

The 5 things to think about before starting PR in 2023

A new year, month, day. It doesn't matter in the media world. Newspapers still print, TV and radio still broadcast - all discussing the most pressing and interesting stories of the day. And being a part of that is a huge opportunity for any business: brand new or market leading, tiny startup or global giant.

That said, in the first half of 2022, over 400,000 new businesses were registered in the UK alone, meaning the clamour for media awareness continues to grow.

To kick off the year, Maddyness asked for my top recommendations for any business starting or continuing PR in 2023:

Figure out where to start

We at Words + Pixels receive a high number of requests for advice from early-stage startups asking how they can start engaging with the press. But the truth is, most already have - whether it's telling family at dinner, attending meetings with angel investors, or even featuring on a friend's podcast.

What people really mean when they ask this question is: when should I start

contacting journalists, sending press releases and product samples, and coming up with story ideas? The first step is setting out what “success” is for you – what are you hoping for? This will direct your approach. We’ve published [*a blog explaining what to do next*](#) to dive into this.

The topics you should be talking about

Having spent their entire lives watching BBC News, many people find it difficult, and daunting, to decide what makes a good story. Not every business story can be as powerful as a protest in Iran or Elon’s Twitter takeover. The truth is though: almost anything can make a good story. As long as you know a problem and the potential solution to it, you’re off to a brilliant start.

The news media are, of course, interested in specific topics that come and go. At the moment, travel, tech, and health innovation are all having their moment. Businesses in those fields might be off to a head start.

That said, there are broader trends that any business can tap into in a way that appeals to the news media. *Words + Pixels*’ resident journalist, Charlie Metcalfe, who has written stories for *BBC News*, *The Guardian*, and *Wired* told me: *“There’s been a significant rise in interest from editors for solutions-focussed stories over the past year. The world is facing serious existential challenges, and people want to know how to overcome those without feeling down in the dumps about it. We can expect this interest to grow.”*

As organisations designed to solve problems for people, businesses can fit in well with that trend. By focussing on finding important problems, and then offering potential solutions to them, Charlie says that companies can be interesting subjects to journalists.

No news, no problem

People who are new to PR and communications often wonder how they can contribute without any company news. There are actually many ways you can secure coverage for your company with the media without announcing a big funding round or acquisition.

Business profiles are one of the simplest ways. You, as a person, are a lot more interesting to the press than you know. Journalists are almost always attracted to stories about interesting people who are striving to make their industry, or the world, better based on their experience.

Other tactical methods of securing coverage are through expert commentary – using your experience to provide insight on what is happening today – and

creating data stories – using your work to tell the story; proving or disproving common opinion.

In both these scenarios, journalists often require external expertise to tell their stories, and will include the name of your company when they publish or broadcast it. A good PR specialist or agency will know how to connect you with the right journalists at the right time.

Endless possibilities

Some businesses will shy away from PR, dismissing it as something they're unable to do because they lack the budget to hire a communications specialist. Of course, if you want to do PR, you will have to dedicate some time and budget to it. But that doesn't mean you need to hire someone in to do it.

Freelancers and agencies can provide all the specialist experience and knowledge without the hassle of hiring a full-time employee. The best ones will be able to draw from their experience with other companies to inform their work for yours. This can be particularly helpful for smaller brands that haven't established strong and appealing stories yet.

Measuring success

PR has historically had bad PR when it comes to measurement. Whilst it's true no PR can ever guarantee a single sale for your business through its efforts (if someone tells you otherwise, they're lying), there are dozens of ways to measure comms and showcase value.

This needs to be intrinsically linked to what the aim is. It could include brand awareness metrics and, specifically, awareness in comparison to key competitors, keywords, message pull-through rates, and backlinks. Simply using Google analytics to track where customers first spotted a business can also work well.

One mistake I see too often happens when a business fails to align its PR with its own sales function. PR's job is to engage with the press to showcase the impact a company is creating. This can be gold for anyone trying to sell the business, so must be integrated wherever possible.

Anyone can achieve media coverage for their brand. There's no rule that prevents smaller startups from receiving attention where big market leaders receive it every day. What's important is to find your voice, and to use it to tell your own story. Try to think about solutions, and the problem that your business solves. With that approach, and the tips shared in here, you'll be

reading about your company in no time at all.

If you're interested in learning more about using public relations to attract attention to your startup, check out the [Startup School](#) on the [Words + Pixels](#) website.

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