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Ignite Sales With Thought Leadership

Quick thought leadership tactics

Thought leadership is a go-to-market strategy to differentiate us from the competition. It opens doors, creates sales cycles, increases referrals, and starts customer conversations. It is a marketing tactic that adds value to our prospects, empowers our community, and enhances our service-profit chain - altogether increasing top-line revenue.

As an industry-expert, product-evangelist, and visionary, we need to be more visible. More people need to know about us. They need to hear our predictions, ideas, accomplishments so they can follow our lead and build a relationship with us. They want us to challenge the influencer in our field and spur innovation. Our passions, opinions, and expertise will capture the ears of our market, earn credibility and trust, and help the customers use our products.

Prospects, customers, and suppliers are predictively information seekers. Once they recognize they have a problem or pain point, they will embark on an information hunt to find a solution. Giving them the answers in a concise way to spark interest within the 8-second attention span will entice them to read more. In this article, we will review the right information to share, where to make it visible, and how to generate sales from thought leadership.

Query-based thought leadership

First, we study our buyer's search queries. There are 3.5 Billion searches on Google per day. Create a list of the top 10 queries our customers might be searching. For example, IT Directors are searching "Does my company need to be GDPR compliant?" or "How do I migrate to the cloud?" Venue managers are searching "what is the best venue management software?" Distressed home sellers are searching "how do I sell my home for cash?"

Import the 10 questions into the Google keyword planner tool to see which questions have the most amount of views amount of traffic. Look for a sweet spot of 1k – 5k monthly views with low competition. Narrow the list into our top 5 frequently asked questions (FAQs) for us to answer.

Now create a list of the top five "should ask" questions (SAQs). Our SAQs are the questions that our prospects should ask to find a better solution in a shorter amount of time. These come from our unique flavor, our own niche expertise, and our opinions of the industry. Revealing and answering these questions provide value and differentiate us from the competition. Our top 5 FAQs and top 5 SAQs are the backbone for creating content - and save us time in the process.

An easy way to create valuable content

The easiest way to create content is to answer our FAQs and SAQs. We can write the answers on our own, or make a voice recording for transcription. The publishing medium we chose should fit into our prospect's liking. For example, they may prefer to read articles over watching videos. We can appeal to readers by writing articles, blog posts, white papers, and case studies. For the visual audience, we can record Facebook live streams, post videos on YouTube, or design infographics. Seven in ten B2B buyers watch videos during the sales cycle. B2C viewers are anywhere from 64-85% more likely to buy after watching a product video. These statistics guide us to record ten videos of us answering our FAQs and SAQs and post them to our website and social media.

Webinars are another tactic to engage our audience. After hosting a webinar, transcribe the audio recording, and send a copy of the transcription to the registrants. Edit and design the transcription with a clear call-to-action. The recipients will forward the transcription to their team, and this can land on a decision makers desk, resulting in new sales cycles. Webinars are a forum to teach, show our personality, and create a real-time conversation with more than one prospect at a time. We can also invite our prospects to teach in the webinar with us.

Create content with a co-pilot

Co-authoring is a way to create content while simultaneously starting sales cycles. Here is a juicy B2B tactic picked up from the NYT best-selling author, Keith Ferrazzi. Ask our prospect to co-write a white paper with us about their industry vertical. Take the lead and do most of the work - writing the content, editing, and packaging it together. Our co-author contributes by sharing their opinion on the subject matter. Email them a list of questions to answer on a phone call. This call will answer the questions and give the prospect an opportunity to ask us questions about our company and service. The article can be published in a blog post, social media post, magazine article, or a video. Both co-pilots can share the content with their network, which creates a bigger reach, and cross-fertilization of audiences.

Use link-love to syndicate content

This is one of my favorite tactics I learned from an editor at Who What Wear. Link-love is a hip name for re-posting each other's content. Like many publications, Who What Wear recommends content at the bottom of their articles that link to external websites. Behind the scenes, these publications link back in an informal partnership. Link-love expands our network and reaches our target market. It also serves as doing a favor for our strategic partners, creating a vacuum for generosity in return.

For those of us just starting out in thought leadership, who have a smaller following, this is a good way to grow our audience and get exposure without paying for placement. Swap links with our partners, suppliers, vendors, and even trade shows with a similar size following. Post their content on our platform, and ask them to do the same in return. The exposure will grow our community of prospects and supporters.

Link-love worked well in the launch of Alex Banayan's book, The Third Door. He interviewed significant business leaders like Bill Gates, Lady Gaga, and Warren Buffett about their road to success. During the book launch, he received social media shout-outs by some of the rockstars he interviewed to help spread awareness and drive in more book sales.

Upselling customers with thought leadership

Once we have a clear idea as to who our prospects are and understand what they care about, then we can give explicit recommendations that solve their problems. One B2C company doing this well is Dr. Bronners organic, pure-castile soaps. Lisa Bronner, the founder’s granddaughter, has a blog and Youtube channel that advocates for chemical-free livings. Lisa shares “recipes” on how to use the same soap for laundry, scrubbing counter tops, and shampoo. This gives customers more reasons to use the product, and creates a positive post-purchase dissonance, resulting in more sales.

This tactic also has SEO perks. Dr. Bronner’s target market is searching for “organic chemical free soaps.” Proper tagging of Lisa’s content and enough inbound links will get the content picked up on search engines. The traffic is then funneled to a shopping cart, making it easy for the customer to buy more product.

Control the traffic that comes from our articles

Effective marketing campaigns control the traffic flow from content to sale. When we syndicate our content, we should funnel the traffic to a landing page. We can include a specific call to action in our content and a link for the reader to click on. On our landing page, we can ask the reader to subscribe to a mailing list, enter a free trial, or buy our product. Make sure the landing page is relevant to the content we published. We can track the amount of traffic that reads our content and follows our call to action. Our goal over time is to increase conversion rates from traffic to acquisition, and lower our acquisition costs.

Community advancement through thought leadership

In addition to increasing sales, thought leadership is a way to give back to the community. One leader in this space is Keith Krach, the chairman and former CEO of Docusign, and co-founder of Ariba. Krach creates videos and writes content on his social media, blog, and Forbes in between his work and family responsibilities. He gives advice to business owners, entrepreneurs, and management executives about leadership, category creation, strategic partnerships, and mentorship. This form of thought leadership is also a traffic source to Docusign. Just like the Dr. Bronner example, exposure from public content-specific thought leadership flows back to the company website.

Concluding with the five steps for a thought leadership campaign

Here is the quick five-step process to implement a thought leadership campaign:

1. Identify a topic that our target market wants to know about

1. Outline 5 FAQs and 5 SAQs about the topic

1. Answer some questions on our own and ask a prospect to answer the others

1. Write and publish the article with a succinct call to action

1. Ask our co-pilot for link-love and continue the sales cycle or conversion funnel

Creating thought leadership content differentiates us from our competition. When we are recognized as the expert in our industry, then more prospects, news publications, and government bodies will contact us. We will earn trust and credibility. This marketing tactic is a way to control the information we publicize, notify our followers of our current efforts, and generate traffic to our website. Thought leadership provides value to the community and brings us value in the form of engagement. It is our responsibility to voice our opinion, and use it to benefit the world we serve.

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