

A B2B INTEGRATED PR INSIGHT | 2.0



How to become an industry thought leader

A practical guide to getting started



EC-PR | B2B Public Relations

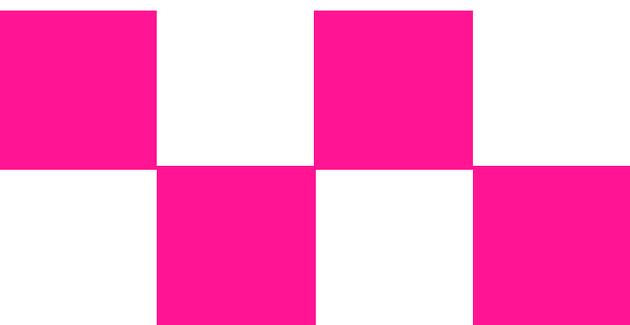
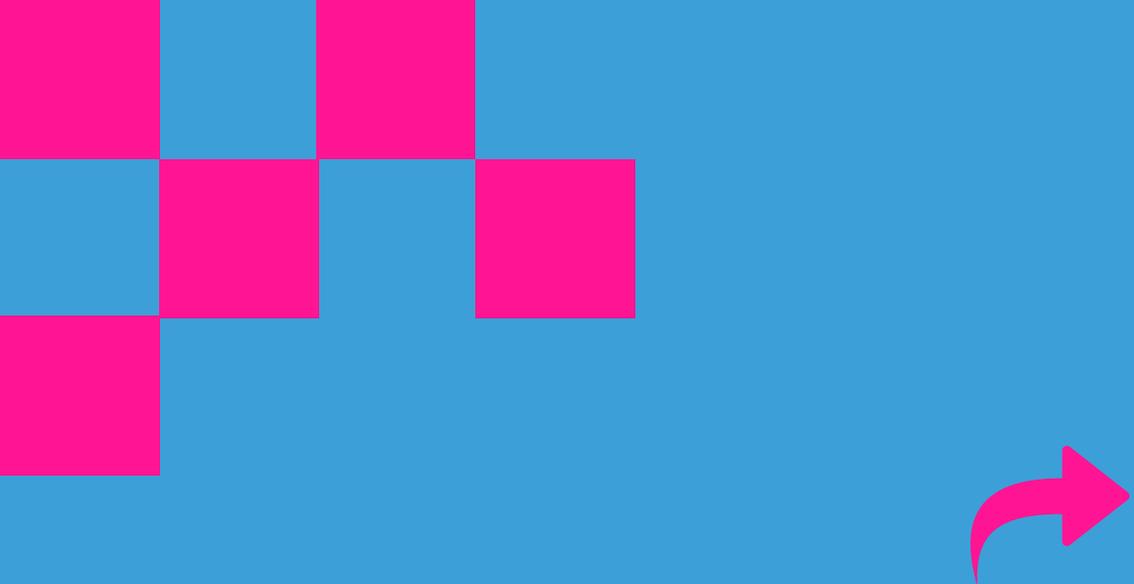


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INTRODUCTION TO THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

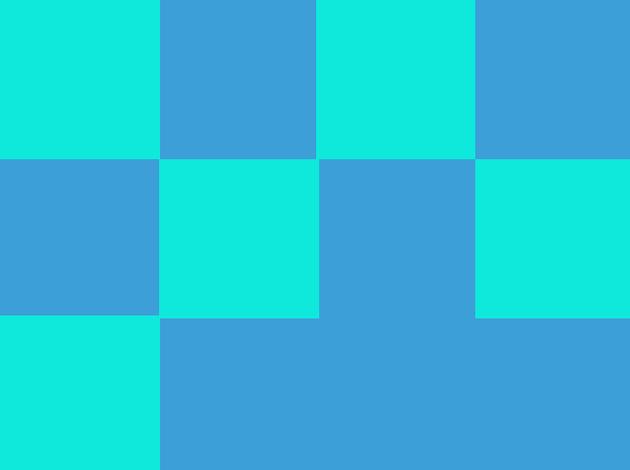
Thought Leadership - Your B2B Superpower

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. There's a lot of work that 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. We have worked together to build the profile of many clients, and we've been lucky enough to work with some of the most prominent leaders in business today.





SIX CRUCIAL STEPS TO GET STARTED



#1 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 fulfills 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 engaged will get your audience listening.

Statistics on thought leadership in marketing

Three main reasons decision makers consume thought leadership content: keeping up-to-date with the latest thinking, gaining insights into key business trends, and discovering new products to support the organization.

(Edelman, 2021)



#2 Work out what you want to say.

True thought leadership isn't about who you are and what you do, it's the expert opinions that matter (and it usually doesn't involve a sales pitch).

- What's going to happen in the industry where you work over the next six months?
- What challenges might your customers face?
- What advice and counsel can you offer on how to tackle issues and ensure success?
- 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 out there talking about the topics you're keen to cover. If there's lots of noise in a particular space, how will you manage to stand out from the crowd?



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

This is an important one. Who you want to reach is probably fairly obvious on the surface – you know your potential customers, who holds the purchasing power within a prospect organisation and who’s important to get in front of, but think further afield too. Who influences your customers – and can you reach them? Would it help your cause if the industry analysts in your sector considered you a thought leader? Or if a journalist in the space was heralding you were the next big thing?

Once you know who you want to talk to, look at where you can reach them. Do you need to be guest blogging on a website that’s well read by CEOs? Or pitching to talk about your topic at an industry event where your prospects congregate?

Once you’ve got this nailed, what format do you want your thought leadership to take? We know, for example, that different content is consumed at different points in the B2B purchasing journey. People actively looking to buy prefer infographics that are crammed full of stats – whereas those who are further up the sales funnel look for long-form articles which explore a subject in depth. A range of different content styles, lengths, and even media formats – might help you cover all bases.



#4 Find your voice.

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

Tone is important 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, but friendly and collegiate 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)



#5 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 – taking a swipe at your rivals is never a good look.

Statistics on thought leadership in marketing

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

(Edelman, 2019)



#6 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 comment and opinion from you. The closer you can work with them the better – tell them about your objectives for writing and blogging – what you want to achieve and how they can help you get there.

You also need to consider reaching out to influencers who already have an established connection with their audience. Locate influencers in your niche to learn from them and build relationships. Follow them on social media and comment on their posts and tweets. As you do so, provide new perspectives and meaningful insights, not just bland comments.

Another way to initiate a relationship with an influencer 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.

Statistics on thought leadership in marketing

94% of journalists prefer to receive pitches via one-on-one email. On the other hand, 66% dislike receiving pitches via phone.

(Muck Rack, 2021)



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.





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