

# Scrappy Marketing

**for Life Science Start-ups**

THE MARKETING BASICS EVERY LIFE SCIENCE START-UP NEEDS TO  
GET TO MARKET

**Few things are more exciting than starting a life science company. But there's a lot to do.**

We've compiled this guide to help life science professionals with no marketing background get started with the bare essentials. We've even made a handy checklist to make implementing the marketing basics a breeze.

This isn't an exhaustive guide, but we hope it will break down key marketing concepts into practical, manageable chunks so start-ups can incorporate marketing into their business operations as early as possible.

**Good luck!**



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# | Where does marketing sit in a life science start-up?

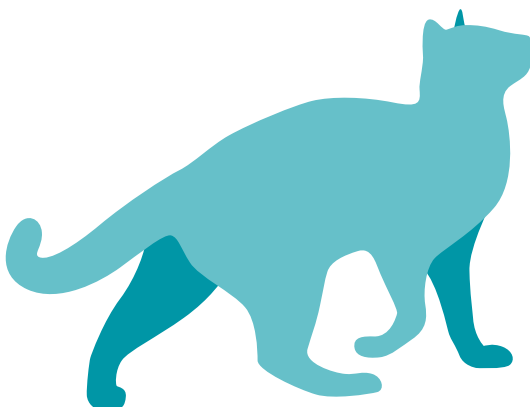
Let's be honest, it's unlikely that you'll prioritize marketing as you start up your life science business. After analyzing your competitors and establishing your unique selling proposition, your focus will be developing your innovation and getting it to market. Things like:



**But what if we told you that everyone should be a marketer?**

## | Why is marketing important early on?

Marketing isn't just promoting your product or service when it's ready. It's understanding your customer, building and priming an audience for your message, and establishing your company as a trusted voice in your field. Successful marketing generates awareness and goodwill in your community, so when you're ready to launch your product or service, your potential customers aren't going to say, "never heard of them".



**The essence of marketing is 3 things:**

### **C**ustomer

Talk (and more importantly listen) to as many customers as you can to find out their wants, needs and purchasing preferences without pushing your product or service. Make "Why?" your new favorite question.

### **A**udience

Relate to potential customers and peers in your network by sharing the challenges and successes you and other people in your field are experiencing.

### **T**rust

Build relationships, not connections. Engage with people beyond your potential customers to build familiarity with your company and the faces behind it.

## Establish your core offering

As a start-up, your core offering is more than the product you're developing or the service you're offering. It's your mission, vision, and values as a company. Having a thorough understanding of these three things will help build your brand and start establishing your company long before showcasing your offering. Writing these things down in their most concise form serves as a useful reference when telling your company's story to different audiences.

Mission	Vision	Values
What is your company's purpose right now?	What does your company aspire to in the long-term?	What are your company's core principles and ethos?
WHY DO IT?		
To communicate the problem your company is solving, and guide your day-to-day operations	To map out where your company is heading and inspire your team to work towards what your company ultimately hopes to achieve	To shape the culture and codes of conduct that your company values
IN ONE SENTENCE		
What does your company do? Who does your company serve? What's your goal? What impact do you want to have?	What goals do you want to achieve in the long-term? What kind of future society do you envision?	What does your company stand for? What does your company value in the people that it works with? What codes of conduct does your company follow?

Trying to serve too many people ends up diluting the effectiveness of your offering. Instead, focus on one type of customer to serve with one solution. Word of mouth will allow you to expand later on, and you'll have a good strategy in place to reach out to other customers.





Write a press release as a vision of what your product will do. Even before you're ready to launch, this can help you think about the story you want to tell and keep everyone on track during development. (Find a guide to writing press releases [here](#))

- What are the most important things about your product/service for the customer?
- What aspects of your product/service would the press want to write about? (It's OK to ask them! - find the relevant journalist/editor at the publication you're targeting online and send them an email)

## Determine your target audience

To communicate your core offering you need to know who you're talking to. Generally, a competitor analysis is a good place to start to find out what types of audience your competitors are targeting and how those audiences respond to their messaging. But as a life science start-up, you'll be building the awareness of your company and bringing in funding through targeting specific audiences.

TARGET AUDIENCE	WHAT QUESTIONS DO THEY HAVE?
<b>Investors</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What problem does your offering solve?</li> <li>• What is the market opportunity?</li> <li>• How are you going to persuade customers to buy your offering?</li> <li>• What's the expected return on investment?</li> <li>• What is the experience of your leadership team?</li> <li>• What will the market look like in 5-10 years and how will your company adapt to any changes?</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborators</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the science and data behind your offering?</li> <li>• How ready is your offering to launch?</li> <li>• How well do you understand the field and the market your offering serves?</li> <li>• How will they benefit by collaborating with you?</li> <li>• Will they be able to access top talent through the collaboration?</li> <li>• Will the culture at your company be compatible with theirs?</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Customers</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well does the offering address their needs?</li> <li>• How credible is your company?</li> <li>• How is your offering different from your competitors'?</li> <li>• What data do you have to backup your claims?</li> <li>• Will your offering save time, money, or effort?</li> </ul>
<b>Promoters (e.g. Journalists)</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will your offering address a problem that is important to readers?</li> <li>• Does your company's vision address a problem that many people have?</li> <li>• Is your announcement topical/aligned with wider issues?</li> <li>• Does your announcement involve emotional human stories, impressive benefits, counter-intuitive findings, well known people, or controversial issues?</li> </ul>

Segmenting your audience further will help you decide who to target. You can segment your audience using various including company size, region and, job title. Once you've decided on your ideal segment, take your research to the next level. Find out what types of things they respond to online and offline (LinkedIn is a great tool for this). Tailor your messaging to speak to those people and make it more likely that they will take notice. Once you're successful with your ideal segment, you'll have success stories to share with other segments. Market to few. Sell to many.

## Effectively tell your story

People remember stories over facts and figures in all areas of business including science (if you've ever wondered why so much money is spent on advertising, that's why).

**As a start-up, there are two stories you need to focus on:**

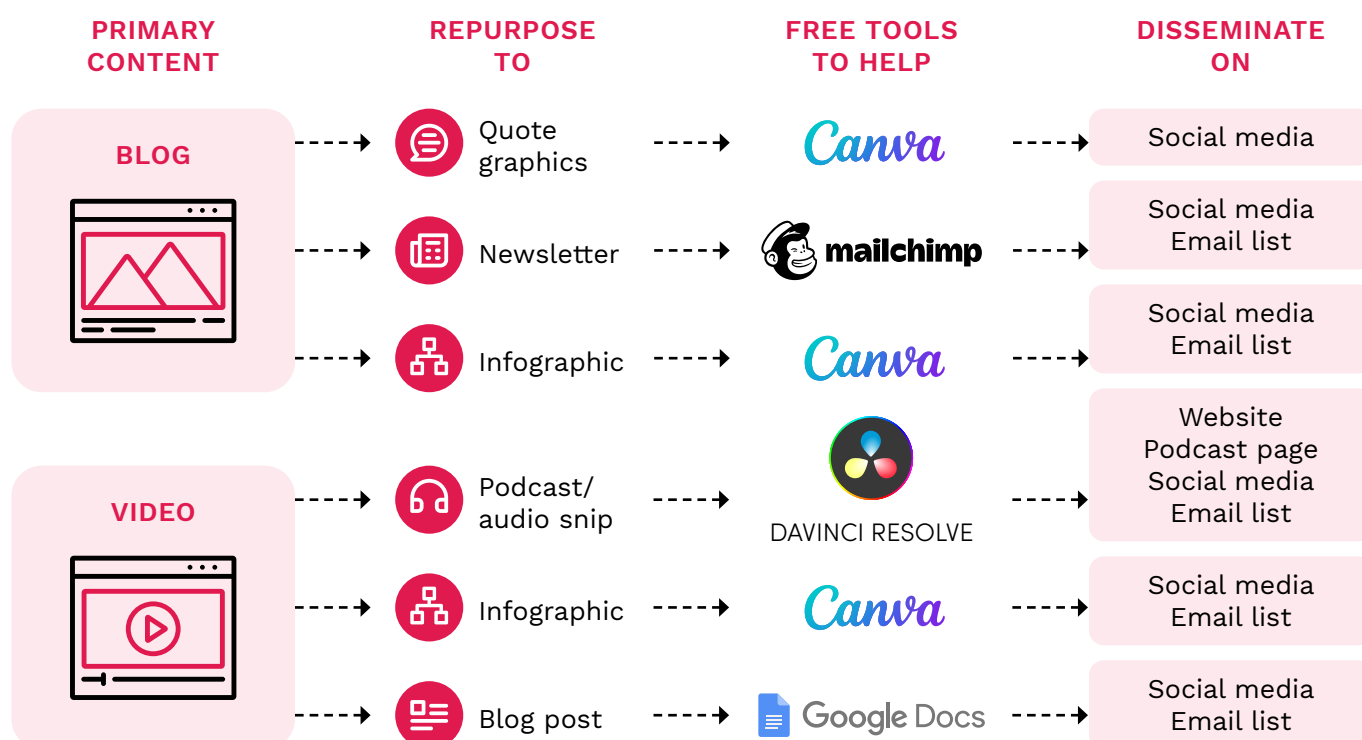
### Your story

People trust people more than brands. Balance the professionalism that you want your company to portray with human elements that allow your customers to get to know you and your motivations, as well as the company's mission, vision, and values.

### Your customer's story

Each one of your customers is on a journey, whether that's developing a new therapy or providing services to improve the supply chain. Your company is there to help your customer on their journey by removing the obstacles that they face, primarily through your offering, but also through knowledge and information. Providing your expertise for free can help establish your company as a knowledgeable voice in the field and build trust with your potential customers for when you're ready to launch.

Creating content is one of the best ways of getting your stories out there. Craft pieces that add value to cut through the noise and bring the attention of your potential customers to you. An effective content marketing strategy helps you make the most out of your content by repurposing what you have and finding the best channels for dissemination. This may sound like a lot of work, but taking the time to create a content bucket (basically all of your primary and repurposed content) means you'll have it on hand and ready to go.

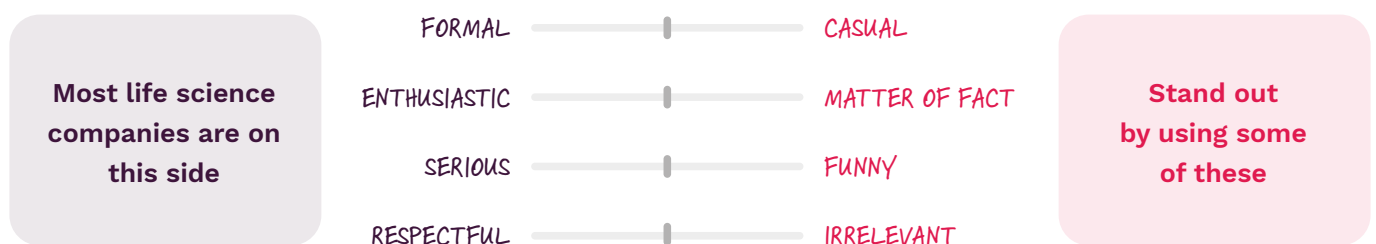


## Branding and Tone

Branding creates your company's persona using assets (like logos, colors, fonts, and taglines) and tones that are synonymous with your company. A strong brand will be instantly recognisable to your target audience and associated with your core message.

A logo is an important asset to visually distinguish your company (it's also really exciting to have one because it's a tangible symbol of what you're trying to achieve with your start-up), so you should put some time and thought into its development. **BUT** it's not the make or break of your brand. You can always update your logo (and even your company name) in a rebrand once you have more resources to put towards it. So don't spend too much time and money at the start. Instead, make sure your logo and other brand assets are consistent.

Another powerful (yet often overlooked) differentiator is tone of voice. How do you want your language to come across online and face-to-face? This may seem like an intangible concept, but thanks to the Neilson/Norman group there are now various spectra that can be used to classify tone of voice.



Having a clear tone of voice that utilizes attributes on the right side of the spectra can help your stand out. Across different platforms your copy should reflect the audience you're targeting (e.g., a more formal sentence structure for your website and LinkedIn and more colloquial terms on Twitter), but your core tone of voice, like your brand assets, should be consistent throughout your messaging.



Create a list of words (or use the ones below) and write a piece of copy incorporating those attributes. Now ask a few people to pick out the words on your list that come to mind when they read your copy and see if it aligns with the attributes you picked out. If it doesn't, repeat the exercise until you nail it. Not every word on this list is desirable, but might provide important feedback.

Accessible, Annoying, Appealing, Boring, Business-like, Busy, Calm, Clear, Compelling, Complex, Comprehensive, Concise, Confident, Confusing, Connected, Consistent, Creative, Dated, Desirable, Difficult, Disruptive, Distracting, Dull, Effective, Empowering, Engaging, Entertaining, Enthusiastic, Essential, Exceptional, Exciting, Expected, Familiar, Fresh, Friendly, Frustrating, Fun, Helpful, High quality, Impersonal, Impressive, Incomprehensible, Inconsistent, Ineffective, Innovative, Inspiring, Intimidating, Inviting, Irrelevant, Meaningful, Motivating, Not valuable, Optimistic, Ordinary, Organized, Overbearing, Overwhelming, Patronizing, Personal, Poor quality, Powerful, Predictable, Professional, Relevant, Satisfying, Simplistic, Slow, Sterile, Stimulating, Straightforward, Stressful, Time-consuming, Time-Saving, Too technical, Trustworthy, Unapproachable, Unattractive, Unconventional, Understandable, Unpredictable, Unrefined, Useful, Valuable



## Personally promote your company

Your current employees and their network are a valuable resource. While you should certainly set some basic guidelines, ideally you've hired people you would be happy to have representing your company. Let them share their experience and enthusiasm for your mission on social media. You and your team will have to put in the legwork to grow your audience, and the best place to start is your network.

Connections in your personal networks (online and offline) are people who already know you, will be interested in what you have to say, and might even be potential customers. These people are more likely to share content to their network and engage in conversations that can help spread awareness of you and/or your company online or through word of mouth.

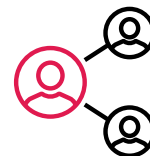
# 01

Brush up your socials - LinkedIn is a must.  
Make sure your personal profiles are as complete as possible.  
If you're using other platforms like Twitter, make sure your content  
on doesn't contradict your company values



# 02

Get everyone in the team to share your company's content with  
their networks and include a personalized message in the post



# 03

Reply to every comment on your posts and look for other  
conversations online where you can showcase expertise in your field  
or express your opinion



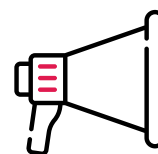
# 04

Add value online through personal articles and opinion pieces on  
developments in your field



# 05

Actively find opportunities to speak about your company, offering, or  
opinions on things in your field (e.g., podcasts, webinars,  
panel discussions)



# 06

Don't be afraid to repeat yourself. There will always be someone  
who hasn't heard your story and the more you talk about it the more  
practiced you'll get at discussing your core talking points



## Website and email



**The most important marketing asset you'll have is your email opt-in list to reach the people who are interested in what you're doing and turn them into promising leads for your offering. The easiest way to build it? Through your website.**



### What makes a good website?



#### **The right domain name**

Ideally your domain name should be your company name accompanied by a .com or a generic/ locational top-level domain (e.g., .net or .co.uk). If your company name is unavailable, try an acronym of your company name and make sure you use that acronym in your branding.



#### **Optimized for mobile**

Most people use their mobiles to browse outside of work. If your site is slow and difficult to read or navigate on a mobile device, you'll quickly lose visitors. It may also affect your search engine rankings as the Google algorithm takes mobile optimization into account when deciding where you'll rank in the search results.



#### **Easy navigation**

The fewer buttons people have to click, the better. A one-pager with all the right content and a navigation menu is all you need when you start out. Make sure your footer (the bit at the bottom of your website) has your company information (registration number and address) and your privacy/cookie policy.



#### **Fast loading**

There's nothing more frustrating than waiting for more than a second for a web page to load, so keep an eye on your loading speeds and contact your web host if they're becoming slow.

## Website and email



### Effective content

Your website needs to tell people who you are, what you're doing, and why you're doing it in the most concise, engaging way. The basic sections you need for your site are:

- About the company (make this about your story)
- Your offering (use this section to tell your story)
- Your team
- Your contact information
- A way people can keep up to date with what your doing (an email list or newsletter sign up)



### Ways to contact you

Publishing your email address is an invitation for spam. Having a contact form and/or a monitored chat box is essential. Adding links to your socials in the header/footer makes it easy for visitors to keep up with what you are doing, and return to your site when something sparks their interest.



### Privacy and data protection

The rules around privacy and data protection vary between locations so it can be hard to keep up to date with requirements. [lubenda](#) is a company that can generate the policies you need depending on what data your website is collecting.



### Calls to Action

You want people to take some action when they come to your website, whether that's signing up for an email list, downloading a document, or making an enquiry. Make sure these things are easy to do. You can even have distribute prompts throughout the page or as visitors are leaving your page. [Calendly](#) is a great tool for visitors to schedule a short call.

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A good website is essential when you start up. As well as being your 'shop window' online, a well-presented website also gives your company credibility. The good news is you don't need to spend vast sums of money on an over complicated website - an easy-to-navigate, good-looking one-pager is all you need. You can build these through all-purpose sites like Wix and Squarespace (although the extent of customization can be limited) or buy your domain name and build it through platforms like WordPress. If you're using a website builder, make sure you pay for a premium membership to remove the host branding.

**Used effectively, social media is a great tool to stay on people's radar and give potential customers and employees insight into your company.**



## LinkedIn

**Most people in business are here so having your company on LinkedIn is a must. Make sure your company profile is populated with information and brand assets specific to the platform.**

Inject a bit of personality by adjusting the tone of your copy, but keep in mind that the platform is for professionals and your aim is to build relationships with other businesspeople. Post content that has a purpose - whether that's an educational piece, an update to the team's activity, or a targeted piece about your offering. Think about what value this will bring to the viewer.

The more people that engage the better. That means getting your team to share the content with their personal views, comment, and engage with people on company posts (and their own).



### COMPANY LOGO SIZE

300 x 300 pixels



### COVER PHOTO SIZE

1128 x 191 pixels



## Twitter

**Many life science companies also have (an underutilized) Twitter account. Use it to post updates about your company, promote events you're attending, and interact with customers.**

Twitter has a 280 character limit so less formal language, terms, and even emojis are useful. Use hashtags effectively - keep it to 2 or 3 and build them into your copy. On most occasions, it's better to use hashtags that don't have much activity to increase the chance that someone who actually cares about what you're tweeting will come across it.

Twitter needs to be actively monitored and used to be an effective tool. If there is someone in your company who loves interacting on the Twittersphere, set up an account. Otherwise, focus on building a following on LinkedIn and other suitable platforms.



### PROFILE PHOTO

400 x 400 pixels



### HEADER PHOTO

1500 x 500 pixels



## Facebook

Facebook is a great platform for paid ads because of its affordability and extent of targeting. But for creating a following and building interest around your company, it's probably better to focus elsewhere.



## Instagram

If your company is heavily image-based (say microscopy or modeling) Instagram can be a useful asset to showcase your offering and add some personality through creative reels and stories. You can't use links in posts, but you can set up a Linktree in your bio to overcome this.

## Analytics

Analytics generate data that indicate whether your marketing efforts are effective and identify opportunities for improvement. Analytics can be overwhelming, so be selective about the data (metrics) you collect and analyze based on your most important goals or key performance indicators (KPIs). These can change over time.

### Metrics

Measure certain events to monitor the performance of a campaign/piece of content

### KPIs

Measure progress towards specific business goals using metrics

An example of how you can use metrics and KPIs:

### Metrics



Website visits



Website engagement



Newsletter signups



LinkedIn page follows



LinkedIn unique visitors

### KPI

Create awareness of your company across Europe, North America, and Asia in the next year

Most web and email platforms will offer some kind of analytics to help you monitor performance. You won't need to delve into those tools too much, but it's useful to align the metrics with specific KPIs to help you monitor the performance of your website and content.



This is the most powerful (free) tool to measure the performance of your website and campaigns. The data on website performance includes how many users, where they are in the world, how they found your site, how long they spent on your site, and their journey across your site. You can also view data in real time! Although it can be complex to set up, there are lots of free guides and tutorials to help.



You can get some valuable insights from LinkedIn's analytics for your company page including how many followers you have, what device they used to view your page, where they are in the world, who they are, and other visitor demographics. [Shield](#) is a good app for analyzing LinkedIn metrics over time.

Finally, don't ignore qualitative feedback (e.g., comments on podcasts or blog posts, feedback from customer service). Just because you can't put a number on it doesn't mean it's not valuable. In fact, direct interactions may be the most valuable!

# SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

**The aim of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is to increase the quality and quantity of traffic to your website by improving its visibility when people search for related information on the internet.**

Search engines rank sites based on how well they answer a given query and other factors such as the perceived authority of your site. As a start-up, focus on the structure of your site to make it easy for search engines to understand. Over time, adding relevant content that focuses on the right keywords will help your ranking.

## 01

A site is published



## 02

Search engines crawl the website and index the pages



## 03

Algorithms analyze the pages in the index and determine the order they should appear in response to given queries based on hundreds of ranking factors



## 04

When a user submits a query that matches the content on the web page, the site will show up in the search engine results



As a start-up with a new website you don't need to worry too much about SEO. After all, you need to have the data before you start to optimize. But there are steps you can take to ensure that search engines understand what your website is about and how it's perceived in terms of visitor experience.

If you want to explore SEO further, [Google Search Central](#) is loaded with information to help you understand the basics and get started.

# SEO (Search Engine Optimization)



## Site structure

(sitemap, titles, meta descriptions, mobile-friendliness, etc)

A well-structured site doesn't just help users navigate your site, it also helps search engines understand what your site is about, determine the relationship between the various pages on your site, and stop pages competing with each other in the search engine rankings.

Because search engine bots use links to navigate a website, your single page website can utilize the internal links from your menu to different parts of the page to help improve your search engine rankings.



## Authority

In its essence, authority is the importance of a web page in relation to a specific search query. A web page with higher authority will rank higher in the search results, and search engines look at many factors like age and trust, quality and quantity of links from other sites to your site, and how frequent a page has been updated.

Keeping your single page website up to date can influence your rankings. If you're speaking at events, being a guest on a podcast, or posting on a YouTube channel, having those sites link back to your site also helps build your page authority.



## Keywords

These are the words and phrases that make up a search query (they can be whole sentences not just words). Having keywords on a page match the search query will influence its ranking.




Keywords aren't that important when starting up, but it can be useful to look at the searches related to your field and organically integrate the most relevant keywords into your website copy if possible (pages stuffed with keywords won't fool the search engines and users will hate them). [AnswerThePublic](#) lets you find out what people are searching for in the fields related to your product/service for free.






## Productivity tools

Start-up life can be tough so here are some free tools to help with your marketing activities and beyond.







### DAY-TO-DAY

-  **asana** Workflow tool to keep track of the assignment and status of tasks
-  **Calendly** Online calendar tool to arrange calls without going back and forth
-  **slack** Messaging tool to communicate with team members

### WEBSITE, EMAIL, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

-  **SUMO** Email capture tool to build an email list
-  **mailchimp** Newsletter builder that also allows you to embed signup forms into your website
-  **Buffer** Social media management tool to manage all your accounts in one place

### CONTENT CREATION

-  **Canva** Online graphic design tool to create social media posts, presentations and more
-  **colors** Color palette generator
-  **Audacity®** Audio editing software
-  **Anchor**  
by Spotify Podcast distribution site
-  **zencastr** Online platform for audio and video podcast recording
-  **sonix** AI-powered audio transcription site

## I Scrappy Marketing Checklist

- ☐ Write your mission, vision, and value statements
- ☐ Determine your target audience
- ☐ Create your brand assets and decide on your tone of voice
- ☐ Build your website and optimize for mobile
- ☐ Set up Google Analytics for your website
- ☐ Set up an opt-in email list
- ☐ Create your primary and repurposed content repository (your content bucket)
- ☐ Set up your company social media and invite your connections to follow
- ☐ Tidy up your personal social media accounts and start sharing company content
- ☐ Set KPIs and decide which metrics will help you measure them
- ☐ Regularly review your metrics and look for ways to improve them
- ☐ Update your website to keep it relevant to your progress

## I About Mowbi



### The life science content creation agency

We know how incredible the life science sector is. That's why we want to help everyone in it communicate their message in the most engaging way.

How do we do this? First, we understand the science. Our brilliant technical writers have expertise in many life science niches. Then, we find exciting ways to convey that science to the right audience by working with fabulous creatives who bring fresh ideas, design perspectives, and often have experience working in the life science sector. Throughout the process we work with our clients to understand what they need, how they like to operate, and what we can do to help them achieve their goals.

Mowbi was founded by Maaria Ginai. Throughout her unique life science career spanning academia, marketing, and technology transfer, her love of communicating through different mediums prevailed, inspiring the creation of Mowbi. Maaria has a PhD in Regenerative Medicine and Bioengineering, is the creator of the Have You Ever Wondered YouTube science channel, and currently hosts Mowbi's [Pros and Comms](#) podcast.

## I About Life Science Marketing Radio



### Conversations into content

Life Science Marketing Radio is a podcast, sure. It's also a custom content studio for video, audio, and text.

Chris Conner creates custom content for companies and events in the life sciences that want to attract, grow, and educate an engaged audience of potential customers. A podcast is not the end product. It's the raw material.

Want to be the smartest person in the room at your next marketing meeting? Chris gives you access to the brightest minds and best thinking from around the industry on the LSMR podcast. It is the go-to resource for marketing information in the life sciences.

Prior to LSMR, Chris led global marketing communications programs at Varian, Inc., Agilent Technologies and Thermo Fisher Scientific. He has a BA in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry from The University of Colorado and an MS in Genetics from The University of Utah. He is an author on 6 peer-reviewed publications in the area of infectious disease.