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# HOW STARTUP FOUNDERS SHOULD DEAL WITH MEDIA FOLKS (AND WHAT TO AVOID DOING)

## IMHO

but admittedly based on years of experience :-)

## FIRST, UNDERSTAND WHAT WE DO:

- we read a lot, and we write a little\*
- we're constantly looking for needles in a very large haystack
- we cater to an audience (aka our readers)
- we spend as much time *selecting* what to write about than *looking* for things to write about
- we're pretty much always running out of time

\*relatively speaking

## MY 'INBOX':

Emails (*lots* of emails), press releases (*lots* of press releases), Skype calls, RSS feeds (we'll miss you, Google Reader), instant messaging conversations, Twitter, direct messages on Twitter, face-to-face meetings, Facebook, events, other media (*lots* of other media), regular voice calls, text messages – and then some.



Your job is simply...

TELL US A GOOD STORY  
(pretty please)

## What makes a story good?

- The topic (duh): unique, fresh, intriguing
  - The way you tell it (less duh)
  - Complete but sized just right
    - Mind the details
- Compelling enough for people to share it

## What makes a story bad?

- The topic (duh): boring, old, heard before
  - The way you tell it (less duh)
    - Too long or too short
    - Insufficient details
- Not compelling enough for people to share it

## 11 commonly made mistakes

- 1) Only reaching out when you feel you have something to share with the world (i.e. when you need us).

Relationships are awesome, but they take time to build and maintain – invest that time.

We might need you too at some point.



## 11 commonly made mistakes

2) Not understanding what journalists do, and who their respective audiences are.

Do your fucking homework: what does the publication you are contacting stand for?

What is the journalist you are reaching out to passionate about? (*read* his or her past articles)

## 11 commonly made mistakes

3) Not convincing us why we would want to spend time writing about your startup or news

We – and our readers - don't care that you're the next-generation, leading, award-winning, ground-breaking, revolutionary anything.

We're looking for innovation - something unique.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

4) Not telling us what makes you or the news you have to share worth writing about.

Give us an angle: if you've raised funding, tell us how much, why, who from, and what for. If you've inked a great deal, tell us what it means for your business. If you're releasing a new product, tell us how it differs from others.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

5) Making our jobs more difficult by wasting our most valuable commodity: time.

You don't have to write the article for us (we're better at it than you are anyway), but give us all the info, bios, screenshots, demo video, relevant links, tell us the embargo time etc.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

### 6) Not telling the truth (or the full story).

Never lie or intentionally leave out information.  
Like, ever.

Most of the time, we will find out anyway. And  
that would be bad news for you.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

7) Misrepresenting, exaggerating or downplaying your rivals, the market and your business.

Look, we research before we publish.

Not painting us the right picture about what you're doing reflects poorly on you.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

**8) Contracting a PR pro too early – or too late.**

Great founders do their own PR until it's simply not feasible anymore. When you do hire or contract a PR pro, it's worth paying them well.

You're the founder and/or CEO, who better to talk about your business than you?

## 11 commonly made mistakes

9) Giving a story (or exclusive) to a rival and then expecting us to write about you anyway.

Come on. We're a proud and competitive bunch. Wanna go to TechCrunch or The Verge for a pre-brief or an exclusive but not us? Your call, but don't expect us to become your 'sloppy second'.

Better to simply always give TNW the exclusive :)



## 11 commonly made mistakes

**10) Seeing us as a tool, a way to reach a goal rather than humans who are eager to learn.**

We're naturally curious. We like to learn new things and discover new stuff too. Try to make the conversation personal, like we were sitting in a coffee shop talking about your business.

## 11 commonly made mistakes

11) Not asking questions when the guy on stage stops talking and asks if there are any questions.

It makes me feel uncomfortable, and I really enjoy answering questions about this stuff.

Any questions?

(Shy people can email me later at robin  
@thenextweb.com or tweet me  
@robinwauters)