

Thomas Madden of TransMedia Group

Speaker1: [00:00:04] This is the Investor Connect podcast program. I'm Hall Martin, I'm the host of the show in which we interview angel investors, venture capital, family offices, private equity, many other investors for early stage and growth companies. I hope you enjoy this episode. Investor Connect is a 501 C three non-profit dedicated to the education of investors and startups for fundraising. Please consider donating \$100 to the program to help others in their investor and entrepreneur journey. You can find the Donate button on the Investor Connect org website.

Speaker2: [00:00:44] Hello, this is Hall Martint with Investor Connect, Today here with Thomas Madden, CEO at Trans Media Group. Trans Media Group is a full service public relations and marketing firm serving clients worldwide since nineteen eighty one. Thomas, thank you for joining us.

Pleasure. My pleasure. Nice to be with you.

Great. So tell us about your background before founding Trans Media Group, what did you do before that?

Well, like a lot of people, I did a lot of things, I started as a newspaper reporter who was with the Philadelphia Inquirer when I got out of college and I worked there for a while until somebody sucked me and knocked me, knocked a couple of teeth, T-cells, and I decided I go into a safer occupation. So I became a college professor for a couple of years. And I got tired of that, and I wanted to get to New York, so I got to New York and I went into the PR business and I worked for a very, very fine firm at the time, and one of my clients that I handled was the Kellogg Company there in the news today, by the way, because they just there was a strike of all their workers and all their plants. So I don't know whether it's going to affect the Rice Krispies or not. But anyway, that was my client for a number of years. And, you know, ABC cared about me and invited me to join them as PR, and I was director of public relations and speechwriter for the broadcast companies.

I did that for a couple of years and I worked with a guy there named Fred Silverman. He was a genius at programming. And Fred and I had a lot of fun together, and I wrote a lot of the speeches. And then when he got the nod to go to NBC as the CEO, he took me with him. I was the only guy he took with him from. Abc was very flattering, so I was very proud. So anyway, I worked with Fred at NBC for a number of years and then when I left NBC, I started transmedia and my first client was about AT&T and I helped them through very difficult periods. This is when the Federal Trade Commission tried to break them up and they had to dispose of their operating companies. And I, I really helped them through some very difficult time, and it was a very, very great event for me and a lot of experience. I really enjoyed it. It started in a very tumultuous way with the biggest company in America at the time. They were the largest company. And then after that, we were in New York for seven eight years and I moved the firm down in Florida. So got a little tired of the winters and, you know, Manhattan, so we went to sunny Florida and this is where we operate right now, Boca Raton, and we serve players worldwide.

Speaker2: [00:03:43] Great. Why did you choose the PR space to go after there are many choices, why that one?

Now, I kind of like the idea of bringing attention to products, services companies and and I knew the media business, so I had what a lot of these companies lacked. And that is the understanding of media because I work at media. So I saw those press releases coming in. And so I kind of knew what the other side would be like. And I think I brought to a lot of these companies and a lot of intelligence and experience, and I helped them to get their points across. And I'm very, very effective way. In other words, when third parties are writing about you, it's much better than beating your own chest. And that's the power of PR. It's the third parties, the media who are writing about you and not yourself. And it's more believable.

Great, well, what's your advice for people that want to join the PR space? What do you tell them to do before they sign up?

And first of all, I try to find out what their budget is, because sometimes it does take time. And I want all of our clients to realize it's not going to happen overnight. And I want them to be aware that it may take two or three months.

For us to establish a little media momentum. So I want to make sure that when people come in to the PR world, if they don't have that experience, I want them to know what's in store. I don't want any disappointed people and I don't want any impatient people. I want them to know the score. So I educate as much as possible before signing on new clients. And I find that in the long run, this is the way to do it because there is a lot of, you know, unrealistic expectations on the part of people who go into PR. They think, Oh, hey, it's been a whole week and I'm not in the New York Times. What's going on here? So I want that to be well known. And then, of course, the budgetary situation, because it does take time and there's so many media crosses. Now I have to hire people in social media and in the conventional media. There is broadcasters interviews, you know, so it requires a team. So I need a certain amount of fee to be effective because I want all the wheels turning. And that's how you establish results. You gain momentum. And then of course, it gets a lot easier as you go because you develop stories that are going to be very appealing to the media.

Well, great, well, how do you see the PR industry evolving from here, where do you see it going?

Well, I'm a classic example of somebody who's going through the whole gamut. I mean, I started with a typewriter and I need an electric typewriter, just a plain old typewriter. And I've had to go with the creation of the internet opening up all these channels, and it's been a constant learning process for me. But young people come into our business and into our firm. We have a lot of interns. I love interns. We are right in the middle of several colleges in my vicinity. They like to send their students to our place because they get a hands on experience and working in public relations, and they're great because they bring current up to the minute skills. And I like to have young people on the board because they see things very differently and they respond to things differently. The only thing they need is some help with writing. Writing is becoming a problem today, but they're quick on the draw with with texting and those thumbs go a mile a minute, you know? Cell phones. But I still see a need for a lot of. Reworking of press releases and things like that, that's it's kind of an art form that is it's losing a lot of its a lot of abilities. There are not really catching on with this thing. That's my book. I just wrote another book, my fifth book, and it's called Word Shine Man, and it's all about making writing more effective, more engaging.

And getting to the heart of the matter as soon as possible and trying to get a result from your writing and I'm constantly editing or polishing, we use the word polish. You know, my daughter was the president of my firm. She said, Dad, can you polish this? Please polish this release. So I start to polish and I and I changed some sentences around shorten things, bring sentence in the fifth paragraph to the second paragraph. And you know, all this stuff. And I'm making writing more effective, at least from the media standpoint, because that's was going to get the press release. So I'm writing it for the guy in the media who needs to see that headline. Grab his attention and that first sentence better singin somewhere is going to. That's the hook. And if you don't hook somebody in that first sentence and that headline, forget it, it's wrong. It's just worthless. So that's what I do these days. I polish and I've written a whole book about it called the word chat and then coming out next month.

Great, well, how do you see the sector growing with social media and all the new tools coming out? Where do you think PR is going to go? Is it purely going to be online or do you think there's going to be more choices?

I do think the choices are going to escalate.

I mean, it's just it gives you more ways to get messaging out and as the internet grows and as new new services come board and new ways of disseminating information, I mean, it's just amazing how it's it's exponential. I mean, the growth now is just tremendous. Every time I turn around, I'm seeing new ways of getting something out there. You know, new ways of attacking certain markets effectively with new types of messaging. So it's you've got to stay with it, stay tuned and grow with it so you can use all the artillery that's available today digitally. And it's just it's just mind boggling how it is changed from when I started in nineteen eighty one, forty years ago, it was a different business. I actually took people reporters out to lunch and we would sit down and have lunch, and I took a whole lunch about a story. Forget about that. You know, you're lucky if you get somebody to read your email or your text. So it's a completely different situation, but you've got to stay competitive and go grow with it and learn it and use all the up-to-date tools. Because in a heavily competitive environment, you know, if you don't grow with all the capabilities, you're gonna finish less.

Well, getting attention is always a challenge, but in this space, but what other challenges do you find in starting a PR firm in today's market?

Well, you know, the challenges are finding talent.

I mean, that's that's always been a challenge and it's there. There's so much talent that it's very deceptive today because very people are very good at presenting themselves and very effective, but you really have to understand their capabilities and they don't really come through immediately. So, you know, so my opinions of people vacillate tremendously as I get to know their skills and their capabilities. Oddly enough, many of these colleges have students from other countries, international students and even from the Far East and all sorts of places in the world. And I find those students fascinating because they I don't know whether they are. It's the language capabilities. I guess when you can speak three, four or five languages, you've got a pretty good IQ. I mean, you are pretty, pretty smart person. And a lot of these people that we get from other countries are multilingual and they have fascinating intelligence. And it's amazing. Yes, they have a lot to learn about our culture and our ways of speaking our language and so forth. But but they do bring a great, great assets to the equation.

Right, so where exactly does transmedia group fit into the PR landscape out there? Is it a particular focus or sector or positioning that you take?

Years ago, I learned never to specialize. You know, we had we had a disaster called the dot.com bubble, if you remember that.

So a lot of PR firms had all those types of tech clients, you know, so that was the kiss of death. So I purposely stay as diversified as possible. We're in health care. You know where we have major Corp. clients, we you know, we have we're in every state. We're law. I have law firms. I mean, I want to stay as diverse as possible because all of these sectors, some are hot, summer cold, they keep changing and so forth. So you want to have a very diverse clientele. And I purposely stayed in that direction. Trans media were headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida. It's a growing area of Florida, you know, Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach and not far from Miami. South Florida is a tremendous growth area. Businesses, you know, a lot of businesses have left the Northeast. They've relocated to warmer climates and lower taxes. They've come here. And so as far as the client world out here is continues to grow. So the way I differentiate our firm is that we still think and operate as if we were still in New York City. You know, I don't let the palm trees affect my the way I think I. I'm still on Madison Avenue. I'm still running for this place and

that place and so forth. Even though I've been, you know, a very relaxed setting. We still operate like we're in New York, and I like to keep that that speed because it differentiates us from a lot of other firms that, you know, we're born and raised here.

And I don't want to sound biased against that because there's some wonderful people down here and some great creativity and resourcefulness in this area. But I like the fact that we were born and raised in Manhattan because if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere, right?

That's right. So what do you look for in your prospective client? What do they have to do to become a client before they come in?

Well, I've got discriminating over the years. I really don't want ordinary clients. You know, it's I don't want to have to try to sell something ordinary or something that is, you know, just not not very exciting, not very inventive. I really look for clients that offer something special. Like, right now, we have a client, I'm fascinated with this client, they're called up to the international and what they have. They make these modules where you can practice, athletes can practice in them and they can reduce the oxygen in them. So the athlete gets a better workout because he's oxygen starved. So it's almost like you're training on top of the mountain. And I think it's a fascinating concept because you get a better workout, more red blood cells created with your if you don't have that oxygen deprived. I love this company. They also are distilling water from the air, and they have a division that's doing that and it's selling that to the military.

We have military in the most godforsaken places around the globe. Some of these places have problems with water. Water is our biggest problem today, and they have these devices, these machines that will produce water wherever you are out of the air, pure water. And I think it's a wonderful device and it's starting to grow. And you know, and I'm excited by those kinds of services that are different than unique and they serve a purpose that makes sense.

Right. Well, in the last few minutes that we have here, what else should we cover that we haven't heard?

Well, I'm excited about my new book, so let's let's leave that in your followers. We're man and I have a how much time do we have? I have a few more moments. Maybe you could tell us a little bit more about the book. I love. I love to read you the way the book begins. It begins with a little poem, and I read it to you real quick. Ok, because I think it's expresses a lot about me and a lot about the book and so forth. It's called the word Chagnon. You want words to tell her you love it, but not so many little smother. But here's what I advise you, brother. Go see the word man once got dirty shoes nail polish.

Nowadays, its words won't shine. So I tell you, bro, consult the word pro, go see the word chime bang, a magician with words as he reels them out with glee, not free. You slap some grease in his hand and he's yours. The word shirt, man. Prose he comes up with will stipulate she'll know you're her number one fan. Never too late for love to percolate John last. He prefers present tense, puts wordy behind fence, keeps it nice tight, tells Repost. Take I nothing too flowery. Not on his salary. Got a message to deliver. He'll read his motorbike. He's the weird, shy man. Oh, that's great. I love the Diprose, it's it's very nice and tight, really written as well. It's great humor there also, but probably true words is also it's fun. And that's the way it should be.

Oh, that's great. Well. Well, how best for listeners to get back in touch with you? Well, I'm easy to get in touch with them, Trans Media Group, its trans media group. Tom and I reach people at five six one seven five zero nine hundred. And it may not be, no. And probably just looking for it, and we'd be wanting to meet interesting people with interesting things to offer.

Great. Well, include those in the show notes. Want to thank you for joining us today and hope to have you back for a follow up soon.

Speaker3: [00:19:42] Investor Connect helps investors interested in startup funding in this podcast series experience investors share their experience and advice. You can learn more at Investor Connect Talk. Paul T. Martin is the director of Investor Connect, which is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to the education of investors for early stage funding. All opinions expressed by hall and podcast guests are solely their own opinions and do not reflect the opinion of Investor Connect. This podcast is for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon as a basis for investment decisions.