

## Who Needs Thought Leadership?



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Whether you are an accountant, architect, or creative director, you have probably been in a situation where a current or prospective client has made you feel like your expertise is as dispensable as a tissue. What is a firm to do to overcome intense competition, steep barriers to entry, and waning interest throughout long sales cycles? The answer is thought leadership. Before you begin building an argument as to why thought leadership won't work for your firm, consider the following points:

### **You're selling expertise, not a hammer**

You can describe what a hammer looks like, or you can explain how it can be used. You are not the instrument, you are the strategy. The basic qualities of your firm: size, services offered, years in business and office locations are all important pieces of information, but they won't necessarily win you any new clients—especially when these qualities do not differentiate you from your competitors. So instead of hitting clients over the head with the same information, demonstrate that you understand their problems and are not only experienced, but adept, at solving them.

### **You might be too busy, but someone else (your competitors) are not**

If you think that you are too busy to write or you don't consider yourself a good writer, the real problem may be that you need to delegate the task to someone else. While you may not have the time to physically sit down to a computer or with pen in hand, you most certainly have an hour (or less) to communicate your ideas or thoughts to someone who does. That person could be a colleague, employee, or a ghostwriter, as long as they possess the ability to present your

concept in a clear and compelling fashion. If your competitors are doing it and consistently winning work, they are no less busy than you are.

### **It's another opportunity for customers to find you**

With the exception of referrals from existing clients or business partners, how do your customers find you? Are you leveraging every asset you own? More often than not, when customers have a challenge they start with “how” to fix the problem and not necessarily with “who.” Writing about the challenges you know stand between your customer and their goals and the topics related to them not only drives increased visits to your website, but highly qualified leads who have an immediate need for your services.

### **It doesn't have to be a one-size-fits-all approach**

If you're thinking to yourself, “we're not that kind of firm,” well, what kind of firm are you? Understanding how you want your firm to be perceived goes hand-in-hand with the type of client you are trying to attract. Your firm may not be an innovator within its industry but that doesn't render your firm irrelevant. If you don't feel confident discussing emerging trends or it feels inauthentic for your brand, can you provide value in another way? Think about the challenges that your prospective buyer could face. What type of knowledge can you present to put them at ease and confident of your abilities to help overcome those obstacles?

If the term “thought leadership” intimidates you, it shouldn't. When your product is a professional service and your competitors are selling a seemingly identical product, it is up to you to educate your buyers on the mistake they might be making when they select a firm with price as the deciding factor.