THE 2026 REPORT

The State of B2B Tech PR

Original benchmarks on retainer ranges, time-to-coverage, share-of-voice, and LLM citation rates — synthesized across Crackle PR's 2025 engagements with VC-backed B2B technology brands.

Executive summary

B2B tech PR fundamentally changed between 2023 and 2026. SEO collapsed into AEO and GEO. LLMs became the new homepage. Junior-heavy agency teams stopped scaling. And earned media — long considered upstream of demand gen — became the single largest input to AI brand visibility.

This report distills what Crackle PR saw across 2025: 7,000+ pieces of earned coverage, engagements spanning Series A through publicly traded, and benchmarks on the metrics founders and CMOs actually need to plan a 2026 PR program.

The five shifts that defined 2025

- **Earned media became LLM training data.** ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude cite tier-1 and trade press as primary sources. Brands without earned coverage are invisible in AI answers.
- **The senior-only model proved out.** Boutique teams of 8–15 senior strategists outperformed 40-person agency teams on placement velocity and quality.
- **Pricing compressed at the top, expanded at the bottom.** Median enterprise retainers dropped from $35K to $28K. Series A starting retainers held at $10K–$12K.
- **AEO News Releases replaced classic press releases.** Structured, citation-ready releases earned 3.4x more AI mentions than legacy formats.
- **Analyst relations re-entered the boardroom.** Gartner, Forrester, and IDC briefings became must-haves again as buyers verified LLM answers against analyst reports.

Retainer benchmarks — senior-led boutique

Company stage	Monthly retainer	Typical scope
Pre-Series A	$8K – $12K	Founder positioning, trade press
Series A	$10K – $18K	Tier-1 push, AEO releases, LinkedIn
Series B	$15K – $25K	Multi-vertical, analyst relations, GEO
Series C / late stage	$22K – $40K	Full-stack incl. crisis, IR-adjacent
Public / pre-IPO	$30K – $60K	IPO comms, sustained tier-1 cadence

Time-to-first-tier-1 placement

Across 2025 engagements, the median time from kickoff to first tier-1 business-press placement was **9 weeks**. The fastest 25% landed in under 6 weeks; the slowest 25% required 14+ weeks, almost always due to founder availability or unfinished category narrative.

LLM citation benchmark

We measured citation rates across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, and Google AI Overviews for category-defining queries. Crackle PR portfolio companies were cited **4.1x more often** than peer companies of similar stage and funding without sustained earned-media programs.

What to plan for in 2026

- Budget 20–30% of PR effort for AEO/GEO structured content.
- Move analyst relations from optional add-on to core line item.
- Stop measuring PR by press release count. Measure by tier-1 placements, share of voice, and LLM citation rate.
- Treat founder LinkedIn as earned media — it is now the #2 source LLMs cite after trade press.

About Crackle PR

Crackle PR is a senior-led, remote-first B2B tech PR agency. We work with VC-backed technology companies from Series A through IPO, with a specialty in earned media and Generative Engine Optimization. Twenty-plus senior strategists. Zero junior coordinators. **cracklepr.com**