

The Evolution of PR | Tami Nealy | Power Lounge S2E23

Amy Vaughan: 0:08

Welcome to our weekly Power Lounge, your place to hear authentic conversations from those who have power to share. My name is Amy Vaughn and I am the owner and Chief Empowerment Officer of Together Digital, a diverse and collaborative community of women who work in digital and choose to share their knowledge, power and connections. Join the movement at www.togetherindigital.com. Let's get started. In today's episode, we'll be discussing the evolution of PR beyond the press release with Tammy Neely, who has been working in corporate communications since 1999. She has worked with pro sports teams and Fortune 500 companies. While leading a comms team at Livestock, she served as a spokesperson, launched a partnership with the FBI and helped lead the company to IPO. Following that, she pivoted to supporting educational technology organizations before spending five years as the executive with an influencing marketing agency. She is also an adjunct professor at the Grand Canyon University. Tammy, thanks for being here with us today and roll with the punches.

Tami Nealy: 1:39

Oh my gosh, I'm so thrilled to be here and I want to start by thanking Meredith Dennis for introducing us. I met Meredith in May at an event here in Phoenix and we quickly connected and we went to lunch a few weeks later and she's like you have to meet anyone and learn all about together digital. So I'm so happy for the conversation we've had, amy, and to be here with you in this room today is really exciting.

Amy Vaughan: 2:02

Same, absolutely, and this is the power and the beauty of networking. Even while we're doing it kind of in person and virtually, it's like, look at the great outcome. We're going to have a fantastic conversation and a podcast to boot after today's conversation because, again, the delightful Meredith introducing us both. So I love it. Thank you, tammy. Your journey, as it goes within PR, spans various sectors, from sports to technology. How has this diverse background enriched your perspective on PR and its potential for impact?

Tami Nealy: 2:36

Well, I love being able to say it. I love being able to explain the story of, like how you go from pro sports to life lock, to FinTech, to influencer marketing. Now I'm working for the International Sports Science and Association, so it's a long, curvy road of my career, but

the through line through it all is that I love story finding and storytelling, and so when people think about public relations, you know that's a pretty big umbrella and media relations includes a lot of different things, but for me, that through line is that story finding and storytelling. And so whether it's with a WNBA team I've got my WNBA ball on the shelf back here Whether it's with the organization that I'm with now where we are helping to educate individuals in the fitness and wellness space and certify them, it's always about finding that story for me. So I love finding that story and then finding a unique way. Like there's a different audience for every story. Who can we share that story with? So that's that's kind of the through line for me.

Amy Vaughan: 3:43

I love it. Yeah, there's, as long as there's a good story, I mean. And story can be found in anywhere, in any vertical or any sector. So I love. I love that. That's your passion and that's what's kept you going through each one. How have you seen the role of PR evolve over the years and what major shifts have you observed over the last few decades?

Tami Nealy: 4:04

Well, taking a step back from PR, I'm looking at like corporate communications, at maybe the bigger umbrella, and underneath corporate communications there's different protocols, there's public relations, there's crisis communication. There's a whole bunch of different things that fall under that. But under PR specifically, you know, when I started, you know I graduated college in 1999 and there wasn't social media, and now it's 2023. So I've been around the block a few times. You know social media exists now as an element under public relations. Community relations exists, I think, under public relations, and then there's events and then there's reputation management. You know, I guess, both fortunately and unfortunately, I've had to do a lot of things in my career that include reputation management and crisis bonds and things of that nature. But I think that evolution, the biggest evolution from when I started to where I am today, is it used to be about? Oh, let's just take this pressure leads, push it out, try to get some coverage, lean into the relationships we have with the media and we're going to get coverage in newspaper, radio and TV.

Amy Vaughan: 5:15

Yeah.

Tami Nealy: 5:16

Both three places right Now. Today, the number of different channels and vehicles that you can use to deliver your message in your audience is on different channels. So how

do you find to that message, to that channel where your audience is in a meaningful way, where they can get excited about it and hopefully take some action for you too?

Amy Vaughan: 5:39

Exactly Well, because of, I think you know having that, you know perspective and kind of coming into PR at a time when the press release was the cornerstone of PR, you know being able to see the bigger picture by kind of coming into the industry at a time when it became like it evolved so quickly and it changed so quickly. All those touch points started to change. I feel very much the same from a digital standpoint. I wasn't far behind you, graduation class wise and coming into advertising and learning really quickly that digital was really kind of the future of marketing and advertising. I really feel like it had a similar impact on PR. What are some other things that have kind of made you see beyond that bigger picture, beyond the press release, outside of maybe like the digital evolution?

Tami Nealy: 6:32

Yeah, so it's also about relationship building. So, for example, I met Meredith and through Meredith I've met you, and now that I'm here, you know everyone, that's, you know, joining us live today or listening to the podcast in the future.

Tami Nealy: 6:47

Connect with me, Like I am all about relationship building. I'm in week one of my current role and you know drinking from a fire hose, meeting all the people internally with the company, but also understanding that media relations is a big focus of what I want to accomplish in this role, and so this week I've reached out to editors of publications, of industry publications, saying hi, my name is Tammy, I'm new to this role. I'd love to set up a time to meet one on one.

Tami Nealy: 7:16

I can learn a few things about you what you're working on, what your deadlines are, the approach that you like to be. You know how you like to be communicated with. And then how can I be an asset to you? And I said I promise this conversation is not a pitch, because building this relationship and saying, let's say, amy, you're the editor of a fitness magazine and I really want to know how I can be an asset to you, because if you reach out to me, you say, hey, do you know somebody who's a company with us? Oh yeah, let me tell you. Talk to this person or talk to that person building this relationship. And then, when I do have an ass down the road of like, hey, amy, we've got this new product launch. Is it something that you think might be a fit for your audience?

Tami Nealy: 7:57

You're like oh yeah, I'm happy to help you. That makes sense. You've helped me with all these other things before, and so yesterday I sent those emails out and I have two meetings already scheduled with editors of like oh my gosh, I love this approach, and so it isn't like, can you help me? It's not a plea for coverage, but it's building a relationship. What are you working on? How can I be helpful to you? Look, I've worked in pro sports, I've worked in education technology, I've worked in in-matter marketing. I've got some pretty wide network of people so I can help connect you with somebody. That makes your life easier. It's an investment in the relationship that I want to build with you.

Amy Vaughan: 8:34

I love it and I think that probably go a long way in easing a lot of our anxieties about relationship building or the more dirty word, networking is when you kind of preemptively kind of begin to establish that connection and that trust and that respect by being curious and asking how you can help before you come asking for help, before you even have an ask. I think that's really smart and that makes a lot of sense. I also love that you said this is not a pitch. I want to kind of ask an additional question around that. I think that that's great and that's really clear. I think that is a tricky kind of space as you're kind of beginning to either network within or work within the PR space or if you're trying to produce PR for your business. Do you think that's an important thing to do is to kind of be clear about what your intentions are when you are pitching and when you aren't pitching, because it does feel like you're always pitching, you know.

Tami Nealy: 9:24

I think it's so helpful. I put myself in the shoes of the recipient If someone reaches out to me and says which somebody did already. This week they found LinkedIn and I got a new job and I figured out like the email naming convention. Oh, I'd love to talk to you about our media monitoring database. When can you have a call? All that it is. It's like we want to sell to you, we want to sell to you and I said how about we connect later in the month and I tell you what my goals are and what I'm trying to achieve and see if that's something that you can help me with. But you know, I'm day three on the job.

Tami Nealy: 9:58

I'm not like signed with a new vendor. You know what I mean. I need to figure out what's happening. So I do think, having that approach and being clear of what you're hoping to accomplish, and then, they can say yes or no.

Tami Nealy: 10:08

If it is a sales pitch, then it is a sales pitch and they're like I'm too busy to talk to this person or send it to this, fill out this form. But being upfront and then truly holding yourself to what you committed, the conversation, and don't bait and switch, you know, and then go into a pitch on the call because now they've said, ok, she's not a trustworthy person, she's not who she is, I don't want to go forward having conversations with her.

Tami Nealy: 10:31

Yeah, I want to make sure it's the best interest of their time and I want to establish and build trust and credibility.

Amy Vaughan: 10:39

I absolutely agree. That's wonderful advice, Tammy, thank you. Yeah, you worked in both pro sports and Fortune 500 companies. Could you share some of your standout experiences where PR strategies have helped to play a pivotal role in shaping the company's narrative? We talked a little bit about story, so let's kind of revisit that.

Tami Nealy: 10:59

Yes, so I worked for Lifelock, the identity theft protection company. Very, very early stages. I was employee number 30. And we were. It was right after the CEO had launched the campaign where he was giving his first security number out in every ad interview. Everywhere he went, he said I'm Todd Davis. My first scary number is that.

Amy Vaughan: 11:22

The film awards. It was everywhere Wow.

Tami Nealy: 11:27

We went through a period of time where people tried to use his first number and they did. Well, the point of Lifelock was if someone does use your number, like it's out there with every doctor's office, dentist's office you know, wherever you've been.

Tami Nealy: 11:39

If someone does try to use it, lifelock's there to help you. There was some kind of confusion in the media and in the market of like, well, does it work? Because they used his account and his social and trying to open new accounts and we're like, yes, but we're fixing it back again. And so we also understood. There was a lot of confusion early in those days, back in 2007, about what is identity theft, how does it work. And it wasn't just with consumers, it was with law enforcement too. They didn't understand when members of the community were calling in to file a police report, what were they supposed to do? So we said what if we went out and found some law enforcement who

were very active and understood that the front lines of this? And what if we hired them? I'm using your quotes for podcast listeners.

Amy Vaughan: 12:29

What if?

Tami Nealy: 12:29

we engaged them to help us go around and teach other law enforcement about it. So we were, we were, we were the people behind it. We weren't going out and saying tell them a minute or tell them that, absolutely not, we weren't the experts.

Tami Nealy: 12:43

We were just saying, hey, we're here as a solution to help protect people. But so we're like, how do we do this? So I dug in and learned that there was a group called FBI lead up it's the FBI's law enforcement executive development association and so reached out to them. They did a lot of training for their education, for law enforcement around the country. So, whether it's local police departments, sheriff's offices and we said, who do you know that's on the leading edge working identity cases? Who's educated about it? They're invested in it. And they quickly identified three individuals. And they we said what, if you know? We made a donation, a we sponsored FBI lead up and built this program together. Well, we can go around the country and these individuals could lead the instruction in front of other Police officers and department members. And so we did that. And what I would want I'm most proud of is in my seven years there, I think we started this program 2008. And we very quickly hit all 50 states, I think within two years. The program was so well received.

Tami Nealy: 14:03

Law enforcement were like we don't know what we don't know, so who can tell us about it? So you know maybe it was me, that or someone else on my team that would go to each event with these law enforcement instructors teaching a class of 100 to 200. What we were able to do to was then go out in that community and meet with their media and talk about what how identity theft was impacting their specific market. So maybe we were in my hometown of Grand Rapids, michigan. Well, the federal trade commission was collecting data on identity theft reports, so I could go into the Grand Rapids Michigan market and talk about how identity theft was impacting their market. I could localize and regionalize that story and say and we're here today, in partnership with FDI leaders, to educate the Grand Rapids Police Department, the Kent County Sheriff's.

Amy Vaughan: 14:44

Office.

Tami Nealy: 14:46

And so what was this great thing of educating law enforcement and really creating more awareness and education throughout that policing branch of the world? Also, we're going to media opportunity, right, and then you know we were doing local radio. There were like hey, you know, if you're concerned about it, I thought you can sign up today and use this promo code. So now we were tracking how was that media performing? Because if I was doing W ABC radio, I would use W ABC 10 or 10% off.

Tami Nealy: 15:17

So now there's we're not just, we're not just going to be doing that, oh, we're doing all this. Now we can have, we can track it. How is that working? You know we gave all law enforcement free identity theft if they wanted, you know, free protection that they want to send up as a thank you for, you know, being on the front lines. And that was it was such a fun program that we had going. It was fun because I can tell that, you know, in every instance the law enforcement were like I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. But from there it built that credibility, that commitment, that that willingness to educate that we're not just this company who's out there saying by our product, by our product, you know, in turn, we're also educating those people that we're not just saying by our product, by our product, because in turn we're also educating those that are on the front line that are trying to protect you from this.

Tami Nealy: 16:10

And I know that was so helpful as the company went IPO. That was such a great story. That became part of our narrative as well. And you know, I will say and this is jumping a little bit ahead when we did go public, Tom Ridge was the first ever department director of Homeland Security and we invited him out to the floor of the New York Stock Exchange because we're talking about how I donate. That is a global issue, but we had a lot of people who were interested in the idea of the issue. But we had former director Ridge with us there to really, you know, to tie in the law enforcement angle into what we were doing moving forward. So I love how that narrative I love it.

Amy Vaughan: 17:03

Yeah, that's a fantastic example. Thank you for that, Tammy. I love that you you were able to find a way to solve a problem, create a story that built relationships and, like you said, credibility, authority and a way that probably puts you far and above your competition Again, because you're coming at the problem and you're creating that education and building that trust. And I don't think people often do think that PR, you

know, has that opportunity, but clearly you do and and you did it. That's fantastic. I love that example.

Tami Nealy: 17:33

And my favorite thing is that I believe that's still a partnership that's still happening at like.

Amy Vaughan: 17:41

It warms my heart to know that like.

Tami Nealy: 17:43

It's this legacy piece that I built. Like you know, my fingerprints are on that part of the company, forever company.

Amy Vaughan: 17:51

Absolutely, absolutely. That's what we're all going for. I love that. That's fantastic. So, when it comes to stockholders, you know, as we're kind of trying to keep up with the economy and the times, how does the evolving PR landscape impact a company's ability to communicate effectively with its stakeholders?

Tami Nealy: 18:11

That's a great question, because stakeholders can be employees. It can be shareholders, depending where you are in ownership model individual investors, board members, customers. I talked about, you know, early in my career when there was TV, radio and Prince. Yes, there's also email, but now with TikTok and Instagram and Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest and threads and you too, and leave them and I'm sure there's more that I'm missing now and you have your company's website and blogs. Now you just have so many more vehicles to which you can communicate.

Tami Nealy: 18:56

Now you don't wanna say, oh, what are we putting on Pinterest to communicate with our investment community? Understand where your stakeholders are consuming your information and then show up there for them. What I think is great about that is that not only do you have more opportunities to communicate, you can really demonstrate your transparency. Maybe they aren't on Pinterest or threads or U2. That's still something that can be in your tertiary plan of communication, Like okay, primary is email, secondary is a webinar, Tertiary, we're gonna go out on these platforms to reach the groups. So it really

demonstrates that we're committed to honest, open, transparent communication and we're gonna show up wherever you want to be.

Amy Vaughan: 19:51

Yeah, well, I can imagine to that consistency throughout multiple channels as well helps to kind of create that drumbeat that leads to then, with that consistency creates trust, and that's what you want is that those people who are investing in you or working for you trust you. So I do think those are some really good, great examples of how to not forget that you need to be consistent throughout all channels in which your stakeholders might be present. Yeah, absolutely All right. Let's talk about some fun things that we like to learn out about around here, like KPIs, key performance indicators, npr and, honestly, across the board, those are evolving with the numerous channels, as you mentioned, that we have to work through and with. Could you shed some light on how PR professionals are now measuring success in this so-called I'm using the air quotes now podcast listeners digital age?

Tami Nealy: 20:39

Yes, and it's absolutely evolved over my tenure, Because before it was like oh, PR media relations is a nice to have. We know we need it.

Tami Nealy: 20:51

And here's the measurement. There were six stories that ran this month and they had one million impressions and their reach was this Okay, but what does that mean? How many people converted? How many people came to the website? In the beginning there weren't these attribution models where you can say, okay, most often PR is top of funnel, right, it's getting you in, it's that awareness piece, but there wasn't the attribution methods in there, the points to say this is the first way that they came in the door and now that's really evolved so you can have different attribution measurements.

Tami Nealy: 21:34

I guess is what I'm saying there. And because it's top of funnel, it is important, but how do you keep that? Always on strategy? So there's always those messages going out there and I think, if it makes sense, like I mentioned with Lifelock, using promo codes, like that would be the easy way for us to measure. But I think now you can measure with different. Maybe you have a unique URL that you can use. How many people clicked on that link, use a UTM there? And how can you create that, not just a different link, but maybe a landing page. So how did that branded landing page? So now it's.

Tami Nealy: 22:23

I heard Tammy Neely on Amy Bond's podcast, and now I'm clicking on this link and it's a branded page where it has together digital on there. It has your face together, digital messaging. Okay, you may have seen Tammy on here. That here's the offer. That is a great way to track, I think.

Tami Nealy: 22:42

Now, and it is really about measuring the last several jobs that I've had. They're like okay, how do we measure success in your role? Like, what are the numbers we can put behind it? And that just wasn't a conversation that was happening in 1999 and 2005. So every organization needs to have an ROI for your position, for every position in the company, and from PR perspective, that's getting trickier. So, really understanding what are the different tools out there that we can use it's not really about how many. What are the impressions anymore of? Like okay, it was a New York time story and it was front page, let's say so, that's great. So many people are getting a physical paper. Now we need to know how many people are seeing it online, how many people have clicked on that link? Where can we get that data from? And so PR is really really more about data, more so today than ever before.

Amy Vaughan: 23:42

Yeah, absolutely. I could only imagine and can we just celebrate for hot minute the adoption of QR codes finally as well as a way to like, track engagement or get like people to certain unique links, instead of having to type in a long, complex URL. Having been in digital since basically the very beginning, before it was native within our phones, I remember back in the early 2000s when we thought QR codes were gonna be the answer to all of our things and it took another 10 years and a pandemic to get us to finally be like oh and then in phones to actually work it natively into our devices so we don't have to download an app to download a scan of QR code. But that ability all of a sudden now it just cracks me up. Everywhere I turn and there's QR codes and I know it's probably drives some people nuts, but as a digital native and nerd, it makes me truly happy because it's one more way to track some data based off of what you might read in print. It's kind of a more physical into the digital.

Tami Nealy: 24:38

I love how you talked about the pandemic helping with QR codes. Because I was definitely a late adopter of that. I was like I'll just Google it. I don't like I'll just, yeah, I'll just go to their website. I don't even scan the QR code, which was obviously gonna take me to a specific landing site in the first place but it was a late adopter and pandemic forced I guess Menus menus at restaurants.

Amy Vaughan: 24:59

They didn't want to put out paper menus. Now a lot of places they don't even go back. They've not even gone back to it because it's cheaper, it saves paper. You can make updates more recent and current, which I mean. I have a sister who's in the food industry. She's in the food and beverage and we know the cost of things are going up so their prices have been changing. So it's such an easier way for even them to work and more economical overall to have that. So it's funny now when you walk into a restaurant and there's just a QR code on the table. That's the new way of things. So yeah, it's kind of exciting to see, but I do credit a little bit of the pandemic for us kind of leaning into that technology.

Amy Vaughan: 25:36

Finally, co-hatch is a new kind of shared work, social and family space built on community. Members get access to workspace amenities like rock walls and sports simulators and more, to live a fully integrated life that balances work, family, well-being, community and giving back. Co-hatch has 31 locations open or under construction nationwide throughout Ohio, Indiana, Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. Visit www.cohatch.com for more information. All right, so you spoke earlier about your example with creating partnerships, like you did with the FBI, so pioneering those partnerships, and which also contributed to that successful IPO example that you gave. How does PR help to build credibility and investor confidence during critical times, for example, a pandemic or an economic downturn?

Tami Nealy: 26:47

PR is an investment in reputation, and by that I mean whether it's hosting a webinar, whether it's media relations, whether it's a conference, you're establishing who you are, your reputation right like you're showing up, and whether you're a company who is focused on sustainability or whatever this is, you can demonstrate who you are and your stakeholders take that in and process that. For example, I'm gonna go back to LifeLock again, because I was there early on and we went through all of these different things together. We went through some crisis communication issues there and the fact that we had this established relationship with the FBI, the fact that we were a best place to work, the fact that all of these different fantastic reputational pieces we were able to stand on when we found ourselves in a moment of crisis. It didn't hurt as badly as I think it could have, because we knew who we were and we had done the best job that we could of telling other people who we were and they believed that. So there was a bit of oh, this is just something they'll get through like. This is just a growing pain type of a moment that

we're able to go through. It didn't break us as an organization if there was any consumer trust that was lost.

Tami Nealy: 28:19

It was for a limited period of time and then they were like oh right, that's the company that does this, that's the company that does this. And one of the great things, one of the many great things that that company did, was that we empowered all employees. It was a do what you should, not what you can, type of culture. So if you were a call center employee and someone called in frantically like my identity's been stolen, dah, dah, dah dah, they were like, okay, let's get you signed up. And they're like but I don't have an active credit card because I called and closed everything down. I'm like all right, no problem, I'm gonna give you, I'm gonna give you six months free. We're gonna work through this with you. Let it in that.

Tami Nealy: 28:59

So, that person didn't have to say let me put you on hold while I call my manager and see if we can do this thing for you, and that type of culture that existed in that organization at that time, empowering employees to do what they thought was the right thing. But the person who is going through this identity theft event in their life, where they just didn't have to be put on hold, someone was empathetic, helped them, gave this to them for free. Guess what they did? They told a bunch of people about it and they were on Facebook and they probably even posted on Facebook about it. So that type of customer service, that type of culture that led to that.

Tami Nealy: 29:38

Customer service experience helps with reputation. And that might not be PR, like in a strategy that I had built out, but that was company culture built out that reputation of being good, kindhearted people, real people, not bots. You weren't sent or seized to someone who maybe didn't really understand the business. It was someone locally based in Tempe, Arizona, that was answering your call around the clock. So I feel like that customer service and PR really go hand in hand, that making sure that customer service scripts and things like that, that PR is aligned with that, to know what's happening, because at any point in time, a reporter, an editor, a producer, radio host, podcast host could have needs to call into your customer service. What understand before they do, what could their experience be? Because they could write about that and not have to go through the PR and the comms team. But what is their experience with your customer service team? So I think that's really, really important.

Amy Vaughan: 30:46

I love that. That's such a great, great point. We've talked a lot about consistency, creating credibility, and, again, like PR doesn't start with the external and the public relations. Necessarily. It starts from the inside, it sounds like even within the culture and the company, because you think about other things like Glassdoor in places where you can review companies that you've worked for. So if what you're trying to portray on the outside isn't what's happening on the inside, at some point someone's gonna figure it out and then you're all of a sudden kind of having to deal with that negative press and having to combat that. So I think that's a great game plan in order to kind of sustain your credibility, your consistency, doing it through culture. It also kind of reminded me too, I think, especially with the example of LifeLock at a past podcast guest in a great book that she wrote called Behavioral Sciences for Marketers, talks a lot about how you can build a ton of credibility to trust in.

Amy Vaughan: 31:42

Ultimately, loyalty, which is what we all want, right, and that kind of consumer journey is we want them to go to advocacy, or loyalty is kind of when you're able to show up at the hot button moment, that moment when they are in crisis, and kind of go above and beyond and helping them solve the problem and I think by empowering your employees or finding ways within your systems or a customer journey even to do that.

Amy Vaughan: 32:07

I love it. I think it just reminds, it should remind us all who are listening, that all of this works together and giving PR that insight and understanding of what the customer experience is like, absolutely important and essential to creating and establishing that trust. I love it. Another great example, Tammy. All right, let's talk a little bit about. Let's go back to ROI. We talked about it earlier. I feel like every role of read department I just love hearing it demonstrating ROI to CEOs can be challenging. What strategies have you found effective in conveying the tangible impact of PR efforts to top level executives, Because I know those who are listening are probably in the spot at some point in their career within PR.

Tami Nealy: 32:52

Yeah, so from a media perspective. So what I like to do is, like, anytime there's any press coverage, podcast coverage, blog coverage how do we take that? How do we create organic social content to reach and to put it, to amplify it there? And then how do we work and create something from a paid media perspective, like, how do we take the headline from the New York Times story and the pull quote and put a paid media piece

around it because it's more content, right, content, content, content. And if it just appears in the New York Times on Friday and then nothing happens with it, you lost the.

Tami Nealy: 33:33

There's so much value on that. How do you take that link and give it to your sales team and say, hey, in your next outbound campaign about product X, product X was just covered in the New York Times please link here and then, but don't just let it run once and then be done. How do you continue to use that and continue to use that, because showing that to the CEO, the CFO, the senior leadership team, showing that it wasn't a one and done, and now you've taken this and you're packaging it in new and different ways. It's yeah, I think there's. You're not squeezing the sponge fully if you're just getting that one hit and moving on.

Amy Vaughan: 34:20

I love it, that's great. Maximize your PR with Pay Media helping to create some evergreen content, because, again, what's gonna do is add metrics and then all those metrics and KPIs add to and result in value for the content. I love it. That's fantastic. You're so in the right field. Not that you haven't been doing it for a minute, but you can tell that for as long as you have been doing it like you've stayed knowledgeable and you've stayed passionate about it, which I think is amazing. All right, a couple more questions and then we're gonna open it up to our live listening audience. In case you've got questions for Tammy, that may be things that we didn't touch on, I always wanna hear from you all to know, to make sure we make the most of our time together when we're here in the Power Launch podcast. All right, tammy, a couple of few questions or a few last questions for you. As the focus shifts to educational technology and influencer marketing, how does PR connect these diverse fields and communicate their value?

Tami Nealy: 35:18

So, yes, I did work in educational technology. I did work in influencer marketing, and educational technology was a bit different. It was like, yes, there's still media that cover that Chronicle of Higher Education and different things like that. But it felt like there it was more those one-on-one relationships. So when I worked in that field it was more about conferences and trade shows. Like where can I go and get in front of decision makers and have a conversation? I was like, what problems are you looking to solve? Here's what our solution does. But like, is that enough? And then how do I take that back to the product team and be like, hey, this CIO at this college or university likes the product but wished it had this one more thing. And our product team's like, oh my gosh,

that's an easy fix, let's just do that. So it was a lot of like going out and like having conversations one-on-one.

Tami Nealy: 36:08

So education technology yes, there's a PR, media relations component to it, but there it felt like getting out in the field and meeting with the decision makers. And I'm you know, we're not gonna travel to every single college or university, but where are those decision makers going? So that was really conference and trade show focused. And then influencer marketing, like, wow, like, as we're talking about the evolution of PR, that's where it's today and I understand that it has the word influencer marketing in it. I also like to call it influencer relations because I think it really does belong. It should be housed under public relations because it's about relationship building. The way that when it's about relationship building is when it can be the most effective. When you call it influencer marketing and you put it under the marketing umbrella, what I've seen most often is it becomes transactional. It's like an ad move on, we do this, we move on. So it's not relational and it's top of funnel.

Tami Nealy: 37:05

And if I am going to, if I'm a brand and I'm gonna work with Amy Vaughn influencer and I want you to try my new, my new product X it's, let's say it's a. I don't know what my product is, but if you've not used it before but you're like, oh yeah, I'd love to try it and you introduce it to your audience and we have a one time relationship, you introduce it to your audience. Your audience doesn't see it again. Now, before building a relationship, I'm reaching out and saying hey, amy, do you wanna try our product? See if it's something you like, if you try it first, we're gonna send you free product and you're like, oh, I love this, I think my audience would love this, I see how I can put this into content every day and all of this. Okay, that's fantastic, let's do that. Let's start with it in your Instagram stories a couple of times and then we're gonna do a reel with showing you using this product and then, if it's a beauty product, a few months later you're gonna show that the jar is empty, right, that you've really used it, and so that's a relationship, right, that's a commitment. But if you say, oh, look at this skincare product that this brand sent me, I'm excited to use it. Done, no more conversation about it. Yeah, I don't remember that because I'm consuming so much content on Instagram and TikTok and social media all day, one hits are gone.

Tami Nealy: 38:27

So when it's influencer relations, you look at it from a different perspective. The word relation is there. It's like we want to build something, we want to have a relationship

there. How can we help them and they help us. So I really, really loved that the five years I spent doing that, because it taught me so much.

Tami Nealy: 38:46

I also managed some social media influencers. We had the company I worked for had a management division. So every opportunity that hit their inbox, they're like I don't want to negotiate it, I just want to be over here on the creative and the production side. So I was looking at contracts and I was kind of that middle person and the people pleaser that I am. I wanted a brand to get everything that they wanted at the budget that they had and I wanted the influencer to get paid what he or she was valued up for the content that was being created. And so being able to communicate to brands and say this is what goes into the production of this content, it's not just like holding your phone up and just recording a video like, hey, I love this product, you should try it too. Peace, it's had a lot more production goes into it.

Tami Nealy: 39:33

So explaining to the brand that, but then explaining to the influencer the brand only has this budget. They don't know you, they don't know if this is gonna work with your audience. They have to test. Everything is a test to start, and then, when you blow them away with your performance, they're going to come back with more money. That's when they're going to try to do this. But communicating that to both sides was really, really fun for me and then trying to explain to influencers who maybe didn't go get a degree in marketing understand what CPI is, what return on ad spend means, like it felt really educational, like I liked being that person that was helping to educate these influencers what the brands are looking for, what success looks like. It doesn't matter, but your video was played a million times. What did they do with it? Did they share it? Did they comment and ask meaningful questions? Or did they just use the emoji high five, like what is really meaningful in what the content did for the brand?

Amy Vaughan: 40:30

That's excellent. I love it. Yeah, I think influencer relations, as we're going to call it from now on, instead of marketing. I don't disagree at all. I mean, there's science behind it too. Right, we had a talk gosh, I think it was before the pandemic in 2018.

Amy Vaughan: 40:43

A friend of mine our daughters went to daycare together teaches advertising in PR at Xavier University and she talked about parasocial relationships and it's the psychology and the science behind why we believe and granted examples kind of dated, but many of us would think that when people were at work talking about the show Friends, that we

were actually talking about people who were our friends, because the way we would talk about them was as if we knew them, because we are, as human beings, like conditioned for connection and sometimes, rather than just connecting with an intimate object or brand, it's easier to kind of connect with and feel akin to an influencer. And so you see this big boom of influencer marketing and I think her talk. I want to say actually it was probably like 2016, 2017. And I feel like that has only grown. I mean, it's no surprise we're sitting here streaming live on YouTube as we're talking, because we're trying to create consistent content that creates credibility for our community and what we do and how we help each other while providing education, and then hopefully, people feel that they I get this. People will meet me and it's so kind of weird for me but lovely at the same time. So don't be bothered if I seem creeped out but people come up and say, oh my gosh, I feel like I know you because I've listened to your podcast and I really enjoy it and I love that. But then all of a sudden it feels a little one-sided. I'm like, wait now. I feel like I need to really get to know you, which I will absolutely spend time to do that with them. But it is interesting to see how people really do become attached to those identities, and so I can definitely see how influencer relations and also, having worked on some influencer marketing campaigns, not picking the right influencers or the ones that speak true or hold true to your brand Like there's a lot of back and forth that needs to happen there.

Amy Vaughan: 42:25

You said it's not just a one-way transaction. It definitely takes time, energy and effort and trust that needs to happen to be built with the influencer before you go out and do the influencing. So we did get a question actually two questions, but they're relatively similar so I'm going to just read Claire. She posted it up in the chat. So thank you, Claire, and thank you Erin also for sending us very similar question what tools do you recommend to build a media list? After a few years away from media relations work, an important cause recently reached out to me for a national story. I'd love to help but my contacts are out of date. And then actually I want to add on for Erin Hers is kind of coming from the perspective of a solopreneur or small shops. What's a great way to build a list if you have limited resources?

Tami Nealy: 43:17

Both great questions. So it's been a while since I've done this on my own because I've worked with media relations agencies. I'm like you're good at this. You have the databases. When I was like building a media list, the database that I used was CISN media monitoring database. I know that's pretty pricey, so for smaller shops that might

not be the best solution. I know there's also Muckrack, which is a competitor now to CISN, and there's some other databases out there too.

Tami Nealy: 43:51

But what I would say is you can simply Google what are the top, what are the most read publications in blank industry and Google someone's already created that for you and then you go through LinkedIn, look up the publication, then hit people and then look at who are the editors, who are the different contributing authors. So you can obviously Google and LinkedIn are free. So there's a lot of different ways that you can approach it there. But that's what I did this week. I Googled top publications covering the fitness industry and then I pulled them and then I just started reaching out to editors and have a few meetings scheduled. So I do have a call later today with a media relations agency to find out how much would it cost to work with you and want to reach out to CISN to begin pricing things out to determine what's the best route to take in my new role for this. But I do think CISN was something that worked really well for me before.

Amy Vaughan: 44:57

Yeah, and I think they have some scalable packages as well for smaller businesses and things like that. And I will add to that as well, if you don't mind, erin from a small business owner perspective. Honestly, looking at other small business owners that are doing a tremendous job with their media relations and connections, I ask if they wouldn't mind making introductions and connecting me. I was a part of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program, which some of you may have heard me mention before, and I was so lured. Some of them don't even have websites yet, so I was happy to try to help connect them with women in our network for help and support on their websites and social. But then, on the other hand, I'm seeing them on the news and getting press coverage every week and so I just was like you know what? I was able to help you with some website stuff, social media things, whatever. Could you maybe help me with the media relations? And they were all more than happy and willing to help.

Amy Vaughan: 45:47

So that's another route of it, but I do think it does take a bit more. It's more of an investment of time than money sometimes when your financial resources are limited, so I love the whole, like LinkedIn and Google approach. You can actually build a relatively decent media list just through some research. All right, well, if you guys have any other questions, feel free to drop them in. Otherwise, I'm going to end with this question, which is kind of for our more early in their career listeners, because I know some of you are out there and in Tammy you've made such an amazing impact and had such a great

legacy in your career and you're not even close to done yet. What advice would you give to someone who is looking to break into?

Tami Nealy: 46:27

PR, depending on where you are, maybe in your educational journey or your age, internships, internships are huge Volunteer. Maybe there's not an internship available, but you're like I'd love to volunteer. Can I shadow you for a day? Can I take you to lunch, my treat and ask about you and what you do, because everyone loves talking about themselves. So, interview someone that way. Read, read, read, read. Join groups. So, from a PR perspective, there's the Public Relations Society of America. There's Together Digital. There's lots of different groups that are out there. There's PR Daily on LinkedIn, which is a great group.

Tami Nealy: 47:07

Ask questions. Just follow people on LinkedIn, see what they're posting and then engage. Ask questions in the comments, dm them, ask, but ask meaningful questions. What's your favorite part of your job? No, call out something that you saw that they've done, that you admire, that you want to learn more about, because then you're personalizing it. You're like, oh, I loved your post two weeks ago when you said this Can you tell me a little bit more about this? Because now it's like, oh, wow, they've been following me for a while. This is a real question. I want to dig in and get a little bit more about Ask meaningful questions. Connect with me on LinkedIn. I think the URL for my LinkedIn will be maybe in podcast notes, it's in the chat. Connect with me, let's have a real conversation. I'll leave it to you to start the conversation with me in DMs and then we can schedule a meeting and take it one-on-one.

Tami Nealy: 48:04

But once you want to break into PR, it is about relationships. So make sure that it's not transactional. It's about a relationship, and I do want to call out that when I first started, my very first internship in PR was with the Grand Rapids Hoops of the Continental Basketball Association, which no longer exists, and the person that hired me his name is Norm Devine, and I see his name. So hi, norm. So I love the fact that I've had a friendship with Norm since I think it was 1996 or 1996. So he knew me when I was like this and I was very, very green. So I love that. Yes. So thanks, norm, for all of your support and getting me started down the PR path that I didn't even know I wanted to go down back then.

Amy Vaughan: 48:57

That's amazing. I love it and that is absolutely. I think that's such good proof of the value of relationship building and networking. I think it's something that we tend to overlook or criticize because it feels awkward or pressuring, but I love some of the earlier advice you shared about being curious about doing the research, creating transformative relationships, which is what we're all about here at Together Digital as well, versus transactional, because that's the thing. It transcends all jobs. It transcends decades to be able to be on a podcast.

Amy Vaughan: 49:28

Who would have thought, when you were just a little babe coming out at your first internship, that the first person that hired you as an intern would be on a podcast where you're being featured as a guest? How cool is that? Well, Tammy, what a great way to end a fantastic conversation. Thank you so much for all of your insights that you've shared, all the wisdom that you shared. So glad to thank you again to Meredith Dennis for introducing us and hopefully at some point I'll get to see you out in Phoenix. Everyone, thank you so much for your time this week. Next week we will be back to talk with one of the founders of Alliance and Tigers. We'll have more information posted about that soon. Tammy, thanks again. It was great to have you here with us. Thank you, Amy. All right, everyone enjoy your long weekend, take care Bye.