



The Battery Guide to

B2B Tech Branding

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INTRODUCTION:

Branding is Storytelling

If there's one thing I learned from my time as a journalist at *The Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* and, now, advising a global investment firm on communications, it's this: **Storytelling can make or break a company.** Telling a great brand story can do more than secure favorable media coverage. It can help you reach new markets, find new customers, hire top-notch talent and motivate your team to do more, better.

Unfortunately, many technology companies — particularly those in the B2B world — don't have much experience with storytelling, or undervalue it as a strategic business lever. It makes sense: Building an innovative new product, or running and expanding a larger technology business, requires a specific set of skills, and storytelling isn't always one of them. The problem is particularly severe for B2B startups. The wonkier your product is, the harder it is to tell a compelling story at a high level about 1) what it is, and 2) why it matters.

And yet: The more-specialized your product is, the more upside you'll find in translating your product message more broadly, and broadcasting that through multiple distribution channels. That's where this guide comes in. Inside, you'll find some common mistakes that tech companies, particularly B2B ones, make when it comes to branding and communications. Read on to discover how to avoid these mistakes, up your branding game and break through to your various audiences with the right company messages. Trust me — it will pay off in the long run!

Let's get to work!



[Rebecca Buckman](#)



Why You Should Avoid 'Buzzword Bingo' When Telling Your Story

AS FEATURED IN:  TechCrunch

The more complicated and arcane a company's technology, the harder the job of branding becomes. In other words: Stories about online-dating and burrito-delivery apps are easily understood by most people. But if a company specializes in making technology for hybrid-cloud data centers, or parsing specialized IT alerts and cybersecurity warnings, the storytelling task becomes much harder — but, I would argue, even more important.

Sure, a wonky company will still be able to talk easily to its customers and chat up nerdy CIOs at trade shows. But what happens when that company raises a Series C or D round of financing and actually needs to reach a broader audience — like really big, potential business partners, potential acquirers, public investors or high-level business reporters? Often, they're stuck.

It can be painful to watch. When I was a reporter, I was amazed at the buzzwords thrown at me by some technology companies trying to get me to write about them. For fun, my colleagues and I would put some of these terms into online "buzzword bingo" websites just to see what indecipherable company descriptions they would spit out. (Example: "An online, cloud-based, open-source hyperconverged Kubernetes solution.") Often, when pressed, PR representatives couldn't explain to me what these companies actually did.

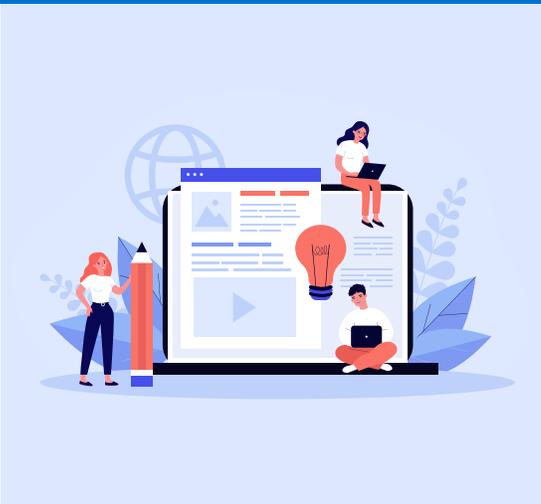


These companies obviously never made it into my stories. And I would argue that many of them suffered more broadly from their overall lack of high-profile press coverage; large business publications like the ones for which I worked target the very big-company executives and investors these later-stage startups were trying to reach.

Now, of course, I'm on the other side of that reporter/company equation — and I often feel like a big chunk of my job is working as a technology translator.

A natural-born storyteller

So why is this B2B storytelling problem so common, and arguably getting worse? Lots of reasons. Many of these hard-to-understand companies are founded by highly technical engineers for whom storytelling is (not surprisingly) not a natural skill. In many cases, their marketing departments are purely data-driven, focused on demand generation, ROI and driving prospects to an online sales funnel — not branding and high-level communications. As marketing technology has gotten more and more advanced and specialized, so have marketing departments.



As a result, many B2B and enterprise-IT companies are often laser-focused on talking about their products' specific bells and whistles, staying in "sell mode" for a technical audience and cranking out wonky whitepapers and often-boring product press releases. They're less adept at taking a step back to address the actual business benefits their product enables. Increasingly, this tech-talk also plays well with the legions of hyper-specialized, tech-news websites that have proliferated to serve every corner of the technology market, making some executives think there's no need to target higher-level press.

One prominent marketing and PR consultant I know, who has worked with hundreds of Silicon Valley startups since the 1980s, says she is "shocked" by how poorly many senior tech industry CEOs today communicate their companies' stories. Many tend to "shun" communications, considering it too "soft" in this new era of data-obsessed marketing, the consultant Jennifer Jones, recently told me. But in the end, poor communications and storytelling can create or exacerbate business problems, and often affect a company's valuation.

So how do you get to a point where you can talk about your company in plain terms, and reach the high-level audiences you're targeting?

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One tactic, obviously, is to ditch the jargon when you need to. The pitch you use on potential customers — who likely already have an intimate understanding of your market and the specific problems you’re trying to solve — is not as relevant for other audiences.

A big fund manager at Fidelity or T. Rowe Price, or a national business journalist, probably knows, for example, that cloud computing is a big trend now, or that companies are buying more technology to battle complex cybersecurity attacks. But do they really understand the intricacies of “hybrid-cloud” data center setups? Or what a “behavioral attack detection solution” does? Probably not.

The David versus Goliath angle

Another tip is to put your company story in a larger, thematic context. People can better understand what you do if you can explain how you fit into larger technology and societal trends. These might include the rise of free, open-source software, or the growing importance of mobile computing.

It’s also helpful to talk about what you do in relation to larger, more established players. Are you nipping away at the slow-growing, legacy business of Oracle/EMC/Dell/Cisco? As a journalist, I once wrote a story about a small public networking company called F5 Networks that specialized in making “application delivery controllers.” But the story mostly focused on F5’s battle with a much larger competitor; in fact, the editors titled the story “One-Upping Cisco.” That’s the angle most readers were likely to care about. Journalists, particularly, love these David versus Goliath type stories, and national business publications are full of them.



Another key storytelling strategy is leveraging your customers. If your business is boring to the average person, try to get one of your household-name customers to talk publicly about how they use your technology. Does your supply-chain software help L’Oréal sell more lipstick, or UPS make faster package deliveries?

One of our portfolio companies had a nice business-press hit a few years ago by talking about how its software helped HBO stream “Game of Thrones” episodes. (The service had previously crashed because too many people were trying to watch the show.) You can leverage these highly visible customers for case studies on your website. These can be great fodder for your sales team as well as later press interviews, as long as they’re well-written and understandable. Try to get more customers to agree to this type of content when you sign the contract with them.

From “Mad Men” to math men

Finally, there’s the issue of marketing leadership inside tech companies. In my experience, most smaller, B2B or enterprise IT-focused startups have CMOs or VPs of marketing who are more focused on data and analytics than brand communications — more “math men” than “Mad Men.” This isn’t surprising, as these companies often sell data-rich products and have business models where PR and general advertising don’t directly drive sales (unlike, say, a company making a food-delivery app). The CEOs of these companies value data and analytics, too.



I encourage B2B tech CEOs to focus on hiring CMOs with some brand/communications experience, or at least a willingness to outsource it to competent partners who are experts in that area. After a couple of early rounds of funding, you should be outgrowing your highly specialized PR firm (if you even have one) that focuses on a narrow brand of trade publications, for example. These firms usually don’t have contacts at the bigger national business and technology outlets that are read by big mutual fund managers and the business development folks at Cisco or Oracle. Hiring ex-journalists — not technical experts — to write content and develop messaging can be a good idea, too.

In other words, start focusing on high-level storytelling earlier, not when you’ve already raised \$100 million in venture funding and have several hundred employees. By that point, it can simply be too late: Your company has already been typecast by the trade press and written off by higher-level reporters, and sometimes even potential business partners, as too niche-y and hard to understand.

As a journalist, I learned that everyone has a story to tell. It’s up to you to figure out what your company’s is, and how to tell that story in a compelling, understandable fashion. If you do, I’m pretty sure the business benefits will follow.



5 Reasons You'd Be Crazy to Do Your Own PR

When tech companies — especially less-sexy ones selling to businesses, not consumers — first get started, there's usually little appetite for spending money on corporate communications and public relations.

"We need to make some sales first," CEOs say. Or: "I can't figure out the ROI on PR! So, I'm not spending money on it." Others want to go it alone because they're convinced that only they have the passion and deep knowledge to sell the company to reporters. Plus, everything "DIY" seems cool today. Why not DIY PR?

But in today's increasingly fragmented media landscape, it's getting more difficult for entrepreneurs to manage their own communications programs. My view is that most B2B startups undervalue PR and content and wait too long to invest in it. The good news, though, is that tapping professional resources (or spending money on an internal hire) to create a modern, targeted startup communications program may cost less than you think — and help you prosper.

It's counter-intuitive, but here are five reasons not to do your own PR — at least once you're out of the early startup phase.

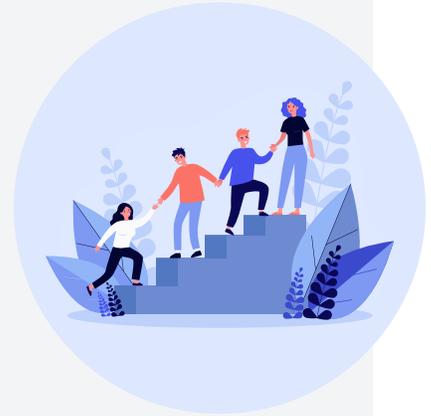
1

PR is more complicated today—and relationships matter more than ever.

“The declining number of newsroom jobs means there are fewer journalists covering your industry, and they’re busier than ever,” says Stephanie Gnibus, president and founder of [GMK Communications](#). “They can only afford to work with sources they trust.” From 2008 to 2018, the number of overall newsroom jobs plunged 25%, according to the [Pew Research Center](#).

The journalists who are still working are also increasingly judged by the number of clicks their stories generate. This means, unfortunately for you, that they may be more interested in online fashion and financial scandals than in the latest hybrid-cloud computing service.

The result is that startups simply have to spend more time today developing core reporter relationships and wooing the decreasing number of journalists who matter to them. Reporters and editors also expect potential sources to know what stories they’ve written already; stay abreast of other coverage on related topics; appreciate what’s newsworthy to an external audience (versus news that is just important for you); and master their publication’s editorial standards, understanding what qualifies as a real “story”. They are also getting scores of PR “pitches” a day, most of which aren’t even relevant to them. “Keeping up is a full-time job,” GMK’s Gnibus says.



2

PR is a long game.

Ongoing, sustainable communications programs often achieve the greatest success. “Some companies make an investment in launching a business or a product and expect that upfront PR work to carry them through for the next few months or years,” says Kathy Wilson, a co-founder and managing partner of [Tier One Partners](#). “But the most successful companies and entrepreneurs understand that PR continues to build business momentum over time.” Ongoing programs also help more with a company’s SEO, as they create a regular cadence of searchable content online.

An ongoing program allows you to build relationships with key reporters who will come to see you as a trusted source. A coffee you had six months or even two years ago could still pay dividends, if you’re keeping in touch with the reporter over time. You, the CEO or founder, are still the source journalists most want to talk to. But to facilitate this access, it is usually helpful to have someone to set up all these interactions for you, strategize beforehand about how to handle them, and fit them into a larger PR program that meets your business goals.

3

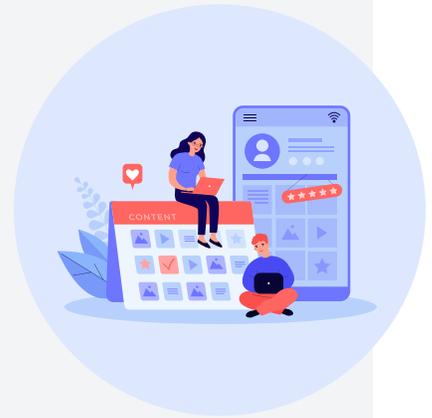
“PR” encompasses a lot more than just media placements.

You might be focused on traditional PR. But what’s now known as “earned media”—stories you “earn” by enticing a real journalist to write about you—is only a subsegment of a modern, well-rounded communications program. And for many companies, it’s less and less important.

Other aspects of communications are often more relevant these days, from content marketing to events/meetups to social media. While these are areas that CEOs of very small startups can handle by themselves for a while, these activities usually become more sophisticated as your company grows — and require more attention as they become increasingly linked to product marketing, sales and overall company strategy.

Indeed, the lines between PR, marketing and sales are now blurring – resulting in many, many more communications channels for your message. A single idea might start as a blog post; morph into a live event; get recorded as an online video or a podcast (or both); and so on. Content marketers can extend the usefulness of a great topic even further by syndicating a post through sites like Outbrain or Taboola or expanding it into a whitepaper for sales or lead-generation purposes.

Good PR firms can help with this. They might also train your senior executives to tweak their messaging for different audiences, or research relevant events and conferences at which you should be speaking. They might suggest turning some ideas into syndicated blog posts instead of media pitches, depending on how they fit into the ongoing news cycle. In short, the PR expert functions as your timely eyes-and-ears in the market, helping you connect your message to ongoing industry and public conversations.

**4**

Professional help is more affordable than you think.

As a small private company, you don’t have to hire a big agency and pay them tens of thousands of dollars a month. A boutique PR agency can put a team of two or three staffers on your account for an average of \$8,000 – \$10,000 a month. You could also pay an individual consultant by the hour – allowing you the flexibility to “go dark” when you need to and ramp up when you have news to pitch, at least when you’re a very small company. You can also hire content-only consultants to write blog posts and whitepapers for you.

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“I believe certain early-stage companies should consider doing PR only when they have news versus ongoing programs,” says Lisa Tarter, founder of [TidalWave PR](#). “Cash-conscious startups have a hard time paying for ongoing PR and then their expectations are out of whack.”

Of course, some firms offering low prices deliver sub-par results. Usually, for B2B companies, this means a drumbeat of press releases and stories in obscure industry trade publications, which may not help much with your ultimate business goals. Spend a lot of time hiring the right PR firm and make sure the firm’s expertise matches with your program goals.

5 When a crisis hits, you need a PR team ready to go.

In today’s landscape, you will need to respond to a data breach or similar PR crisis within hours. The last thing you want is to be scrambling to find outside help and then waste time getting them up to speed—all while news of your crisis is spreading on Twitter in real time. If you’ve already got a relationship with a PR firm or consultant, this won’t happen. In fact, a PR pro with crisis experience can help you create a proactive crisis-management plan that establishes communications guardrails to help protect your company’s reputation.

The need for PR varies by startup—and it may not make sense for very small companies at the seed or Series-A stage. But most companies more mature than that can benefit from a diversified communications program—and one run, or at least advised by, a professional who is paid to stay abreast of current media and content-marketing trends. Believe me, you don’t want to try this at home.





Don't Miss Out on the Branding Opportunities of an IPO

AS FEATURED IN:  TechCrunch

There is obviously a ton of operational, financial and regulatory preparation that goes into a successful initial public offering. But one aspect of IPO planning that often gets short shrift, particularly at B2B-focused companies chasing relatively niche buyer audiences, is branding and communications. As the head of marketing and communications for a big investment firm, I see this all the time. I believe companies who skimp here are throwing away significant equity value.

Simply put, a highly public financing event like an IPO is an enormous branding opportunity for most companies. It's a free pass for companies to tell their stories to a huge, global audience and rack up high-level press coverage — both at the time of the IPO and in the future, since many publications (like my former employer, the *Wall Street Journal*) often focus on coverage of larger, publicly traded companies.

Why do so many companies fall down in this area? I think a lot of it has to do with the broader shift toward data-driven, online marketing and away from branding at many companies. Because highly technical companies in areas like hybrid-cloud computing or DevSecOps (yes, that's a thing) often struggle in their early days to get journalists interested in their stories, they



never make communications a priority inside the company. This comes back to haunt them when, all of a sudden, they've filed an S-1 and their exec team has zero experience explaining the company's story in clear, persuasive terms to a general audience.

But smart companies can avoid this trap. Here are five ways you can get the most branding bang out of your tech IPO, no matter how arcane your company's business is.

Don't procrastinate.

This is honestly the most important point to take away here. Successful PR and communications around an IPO are a result of long-term planning that starts at least 12 to 18 months before you file your offering document with the SEC. Once you think an IPO is in the offing, take a hard look at both your 1) marketing/communications staffing, and 2) your existing digital footprint.

In terms of staffing, ask yourself: Do I have a top-notch PR firm, or savvy internal staffers, with IPO experience? If not, it's definitely time for an upgrade. Don't be cheap here. In terms of your digital footprint, take a hard look at your website, Google search results, Wikipedia page, Glassdoor, etc. Are you broadcasting a consistent and positive message to all your key audiences (customers, investors, employees, press, partners, regulators) through these channels? If not, you have time to make fixes. If you wait too long, you may be stuck in an SEC-mandated quiet period and will face more limitations in how you can rectify some of these problems. This means you may not be perceived as positively on IPO day.



With messaging, go high.

Take it from Michelle Obama: While much of your earlier corporate messaging may have been low-level and focused specifically on drumming up sales, you now need to go high. Instead of selling a product, you need to be publicly selling a broad (preferably fast-growing) market category and attaching yourself to mega technology trends — every-company-is-a-software company, the rise of work-from-home, the decline of privacy on the Internet, whatever. Your investors and the press want a non-jargony story they can easily understand, and one that is focused on a better future. This will help you connect with reporters and make them more likely to write about you.



Prime the pump.

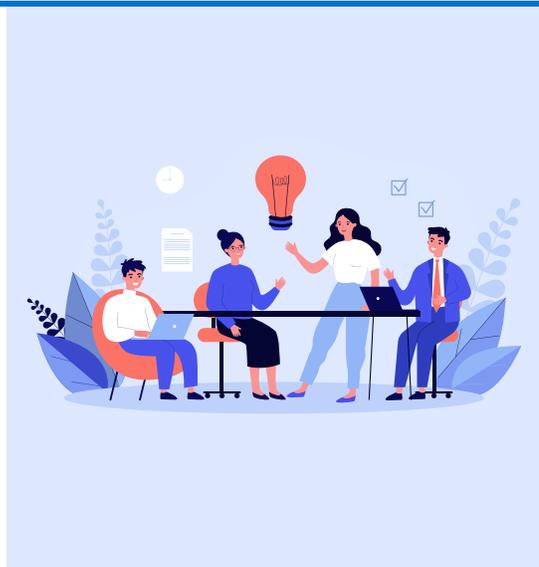
Well before you file that S-1, you need to establish a regular cadence of outward-facing communications activity. This could include everything from customer case studies to CEO blogs to conference sponsorships to press interviews — all underpinned by your new, high-level messaging and positioning. Sticking to this cadence often means you can continue some of these efforts even into your quiet period (though obviously, you should consult with your legal counsel on the specifics).



You should be breaking into the Tier-1 business press during this time, instead of limiting yourself to coverage in the trade/industry press. You should also make sure your CEO and other C-suite executives are getting visibility at conferences, online events, podcasts and social media. And remember, some of your best, high-level press coverage may have nothing to do with your business. A reporter may care less about DevSecOps and more about the fact that you have multiple women in your C-suite, that you’ve developed unique company culture, or that you maintain dual headquarters in the U.S. and Europe — and somehow manage to make that work. Embrace this. The coverage is still building your brand. This also means that when the S-1 drops, reporters will already have a lot of background information about you that they can use in their IPO-specific stories.

Train the messenger.

Don’t forget: In an IPO, you’re also selling your management team. Investors at T. Rowe Price and Fidelity want to invest in compelling, brilliant people, along with a great story — and the press wants to write about those people, too. So, IPO-specific media training for the CEO and any other IPO spokespeople is a must. As a CEO, you may get asked questions you’ve never been asked before, like, “How does it feel to be \$100 million richer?” A detailed, lawyer-approved FAQ document here is essential. And of course, a strict FAQ also helps ensure that company spokespeople are not making comments through the process that appear to be hyping the stock.



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Treat “IPO Day” like D-Day.

I realize you’re not storming the beaches of Normandy. But you should treat the communications aspect of IPO day like a military operation. Every aspect of it needs to be planned in advance: Where the CEO will be, what written communications they are issuing to whom — like employees and customers — when, and which reporters they are speaking with. You can start planning this and scheduling interviews with reporters up to two weeks in advance. Having a staffer track press coverage on the fly and adjust talking points based on what’s being written in this critical period — and on how the stock initially prices and starts trading — is also important.

Honestly, it’s harder than it looks on TV. But with careful planning and preparation — and plenty of help from your legal team — your brand will come out an IPO stronger than before and ready to evolve as your company moves into its next chapter of growth.





Doing Thought Leadership Right

AS FEATURED IN: **Entrepreneur**

These days, most startup companies understand the value of content marketing for driving revenue and generating sales leads. According to the [Content Marketing Institute](#), the tactic can result in three times as many leads compared to search advertising — and cost far less. Content marketing is, after all, less intrusive, more educational and often more authentic than advertising or a cold hard sales pitch. It's no wonder it's so effective.

But content marketing in a slightly different form — often euphemistically called “thought leadership” — can also be extremely useful for small-company executives. It can help them build their personal and company brands; connect to potential customers and partners; and promote their business interests in a subtle, backdoor way.

The problem: Most executives are going about thought leadership all wrong, if they're doing it at all.

First, many busy startup CEOs and other top executives don't or won't make the time to develop thought-leadership content. They view all content as the province of the data-driven marketing department and find it difficult to see value in collateral that is not directly driving sales. When they do take up a more-general content project, they use overtly promotional language and focus on their company, their product and their hot market.



This is, of course, the wrong mindset. Whether it takes the form of blogging on your own site or writing a contributed byline for your PR agency to pitch to a publication, thought leadership is not meant to be promotional. It's meant to spark conversations and add to an industry dialogue. Done right, this type of marketing allows you to share timely insights and anecdotes with your audience to educate them about a topic and your particular point of view.

Thought leadership can pay big dividends. These range from making you a go-to expert on a particular issue, ideally one sought after by the press and industry leaders for comment, to influencing public policy. You could be asked to speak at a major economic conference, for example, or named to lead an industry group or task force as a result of your expertise. Your increased visibility on a certain topic could attract a new board member or get you in the door of a hard-to-reach customer.

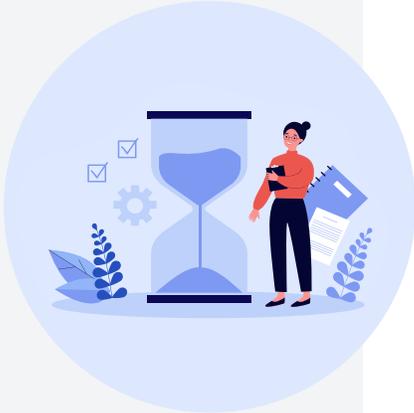
Finally, with traditional startup PR harder and harder to get these days — owing to [the rapidly declining number of reporters](#) and the continuing erosion of journalism's business model — thought leadership has become a much more critical communications channel for small companies. It may be the only way your company ever gets its name in certain publications.

So how do you do thought leadership right? Here are four tips:

1 Be timely.

One of the reasons executives often fail in thought leadership is that they're too busy to do it at the right time. But with this type of content creation, timing is everything. If Congress, say, passes little-noticed legislation that would impact your market or business, the time to get your thoughts on the issue out there is WHEN this is happening — usually in a matter of days. It will dramatically increase readership. That's just the reality of today's lightning-fast news cycle.

Stephane Kasriel, a prolific blogger and the former CEO of freelancer network UpWork, did this recently when news of tech giant Amazon's search for a second corporate headquarters was picking up steam in the press. He very quickly wrote a piece [published on CNBC.com](#) positing that all the hubbub over "HQ2" was actually misplaced: Cities would soon realize that massive, centralized corporate campuses aren't actually worth the money and effort. Instead, more companies would use distributed workforces and freelancers, he predicted. Several years before, [he fired off a post](#) riffing on a just-announced policy by IBM to crack down on remote working arrangements for employees.



2 Be provocative.

Executives have a lot of important constituencies to think about: customers, investors, employees and business partners, to name a few. So, they're generally quite careful about what they say publicly. They don't want to offend anyone and adversely impact their business.

That's why it's so hard for many executives to stake out a contrarian and provocative point of view in a blog post. But to do thought leadership right, they have to. No one wants to read a boring essay listing the pros and cons of a particular issue, and no real journalistic publication will run it. You need to feel strongly about your topic and have something interesting and different to say about it. If you don't, it's just not worth writing — and no one will remember it anyway.

One partner at my venture-capital firm, Dharmesh Thakker, is great at this. Recently he wrote a blog post comparing the new, low-commitment world of enterprise IT to dating app Tinder (the post was called "[Swipe Right for a Cloud Instance.](#)") In other pieces, he's pulled no punches in predicting that big, legacy tech players like IBM, Dell and HP will suffer if they don't latch onto new computing trends quickly enough.

3 Get to the point.

Despite what we all learned in high school English class about writing a strong thesis statement, many successful people still have trouble doing this when they blog. Perhaps because they're afraid of saying anything too controversial, many CEOs meander when they write, often not stating their main point until the end of their piece — as if they're afraid to even say it.

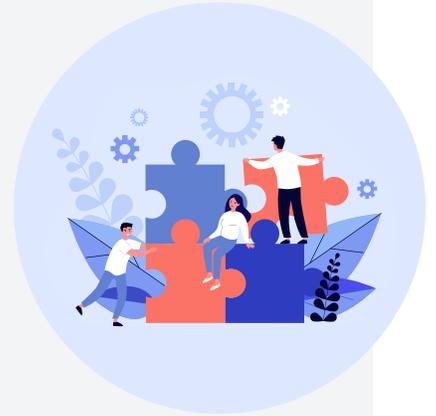
In the news business, editors have no patience for this. When I was a reporter, we talked openly about stories needing a "who cares" statement near the top of the piece. In other words, clearly articulate your point up high in your post — why a reader should care. Then, concisely expand on that point with well-organized, supporting material. And remember, cut, cut, cut words and sentences when you edit. In writing, less is always more.



4

Show, don't tell.

In business, facts often tell the story. But in writing, stories and anecdotes almost always do a better job of getting a point across. If you read long feature stories about business issues in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes* or *Fortune*, you'll notice they often begin with a personal anecdote — a story that relates the point the author is trying to make. Telling a specific story about how an executive made a tough decision, or turned a business around, is far more interesting than just reciting numbers or facts.



You should do this, too, when you write a blog post or a contributed article.

One good model to follow here is serial entrepreneur Hiten Shah. Shah wrote a [lengthy blog post in Oct. 2017](#), for example, explaining in great detail why he felt collaboration-software company Trello, whose technology helps teams plan and organize projects, missed the boat with its business model. (Trello was bought by Atlassian for \$425 million but could have, Shah argued, been “the next \$1 billion SaaS application.”) It’s fairly wonky stuff. But Shah started his post with a short anecdote, putting readers in a specific time and place by recalling exactly how Trello’s co-founder first introduced the product at a big tech conference back in 2011 — unveiling a product that looked like a whiteboard filled with sticky notes. Similarly, Shah [wrote a separate post](#) about growth hacking by leading with an anecdote about drinking mint juleps and beers at a bar called Memphis in Southern California.

Obviously no one expects you, a busy startup CEO, to write like William Faulkner. But if you’re serious about thought leadership, you should make a commitment to doing it right — both by allocating the time and trying to punch up your posts to make them readable, interesting and timely. The rewards for you, and your company, could definitely make up for the extra effort.



Why Employee Experience Matters: It's Internal Branding

Employee experience is the feeling a team member gets from all the interactions they have with their employer – including before and after their period of employment. It includes everything from the tone a company takes when talking about compensation or benefits to the way a person is treated as they are leaving the company.

It's an investment worth protecting. When done well, it can lead to measurable increases in business performance. [One Gallup study](#), for instance, found that company work units ranking in the top quartile in terms of employee engagement outperformed bottom-quartile units by 10% in terms of customer ratings; 22% in terms of profitability; and 21% in terms of productivity. These top-quartile groups also experienced 25% to 65% less turnover, depending on several factors, and 37% less absenteeism than units in which employees said they were less engaged.

On the other hand, disengaged employees can present risks to a company's brand value and reputation that can take years to repair, including through the loss of key talent. Simply put, employee experience measures the strength of your internal branding. Strong external brands nearly always stem from companies with a strong and positive employee experience. It's almost impossible to project a strong external brand if your employees aren't excited about coming to work every day.

What's more, investments in employee experience don't typically cost a substantial amount of money; instead, they involve creating and maintaining a certain type of culture, with the "cost" borne by top executives who must spend the time relentlessly focusing on things like company values, firm narrative and effective communication with employees.

EX Best Practice Areas & Principles

PLUMBING

- » Cadence & Channels
- » Digital Workplace
- » Feedback & Convo
- » Physical Workplace

LEADERSHIP

- » Tone & Voice
- » Culture & Values
- » Purpose
- » Narratives
- » Exec Sponsors
- » Managers

HOT TOPICS

- » Comp & Benefits
- » Financial & Strategy
- » Crisis
- » Change Management

Leaderly • Clear • Open • Thoughtful • Accessible

So, what are some of the specific investments in employee communications, engagement and experience that every company should be thinking about now? Here are three key points to focus on:

Everything starts with your company's purpose, culture and values.

These provide a solid foundation to guide all your decisions affecting your employees, from the moment they express interest in a job to their last day and beyond. Hold your teams and leaders accountable to your principles. Lead with them and make business decisions based on them. Celebrate people who embody them.



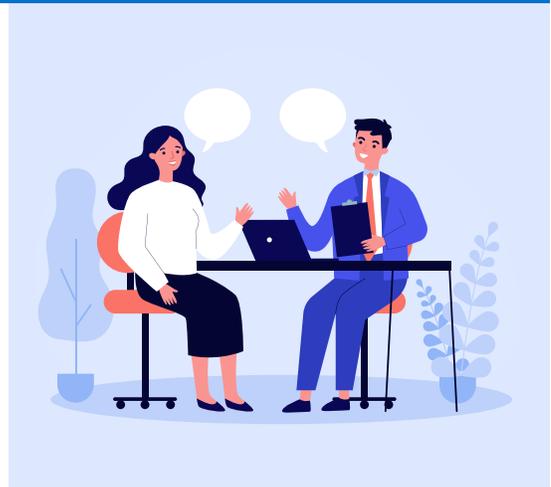
Keep a written record of your company narrative.

This includes where you've come from and where you're going as a business. It notes how you're evolving over time and why. This story provides a framework for how you talk to your employees, customers and other stakeholders so the decisions you make are part of a rational continuum, even during times of unexpected turbulence.



Create opportunities for regular conversation with employees.

Whether it's an all hands Q&A or an engagement survey, make sure there are plenty of ways for your team to let you know how they think things are going. This is especially important as you grow from a small startup of 10 people in a room to a growing company of 100 or more. And after you ask for feedback from employees, always reflect that it was heard and whether it was acted upon.



Whether your company has 20 employees or 20,000 around the world, making their experience at your company as engaging and productive as possible will always pay off.

CONCLUSION:

Start Telling Better Stories

I hope this whitepaper helps you start thinking about the stories you're telling and how you can do so more effectively. If you're ready to do more, and you're a Battery portfolio company, please don't hesitate to reach out. We can connect you with communications and content-marketing professionals who can help you build a thought-leadership program, forge relationships with key journalists on your beat, and prepare for an IPO. On a broader level, we can help you find the thread that ties your product — no matter how technical — to real people's lives. And we can advise you on how to build a company culture around a core purpose that will engage and inspire your team.

I've worked with many technology companies on a variety of different branding and storytelling questions. I'd be happy to help you uplevel your branding and communications and break out in the best way.

Feel free to contact me directly if you would like to talk more.

Best wishes,

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