

Thought Leadership

**A differentiation strategy for those who want
to be seen as a market leader**



What is thought leadership

Thought Leadership is an effective tool for companies operating in B2B or technology environments, especially those where products and solutions are seen as somewhat commoditised.

Here's a quick run-down on what Thought Leadership is and what it takes to effectively implement.

Thought Leadership is a means of differentiating your company from others in your field by being seen and heard as informative, innovative, challenging and relevant to current industry issues and challenges.



What is thought leadership

Thought Leadership is personal - it centers on your company spokesperson. As such, this requires a genuine commitment from that person to:

- be up-to-date on what the media is covering in the way of issues
- have innovative - even contentious – views
- be prepared to take some flack - not everyone will agree with those views
- be available - both for media and for other activities that build Thought Leadership

Thought Leadership Tools

Although predominately personal, Thought Leadership activities include some specific written materials. Key among these are:

- Case Studies - show how your company helped another solve a problem or gain a competitive edge. They usually follow a three step process of 'situation, solution and results'.
- White Papers - a means of mounting a case for your company's vision and product strategy. A similar three step process to case studies, but this time looking at 'problem, process and payoff'.
- Opinion Pieces - by-lined articles that contain a unique view of a current problem or issue.

Thought Leadership Tools

On the personal side, your spokesperson needs to be committed to allocating time for activities such as:

- Media engagement - informal meetings with individual editors and key journalists to discuss current topics and issues. This is undertaken not to gain immediate coverage, but rather to give media an idea of what you can comment on when they are writing articles and features.
- Speaking opportunities - a means of bypassing media to a degree and communicating directly with your customers and prospects.
- Media requests - those times when media phone to obtain an opinion of quote for articles being written



thought leadership in new media

Today, people are looking for more and more information and answers on the Web. For this reason, a complete Thought Leadership program should also include:

Your company website - the materials you develop for your Thought Leadership program should be made readily available on your corporate website. Remember that the leadership is often linked to the spokesperson, so make sure that is reflected in how you present the material on site.

Blogs - do a search to see if there are web blogs dealing with your industry and the issues you wish to challenge or champion. If there are, then consider creating your own and having your materials available for discussion.



thought leadership in new media

Thought Leadership is more than a bullet point on your PR plan.

It should be a comprehensive program of activities that are budgeted for in terms of written materials and spokesperson time.

If you have not undertaken Thought Leadership as a total program up until now, consider treating it as a project in your next budget period - that way you will be more likely to maximise its effect and should find it easier to obtain spokesperson buy-in.

resources

From PR Influences - Australia's most comprehensive PR reference source - written and produced by Network Communications.

Network Communications provides a full range of marketing and Marcomms support services to Australian industrial, B2B and technology companies.

For further information: OnlinePR@networkpr.com.au

