

How to do PR in a way that works for your startup – Part 1

Foundational PR knowledge, especially media relations, has been kept opaque for a long time. It's allowed a layer of ambiguity to be drawn over the media landscape in a way that has only benefited PR professionals. This opacity has meant that startups now typically default to using external agencies that charge them high rates and fail to provide transparent ROI metrics, leaving founders wondering whether PR is really worth it. In short, PR has become a black box, and it shouldn't be.

Here, we want to give you the information and insights that you'll need if you're going to choose the right PR solution for the stage you're at – whether it ends up being with us, or an alternative.

Understand the breadth of PR content

you can create

If you're new to PR, you're probably thinking that press releases announcing something are the only items under the PR content umbrella relevant to you. Press releases are a good way to build credibility – and regular press releases that share news of partnerships, major hires, product launches and rarer funding announcements are all good mechanisms to build a trusted and authoritative brand profile. The regularity of these will also evidence your growth to investors.

However, there are other ways to demonstrate the expertise within the company – many that are more interesting than announcements, and better at building credibility and attracting employees, investors and customers.

Interesting content is about perspective and domain expertise

If you have deep domain expertise in the company, someone will be interested in reading the insights you have to share. Don't think that your company is too small for readers to care – if you're bringing value to them, they will be engaged.

Founders always bring prior expertise that legitimises them as authors and with the right research – which can be quick to do – you can almost always place what the PR industry calls “thought leadership pieces” (or op-eds) in specialist media without a big company following. It just depends on finding the right audience that you can provide value to. For an example, and context on this article's authors – we're a pre-seed startup without a big brand, but we know a lot about building relationships with journalists and sharing valuable content efficiently. And if you've read this far – we hope you're still engaged...

Your ideal customer profile will closely align with audiences at the right publications

The first thing to do here is to identify your industry's trade media ecosystem – such as specialised financial, HR, climate, healthcare, pharma, legal, insurance, crypto, consumer tech etc.. publications – and the journalists at those outlets who write about companies similar to yours. At the very least, you need to find out which journalists cover topics adjacent to the problem you're solving.

In addition to approaching these specialist, ‘vertical’ publications, think about ‘horizontal’ topics too. As a fast-growth tech startup, people will be interested in your perspectives on how to build, grow, and scale a company – and that means getting to know the tech, startup and business media. For the latter, we find that original, fresh (and ideally data-driven) content on how to build a strong company culture, hire and manage remote workers, or navigate the cost of living crisis with innovative employee policies are always popular these days.

Writing about these kinds of topics will also help with what the industry terms ‘employer branding’. In short, making your company look like a cool place to work, and showing your exec team off as a group of self-aware leaders who understand the importance of investing in smart people management practices.

Before you write any article in full though, create a synopsis – usually a headline and then the subheaders, and share the outline with the journalist first. It will save you a tonne of time in writing and there’s a good chance if the journalist is interested in you as an author, they’ll give you feedback on the direction they’d prefer. It’s a good way to find out if what you’re thinking of writing is valuable enough to share without writing the piece in full. We’ve included a synopsis of this article as an example of what structure to share (note that this evolved from its initial outline to make our sub sections more catchy):

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Understanding the breadth of PR content startups can create

Perspective and domain expertise: how to think about what content you can generate efficiently

How to choose the right media that aligns with a startup’s audiences

Generally speaking however, if your content is concise, direct, jargon-free, timely and relevant to the audience you’re addressing, and you are a legitimate expert in your field – you have strong chances of earning a slot in trade media. And if it doesn’t land and you still feel it’s valuable for your ICP, you can publish it anyway on your “owned” channels – like a website or Medium blog, or broken down as a thread on your social media pages.

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Read also

[How to do PR in a way that works for your startup - Part 2](#)

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