

# Analyst Relations in Digital Health

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How to Accelerate Market Credibility,  
Buyer Trust, and Pipeline Entry Points

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# Executive Summary

In digital health, analyst relations have traditionally been viewed as a milestone for later-stage companies. But that thinking doesn't reflect how health systems actually buy. Today, early-stage solutions face credibility hurdles from day one — and analyst engagement is one of the fastest ways to overcome them.

This report is for digital health founders, go-to-market leaders, and commercial teams navigating how to build trust in a system that doesn't reward newcomers easily. We lay out a practical framework for using analyst relationships as a strategic lever — not a side bet.

You'll learn how analyst firms shape buyer shortlists, how to pick the right firm for your stage and market, and how to engage in ways that actually drive signal. We cover what works (early briefings, peer reviews, and First Look programs), what doesn't (overpolished decks with no customer proof), and why analyst feedback loops can tighten everything from product messaging to board strategy.

We also highlight the common traps — mistaking paid access for influence, showing up too late, or treating analysts like another prospect. And we share a phase-by-phase playbook to help you move from early signal to full-scale research inclusion.

Done right, analyst relations don't just validate your message. They amplify traction, de-risk deals, and shape how you show up in rooms you can't yet enter. This isn't about brand polish. It's about commercial momentum.



# The Role of Analyst Firms in a Distrustful Market

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## Why Analyst Relations Matter Earlier Than You Think

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When we talk to digital health founders, there's often a quiet assumption that analyst relations can wait. After the Series B. After the deck is polished. After a marketing lead is in place to "own it." In our experience, that assumption is exactly where early momentum stalls.

Analysts don't just echo the market — they shape it. And buyers, especially in risk-averse healthcare environments, lean on these third-party signals long before anyone schedules a demo. If your company isn't showing up early — in a KLAS Emerging Tech review or a Gartner vendor note — it may not show up at all. Not because your solution lacks value, but because it doesn't look ready from the outside. That's the difference analyst engagement can make. It converts early traction into credible signal. It validates that your solution matters, and that it's solving real-world problems buyers already recognize.

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## Who Analysts Influence

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Analyst coverage is about signaling relevance to the right buyers:

- From where the CIO sits, a Gartner Hype Cycle mention is a quick way to reduce perceived risk.
- **Private equity** and **venture capital firms** often use KLAS or IDC to validate product-market fit in diligence.
- **Partner networks** — whether payer-backed platforms or care coordination vendors — look for third-party validation when deciding who to integrate or resell.

If you're not in the conversation early, the burden of proof shifts entirely onto your sales team. And in long-cycle industries like healthcare, that slows everything down.

# Mapping Analyst Firms to GTM Stage and Buyer Type

Not all analyst firms serve the same purpose — and that's a good thing. Some firms help you land on a buyer's shortlist. Others help you get ready for that moment. We encourage early-stage companies to think about analyst engagement as a staged progression. The trick is knowing who to talk to — and when.

Firm	Best For	Stage Fit	Buyer Influence
<b>Gartner.</b>	Market strategy, hype cycles	Late Seed–Series B+	Health system executives
	Provider signal, early validation	Seed–Growth	Clinical buyers, diligence partners
<b>FORRESTER®</b>	Bold, mid-market positioning	Mid–Growth	Strategic leadership
	Market sizing, IT intelligence	Early stage and beyond	PE/VC teams, global buyers
	Message clarity, story coaching	Early	Founders, GTM leads
	Analyst report strategy and response guidance	Post-briefing	Submission teams



Gartner and Forrester are what most founders recognize, but for earlier-stage digital health companies, firms like Spotlight AR or KLAS might deliver more immediate value. Spotlight helps you pressure-test your message before you go public with it. KLAS offers early access programs that are trusted by both providers and investors looking for qualitative signal.

IDC, on the other hand, is frequently used by growth-stage companies or international entrants who need credible TAM and SAM narratives to support investor decks and sales planning. If you're asked to prove your market opportunity in a measurable way, IDC gives you the tools to do it.

The Skills Connection is a bit of a specialty player. If you're entering a Magic Quadrant or Wave cycle, they'll help you avoid the common traps. It's not about spinning the story, but about aligning to how analysts interpret readiness and traction.

Bottom line: Analyst firms aren't interchangeable. You're not "working with analysts" — you're building the right kind of credibility for your current stage and future motion.



# Common Analyst Engagement Paths – And What They're Really For

There's a common misunderstanding that analyst relations start and end with the Magic Quadrant. That's not how it works — especially not in healthcare. Most of the real value comes from earlier, more tactical engagement options that help you build trust and credibility over time. Here's how to think about the common paths — and what they're really for.



## Vendor briefings

**Vendor briefings** are usually the first door in. Most firms, including Gartner and Forrester, offer free briefings to vendors. These are not sales pitches. They're opportunities to introduce your solution, describe the problem you solve, and explain how you're different. Analysts may challenge your assumptions, and that's useful. Their job is to represent the buyer's mindset. Your job is to come prepared with evidence, not just vision.



## Peer review programs

**Peer review programs** are increasingly influential. Firms like Gartner Peer Insights and KLAS invite your customers to provide feedback directly. These reviews show up in analyst databases and are often summarized in buyer-facing reports. If you have even a small number of live customers, this is one of the fastest ways to start generating signal.



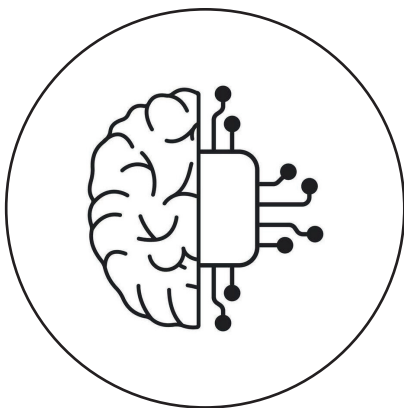
## KLAS's First Look and Emerging Tech reports

KLAS's **First Look and Emerging Tech reports** are early-stage options tailored to healthcare startups. They typically include three to five provider interviews. If your customers are willing to speak candidly, this is a low-cost, high-trust way to show traction — even before you hit commercial scale.



## Research inclusion

**Research inclusion** — like Magic Quadrants or Market Guides — is what many companies aim for, but it usually comes later. You'll need proof points, customer references, and demonstrated market presence. It's a great credibility marker once you're there, but it's not the starting point.



## Diligence

And then there's **diligence**. When a private equity firm calls KLAS or IDC to validate you during an investment process, that conversation carries real weight. Even one analyst's offhand remark — “they're early, but interesting” versus “we're not hearing much” — can tilt the conversation. You won't always see it, but it matters.

The key is not  
to treat these  
engagement paths  
as linear or one-  
size-fits-all.  
Start where you are.  
Build from there.

# The Strategic Value of Analyst Relations in a GTM Motion

When we talk about analyst relations, it's easy to focus just on visibility — getting your name into a report or up on a slide. But the real value comes from how analyst engagement changes the commercial trajectory of your solution. Done right, it helps you cut through noise, earn early trust, and amplify existing wins.

## From a buyer's perspective, analyst input is a filter.

It reduces the noise. Health system leaders are constantly being pitched — sometimes ten, twenty vendors a week. But if your solution is named in a Gartner Market Guide or highlighted by KLAS, it triggers a different response. Not because the analyst firm tells them what to buy. But because it signals you're worth evaluating.

That signal matters even more if your category is still being defined. If you're building something new — a workflow tool, care navigation layer, or hybrid service platform — the first challenge is often credibility. Analyst coverage helps bridge that gap. It provides language and framing that buyers already understand.

## Internally, the engagement sharpens your message.

If your sales team is struggling to explain why your solution matters, analyst feedback can serve as a forcing function. It helps unify your product narrative, tightens your positioning, and can even inform pricing and sales enablement. We've seen teams use analyst summaries in board decks, sales proposals, and investor materials — not as fluff, but as real validation.

And when you win a deal, analyst relationships make it easier to scale that win. A single provider quote that gets picked up in a KLAS summary can spark interest from dozens of health systems. One strong analyst note can open doors in partner networks or accelerate diligence conversations with capital partners.

Put simply: analyst relations aren't a marketing nice-to-have. They're a commercial multiplier — upstream of sales, adjacent to product, and downstream of customer success.



# A Playbook for Early-Stage Digital Health Companies

Most early-stage companies want a step-by-step playbook for analyst engagement. The good news is, it doesn't need to be complicated — but it does need to be grounded in where you actually are, not where you hope to be six months from now. Here's how we break it down.

## Phase 1: Readiness

Before any formal outreach, we recommend confirming a few essentials. You need a working solution — even if it's still evolving. You need at least one or two live deployments, even if they're pilots. And you need a story that links your technology to a real, operational or clinical problem that buyers already care about.

This doesn't mean your solution needs to be perfect. But it does mean you need to be clear about what it does, who it serves, and what the early signals are. If you can't yet articulate that, it's likely too early for a vendor briefing.

## Phase 2: Engagement

Once the basics are in place, you're ready for external engagement. Most analyst firms offer free vendor briefings — that's where to start. These briefings let you introduce your company and explain your differentiation. The best briefings feel like conversations, not pitches.

If you have early customers willing to speak on your behalf, KLAS's First Look or Emerging Tech review is often a strong early option. These programs validate your solution using real-world interviews — and KLAS is trusted by both provider organizations and capital partners. Similarly, peer review programs through Gartner Peer Insights or other platforms can help reinforce your credibility using direct customer input.

## Phase 3: Expansion

Once you've got your foundation in place and initial analyst engagement underway, you can begin aiming for formal inclusion in research. This might mean a Market Guide, a Hype Cycle, or a Magic Quadrant down the road. But timing matters. Research inclusion usually depends on proof points, strong references, and fit within a recognized category.

At this stage, we've seen companies use analyst relationships to support other motions: investor due diligence, commercial partner discussions, sales enablement, even recruiting. When analysts know your story and believe in the problem you're solving, they often become unspoken amplifiers. They'll mention you in calls, add you to reports, and help you stay visible in rooms you may not yet have access to.

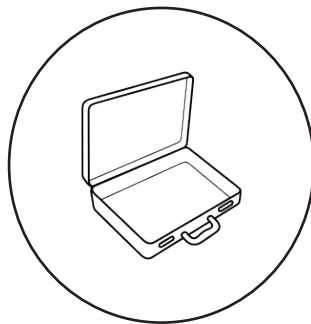
# Common Pitfalls

## – And How to Avoid Them

There are a few traps we see digital health companies fall into when it comes to analyst engagement. Avoiding these can save you time, money, and reputational friction.

1.

**Buying coverage that doesn't stick**



### What it is and how to fix it

It's tempting to think a paid subscription alone will open doors. But analyst trust is built on substance, not spend. If you're not providing clear proof points, referenceable customers, or a compelling take on your category, no subscription will make your story land. Instead, lead with value. Focus on clarity and traction before contracts.

2.

**Pitching like it's a demo**

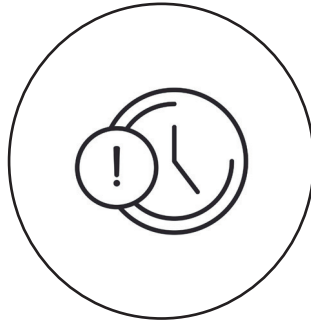


### What it is and how to fix it

Analyst briefings aren't sales calls. You're not there to show off your UI or talk through roadmap minutiae. You're there to explain the problem you solve, how you solve it, and why it matters now. Analysts want context, clarity, and conviction — not a feature tour. Treat them as market shapers, not prospects.

# 3.

## Waiting too long to engage



### What it is and how to fix it

Some teams hold off until everything is “perfect.” But waiting until Series B to build relationships can put you behind competitors who’ve already seeded analyst awareness. You don’t need full scale — you just need a credible story and a customer or two. The sooner analysts understand your position, the more likely they are to reference it when it counts.

**Analyst relations work best when they’re treated as an always-on signal, not a one-time announcement.**



# Analyst Relations as a Commercial Force Multiplier

When analyst relations are done right, they don't just validate your messaging — they unlock momentum across every growth lever you're trying to pull. It's why we frame them not as a visibility effort, but as a commercial force multiplier.

## Sales

**For sales,** analyst recognition shortens time to trust. When your buyer sees you named in a Market Guide or Emerging Tech Brief, it validates that you're worth serious consideration. It doesn't close the deal for you — but it opens the door faster, and reduces friction during internal vetting.

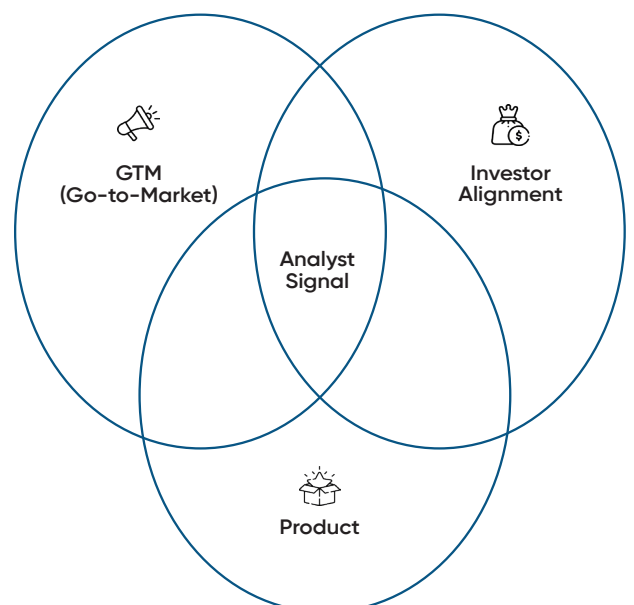
## Team

**For your own team** — especially product and marketing — analyst conversations serve as real-time market feedback loops. They expose message gaps, highlight category confusion, and often reflect back the language buyers actually use. That helps everyone get tighter. It creates consistency from board meetings to pitch meetings to outbound sequences.

The signal is subtle but powerful. When you treat analyst influence like a real part of your GTM strategy, it pays off downstream, again and again.

## Investors

**For investors,** analyst relationships strengthen the narrative. When diligence teams ask who's tracking you or what early traction looks like, a KLAS mention or analyst quote adds credible third-party validation. It shows that what you're building matters beyond your pitch deck.



# About Accretive Edge



**Accretive Edge** is a healthcare go-to-market advisory led by Andy Strunk. We work with digital health companies that need pragmatic strategy and real traction — not more theory. Our clients range from seed-stage founders refining early positioning to growth-stage teams preparing for commercial scale or U.S. market entry.

We help you build a message your buyers understand, a sales strategy your team can execute, and a commercial story your investors can back. Whether you're trying to get into your first five health systems or expand from pilots to scale, we help turn intention into outcomes.

We also advise on analyst engagement, channel strategy, pricing, sales enablement, and partnerships — because go-to-market isn't one lane, and it rarely moves in a straight line.

Learn more at [accretiveedge.com](https://accretiveedge.com).

## About the author



**Andy Strunk** is the founder and CEO of Accretive Edge, where he helps digital health companies turn strategy into revenue. He's worked with early-stage teams, publicly traded companies, and global multinationals — all navigating the complex task of commercializing healthcare innovation in the U.S. market.

He brings deep experience across go-to-market execution, pricing strategy, analyst relations, and health system engagement — always with a sharp point of view and a bias for what works. Andy's background includes senior leadership roles at Google Health, UpToDate, and Swisslog Healthcare. His expertise has been featured in industry publications, GTM strategy playbooks, and on stages from HLTH to HIMSS. He lives in Denver, Colorado.



# Analyst Relations: Briefing Prep Checklist

Before joining an analyst briefing, make sure your team has prepped on the right points. Here's a basic checklist we use with clients:

- ☐ Confirm your messaging is aligned — what problem you solve, for whom, and why now.
- ☐ Select one person to lead the briefing and one to manage follow-up.
- ☐ Know your ask. Are you seeking inclusion, feedback, signal?
- ☐ Prepare a one-pager or briefing deck (no more than 8 slides).
- ☐ Be ready to speak to traction — live customers, usage data, or credible pipeline.
- ☐ Avoid demo-heavy sessions. Use product visuals only if they directly support your positioning.
- ☐ Leave 10–15 minutes for discussion. Analyst feedback is part of the value.
- ☐ Clarify next steps — are you submitting materials, waiting for follow-up, or scheduling a second touch?

The best briefings don't feel like pitches. They feel like insight exchanges. That's what analysts remember.