

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a bright, glowing orb. The orb is the source of a strong light, creating a lens flare effect with rainbow-colored streaks. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The hand is in silhouette, with the fingers wrapped around the orb.

Writing To Build Thought Leadership

Thought leadership is the ability to provide original insight and to organize information into actionable knowledge.

Customers and peers actively seek the opinion of leading thinkers in their field to assist them with the current problems that face their industries and the issues that challenge their organizations. Become one of these go-to thinkers by making effective use of online and offline media to communicate your subject matter expertise.

Written publications reinforce your thought leadership when they can be characterized in the following ways:

1. Their scope and breadth promotes meaningful insights.
2. Their format addresses readers' learning preferences.
3. Their content meets readers' expectations of credibility and expertise.

Produce materials in the format that best highlights the type of knowledge you wish to convey:

- * **Articles** elaborate a particular point.
- * **Books** present an extensive compilation of information on a particular topic.
- * **Booklets** are tip sheets expanded to include more depth and detail.
- * **Case studies** are discussions of a technique, method, process, activity, incentive or reward that shows itself effective in the delivery of a particular outcome.
- * **Manuals** serve as reference books on a particular subject and, if necessary, provide policy information and/or detailed instructions on specific procedures.
- * **Tip sheets** offer short, to-the-point insights or how-tos on a particular subject.
- * **Reports** provide detailed coverage of a particular subject matter.
- * **White papers** offer in-depth explanations of industry and market trends that face your customers.

In order to become a subject matter expert (SME), a leading thinker in your field, you must count on customers to value your knowledge. One way to position yourself as a thought leader is to publish on a regular basis. Frequent publication indicates that you consider both the knowledge and the distribution of it a priority. Remember, when you promote your subject matter expertise, you also guide your customers toward becoming thought leaders.



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Timing and Thought Leadership



Thought leaders are expected to provide original insight. One of the components of originality is to be recognized as the first, the innovator. That makes the timing of the dissemination of your knowledge critical!

Therefore, being first to publish is essential to the reinforcement of your thought leadership. How can you be first? React quickly to market news by publishing your opinions via blogs and RSS news feeds. Distribute e-mail and press release updates. Grant interviews. Write letters to the editors of the publications your customers and potential customers read.



Another expectation of thought leadership is the ability to organize information such that readers can easily 1) interpret the meaning, 2) apply the knowledge to real-world problems and 3) use the insight to add perspective to their challenges.

Clear, concise and comprehensive writing is essential to the achievement of leadership thinker status. Share your knowledge through the use of explanatory manuals, insightful case studies, interpretive articles, illustrative e-books and other publications that allow for in-depth explanations and analyses.

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