

What Can Thought Leadership Do for Your Business?

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Thought leaders – the men and women most people listen to. Thought leaders o authorities of a subject can be beneficial to your business, as their insights are valued by their peers, customers and the general public. Think Steve Jobs, Jack Welch or Tony Robbins.

Thought leadership should present new concepts rather than rehash existing materials. These concepts can come from original research, hard-won experienc or a fresh take on an old problem.

Why Become a Thought Leader?

There have always been thought leaders, but in a digitised world there are a lot more of them and plenty of advantages to being one. If consumers are going to invest in a product or service, they find it reassuring if it has been created or at least endorsed by someone whose expertise they respect.

Do what you do well enough for long enough and you may end up a thought leader. If you want to speed up the process, you should highlight the following:

- You and your business's achievements
- Endorsements from respected figures and satisfied customers
- Evidence you've created innovative products, services or processes
- Media coverage you've received

As a small business owner you'll need to accept you probably won't be venerated overnight for your Gandhi-like wisdom. Start a blog, post to LinkedIn, offer to write articles for respected websites and trade journals, volunteer to speak at conferences. Register with sites such SourceBottle, where journalists from major media organisations go looking for expert opinions. If you have the budget, hire a PR agency.

Thought Leadership and Brands

Before bursting into print, think about how to align your thought leadership with the values of the brands you and your business have established. For example, Richard Branson specialises in launching enterprises that challenge large, complacent companies. So it makes sense for him to provide iconoclastic thought leadership in books with titles such as *Screw It, Let's Do It*. But if Branson were running a conservative insurance company, taking such a brash approach would risk tarnishing his brand.



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Read about how to boost your brand by mastering face-to-face method of marketing (<http://www.intuit.com.au/r/marketing/tradeshows-exhibitions-real-life-marketing-can-boost-brand/>).

Cheap, Effective Advertising

Thought leadership differs from other forms of marketing in that it's about *why* businesspeople do what they do (to solve a problem, make life easier, put a dent in the universe) not *how* they do it (i.e. through products and services). When the share interesting ideas and give potential clients an insight into what drives them business owners often find it's not long until both their professional reputation and bottom line improve.

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