

*diffusetap*  
Virtual Event Series

# PR for Portfolio Companies



Guest Speaker:

**Tomer Dicturel**

Co-founder and CEO  
Epic AI

Hosts:



**Kenny Estes**  
CEO and Founder  
Diffuse



**Ayla Kremb**  
Chief of Staff  
Diffuse



## DiffuseTap: PR for Portfolio Companies

This week on DiffuseTap, we had the pleasure of featuring as guest speaker our very own advisor, **Tomer Dicturel**, also Co-founder and CEO of startup incubator Epic AI. During the session, our **CEO Kenny Estes** and **Chief of Staff Ayla Kremb** talked to Tomer about the importance of PR for a company of any size, and the different ways to generate good PR without breaking the bank.

Want to make friends from the Diffuse Fund Ecosystem? Email [contact@diffusefunds.com](mailto:contact@diffusefunds.com).

### DiffuseTap

This networking session is part of our weekly virtual events series. Networking (you'll bump into at least a dozen high caliber fund managers) meets purposeful (you'll tap into brand-new sources of ideas) ... straight from your armchair like a boss.

### Meet the Speaker



Tomer Dicturel is the Co-founder and CEO of Epic.AI, a company that focuses on building Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain technologies such as Crane.ai and Slide. Tomer has over ten years of experience working in multiple tech industries, holds a master's degree in business administration/management and is currently studying to acquire a doctorate in business administration.

LinkedIn: @tomerdicturel

### About Diffuse®

We are an alternative fund platform offering differentiated investment products. From digital assets to VC funds and beyond, we identify green field investment opportunities we feel will have market beating returns and turn them into professionally managed funds. For more information, visit [www.diffusefunds.com](http://www.diffusefunds.com).



**KENNY ESTES:** Tomer, thanks for being here. Why don't you do a little introduction for everybody?

**TOMER DICTUREL:** Sure. Hey, everyone. To give you a bit of a background, I've launched many, many companies. Actually, 12 of them. I was fortunate enough to sell two of them, a couple of them are running, and I also had the pleasure of bankrupting a few. But that's just part of the game. I sold the latest one two months ago, so I'm looking now into a whole bunch of things.

Some of them involve fundraising for startups. I've helped about 4,000 startups, and fundraised money in the last two years, which involves a lot of PR work with dozens and dozens of family offices and VCs and helping their portfolio companies. I have lots of cool war stories, some of them wins, some of them losses.

It's great that Kenny asked me to come and talk, it's a pleasure. Happy to share my experience, both on the fundraising and on the PR for portfolio companies and startups. If anybody needs any help building connections, friends of Diffuse are friends of mine. I'll share my contact information, so feel free. Always happy to help.

**KENNY:** That's great. And Tomer, it's great to have you on. Tomer is an advisor of Diffuse, by the way, who's helping us in our marketing and community-building efforts. So, the way we do the fireside chat is me and my partner in crime, Ayla Kremb, are going to tag team a few questions. But you, as a member of the audience, if you have something that you want to discuss, chuck it in the chat and we will pick it up and ask our speaker. Ayla, do you want to kick it off?

**AYLA KREMB:** Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a lot of back and forth between what really is marketing and what is PR. It would be great if maybe we start with a definition of what covers PR, and what's actually included in that one, including some of the techniques that most startups use at the moment.

**TOMER:** Cool. So, many people confuse marketing and PR. Mainly, it's because when you're a small startup, the same person does both tasks. But actually, they're very different from each other. Marketing is hyperactive on generating sales and includes selling your product.

PR, which is public relations, not press release (if you google PR, you'll get confused) focuses on building the reputation of your company and building the reputation of your product as well. But also, it's more about building the image of your company and influencing what people might think of you as a CEO, as a company, or your products down the road.

So, they're two different things. Many of the people who practice marketing also practice public relations, but the activities are very different and are in two different areas. As far as the second part of the question of what people use PR for, we can break it into four different categories.



The most popular things people use PR for, and also what they think of it, is for things like, we want to get on the front of the New York Times and TechCrunch. But really, it's more of driving traffic to their site and getting a lot of traffic to the website and the product. It is the most difficult one to do, that the least amount of people is successful with.

The easiest and most popular thing to use PR for is SEO. An amazing SEO technique is you release a little press release appearing on a couple of hundred websites for a \$200 blast. It gets amazing results as to where your website ranks on Google, and that helps you down the road.

Another thing I do with a lot of companies that we work with is we use PR for fundraising. PR is a great indicator of momentum. And as you know, most investors, when they look at new companies, momentum is probably the most important thing, alongside who's on the team and what have they done in the past. Momentum is amazing, and PR indicates momentum like nothing else.

**KENNY: Interesting. PR indicates momentum like nothing else, I like that. I'll have to steal that one from you.**

**TOMER:** I should have trademarked it.

**KENNY: [Laughs] Alright. So, you just sold a company in the PR space. What have you seen developing in the last year or so in that space? You already touched on SEO, but that's not new. What are the kinds of cool, hip terms that people are throwing around these days?**

**TOMER:** In the past, PR was very slow. You needed to know journalists, have relationships, make a pitch book, try to hunt for places to get on. Today, technology has replaced that. It's one of those things, like searching for investors, which you can pretty much do with emails, cold outreach, and using a good database to send emails. And if you send 1,000 emails, you'll get 10 phone calls with journalists.

Journalists are looking for good things to write about just like everyone else, and you're reaching out to them. They're actually more susceptible to open emails and to get on the phone with you, like investors or anyone else. If you put a good title on your email and you send it to a thousand investors, you're guaranteed to have a good amount of phone calls. So, emails are the quickest, they work 24/7, you just have to blast it. And don't be afraid of rejection. That's the one thing with blasting emails, there's lots of rejection.



**AYLA:** I think that's probably true for everybody, especially everybody who's a startup. So, the next question that we have is, when does the company really need to invest in PR? For example, most of them don't have this set up. And one of the tools to run, for example, is a campaign. But it might not make sense for a startup to hire an agency. Should they try to do it themselves only with tools that are available? Should they hire an intern and really force them to cold email? What's your suggestion there?

**TOMER:** I think it's never too early to start with PR. There are different levels of PR, for different reasons. Every CEO can start with a PR for the sake of SEO. And as soon as you have a website, you probably want to do it because it takes a long time for SEO to rank up and get you to the first results. But all it takes is \$200. You don't need to know anything else. Two-hundred dollars and then spend an hour writing something interesting.

You can start with that as a first round. Before you start thinking about fundraising, 30 days before, it's a great idea to start working on the momentum. And it's also something you can do alone. I had the pleasure of hiring everything from a large agency to a small agency, from paying \$25,000 a month to a much smaller amount. And I never had luck with the large agencies. To me, throwing \$25,000 a month is a bit too much.

If you are McDonald's or a large fortune 500 company, media is keen to hear your story and publish it. So, it might be acceptable to hire large agencies and pay large amounts like 20, 50, or \$100,000 a month, even if it will not do anything to you. But I don't think startups should go with larger agencies, or even smaller agencies to further effect. I think if you have a little money, you can hire someone in-house.

The best result I've ever had is I hired a young PR and marketing lady for \$5,000 a month. She worked 24/7 on reaching journalists, and she got us on the front page of Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and Business News. And that generated huge momentum. That got us a call from Google, and they were saying "hey, would you like to present in our building in New York City?" No one has done it before.

And as soon as that happened, we had almost 400 family offices wanting to come and listen to what we have to say because we're in the Google building, and we're in front of the New York Times. And that all came from an in-house 24-year-old young lady sending email to journalists and doing an amazing job there.

So, if you have the resources to pay \$5,000 a month, it's great. If not, if you allocate \$200 or \$400 a month into press releases, you can do it yourself. There's lots of great websites to help you with it. That was a long answer.

**KENNY:** It is a long answer, and it's pretty good. How did you find this 24-year-old PR officer? If somebody wants to do this approach like you did there, where would you point someone to do it on a budget and get somebody who's really hungry to get that type of thing off the ground?

**TOMER:** Yeah. So, I did some research. It was six years ago, I think, when I launched the first consumer product. And I went down the rabbit hole of what you need to do to launch a consumer product. And I came up with a Google Doc that had 50 to-do items. And one says find a PR person.



I went on Angellist, I posted a very simple, zero budget Angellist internship, and I got a hundred people asking for the position. And there was one that came out, she worked three years at NBC as an intern, and she says "oh, I know how to do that." And she said, "if I don't get you good results, I'll refund you the \$5,000 for the first month." I said "you know what? I can't lose over there." So, we did it.

She had a database similar to the database we have now that she paid a few thousand dollars for, and she looked for and researched journalists, wrote a personal email to each one of them. At the time, the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) was on, so we used CES to launch a software tool, which is not something that's happened before.

But the fact that all those journalists were at CES, and they heard about our product, and they saw a couple of people in the event talking about us immediately, we got Wall Street Journal and New York Times. We said, "oh, can we get an exclusive?" and they said "sure." We're three months old, and we were a live-streaming company before live-streaming was big. And then once you have one big place, everyone jumps on. So, the young journalists trick worked very, very well for us.

**AYLA:** That's amazing. Now, this kind of parlays nicely into another question that just popped up in the chat. You were talking about startup PR just now, but when it comes to VCs, what kind of PR works for them? Is it a completely different approach and different audience? Or can you use the same strategies for fund as well, as much as you can for a startup?

**TOMER:** You can use a similar approach for VCs. Last year, 2020, I worked with the seven VC funds and helped them raise money from institutional investors. What we've learned is that when you reach out to investors, and you include a link for a press release in the email, they get the greatest number of clicks. More than your deck, or anything else.

So, we worked with them on getting something published so they can include it in the press release. And again, just from pure numbers, if funds or startups have a press release or link to any sort of a publication that people would recognize on the outreach for fundraising, we get five times more meetings with investors. That indicates that you've been vetted by major sources.

It's always better to say, "oh, we have huge lead investors and names that everybody recognizes." But what we found is that if you don't have that, the next best thing is to have the New York Times link, or any other major publication TechCrunch in your outreach, and you'll get much more clicks and requests for a phone call.



**KENNY: That's really, really fascinating. Going one level down, if you work with any VCs, do seed stage venture capitalists push hard to get their companies to do PR as well?**

**TOMER:** Every time that I have a discussion with a VC, we come to the point where we ask if there is someone in the startup that does marketing and are they capable of doing PR. Doing a press release for \$200 is great in any case, but if there is a fundraising, especially for seed round VCs, they want to help those companies get to the A round as fast as possible. In that case, there's more money and more capabilities required.

And those press releases in major publications really help with the A round. It doesn't require a lot of money. You just need someone who has done it before, or someone that knows how to do it, and then you should pay attention to it. I'm working with a VC that called me a few weeks ago. They have about 50 companies, and they just asked if we can direct them to someone who can help them with all the portfolio companies. So, it's never too early to start, and it doesn't take much money. People think it's very expensive, but that's not true. PR can be very, very inexpensive.

**KENNY: That begs the question, if you want to do it yourself, do a press release and try to get it picked up by major news agencies or media outlets, what should it be about? I'm assuming that just doing a pitch of your product isn't going anywhere? What do you find has the highest likelihood of going viral, or getting a lot of hits or whatever the case may be if people try to do it themselves?**

**TOMER:** Yeah, so it shouldn't be about the product because journalists don't care about your product. They care about some sort of a story. We just did one for a small VC, and the story was ex-Googleers launching a new fund. Those were two kids that were interned at Google. But since they were both at Google, the press loved it. I think ex-Googleers actually made it to the title, and the story was about how a \$50 million fund with a unique approach was launching.

The journalist's goal is to get as much exposure and views to their story as well, so you need to give them something interesting to write about: "a new company to take on Facebook," maybe. That's something that works.

**AYLA: One question I have is, what about bad rep? Or anything that somebody in the company might have, when googled? Would you suggest holding certain events within portfolio companies, when something needs to be addressed publicly somehow? What's your thinking around that?**

**TOMER:** Definitely. There's a whole subject of brand reputation that we didn't even mention. But once a company, portfolio company, or fund has a tiny bit more money, it's definitely something that needs to be monitored. It goes 24/7 today with social media and stories. The faster you are aware of something, the faster you can respond to it. If there are stories you want to hide out of the first page in Google, a press release is a great solution.



When you push something, and you get taken by 100 different publications, most likely their DA is the one who published it. That's where social media is very tricky. Social media is very high DA, and their stories tend to jump to the first page. But otherwise, if it's something that is not on social media, you can definitely find it in press releases. So, you want to bury the bad information in as much stories as possible. When you release the bad information, try to get it to page five, because nobody reads more than page five.

**AYLA:** The goal is not to eliminate. The goal is just getting it to page five.

**TOMER:** You can try to eliminate, but good luck with it. You're going down the wrong path. It's very, very hard. On the other hand, you can push it to page five. As I said, if it's over page five, nobody cares about it.



Thank you for downloading this DiffuseTap event transcript.

[Sign up for upcoming sessions](#) and check out [past features and event transcripts](#).



**Dennis Chookaszian**  
Corporate Director, CME Group

**DiffuseTap: Institutional Grade Governance**

Sharing his decades-long expertise on corporate governance, Dennis discussed how to avoid a co-partnership going sour, the problem with overly idealistic CEOs, and the importance of keeping your board in check. [Read on](#)



**Susan Brazer**  
CEO & Founder, LionShare Media

**DiffuseTap: Media Metaverse 2022**

Susan talked about the 2020 digital media landscape; the evolution of media distribution; how converging, emerging technology points to the metaverse; and the prospect of having an open, decentralized, and free Web 3.0 marketplace. [Read on](#)



**Raj Mukherjee J.D.**  
VP/Global Head of Tax, Binance.US

**DiffuseTap: Crypto Taxes Decoded with Binance.US**

Raj explained the complexities of the US crypto tax landscape, how he built a dynamic tax information system for Coinbase and Binance from scratch, and how investors can profit from crypto without getting caught in a taxation mess. [Read on](#)

**JOIN US**