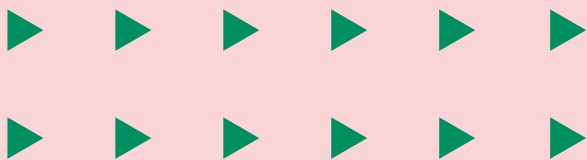


Making quantum technology a “now” issue

PR that speaks to
business decision makers





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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for leaders in the quantum technology sector. The people tasked with commercialising vastly complex products and solutions. It aims to explain how PR can help – and how to approach it.

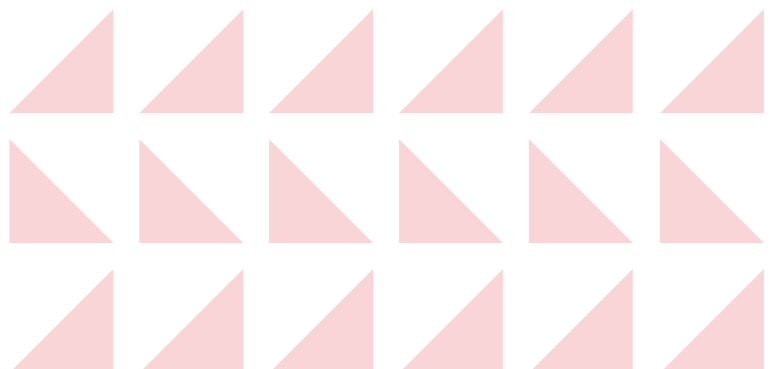
Introduction

The UK government has poured £2.5 billion into the country’s quantum industry¹, more public funding than the US². Meanwhile, the Chinese have pumped an estimated \$15 billion into their sector³. By 2040, these eye-watering investments could lead to a market worth £106 billion⁴.

Businesses are taking note, preparing to capitalise on the technology. According to the OpenOcean-IQM-Lakestar State of Quantum Report, 91 per cent of company leaders are already investing or planning to invest in quantum computing⁵.

The quantum race has gone from limbering-up to a full-on sprint. The firing pistol has echoed around the arena. Nations, companies and academia are in the first few vital strides toward the winning line.

The race will be hard won, with high technology costs, a skills gap and limited infrastructure all presenting challenges that will slow down the runners. However, the PR hurdle is one we can help you jump. There are ways of getting the story out and making quantum technology a “now” issue with journalists and prospects. You just need the right spin... sorry, we couldn’t resist.





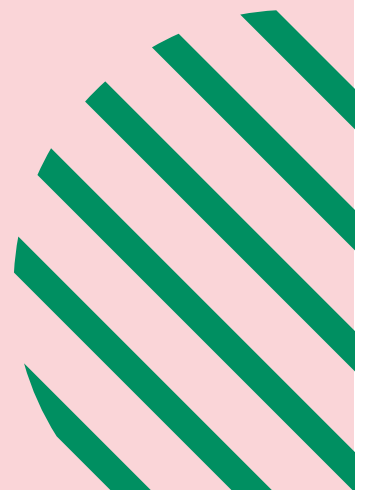
How can PR help quantum technology businesses?

Bill Gates once said, “If I was down to my last dollar, I would spend it on public relations.” Why? Because it has immense power. Unlike advertising and most types of marketing, PR can reach audiences with something no other communication can: the third party, independent credibility of a journalist.

Journalists are trusted to deliver stories that hit the mark every time. To cut through the noise and disregard the hype. As a result, when businesses

achieve PR-generated coverage, it has an authenticity no advertising can ever hope for. It has the stamp of approval. A trained professional has considered a brand worthy of writing about.

Journalists are truth tellers. And being part of that truth simply can’t be bought. It must be earned through effective PR that overcomes the specific barriers faced by quantum technology businesses.



Why do quantum technologies have a PR problem?

Unless you're already part of it, the world of quantum technology is hard to fathom. The very word “quantum” strikes fear into lots of people – even some journalists. The shutters come down. Glazed expressions appear. The subject gets changed.

To overcome this, leaders begin trying to explain the physics in simple terms. But as Richard Feynman once said about the quantum electrodynamics work that won him the Nobel Prize, if it were possible to describe it in a few sentences, it wouldn't have been worth a Nobel Prize⁶.

This is the PR problem quantum technology companies face. They get distracted trying to explain something that normally requires a PhD in language that can't possibly achieve it.

The result? It's so baffling to the average businessperson or journalist, that they get spooked. The promise quantum offers is obscured by the complexity it brings. Journalists who don't specialise in the topic put it in the 'too hard' pile and think their readers won't be ready for it.

Which begs the question of why businesses keep on trying. No other successful technology company in the world does this. Apple doesn't talk about precision engineering details in its PR materials. And in a B2B context, enterprise software firms don't begin journalist pitches with a pithy guide to how the code was written.

Quantum businesses must learn from this. By all means, have explanations ready for when required, but they need to be secondary to something else. Namely, the business case told through a story.

Put simply, when communicating with prospects via journalists, speak their language. Or to put it another way, demystify quantum by focussing on how the technology can solve real-world problems, today, rather than how it works⁷.

This requires a shift in communications from theoretical language to indispensable value: optimisation of logistics, powerful encryption, drug discovery and reducing risk in finance.



1. Consider your PR goals

Like all the best plans, you need to start with the goal in mind for PR. After all, how can you hit a target if you don't know what it looks like and where it is? This should be aligned to the commercial aims of the business, such as supporting the sales process or gaining investment.

This allows the PR team, agency or wider marketing function to start considering everything that goes into an effective campaign. With a goal set, it's possible

to begin gaining insight that will inform a communications strategy – a framework that will give all activity purpose towards the goal.

In turn, this strategy will help define the stories that should be told and the tactics that can be used. Proper planning and consideration at this stage is vital. Otherwise, activity becomes purely tactical, with a scattergun approach, often reverting to explanations of the technology rather than the commercial value.



2.



Consider your audience

As part of this planning process, the biggest consideration is your audience. In the past, the quantum world was relatively insular, with experts communicating to a limited audience of like-minded specialists. But things have – and continue – to change. The sector is increasingly selling to commercial entities: manufacturers, logistics firms, financial institutions and pharmaceutical companies.

To effectively reach these people, PR needs to tap into their needs. And let's face it, trying to learn quantum theory is not likely to be one of them. Leaders need to approach audiences from a position of empathy. So, instead of saying, 'We sell quantum technology,' say, 'We understand your problem and have a way to solve it.' Then tell a story about how.

Think about the real-life challenges faced by prospects and paint a picture of how quantum technologies could address those. Always focus on the problem first, which will grab the attention of journalists and their audiences and be far more relatable. This might take a bit of research, for example, by speaking to customers. Or it could be as simple as having a conversation with the sales team, which will also bring them into the PR process and create advocates for it.

3.

Consider
your story

Once you've understood customer needs and got an idea of the problems they face, it's important to think about the story to tell. In doing so, it's vital to remember how PR differs to other forms of communication.

Journalists want more than key messages and facts. They want something dramatic that will make people read or watch. They look for negativity, disappointments and failures. This means you must add spice to your audience's challenges. Turn it up to 11. This might be achieved through some research among your business audiences about the true scale of the problems they face. Are logistics firms wasting millions and creating a huge carbon footprint by not optimising their operations? Are businesses sleepwalking towards a cyber security disaster?

4. Bring it to life

But bringing attention to the problem is just half the job. The other half is showing the solution. And this doesn't mean reverting back to a technology explanation. It requires a real-life case study or an ideal example of a customer facing adversity before turning a corner and succeeding with your help.

This brings the whole thing to life, offering an understandable, relatable and – importantly – repeatable example of how quantum technology can solve a business challenge and create value.

And, of course, this needs to be written with flair and clarity. It must also follow basic narrative principles including a character, a challenge, a triumph and finally, a result. In doing so, use the voice of the customer and anecdotes as well as statistics and proof points.

Armed with a great client case study and a compelling storyline, the world's your oyster. Importantly, it offers you lots to say through reports, media materials, social media content and marketing collateral. And, hopefully, avoids the temptation to simply explain how quantum technologies work.



5.

Keep going

This last point is an important one. You must keep going. Because PR is like a drip feed. It needs to constantly lubricate the cogs of sales and marketing. Turn it off and the machine will run less smoothly or even seize.

It's been claimed buyers need to see a message seven times before they're provoked to act. That means keeping

the PR tap on to deliver all those opportunities. In fact, Accenture says, “Most B2B buyers are already 57 per cent of the way through the buying process before the first meeting with a representative.”⁸ PR helps achieve that 57 per cent.

In short, those committed to the long run will be rewarded with results.

Why now?

It's simple. The market is approaching the mainstream and those who move first will win. In the words of the BBC's Mark Urban on Newsnight earlier this year, quantum is going to, “Finish off microprocessors as surely as steamships left sailing clippers in their wake.”⁹

Winning this race will depend on whether communicators can overcome the PR challenges they face, making their offering a “now” issue.

About Five not 10



We're the PR agency obsessed with simplicity. Why say something in 10 words when five will do? This is because the best ideas are the simplest. They cut to the chase, have a razor-sharp focus and are instantly effective.

We identify what's slowing you down; what's stopping you from achieving results. We introduce simple strategies to overcome these barriers. Then we get stuff done and make progress.

Oh, and by the way. Not even one of us is a physicist. That's your job. And that's precisely why we can help, bringing a new perspective.

Get in touch

If you'd like to learn more about creating the right content to fuel your quantum PR campaign, please get in touch by emailing hello@fivenot10.co.uk. Or find us on social media. Our door is always open for a chat.