a consequence, the description should be very precise and get straight to the point with a simple phrase. Try however to avoid overly poetic descriptions of your technology – investors aren't quite ready for that yet.

## **A considered brand identity**

This is crucial! Investing in a startup with a poor or neglected identity can be crippling for venture capital. Why? Because your brand reflects your company. Neglecting your image can mean that you neglect your product, its interface, the way your users interact with your product, frankly everything.

A slick logo is the first thing we see. In a fraction of a second, it has the potential to show that the startup is made up of the latest trends in terms of user interface and if you worked with designers to develop your brand and your product. Maybe it is unfair, and surely wrong, but when you only have several seconds to decide if you are going to engage in a conversation for 15 minutes with an entrepreneur or not, having a beautiful logo can really make a difference.

## **The expressions that could make an investor run away**

“The first startup that...” Using this argument can send two messages: It could mean that you are really the first to create a product/service. Which means that there might not be a market for it (yet) and that you are going to create one (with all the risks included). Why not! We love risks! But being the first doesn't necessarily mean that immediate success will follow. We even often see the opposite ... Or it could just be a marketing scheme, which means you are in a saturated market and that the only differentiating factor is being able to pride yourself on being the first.

“Our patented technology...” As surprising as it seems, this can send a negative message to the investor. Playing the game of patents isn't easy for a startup: throwing yourself into a procedure that takes a lot of time (something that a startup doesn't have) and legal fees are extortionate. But obviously, when it is possible, you must protect what is able to be protected (which would be the value at the moment of a potential purchase).

A venture capitalist will favour a product more that has found its market and has demonstrated the traction than a product whose only value is that it is protected by a patent. The true barrier at the beginning is the technological

complexity of your product. The patent is interesting, but it shouldn't be the only argument of your startup.

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[When to believe in an entrepreneur and when to run away](#)

## **The tech stand life - Engage in conversation about the content**

An investor (and all visitors in general) approach a stand because they saw the exterior. They stay because they want to see what's happening in the interior. The challenge for you is to find a way to capture their attention and engage in a discussion, even if it's short.

Investors put a lot of importance on the product. It's the true strength of a startup. However, too many entrepreneurs don't think about putting it up in the front, showing it off, and explaining what makes it exceptional.

The content is key. The more playful, interactive, well-made, and attractive you make your content (videos and demos are the best ways to stand out from the crowd) the more you create ways for people to engage in conversation.

## **Employees as brand ambassadors**

An investor is sensitive to the atmosphere that they perceive in a startup. When we invest in a startup at an early stage, the criticism is based mainly on the founders, how well they complement each other, their understanding, and their capacity to engage with the team.

Even if it has become a cliché of the "startup nation," you can't neglect tricks like staff in branded clothing. Not everyone will agree on this, but I think that it shows that the founders and collaborators are proud of what they have worked for every day, proud of their brand identity and have a team that shares this pride. In short, they are engaged and united.

I remember, for example, at an event more than 2 years ago where I ran into 20 employees from Meero, all with sweaters from their startup! At an event with more than 100 people... It was a strong move that showed engagement

and commitment!

## **Prioritise your discussions**

You need to know how to politely stop or interrupt a conversation that you are having, if there is someone more important waiting at your stand, and thus optimise your time according to your priorities, it's a true skill which can be uncomfortable.

A tech fair is a demanding moment for founders. It's easy to run out of breath! So, maximise your breath, voice, energy and time by prioritising the people who will be most useful for your startup. This strategy seen from the outside makes you appear more serious and competent.

There are two benefits. At a fair, an investor tries to find the maximum number of entrepreneurs. Consequently, if they wait too long to talk to someone without having the impression of being noticed, like everyone else, they will leave. Obviously, the investor isn't a priority, they need to simply organise their time to the maximum.

At a fair, appearances matter. It's the effort perceived by the investor to make yourself clear and appealing that will bring them to your stand. It is your capacity as a good host that is going to make them stay. Once all of this has gotten together, you can (finally!) start to speak in detail about your vision, your products and services, your organisation, even your metrics.

If you are given the opportunity to meet with them outside of the fair, there are several things you need to know that are waiting for an investor of a startup in the early stages and the weak signs that could make your fundraising topple over.

*Read also*

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