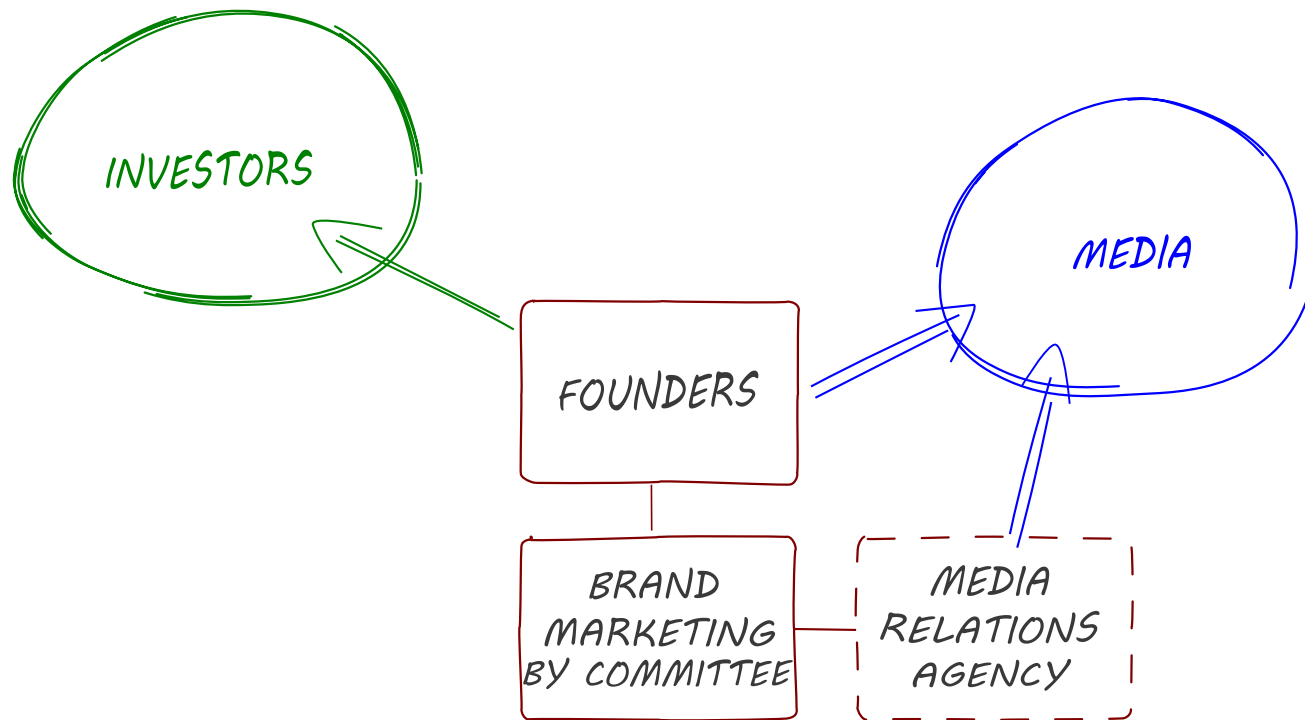


Early- to Mid-Stage Companies: Comms by Committee



It is not unusual for a company to close multiple rounds of funding before hiring a dedicated “head of communications.” Early on, the key audience is a relatively small community of investors – angels, VC firms, potential acquirers – with founders driving the narrative. Because of this specialized audience and the need to justify spending to investors, the emphasis will be on brand marketing because it’s easier to tie those efforts to the bottom line. More traditional communications will require a group effort.

But that can change quickly. Jet.com reached a billion-dollar valuation in just four months. It took Slack only five quarters and Snapchat about two years. Before you get to that scale, it is important to scope out your ideal first communications hire and set a timeline.

Communications in that environment calls for a unique skill set – business savvy, a deep understanding of technology, and an ability to both set and implement strategy.

It also takes confidence to mold founders into media-ready thought leaders. As a result, the hiring process can take months.

If you don’t plan ahead, you risk your public profile outgrowing the resources you have to manage it. Agency support can help, but using it to put off making an in-house hire risks creating an even larger hiring deficit down the road. That lack of runway to build out a whole department could even scare away some great candidates for the top job.