

Entrepreneurs and journalists working together: Interview with GuidedPR founder, Rafael dos Santos

“I could work 24/7 doing PR campaigns, talking to journalists and getting my clients featured in the media. I love what I do”, says Rafael dos Santos, founder of GuidedPR. What’s his secret, and how does his firm GuidedPR offer mutual benefits for journalists and founders?

Maddyness spoke to media polymath Rafael about lecturing young entrepreneurs with help from Hello Kitty sleep masks; what it’s like to do a TED Talk; and why the best part of PR might just be the parties.

[*Maddyness*] Could you tell me about your background leading up to what you do now, and explain GuidedPR in your

own words?

[Rafael] I have been in the UK for 20 years. In 2013, I published my first book, *Moving Abroad One Step At A Time*; by doing PR for the book I learned the power of media. A lot has happened since then. I sold my property business, completed an MBA, and now I am running a business I love: PR.

GuidedPR is an automated platform that helps entrepreneurs and owners of small businesses find media opportunities, and in turn helps journalists to find sources quickly and accurately.

I know how hard it can be for a journalist to find the right profile and then the right comments to add to their articles, and I know how expensive it is for an entrepreneur to pay PR agencies to go find them media opportunities. Essentially, GuidedPR is here to solve this problem.

You seem to be a bit of a polymath. Do you enjoy doing lots of different things at once, and is this kind of career becoming more common?

I do wear a few hats, but they are all related to the media. I could be running a PR campaign one week, and helping entrepreneurs create content for their website or marketing campaign another week. Or I might be attending a photoshoot for a client who is going to be on the cover of a magazine, or running media training so my client knows what to say in their radio interview.

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I run a PR company and I also run a magazine and write for *Forbes*. I think if I was making shoes or selling cakes in a hairdressing salon it would seem very strange but being a publicist, editor-in-chief and business writer is all pretty much the same – just for different companies and people. I love it!

I think most entrepreneurs do a lot but the key is not to get lost by getting involved in too many projects.

I frequently get asked to be involved in LGBT+ and company internationalisation projects (I am Brazilian living in the UK), but I don't think I have the credibility or the expertise.

Therefore, I keep to PR and marketing projects – which I can do with my eyes closed!

After many years of entrepreneurship, why did you choose PR?

I love the challenge, I love the media and the buzz my clients get when they see their interview or article published in the media. Also, I love the parties, the cool people, we get to know all the new stuff coming out, it's fun! If you don't like people or talking to them – PR is not for you.

You see, entrepreneurs don't have a manager to say "Congrats, you're doing great." An article in a newspaper or magazine is a pat on their back, telling them they're doing great. Entrepreneurship can be lonely and scary. You're making all the decisions, and you learn as you go along.

When an entrepreneur sees themselves in a magazine or newspaper article, it's a reward for their hard work and expertise.

What are businesses doing wrong when

it comes to getting press coverage, and what do journalists have to learn from businesses?

The problem is that business owners just want to pitch their businesses and say how great they are and what they sell. By doing that they think they will sell more. On the other hand, you have journalists who are interested in fact and knowledge-based answers, opinions or comments.

There is a mismatch here, and that's why PR agents need to get involved. They need to find the balance between 'self-promotion' and 'public information' so both parties win: journalists get the facts and knowledge they need, and business owners get publicity.

Unfortunately, most business owners are not writers. They frequently waste media opportunities because their answers are overly promotional.

What was it like doing a TED Talk? And what *does* it take to be a migrant entrepreneur?

It's a great experience but scary too. You know it's being filmed so you can't mess up. I must have rehearsed my TED Talk a thousand times, and am sure more speakers do too. It's great for your CV as a public speaker – I've had so many invitations to be a speaker in events since giving my TED talk.

What does it take to be a migrant entrepreneur? There are so many words I could use here but I think: resilience, courage, humility, strength, openness, hard work and never giving up. Things will get tough; just keep pushing, asking, pleading, crying, laughing – and things will get better at some point. They did for me, and they will for you too!

You teach at universities. What's that like? Do you have faith in the next generation of entrepreneurs and what's

your biggest piece of advice to future founders?

I do teach and I love teaching. It's very rewarding.

My classes are fun! I teach the way I'd like to be taught. In one university I teach entrepreneurship and one of my classes is about pitching. I bring Hello Kitty sleep masks and give them to all the students. One by one, they have to put on the sleep mask and pitch once with the mask on and once off.

I do that to show the students that one of the fears surrounding pitching is being judged. When we can't see people in the room, we are not afraid of being judged, so those wearing the sleep mask normally pitch much better than the ones without the mask.

Personally, I don't think entrepreneurship can be taught – but you can learn processes and systems that will support you on your journey to develop your business further.

I did an MBA at the age of 35, but wish I had done it earlier, before I sold my property business. I think I would have grown my business much more and sold it for a much larger amount but hey... that's easy to say with hindsight!

My biggest piece of advice: find a job first. Learn processes and systems in a large organisation, then explore your passion and launch a business by doing something you love.

And finally, we've started asking everyone we interview about their daily routine and the rules they live by. Is it

up at 4am for yoga or something more traditional?

Haha – 4 am??? What?? No way. I don't wake up before 8 or 9am. I prefer to work until late. I hate mornings. It takes me forever to wake up. My brain gets more and more active after 3/4pm.

Here's some of my routine:

Wake up and have a cup of (Brazilian) coffee. For the past ten years, my husband has made my cup of coffee – every single day. I know when he is not happy: I don't have my cup of coffee by my bed in the morning.

Reply to emails and make some phone calls when they are pre-booked

Have a mid-morning snack and then go to the gym (three times a week)

Come back home. I love walking to and from the gym because we go through Clapham Common

Have lunch, make more calls, have online meetings, chat endlessly on WhatsApp to clients, friends and family (WhatsApp is a blessing and a curse, don't you think?)

Then I cycle for about 30 minutes in the evening in Clapham Common, cook dinner with my hubby and watch Netflix or Discovery Channel. We're both obsessed with travel and wildlife.

When I was allowed I would attend between three and seven events a week. Yep, seven! Sometimes my husband threatened to divorce me – but the PR business is 'demanding'... you've got to attend those parties, right?!

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