



Making the news

Five tips to get your startup the media love it deserves *By Meghan Powers*

Even the most ambitious founders will find it challenging to get editors and producers to pay attention to their startup's success.

Here are five steps you can take to catapult your company into the media spotlight, so that investors and consumers alike will give it the attention it deserves.

1. SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Even if you're captaining the ship of the next big disruptor in Silicon Valley, it's still difficult to grab the attention of reporters whose inboxes are flooded around the clock with pitches claiming as much. Often, the best way to navigate through uncharted media waters to your final destination—say, *The Wall Street Journal* or *Entrepreneur*—is to drop anchor at niche publications

and websites along the way. A link to a profile piece on a trade blog can show an editor that your company is legitimate, profitable, on the radar of respected industry experts, and, well, interesting. Any well-done placement can serve as leverage to the reporter or outlet of your dreams.

2. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE, AND YOUR AUDIENCE'S AUDIENCE

There is a great degree of value in understanding who exactly you're reaching out to, and why they should bother to read your email. Journalists' inboxes are overflowing with pitches and press releases, most sent blindly. I'll always remember a pitch I received as an interview producer for a national show covering the global markets and economy. The publicist who reached

out saw that I covered business news, but didn't take the time to check out the show's website, my LinkedIn profile, my host's Twitter account—all resources readily available online that made our program's focus clear. His pitch was *most definitely* a business story... about a new dog food on the market. The face of the brand—a (very adorable) puppy—was available for interviews. That night, our show aired an interview with a world leader as part of our coverage of the World Economic Forum. It was hard to take this person's pitches seriously moving forward.

So, know your audience, and specifics about the content they cover. While a reporter may on the surface look to cover an area that seems to be a fit for your company's product or service, it isn't always the case. Knowing this in advance will increase the likelihood of both receiving a response from the writer. A common mistake that many founders make when reaching out directly to reporters is not taking the time to read bios, articles, and social media accounts. Doing so will make a difference, especially if you add a personal note referencing any of the aforementioned. Tell them about the story of theirs you read and enjoyed, or how you noticed they were following a relevant story on Twitter. Genuineness, and research, goes a long way.

3. YOUR WEIRD JOURNEY CAN BE INVALUABLE

Speaking of genuineness, one way to get the media to ignore you is by sending them a self-promotional pitch touting only your suc-

cesses, profits, new products. Editors and producers at top tier media, and their audiences, are on the hunt for unique narratives, not advertisements or marketing materials. A story (and email subject) detailing a failed entrepreneurial project that eventually led to a multi-million-dollar business is going to catch a lot more eyeballs than a generic one about an unknown brand's profits and success. It humanizes your business, which connects with an audience. A bonus for the reporter: your weird path to success can make for a catchy headline that gets heavy pickup on social media.

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4. NO NEWS IS NOT GOOD NEWS FOR JOURNALISTS

It's important that your contact with reporters have purpose. While evergreen profile pieces and features aren't out of the question, it's more likely that something actionable is going to help get your foot in the proverbial door of a newsroom. Maybe you've just hired on a well-known industry name, or your company got a big round of funding, or you're speaking on a cool topic at a panel at a prominent conference. These are all headlines that could warrant a blurb or story on their own, or act as a platform for a bigger piece about your business, mission, or you, as a thought leader.



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5. BRING ON THE BYLINES

Positioning yourself as an expert can also be achieved by writing original content that you can post on free websites like *Medium*, or shop around to editors at other websites (particularly ones about leadership) that will publish well-written, one-of-a-kind bylined pieces. If you're aspiring toward an on-camera interview on national television, write on a topic that's hitting the front page of the national papers, such as tax reform or health care. A link to your piece could help a TV news producer have a better and clearer understanding of your point of view as a business leader. Thought leadership pieces on broader themes -but with very specific talking points- can also help to establish you as an expert, and leave a digital trail that highlights your expertise, background, and success.

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Engaging with the media can be tedious and daunting. By doing your research, "humanizing" your company, and making sure your pitches and pieces are timely and relevant, you'll have a better chance of getting the coverage you desire, and likely deserve. ■

A BOOST FOR THE CREATIVES

OSN launches ASLI, a platform for MENA content creators to showcase their original works

PwC's *Entertainment and Media outlook 2014-2018* for the Middle East and Africa region states that digital advertising is all set to outpace revenue from traditional entertainment channels, and considers it imperative for companies "to apply a digital mindset to build the right behaviors to monetize the digital consumer." With media groups across the region revamping their models to suit consumer preferences and such dominant industry trends, regional media company OSN is the latest to announce a strategic offering that is certain to encourage regional digital content creators.

In a huge boost for the region's creative community, OSN has launched a localized, free, curated content publishing platform called ASLI during the Dubai International Film Festival 2017 held in December. According to a statement on the launch, ASLI (meaning "genuine" or "original" in Arabic and other regional languages) will go live in early 2018 through the company's existing digital streaming platform WAVO, free for viewers, and is expected to feature new age content on the lines of those dominating MENA's web and social media in Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Turkish, and other regional languages.

Speaking at the launch, OSN CEO Martin Stewart said, "OSN is the region's leading entertainment network. We have been ASLI for more than two decades, which is why we are deeply committed and fond



Martin Stewart,
CEO, OSN

of this region and its people, who like us, love great entertainment. As we strive to continue to reshape the entertainment landscape in this region, home to such amazing talent, it is with extreme pride and excitement that we now deliver ASLI, an online curated publishing platform, where content creators can license and showcase their unique work to reach a vast audience." OSN says that through ASLI platform, the network has now become "the first entertainment network in MENA" to offer an online medium for regional content creators to showcase their original works. "ASLI will champion short to medium-form content so that in one click, viewers will be able to enjoy diverse content across various genres including travel and culture, adventure and lifestyle comedy, music, art, audio podcasts, food and sports," reads OSN's statement on ASLI.

The ASLI content on WAVO will be subtitled in both Arabic and English, and the original works of local content creators thus stand a chance to be featured alongside global shows. The creators will retain the intellectual property rights and full creative control of their work. Launched earlier this year as the network's over-the-top content (OTT) arm, WAVO offers subscribers in the region access to global hits including *Westworld* and *Game of Thrones*, along with popular Disney content. OSN also named some of the region's existing content creators who will initially be featured including *Peeta Planet*, *Punny Pun Times*, *Kerning Cultures*, *The Planet*, *What Doesn't Suck*, *Waastaa / Halla Walla* and *The Scene Club*.



ASLI Producer Ismat Abidy, freelance filmmaker Faisal Hashmi, Halla Walla's Yasmine Rasool, OSN CEO Martin Stewart, and travel bloggers Jeff and Anne