

# The Wind Beneath Your Wings

*The foundation for great marketing programs may surprise you*



Attention marketers: Do you believe that you can easily lose ten pounds in one week? Do you plan to go from “couch potato” to marathoner in the space of a month? Of course not! And yet, the expectation of this “instant gratification” is invading the public relations space—big time.

In a world of same-day delivery by Amazon and rides on demand from Uber, marketers are looking for their media relations programs to deliver immediate leads and sales. The plethora of analytics that measure every click and share are heightening this demand. But there is a unique value to public relations that’s easily obscured in this “want it now” age. That’s the ability to build trusted, differentiated and visible brands—a strategy that will help generate sales over time.

Whether you’re launching a new product or positioning your company for an IPO, think of public relations as the wind beneath your marketing wings. Planned and executed strategically, public relations will give the rest of your strategies and tactics the lift they need. But first it’s important to understand where the unique value of public relations lies. Here’s the skinny:

## **Tapping into the Power of Third Parties**

Unlike advertising, which everyone knows is pay for play, great public relations programs are built on the reputation and influence of respected, discerning, objective journalists. You can’t put a price on an earned story in *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, or high-level trade media. Because this kind of coverage can’t be bought, it has to be earned and when it is, it automatically elevates your thought leadership, and gives more authority and gravitas to your brand. Widely circulated and highly searchable, these media placements hold weight when prospective customers, venture

capitalists or potential acquirers are evaluating your company. Many routinely look at coverage as an important barometer of your success and potential.

For this and other reasons, media relations programs require a committed and consistent effort. That's key to ensuring that you stay on reporters' and prospects' mental menu. Would your business pay thousands or millions of dollars to a company that had very little targeted media coverage? If your answer is no, then you need to be "always on"—reaching reporters continually and not just for a product launch but consistently as part of a leadership position in the marketplace—so that you're not left out of important stories.

Beyond keeping you on the radar, effective public relations delivers benefits that other "paid" marketing strategies and tactics can't touch, including:

- Believable stories that help you build emotional connections with new prospects, circulating to thousands or millions of potential buyers.

- Published customer case studies that can be used to advance the sales process.

- Bylined articles and blogs that help amplify your distinctive positioning, seed your entry into new markets, and multiply opportunities to be seen, heard, and understood.

- Reinforcement—pre-IPO or M&A—that your company is "hot," fast-growing and innovative. This, along with many other factors, can impact the success of your exit strategy.

- Creating your own proprietary research to support hard news and the creation of whitepapers that not only deliver high level media coverage, but also propel prospects to your website for more information—getting them swiftly into the sales funnel.

- It's all part of the holy grail of content, content, content—the currency that keeps your online, social and mobile marketing chock full of newsworthy content and running at maximum effectiveness.

In a world where we can easily become buried in our iPhones and obsessed with each click or tweet, it's natural to want immediate gratification from each published feature or article. But except for true commodity products, the road to sales is never linear. A media and social media campaign that resonates with targeted prospects, keeps your brand front and center, and demonstrates your unique value in a compelling way will certainly move the needle. And there is no better and more cost-effective medium for doing so than public relations—founded on the bedrock and trust of implied third party endorsements of influential media and influencers.