

# 2020

## B2B THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IMPACT STUDY



Edelman

LinkedIn

An Annual Report on B2B Thought Leadership by Edelman Business Marketing and LinkedIn  
**GLOBAL REPORT**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

## SEIZING THE UNTAPPED BUSINESS POTENTIAL OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Over the past three years, Edelman has collaborated with LinkedIn to investigate the power and impact inherent in publishing quality Thought Leadership content. This year's study confirms that B2B Decision-Makers are spending meaningful time consuming Thought Leadership content and, when that content is done well, that it has the potential to significantly influence brand perception and buying behaviors.

However, even though a sizeable amount of this content is being created, the Decision-Makers reading it continue to be disappointed in its overall quality, which poses real risks to the reputation and sales of the B2B companies publishing it.

This year's survey results show that while more than half of the Decision-Makers we surveyed spend more than one hour every week consuming Thought Leadership, only 15% of them rate the quality of most of what they read as very good or excellent. This situation becomes even more concerning when you know that 89% of Decision-Makers surveyed believe that Thought Leadership is effective in enhancing their perceptions of an organization.

In addition, most marketers are missing the opportunity to connect Thought Leadership efforts to measurable business impact, including high-priority KPIs such as account lift, MQL, SQL and other measures of how content is driving positive customer behavior. This year's survey found that only 26% of marketers can tie the Thought Leadership they produce to sales and business wins.

This disconnect is perpetuating a negative cycle of inadequate investment, poor quality content and an underestimation of Thought Leadership's impact — both positive and negative.

This data makes the bottom line very clear — producing Thought Leadership is an excellent way to gain the attention of the people who make B2B decisions, but if your organization is not committed to doing it well over the long-term, your efforts can move the needle in the wrong direction.

### KEY LEARNINGS

1. Three years of data make it clear — Thought Leadership is a powerful way to connect with B2B Decision-Makers.
2. Most Thought Leadership producers are unable to measure its impact on business opportunities — signaling a missed opportunity and potential risk.
3. Brands that cultivate a culture of Thought Leadership reap greater reputation and sales impact than those that do not.



## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Free deliverables organizations or individuals produce on a topic they know a lot about and feel others can benefit from having their perspective on. Thought Leadership, in this context, does not include content primarily focused on describing an organization's products or services.

## AUDIENCES IN THE REPORT...

### PURCHASE DECISION-MAKERS

Consumers of Thought Leadership who are involved in vetting, recommending and/or making final decisions on their company's choice of professional service providers or products.

### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PRODUCERS

Consumers of Thought Leadership who also work in an organization that produces freely available Thought Leadership.

# ABOUT THE STUDY

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS & METHODOLOGY

To help B2B companies understand the impact of Thought Leadership, Edelman and LinkedIn surveyed **3,275 global business executives** across a wide range of industries and company sizes.

### SENIORITY LEVEL

Manager	33%
Director	38%
VP	13%
CXO	8%
Partner	3%
Owner	5%

### COMPANY SIZE

1-200	46%
201-1,000	14%
1,001-10,000	18%
10,001+	23%

### VETTING ROLE

Give input	46%
Manage the process	28%
Final decision marker	26%

### DATA COLLECTION

Online, using the LinkedIn platform to survey LinkedIn members

### MARKETS SURVEYED

Australia, France, Germany, India, Singapore, India, United Kingdom, United States

### FIELDING DATES

September – October 2019

### SURVEY LENGTH

10-15 minutes

### MARGIN OF ERROR

Total Sample +/- 1.7%  
Decision Makers +/- 2.0%  
Producers of Thought Leadership +/- 2.9%

### ADDITIONAL SEGMENTS

Works for organization that produces Thought Leadership	32%
Works in the <b>high-tech</b> industry	19%
Works in the <b>finance</b> industry	13%
Works in the <b>manufacturing</b> industry	11%



# AT-A-GLANCE | THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IMPACT

KEY DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTION	2019
<b>Engagement</b>	% of Decision-Makers who spend an hour or more per week engaging with Thought Leadership	<b>48%</b>
<b>Quality</b>	% of Decision-Makers who rate the quality of most of the Thought Leadership they read as very good or excellent	<b>15%</b>
<b>Value</b>	% of Decision-Makers who say they gain valuable insights more than half the time they consume Thought Leadership	<b>29%</b>
<b>Brand Impact</b>	How effective Decision-Makers say Thought Leadership is in enhancing their perceptions of an organization	<b>89%</b>
<b>Sales Impact</b>	How effective Decision-Makers say Thought Leadership is at influencing their purchasing decisions	<b>49%</b>
<b>Attribution</b>	% of Producers who can tie their Thought Leadership efforts to sales and business wins	<b>26%</b>

## OVERARCHING TRENDS

- Almost half of Decision-Makers who engage with Thought Leadership spend at least an hour a week
- There is relatively little high-quality content being produced
- When done well, Thought Leadership positively impacts brand perception and sales
- Producers are not investing in doing it well and developing processes to measure its ROI

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. See slides 8-16 for an explanation of how each dimension score was calculated



Edelman



---

# 01

Thought Leadership's  
Proven Impact

---

# 02

Keys Attributes of Strong  
Thought Leadership

---

# 03

The Crucial Importance  
of a Thought  
Leadership Culture

---

# 04

How to Win:  
The Edelman Thought  
Leadership Flywheel



Edelman

| LinkedIn

---

01

**AFTER 3 YEARS, DECISION-MAKERS  
CONFIRM THOUGHT LEADERSHIP'S  
IMPACT – BUT ARE DISAPPOINTED IN  
THE QUALITY**



# DECISION MAKERS SPEND MEANINGFUL TIME CONSUMING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

ALMOST **1 / 2**

Of Decision-Makers spend **one hour or more** reading Thought Leadership per week

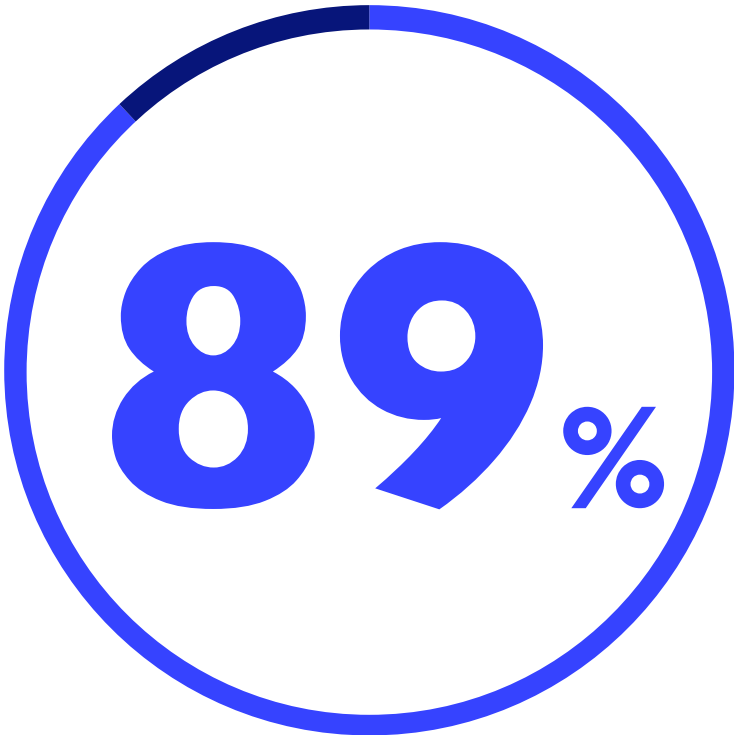
## ENGAGEMENT

Time Decision-Makers spend per week reading Thought Leadership.

	2019
<b>Meaningful Engagement (1+ hours)</b>	<b>48%</b>
1-3 Hours	31%
4+ Hours	17%

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q 51. On average, how much time per week do you spend reading and viewing thought leadership? Select one response. Data: % spending one hour or more among Global decision-makers who consume thought leadership.

# A MUST WHEN IT COMES TO EARNING TRUST



Of Decision-Makers say that Thought Leadership can be effective in **enhancing their perceptions of an organization**

## BRAND PERCEPTION IMPACT INDEX

Brand Perception Impact Index is the average percentage of Decision-Makers who say the following occur sometimes or more frequently after they have engaged with a piece of Thought Leadership:

- Their **respect for the organization responsible increased**
- Their **perception of the organization’s capabilities increased**
- Their **trust in an organization increased**

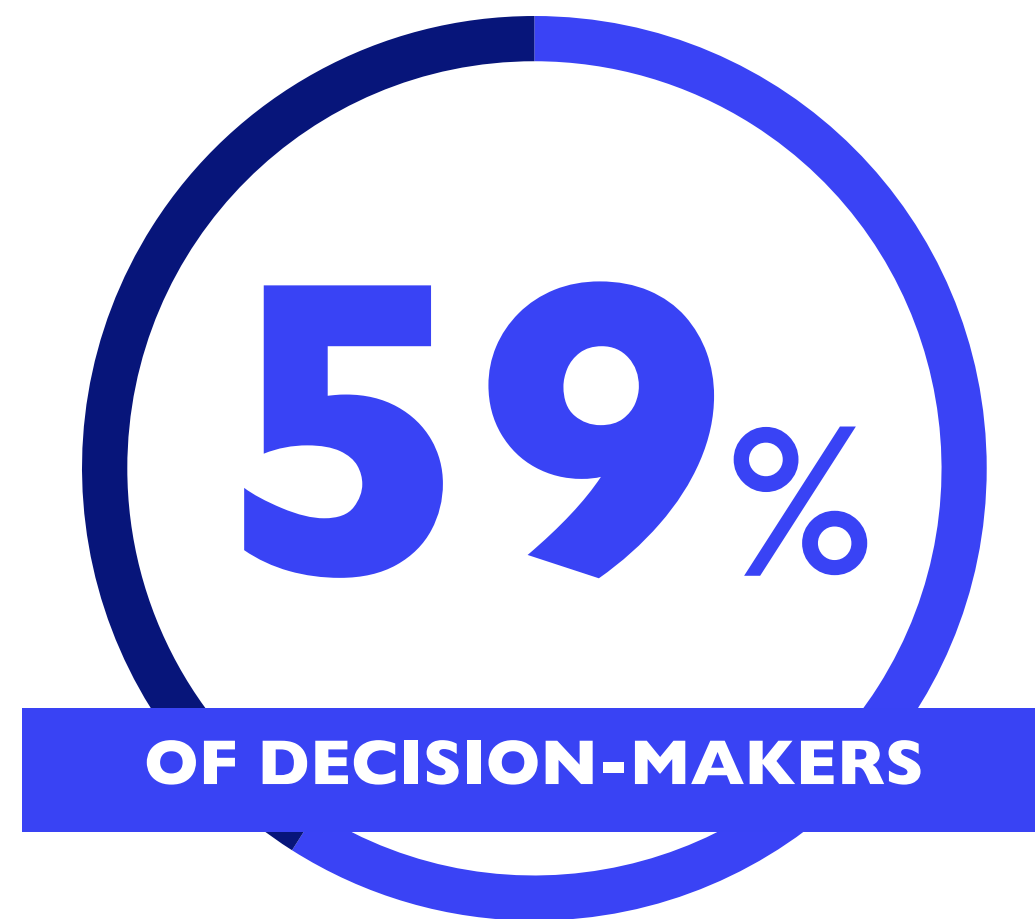
## BRAND IMPACT

A measure of how effective Decision-Makers say Thought Leadership is in enhancing their perceptions of an organization.

	2019
<b>Average of Inputs</b>	<b>89%</b>
Respect Increase	<b>90%</b>
Perception of Capabilities	<b>88%</b>
Trust	<b>88%</b>

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q11 ENGAGED: How frequently has the following occurred after you have engaged with a piece of thought leadership. Data: average % who responded sometimes, often or almost all of the time among Global decision-makers.

# DECISION-MAKERS USE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP TO VET A COMPANY'S CAPABILITIES



Agree an organization's Thought Leadership is a **more trustworthy basis for assessing its capabilities** and competencies than its marketing materials and product sheets



Agree reading Thought Leadership is one of the best ways to get a sense of the type and caliber of an organization's thinking

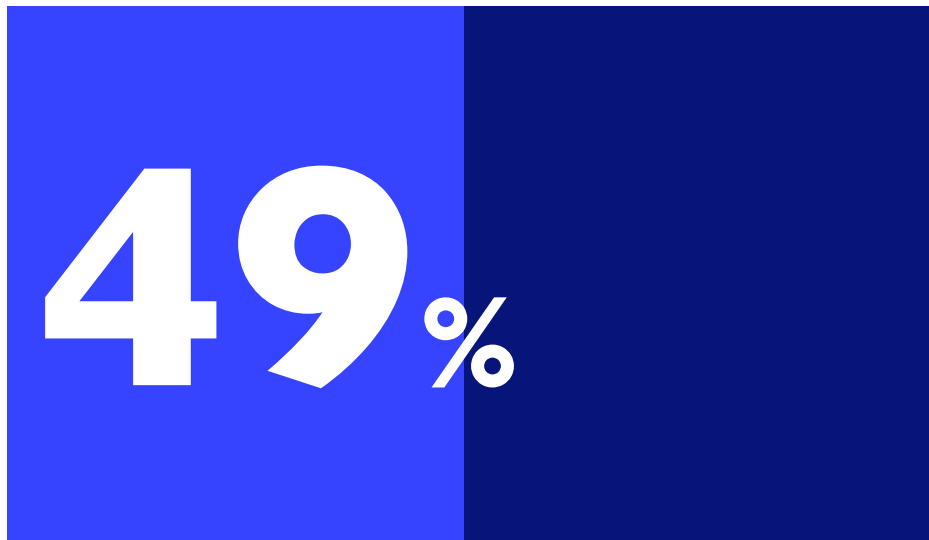


Who are willing to pay a premium say it's because Thought Leadership demonstrates deep thinking and other virtues important to them

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q8 PREMIUM1: How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? Select one for each: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree, strongly agree. Data: Top 2 Box Agree among Global decision-makers. Q9 PREMIUM 2: You just said that you would be more willing to pay a premium to work with an individual or organization that produces thought leadership versus one that does not. Specifically, why are you willing to pay a premium? Select all that apply. Data: % who selected this response among Global decision-makers who said they were willing to pay a premium to work with Thought Leadership producers



# COMPELLING CONTENT INFLUENCES B2B SALES



Of Decision-Makers say that Thought Leadership can be effective in ***influencing their purchasing decisions***

## SALES IMPACT INDEX

The Sales Impact Index is the average percentage of Decision-Makers who say the following occur sometimes or more frequently after they have engaged with a piece of Thought Leadership:

- They invited the organization (which was not in their original consideration set) to **bid on a project**
- They **awarded business** to the organization responsible
- They decided to **increase the amount of business** they did with the organization
- They **purchased a new product or service** from the organization that they had not previously considered buying

## SALES IMPACT

A measure of how effective Decision-Makers say Thought Leadership is in influencing their purchasing decisions.

	2019
<b>Average of Inputs</b>	<b>49%</b>
Consideration - Generated RFP invitations	<b>42%</b>
Purchase - Led to awarding a business	<b>48%</b>
Upsell – led to increasing the amount of business you do	<b>53%</b>
Cross-Sell - led to purchase of new product/service	<b>54%</b>

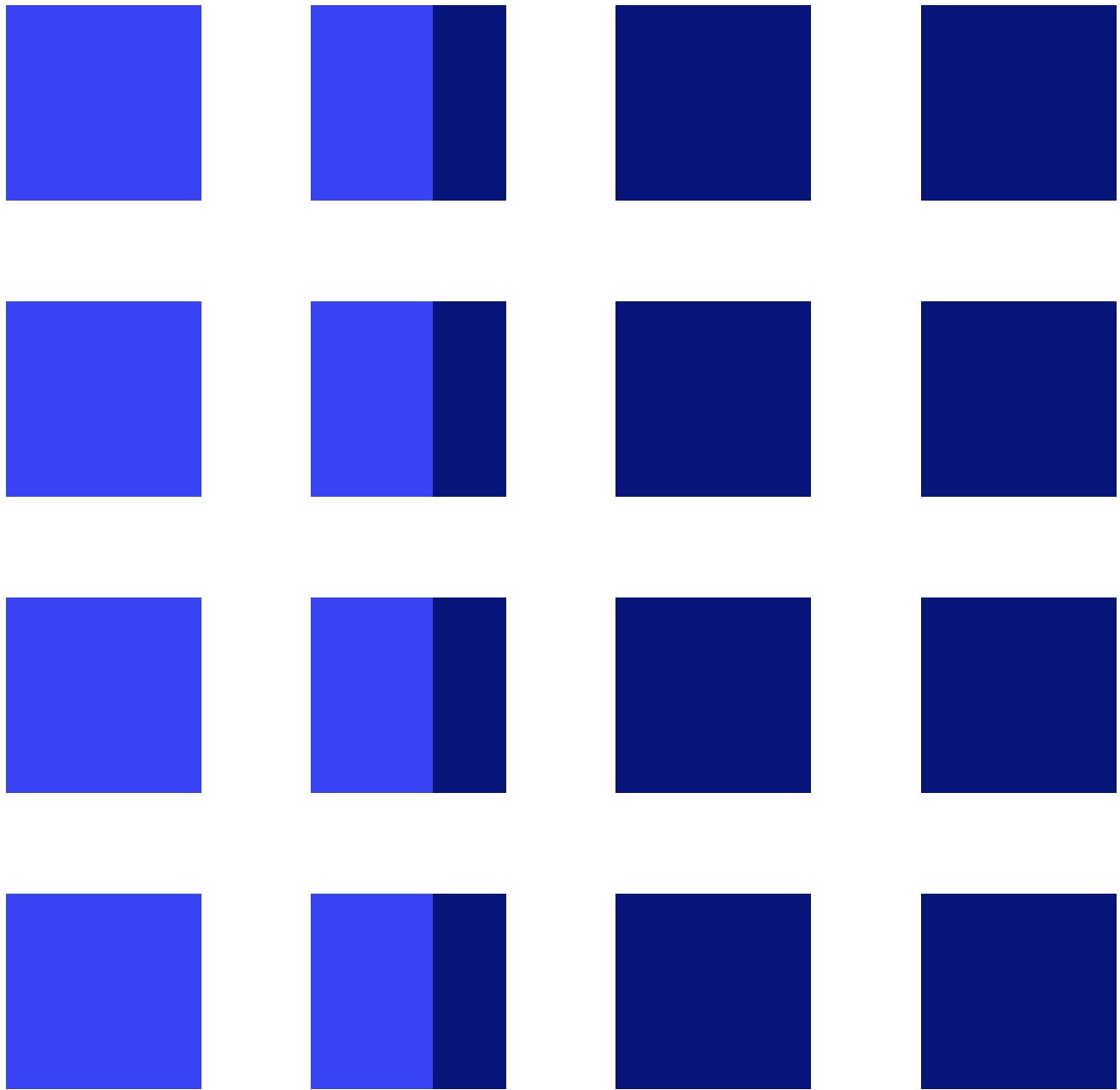
Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q11 ENGAGED: How frequently has the following occurred after you have engaged with a piece of thought leadership. Data: average % who responded sometimes, often or almost all of the time among Global decision-makers.

# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CAN HELP COMMAND A PREMIUM

42%

## OF DECISION-MAKERS

Agree they are more **willing to pay a premium** to work with an organization that produces Thought Leadership versus those that do not



Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q8 PREMIUM1: How much do you agree or disagree with these statements? Select one for each: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree, strongly agree. Data: Top 2 Box Agree among Global decision-makers.

# DECISION MAKERS ARE MOSTLY DISAPPOINTED IN THE QUALITY OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CONTENT



## QUALITY

How Decision-Makers rate the overall quality of most of the Thought Leadership they are reading.

	2019
<b>Very Good to Excellent</b>	<b>15%</b>
Good	57%
Mediocre to Very Poor	28%

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q3 QUALITY: What would you say is the overall quality of most of the thought leadership you read? Select one response. Data: % Very Good or Excellent among Global decision-makers.



# DECISION-MAKERS CRAVE MORE VALUE

# 29%

Of Decision-Makers gain *valuable insights* more than half the time from the Thought Leadership they read

## VALUE

The % of Decision-Makers who say they gain valuable insights more than half the time from the Thought Leadership they consume.

	2019
Reliably derive value	29%

# LOW QUALITY CONTENT IS A **RISK TO REPUTATION AND SALES**

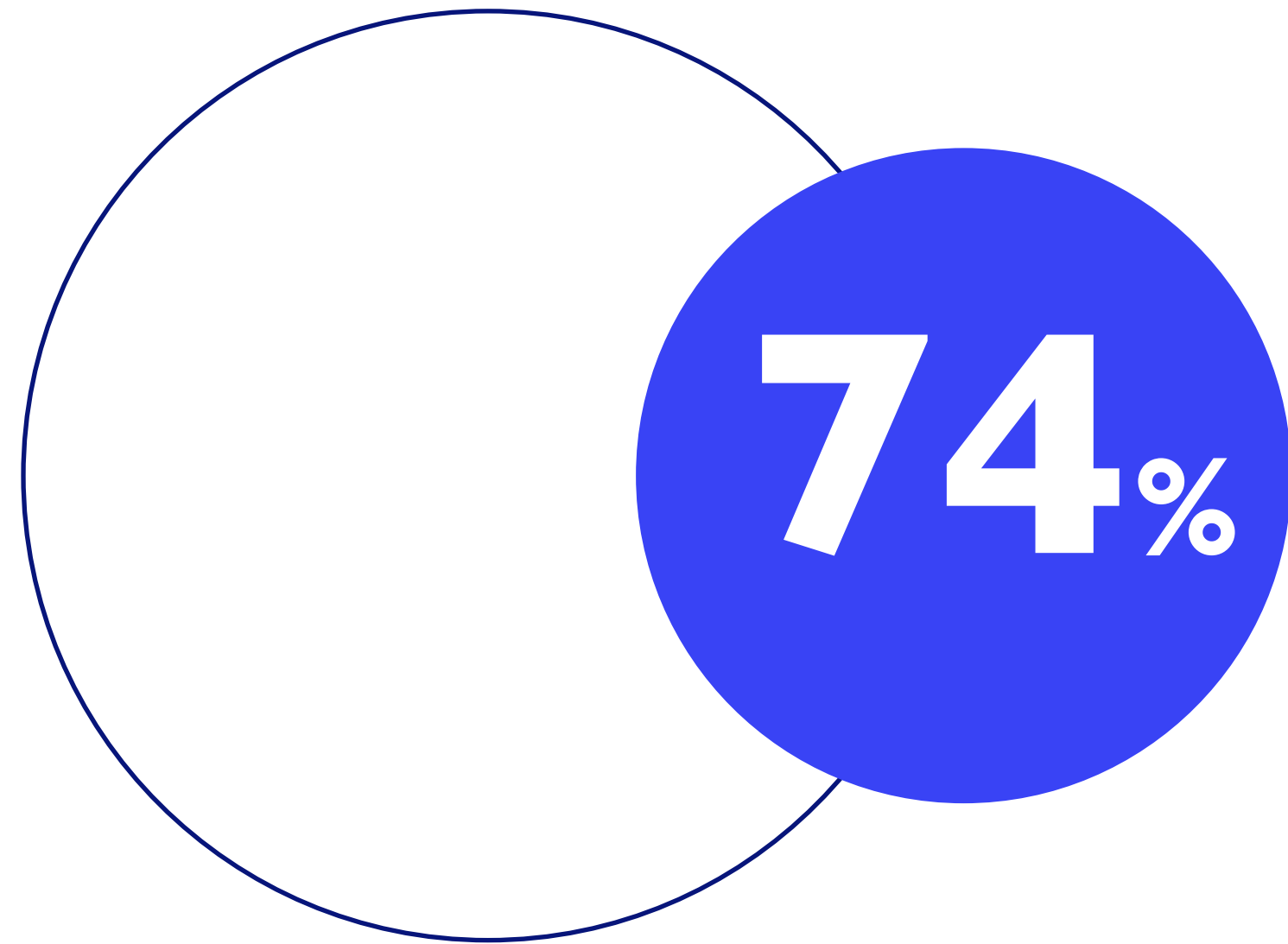
**38%**

of Decision-Makers say that sometimes after reading its Thought Leadership their **respect and admiration for an organization has decreased**

**27%**

of Decision-Makers say that sometimes reading its Thought Leadership has directly led them **not to award business to an organization**

# A GLARING ATTRIBUTION GAP



of Thought Leadership Producers  
**have no way to link sales or wins**  
to their Thought Leadership

## ATTRIBUTION

% of Producers who can link their Thought Leadership to sales leads and business wins.

	2019
<b>Net of Inputs</b>	<b>26%</b>
Can link sales leads to Thought Leadership	18%
Can link wins to Thought Leadership	16%

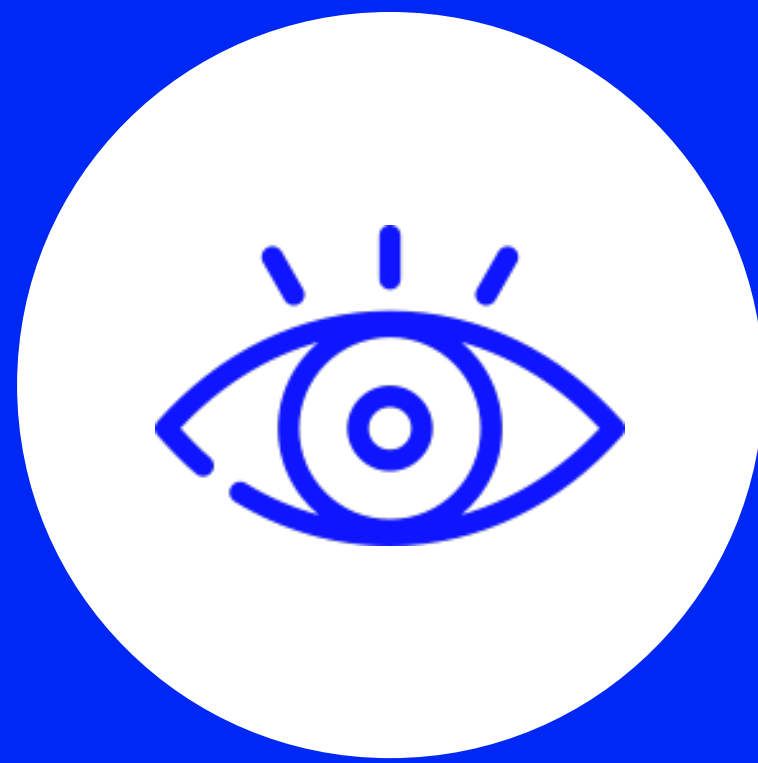
Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q21 EFFECT: How do you measure or determine the effectiveness of your thought leadership? Select all that apply. Data: Net of “We have a way to link sales leads back to specific pieces of thought leadership” and “We have a way to link business wins back to specific pieces of thought leadership” among total Global Producers of thought leadership.



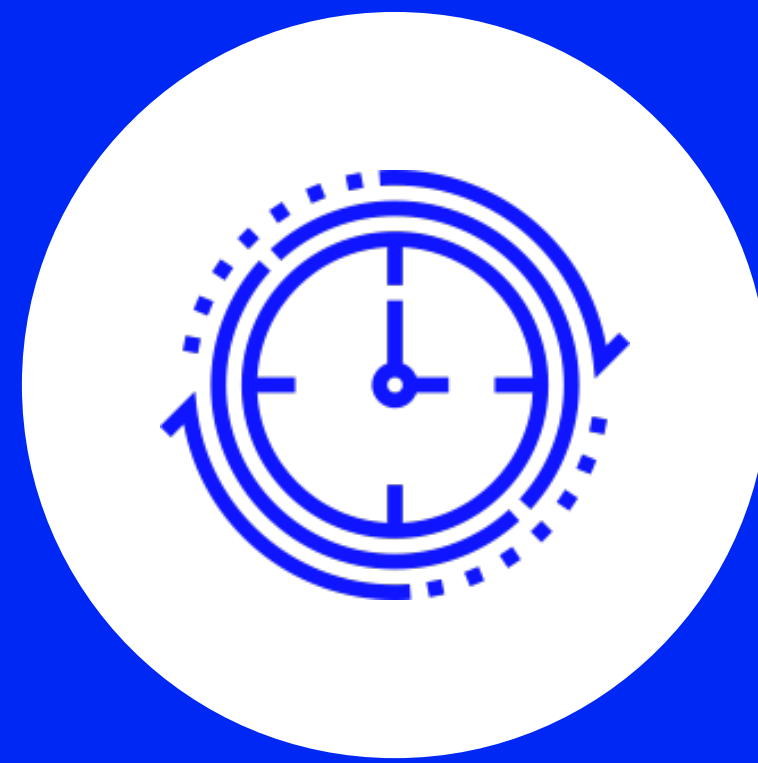
---

# 02

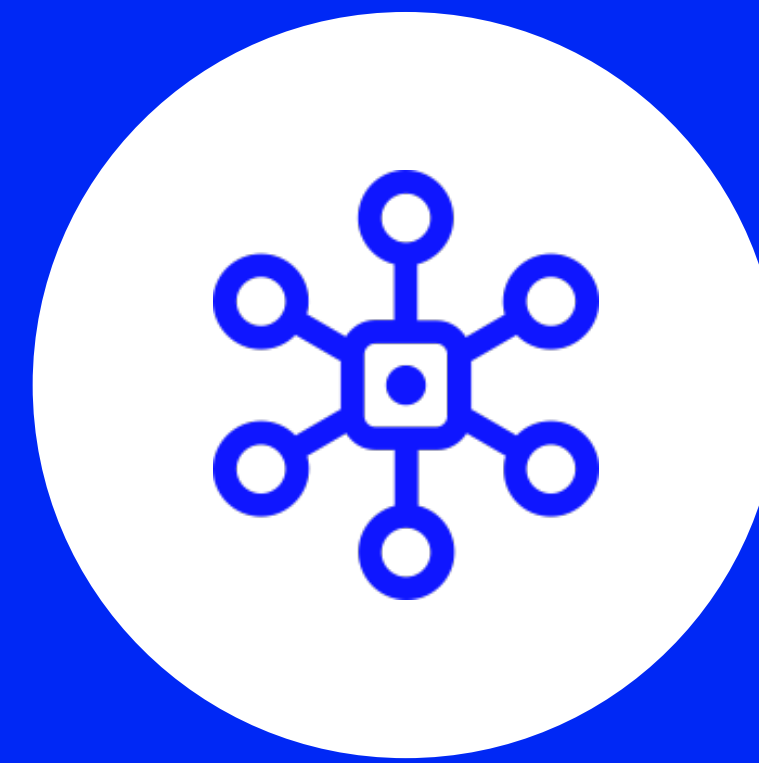
## KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



**NEW  
PERSPECTIVES ARE  
HIGHLY VALUED**



**TIMELINESS AND  
BREVITY ARE KEY  
TO ENGAGEMENT**

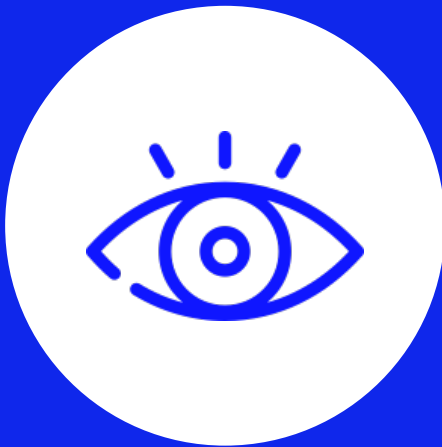


**EFFECTIVE  
DISTRIBUTION  
A MUST**



Edelman

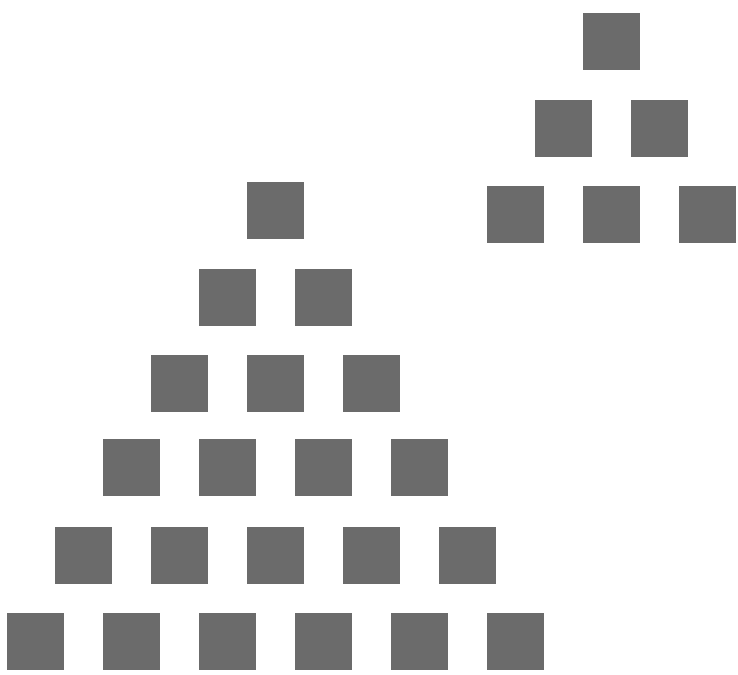
LinkedIn



# NEW PERSPECTIVES ARE HIGHLY VALUED

The top characteristics of **high-value** Thought Leadership content, according to Decision-Makers

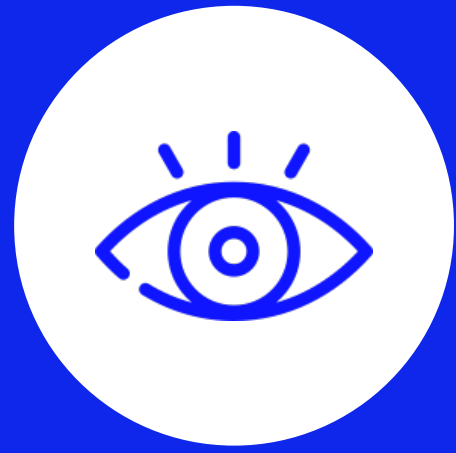
# DO CREATE SOMETHING SUBSTANTIVE



- Explores potential challenges or new opportunities I had not considered before
- Points out things that I had overlooked in thinking or strategizing
- Offers actionable competitive intelligence

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q6 HIGH QUALITY: Think about the last piece of thought leadership that you consumed that you felt delivered a lot of value to you. Specifically, what about it made it particularly valuable? Select all that apply. Data: List of content-related items that were selected by the highest % of decision makers among Global decision makers





## NEW PERSPECTIVES ARE HIGHLY VALUED

The top characteristics of **low-value** Thought Leadership content, according to Decision-Makers

## DON'T BE MORE WHITE NOISE

- Merely repeats what everyone else is saying
- Insights are too elementary and superficial
- Emphasizes selling something instead of imparting valuable insights





# TIMELINESS AND BREVITY ARE KEY TO ENGAGEMENT

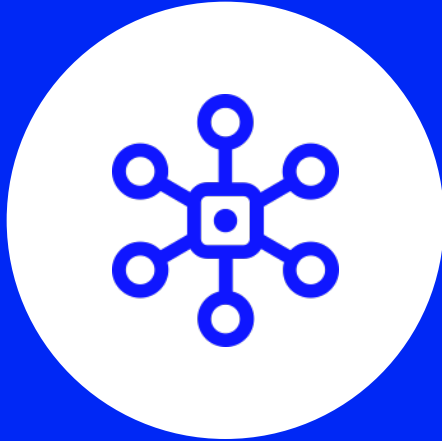


Of Decision-Makers say that being **short and easy to absorb** makes **Thought Leadership very compelling**

Of Decision-Makers say that Thought Leadership addresses a **topic they are currently working on or thinking about** makes it **very compelling**

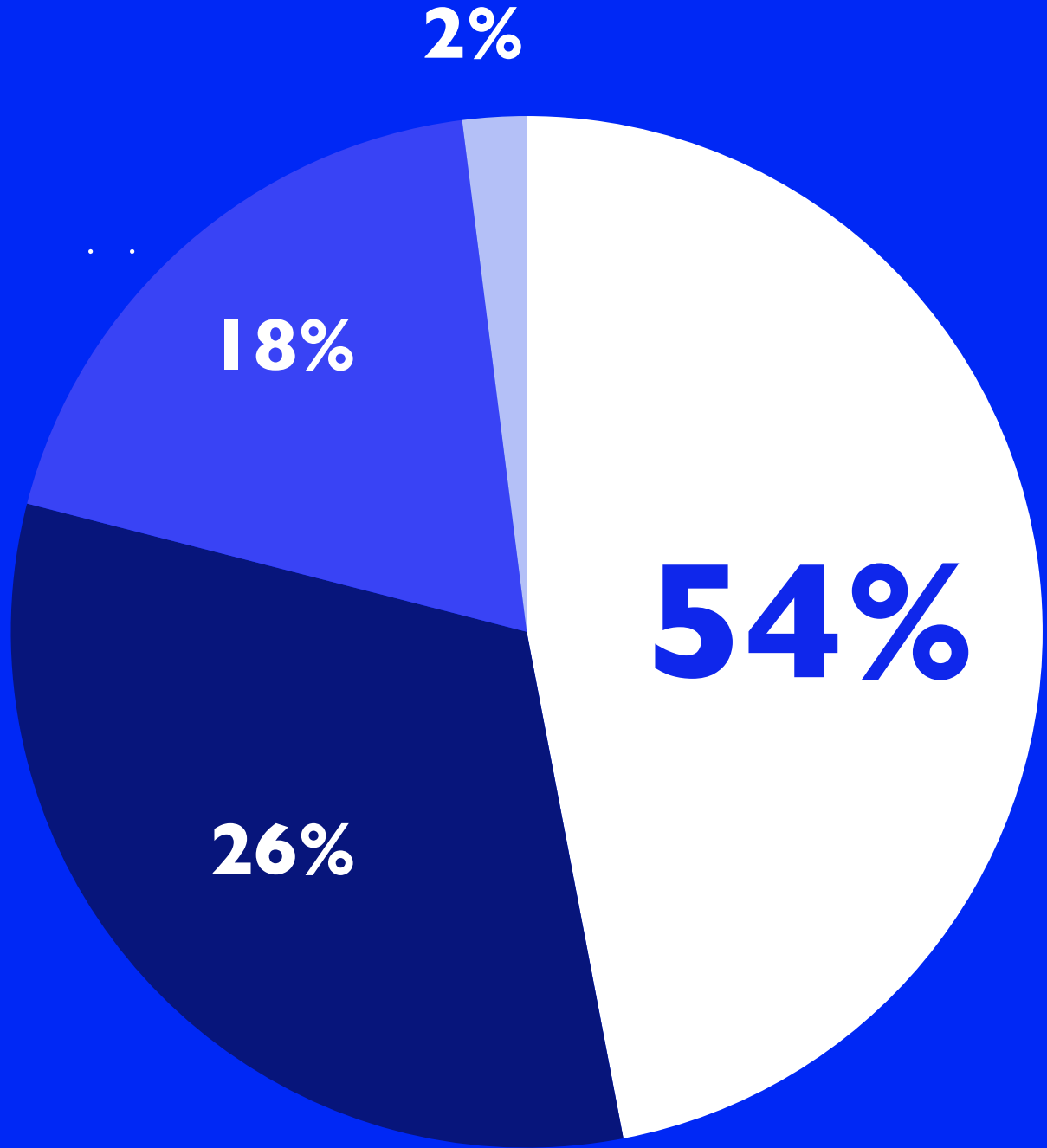
Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q2. FORMAT: When it comes to its content or format, please rate how compelling each of the following are in getting you to engage with a specific piece of thought leadership? Data: Top-2 Boxes on a 1-5 scale where 1 is "not at all compelling" and 5 is "extremely compelling" among Global decision-makers.





# EFFECTIVE DISTRIBUTION A MUST

How did the last piece of Thought Leadership you consumed come to your attention?



**UNKNOWN**

**DISCOVERED**  
The Decision-Maker was researching a specific topic or came across it in their day-to-day

**AMPLIFIED**  
The Decision-Maker saw the Thought Leadership promoted on paid or earned channels

**PUSHED**  
The Decision-Maker received it directly from someone else

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q5 FIND: Think back to the last piece of thought leadership you consumed. How did it first come to your attention? Select one. Data: DISCOVERED: Net of "I saw it on a professional newsfeed(e.g. LinkedIn)", "I did a search for content on the topic", "I saw it on a social media newsfeed", "I found it on a website that aggregates and curates thought leadership". PUSHED: Net of "It was forwarded or mentioned to me by a colleague", "It was pushed to me from a source from which I have opted in to receive reports and publications", "It was a leave-behind or was mentioned in a brochure I received at a conference or meeting". AMPLIFIED: Net of "A major news outlet did a piece that mentioned it", "A trade publication or newsletter I read did a piece that mentioned it", "An influencer or someone I follow in the field mentioned it". UNKNOWN: "Don't know / Not sure" Among Global decision-makers





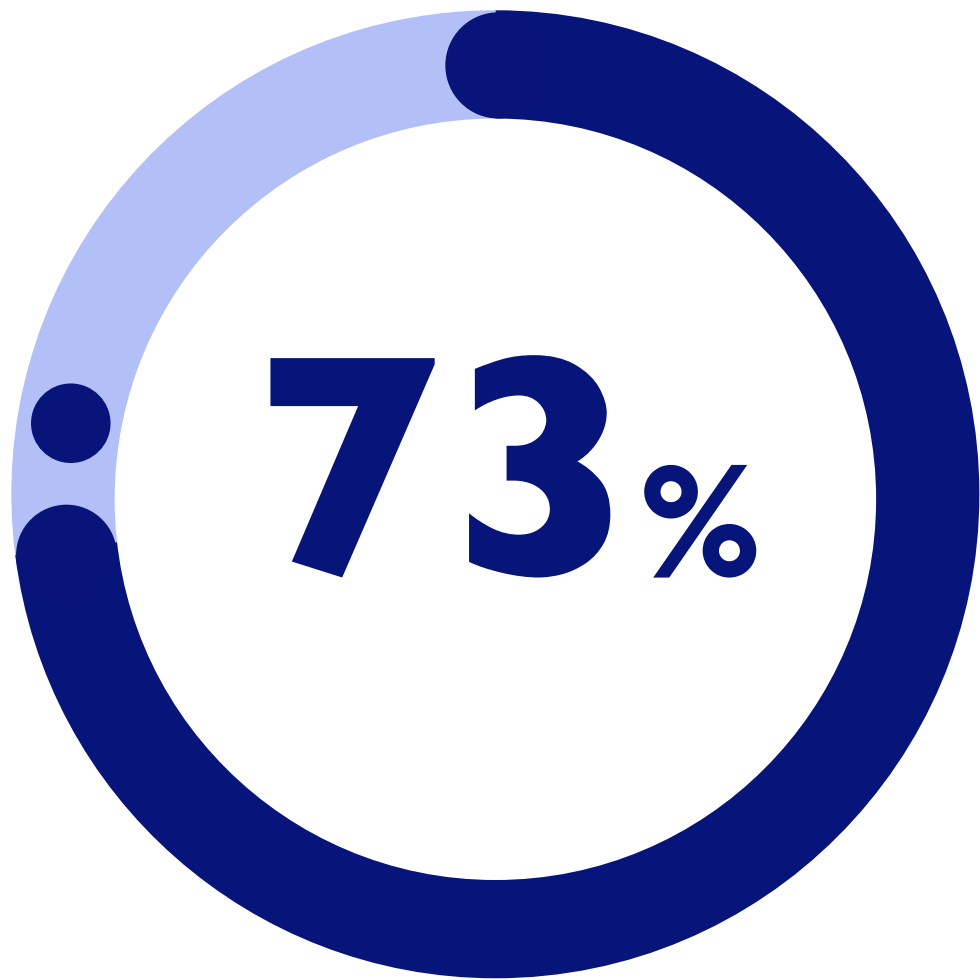
---

**03**

**ENDURING SUCCESS REQUIRES A  
CULTURE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**



# DEEP THINKING AND INTELLECTUAL RIGOR



Of Producers credited **deep thinking and intellectual rigor** among the most important drivers of their last exceptional Thought Leadership success

## CHARACTERISTIC I: DEEP THINKING AND INTELLECTUAL RIGOR

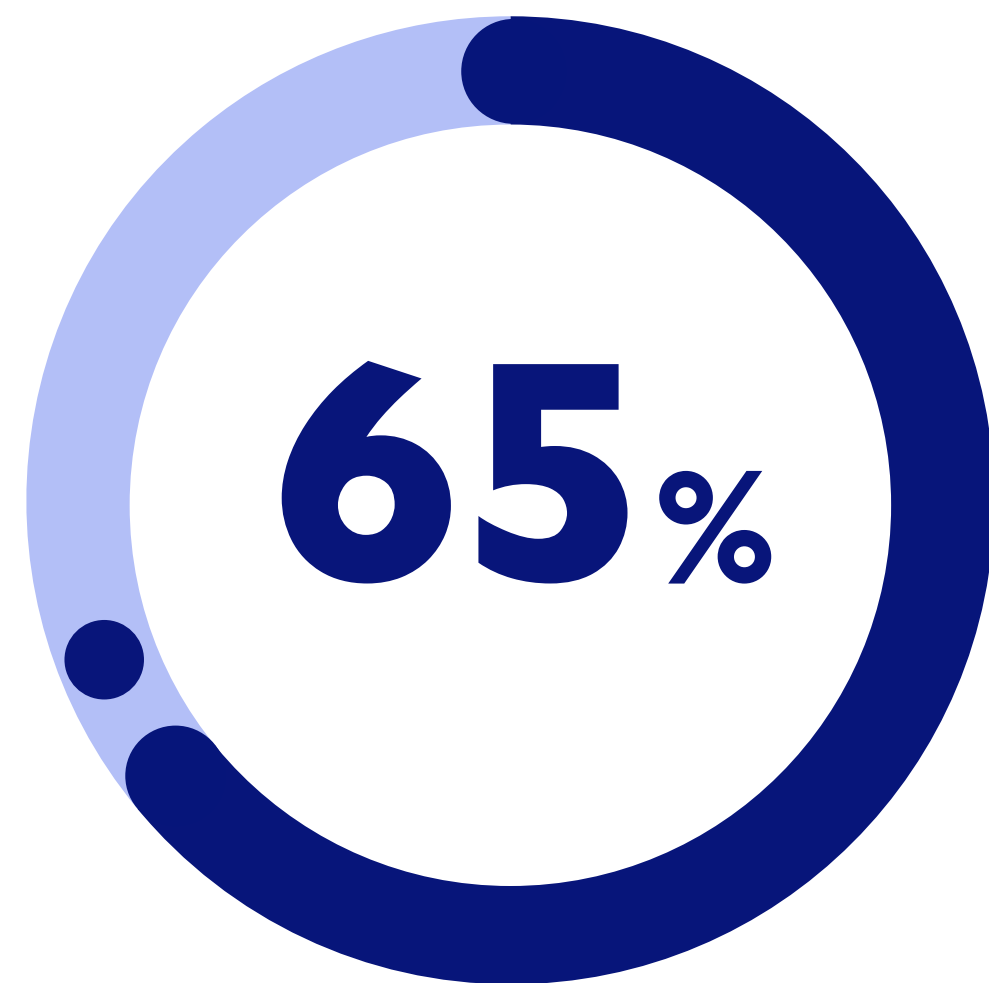
Net of:

- 35% It came out just as there was a lot of emerging interest in the topic
- 34% It was based on rigorous, high-quality research
- 33% We said something new, substantial and potentially game changing on the topic
- 31% It laid out a clear set of actions that organizations should take in response to the challenges or opportunities the piece identified and discussed

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q18 SUCCESS2: Still thinking about that same exceptionally successful piece of thought leadership your organization produced, when it came to its content and format, which of the following were the most important drivers of, or the keys to, its exceptional success? Select all that apply. Data: % who selected each item and net percentage of respondents who selected at least one of those items among Total Global Thought Leadership Producers



# SUPPORT FROM LEADERSHIP AND ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION



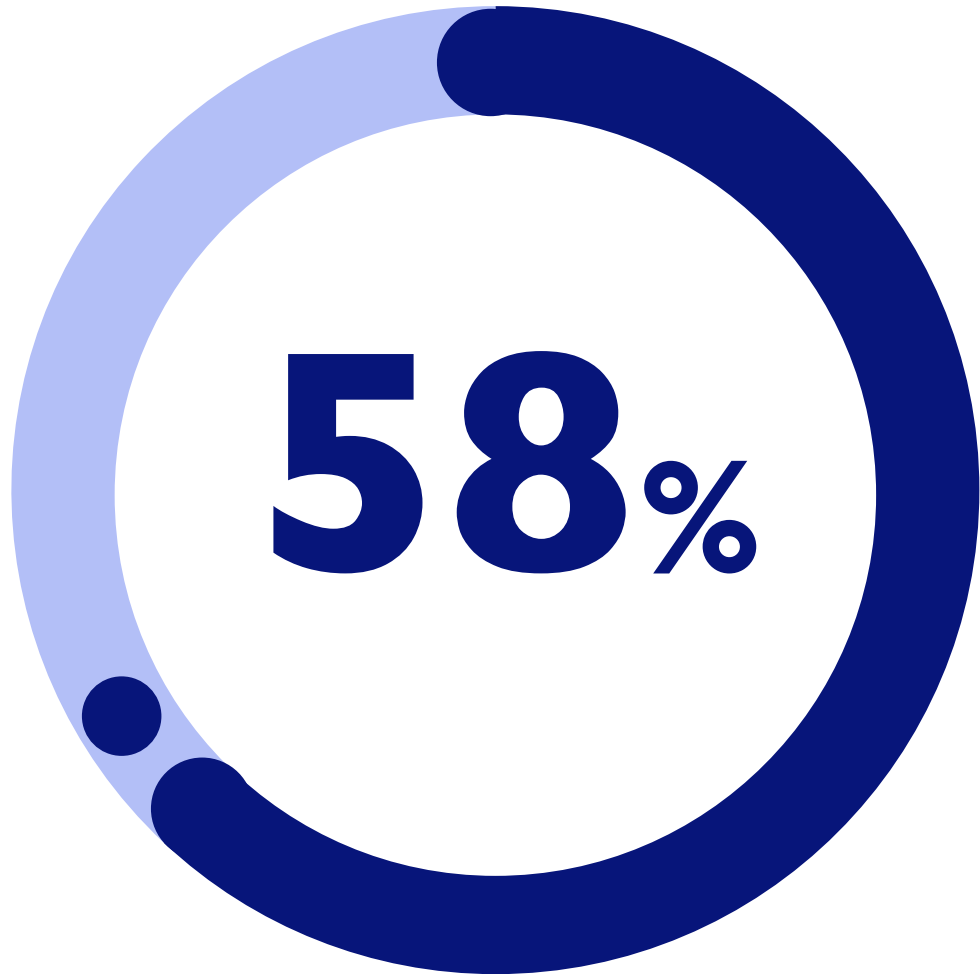
Of Producers credited **support from leadership and across the organization** among the most important drivers of their last exceptional Thought Leadership success

## CHARACTERISTIC 2: SUPPORT FROM LEADERSHIP AND ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

Net of:

- 39% senior executives championed and were highly visible around its release
- 32% our best thinkers and top executives were involved in producing it
- 27% our organization as a whole worked in a coordinated fashion to foster its success
- 21% We thoroughly trained our leadership and business development team in how to understand and effectively communicate the big ideas presented in the piece

# PROMOTIONAL FOLLOW THROUGH AND SUPPORT FOR DISTRIBUTION



Of Producers credited **promotional follow through and support for distribution** among the most important drivers of their last exceptional Thought Leadership success

## CHARACTERISTIC 3: PROMOTIONAL FOLLOW THROUGH AND SUPPORT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Net of:

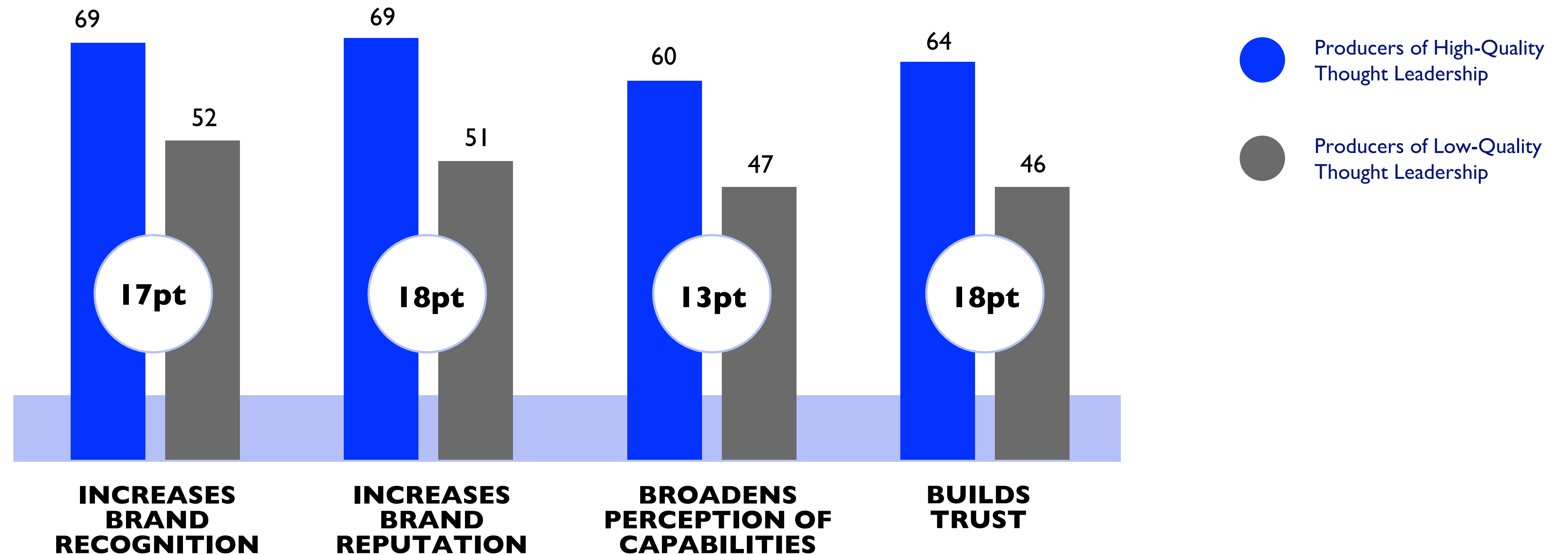
- 40% we distributed it broadly and effectively
- 31% we effectively engaged our employees in its amplification
- 11% we supported it with paid promotion

Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q17 SUCCESS1: Think about the last exceptionally successful piece of thought leadership your organization produced. When it came its marketing, amplification and distribution, which of the following were the most important drivers of, or the keys to, its exceptional success? Select all that apply. . Data: % who selected each item and net percentage of respondents who selected at least one of those items among Total Global Thought Leadership Producers

# HIGHER-QUALITY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP GENERATES

## GREATER BRAND IMPACT

A significant gap exists between organizations that produce high-quality versus lower-quality thought leadership in achieving brand impact.

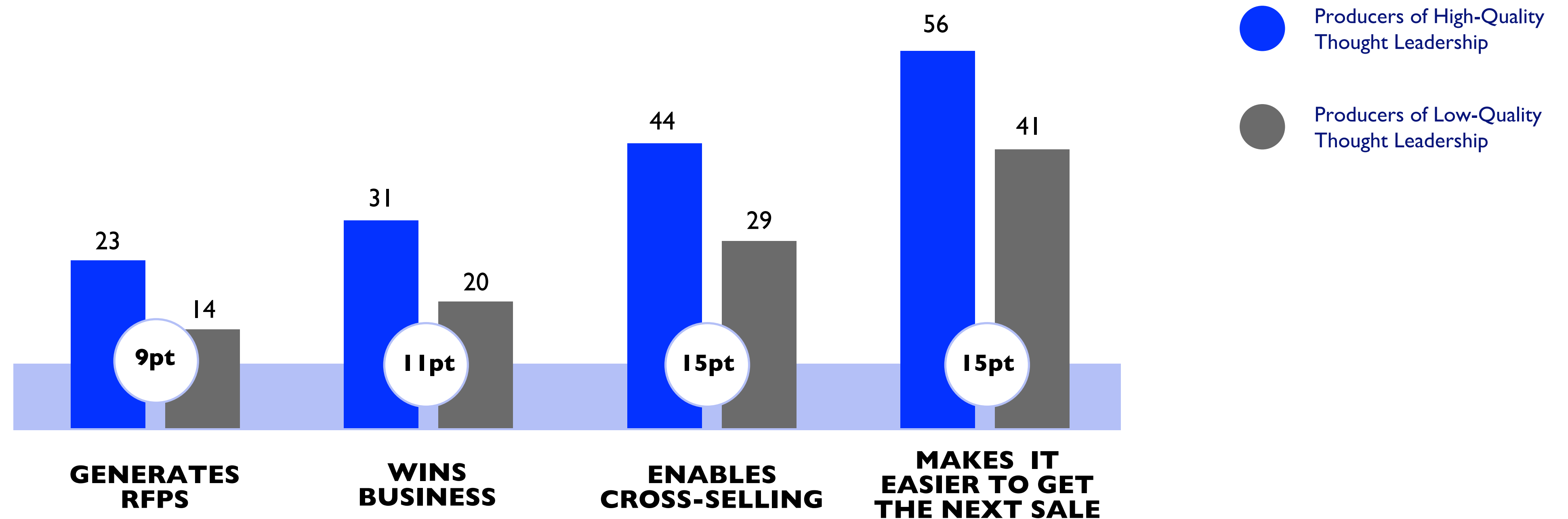


Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q15 MARKETING: Within your organization, is thought leadership effective as a marketing tool? Select all that apply. Data: % who selected "it increases our brand recognition", "it enhances our brand reputation", "it broadens people's perceptions of our capabilities and of how they might work with us", and "it builds trust in our organization among potential clients" among Global Producers of Thought Leadership who say in Q14 QUALITY 2 that the overall quality of their organization's Thought Leadership is Very Good or Excellent versus those who say it is Good, Mediocre, Poor or Very Poor

# HIGHER-QUALITY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP GENERATES

## ENHANCED SALES IMPACT

A significant gap exists between organizations that produce high-quality versus lower-quality Thought Leadership in achieving sales impact.



Source: 2020 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study. Q16 NEWBIZ: Within your organization, is thought leadership effective in generating new business opportunities? Select all that apply. Data: % who selected “it gets us more RFPs”, “it helps us close and win business on proposals we have submitted”, “it helps us cross sell current clients”, and “it helps us maintain and strengthen relationships with current clients so that it is easier to get the next sale” among Global Producers of Thought Leadership who say in Q14 QUALITY 2 that the overall quality of their organization’s Thought Leadership is Very Good or Excellent versus those who say it is Good, Mediocre, Poor or Very Poor

# COMMITMENT TO A CULTURE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP YIELDS GREATER REWARDS OVER TIME

**32%**

of Producers say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of **very good or excellent quality**

**9%**

of Producers creating Thought Leadership for less **than one year** say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of very good or excellent quality

**20%**

of Producers creating Thought Leadership for **1-5 years** say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of very good or excellent quality

**29%**

of Producers creating Thought Leadership for **6-10 years** say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of very good or excellent quality

**29%**

of Producers creating Thought Leadership for **11-20 years** say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of very good or excellent quality

**35%**

of Producers creating Thought Leadership for **21+ years** say the Thought Leadership their organization creates is of very good or excellent quality



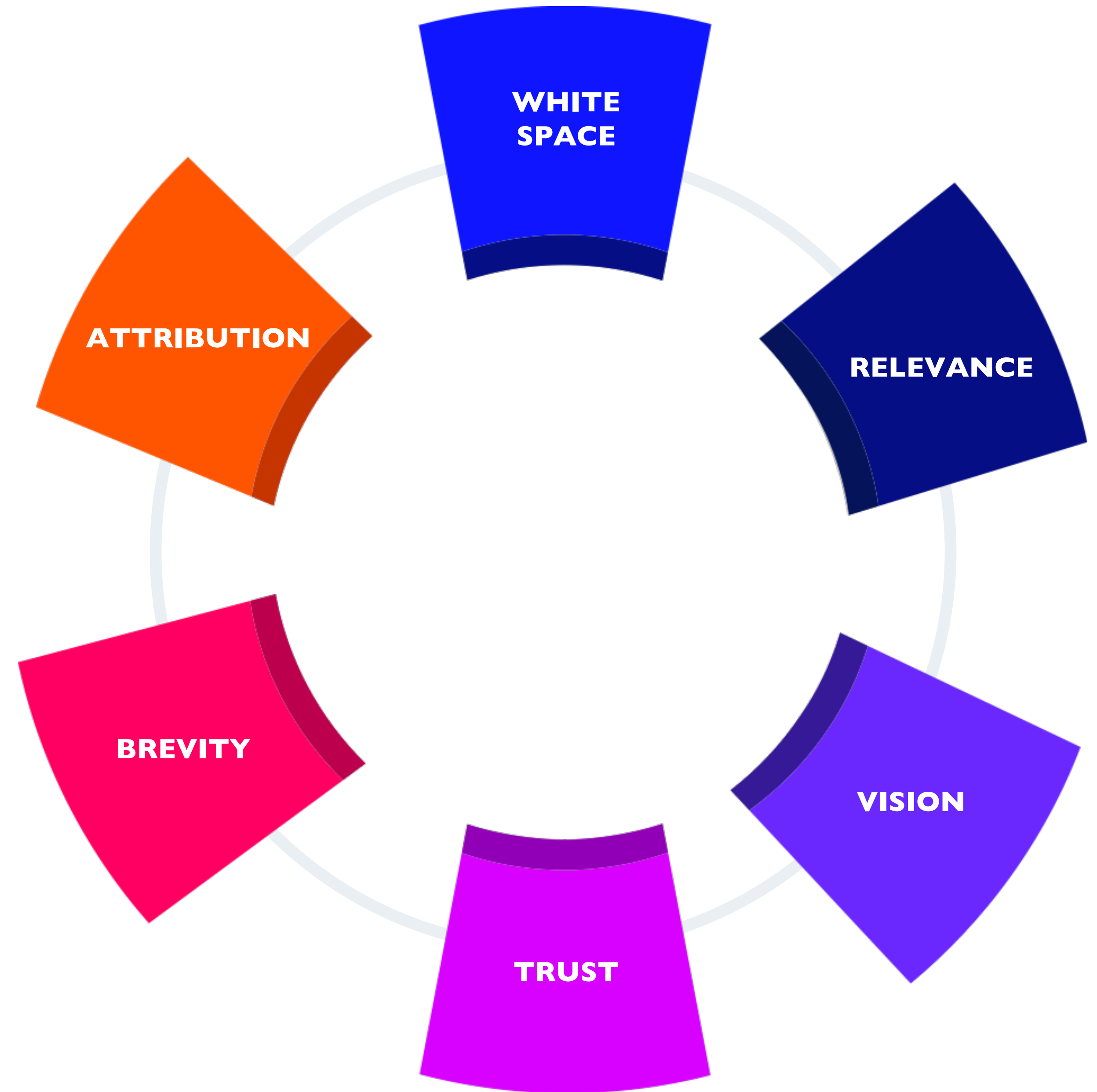
---

04

**BEST PRACTICES:  
THE EDELMAN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP  
FLYWHEEL**

BEST PRACTICES:

# THE EDELMAN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FLYWHEEL





# CAPITALIZE ON WHITE SPACE

**FIND OPPORTUNITIES WHERE YOUR BRAND CAN OWN AND LEAD TIMELY CONVERSATIONS**

## **Seek out timely topics that pose challenges for your customers**

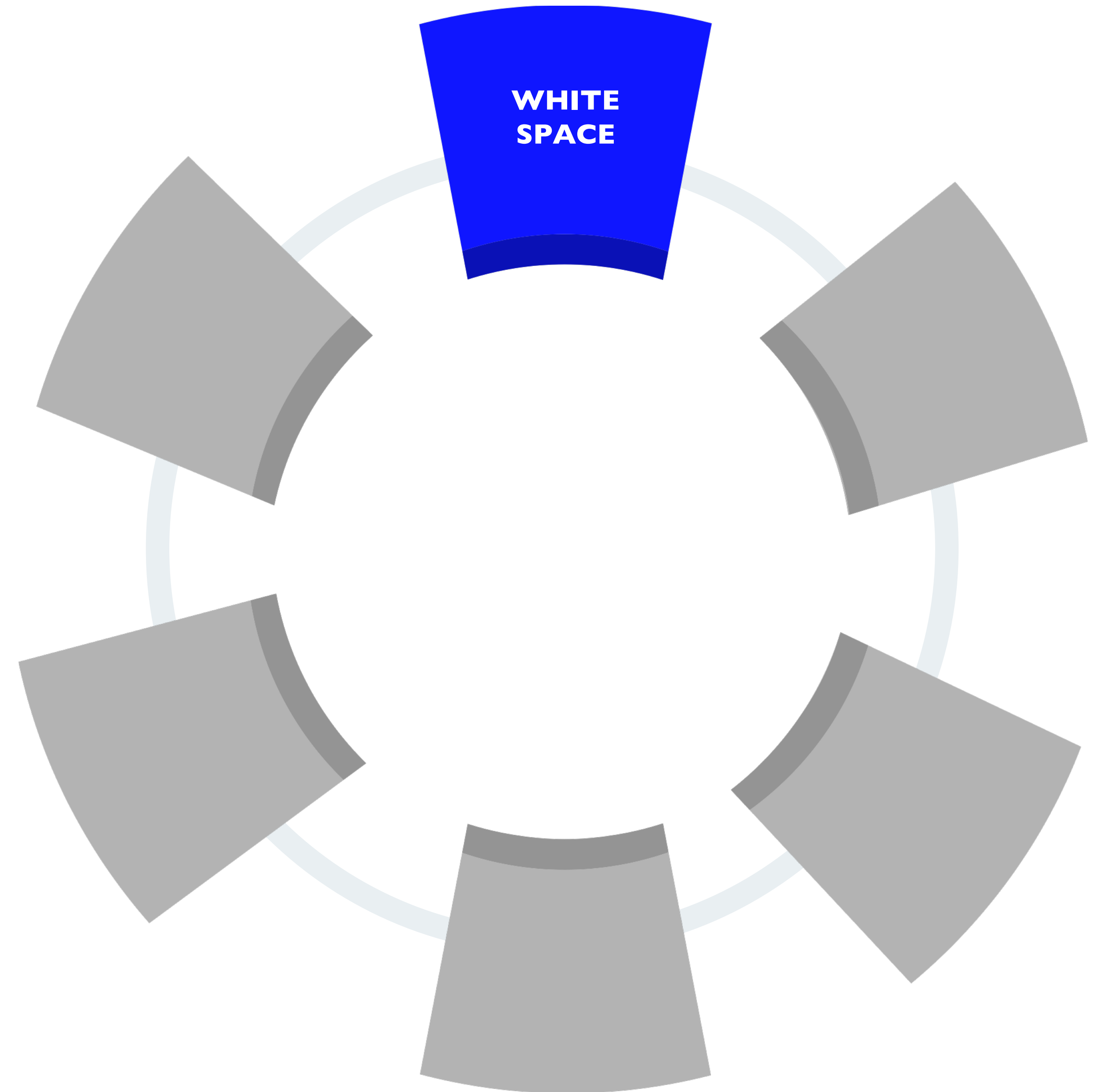
Explore thought leadership topics at the intersections between timely industry trends, customer pain points and your company's growth priorities.

## **Play the contrarian or unexpected angle**

Conduct a media analysis to uncover opportunities to say something novel, especially around crowded topics. Seek out new angles and a counterintuitive POV.

## **Be bold and imaginative in your storytelling**

B2B thought leadership need not be limited to whitepapers. Even for well-covered topics, find creative and unexpected ways of delivering your story to create whitespace and distinguish you from competitors.



# BE RELEVANT

---

## STRONG THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IS CLOSELY MAPPED TO CUSTOMER NEEDS

---

### **Avoid the “everything to everyone” trap**

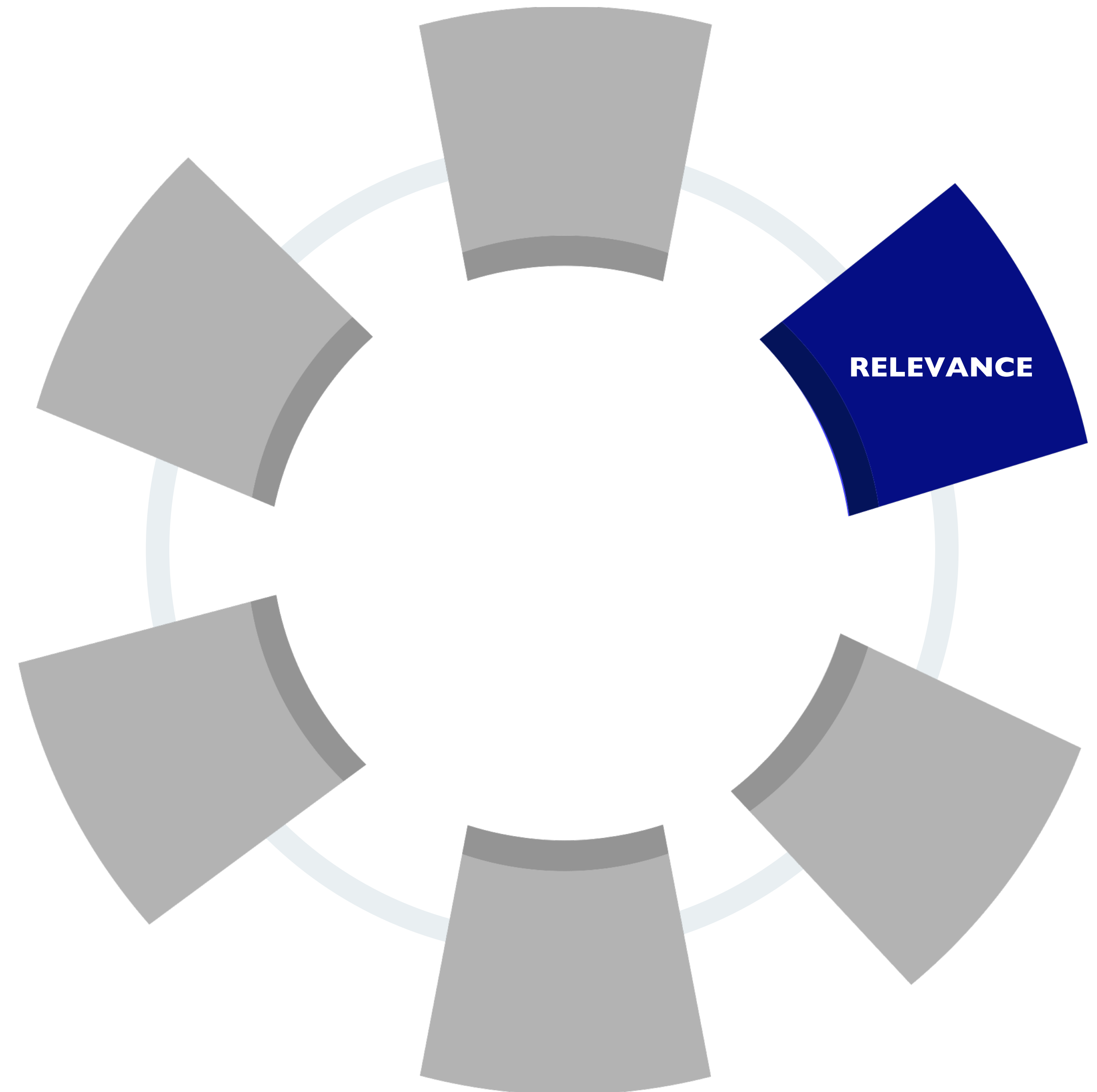
Narrow the target audience for Thought Leadership to a set of companies, a particular industry or key function within the buyer committee. The more specific your target, the more tailored your communications can and should be.

### **Find customer insights in the trenches**

Engage frontline sales and customer relationship managers early in the Thought Leadership development process to uncover what topics most concern current customers and prospects on a day-to-day basis.

### **Embrace martech that fuels creative editorial content**

Instead of a one-to-many editorial approach, embrace publishing technologies that enable granular personalization and tailored content experiences to niche audiences (e.g., website personalization, progressive profiling, account-based marketing).



# SET A VISION

---

## DECISION-MAKERS WANT TO KNOW WHERE THEIR INDUSTRY IS GOING

---

### **Explain not just “what” but “why”**

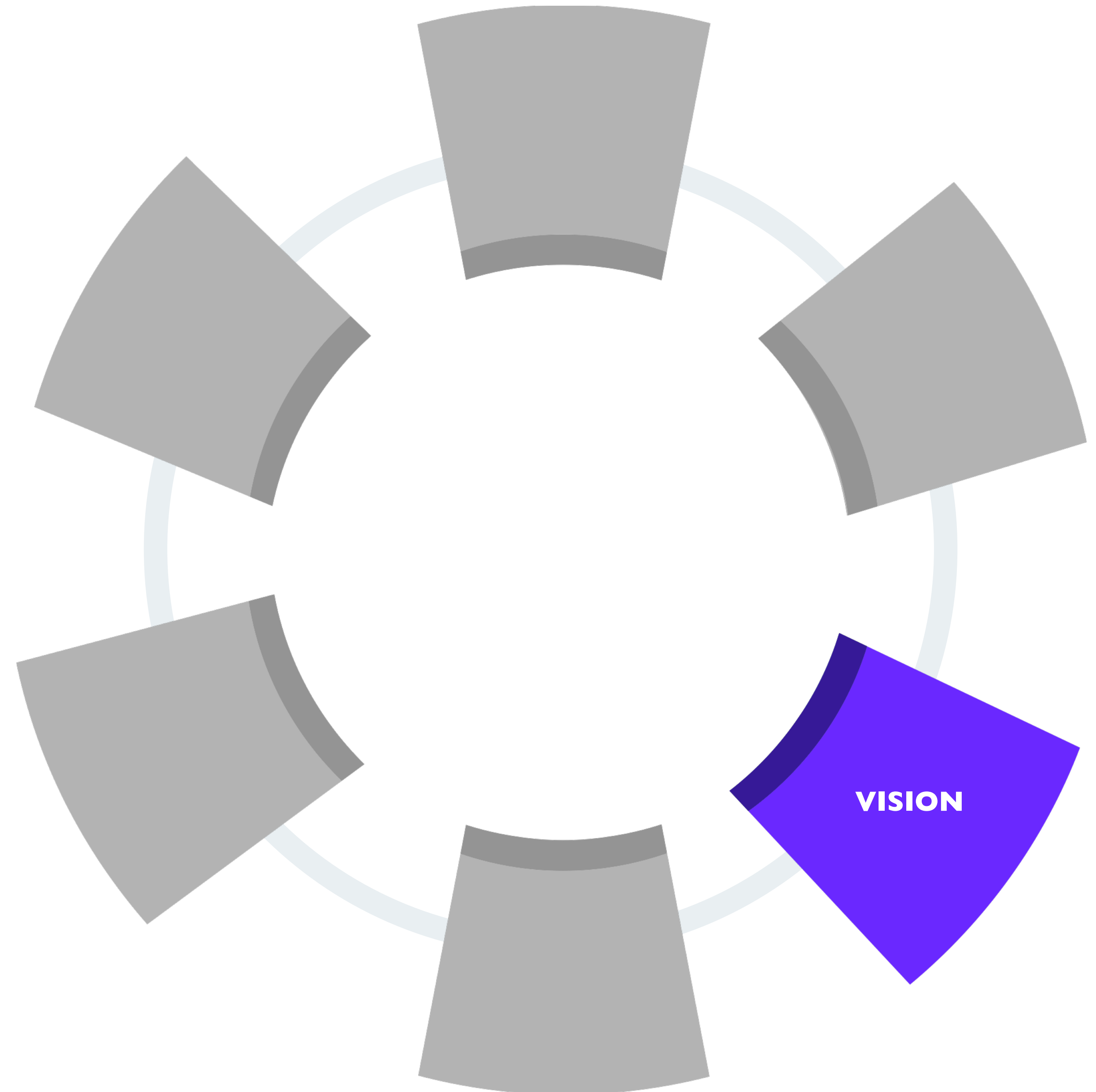
Don't just identify trends – demonstrate an understanding of why things are happening in a way that nobody else can. Especially for senior Decision-Makers, seek to explain the underlying causes of trends that map back to their key business challenges.

### **Uncover what's next for your customers**

Inspire customers by looking around corners to find new opportunities that will benefit them. Spend less time on the features/benefits your company offers, and more time explaining how your customers can gain a competitive advantage in the future.

### **Use big picture thinking to condition the selling environment**

Many companies focus on chasing down leads for product purchases. Fewer invest the effort to earn credibility in the minds of customers and create an environment that stimulates demand. Visionary ideas are more likely to resonate with senior decision-makers, especially those who think about their own business in holistic terms.





# EARN TRUST

## BEING A TRUSTED SOURCE IS KEY TO DRIVING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

### **Showcase your people to earn credibility**

Harness the power of your people – senior executives, deep subject matter experts and employee “amplifiers” – to convey your thought leadership in a more personal and authentic style.

### **“Pay it forward” by teaching customers how to solve a problem**

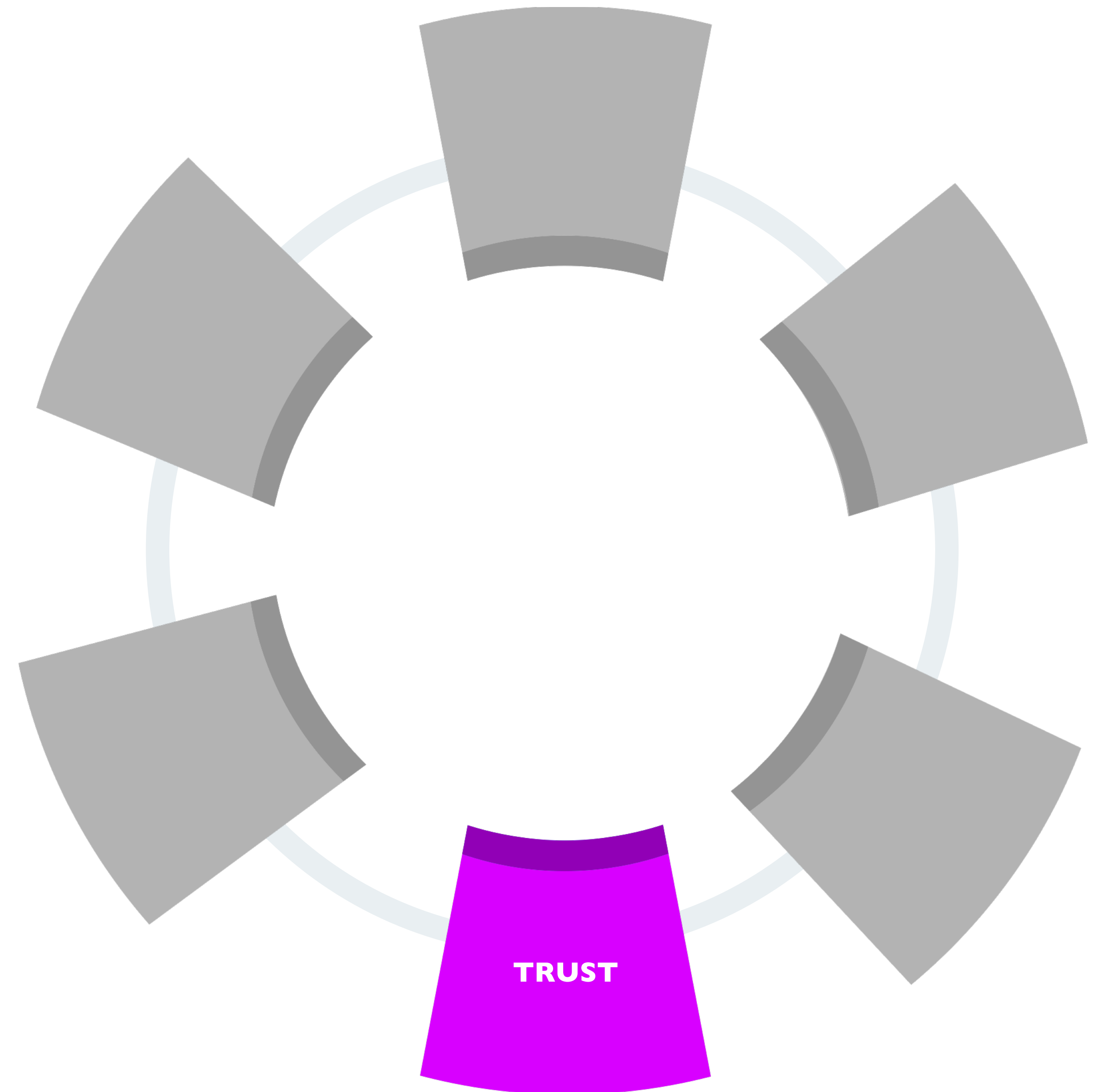
Invest in journalistic-quality content and ideas that go beyond products and services to educate customers and provide genuine value and knowledge they can use. Generosity pays dividends.

### **Aspire to consistency and longevity**

Explore how your Thought Leadership can be an ongoing franchise rather than a one-off event in order to generate goodwill over time. Increased followers, opt-in subscribers and ultimately, a captive audience, are the rewards.

### **Align with trusted, recognizable voices outside of your company**

Enhance credibility through partnerships with industry influencers, academia, media publishers and other sources of information that your target audiences already know and trust.



# BE CONCISE

---

## BREVITY IS OVERWHELMINGLY PREFERRED BY BUSY PROFESSIONALS

---

### **Think in terms of headlines**

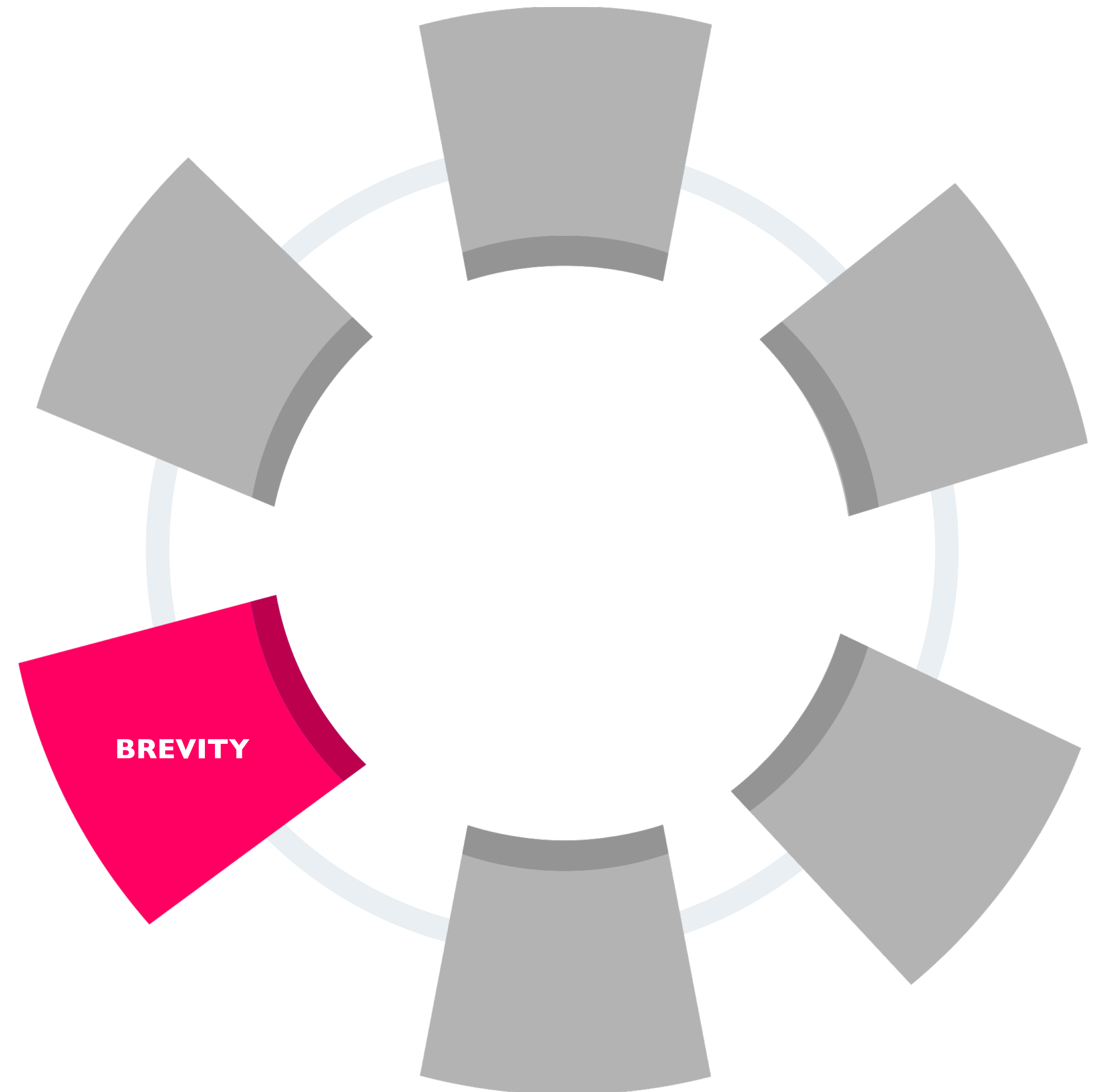
Imagine how a journalist would write a story about your Thought Leadership. Anticipate the key messages and insights that people would want to pass along to others. Craft your story around the most memorable and quick-hitting ideas.

### **Entice readers along a journey**

Create short, snackable media such as infographics and rich media that capture attention, provide immediate value and motivate readers to continue on to consume longer-form content. Break down content into smaller chunks that can be easily consumed via social media, email newsletters, etc.

### **Simplify complex stories with a human touch.**

Consider video and audio as storytelling aids to quickly deliver hard-to-digest information in a personable format that people want to spend time consuming.



# MEASURE PROGRESS

**THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CANNOT BE APPROPRIATELY VALUED WITHOUT ATTRIBUTION**

## **Begin at the end**

Before executing Thought Leadership campaigns, identify what company leadership and the broader organization will consider success, and how it will be measured.

## **Engage with sales early**

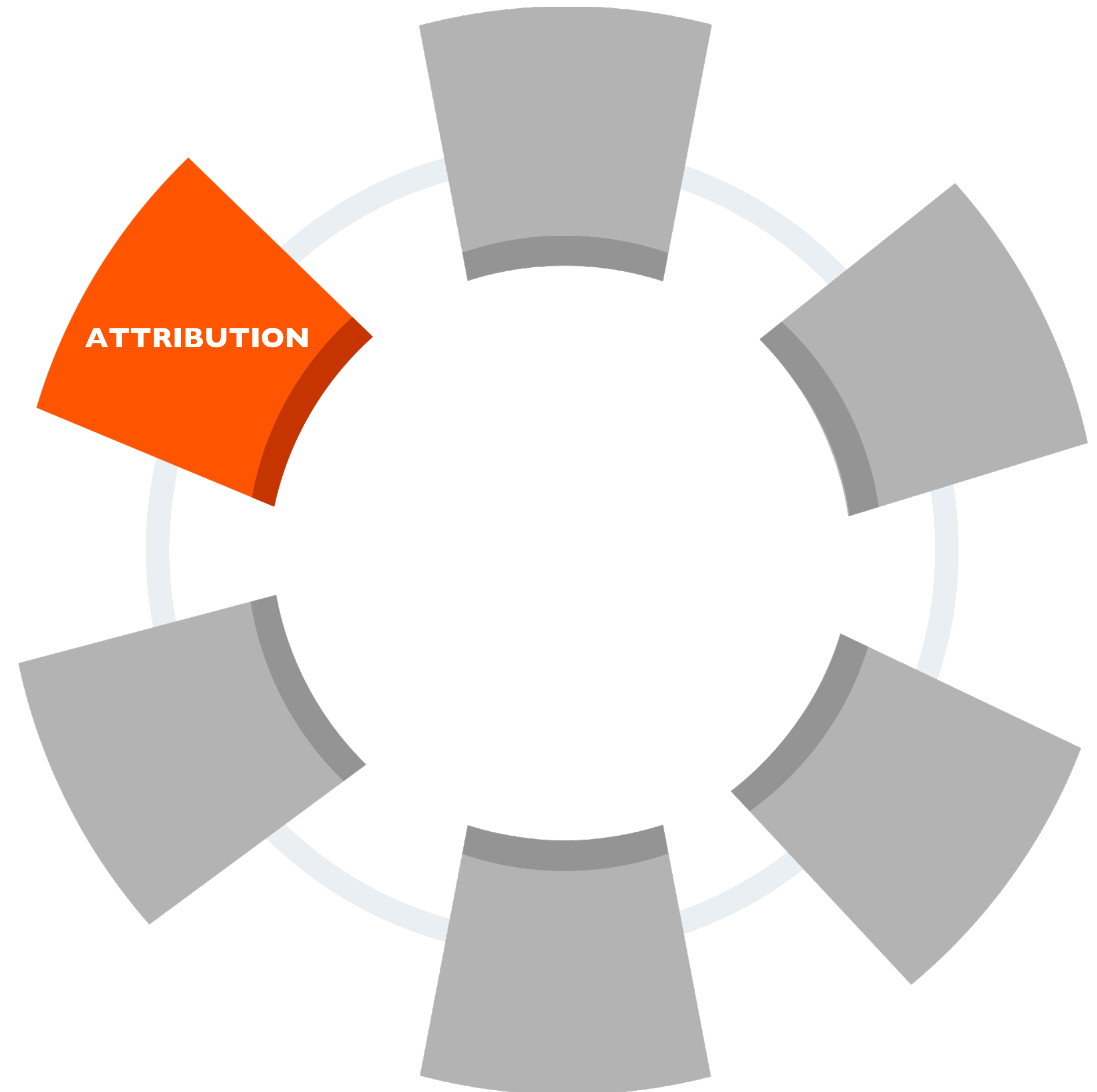
Align sales and marketing on high-priority KPIs such as account lift, MQL, SQL and other measures of how content is driving positive customer behavior.

## **Adopt measurement tools aligned with your priorities**

Ensure you have the right tech and data in place to understand content performance from awareness through purchase – especially site-side analytics that track customer actions after they have consumed Thought Leadership.

## **Beyond “how many,” focus on “who”**

Look beyond the large numbers typically tied to outbound tactics such as impressions and anonymous clicks; dig deeper to verify the identity and quality of the audience, and what kinds of interactions thought leadership is driving.





# 2020

## B2B THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IMPACT STUDY

---

### CONTACT US

**Joe Kingsbury**

U.S. Managing Director  
Edelman Business Marketing  
[joe.kingsbury@edelman.com](mailto:joe.kingsbury@edelman.com)

**David Bersoff, Ph.D.**

Head of Global Thought Leadership Research  
Edelman Intelligence  
[david.bersoff@edelmanintelligence.com](mailto:david.bersoff@edelmanintelligence.com)

**Tonia Ries**

Global Executive Director  
Edelman Intellectual Property  
[tonia.ries@edelman.com](mailto:tonia.ries@edelman.com)



Edelman

LinkedIn