



# Definitive Thought Leadership Guide: **Navigating Disruptive Tech and Hyper-Educated Buyers**





The success of social media and online marketing has created a hyper-educated buyer.

The problem: delayed engagement with sales.

Thought leadership is one part of a robust content marketing strategy. It builds trust in your brand's expertise, expands your reach, and helps drive awareness, lead generation, and revenue.

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Drive Revenue Growth</b> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Elevate Brand Position</b> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Build Awareness</b>      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Prove Marketing ROI</b>    |

How can you start incorporating thought leadership into your marketing strategy?

This guide will address the key elements to consider when developing a thought leadership approach.



## Thought leadership content can help:

- **Reach new customers**
- **Elevate your brand's position in the market**
- **Increase media coverage.**



66%

increase in content created over the  
past year.

*Source: Content Matters, WordPress VIP, 2022*





## More Content is Not Better Content

More people are creating content because content matters. This also means there will be an even more crowded digital space for B2B buyers to evaluate brands. It's easy to feel the pressure of having to keep up with the content race.

More content, is not better content. You need content that produces better results.

Thought leadership is an example of a focused effort to produce the level of content that B2B buyers are looking for when they are evaluating brands online.

### Why is thought leadership important?

- It is the valuable, quality content that cuts the clutter
- Builds brand awareness
- Creates a foundation of trust and credibility
- Aligns marketing and sales strategies



## Figure Out Your Brand's "Angle"

Thought leadership isn't another type of content marketing or sales enablement process that highlights products or services, but part of a broader conversation in your industry. Your brand needs to determine a position on a meaningful, relevant topic affecting the industry at large.

Before you begin to outline what your individual thought leadership pieces will look like, you should spend some time with your team investigating what has already been said about your topic, and where your voice can make the most meaningful addition.

### Key areas to consider during your exploratory stage of your thought leadership content plan:

- Converging market trends
- Digital transformation affecting your market
- Key audience target
- Messaging objectives that tie into transformative change
- Measurement KPIs that tie back to messaging objectives



### IDC APPROACH:

Through our Analyst mash-up executive session, IDC Analysts work with your team in a dedicated session to discuss themes and messaging, making recommendations based on their assessment of your program needs, technology trends, and competitive positioning

## Do Your Research. Resonate with your Audience.

One of the most effective ways to establish industry credibility and to create meaningful thought leadership is to conduct original research on your chosen topic area, in order to publish content that's meaningful to your buyers.

### **Example: AI Applications**

*A company that produces artificial intelligence software might choose to launch a thought leadership campaign around ethics in AI. While that topic might not directly correlate to the company's specific products, it does speak to a relevant, timely issue around AI applications. By speaking to the ability to ethically use AI to protect consumers and employees, you establish your company as not just knowledgeable, but one that is considered a market thought leader worthy of consideration.*



### **Decide what style of research will best serve your needs**

- Quantitative research: based upon objective measurements using mathematical or statistical approaches
- Qualitative research: explores the opinions, motivations, or reasoning of a target group through polls, surveys, or focus groups

### **Spend some time and carefully craft your data collection tool**

From a statistical survey to a focus group, you want to ensure that your questions are designed in a way to receive a specific answer, but do not influence the responder. Your data is only as good as your collection process.

### **Decide how to best visually represent the findings**

Your research is merely a way to support your brand's story around your chosen topic. Make sure your chosen asset formats support and streamline the narrative.



## Develop an Approach That Aligns Marketing and Sales

For thought leadership to be truly effective you will want to create a closed loop of logic and information that spans several assets that serve different, but equally important, objectives.

1. Marketing assets to elevate awareness over time as well as generate leads.
2. Guides and tools for sales enablement and partner activation.

B2B buyers expect you to provide relevant information, when and how they need it. They also want an on-going enriching relationship. That is why your thought leadership content approach has to consider the asset needs for a marketing perspective and the content needs for the sales team as well.



**IDC creates custom research which drives thought leadership messaging and assets to create awareness, lead generation, and sales and partner activation.**

### **AWARENESS AND LEAD GENERATION:**

- Interactive Infobriefs and infographics
- Digital whitepapers and spotlights
- Analyst blog posts
- Analyst videos

### **SALES AND PARTNER ACTIVATION:**

- Conversation Guides
- Industry Briefs
- Business value assessment tools
- Sales quick reference guides
- Mastery class workshops or digital coaching

83%

state marketers should make the highest quality content possible, even if it means posting less often.

Source: State of Inbound Marketing Trends, HubSpot, 2022





## Know When to Leverage Third-Party Experts

If it sounds like research-based thought leadership is time and resource consuming, that's because it is. If your team is smaller or constrained by time or other initiatives, launching your own research effort and crafting an entire thought leadership strategy and campaign might be out of reach.

Choosing a trusted third-party to help with any or all elements of the campaign can be tremendously helpful. Cultivating relationships with these experts can benefit your marketing efforts in several ways.

- They can conduct the research and develop high quality content for you
- Provide campaign roll-out support
- Create sales enablement programs for your sales team and develop and conduct training workshops
- Design speaker event series, offering industry-respected analyst speakers
- Provide PR support



## Want to get started?

IDC's Thought Leadership Practice provides leading-edge quality content that elevates your brand image and associates your company with emerging technology trends, driving your global media coverage and market awareness, and re-defining your client dialogue.



To learn more about our work in creating unique, research-fuelled [thought leadership content](https://bit.ly/IDCthoughtleadership), visit:

<https://bit.ly/IDCthoughtleadership>

