

5 tips to get coverage for your startup (without using a PR agency)

Anyone who launches a business naturally wants others to know about it. No one wants their company to be the best kept secret or it'll never grow to its full potential. This challenge is something I see every day, with new innovations and solutions being unveiled as often as the moon.

PR, given the purpose it serves, actually has quite a bad reputation. Either from bad practices, an overhyped offering, or, where I think the challenge is, a lack of understanding. PR can break a business (in both the good and bad way), and yet is often perceived as something anyone can do or given to the intern who said he was good at writing.

Like your financial reports or tax returns, it takes skill and experience to master the craft (yep, I'm sticking with that one), however there is something that no PR will ever be able to replace. You. Your experience, knowledge, insight and opinion. These are all vital to having a voice in the media. Coupled with the fact that as a startup or scaleup, investing in an additional person or external agency might not be feasible, here are five tips to help you do it yourself:

Your team are experts

One of the reasons you're doing what you do is that you and your team know your industry and product/service inside out. Media will always be looking for experts to provide comments on key topical news to move stories forward and provide a new angle. The more you do this, the better the relationship you'll build with journalists and they'll be interested in working with you again if they know you're a reliable expert on a certain topic.

You know what people want

By looking at the data you've collected as a business, you can provide insights into patterns and trends on partners, your customers or the general public. This will all be unique to you and can be used to highlight interesting developments in your sector. It's well worth identifying what data you use everyday and think about its benefit and impact if shared publicly. Bear in mind that these need to be different or unique compared to what is already being said.

Have I got news for you?

We don't have to tell you this, but the news moves quickly. By knowing what is making the headlines in your space, it can open up opportunities to get involved. Subscribe and read your industry titles each day, as well as the mainstream news. Rough rule of thumb, the stories in the front six pages of the broadsheets will be featured by the TV news – Sky, BBC, CNBC, etc. This means, if you're an expert on a newsy topic of the day, there could be the chance to comment further as the story develops. Even if you aren't able to be featured in the media, share your insight on medium, LinkedIn, Clubhouse or anywhere your audience is engaged.

'So what?

There will undoubtedly be a lot happening in your business and exciting developments all the time. Take a moment, be honest and think if people outside of your colleagues, friends and family would care? Some things will be of interest to your broader industry to specific press but lots would just be far too promotional. The media is there to tell stories, not promote your business unfairly. Everyone has a bit of a beautiful baby syndrome, but not everything you do is a story and that's OK. If you can, talk to contacts to understand what is and get a fresh perspective.

Ask for help

Most of our clients have never asked if they can use their customers or partners in the press. These examples of your best work can uniquely highlight what makes you great. If you're a B2C business, you may have helped someone achieve something which could be a story, or if B2B, you could provide an example of why your client is ahead of its competition. Just ask, the worst they can say is no. Similarly; investors, board members, senior hires, they've all backed you and bought into your vision. Work with them to highlight that decision externally, but read point 4 to check it's worth shouting about.

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