

# 3 Tips to Launch Your Startup Successfully

by Elliot Tomaeno, Founder of ASTRSK; posted 5/17/16 to *UpStart Business Journal*

“Launch” is kind of a dramatic and powerful word. After all, outside of a business context, it’s often reserved for spaceships and rockets. Entrepreneurs aren’t astronauts, but both similarly prepare to ensure their launches go smoothly.

When it comes to readying startups for this big launch date, consider me “mission control.” I’ve worked with more than 200 companies preparing for takeoff, helping founders build their brands’ egos, identify their brands’ languages, and then visually communicate those brands in a way that sends them into the stratosphere.

A few years ago, my company was approached by a group of relatively unknown Icelandic app developers preparing to launch QuizUp, their new trivia game. We worked alongside them to plan a huge launch party and invited as many journalists as possible to demo the app. After an informative evening of food, drinks, and fun, articles sprouted up across the internet, and the rest was history. Today, the game is a huge success, and it’s about to become a television show.

## Prepare for Liftoff

A strong launch will build key early momentum for your brand. Though only a select group will actually witness the event, these early adopters are vital because they will relay their experiences to their friends, colleagues, and, in the case of journalists, the world.

A subpar launch, however, will create inertia. Whether because your product isn’t ready or your event is boring, a failed launch will sap your brand’s credibility and leave in attendees’ mouths a bad taste that no amount of Orbit gum could cure. But you can host a launch that propels your startup to stardom using these three tips:

**Turn attendees into advocates.** If your launch makes the right impression, attendees will become your first brand advocates who can independently grow your community. Don’t underestimate the role of early inspiration: Start off weeks in advance by sending a beautiful invitation that paints your event as both exquisite and exclusive. Then, build up anticipation through social media as the big day draws near.

At the event, make your brand shine bright by offering special sneak peaks, promos, meet and greets, and discounts. But on top of that, I cannot stress enough the importance of providing plenty of delicious food and drinks. I tell all my clients that their budgets are better spent on food than over-the-top decor or celebrity guests.

**Cater to the journalists.** As I mentioned earlier, journalists have the power to tell the world about your new venture, so it's essential to make sure they leave your launch with all the information they need. But before that's even possible, you've got to make it easy for them to attend. Don't host your launch party at 3 a.m. on a remote island, hours from civilization. In New York City, for example, media outlets tend to be located in one general area, and I know that if the event is both nearby and happening at a reasonable hour, they're much more likely to attend.

Demo your product, give a quick speech, and make yourself and your team available for questions throughout the night. Successful dialogue with journalists will lead to successful launch coverage. Also, be sure both you and your venue are as photogenic as possible. The pictures and videos taken at your launch party will float through cyberspace forever.

**Remember to breathe.** There's no avoiding how stressful preparing to launch a startup can be. Your plate will constantly be full, and most of your to-do list will have to do with physically preparing your brand: making sure the product is tested and ready, working out shipping logistics, devising your social media strategy, finalizing the hors d'oeuvres menu, and so much more.

Amid this chaos, don't forget to prepare yourself on an emotional level. A stressed-out and sleep-deprived entrepreneur won't do his startup any favors. So whether that means going on a long walk or, as I like to do, heading out of town for a brief recharge, be sure to find some "me" time before the launch to unwind and simply breathe. There's plenty of oxygen on Earth; use it.

Your launch is your startup's big bang. It's not quite a do-or-die moment, but it's darn close to one. So do some deep thinking to determine which visual cues you want to portray, and then devote plenty of time and energy toward building an event that sends your brand name echoing through the cosmos.

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***Elliot Tomaeno is the founder of ASTRSK , a PR agency based in New York City. Elliot was listed as one of Business Insider's "50 Best Public Relations People in the Tech Industry" and was named one of the "100 Most Influential Tech Agency PR Executives in the World." Follow him on Twitter and LinkedIn .***