

# Four tried and tested PR strategies for deep tech startup success

*Deep tech describes technological innovations at the cutting-edge of science and engineering. These early-stage businesses often have the underlying potential to overcome major industry challenges, and even flip an entire space on its head if successful.*

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The expectation can sometimes be these tech firms represent the Holy Grail of innovation. However, the development cycles for problem or mission-driven startups of this ilk can be long, very long. We're talking potentially 10-15 years until there's typically any real signs of momentum. This calls for a significant degree of patience and normally a very large amount of capital to truly take off.

Whilst not a world away from traditional B2B technology communications, deep tech businesses come with a unique set of PR challenges. Whether it's AI, quantum computing, biotech, blockchain, robotics, or another innovation entirely, here's four tried and tested PR strategies for deep tech startups looking to communicate effectively with journalists, investors, customers, prospects, and other stakeholders alike.

## Long-term relationships are truly essential as patience is a virtue

To stand any chance of eclipsing the boundaries of existing technology, a classic hallmark of a deep tech startup is the requirement for a sizable

level of investment. There is a much longer time horizon for ROI and a need to understand that some projects may prove to be commercially – or even scientifically – unviable.

Traditional B2B tech businesses, however, tend to apply established engineering techniques to address existing market needs, working with existing software frameworks to shorten the path to monetisation.

From a comms perspective, this is quite a different proposition. Deep tech businesses need to think about their narrative, messaging, thought leadership, and both journalist and other stakeholder relationships in terms of years, not months or weeks.

Building profile with and educating journalists about a particular idea or concept won't happen overnight. You need to be ready for a slower burn trust-building exercise, rather than necessarily being reliant on a constant stream of news. Sometimes, less is more.

## Have a clear and concise umbrella message that even your mum can understand

Ambiguous, niche, and esoteric language has no place in media-facing content. As a rule of thumb, when putting anything together for a journalist, be it a pitch, a press release, an opinion piece etc, always try to stop and think, *“would my mum understand this?”*

When deep tech businesses do emerge from stealth mode, they can be well insulated from wider market competition because they're built on such nascent concepts. But this also means that being able to explain what your company does in layman's terms is even more important.

Your umbrella message should therefore cover very, very clearly what you do and what your overall vision is. Generic taglines should be avoided

at all costs, as should phrases like next-generation, leading, and best-in-class. Your audience needs to understand your company's core message, which means avoiding language that isn't inclusive and serves only to thicken the veil that is draped over certain industries. You need to tell a human story.

## Articulate your technology's value and impact in different settings

Yes, you want to avoid "inventor's syndrome" at all costs and make your message accessible, but you also want to use creative license to flex when necessary and tailor your message to your audience in certain moments.

This means being able to explain the degree to which your technology can fundamentally change the status quo. What aspect of a specific field can it improve or revolutionise? How much time, money etc. will it save or generate? These are defined points of progress that key stakeholders can get their heads around. For investors, they can demonstrate your business' potential for scale.

Your mum needs to understand your message, yes, but you also need to be able to calibrate it to go deep on the science if necessary.

## Technological milestones should be the bedrock of your external communications

Whereas traditional B2B tech companies measure their early-stage success or failure on metrics like customer acquisition and churn, deep tech businesses are frequently judged on the technological milestones they may have hit. Perhaps the most important deep tech metric is an innovation's ability to push humanity forward and shape the future.

Everything external that a deep tech startup does and says – beyond just press releases and social media – should be anchored around this. Showcasing key developments and the leaps forward you’re making should run through your owned, earned, and paid content. This should be the red thread throughout your communications.

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