

Start Up Loans

# Essential guide to PR

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# Welcome to our Essential guide to Public Relations

PR might seem like something only big businesses engage in but knowing how to engage with the media could help you take your start-up to the next level.

With guidance on everything from seeking out journalists to writing press releases, our Essential guide to PR can help you engage with the media with confidence.

# Contents

**4**

What is PR?

**6**

The key components of PR

**9**

Finding PR opportunities

**11**

Creating a PR strategy

**17**

Writing a press release

**20**

Getting the most out of the media

**24**

Working with journalists

**26**

Using social media for PR

**28**

When and how to use a PR agency

**30**

PR tips for start-ups



**This is an interactive document.**

The contents on the left are interactive, allowing you to navigate through the documents sections. To return to the contents, click on the contents menu icon (≡) on the top right of each page.

1

# What is PR?

Learn the basics of Public Relations and how it could benefit your business



PR, or Public Relations, is how a business communicates with the public to create a positive image.

It involves sharing information through media such as newspapers, TV, and social media to influence how people perceive your business, product, or brand.

Whether you run a yoga studio, bookkeeping service, or baking business, PR could help your small business expand and succeed.

## How does PR work?

PR uses different methods to influence how people view a business.

One common way is to send press releases, which share news about the business with the media.

Building good relationships with journalists could help you secure positive coverage.

Social media is also useful for directly connecting and engaging with your audience.

Problem-solving, like dealing with bad publicity, is also part of PR.

This involves carefully handling unexpected issues to protect the business's reputation.



**Tip:** You may want to ensure that your social media accounts are fully up-to-date with complete profile pictures, bios, and contact information to build trust in your start-up.

## How PR could help your start-up

New businesses often struggle to build trust and credibility.

PR could help with this by shaping how people see your business, building credibility, and increasing visibility, which could lead to growth and connections.

### Here's why PR could support your business:

- ✓ Well-planned PR could help your business stand out in a crowded market, potentially attracting customers and investors
- ✓ PR helps build your business by sharing its values and mission, creating a strong brand identity
- ✓ PR could encourage your business to engage with local communities, fostering brand loyalty
- ✓ PR could work out cheaper than advertising if you have an interesting story to tell
- ✓ People might see positive news coverage in newspapers and online as a reliable endorsement of your business.

2

# The key components of PR

Learn more about the key elements that make up a PR strategy



PR includes different activities that help create and maintain a good image for your start-up.

## Media/Press relations

This involves working with journalists to get news coverage.

Building good relationships with media professionals could be useful for achieving this.

Businesses send out press releases to share important news, like new products or achievements.

Getting media coverage could help you reach more people for free and build trust.

## Community relations

This focuses on connecting with local communities.

By working with local people and organisations, sponsoring events, and helping the community, you could improve your company's reputation and build goodwill and customer loyalty.

## Influencer marketing

This involves using people with large social media followings to promote your products or services, usually for a fee.

Working with the right influencers could spread your brand's message and reach your target audience.

Influencers add authenticity, which could boost credibility, and this method of PR is popular in digital marketing strategies.

## Event management

This involves planning events to promote your business, such as product launches or charity fundraisers.

Events let you engage directly with people and show off your brand's personality and values.

Successful events could create excitement, draw media attention, and help build personal connections with attendees.



## PR activities across different channels

PR isn't just about traditional media like newspapers; it uses various channels to make a big impact.



### 1. Social media

Social media is a strong PR tool that lets you interact directly with your audience and listen to their feedback.

Businesses can easily share updates, answer questions, and engage with followers.



### 2. Press releases

Press releases are official announcements sent to the media and are key to getting media attention.

A good press release could lead to valuable news coverage.

Learn how to write a press release in [chapter 5](#).



### 3. Websites

A company's website is an important PR tool, often being the first place people look for information about a business.

A well-kept website could boost your start-up's credibility and visibility online.

It should have up-to-date information and reflect the brand's image.



### 4. Editorial requests

This involves giving expert opinions or quotes to journalists.

Being featured in these stories could help position your business as a leader in the field.



**Tip:** Using a mix of different channels could increase your chances of getting good PR.

## Learn more about

[How to create a social media strategy](#)

[Define your brand and company mission](#)

[How to create a website for your business](#)

# 3

## Finding PR opportunities

Learn about what activities your business could do to generate media interest



Every business has moments worth sharing that could lead to good PR.

Think about what your business already does, like:

- ✓ launching new products or services
- ✓ getting industry award nominations
- ✓ celebrating important milestones.

These could be newsworthy and sharing them with the media could bring positive attention.

## Create opportunities

Sometimes, you need to make your own PR opportunities.

For example, writing helpful guest posts for industry blogs could show your expertise and reach new audiences.

Commenting on relevant blog posts could keep your start-up in the conversation.

Another idea is creating surveys to gather industry insights.

You could share the results with the media to show your business as an industry thought leader.

Reporters like data-backed stories, so surveys tend to be a strong PR tool.



## Partner with other businesses

Working with other businesses could lead to joint events or initiatives that get media attention.

Teaming up with a related business could expand your reach and add credibility.

For example, co-hosting webinars or workshops could attract more people, provide value, and showcase your expertise.

## Host events and sponsorships

Hosting events is a proactive way to create PR opportunities.

Events like product launches or community gatherings could attract media coverage and let you engage directly with your audience and the press.

Aligning an event with your brand values could have a big impact.

Sponsoring local events or charities could also create PR opportunities, building goodwill and community interest in your business.

## Use accessible tools

There are tools you could use to find PR opportunities.

[Google Alerts](#) is a free tool that lets you set alerts for industry-related topics to stay informed or join ongoing discussions.

Social media is a direct way to find PR opportunities.

Look for free Facebook groups or X (formerly Twitter) accounts that connect businesses with journalists seeking sources.

Responding to relevant queries could get your company featured.

Use hashtags like #journorequest to find journalists looking for experts like you.

Finding PR opportunities involves using what your business already does and creating new opportunities.

Collaborating with others could enhance your PR efforts.

This proactive approach could build a strong public image, increase visibility, and support business growth.

# 4

## Creating a PR strategy

Learn how to build a PR strategy that works for your business



Developing a PR strategy is important for any business owner.

It helps manage your start-up's public image and make the most of your time and money.

Here are some things to consider:

## Understand your audience

Knowing your target audience forms the base of any good PR plan.

Identify your customers and what they like or need, and crucially, where they get their information from.

Whether it's a local newspaper, a niche magazine, or an industry blog, choosing the right platform

to carry your PR helps ensure your message is relevant and reaches the right audience.

Adjusting your communication to fit these channels could also boost engagement and impact.

It also pays to know what's important to your audience – whether that's new products, sustainability, or social issues and to develop messaging that addresses those topics.



## What is a PR strategy?

A PR strategy is a detailed plan for how a business will handle its public communications.

It includes planned activities, responses to unexpected events, and taking advantage of sudden opportunities.

### 1. Planned activity

This involves scheduled press releases, campaigns, and events.

These are planned to promote your business and align with strategic goals, working alongside advertising efforts.

Planning ahead on a calendar helps ensure maximum impact.

Examples include PR for:



Business expansions



New product launches



Significant new hires



### 2. Response preparedness

This is about being ready to seize unexpected opportunities to boost your brand's reputation.

Examples include:

- **a viral trend that aligns with your products** – being prepared lets you create and share content quickly
- **an unexpected award** – being ready allows you to share this positive news through press releases, social media, and newsletters
- **a celebrity mentions your service positively** – being prepared means you'll be able to quickly engage with their audience.

PR activities should also include updating your website with news and blogs.

A good strategy includes a crisis communication plan to handle any negative publicity.



**Tip:** Always be honest in PR communication to keep trust and credibility.

### 3. Ad hoc opportunities

Unexpected opportunities could offer the chance for some positive exposure.

A flexible PR strategy should allow you to act quickly on these.

Examples include:

- requests for comments or interviews from journalists
- invitations to speak at conferences
- opportunities to collaborate with another brand or influencer.

## The power of storytelling for start-up PR

Storytelling is crucial for PR, especially for new businesses.

It involves creating a compelling narrative about your start-up.

### Consider sharing:

- ✓ your brand story
- ✓ your mission
- ✓ your start-up's sustainability activities
- ✓ your personal journey – including the ups and downs
- ✓ your brand values, such as supporting the local community.

Storytelling humanises your brand, making it relatable and memorable.

It could help your brand stand out in a crowded marketplace.

A well-told brand story could inspire action, encouraging your audience to become repeat customers.

## How to create the right strategy for your business

Not all PR strategies are created equal.

What works for one small business might not work for yours.

A good PR strategy for your start-up should match your PR goals with your business objectives.

You might start by defining what you want to achieve, such as increasing brand awareness, launching a new product, or entering a new market.

You could then choose the best channels to reach your audience, including traditional media, social media, or industry-specific platforms.

Each channel might need a different approach in content and tone.

Consistency is crucial, so keep your messaging clear and uniform across platforms.

Regularly review and adjust your strategy to keep up with changes in your business or market.

This helps ensure your PR efforts match your business goals and maintain trust in your brand.

## Scheduling and timing

Timing is crucial for PR.

Planning helps you schedule activities for maximum impact.

Create a timeline for your PR activities to keep everything coordinated and allow for new opportunities.

Timing also involves understanding when your audience is most receptive.

Aligning releases with industry events or seasonal trends shows you are engaged with current issues.

For example, an eco-friendly product maker might schedule PR activity around Global Recycling Day.

## How to create a PR calendar

A PR calendar is a key tool for organising your PR activities.

It shows when and where each activity will happen, helping you keep a regular flow of communication.

A calendar helps you use your team's time and resources well and ensures your messages are timely and relevant to your audience.

Here's an example calendar you could use:

Month	Subject	PR activity	Aim	Target Media
January	New Year	10 eco-friendly New Year's resolution tips	Drive customers to buy sustainable coffee cup product	- Local press - Eco-bloggers
February				
March				
April				
May				

## Deciding which stories are newsworthy

Once you have a calendar, how do you decide what to put on it?

Newsworthy stories usually involve new developments, big achievements, or unique insights.

Not every story is newsworthy, so think about its relevance, audience interest, and timing.

Consider your story's potential impact – both now and in the future.

Ask yourself: does this story have a strong angle people may be interested in? Is it 'newsy'?

Working with experienced journalists could help polish your story to meet editorial standards.

A good story should inform, engage, and resonate with your audience.



## Ad hoc PR: staying on trend

Ad hoc PR means taking advantage of current trends.

This requires staying informed about industry news and popular culture.

Tools like [Google Alerts](#) can help track relevant topics.

A flexible PR strategy lets you join conversations as they happen, keeping your brand current and visible.

Engaging with trending topics on social media could increase your reach and engagement.

Participating in these conversations shows your brand is responsive and authoritative, boosting its visibility.

## Learn more about

[Marketing on a shoestring budget](#)

[How to outsource expertise and grow your business](#)

[How to create a website for your business](#)

## Distribution: choosing the right approach

Once your strategy and newsworthy stories are ready, decide how to share them.

**You have several options:**



### PR agency

An agency could offer expertise and media contacts but could be costly.

Agencies are beneficial for businesses looking for full PR management.



### Freelancer

A flexible, affordable option for specific projects.

They could provide expertise without a long-term commitment.



### DIY approach

Cost-effective but requires time to build media relations.

May be suitable for start-ups with limited budgets.



### Online platforms

User-friendly tools for wide distribution without extensive resources.

5

# Writing a press release

Discover the steps needed to write newspaper -  
quality press releases



Now you know how PR works, who you want to target, where you want to target them, and have a strategy in place, how do you communicate with your target audience?

You could choose to do this with a press release.

A press release is an official statement sent to media outlets to announce important news.

Its main goal is to give journalists the information they need to write a good story.

## Creating a media list

Before writing your press release, decide which media to target.

To create a media list, find outlets relevant to your industry and audience.

Research journalists who cover similar topics and note their contact details and preferred communication methods.

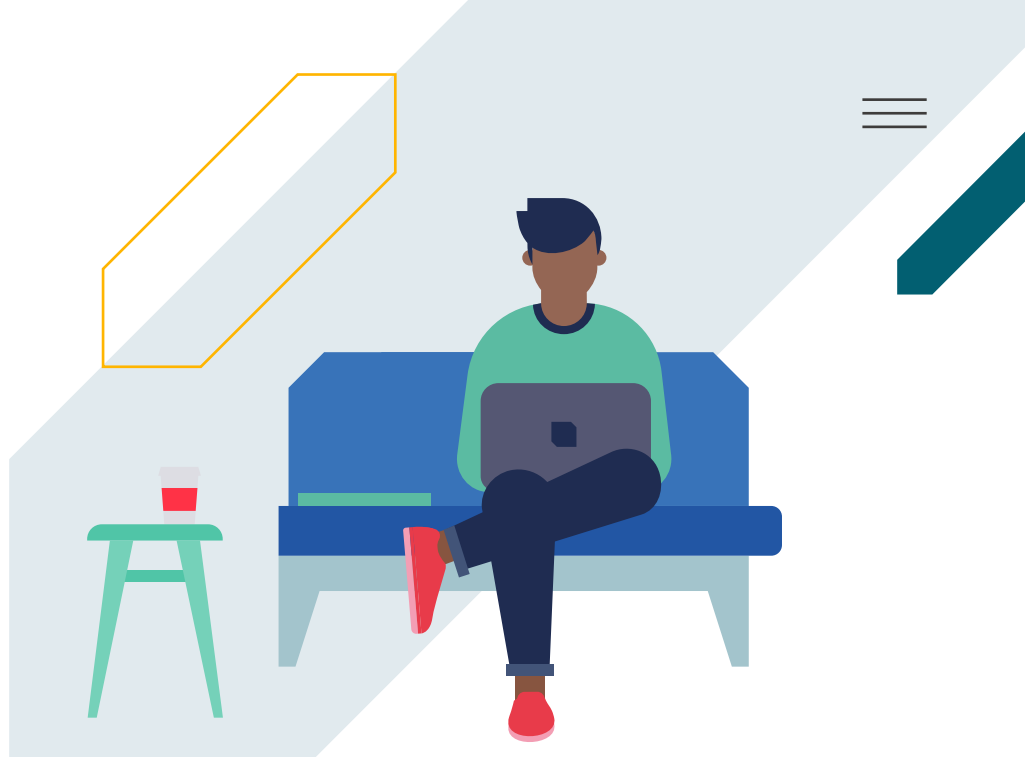
To make this easier, you could consider using tools like media databases, visiting media websites, or searching social media.

## Have a strong opening hook

The first sentence should grab the reader's attention immediately.

This 'hook' should provide the most significant information and entice the reader to continue.

Use a strong statistic, a question, or a bold statement to interest the reader.



## A simple press release format

A good press release should be well-structured and easy to read.

Here's the basic structure:

### [Company logo]

For immediate release

**[Headline]** A short, catchy headline that captures the news.

**[Sub-headline]** Summarises the story with extra details.

**[Dateline]** Specifies the location and date of the release.

**[Lead paragraph]** The first paragraph should clearly state the purpose of your announcement.

**[Main content]** Expand on the details provided in the lead paragraph.

Include relevant facts, statistics, and background information.

Add quotes from relevant people for authority.

Include a call to action if needed, such as directing the reader to a website for more information or visiting a specific product page.

**[Boilerplate]** A short paragraph about the company, including its history and mission.

**[Contact information]** Clearly list the contact details of your brand's media contact, including their name, title, phone number, and email address.



## Writing in the correct style

Writing a press release is different from writing a blog post or an email.

Use clear, concise language without jargon.

Write in the third person and keep an objective tone.

Use short paragraphs and an active voice for better readability.

Don't forget to include accurate facts and data to show credibility.

## Information to include

You could include all pertinent information a journalist might need to write a complete story.

This could cover the core details of the announcement, relevant background information, and quotes from company executives or stakeholders.

If in doubt, ensure your press release answers the five key questions: who, what, where, when, and why.

Including contact information for someone who can answer follow-up questions could also be helpful.

Consider sending photographs or illustrations, such as infographics, for possible use alongside the story.

It is important to only use imagery with your press release that you have the usage rights for.

## Sending your press release

Timing and method are important when sending your press release.

Email is the most common way to send it.

Consider sending it mid-morning, perhaps on a Tuesday or Wednesday when journalists are likely to review pitches.

It may be best to avoid sending it late in the evening or at weekends when it might be overlooked.

Depending on the scale of your PR campaign, you could send press releases using a paid service such as [Response Source](#).

## The dos and don'ts of press releases

Remember, you're trying to attract the attention of busy journalists.

To increase your chances of good coverage, try these tips:

### Do



- Keep it concise and focused
- Tailor your release to your audience
- Proof read before sending
- Personalise your outreach to journalists
- Follow up professionally.

### Don't



- Use jargon or complex terms
- Exaggerate or mislead with information
- Make it too promotional
- Send without contact details
- Spam journalists with repeated follow-ups.

## Learn more about

[How to write a press release](#)

[Defining your target market](#)

[How to win customers](#)

# 6

## Getting the most out of the media

Learn about the tips and tricks businesses use to get attention from the media



To enhance your media efforts, consider providing additional information about your start-up beyond sending press releases to journalists or influencers.

This could include doing some of the following:

## Create a media kit

A media kit is a useful tool that gives journalists everything they need to know about your business.

### A basic media kit could include:



#### Company overview

A brief description of your company, including its mission, history, and key achievements



#### Press releases

Recent press releases that highlight significant news or updates



#### Executive bios

Short biographies of key executives and spokespersons



#### Product information

Details about key products or services offered by your company



#### Contact information

Clear details for media inquiries, including phone numbers and email addresses



#### Visual assets

High-quality images and logos available for media use.

## Opening a press room

A 'press room' on [your website](#) is a central hub for all media-related materials.

This could boost your credibility and help journalists quickly find the information they need.

Make sure it's easy to access and regularly updated with sections for press releases, media kits, high-resolution images, and contact information.

To make this easier, you could use a hosted press room service to manage and share your media resources.

## Link building and why it's important

Link building in PR means getting reputable media outlets to link back to your website.

These links enhance your website's [search engine optimisation](#) (SEO), increasing its online visibility and credibility.

Quality backlinks show search engines that your content is valuable and trustworthy.

This could improve your rankings in search results, driving more organic traffic to your site.

You could include links to your website in press releases and encourage journalists to include them in their articles.

## Media training – how to be confident in interviews and on-camera

Media training is important for anyone representing your company in interviews or on camera.

Here are some tips that could improve your media presence:

- ✓ **understand the medium** – different formats like TV, radio, or print need different approaches. Know what to expect from each
- ✓ **practice your delivery** – work on how you speak, including your pace, tone, and clarity. Practice in front of a mirror or record yourself
- ✓ **control your body language** – maintain good posture, make eye contact, and use natural gestures
- ✓ **stay calm and composed** – take deep breaths to relax. Being calm could help you think clearly and respond effectively
- ✓ **seek feedback** – after practice sessions, you could ask colleagues or a media coach for feedback to refine your approach.



## How to prepare for a media interview

When a journalist conducts an interview, you may only have a short time to share your message effectively.

Many interviews are brief – a few minutes or so – as journalists are mainly interested in the key information for their story.

**Here are some tips for a successful interview:**

### Create a 'crib sheet'

This is a one-page summary of your key message, an interesting statistic to back it up, an example, and a few important points you want to share.

Write it down and try to memorise it to confidently deliver your message during the interview.

### Research the interviewer

Find out who will interview you and learn about their style and typical questions.

Think about possible questions and practice your answers in advance.

### Prepare your key messages

Know the main points you want to communicate and stick to them – avoid waffling or veering off the subject.

### Be authentic

Being genuine helps build trust and connection with your audience, so always be yourself and speak honestly.

## Images for PR use

High-quality photos and images are helpful for effective PR.

Visual content grabs the reader's attention and could enhance the storytelling aspect of your press releases and media interactions.

**Here are some tips:**

- ✓ **use professional photography** – invest in professional photos of staff, products, and events to attract media interest
- ✓ **variety of images** – provide a range of images, including headshots, product shots, and event photos to suit different media needs
- ✓ **high resolution** – ensure all images, including logos, are high resolution to meet media outlet standards
- ✓ **clear labelling** – use descriptive file names and captions to ensure images are used correctly
- ✓ **easy access** – make images easily accessible through your press room or media kit, so journalists can download them easily.



**Tip:** Keep photography simple to suit various PR needs.

# Working with journalists

Read about how successful start-ups build relationships with key parts of the media



Consider building strong, positive relationships with journalists if you want long-term PR success for your business.

## Connecting with journalists

Start by finding journalists who cover your industry.

Following them on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn could help you understand their interests.

You could engage with their content by thoughtfully commenting or sharing their articles.

## Building relationships with individual journalists

Building relationships with journalists takes time and effort.



Personalising your communication by addressing them by name and referencing their recent work could be an in-road.

Offering exclusive insights or data could also interest them.

Regularly update them, but avoid overwhelming them with too much information.

Trust and credibility are key.

## Thinking like a journalist

To pitch effectively, consider what makes a story newsworthy, like timeliness, relevance, and uniqueness.

Consider tailoring each pitch to the journalist's audience, focusing on the human interest angle or a new insight.

A well-considered angle that aligns with a journalist's interests is more likely to capture attention than a generic template sent to everyone on your media list.

## Responding to editorial requests

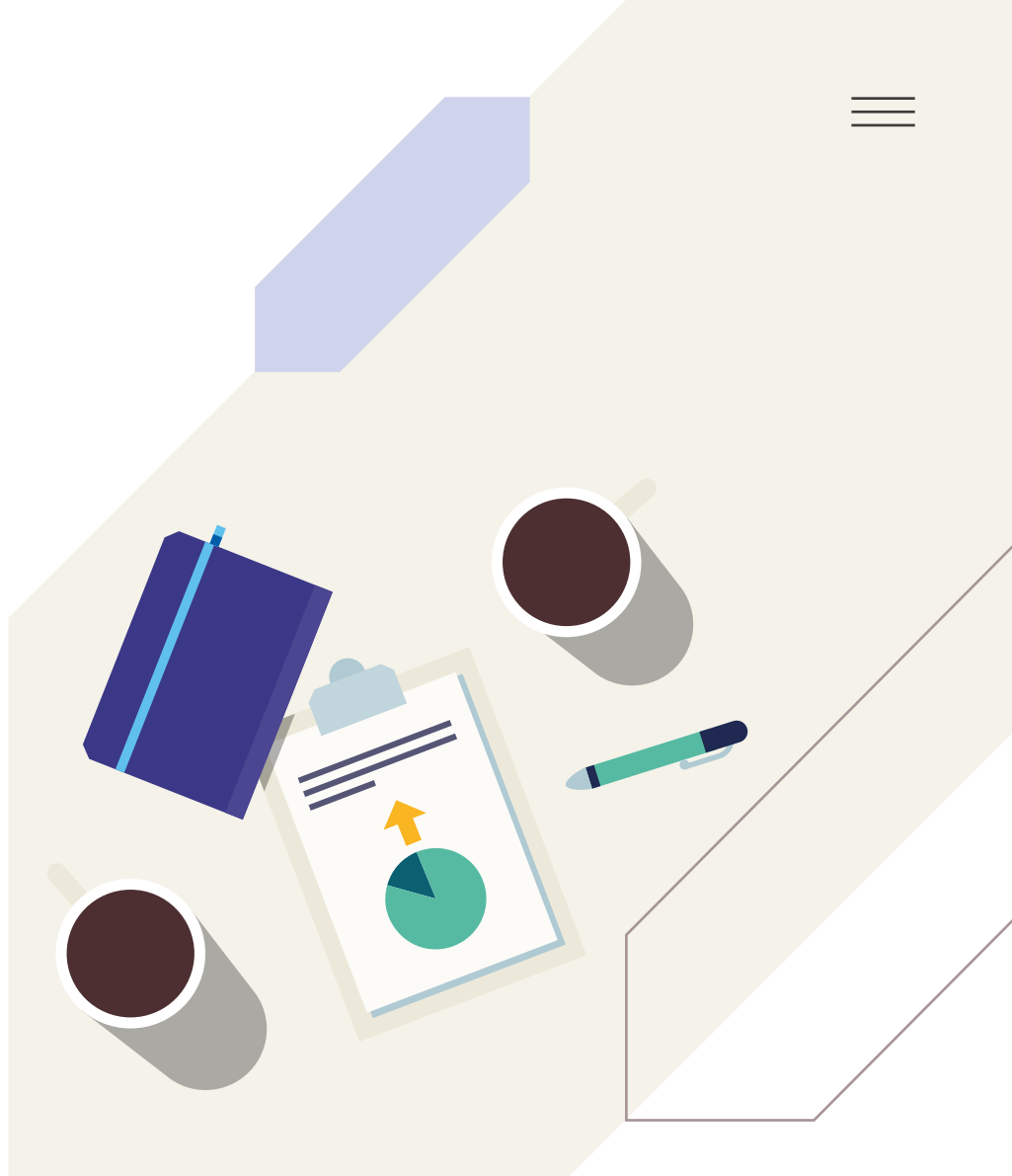
By making genuine connections and providing valuable content, you can work effectively with journalists to get positive media coverage.

When responding to editorial requests, try to be prompt and precise.

Journalists often have tight deadlines, so a quick response could increase your chances of being featured.

You may also want to provide concise information and offer additional resources or interviews.

To forge a good relationship, show gratitude for the opportunity and follow up quickly if more information is needed.



# Using social media for PR

Discover the power of social media when it comes to reaching your customers



Social media is a powerful tool for small businesses to boost their PR, but it requires some planning.

A smart combination of creativity and collaboration could help you promote your business and connect with your audience.

Consider tailoring your approach to fit business goals and audience preferences.

### Here are some ideas for promoting your business across different channels:

- ✓ **video content** – create engaging videos showcasing products, behind-the-scenes looks, or customer testimonials. Platforms like [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [YouTube](#) are good for video marketing
- ✓ **podcasts** – you could launch a podcast to share industry insights, interview experts, or discuss relevant topics to build authority and reach new listeners
- ✓ **blogs** – post informative blogs on your website and promote them on social media to drive traffic and establish your business as a thought leader.
- ✓ **forums and community sites** – join discussions on platforms like [Reddit](#) or niche forums. Offer valuable insights and subtly promote your business where relevant
- ✓ **blogs** – post informative blogs on your website and promote them on social media to drive traffic and establish your business as a thought leader.

## Audience engagement

Engaging with your audience is crucial for effective social media PR.

Respond promptly to comments, thank customers for positive feedback, and address concerns professionally.

This could help you manage brand sentiment and improve customer satisfaction.



**Tip:** Spend time every day checking comments and staying on top of feedback.

## Capturing trending topics

Use trending topics on social media to increase visibility and engagement.

Identify popular content formats or themes using free tools or platform research.

You could then create content that aligns with your brand values and incorporates your business into these trends.

Learn more with our free [Social Media Toolkit](#).



## Connecting and collaborating with influencers

Working with relevant industry influencers could connect you with your target audience and add brand credibility.

Choose influencers who already have your audience's attention and know how to communicate with them.

Select influencers based on their content, follower count, engagement rate, and authenticity.

Collaborations could include product reviews, joint events, or sponsored content, although influencers may charge a fee.

# When and how to use a PR agency

Learn how a PR agency could support your business as it grows



PR can need regular attention, so some business owners choose to outsource their PR needs to an agency.

## When to use a PR agency

A PR agency could improve your PR efforts, especially if you work with the right one for you.

If your budget allows, an agency can offer expertise, established media connections, and strategic guidance that might be hard to achieve on your own.

Smaller businesses might handle PR themselves until they need expert help for big campaigns or entering new markets.

Agencies offer services tailored to your goals, making them useful if your needs exceed your team's skills.

## How to find the right PR agency

PR agencies focus on different areas and industries.

Start by clarifying your PR goals and look for agencies specialising in your field.

Find agencies through recommendations, reviews, and online searches.

You may want to consider the agency's price, size, and structure.

Larger agencies may offer more resources, while smaller ones might provide personalised attention.

After creating a shortlist, you could schedule meetings to discuss your needs and their approach, which will help you determine if they can fulfil your PR goals.

## How to work with a PR agency

Once you choose an agency, effective collaboration and communication are key.

### You might consider doing some of the following:

- setting clear communication channels and scheduling regular check-ins to track progress
- giving the agency all the necessary information about your business, such as your brand guidelines
- defining measurable objectives and key performance indicators
- regularly reviewing these metrics with the agency to help you assess performance and make adjustments
- encouraging creativity from the agency, but also providing feedback and being involved in decision-making.



10

# PR tips for start-ups

Read all about practical PR hints and tips you can use to help your start-up succeed



Launching a PR campaign as a start-up can be tough, especially with limited time and budget.

Here are some tips to help you gain visibility without spending too much:



### Use free tools

Try free platforms like social media or email marketing tools to spread your message at no cost.

Tools with free basic plans like Mailchimp for email campaigns and Canva for creating engaging visuals could be helpful.



### Build long-term relationships

Networking with journalists and influencers in your industry on social media could be crucial for building a rapport.

Regularly engaging with their content and sharing insights could lead to future collaboration.



### Create your story

Develop a strong brand narrative that shows what makes your start-up unique and why it matters.

A good story could resonate with audiences and catch the attention of media outlets, potentially winning you coverage and building a loyal customer base.



### Keep press releases clear

Write simple, well-structured press releases to communicate announcements clearly.

This improves the chances of journalists picking them up.



### Focus on local media

Start with local newspapers, radio stations, and community blogs for initial coverage.

These outlets are more likely to feature new local businesses and could help establish your brand's presence in the community.



### Pitch smartly

Networking with journalists and influencers in your industry on social media could be crucial for building a rapport.

Regularly engaging with their content and sharing insights could lead to future collaboration.



### Host events

Organise low-cost events, social media live events, or webinars to attract media attention and engage with your audience directly.

These could showcase your brand's personality and expertise, strengthening community ties.



### Monitor and adapt

Regularly review and adjust your PR strategies based on what works for your start-up.

This approach could increase your chances of success by allowing you to refine tactics and respond to changing market dynamics.

Use in-platform analytics tools to track engagement and outcomes for informed adjustments.

# Contact

**British Business Bank**

**Steel City House**

**West Street**

**Sheffield S1 2GQ**

**[startuploans.co.uk](http://startuploans.co.uk)**

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