

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/early-design-feedback-and-promotion>

Akshay Kothari, co-founder of Pulse, shares how he and his co-founder were able to collect design feedback and attract media attention after launching their product.



Transcript

Yeah.. So I can now talk a little bit about what we did with Pulse.. So Pulse, it was - because it was built in five weeks, it was very barebones.. I did the visual design as an electrical engineer, so you can imagine how bad it was initially.. And so, I am glad we are not sharing those mocks anywhere, but it was actually pretty bad.. And we're not sure if it was ready for prime time and so what we did was we actually thought, let's target a smaller demographic first.. So what we did was we actually, my good friend Joel has this really cool camera and we said can we just shoot a film of about a minute which basically goes through the app and shows what it can do.. And so we shot this at Satura Cakes in Palo Alto, which actually is not there anymore, but we shot it there and we put this video in a bunch of design blogs out there.. So we put it in Core77, NotCot, not the tech blogs, we put it more in the design blogs just to see people's reactions to it.. And more design blogs picked up that video and so already we saw a lot of people actually curious about this app..

So, even before we had actually launched it in the App Store people were actually talking about it.. We both found the interaction that we really need.. And so that was the first thing, and then we actually launched it without actually press to just see how real people use it, and we actually saw the app actually shoot up to the top of the news category.. But there was a lot of feedback, like the visual design was really bad, people wanted more sources, they wanted to add, people wanted a better catalog.. And so we spend another two weeks actually refining the product to those feedback points, and getting that feedback quickly was really important for us.. Then when we felt comfortable we actually sat down with a visual designer for a full day basically, like took out all my designs and actually made it much cleaner like you see in these mocks, and then we actually did a smart thing, we actually made another video.. But in this video we actually focused on sources that we wanted to cover us.. So we focused on like we had TechCrunch in there, we had New York Times in there, we had a bunch of sources there in Pulse being used, and then we actually emailed TechCrunch and said, see TechCrunch is featured in this video, we emailed New York Times and said you are featured in this video, this is a new product that Stanford students have built like you guys may want to cover us.. Simple, and then they picked up that video, so TechCrunch actually wrote it about.. They wrote about it and then we literally shot to the top of the App Store overall, not just the news category, and then New York Times picked up, because they said, well there is a class project that's suddenly in the top of the App Store..

And so we were - that was the first week when we actually got more mainstream press, but we were actually ready at that time to be able to kind of accommodate a much bigger user base as well..