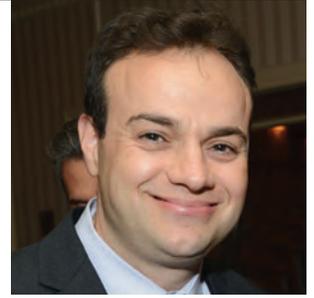


# 10 Takeaways for Startup PR Agencies and New In-House Teams



Starting a business is a challenging undertaking involving big risks; however, by relocating from Israel to New York, I was taking a much bigger risk than most. In 2010, I launched **Puder PR** and it has grown steadily since. As such, I'd like to offer advice to those considering starting an agency or brand PR teams seeking to better their game.

As a former PR consultant for major Israeli political figures, I had much experience, but, really, I was starting in New York from scratch. My philosophy for PR startups can be boiled down to: Find your niche—and be the best in it.

Let me explain and offer some lessons I've learned over the years:

**1. Find Your Niche:** The PR industry is oversaturated. The only way to distinguish your agency from the myriad firms offering similar services is to carve out a niche. This is especially true for startups. You have to be a unique provider, but don't limit yourself. My niche found me. When I worked for Israel's Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, I was constantly in contact with Israeli and Jewish organizations worldwide. When I relocated to the U.S., my extensive contacts at these organizations were a natural starting point for my new business. The media relationships I had cultivated over the years were my greatest asset. Ideally, you should have a strong connection to and personal interest in your niche area.

**2. Play to Your Strengths:** By the time Puder PR opened in New York, I'd been in touch daily with the Israeli media and major reporters covering this beat. Reporters already were coming to me as a source. When I started the firm, I was poised to be a journalistic source in a whole new way, to introduce more "take" into these give-and-take relationships. Media connections are PR's bread and butter; maintaining strong relationships with the press is essential.

**3. Identify Your Weaknesses and Compensate:** This is humbling but important. While Hebrew is my mother tongue, I speak English almost fluently. But you might recognize I'm not a native English speaker. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and take action. I knew right away the first thing we needed was a native English-speaking copywriter.

**4. Assemble a Strong Team:** Surround yourself with the best team possible, people who can complement and enhance your skills and take your firm to the next level. Having a solid team of PR pros you can trust is crucial, especially during startup. The fewer staffers, the more each impacts the team's growth. The smaller the team, the less freedom you have to take risks on new hires, so pick your team wisely.

**5. Know the Landscape:** I've worked in the field long enough that my expertise in Jewish affairs is wide, but that's

not enough. I read the next day's Hebrew headlines before I go to sleep and English headlines prior to work. I make sure I know everything about the Jewish world, including listening to back-room whispers reporters might miss. Obviously, you have to know the media, too. Every reporter who might be relevant should be on your radar, regardless of their stature.

**6. Location, Location, Location:** Worldwide, about 80% of the world's Jews live in the U.S. or Israel; however, as a PR pro in Israel, I was fairly limited in my reach. By moving to NY, the world's PR capital and a major center of Jewish life, I was able to expand my services. I became a much more viable PR pro to a host of previously inaccessible clients. I retained most of my Israeli clients, who were interested in getting more coverage in American media. My client base grew in ways that wouldn't have been possible in Israel.

**7. Think Like an Israeli:** Easier said than done. Israelis are known for *chutzpah* (shameless audacity) and we don't like to take no for an answer. Be proactive in creating opportunities for media coverage and pursue them vigorously. Don't be afraid to take risks; coverage won't always be positive, but if you want to make an omelet, you have to break some eggs.

**8. Communication Is Key to Communications:** I believe we are the only American firm offering full access to the Israeli media in English and Hebrew. My staffers also speak French, Italian and Portuguese. I want to add Spanish and Russian. It's about more than language; be well-versed in the issues and very aware of cultural nuances. It doesn't matter how small your firm or team; the more languages you can use to communicate messages, the more outlets and audiences are available to you and the more valuable you become.

**9. Good Service Brings New Business:** A major advantage a small firm or team has over larger competition is that its leader can be involved personally in all campaigns. Work hard and be results-driven. Trust me, prospective clients—especially those in your niche market—and business execs will be impressed by your success with other projects.

**10. Keep Going:** So you've built a great speciality firm or team with a strong roster. You keep abreast of everything related to your field. What now? Be the best! Find ways to offer ever more value: add advertising, media buying, social media and web design to your services by expanding staff. Pursue projects slightly outside your comfort zone. Master a new field by applying the lessons you've learned already. ■

**CONTACT:** [info@puderpr.com](mailto:info@puderpr.com)