

Get the **Best PR For Your Business**

Do not dilute the scope of this dynamic aspect of your enterprise.

By Nandita Lakshmanan

“**P**ublic Relations is about facts, not the whitewash of facts.” Having been a practitioner for close to two decades—representing established brands and startups—I believe that if PR is integrated well into a startup’s foundation, the impact can be far reaching. This would mean abandoning preconceived definitions and dumbing down of what PR is capable of. To get the best out of a PR program, it is important:

TO HAVE A KEEN UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR BUSINESS, your stakeholders, challenges and opportunities. An idea can be nurtured into a business, but the idea cannot ensure success of your business. This was a common mistake made during the dot-com era when entrepreneurs had ideas, but did not know how to transform them into enduring businesses.

TO DEFINE PR AS PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND NOT LIMIT IT TO PRESS RELATIONS. A startup may not have either the bandwidth or the budgets for divisions such as marketing, HR, finance, public affairs, corporate relations, investor relations. What a pity then to dilute the function of public relations, claim you have limited budgets and use it only for publicity!

TO SET EXPECTATIONS AT THE ONSET AND TREAT PR AS AN INVESTMENT. You may be looking for immediate impact more than a long-term sustained campaign; you may be looking for someone to execute rather than provide direction. Spell it out clearly to the firm you choose to work with and set expectations at the onset. For example, what are the objectives we are trying to achieve; can this be done through media relations alone; what relationships are relevant to the organization etc. Very often clients dismiss introductions to primary or secondary stakeholders as irrelevant, little realizing that the association can reap direct business benefits as against a media interview! Such introductions are priceless—imagine you



are looking for investments; helping you reach out to the investor community directly through a firm’s network, ensuring that your message is crisp and effective, establishing a communication channel with the VC should be valued higher than a few media interviews that may or may not reach your target, in this case!

It is important to know that the media has changed considerably over the last decade. With the advent of social media, consumer experience becomes mightier than the proverbial pen. Meritocracy pays here too—if you find your way through the clutter based on the strength of your business model, your product’s unique proposition or differentiated messaging, your visibility will be more than just a flash in the pan. Clearly, the media helps cast the net wide, but it also lends itself to too many other variables. ■

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