

The Impact of Thought Leadership on B2B Demand Generation

An Edelman Study, Powered by LinkedIn

While thought leadership is often thought of as a means to drive awareness or visibility for an organization, research from Edelman and LinkedIn demonstrate that it does a lot more—it builds your business and gets you opportunities you wouldn't ordinarily be able to access. In fact, we've found that thought leadership is performing a lot better with key audiences than its publishers think it is. But we also found that, when poorly handled, thought leadership can have negative effects on business development. See below for more details.

Understanding the Power of Thought Leadership

Edelman and LinkedIn surveyed more than 1,300 business decision makers, as well as a number of CEOs and founders. Slightly more than half of the sample were people whose companies produce thought leadership. The survey polled people from companies of all sizes and in a variety of industries.

The Thought Leadership Attribution Gap at Four Stages of the Sales Funnel



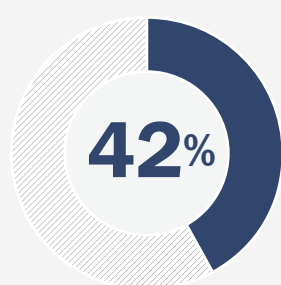
AWARENESS
CONSIDERATION
PREFERENCE
PURCHASE

Most marketers and communicators believe that the impact of their thought leadership content ends at the top of the sales funnel—"Awareness." But, as you can see below, we show a significant gap in how creators of thought leadership believe their content performs and how those recipients value it.

1 AWARENESS: Thought Leadership is Key to Gaining the Attention of Decision Makers

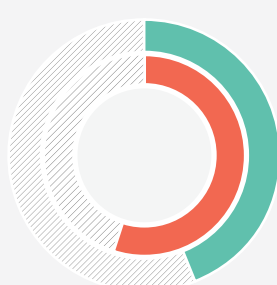
Creators of thought leadership believe:

It helps with lead generation



What Decision Makers actually do after engaging with thought leadership:

Gave the organization your contact information

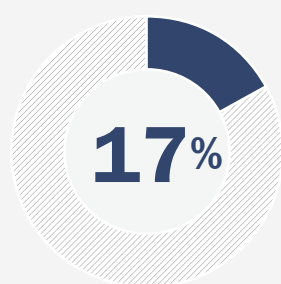


In this phase, thought leadership drives awareness and has particular value in gaining interest from C-level executives.

2 CONSIDERATION: Thought Leadership Generates RFP Opportunities

Creators of thought leadership believe:

"Thought leadership gets us more RFPs"



Decision makers said:

"After seeing its thought leadership: invited the organization to propose on a project"

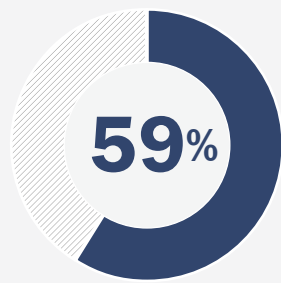


Thought leadership works better than its creators think — more than twice as well — when it comes to generating RFPs from prospects who weren't considering that company previously.

3 PREFERENCE: Thought Leadership Increases Respect and Admiration

Creators of thought leadership believe:

"It enhances our brand reputation"



What decision makers actually think after engaging with thought leadership:

"My respect and admiration for the organization increased"

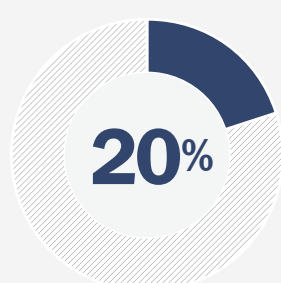


Thought leadership has much higher trust-building effectiveness than creators realize.

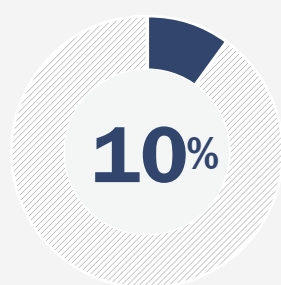
4 PURCHASE: More Than Twice as Effective at Winning More and Better Business than Creators Think

Creators of thought leadership believe:

"It helps us close and win"

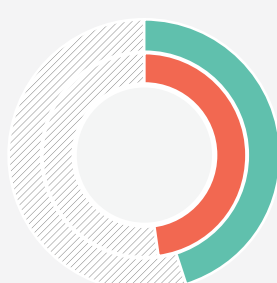


"It allows us to charge more than our competitors who produce lower quality thought leadership"

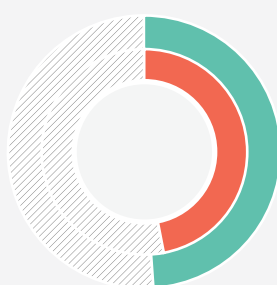


Decision makers said:

"Directly led you to decide to give business to a company"



"I am more willing to pay a premium to work with an organization that has publicly articulated a clear vision for the future"

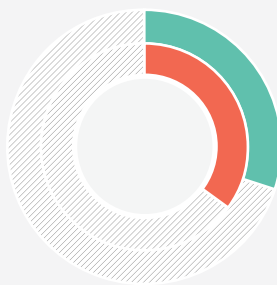


Thought leadership outperforms creators' expectations for revenue-generation.

Poor Thought Leadership Can Also Remove You From Contention

Decision makers said:

"Directly led you to decide to NOT award a piece of business to a company"

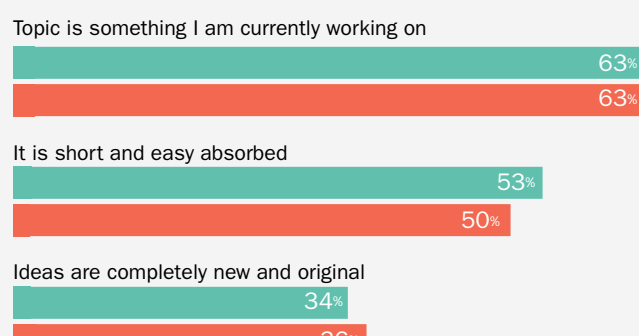
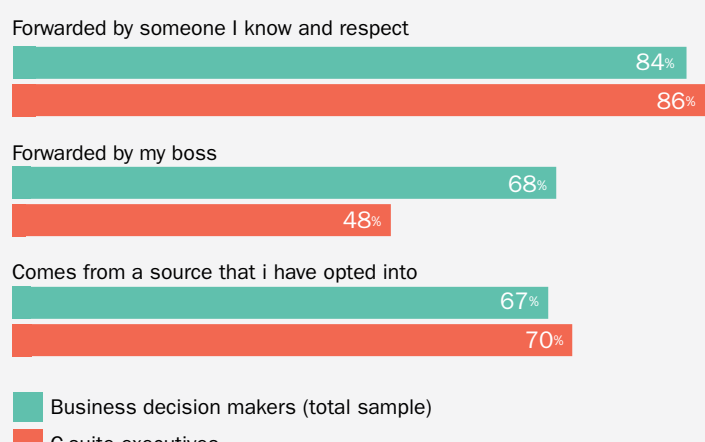


Thought Leadership can be a double-edged sword.

So, Thought Leadership Works. Here's how to do it right.

What Drives Successful Engagement with Thought Leadership?

Importance of each trigger in getting respondents to engage with thought leadership (3 most important triggers shown)



Timeliness and relevance is more important than originality.

To find out more and subscribe to exclusive insights on how to apply this research, go to www.edelman.com/b2b-thought-leadership.