



Thought Leadership Takes More Than Experience 9.15.20

Thank you to our panelists!

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Who is a Thought Leader?

- NOT someone who calls themselves out as a “maven, guru, expert, thought leader”
- IS someone others naturally turn to for their expertise and insights on a specific subject. Someone with a depth of knowledge that can contribute new perspectives on an issue.
- Once you do the work and truly have expertise, share that knowledge selflessly with others to educate and inform.

What are the qualities of an effective thought leader?

- A true “Subject Matter Expert” (SME) should have hard and soft skills.
- Hard skills as validated by educational and/or hands-on life experiences.
- Soft skills such as strong and clear communication about your topic.
- Have clear goals:
 - Why do you want to be a thought leader?
 - May be establishing your brand for business promotional reasons
 - May be trying to assert corporate leadership
 - Reputation management

- Lead generation
 - What information do you want to share?
 - What impact are you trying to make as a thought leader? For yourself? Your company?
 - In what mediums are you most effective as a communicator?
- Authenticity
- Share your information in the service of others not just for your own self interest
- Ability to tailor your message to your audience
 - Everyone listens to the same station: WIIFM: What's in it for me.
 - If pitching to the media, consider the unique angle that will help them draw in an audience
 - Always be ready - it's called "news" for a reason!
- Be honest with yourself about your strengths and play to those
- Ask (and accept and learn from) feedback from experts to improve your communication
- Be prepared with your pitch or story - if called upon, especially for a media interview, you may need to be ready and available at a moment's notice
- Know what you know - and what you don't know. Only speak about things you're really knowledgeable about.

Tips to Be an Effective Communicator

- K.I.S.S. - Keep It Simple, Stupid.
- Have **3 key points** at most - if you give more, most people will focus on the 2-3 that they are most interested in, not the ones that you believe are most important.
- Know which medium and environment you're most comfortable communicating: individual conversations v. presenting to a crowd; written v. oral; digital/virtual v. in person; and consider their availability
- Work with a professional to hone your message
 - PR professionals and ghost writers will support you to help translate your message effectively and efficiently.
- Tell stories about people, not just statistics. People remember stories and it will help to get your point across more effectively.

- If possible and appropriate have a constituent, client, etc. participate in an interview
- Tie your subject matter expertise to something current in the news - i.e. COVID, elections, social justice
- Know the news value of your story - present the story with a unique angle in a 30 second pitch
- Seek specialized publications or organizations that engage your target audience - quality of the audience may be more important than quantity
- Set ground rules before starting a media interview - YOU are in charge of the interview, not the journalist.
- Establish credibility in an emerging industry by focusing on why it is relevant, expected trends and how it might impact current industries.

Insider Tips/Best Practices

- Acknowledge the question then say what you want to say
 - A question is not a demand for an answer, it's an opportunity for a response
- "No points for shy" - Dan Ward. If you don't ask the question you'll never know the answer. When you have an idea for a pitch, just present it!
- Be authentic.
- Be prepared.
- Seize opportunities to share your message, even if they're
- Find a thought leader you like and follow them online, watch their presentations, etc.
 - Reach out to introduce yourself, ask them for advice - thought leaders are probably more accessible than you might think.

Book recommendations:

[*The Business of Expertise: How Entrepreneurial Experts Convert Insights Into Impact + Wealth*](#), by

David Baker

[*The Go-Giver*](#), by Bob Burg