**Tiffany Tabar and UpSpring PR Focus on Design**

Tiffany Tabar is the CEO and co-founder of UpSpring PR, a boutique public relations firm specializing in architecture, interior design and product manufacturing. She and her co-founder, Sarah Nelkin, the company’s President, have built a strong niche in the hospitality, residential and commercial design markets, precisely by targeting clients working in these areas, such as the design of new restaurants. Their current roster includes a nice mix of big design firms and individual industrial designers, including [ICRAVE](http://www.icrave.com/), [POD Design](http://www.poddesign.com/) (founded by Brooks Atwood), Vincent Celano, and [Guillaume Gentet](http://www.guillaumegentet.com/).

Tabar and Nelkin, childhood friends who grew up in NYC and then attended George Washington University together, decided to try their hand at public relations during their senior year at school. In their last semester before graduating, they took on several pro-bono clients from NY and DC to see if they could convert any of them into paying ones, “… at least that was the pitch to our parents.”

As you may remember, 2009 was not a favorable time to graduate and enter the workforce. While many of their friends were having trouble finding or holding onto jobs, Tiffany and Sarah hit the ground running with the one NY-based, paying client they retained from their initial group (still a client today) and a few thousand dollars contributed by their families.

Slowly but surely, their idea to launch their own firm progressed, as they worked first from Starbucks and their apartment, and eventually traded some PR work for a discounted spot in a communal office space. This was the first important leap they made to solidify their plans, as “… the blenders really got in the way when we were on conference calls.” They spent the next year and a half there, continuing to build their business, one client at a time, until finally they realized it was time to get their own office space. This last major transition, in January of 2011 was instrumental in allowing them to feel “… more put together and organized and dedicated to what [they] were doing.”

Over the last couple of years, UpSpring PR has grown considerably. Starting out as just the two of them with a small team of interns, by last April they had hired two employees, and added another one in November. At present, they are a team of five, plus three interns.

Also significant is the conscious choice Tabar and Nelkin made to narrow their focus to the fields of architecture and design, particularly within the hospitality market. It was certainly a risk to turn clients away so early in the game, but specializing within the industry seems to have paid off. In the process, they’ve developed an extensive network of company owners, designers and mentors that have helped them grow rapidly over the last two years.

Another strategic choice they made was to stay focused on building a strong media machine, rather than branching into producing live events. One look at their [press page](http://www.upspringpr.com/newsroom/), and you can see that they have built a solid network of relationships on behalf of their clients, who enjoy regular exposure for their projects.

Tabar cites their biggest challenge as having nothing to do with PR. In fact, it was the mechanics of managing a business, making sure that all of their employees remain happy and motivated, creating an environment conducive to growth and working in sync with one another – all of which she says is “harder than people think.”

For new entrepreneurs, she recommends, “Ask as many questions as possible.” She has found it enormously helpful to have a strong advisory board comprised of family members, professors, and other successful people whose advice she values.

So what’s next for this successful young company? According to Tiffany, while they have no plans to stray away from the kind of work they are currently enjoying, they have been considering, when the time is right, branching out from their current coverage of the architecture and design of new restaurants and starting to include a focus on the food and beverage side of the industry.

“Restaurants mean a lot more than they used to these days…” So true! With the rise of movements like Farm-to-table, Locavore and Made in America, as well as the incredible success of celebrity chefs, it seems like a wonderful time for the team at UpSpring to mirror their own brand of authenticity in the nexus of local, healthy, organic eating and cutting edge design. I, for one, am really excited to see where they go next.