

How to launch a product

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Welcome To
The Media

'You killed our business'

-

'We might as well just
shut down'

Where do I fit in?

- Technically labeled as an 'Influencer'
- Every media/magazine/publication outlet follows me...but won't always write about me/link to me
- Every retailer/buyer/distributor follows me...silently.
- I don't follow the script
- Consumers follow me – and **that's who I write for**

Who do I write for?

- **Phil:** Very strong cyclist, competes regularly
- **Lauren:** Middle of pack runner and triathlete
- **Mark:** Bike commuter & weekend cyclist
- **Mayan:** Enjoys being healthy, but not out for endurance sports
- **Mom:** Runs daily, but never more than half-marathon – and rarely in a race, just wants distance/time/HR.
- **Dad:** Cyclist – but never in a race
- **The Girl:** Does everything...but isn't data crazy (more fashion forward)

Understanding The Landscape

Traditional Mainstream Media

- NYTimes
- BBC
- ESPN
- CBS, FOX, ABC

Mainstream Sport Magazines

- Runner's World
- Bicycling Magazine
- Triathlete Magazine
- Men's Health

Tech Media

- The Verge
- Engadget
- TechCrunch
- Wired

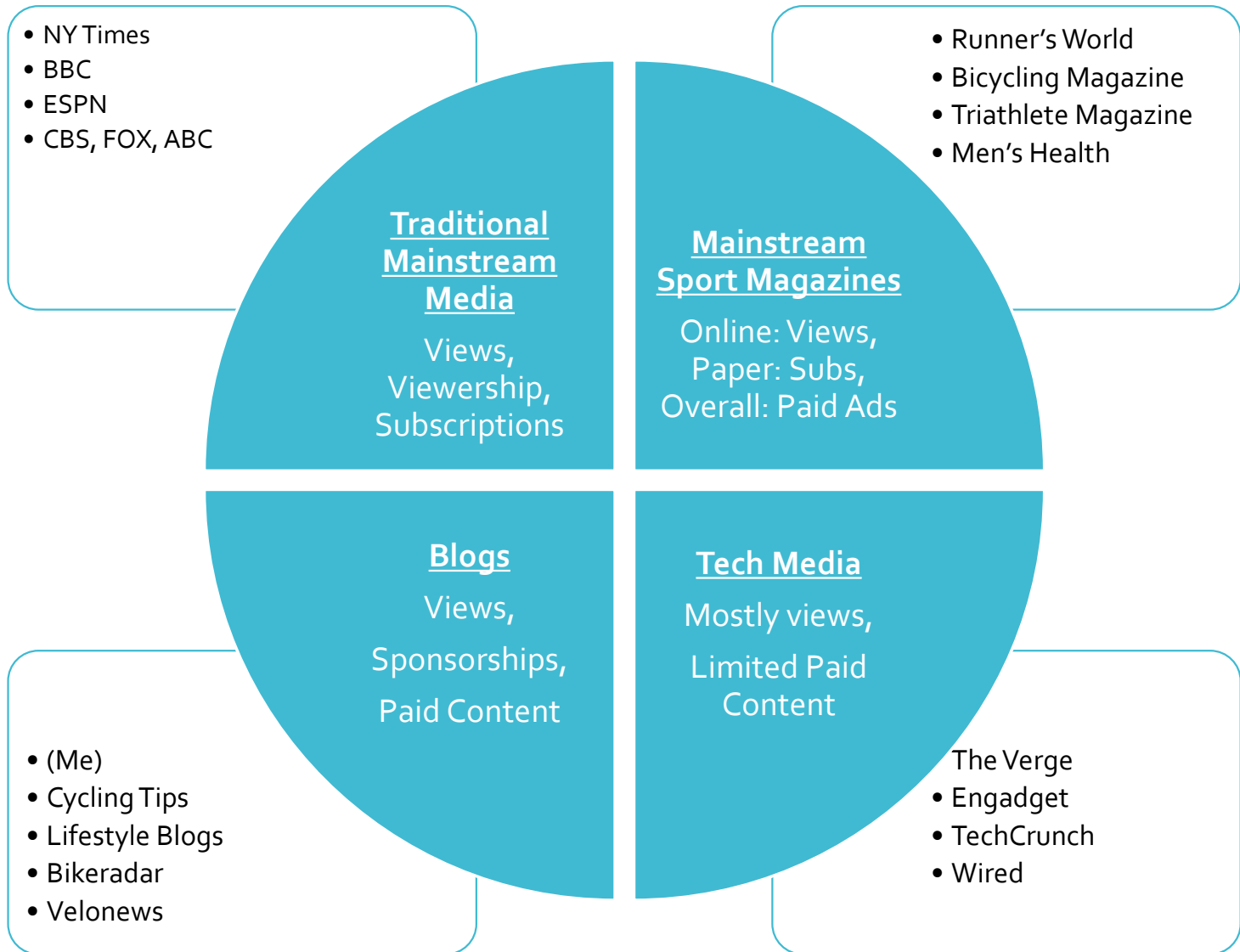
Blogs

- (Me)
- Cycling Tips, Bikeradar, Velonews
- Lifestyle Blogs

Non-Written Social Media

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Other mediums

Understand what drives each tier



Lifestyle Blogs and Related

- Used to be called 'Mommy Blogs', but it's far bigger and more wide reaching
- It's all about sponsored content
 - Sponsored posts
 - Pre-written posts
 - YouTube videos
 - Instagram placement
- Ad impressions alone are not enough for this audience
- Hashtags are the giveaway
- Paid trips are common
- ROI is usually far better than a Pro Athlete

Athlete Sponsorships

- Many reasons to sponsor an athlete
- Pro or Age Group?
- Sponsored or Ambassador?
- For product validation?
- For marketing?
- Or for trying to get the word out?
- For most companies, it's a poor ROI to sponsor a professional athlete...unless they are hyper-engaged or constantly on the podium.

Sport Technology Media

- It's a small world, really only 10-20 major outlets in total for this niche
- Product demo's are the way to our hearts
- Three ways in-person launches occur:
 - Coming to me: Company visits media outlet's offices
 - Me going to company HQ
 - Me going to offsite event
- Typical cadence of a sport tech launch:
 - Presentation (PowerPoint) of what's being announced
 - The actual ride/run/etc...
 - Downloading/analyzing data, post-activity brief
 - Ideal timeframe: 1-2 days

The Three (+1/2) Categories of Well Executed Launches

- What's the purpose of a product launch?
 - Increase awareness of a product
 - Leave no stone unturned in information
 - Drive consumers to make a purchasing decision
 - Execute on that decision (buy the thing)
 - (Ideally) Ship them that product shortly thereafter
- Good product launches make it easy for a consumer to check off all of the boxes above

In The Spirit Of
Learning...

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MISTAKES

IT COULD BE THAT THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE IS
ONLY TO SERVE AS A WARNING TO OTHERS.

Good: Wahoo ELEMNT

- **What:** GPS Bike Computer
- **When:** Interbike 2015
- First saw the product over a year ago, provided some initial feedback
- Met at Eurobike for a couple of rides with product
- Met again at Interbike to pick up beta unit & get final shots
- Had an launch exclusive (though, actually not important to me)
- Astounding follow-through & response on reader comments
 - ^Might be the most important thing

Good: PowerTap P1

- **What:** Power Meter Pedals
- **When:** February 2015
- First saw the product over a year ago, provided some initial feedback
- Had private event (perhaps 10-15 folks) attached to tri expo in Germany
 - Had embargo date attached to it
 - Another event in US prior to embargo date
- Held two separate first ride 'camps' for journalists to ride the unit
- Then shipped me unit ahead of retail availability to have review ready about a month after they started shipping (final production HW/SW)

Middle (Roughly): Garmin Edge 520

- **What:** GPS Bike Computer
- **When:** Early July 2015
- Knew about unit through the grapevine months in advance
- Got PR materials about 36 hours prior to launch
- Got test unit 24 hours prior to launch, got few brief rides with unit
- Did have opportunity to take as many pictures as I could within 24 hours – establish a ‘First look’ or ‘Hands-on’ post (not a review)
- Received production unit shortly after first units started shipping to consumers

Middle: TomTom Spark

- **What:** GPS Running Watch
- **When:** Launched at IFA on Sept 3rd, 2015
- No prior notice to (any) media, other than PR copy at time of launch
- You'll have seen no hands-on media time, only time at booth at IFA
- This past week they held (all expense paid) event for journalists/Instagrammers/etc in Ibiza
- ...but also had a private meeting for me at their London Fitness HQ
- Poor launch, but OK recovery

Not Ideal Launches: Suunto Traverse

- **What:** GPS Hiking Watch
- **When:** Sorta this summer, kinda?
- Seen late July on show floor at Spanish expo
- Then, officially launched at OR early August...but still no press release
- Website still wasn't updated to show unit (until today)
- Today, almost three months later you still can't pre-order it yet (Oct 15th)
- Nor is there really any 3rd party media information
- Nor any real media attention
- Now, the device isn't spectacular, but I still would have covered it.

The Hail Mary: 4iiii Precision Power

- **What:** Cycling Power Meter
- **When:** Briefed on unit at Eurobike two weeks prior, but not really shown product
- Wrote up 3/4ths of post on unit prior to launch:
 - Intro: Done
 - Functionality overview: Done
 - Pricing & Tech specs: Done
 - Installation: (Blank)
 - Test Ride & Accuracy Section: (Blank)
 - Conclusion: (Blank)
- Meet at 10PM night before in hotel room to do installation
- Then at 6AM at parking lot near Lake Mead, basically a drug deal with minivans
- One ride and hoped it worked. Everything would depend on that.
- Sometimes this doesn't work though: See Brim Brothers Power Meter

Understanding Sport Trade Shows (for me)

- Trade shows for me are for catch-up. If I'm surprised at a trade show, you've failed.
- If you want depth or detail, I can't write that at a trade show that same week. My goal there is survival.
- If you go to CES or Interbike or Eurobike, all of the media is there days ahead doing pre-show events. The shift is that now the announcement time is your embargo time, not the dinner bell.
- Many companies hold events the weekend prior (never after)
- Trade shows are for getting ancillary media interested in your product, not your Top 5 to Top 10 publications.

What are your target media platforms?

- Who is your audience?
- How do you reach that audience?
 - Mainstream media?
 - Sport-specific media
 - Lifestyle/Social platforms
- Is the NY Times or Men's Health realistic?
- And even if it is - does it convert for your product?
- Remember: You are not Apple.
- I repeat: You are not Apple. There is only one Apple (until there isn't)

Launch Day Checklist

- Is your website live at *exactly* the embargo release time?
- Can someone actually click to purchase your product?
- Have you provided PR materials/specs/details in advance?
 - Draft materials are usually fine for me
- Are major retailers (if applicable) ready with applicable SKU's?
 - Leaks are far more rare than you might think
 - You want the widest possible distribution
- What's your global distribution plan?
- If not available immediately, what is your specific plan?
 - "We will release details at a future date" is not a plan, it's an excuse.

Kickstarter Projects

- Continuing to be the place for free PR...and substandard & late products
- Be very careful if you're an existing company using Kickstarter
- You'll probably deliver, usually a year late, and usually with half the features
- The Kickstarter Sweet Spot: 3-4 months out
- You're essentially ready for manufacturing, just need funding to go to production
- I simply won't post a Kickstarter project unless I've had it in hand. Period.

A Few Final Thoughts

- 5 Most Important Things To Me:
 - Access to the product (I don't do stock/PR photos)
 - Time to actually use the product
 - Product actually does what it says its supposed to do
 - Having a post at the exact second of product launch
 - Fast answers to clarifying questions
- Your launch plans will be the legacy of your product. Seriously.
 - The vast majority of articles/posts/etc people find for *years* will be what was written on launch day, not after.
 - SEO helps to solidify this truth

Q&A

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