



5 Ways Thought Leadership Can Make the Best Brand Better

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If you could team up with any rich, powerful business partner in the world, who would you choose?

Donald Trump? Oprah? Warren Buffet? Mark Zuckerberg?

It's fascinating so many of us would list the same few people given a single prompt. And it's even more interesting that the branding mechanism behind your choice could play a pivotal role in establishing and expanding your business.

These four business icons have two important things in common. First, each is the best in his or her industry. But since being the best won't necessarily make you successful, it's the second trait that is the most important: each of these icons has successfully developed and implemented a targeted thought leadership strategy. And the best news of all? You can use the same strategy to boost your company's reputation and bottom line.

Well-executed thought leadership elevates the way prospective customers, organization members, and media experts perceive and engage with your business. By positioning your company as an expert, you gain unprecedented control over the education of your customer and the world's perception of your brand. This influence works on both a global and individual scale, generating a widespread respect for your brand, a deep connection with each customer, and a far more compelling marketing funnel.

How Well-Executed Thought Leadership Boosts Your Brand

Thought leadership refers to the intentional process of positioning your organization as the leading source of industry trends, insight, and expertise. It employs the artful use of content assets and strategic digital networking to convey your business's authentic leadership and long-term stability within a given market. And it could be the secret weapon that brings powerful results to your digital marketing efforts.

But what does thought leadership really do for a brand? And how can your company benefit from it? Here's look at five cardinal benefits that arise from effectively executed thought leadership:

#1 Thought leadership positions your company at the forefront of modern B2B marketing.

Over 70 percent of B2B customers research their business purchases online before doing anything else.¹ And by 2015, 70 percent of all demand generation is likely to come from content marketing strategies.² These numbers indicate that content marketing and thought leadership are not trends, and they are not to be ignored. Whether you choose to participate or not, your brand's digital footprint will be judged by these modern content marketing standards.

If you have any intention of influencing your target B2B customer, then you need to engage in a content marketing strategy that will establish your brand's thought leadership within your industry. If you don't, then your competition will drown you out with their own efforts, and you simply will not exist online. And companies that don't exist online might as well not exist offline, either.

#2 Thought leadership allows you to spend less on a greater ROI.

In business and in sales, you know that your network is everything. The digital marketing landscape works in much the same way. When you're well known for your industry, it speaks volumes about your value as a company. It leads directly to increased visibility, influence, and access to your target market.³ And when you are a trusted resource for every stakeholder in the buying process (to include your customers, industry analysts, and everyone in between), you're spending less time selling and more time providing those valuable services to your customers.⁴

¹ [B2B Buyers Prefer Short Content; Rely Heavily on Google Searches](#) (Marketing Profs)

² [The 8 Pillars of Demand Generation for Modern B2B Marketers](#) (AdAge)

³ [The Lifetime ROI of Thought Leadership](#) (Influence & Co)

⁴ [Why Thought Leadership Is Your Most Valuable Asset](#) (Marketo)

While thought leadership appears to have a high up-front price tag in terms of resources and time, its ROI is uncommonly competitive in the long run.⁵ For starters, investing in the thought leadership process involves a clear list of expenses. These expenses are not calculated as investments, but rather one-time costs that result in the creation of long-term, recurrently useful assets. Posting these assets on your own site provides unlimited value for your website visitors and your demand generation funnel. And assets posted off-site (on other high-profile websites, for example) continue to send you traffic and build your authority without any ongoing expenses.

#3 Thought leadership lets you build an authentic industry voice through digital networking.

Your competitors source relevant information and significant trends from top blogs and publishing institutions within your industry. This is how they stay informed enough to make decisions about their own business and the future of the industry. Thought leadership best practices allow you to infiltrate this relationship and establish yourself as a trusted source of information and perspective. When you enter into this conversation by guest posting or sponsoring a popular, reputable blog, you become a part of the information and decision-making equation.

Thought leadership also allows you to reach prospective customers in a meaningful way. When you create a platform for your business with a reliable context and flow of content, you're able to establish an authentic voice for your company. By sharing this voice in a strategic and genuine way, you can position yourself in a place of respect and authority for customers researching solutions to their problems. This influence leads to increased connection and authority, which in turn leads to an increased market share.⁶

⁵ [Why ROI Is Often Wrong For Measuring Marketing Impact](#) (Forbes)

⁶ [5 Ways Thought Leadership Puts You In The News](#) (Forbes)

#4 Thought leadership builds long-term content assets that convert.

Strategic thought leadership content assets could include any of the following written, visual, verbal, social, and interactive content marketing channels:

- On-site blog posts
- Off-site blog posts
- eBooks and resource guides
- Case studies
- Email marketing newsletters
- Infographics
- SlideShares
- Social media updates
- Webinars
- YouTube videos

Each asset speaks to a unique need or preference within your customer base. By selecting targeted assets for targeted content efforts, you meet your prospective customer on their level, providing a comfortable, authentic brand experience. And once created and posted online, these assets do not expire – they provide a living history of who you are and what you have to offer.

However, putting these content assets on your to-do list won't help you convert your prospective customers into active clients. To be effective, all of your marketing efforts need to work together towards one end goal. Each asset must be created and promoted with a unique target customer in mind. And through this carefully thought-out process, you'll have useful, effective content assets that help guide prospective customers through your sales funnel more quickly.

#5 Thought leadership establishes an authentic, desirable company personality.

Too often when companies achieve a certain level of success they sink into their own corporate culture and stop presenting a personality to the public. But this is a

grave mistake. Customers trust companies that offer a real connection. And a real connection doesn't come from corporate-speak. It comes from injecting authentic expressions of personality into your marketing and branding efforts.⁷

With every content asset, you have the opportunity to show your customers who you are and uniquely differentiate yourself from other faceless brands. And while it may be tempting to duplicate the tried and true methods of your peers, if you do so they will remain your peers indefinitely (with the equal market share to prove it). Thought leadership can help you re-align your corporate personality with your genuine brand personality and turn this personality into a valuable tool that helps your brand stand out from a crowd of competitors.

Are you carefully and intentionally building a reputation and digital footprint for your company? If not, consider how you would approach a thought leadership strategy to develop an industry voice worth listening to, make the most of modern B2B marketing, and greatly increase the effectiveness and value of your content marketing strategy. Carefully craft and target each step of the process to reap the rewards of an authentic position of leadership.

⁷ ['I'm a Mac' -- so what? Study finds way to measure brand personality appeal](#) (Science Daily)