



Launch your startup with a **BANG**

DO-IT-YOURSELF PR FOR STARTUP FOUNDERS



sunscrapers

As a startup founder, you have one goal:
to create the best possible product.

The value of your brainchild might be clear to you but it's not that obvious to other people - including your potential customers.

Even if you develop an amazing Minimum Viable Product (MVP), its success isn't guaranteed. How you let other people know about your product is just as important as its amazing features.

Journalists get tons of press releases about new apps that promise to "change the world", so expect them to be very selective. At Sunscrapers, we noticed that startup founders often put all their energy into developing their product and forget planning for market launch.

We strive to support our clients at every step of the way, so we decided to share our tips to help founders create a buzz their products deserve right from the start.

In this ebook, you'll find tips on:

- Creating PR materials on your own,
- Developing a media plan,
- Building a personal brand,
- Creating a press release for your product,
- Choosing the best day and time for launch,
- **And launching your startup with a BANG!**

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01 | Why startups don't need to hire a PR agency

The fewer responsibilities you have on your hands when launching a startup, the more time you'll gain to grow your business.

Since there are so many tasks begging for your attention right now, you might be toying with the idea to hire a PR agency to promote your product or service for you.

But in our experience, that's not always necessary. Here are 7 good reasons why startups don't really need to hire a PR agency at the beginning of their operation (+ the benefits of running PR activities on your own!).

- 1 Building relations with the press** — When paying a PR agency for their services, you will never build relations with journalists. The agency will be doing that for you.
By sending press releases and offering expert commentary to journalists, you can build strong professional relations that could later transform into successful publications on a regular basis.
When you reach out to a journalist and show that you are an excellent source of information, you can be sure that when they write on a topic relevant to your niche, **they will reach out to you for comment and consequently help expand your reach.**
- 2 Saving money** — Agency PR is costly. Experienced agencies will charge you at least \$10,000. You can probably find better uses for that money. Treat that sum as your marketing budget - you'll be able to make several times more out of it if you take PR into your own hands.
- 3 Knowledge of industry press** — When initiating your journey into PR, the first step is conducting some careful research and analyzing the press industry. That way you'll get acquainted with the publications available on the market and learn what's hot and what's not.
Pay close attention when doing that because it's often the most niche magazines that bring you the best leads.

- 4 **You get to develop your own contact database** — Does it really make sense to pay for a database of telephone numbers that are 100% cold calls? Do your homework and start organizing your database of journalists. Divide your list of media professionals by industry and create an overview of the most critical media for your business.

Start reaching out to journalists to offer them expert commentary, curated content or a press release. Build a professional relationship with the media industry - it will pay off in the future.

- 5 **Doing PR yourself prepares you for the future** — With all the knowledge that you gain right at the start of your operation, it will be easier to hire a PR agency later on. When you do that and pay the big bucks, you'll have a clear idea of what you want to get out of that collaboration.

- 6 **Someone else's value is in play** — Let's not forget that PR is much more than press releases. First and foremost, it's about your reputation. **How is an account manager who has no clue about your niche supposed to come up with a brand for your company in just a couple of hours?** Every startup owner knows their niche like the back of their hand. That makes them better equipped to create a strategy for building a solid reputation.

- 7 **Personal branding** — By delving into PR, you're going to build a personal brand for yourself free of charge. Doing the same with the help of a professional PR agency will cost you a lot of money.

So how do you start creating your image? Since you're the CEO of your startup, it's a good idea to share insights about what you've learned, show how your startup works behind the scenes and maybe even admit some mistakes you made at the beginning of your operation and the lessons you learned from them. Trust me, that type of personal branding activities will only help your brand grow stronger.

That's why blowing money on PR isn't necessary at the beginning of your operation.

PR AGENCY

CONTACT DATABASE

PRESS RELATIONS

KNOWLEDGE

Founders tend to approach communication in two different ways:

They either communicate as frequently as possible or they communicate at all and focus on making their business work.

Both approaches are wrong.

If you try to maximize your communications and talk about your product in all possible media outlets, you'll lose plenty of time and energy on irrelevant audiences.

But not getting in touch with the media at all, you'll be missing out on the opportunities communication creates for reaching our business model through a shortcut.

Many startup founders are convinced that they just don't have enough knowledge about creating PR materials. That's just BS. An honest story of a founder who takes the risk to develop a product that solves a particular problem is more than enough for an engaging media story.

All it takes is a little work, and you can develop an article with a potential for virality.

An authentic story that tells the struggles of a founder who decided to solve a problem is something different than typical news about yet another app that promises to change the world, yet again.

The key to the quick and efficient creation of promotional materials and easier communication with the media lies in defining your value, mission, and unique selling proposition (USP).

- Value – your value is what directs you in your everyday work. It's your goals and aspirations. When used in communication, your value isn't about being professional or offering an innovative approach. We've heard about these before.
- Mission – this is an essential point of communication that defines why you do what you do. You have to make sure that your purpose is honest. Trust me, people can quickly verify it and when it turns out that something doesn't click in your mission and business, expect trouble.
- Unique selling proposition (USP) – the USP is a statement where you show how your product addresses a specific need or pain point of a given target group.

So let's round it up: USP, mission, and value are at the backbone of communication.

Whatever you communicate to the public should rely on these three elements. That's how you make sure that your messages are honest, simple, and – most importantly – easy to create.

Trust me; the last one really comes in handy when you're a startup CEO who wears 50 different hats during each workday.

Once you've got all these elements in place, you'll be able to show your target how they can benefit from your product to build its value further and ensure successful market launch.



VALUE

MISSION

USP

03 | Develop a media plan in 5 steps

PR is the last thing you want to do last when releasing a digital product.

Going public as a startup means you will be taking on new responsibilities. As you move from the garage to the daylight, your time will shrink drastically because there will be so many people around you wanting to talk to you about your product.

That's why it's vital that you deliver on your promise.

Remember that the media, customers, and stakeholders will follow your actions. For example, if you declare the premiere of your product on a specific day and fail to deliver it on time, you will instantly appear as someone who can't be trusted. Consequently, you'll be risking that your business loses its reputation before you even release your product.

As a result, you might miss the only opportunity you'll ever have for growth.

I realize that if you're on the way to launching your product, writing a press release is probably very low on your list of priorities. But that's a huge mistake. If you think that it's enough to send a simple product-oriented press release to a random selection of media, you will be only wasting your time.

Excellent PR communication can bring you a massive free audience. But for that to happen, you need to know how to spread the news about your launch properly.

That's where the media plan comes in. A media plan helps to organize all your communications at the right moment. And you know that timing is critical in the media, don't you?

Your media plan should include the following things: your value, mission, and USP. If you define your value, mission, and USP beforehand, you'll be able to create PR content quickly and efficiently.

Here are the essential steps you need to take to plan a market launch that will kick off your project in grand style and set your startup for success.

STEP 1



Media research

you probably know many things about your target audience at this point. Now you need to learn whether that audience also reads the media publications you picked for your plan. Divide your research into sectors and audience types. Segment your audience and develop a few different styles of press releases to address different targets with a different kind of communications. Address audiences that will bring you a maximum ROI. Once you do media research, you'll know how to choose the best channels to communicate with your customers.

STEP 2

2

Write a press release

forget about simple advertising and instead build a story that shows how your product solves the problem of your target audience and how you came to be the one to build it. Be creative and demonstrate the benefits of your product interestingly. Include use cases to showcase how your product in action and identify the pain points it addresses.

STEP 3

3

Establish key operations with the media

if a medium caught your eye and you believe it's essential for your sector, get in touch with them. For example, if a journalist from that medium wrote about a similar solution before, you can reach out to them directly or to the editorial team and tell them about your idea.

STEP 4

4

Final check

if you think that your press release is ready, be sure to check it three times throughout the day and have someone else proofread it. Nothing will save you from a colossal fail right at the premiere of your product. The press and journalists won't forget that and customers might get bored quickly. Create a checklist to control the chaos.

STEP 5

5

Market launch

the point where you send information to all the journalists and editorial teams you got in touch with. Don't forget to reserve enough time to answer the questions journalists asked you and make sure that your team also has time for delivering proper customer service for the requests and questions rolling in.



04 | Build a personal brand

The best thing about personal branding is that if there's anything that others can copy from your business model, your reputation and image will cover it successfully.

A strong personal brand will make your product or service much harder to replicate. Also, by running PR yourself, you'll gain the opportunity for developing relations with the media personally.

Here are **4 good reasons** why it's worth to invest in personal branding at the early stages of running your startup:

- **Boost the credibility of your company** - when you build a strong personal brand, you become an authority in a niche. That type of credibility extends to everything you do, including your company. That allows building trust around yourself rather than the company and then extending this trust to your product or service.
- **Contain an entire resume in your name** - a well-developed personal brand is more valuable than even the best CV. A strong personal brand proves that your activities bring tangible results and that you have a specific reach in your niche.
- **Improve sales and support marketing activities** - to build a personal brand, you will write expert content for the media, set up your blog, or speak at industry conferences. By doing that, you will be sourcing and engaging potential prospects directly.
- **Find talent for your startup** - during conference presentations or when sharing your knowledge online, you'll be inspiring your audience to connect your activities with your brand automatically. If these turn out to be interesting, your target will believe that your startup is an exciting place to work at.

So how do you create a strong personal brand?

1 Start writing

One of the easiest ways of creating a personal brand is sharing valuable content. Use blogging platforms like Medium to publish articles where you share your expertise, knowledge, and experience. Make your strategy omnichannel by adding supporting that content with LinkedIn activity. That's the easiest branding method, but it requires dedication and patience.

3 Help people out

A smart way to share your knowledge without risking that you end up looking conceited or full of yourself is helping others out. For example, you can dedicate half an hour every day to answer some industry questions others post in groups, forums or platforms like Quora. Writing answers to questions posted by others is an excellent occasion for demonstrating your expertise publicly and getting your name out there.

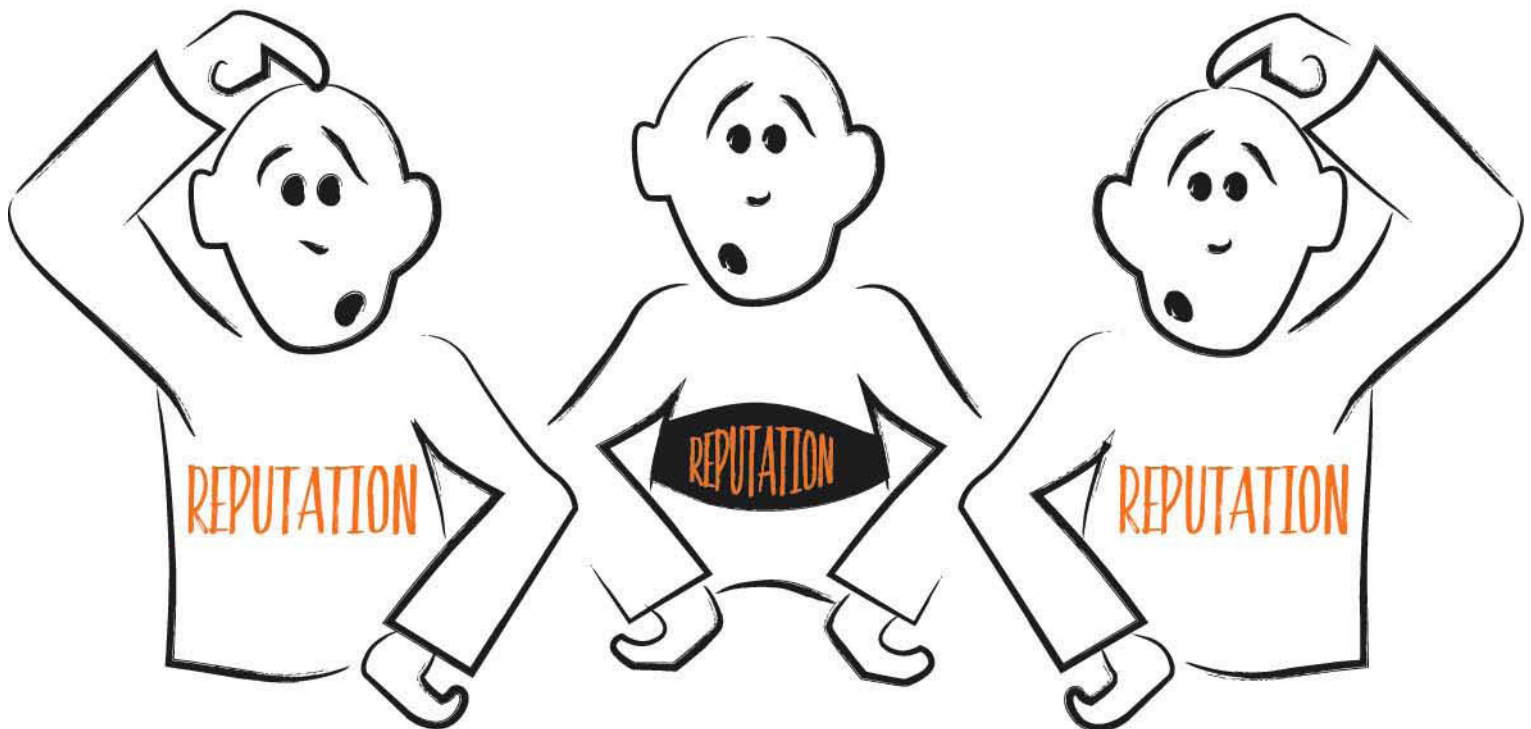
2 Speak at conferences

Participate in and speak at industry conferences and events. By being a regular at these events, you can be sure that sooner or later others will start recognizing your name. So be open to sharing your knowledge with other people and use the opportunity for some robust networking too. With every presentation, you'll be showing more people that you're an expert in your field.

4 Express your opinion

Since you're speaking as an individual and not representing your company, you can use your public profile to share private opinions and recommendations. Your LinkedIn profile is an excellent place to do that. By sharing statuses where you talk about recent happenings in your niche, you will build a position for yourself as an authority able to pick up on trends and set the direction of the entire sector- all the while adding more value to your community.

Use these 4 tips to build a strong personal brand that elevates the status of your startup and inspire people in your sector to trust your expertise.



05 | The best day and time to launch a product

The moment when you unveil your product to the world can make or break its impact on the market.

That's why picking the right date for premiering your product is so crucial to the overall success of your startup.

People and organizations have different habits, so if you end up pinging them at a wrong time, they might ignore your message and never learn about your product.

Here's a short guide to help you choose the right date for premiering your product and making a big splash all over the media.

1. Determine your business type and set the date

Take a second look at your startup idea and ask yourself these questions:

- **Is there a particular time when your target audience will want to use that product?**
- **When would they benefit from your product most?**

For example, if you came up with an innovative pair of skiing goggles, it just doesn't make sense to launch them right in the middle of summer. Winter sports are the last thing people are thinking about when dipping their toes in a pool.

Another essential factor is local religious holidays or consumer habits that are related to religion. Research your target markets to learn more about these specifics before deciding to premiere your product.

2. Select the best day for spreading the news

Once you consider these factors, you'll probably pinpoint a period that suits your purposes. All you need to do now is pick the best day for kicking off your product.

Our experience and research show that the best day to launch a product is Tuesday.

In fact, the worst thing you can do is emailing journalists on Sunday. Sunday is the only free day they get during the week so don't expect them to look at their mailboxes.

What about the following day, Monday? Monday is a busy day as people arrive at work and find their mailboxes filled to the brim with the news. You don't want your press release to get lost between other emails and cases from the previous week, right?

This is what makes Tuesday perfect:

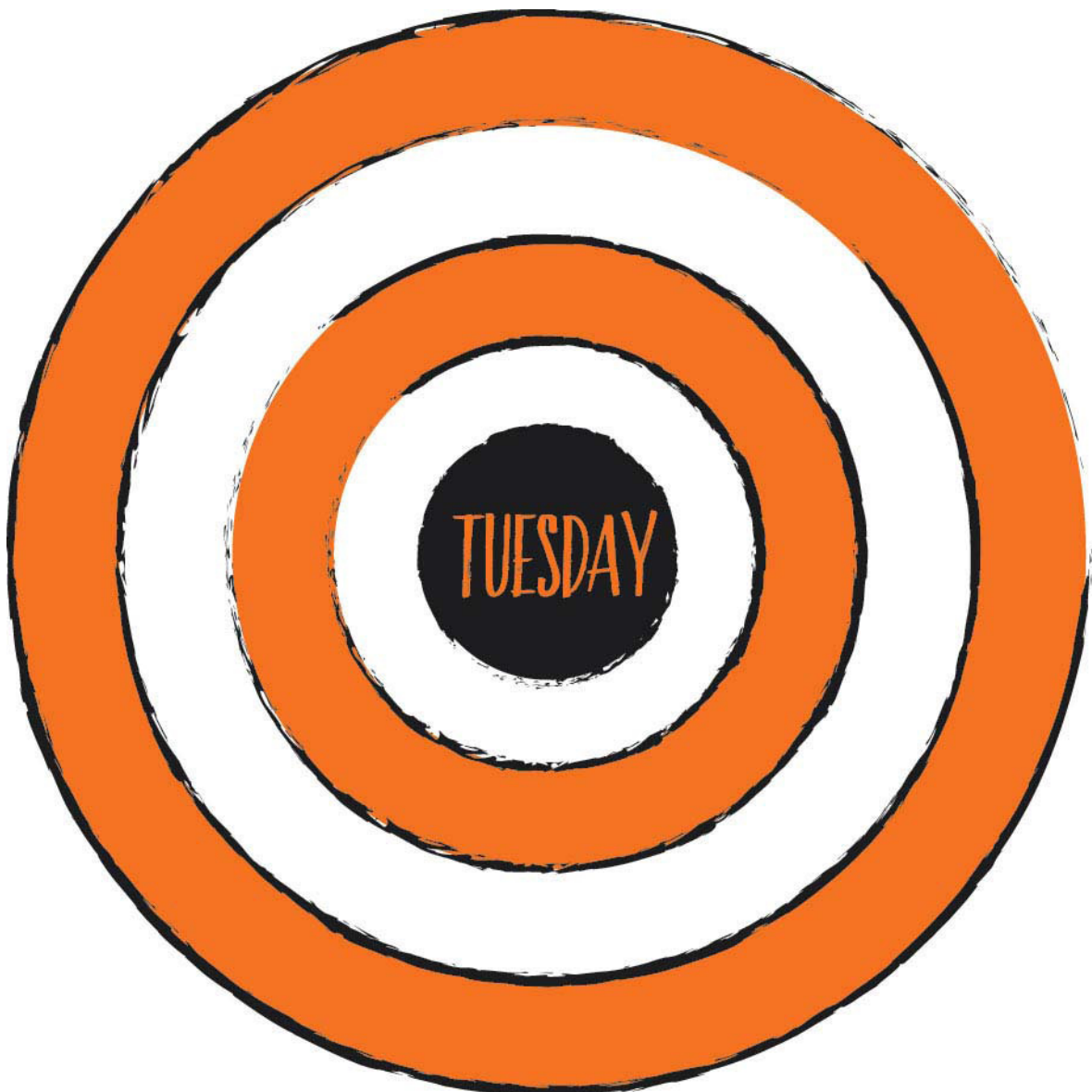
On Tuesday, you can be sure that journalists and media professionals have already dealt with cases from the previous week and went through their mailbox on Monday. At the same time, Tuesday gives you just enough time - a total of three days - to follow up on questions from journalists. That's why Tuesday simply kills other days.

3. Choose the hour for sending your press release

When picking the hour for delivering your press release to the media and revealing your product to customers, you need to consider the nature of your business again:

- Is your business global or local?
- Do you operate in different time zones?
- What are the habits of your audience? Perhaps they have some special activities planned during the day or go to sleep early and read press only in the morning?
- And most importantly - are you planning to target journalists located in different time zones?

Use these questions to pick the right hour for sending out the news to the media and your target audience. You don't want your message to reach them when they're not paying attention.



06 | Create a press release for your product

A press release is an excellent medium for spreading the word about your product.

So how do you create a press release that ensures numerous publications and allows building a relationship with journalists?

1 STEP 1

Define your goal

Before setting out to writing the press release, identify your objective for reaching out to the media and journalists. You don't want journalists to just copy your press release. That type of media coverage won't bring you significant results. Instead, you should concentrate on convincing journalists to create unique articles in collaboration with your startup. That's why you need first to develop a media plan before you sit down to write your press release.

2 STEP 2

Build a media plan

To create a solid media plan, just follow the steps outlined in a previous post in this series where we cover the basics of PR for startup founders.

3 STEP 3

Pick the format for your press release

Once you have your media plan in place, you can start writing your press release. Your first step here is choosing a right format that reflects the character of your company and helps you stand out from the crowd.

If you manage to set yourself apart from hundreds of black-and-white press releases, you stand a better chance at engaging journalists and launching a fruitful collaboration.

If you're a startup owner with an exciting product, bet on something creative - for example, a well-designed infographic that showcases the use cases or benefits of your product.

4 STEP 4

Create the content of your press release

Here are three tips to help you create a press release that will convince journalists that you've got something interesting to say and present your product in the best light:

✓ **It's not enough to just talk about your product** - we don't need yet another application that will make the world a better place. Journalists are flooded with that type of content every single day - and so are the readers. You need to make your message more unique than that.

✓ **Solve the problem of your target audience** - to attract the interest of the media, you need to show that your product is valuable because it solves a pain point for readers. Journalists are always on the lookout for interesting material. If you manage to deliver content that is valuable for the readers of a given medium, they will be far more likely to publish your press release and reach out to you whenever they need expert commentary

✓ **Speak the language of the medium** - you need to tailor your press release to a given type of medium where submitting it. Every title has its profile and specific reader base. For example, startup media target people interested in the startup culture and those readers will be more interested in your business model rather than a personal story. In contrast, media targeting a broader reader segment might appreciate more an exciting story about how you ended up solving a particular problem.

SPEAK

THE LANGUAGE

— OF —

THE MEDIUM

07 | Go through this product launch checklist

Every product launch is different. There's no point in looking for one universal solution that works for every business and product.

Still, there are some things every product launch needs for success.

By sticking to the 20 points outlined in the checklist below, you'll be on your way to boosting your sales and getting the word about your product out there before revealing it to the world.

- 1 Define your Unique Selling Proposition (USP).** You need to communicate how your product is different from the others available on the market and why customers should choose yours. Here's an article where I explain how to identify a unique selling proposition before releasing your product.
- 2 Develop a media plan.** Launching a product without a media plan in place is a considerable risk. You're only going to launch your product once, so you need to make the most of that occasion. If you're not sure where to start, check out this post about creating a media plan for digital products.
- 3 Identify your primary target audience.** Your PR strategy should aim to attract and engage this group of people.
- 4 Assign roles to your team for the launch.** A product launch is a busy time. Ensure that each member of your team knows what they should be doing and for which areas they're responsible.
- 5 Write a press release.** Journalists receive hundreds of press releases each month so make sure that yours catches their attention and engages them to reach out to you. Have a look here to learn how to write a press release that does its job.
- 6 Invest in media monitoring.** By having someone help you learn who writes about your product and how you'll gain heaps of valuable insights for later implementation.
- 7 Choose the right day and time for your product launch.** Use the tips we shared about picking the time for sending out your press release; they're both important.
- 8 Get in touch with key journalists** and confirm your launch date to help them develop their content.
- 9 Inform all stakeholders about your launch date beforehand.** Each member of the team will need to reserve their time to work on the launch and create a buzz.
- 10 Offer bonuses to early adopters.** Nothing helps to attract people more than exciting freebies or promotions that come as part of the launch.
- 11 Create promotional and sales materials.** Develop your offer and content you will share online. Always make sure that someone else reviews your materials.
- 12 Test to check that everything works.** Conduct testing at least a few days before your launch. If you test your product too late, you risk disappointing users who are waiting for it. Also, if you change any variable, remember to check it again.
- 13 Check your support.** You need to know whether your support team can handle a sudden influx of requests from users. Make sure that there are enough people on board who can answer users' questions and help them take advantage of the product from day one.
- 14 Establish the goal of your market launch.** You need to have an objective in mind when launching your product – for example, the number of users you want to engage or specific sales metrics you want to reach. By measuring your success, you will learn more about what works and what doesn't for your audience.

- 15 **Launch your product internally first.** It's smart to test everything internally on the day of the launch. If you spot a technical glitch, you'll have just enough time to eliminate it before the official start.
- 16 **Spread the word.** Make sure to ask everyone you know – from partners and employees to family and friends – to send out and let everyone know about your new product. Use social media channels smartly, and you'll engage your target audience even before the launch.
- 17 **Send your press release to the media.** Once you write a fantastic press release, it's time to distribute it across your network. If you're using a database, don't forget to place these addresses in Bcc.
- 18 **Offer support to the first clients personally.** By delivering that type of customer service, you'll not only gain insight about the first reactions and opinions of customers about your product but also make a great impression on them as someone who cares about their users.
- 19 **Plan future communications.** It's smart to create a broader PR plan where you include communications to be delivered after the launch. For example, if you plan to open a newsletter box, you need to know what type of content you'll be sharing with your audience before someone subscribes.
- ✓ **Stick to this checklist, and you're guaranteed to make your market launch a great success.**



It might come as a surprise, but in its essence, product launch and product development are very similar.

In fact, the two are tightly woven together. And that's sometimes a little too much for founders who struggle to finish one task after another, at some point losing a broader view of their product. There are so many things that require their attention that it's easy to forget about overall goals.

That's when founders can make mistakes that may have a significant impact on the success of both their market launch and their product itself.

Here are 5 critical mistakes many startup founders make during the market launch that derive from problems that were already part of the product development process.



1

The product doesn't solve a problem

That's the primary reason why so many startups fail today. Relying on your preferences, taste, and beliefs rather than measurable data about your target audience is a grave mistake. You not only risk burning through your budget but also failing to learn what caused the misery of your business in the first place.

Many founders somehow manage to ignore that their expenses are growing and profits are minuscule. They keep on going even though they know that it's not worth it because they believe in their product. The trouble is, they're the only ones out there who want to buy it.

They could have checked it right at the beginning of their product development cycle.



2

Too few early adopters

The best of product launches looks like a snowball.

As you slowly build a database of users who get to test the new releases of your product before it hits the market, you get to develop a loyal client base who will help spread the word about your product when you finally release it.

That's why it's essential to provide early adopters with bonuses and inspire them to become part of your product development process. By not paying attention to the opinions of these early adopters, you automatically reject their support during the product launch. Also, you risk releasing a product that hasn't been tested by anyone – which is another problem!

3

Lack of proper validation or MVP

Even if your product solves a particular problem, you might still not be clear enough about its benefits when communicating with your target audience. By testing your product right from the start and engaging your target community, you'll quickly boost the UX and eliminate mistakes that you just aren't able to generate on your own.

4

Your support team is too small

So you've had a great start, and your product got a lot of positive feedback and attention. But as your user base grows and people start asking questions, you might find yourself struggling to provide them with the proper response.

If your social media channels are overflowing with comments that you're simply unable to handle by yourself, prepare for trouble.

As people wait, they start to get nervous and what seemed to be a success might quickly become your worst nightmare. That's why it's smart to develop a support team before the launch and have a few extra people on hand just in case your product is a huge success.

5

Your product contains errors

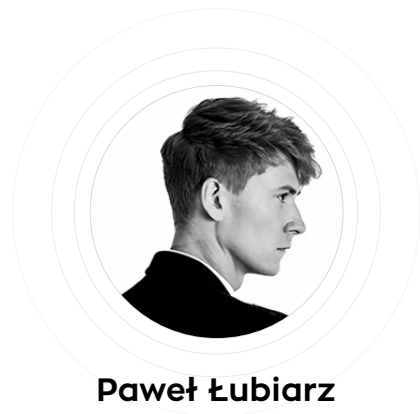
And I mean all kinds of errors. It can be technical mistakes or typos in your content. You can't have any of that. If users notice them, they might abandon your product and turn to your competitors.

If you can't get proofreading done right, how can they trust your product or service to do the job? Be sure to check everything many times over. Go through the entire user journey yourself to make sure that everything works just as you planned. Have someone review that process too. And don't forget to hire a proofreader to make sure your content is spot on and error-free.

Get your PR going NOW!



*Still not sure how to kickoff your product?
Don't hesitate to send us an email.
We're always happy to help startup
owners take their product to the next level
with excellent software development
and strategic advisory.*



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Got an idea for a digital product? Get in touch with us.

Choosing a tech partner who will support you at every stage of the product development is key to the launch and growth of your startup. At Sunscrapers, we realized many entrepreneurial visions and know what takes startups from average to amazing.



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