

Is Your Startup Ready for PR? Here's How to Know for Sure.

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At some point, every startup founder comes to the idea that they may need to integrate PR into the proliferation strategy of their company. Indeed, with the right approach, PR efforts can easily become a powerful tool to accelerate growth. The list of goals that can be achieved through a thought-out public relations campaign includes the following:

- Attracting investors to improve visibility for securing funding
- Providing information about a startup's products or services
- Building awareness among potential customers and partners
- Creating a favorable image for a company

However, all entrepreneurs should keep in mind that PR is not a magic pill. It works best under certain conditions and with a deliberate approach. Before turning to this tool, you need to evaluate its necessity for your company and the preparedness of your business for starting a public relations campaign.

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How to tell if your startup needs PR

Before turning to PR, make sure that your company needs it in the first place. Analyze the market and your product, and look at the goals you want to attain. PR will definitely be beneficial for your venture if:

- Your startup operates within a highly competitive market;
- Reputation and trust are critical for your business;
- Your product is complex and expensive, and people can't experience it before purchasing;
- You are looking for new partnerships;
- You are looking for investors;
- You want to expand your customer base.

But even if your company meets all the above criteria, you need to think twice to be certain that PR and media relations are the best way to address these challenges for your startup. It often happens that founders expect public relations to be a counterpart of advertising and a solution for direct sales. In reality, the first and main purpose of PR is to gain a reputation. Publicity management impacts sales – but only indirectly and when it works in synergy with marketing.

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How to make sure your startup is

ready for PR

Unfortunately, it's not a rare situation when startup founders underestimate the efforts required for high-quality publicity management. As a result, they initiate a PR campaign too early and get disappointing results. There's no sense in rashness. Take time to assess whether your startup is ready to launch a PR campaign. Here's a checklist for that below:

- **Your product or service is fully developed and works with no mistakes:** When you start pitching your company to mass media, it's important that people can try what you have to offer and give it positive feedback.
- **You can clearly state the goals that you want to achieve with PR:** There are different PR tactics and strategies for different aims. Approaches may vary even for different funding stages. Doing PR without precise goals is a waste of time and money and won't help anyone.
- **You already have a brief clear description of your product or service and can explain how your company differs from competitors:** Journalists, potential clients and investors should immediately understand what they are looking at and why it's unique and worth their attention. Also, don't forget to translate the description and other texts to languages of all the markets in which you are planning to launch.
- **You've articulated your startup's mission, vision and key messages:** Everybody loves a company with a mission and a visionary. It makes a startup more memorable.
- **You've found the appropriate tone of voice and brought all the text materials to a consistent format:** This includes all the texts that can be found on your website, social media accounts and in newsletters. If a text goes public, it should agree with your

communication strategy.

- **The company's social media accounts and blogs are aligned with the current message and explain who you are and what you do:** Journalists, potential customers, existing customers and investors will surely find those and analyze them as any other media publication would.
- **The speakers who represent your company have their social media profiles properly worked through:** Today, any given person can research every aspect of your business that they are able to find online. So, use every little chance to make a favorable impression and explain the importance of it to the team.
- **You've decided on the positioning of each speaker:** When you have a pool of media representatives for your startup (even if it's only your CEO), it's necessary to decide what topics they will be covering as experts and clearly communicate them to reporters and editors.
- **The speakers have appropriate photographs shot by a professional photographer and a short bio:** These things may be requested by journalists when they prepare publications about your company. It always feels highly satisfactory when the people of your startup are properly introduced in an interview.
- **You are ready to share some exclusive data and analytics:** It helps to build credibility, especially in the eyes of journalists who usually have no desire to copy and paste information that has been published already and always strive to impress their audience with something new.

Related: Is Your Brand Ready for Public Relations and Press?

Smaller startups may hesitate to hire a public relations

agency because most agencies' retainer fees look overwhelming for such companies. However, it's hard for founders to control the crucial operations of a venture and simultaneously bootstrap their PR efforts. No effective communication with the media can exist in such circumstances.

A well-suited option may be to look for a PR agency that focuses exclusively on startups, including early-stage ones. Usually, such agencies are deeply aware of the needs and pains of their clients and offer reasonable contract terms. You need to find a KPI-driven PR firm –because, with them, you'll have guaranteed results and be able to adjust your KPI requirements to your budget. An early-stage startup can agree to the minimal KPI and increase them later, when they can afford to do so.

Perhaps the most crucial thing to remember is that PR, being an effective tool, requires time to achieve the needed outcome and brings no instant success. However, with the right approach, it can be powerful and help early-stage startups achieve their key goals.

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