

BEACON B2B^{PR}

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

How to become an industry thought leader
A practical guide to getting started





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INTRODUCTION TO THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BEACON

Thought leadership – your B2B superpower

While the term “thought leader” might sound like another corporate buzzword, the truth is that, when it’s done right, thought leadership can transform your brand. It can position you and your business as leaders in your industry, open doors to new opportunities – and build lasting trust with the audiences who matter most.

Of course, becoming a leading expert in your field doesn’t happen overnight. A lot of work goes into creating a thought leadership strategy and becoming a trusted name in your space. And it starts by simply getting out there – by blogging and writing articles about the topics you want to be known for.

Over the last decade, the team at EC-PR has spent plenty of time observing what it takes to be a thought leader and what the good ones have in common. My team and I have worked together to build the profile of many clients, and I’ve been lucky enough to work with some of the most prominent business leaders today.

> [Net Zero Thought Leadership Campaign | EC-PR Case Study](#)

> [How to develop a B2B thought leadership strategy | EC-PR](#)

So, if you’re looking to build your thought leadership and lead your industry, here are six crucial steps you’ll need to get started:

Liz Churchman

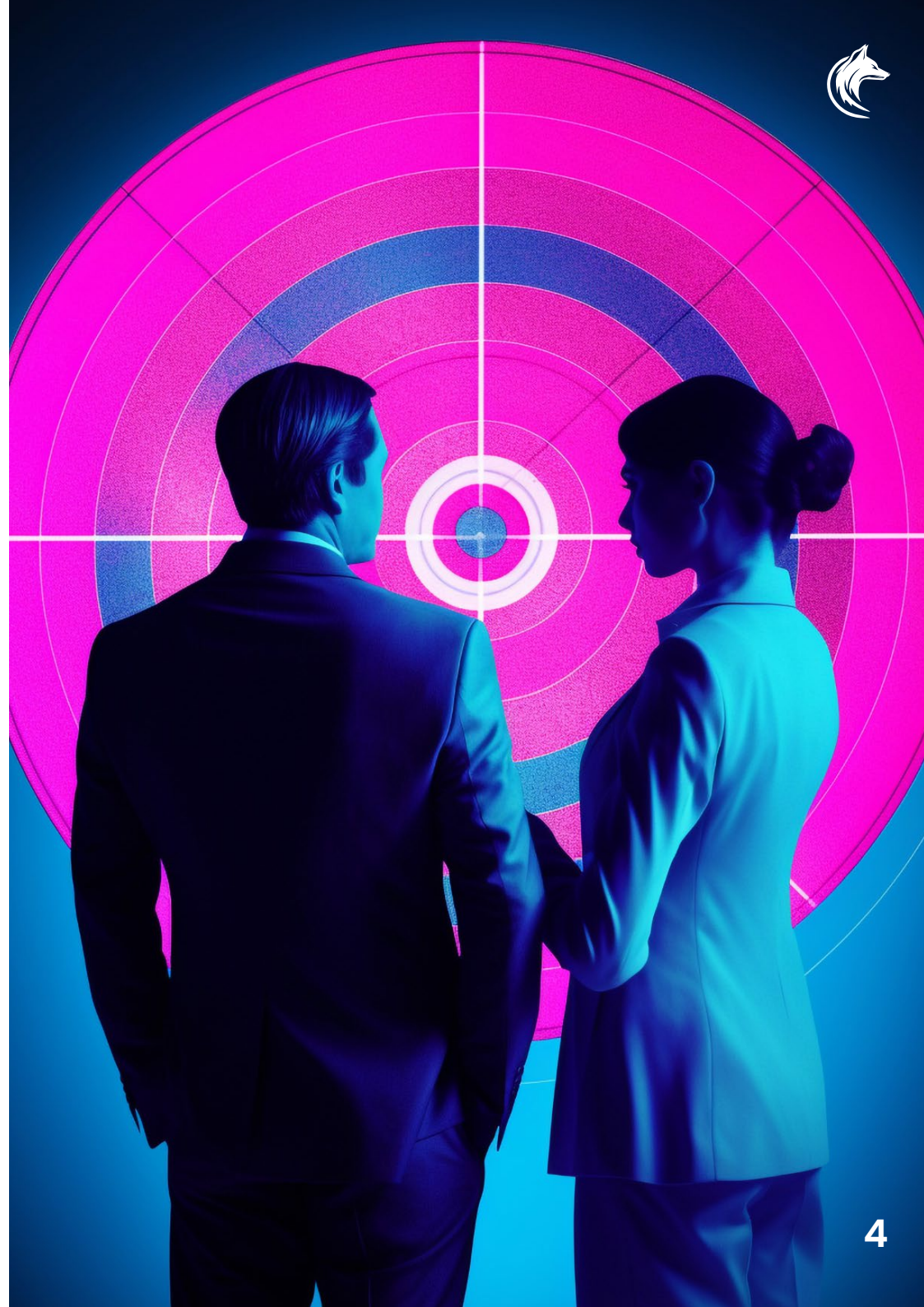
Deputy Managing
Director, EC-PR





STEP ONE

Figure out what
you're an expert in





STEP ONE

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Figure out what you're an expert in

- Honesty pays when you're starting out. Just like anyone else, you don't know everything. But that's ok.
- Great thought leaders understand their niche. They know where their expertise is most helpful and what their audience values, and they connect those two. Ask yourself: What do I love? What have I built my career around? What fulfils me? What am I more passionate about than my peers?
- If talking about your chosen subject is a chore, the chances are you won't engage with all the profile-raising opportunities that come your way. Passion shows – and being enthusiastic and committed will get your audience listening.



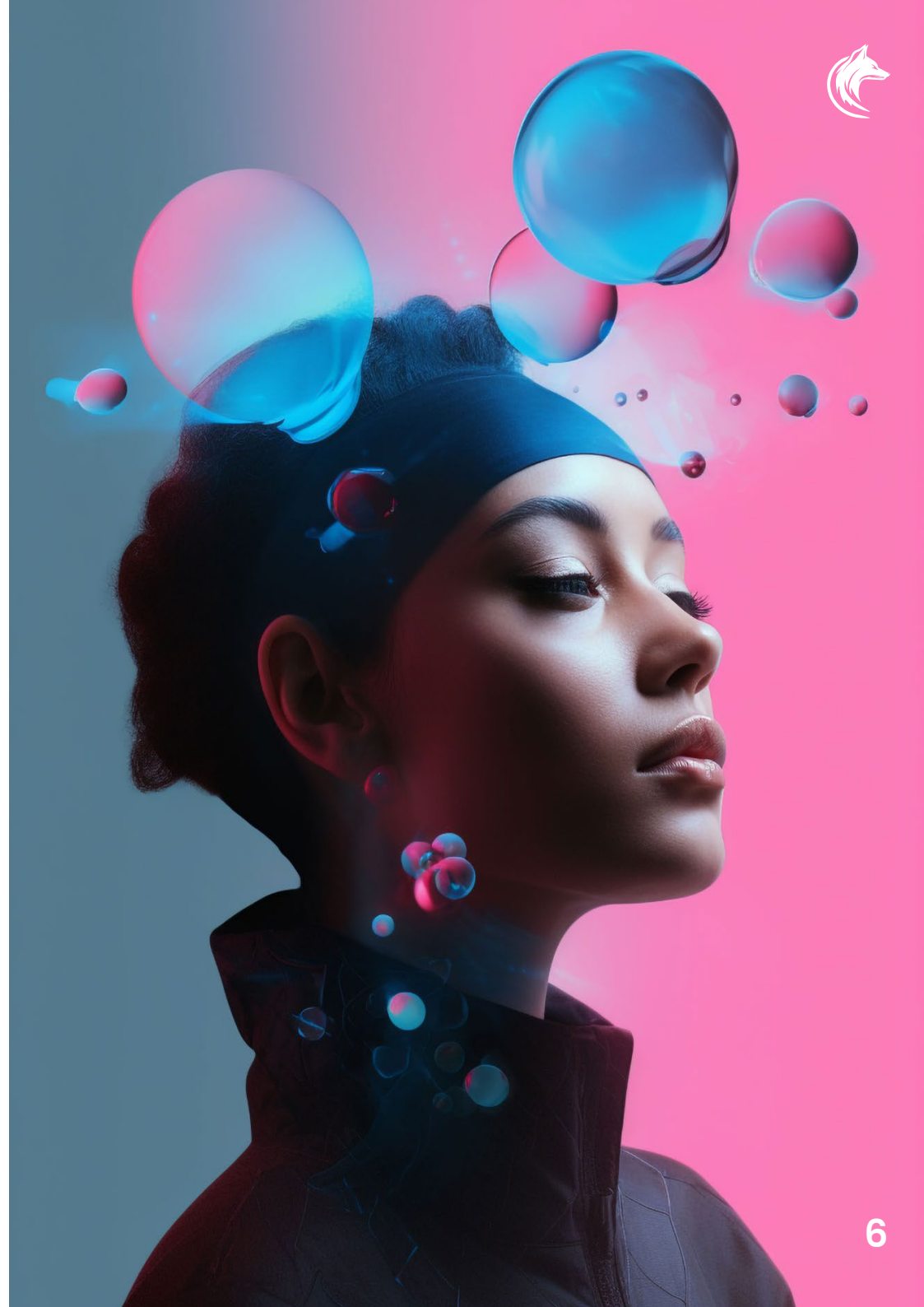
Statistics on thought leadership in marketing.

Decision makers consume thought leadership content for three reasons: keeping up to date with the latest thinking, gaining insights into key business trends, and discovering new products to support the organisation.

Edelman, 2021

STEP TWO

Deciding your themes





STEP TWO

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Deciding your themes

Authentic thought leadership isn't about who you are and what you do; It's the expert insight and informed opinion that matter (and it usually doesn't involve a sales pitch). Topics can include:

- 1 What will happen in the industry where you work over the next six months?
- 2 What challenges might your customers face?
- 3 What advice and counsel can you offer to tackle issues and ensure success?
- 4 Why is it important this issue is spoken about right now?

Once you've built a bank of topics you want to talk about, research is critical. Look for proof points to back up your arguments – which often come in the shape of analyst reports, industry statistics, research, and more. And look at who else is talking about the topics you want to cover. If there's lots of noise in a particular space, how will you manage to stand out from the crowd?



STEP THREE

Who do you want to speak to, and how can you reach them?





STEP THREE

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Who do you want to speak to,
and how can you reach them?

This is an important one. You are probably clear about who your target audience is and their role in the decision process – but how do you get your thought leadership in front of them?

Consider which media channels and outlets your target audience respects and trusts, and more importantly what do they regularly consume? These are the critical questions, and you may find you have a couple of answers suggesting more than one media channel. Your list may include:

- Industry analysts
- Industry media (third-party owned channels print, broadcast, and podcast)
- Industry events
- Business networking
- LinkedIn
- Company blog



Your thought leadership status will grow with time, provided you are consistent and your material compelling. So, at the outset, you might select a media channel in which you can completely control what appears and how often, such as LinkedIn, and another media channel to which you aspire to become a regular contributor, such as a respected magazine. The former will build your familiarity and trust through regular exposure the latter will build your credibility and gravitas.

This will vary by time pressures, the device we use, how stressed we are, whether we are actively or passively 'scrolling,' and where we are consuming the media. To reach your target audience, keep your communications fresh, and execute your campaigns and content in multiple formats, and various durations, for print, video, audio, and broadcast.



Optimising your LinkedIn profile and posting about your specialist subject at least three times a week is one way to establish yourself as an expert in your field.

LinkedIn boasts over a billion business decision-makers on its platform.

LinkedIn, 2022



STEP FOUR

Find your voice





STEP FOUR

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Find your voice

Not the best writer in the world? It doesn't matter – finding your authentic voice is much more critical. Worry less about being word-perfect and more about sounding like you. Imagine speaking to your colleagues and peers and replicating how you'd talk in person.

Your tone is essential in the way you write, too. While in thought leadership pieces, you're generally imparting knowledge or expertise; it's crucial not to be patronising or talk down to your audience. Ensure you maintain an expert, friendly and engaging approach in your writing.



Statistics on thought leadership in marketing.

47% of B2B decision makers say that thought leadership content led them to discover and purchase from companies that are not widely considered industry leaders.

Edelman, 2021



STEP FIVE

More is more





STEP FIVE

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More is more

Now is the time to get prolific. It's not enough to blog once and hope everyone you want to read it does. Securing a reputation for having expert opinions means building a bank of content and establishing that you know your stuff, time and again.

Stuck for something to write? Scan the news agenda and piggyback onto the most topical issues. Look, too, for what's happening at trade shows or events – have you got something to say about the most recent announcements? How about analyst reports? Are the experts predicting something which you agree or disagree with? Have your say. Be careful not to 'competitor bash' though – swiping at your rivals is never a good look.



STEP SIX

Reach out





STEP SIX

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Reach out

When you've begun creating content, it's time to reach out and tell people about it. If you have a PR team, chances are they are already pitching journalists with your comments and opinions from you. The closer you can work with them, the better – tell your PR team about your objectives, what you want to achieve, and why. They can then identify target media publications and journalists to help you achieve your goals fastest.

It is also worth considering reaching out to your network, both passive connections and contacts who have already successfully been on this journey. Locate influencers in your niche to learn from them and build relationships. Follow them on LinkedIn and comment on their posts. As you do so, provide new perspectives and meaningful insights, not just bland comments.

Another way to initiate a relationship with an influencer on LinkedIn is to offer your assistance rather than ask for help. Offering to help them with a campaign or contribute to an article can go a long way toward establishing a connection.



When articles are published, you must post about them on your LinkedIn page and tag the publication as a way of thanks. A show of gratitude on social media goes a long way to building long-term relationships with that publication, and they will appreciate the added reach your post will give them.

Share your article far and wide. E-mail the article to old and new colleagues and people within your network.



89% of B2B decision makers believe that thought leadership content can help change their perception of an organization.

Edelman, 2019



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THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Feeling inspired? It's time to get going. If you're sitting down to write your first piece, then refer back to this simple methodology to ensure it's a success.

RESEARCH

- 1 Focus on something you are passionate about.
- 2 Research your area properly so that you are informed on different possible perspectives.
- 3 Evaluate which angles have the most merit, document these.
- 4 Develop your opinion with appropriate proof points.
- 5 Think about visual representations of your idea (graphs, infographics etc).
- 6 Identify the audiences you want to share your idea with.





FORMULATE

- 1 Write 1000+ words for your first opinion piece (other formats like blogs or even videos can come later).
- 2 Share the draft for review and constructive feedback.
- 3 Revise your draft based on the feedback.

COMMUNICATE

- 1 Get your articles out there - on X, LinkedIn, and your website.
- 2 Research influencers you'd like to reach and tell them you've written; via X or other platforms they use.
- 3 Ask for opinion, feedback, and thoughts.
- 4 Comment on articles from others to create a dialogue.





SUCCESS STORIES

ENERGY • ENVIRONMENT

“EC-PR never fails to deliver. Their approach to thought leadership, both in terms of crystallising our initial ideas and then drafting good quality content, is second to none. Given how time-poor our subject matter experts are when it comes to PR, it was a breath of fresh air to have the EC-PR team support us and deliver some great coverage in our target media. We’re looking forward to our next campaign to continue improving our share of voice on key net zero and ESG issues.”



Ruth Fain, Associate Director, ITPENERGISED



- **Challenges:** ITPENERGISED needed to increase awareness amongst their target audiences and, in turn, fill their sales funnel. However, ITPENERGISED’s subject matter experts were time poor, and existing relationships with trade media were very limited and needed to be nurtured.
- **Design:** Our task was to secure and generate thought leadership content attributed to ITPENERGISED’s experts, while keeping the onus off them in terms of demands on their time. The approach we took to achieve this involved EC-PR shouldering as much of the responsibility as possible, while only requesting the client’s time when it was absolutely necessary, such as at the points of information-gathering and final approval.
- **Distinction:** 100% of the thought leadership article ideas we pitched resulted in secured coverage. As a result, ITPENERGISED’s thought leadership coverage on net zero appeared in top-tier and highly targeted media including:
 - Investment Week
 - Energy Voice
 - Renewable Energy magazine
 - Offshore Wind Journal

For more detail on the elements of the campaign go to [Net Zero Thought Leadership Campaign | EC-PR Case Study](#)



SUCCESS STORIES

ESG TRANSFORMATION • INDUSTRIAL MINERALS • IT • MINING

“EC-PR has helped us build awareness through quality thought leadership coverage in global trade publications. Our brand credibility was further strengthened through an industry round table event attended by a high-profile panel of industry experts and influencers.”



*Pieter Neethling,
Segment Director –
Mining Operations,
Seequent*



- **Challenges:** Seequent needed to expand its thought leadership programme and visibility in the entire mining sector. It was looking to increase its share of voice in global publications and position itself alongside mining associations and industry bodies. It was looking to build credibility and be known as the industry leader across the whole lifecycle of mining operations – from discovery to restoration.
- **Design:** EC-PR designed a strategic campaign, starting with a communication strategy that included customer base validation to ensure alignment with customer perceptions and ambitions. A Brilliant Ideas Bank was created for media engagement, leading to successful article placements. A key campaign feature was an online thought leadership roundtable with industry experts, resulting in the creation of multiple content formats like an insights paper and a LinkedIn Live event.
- **Distinction** – The Seequent mining campaign achieved significant reach, engaging a total audience of 1.38 million with a high average Domain Authority of 54 in press coverage. The innovative delivery method, including an online roundtable, bolstered Seequent’s thought leadership and brand visibility. It also provided versatile content for future use to prolong the campaign’s impact and support ongoing thought leadership and brand awareness efforts.

For more detail on the elements of the campaign go to [Seequent | Thought Leadership PR Case Study | EC-PR](#)



CONTACT US

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At EC-PR, we are passionate about B2B communication and pursuing our instinct to make tech brands distinct. We believe your work is amazing and we want to help you tell the world how extraordinary it is.



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