

HOW A CREATIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM HELPED GROW A PEA-SIZED IDEA INTO A BREAKTHROUGH BRAND

By Valerie Christopherson, Founder and CEO, Global Results Communications

Junk food snacks are a \$20 billion industry dominated by just a few juggernaut brands, and for newcomers hoping to break into the space, it's a crap shoot. With a fiercely competitive landscape featuring traditional corn-based products that have been around for decades in the favored slots on grocery store shelves, it takes more than great taste to convince consumers and grocers to give a snack made from peas a chance to prove itself. So, when fearless entrepreneur Nick Desai was ready to take his plant-based PeaTos™ crunchy puffed products to the greater mainstream market, he turned to [Global Results Communications \(GRC\)](#) in 2018 to help him advance his mission to change the way America snacks.

Prior to our firm's engagement, the PeaTos internal creative team had already developed messaging. Determined to use the tiger and the motto "Tigers live longer than Cheetahs," they focused on attacking Cheetos® and its mascot, the Cheetah. Working with Nick, GRC developed a strategy, calling it a David vs Goliath campaign. Willing to hedge our bets on Nick, we helped PeaTos launch the campaign via the 2018 Natural Food Expo. Within a month, PepsiCo's Frito-Lay filed a legal claim, accusing PeaTos of trademark violations. To keep in the spirit of being a bold new brand, the GRC team recommended a full-fledge David vs Goliath PR campaign outside of the tradeshow—making the legal notices public, telling the story about how the big junk food providers are trying to use the law to muscle out the healthier small guys. The calculated move worked and landed PeaTos favorably in the spotlight, with features in the *Wall Street Journal* and *BusinessWeek* among other notable national publications.

By 2019, the story of David and Goliath had run its course and the junk snack market was ready for something new. Plant-based product sales were growing across all categories, from meat to dairy. In fact, the [Plant Based Foods Association](#) reported that sales grew by an incredible 20 percent in 2018, reaching a total of \$3.3 billion. We suggested changing the story to the phenomenon happening with the plant-based, gluten-free craze and moms, in particular, looking for quick and healthier snack for kids. Leveraging the obvious void in satisfying Americans' love affair with salty, savory junk snacks that were "better for you," we advised PeaTos to tell its own unique story, one which included Nick himself. It was a strategy that paid off in top media placements and increased revenue for several reasons:

- 1.** We saw Nick as a clear frontrunner in disrupting the empty-calorie corn and potato junk snack business and put him front and center, telling the story of his personal journey from attorney to entrepreneur. As a child of Indian immigrants, he traveled frequently from the U.S. to India, where during those visits he discovered the fascinating fact that Indian junk food was made primarily from peas and lentils instead of corn or potatoes, which provided the base for most salty snacks. Years later, recognizing the shift in consumer behavior toward eating healthier—but also understanding from his research that few consumers would be willing to trade great taste for healthier alternatives—he embraced the notion of "snacking compromise" head on. Assembling some of the brightest minds in snack manufacturing, he brazenly created a taste and eating experience that rivaled the country's most popular junk food.
- 2.** We believed in his products, and everyone on the GRC team loved the taste of PeaTos. It was an easy sell, especially with Americans increasingly having to choose between the addictive junk food flavors they love and eating better. With clever pitches and snack samples sent to targeted media,

we quickly secured features and product reviews in leading publications such as Vogue, Cooking Light and Men's Health to name a few. In addition to helping PeaTos win numerous awards, we also secured rave reviews on national broadcasts such as the Dr. Oz Show and NBC's TODAY Show, which featured PeaTos as one of the hottest new snacks from the 2019 Sweets & Snacks Expo. Within a week of air date, PeaTos sold a month's worth of inventory and was named the top selling salty snack on Amazon.

Catapulting Nick and his snacks into the national spotlight, the brand and the man behind it have garnered more than 1.6 billion media impressions to date as a result of both his grit and drive and our ability to craft the perfect roadmap inclusive of: identifying top industry events to maximize product exposure; targeting specific media outlets and journalists; building out a samples program; newsjacking; and presenting Nick as thought leader in food space, with speaking opportunities and award nominations. At the core of our success were these key considerations:

- 21st century brands should be built from the inside out with a compelling story
- Small budgets can produce big impacts with proper focus
- Controversy goes a long way if you have a bold CEO
- Aggressive outreach requires stopping at nothing
- Creative content can sometimes be simple
- Creative programs/campaigns can last more than a month, sometimes years
- Collaboration is essential

The PeaTos strategy, while wildly successful, has been a tenet of GRC across the spectrum, particularly when it comes to technology clients. That's where our creativity really shines through. Often, tech companies wrestle with issues that at first glance appear unrelated to their offerings, but at the end of the day, it is critical to see that everything is intertwined—and essential for raising visibility, building trust and reaching new markets, influencers and opportunities. That's the turning point where one can take those challenges and flip them into advantages. Here are just a few of the many creative ways we have helped tech companies make their mark:

Small, Dark and Handsome

A provider of ultra-high-performance smart antenna system solutions tapped GRC to get the media to tune in and talk about its wireless antennas. Understanding that while everyone likes to talk about new apps and wireless devices but not the back-end technology that makes them functional, GRC worked with the client to develop a "Small, Dark and Handsome" campaign. Based on the premise that mobile phone antennas are small, they are always black, and they're handsome—as in handy (because without them, the phones and apps don't work)—the strategy was designed to capture the attention of media and the target market with just one short seductive phrase. Our cheeky outreach approach resulted in consistent coverage at an average increase of 78 percent during the 3 months of the campaign, with high visibility from OEMs that led to new opportunities and an increase in sales.

Visualizing a Future Beyond Print

A leading manufacturer in the printer, professional imaging, projector, scanner, system devices and factory automation categories tasked GRC with re-branding the client from its "old school" legacy in printers and projectors to a company that is recognized as an innovator in smart wearables with its augmented reality smart glasses. Working with the client, GRC created messaging that highlighted

its competitive differentiators that no other company in the nascent smart glasses industry could equal: leadership in projection technology, global technology and R&D capabilities, manufacturing, scalability and distribution. GRC brought smart glasses directly to reporters via desk-side tours, video interviews and industry conferences, including a press conference at CES, which more than 200 reporters and analysts attended. We also tapped into the enterprise application developer market to find developers to create compelling applications for B2B use, and we promoted these stories via traditional and social media to show “real world” examples of how smart glasses can make a difference in a variety of markets, from healthcare and education to training and beyond. During the first 3 months of the program, GRC generated 1,200 press articles, 300 million media impressions and 8 million Twitter impressions. Notably, the media placements created demonstrable conversion to customer sales.

All for One and One for All

An American computer hard disk drive manufacturer and data storage company empowering the world’s data infrastructures sought to create a singular, unified, global voice across social media from various regional locations, which had developed their own “identities.” Recognizing that the client had long been at the forefront of game changing innovations—from the invention of the first hard drive to recent advancements in 3D NAND—but was struggling with new social media platforms, GRC conducted global audits to consolidate corporate goals across the board. After compiling and analyzing results, GRC strategically killed off approximately 30 of the existing social media handles and created a global content sheet, which resulted in one corporate social media program that fueled each region.

Most important, the results of any PR campaign must meet a client’s goal. That’s how impact is measured. I have often been asked, “What is the secret in using challenges to your advantage?” I tell people, it’s like taking one’s greatest weakness and turning it into a strength. Today, too many of us try to harness attention and dull the active mind. But it’s really about focus. When presented with a challenge, learning to laser focus on an outcome will provide a creative roadmap or blueprint leading to the desired destination for both the client and the agency. It’s a win for everyone.

ABOUT VALERIE CHRISTOPHERSON

Valerie Christopherson is founder and CEO of Global Results Communications (GRC), an award-winning public relations firm trusted by both entrepreneurs on the cusp of new discoveries and multi-billion-dollar enterprises breaking new ground. Renowned for her expertise in high tech, she is the driving force behind GRC’s targeted communications strategies that dramatically enhance client market presence and performance on a global scale. Prior to founding GRC in 2005, Valerie held key positions at QUALCOMM, Porter Novelli Convergence Group and other niche agencies in the mobile, telecom and technology sectors. Over a span of 20 years, she provided unparalleled counsel and campaign management resulting in successful public relations and social media programs for Fortune 500 companies, major trade associations and start-ups. A current board member of Golden Rule Charity, Valerie has been involved with various nonprofit organizations including Make a Wish Foundation and Mobile Giving Foundation among others. An industry thought leader, she is frequently called upon to speak at regional and national events including PR News conferences, regional PRSSA (Public Relations Student Society of America) conferences and Comm Week at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). A graduate of CSUF, Valerie holds a bachelor’s degree in both English and communications with a public relations emphasis. She also completed a social media certification program at University of California, Irvine.

ABOUT GLOBAL RESULTS COMMUNICATIONS

Global Results Communications, Inc. is a full-service public relations and digital media firm focused on enhancing its clients' public profiles. GRC specializes in servicing mobile and high-technology markets to clarify positioning, raise marketplace awareness and advance overall business agendas. GRC is an award-winning firm and recipient of more than 25 Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) PROTOS awards for its media relations, writing credentials, expertise and overall excellence.