

Thought Leadership Marketing



WHAT IS THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING? Your customers and prospects want insights into issues they really care about. Thought leadership marketing actively positions you or your firm as an authority, a resource, and a trusted advisor on these issues. When it comes time for your prospects or customers to purchase a product or service related to these issues, you are top-of-mind, the first they turn to for help.

- » Thought leadership marketing offers you a means of differentiating yourself, your firm, your product or service, to give you a competitive advantage.
- » To position yourself as a thought leader you use a variety of marketing techniques, including publishing, direct marketing, social media, public relations, speaking, etc. to build awareness and credibility and to earn your prospects' trust.
- » Thought leadership marketing encourages your audience to think and act — engaging with you over the long term. It's how you pull your prospects and customers through the buying stages — awareness, information, evaluation, purchase, loyalty.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING CONTENT

- » White papers
- » Newsletters
- » Magazines
- » Books
- » Blogs
- » Websites
- » Research reports
- » Social media posts
- » Case studies
- » Videos
- » Press releases
- » Webinars

A **STORY:** You're in business, generally to make money (even for non-profits, this is usually a major goal). You make money by selling products or services, and marketing is the means you use to get folks interested in buying your products or services.

- » You brand your firm so your prospective buyers know what you do, what you stand for, and why they should turn to you when they decide to buy what you offer. They know to turn to you because you've positioned your firm as the one that offers them exactly what they want and need.
- » You set yourself apart from your competition by creating content — advertising, writing articles, speaking at events, writing books, blogging, hosting a website, and engaging in a variety of other tactics — clearly showing your customers that you know what they need and that you've delivered before.
- » You are a thought leader. Your prospects trust you and know they can rely on your products and services. So they buy from you and you make money (the circle is now complete).

THE MARKETING TREE

Sales

A means of making money

Marketing

A means of capturing and nurturing leads that will turn into sales

Branding

A means of making prospective leads aware of the unique aspects of the company, product, or service

Positioning

A means of differentiating the brand from competitors

Thought Leadership Marketing

A means of positioning a company, product, or service

Content Marketing

Tactics used to engage in thought leadership marketing

WHY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING? A poll conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit showed that thought leadership is fast becoming the most widely used business-to-business marketing practice.

- » “The art of B2B marketing itself is going through a radical transformation. The old way of image and brand enhancement through standard advertising is giving way to building concrete business through intellectual engagement, commonly known as thought leadership. Survey respondents and interviewees reveal that thought leadership is becoming the most effective means to attract attention, differentiate capabilities, and spur customers to action.”
- » When asked what their top marketing objectives are over the next 3 to 5 years, 56% responded “Positioning our company as a thought leader.”
- » When asked what will be the best way for providers of services to market to you in the next 3 to 5 years, 43% said “Meetings/conferences,” 41% said “Original research,” and 35% said “Thought leadership surveys and white papers.”

SOURCE: “10 Megatrends in B2B Marketing,” Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008.



BENEFITS OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING

- » Generate leads
- » Differentiate you from competitors
- » Retain customers
- » Open new markets
- » Improve your brand
- » Foster relationships
- » Build trust, credibility
- » Target your market
- » Stay relevant and on the radar
- » More pull — customers come to you

THE FOLLOWING PAGES PRESENT **50 QUESTIONS** you need to ask, and answer, in order to be successful at thought leadership marketing. A complex process, thought leadership marketing requires significant expertise and effort to perform well. How much?

- » If you can answer the questions on the following pages, you'll be well on your way to being successful in each of the five phases of thought leadership marketing: exploring, planning, creating, delivering, and assessing.
- » These 50 questions demonstrate the depth of knowledge you'll need — from clearly understanding why you are creating a thought leadership marketing program to how you go about determining whether you've met your goals.
- » There's one key consideration you must keep in mind when engaging in thought leadership marketing: your audience determines whether you are considered a thought leader, not you. Don't be presumptuous and make pronouncements about your own thought leadership. If you really are a thought leader, your audience will let others know.

What do you need to know? Keep reading.



THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING PHASES

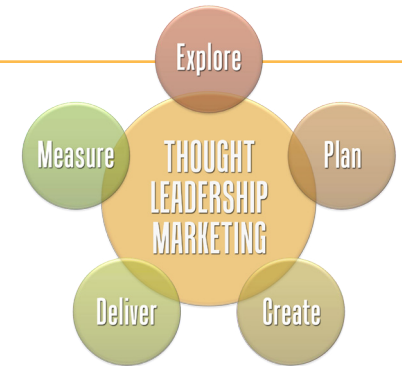
- » Exploring
- » Planning
- » Creating
- » Delivering
- » Assessing

EXPLORING

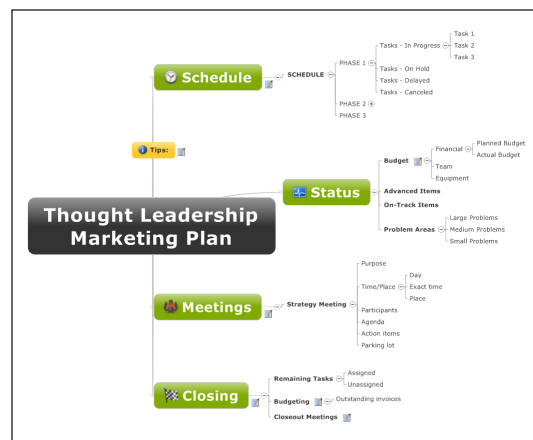
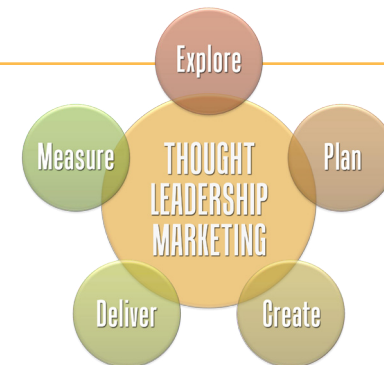


Thought leadership marketing begins with the question *Why?*

- » Why do you or your firm want to be a thought leader? What are you trying to accomplish — what are your goals and objectives? Who are you?
- » What will you need to do in order to meet your goals and objectives? What are your options for creating and delivering thought leadership content?
- » Who is your audience? What issues are important to them? What do they need? How do you know?
- » Will the thought leader be you, someone else in your firm, your firm as a whole. Are you positioning the firm, a product, a service?
- » Do you or your firm have the knowledge and expertise needed on issues that matter to be a thought leader? If not, what can you do about it — learn, hire, partner, outsource?
- » Are you willing to take risks with your thought leadership position (be controversial, live with public attention and judgment)?
- » Who in the firm needs to be involved in your thought leadership marketing program? Who are your stakeholders?
- » How will you stay focused on delivering value? Are you willing to make the long-term investment (time, money, effort) needed to succeed?
- » Will your firm’s culture support thought leadership marketing?
- » How will you ensure that your thought leadership marketing strategy is aligned with your overall marketing and corporate strategies?



PLANNING



Now that you have your thought leadership marketing strategy developed, what tactics will you pursue?

- » Who's responsible for managing the overall thought leadership marketing program, making sure that everything is planned for and seeing that everything gets done according to plan?
- » What thought leadership marketing tactics will you pursue? What is your content marketing strategy?
- » Who will work on what, and are they available when needed? Who is responsible for scheduling and managing these people?
- » What will the work cost, how will it be paid for, and have adequate budgets been allocated to complete all the work?
- » If you need to rely on sources outside your organization, how will you select them? Who will manage them?
- » How is the quality of ongoing work evaluated? If not acceptable, how will you deal with it?
- » What decisions need to be made and who will make them?
- » Are there plans in place describing how you would respond to any risks to your plans?
- » Are you able to collect data on the progress of your program? Are you getting the information you need to make good decisions?
- » Are there processes and procedures in place to help you continuously improve your thought leadership marketing program?

CREATING



You have your thought leadership marketing plan developed — now how do you implement it?

- » Who is going to create your thought leadership content (you, subject matter experts or executives in your firm, a subcontractor)?
- » Whose role is it to develop the ideas before they are put into articles, books, speeches, etc?
- » What issues are you trying to address — what's your point of view, your tone, your style, your position?
- » What research is needed to support your thought leadership position? Who will engage in this research?
- » How will you demonstrate your thought leadership — books, blogs, white papers, speaking, e-mail, etc. — and which is your best choice?
- » What actions do you want from your audience? Do you know what different content types are best for pulling your prospects through the buying cycle?
- » Do you have the capability to design and produce the content types needed to meet your marketing goals? If not, how will you get it?
- » If you need to rely on sources outside your organization, how will you select them? Who will manage them?
- » Who in your organization needs to review and/or approve content? How will you manage this review process?
- » And remember, all this work is constrained by a budget, a schedule, a scope of work, and a certain level of quality expected — who's watching that you meet these constraints?



DELIVERING



You now have thought leadership content — how do you reach your audience?

- » How will you determine which marketing channels to use to reach your audience? Do you know all the publishing, direct marketing, social media, public relations, event, speaking, and advertising channels that are available to you?
- » If you use multiple channels, how will you integrate the content so you deliver a consistent message?
- » Do you target your market (can you?) and possibly deliver different versions of your thought leadership content to different targets?
- » Do you sell your thought leadership content? If so, at what price? Do you give it away? If so, how much of it?
- » Who's responsible for the ongoing management of delivery, making sure that everything is getting done according to plan?
- » Do you have the expertise needed to deliver your message effectively? If not, how do you get it?
- » How will you manage subcontractor relationships? Who evaluates the relationship and whether or not it should continue?
- » Can you partner with others to reach your audience?
- » Do you know the various costs in using different marketing channels?
- » How will you know which delivery channel is best — in terms of getting results, being cost effective, and maintaining your brand image?

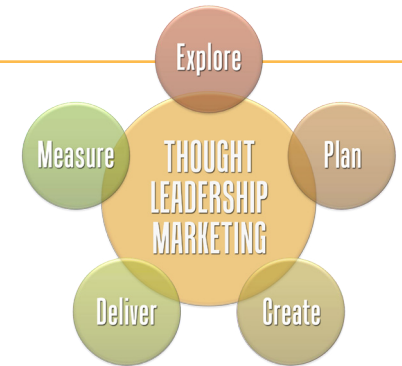


ASSESSING



Your audience has seen your thought leadership content — how do you determine whether it's doing what you hoped it would do?

- » How will you know if you're meeting your goals, getting the results you projected?
- » Do you know how to measure the performance of your thought leadership marketing tactics?
- » Can you tell if your audience understands what you are saying? What they think about your message? How its changed the way they think and act?
- » Will you know whether you have the reach you want — How many prospects received your message? Who they are? Whether they're the right audience? How many times they have “touched” your content?
- » Can you build in ways for your audience to actively engage with you? Are you prepared to deal with the feedback you get?
- » Do you have a means to convert prospects to leads and leads to quality leads? Can you gather information about them?
- » Can you tell if your thought leadership marketing is helping you retain customers? Whether they are continuing to engage with you?
- » Do you have the data you need, in the format you need, to provide information to others in your firm that explains the value of your thought leadership marketing program?
- » Can thought leadership marketing be ingrained into your firm's culture?
- » Do you know how to improve your thought leadership marketing program?



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO? There are many ways to demonstrate your knowledge to position yourself as a thought leader. You can show that you know-how, know-that, know-what, or know-why.

Here are some actions you can take.

- » Conduct original research that highlights industry challenges and best practices to meet those challenges.
- » Demonstrate proven expertise in solving problems that are currently challenging your audience and clearly show how you solved those problems for others and delivered significant business results.
- » Develop a well-researched idea that addresses something your audience never really thought about and point out to them how it's relevant to their issues.
- » Create a clear and practical way to address an industry problem that's different from existing and competitive approaches.
- » Establish a strong point of view on an issue that sets you apart and makes your audience think about the issue and engage with you.
- » Offer deep, research-based insight into market trends.
- » Target your market influencers with any of the above thought leadership marketing initiatives.



LINKS TO FIRMS THAT DO THOUGHT LEADERSHIP MARKETING WELL

- » *PM Solutions*
- » *Cognizant*
- » *Capco*
- » *Tellabs*
- » *Jump Associates*
- » *Unisys*
- » *Booz & Company*
- » *Wipro Technologies*
- » *KPMG*
- » *Egremont Group*
- » *Novantas*
- » *WCG Company*
- » *Xantus Consulting*
- » *Right Management*



- » Pennypacker & Associates can help you with each step in the thought leadership marketing process to insure that you get the results you expect.
- » Call us at 610.883.7988 for a free consultation.
- » For more information visit thinkpennypacker.com.