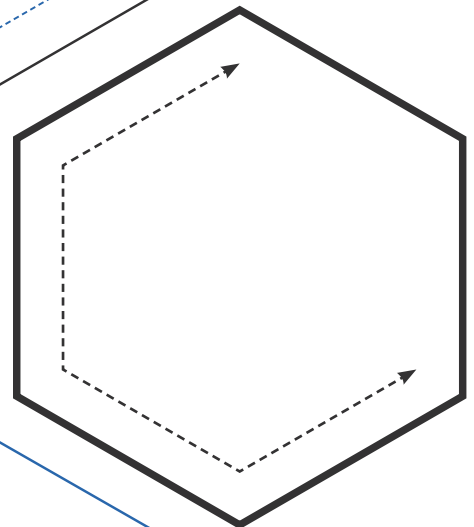
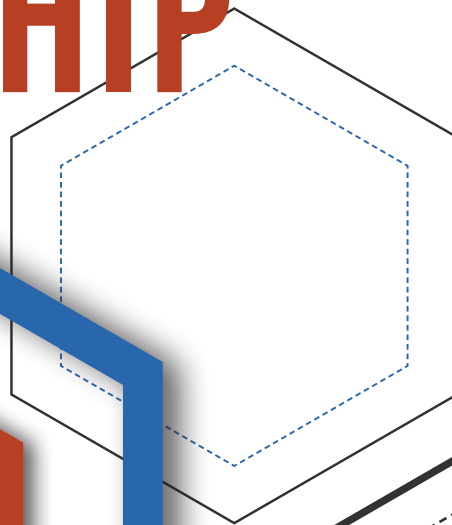
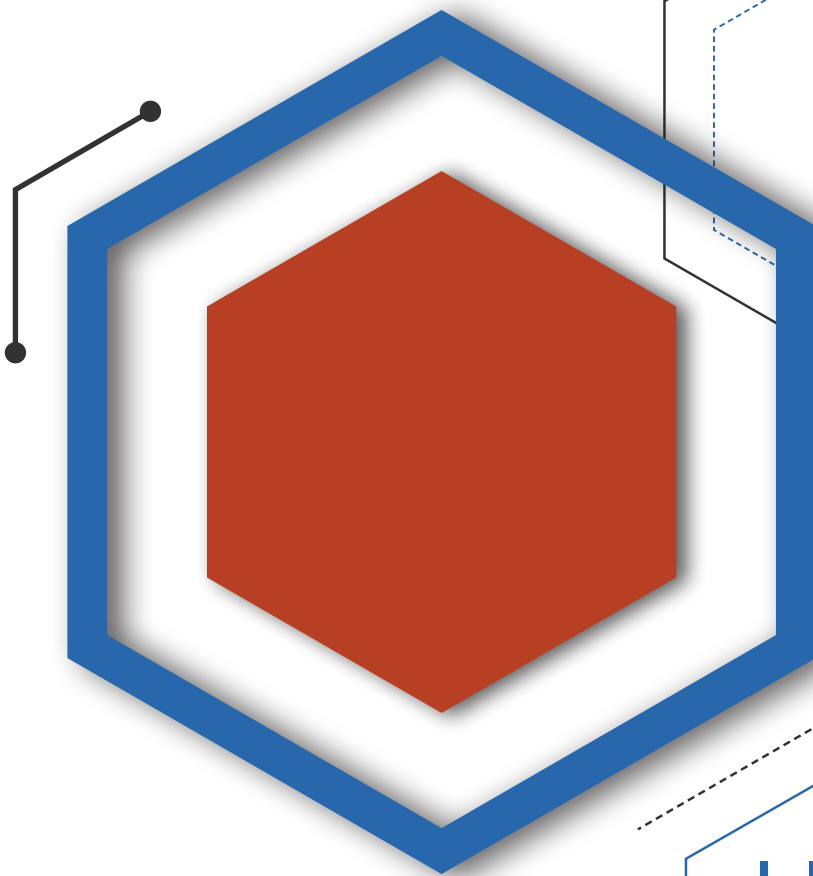


THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



ROCKET
CONTENT



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A CONTENT-DRIVEN
B2B MARKETING
STRATEGY FOR
GROWTH

CPD
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The CPD Certification
Service

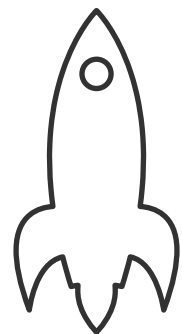
Introduction

You have probably come across the phrase ‘thought leadership’ in the context of marketing. It is a powerful strategy for B2B marketing, but it’s often misunderstood and consequently not applied effectively.

LinkedIn describes thought leadership as a strategy that: “leverages the knowledge and experience in your

organisation to answer your audience’s questions – especially those they haven’t thought to ask.”

Thought leadership works well in the building services sector because marketers who keep their potential customers up-to-date with industry developments can win their trust – that is thought leadership in action.



Thought leadership comes from a place of generosity.

Contents

THE VALUE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP 04

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY 06

CONTENT FOR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP 08

LONG FORM: GUIDES & WHITE PAPERS 09

BLOGGING: BUILD YOUR VOICE 10

MEASURING SUCCESS 11

The value of thought leadership



Selling products or services is the ultimate goal of every marketer. Whatever marketing strategies or tools marketers use, the objective is to put their business top-of-mind for buyers.

The complication for B2B marketers is that, often, the buying process is long and complex. It is notably the case in the construction and building services sectors, where numerous professionals influence a final purchasing decision.

It is challenging to reach all of these people and to target your message at them consistently.

Thought leadership allows marketers to do this by using content to demonstrate

knowledge and capability to potential customers.

This content can take a number of forms, for example technical guides or white papers that address hot topics or technical challenges for the building services and construction sector.

Subjects covered can also include analysis and explanation of legislation to keep readers up-to-date.

Providing useful information in various formats not only shows potential customers that you know your industry but also that you can help them with their day-to-day work.

Most importantly, research shows

that B2B decision makers place a high value on thought leadership content from companies in their sector.

The 2019 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study highlights that B2B decision makers will pay a premium to work with organisations that demonstrate thought leadership and who 'establish a clear vision for the future.'

Decision makers who took part in the survey also said that they read thought leadership content for at least an hour each week and gained value from doing so.

Great content is how marketers drive a thought leadership strategy (see the *Rocket Content Guide to Content Marketing*).

It's all about producing content that demonstrates your company's technical expertise and shares its vision of the industry (challenges, opportunities, the future). Content is central to gaining a thought leadership position in your industry.



Leading the field: content in action



Set the conversation

Identify ways in which your company can lead the the conversation in your industry. Consider the key issues in our sector that your clients have to solve (e.g. sustainability; decarbonisation; health in buildings). Offer content that provides useful and actionable insights



Earn trust

It is vital that your thought leadership content is trustworthy. Readers will quickly spot a sales pitch, so focus on being helpful. Thought leadership is a long-term strategy, but the outcome is that your brand stands for quality, integrity and knowledge.



Measure success

Marketers must be able to show that thought leadership is working. Setting targets and measuring via digital and social engagement tools is a crucial part of the process that should not be overlooked.

Delivering a thought leadership strategy

A long-term approach to building relationships with customers



A thought leadership strategy is a long-term approach that builds engagement over time. It is not a quick-fix to win sales leads.

Instead, thought leadership and content marketing should come from a place of generosity: It is about providing useful information to potential customers to gain credibility in the marketplace and build trust with potential customers.

The aim is not to make sales directly from these communications, but to demonstrate your business as a credible and reliable partner.

- ➡ 47% of thought leadership content is found through discovery - on a LinkedIn feed; web search; social search
- ➡ 32% of this content is forwarded from colleagues, conferences or opted-in sources

Figures from: LinkedIn/Edelman research



"When your business invests in content marketing, you improve your ability to engage your buyer personas, convert more leads, boost brand awareness and connect with your audience."

Christina Perricone, Content Manager - Hubspot

While this sounds like taking a long way around to achieve the ultimate marketer's goal of growing sales, it has significant benefits.

The research carried out for LinkedIn shows that thought leadership content is a powerful tool for reaching high-level decisions makers, with 88% of decision makers agreeing that it "enhances their perceptions of an organisation".

Great content also has the power to

Offer helpful insights

drive engagement – with 47% of top-level executives saying that they shared contact information after reading thought leadership content.

So when delivering a thought leadership strategy, it is vital to focus on providing useful information and genuine insights – not a sales pitch.

The real power of this approach is that it encourages readers to share your content with colleagues, amplifying its reach. LinkedIn's research shows that 32% of content finds its way to decision makers because colleagues or connections forward it to them.

Content for thought leadership

Focus your content on buyer personas and it's easier to create quality communications that engage your potential customers.

If you set out with the objective of demonstrating 'thought leadership', the task of producing content will be that much harder. It is far better to focus on your potential customers and ask what they need to know. This will provide an easier route to producing useful, usable content that attracts interested readers.

Customer personas are a useful way to identify where you might best focus your content.

The more you understand the audience for any marketing communications, the

more effective you can be. them to help put together profiles of the key personnel they deal with when moving potential customers towards making a purchase. It's a great idea to involve your sales colleagues so they can contribute to the success of a thought leadership strategy.

Create 'personas' from the information you gather – Colin the contract manager; Frances the facilities manager. Make them as real as possible.

These marketing personas will not only help you understand how to focus your



more effective you can be.

The best way to develop personas is to consider your existing customers. Who are they? Useful aspects to consider include job title; seniority; primary responsibilities.

It's also a good idea to ask your existing customers what their hot topics are and what they feel the main industry trends are going to be.

Speak with your sales team and ask

content. They will also be useful if you decide to work with a content or creative agency as your customer personas will assist with the briefing process by providing clear insights into your target audience.

So, the key point is that thought leadership means putting potential customers first, ahead of making a sales pitch with every communication.

Long-form: guides & white papers

Technical Guides (or White Papers) are an ideal approach to thought leadership content. They allow your business to demonstrate a range of technical know-how.

A Guide or White Paper is not a company brochure. If it becomes a 'selling' document, then it loses its value to potential customers.

The writing must focus on answering questions, being helpful and authoritative – not on pushing a brand or product. This is about giving readers what they want, hence the importance of understanding your important buyer personas.

One way to emphasise the quality of a Guide is to have it CPD Certified. A third party accreditation demonstrates that your content has achieved a recognised standard of quality and integrity.

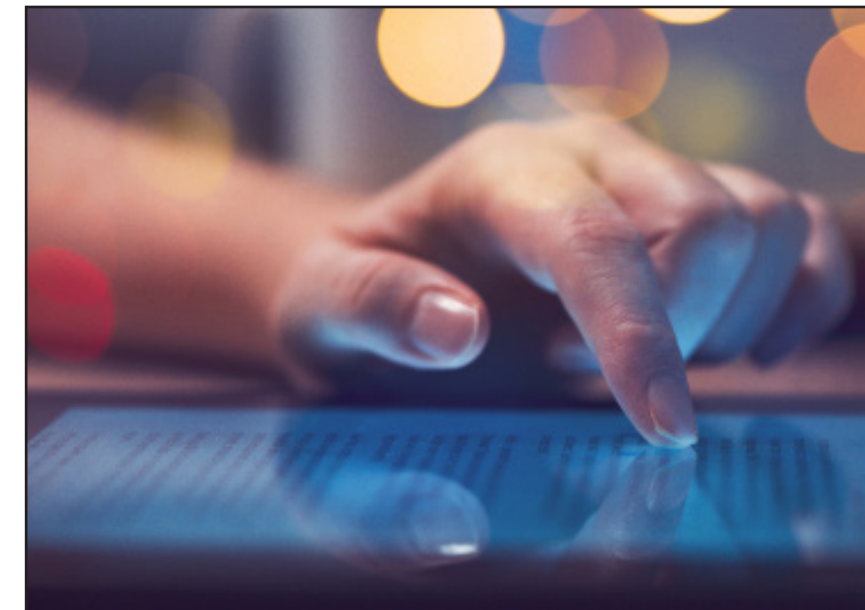
CPD Certified content is attractive to engineering and construction professionals who are members of associations that require them to accrue CPD points regularly.

Long-form content offers other benefits for marketers when hosted on your company website.

Websites that engage readers and encourage them to spend more time reading will rank highly on search engine results pages (SERPS) – pushing your site up the rankings.

Guides and White Papers can also help to build contact databases of potential customers.

Asking website visitors to provide a contact email address before they access the publication is a great way to gather information that you can use for follow-



up contact. If your guide is useful, these people will want to hear from you again.

Once you have produced long-form content, it can be used time and again. Some companies use their guide as the basis for a presentation or webinar, for example.

Once you have pulled together the material for a Guide, it can be repurposed into shorter formats, such as creating a Twitter campaign (to drive traffic to your website), or perhaps for LinkedIn features from your key staff members. LinkedIn refers to this re-use of content as 'slicing the turkey', and it helps to optimise the use of your marketing budget.

While long-form content takes time to put together, it can be an excellent centrepiece for your whole thought leadership content strategy.

Bloggging: build your voice

Regular blogs for your website are a great way to establish a 'voice' for your business and to establish regular communication with the market.

Regular blogs for your website are a great way to establish a 'voice' for your business. They are much shorter than guides, so offer website visitors a faster way to get to grips with your technology, products and market.

The short-form also means that you can track responses to blog topics and pursue those that receive the best response and highest engagement from readers.

But a regular blog is a time commitment. Adding a new blog once a week is ideal, so it is best to plan your ideas well in advance – for example, every quarter. Rocket Content has produced a free list of ideas for building services blogs, which might be an excellent place to start if you are looking for inspiration.

Like guides, blogs should focus on your customer personas – although it is possible to be more specific about how your products or services can help solve their problems. But the key is to offer genuinely useful and actionable information that aims to be helpful, rather than a sales pitch.

Host blogs on your company website, but don't forget to use them as LinkedIn articles to boost their marketing power.

When using LinkedIn, be aware that, at this time, articles can only be published on personal accounts, not company pages (although you can publish short posts and links to blogs from there). Many

companies use the personal accounts of key personnel to post articles. It gives your business a 'face' and allows your sales team, for example, to grow their contacts – ideal for direct follow up communications.

It's also a good idea to encourage other people in your business to share articles from colleagues. It extends your network of potential customers enormously and shows that you have expertise all across your business.

LinkedIn figures show that even though only around 3% of employees share content from colleagues, they generate 30% of all content engagement for a typical business. So don't forget to get your whole team involved as this is probably untapped potential that your competitors aren't using yet.



Measuring success

In today's B2B business world, it has never been more critical for marketers to be able to prove the value of what they do.

One of the major benefits of social and digital marketing tools is that they allow marketers to monitor and measure results. In fact, in today's B2B business world, it has never been more critical for marketers to be able to prove the value of what they do.

If you are selling products from a website, success is relatively easy to track and demonstrate. However, if you are marketing B2B products or services for construction, that might be more challenging. But there are measures and methods that you can use to see how the market is receiving your content, and what results it's driving.

The best way to measure the impact of your thought leadership strategy is to set clear goals at the outset. These will naturally form part of your overall business objectives, but they may also relate to particular marketing events.

For instance, an overall business goal may be to grow sales by a certain percentage. A marketing goal might therefore be to increase the number and quality of leads for your sales team. You may also want to host a webinar (based on a Guide, for example) so the number of sign-ups will be an essential metric to track.

Monitoring and measuring are not only about gathering numbers for end-of-year reports. The beauty of digital marketing is that you can adjust your content according to engagement. If your Guide to F Gas

Regulation proves to be a hit, include the topic in your blogs and address the subject from another angle.

Other measures to consider are:

* **Website visitors** – Google Analytics is a simple way to track how many visitors arrive at your website. It will also show you where they came from – social media channels, for instance, or search engines.

* **Bounce rate** – this is an indicator of how long visitors stay on your website. A low bounce rate indicates that they are interested in what you have to say. Again, Google Analytics will give you this figure, along with a list of the most popular website pages.

* **Social media engagement** – this could be the number of responses to a LinkedIn article; or the number of new followers acquired by personnel posting blogs.

* **Sign-ups** – if you ask people to provide an email address and details such as job title before downloading a free White Paper, it is an excellent indicator of content engagement. It also allows you to follow up with another email, or perhaps even a regular newsletter. You can build a list of potential customers who have already shown an interest in your business.

Conclusions

Thought leadership is a strategy, rather than a tactic. It should influence your whole business relationship with potential customers, so it requires your entire team's involvement.

But because it's not easy to execute successfully, a thought leadership strategy offers real standout for companies that manage it effectively.

Great content is at the very centre of thought leadership. It demonstrates your expertise to professional buyers who face complex issues in their everyday work.

But by making your content genuinely helpful, you will build strong relationships that will put your business front-of-mind with professionals who want to work with organisations that understand them.

Get in touch

Rocket Content can help you develop, produce and use great content that supports your marketing goals and metrics.

We are also a QMS Partner with CPD UK. This means that we can certify the content that we produce for you.

Coupled with our extensive experience in building services, Rocket Content can ensure your thought leadership content engages professionals in our sector.

Contact us today to talk about your goals.



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