

What Entrepreneurs Can Learn from Josh Hart's Partnership with Tommy John

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Key Takeaways

- Authentic partnerships outperform flashy ones.
- Lifestyle storytelling builds stronger brands.
- Personality is currency.

Some brands go for flash. But that wouldn't be appropriate for an underwear brand like Tommy John. So naturally, they went for fit instead.

When the leading underwear and apparel company announced New York Knicks player Josh Hart as its first-ever athlete partner, it wasn't looking to make a splash with a perennial All-Star or MVP candidate.

It was about alignment. It was about finding the right voice, the right personality and the right audience.

A perfect fit

Tommy John had already worked with Hart through *The Roommates Show*, his podcast with fellow NBA player Jalen Brunson. They'd seen his humor, relatability and ability to connect with fans beyond basketball. Combine that with the fact that Hart plays in the country's largest media market, and the partnership became an easy call.

“Obviously, my lifestyle is extremely on the go,” says Hart, who, during our conversation, was in the middle of picking up his kids from school. “So I need stuff that’s really comfortable and convenient. Tommy John emphasizes those things.”

The partnership centers around Tommy John’s 2025 holiday campaign, *“Gift from the Hart.”* The brand’s first athlete-led campaign features a playful spot titled *“‘Twas the Hart Before Christmas,”* where Hart shows off his easygoing personality while sharing his approach to gifting.

“I think it’s perfect,” he says. “The partnership is fun, loving, and a little funny – it fits my personality to a tee.”

Beyond promoting a product, Hart helps Tommy John reach new cultural spaces – blending sports, family and humor into a lifestyle message that connects with modern consumers. Known for his quick wit and easygoing charm, Hart’s trophy case may be light (for now), but he’s clearly the people’s All-Star.

For Tommy John, that’s smart brand-building. For Hart, it’s proof that athletes can win big by leading with personality over performance.

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A partnership from the Hart

This collaboration reflects a larger trend in the sports fashion world. For years, athletes have been walking billboards for designer brands – the kind of clothes you call pieces rather than shirts and pants. That tide is changing.

Today’s athletes want to represent brands that align with their values and lifestyle. Accessibility, comfort and authenticity matter just as much as luxury. That’s why successful brands are shifting their focus from pure performance and prestige to purpose-driven storytelling that

connects with athletes on a personal level.

“When I first got into the locker room, it was always like, ‘Oh, what brand are you wearing now?’” Hart says. “Now it’s more about, what’s he actually wearing today? How’s he feeling in it?”

That shift from image to intention is part of a broader movement across industries. Whether you’re an athlete or an entrepreneur, people now want to see *themselves* in your choices.

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Why it matters – lessons for entrepreneurs

1. Authentic partnerships outperform flashy ones.

Tommy John didn’t chase a superstar; they chose someone who genuinely aligns with their brand. In business, long-term success often comes from partnerships rooted in shared values, not just visibility. On top of that, successful partnerships start with a clear purpose. Knowing why you’re partnering guides every decision and helps build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships.

2. Lifestyle storytelling builds stronger brands. Consumers connect with how a brand fits into everyday life. By centering its campaign on comfort, family and personality, Tommy John turned an underwear ad into a lifestyle story.

3. Personality is currency. Josh Hart’s humor and relatability make him valuable beyond basketball. For entrepreneurs, it’s a reminder that authenticity and human connection can be just as powerful as titles or follower counts.

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