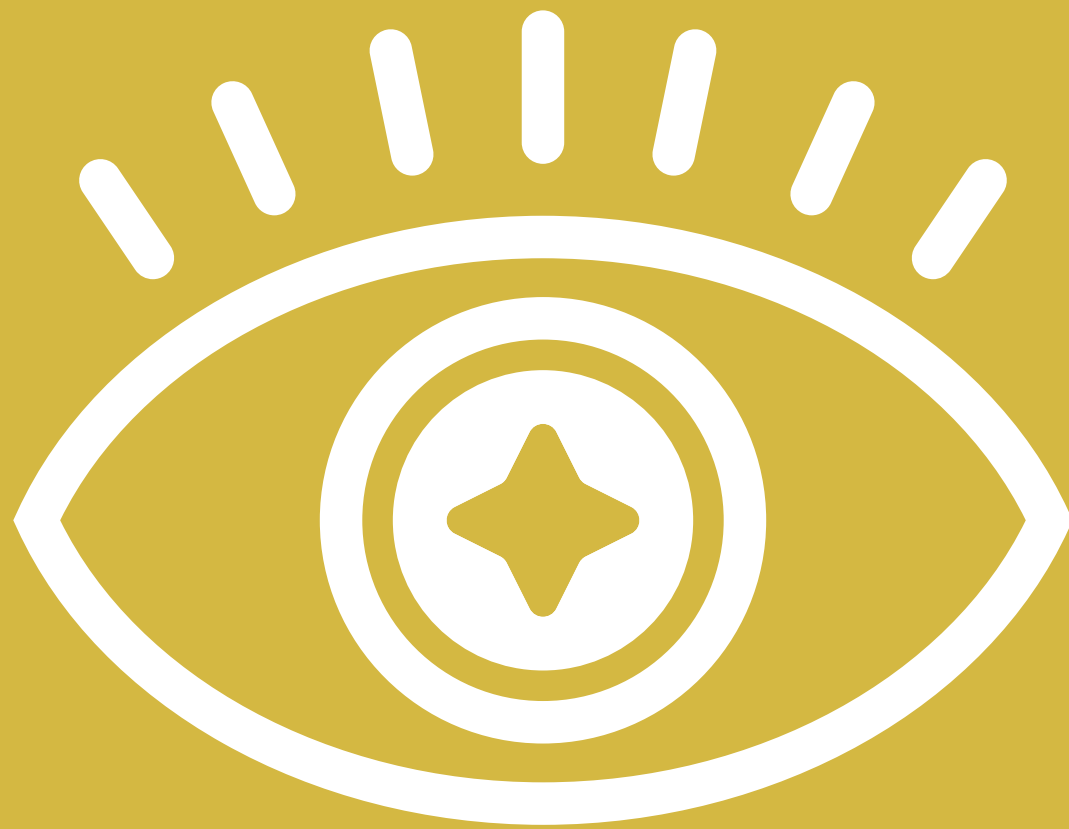


CREATING **INSIGHTFUL** CONTENT

How to stand out and be heard.



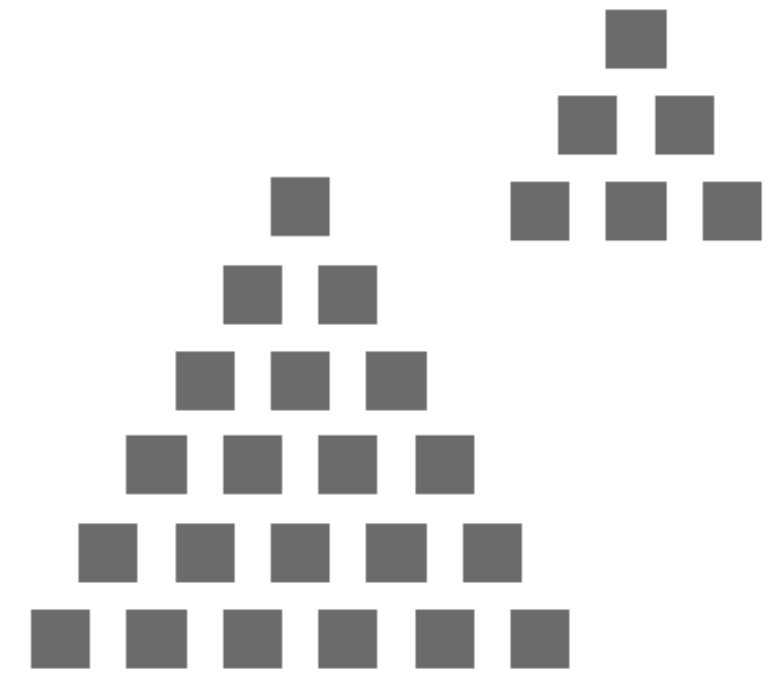


DON'T BE MORE WHITE NOISE

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



DO CREATE SOMETHING SUBSTANTIVE

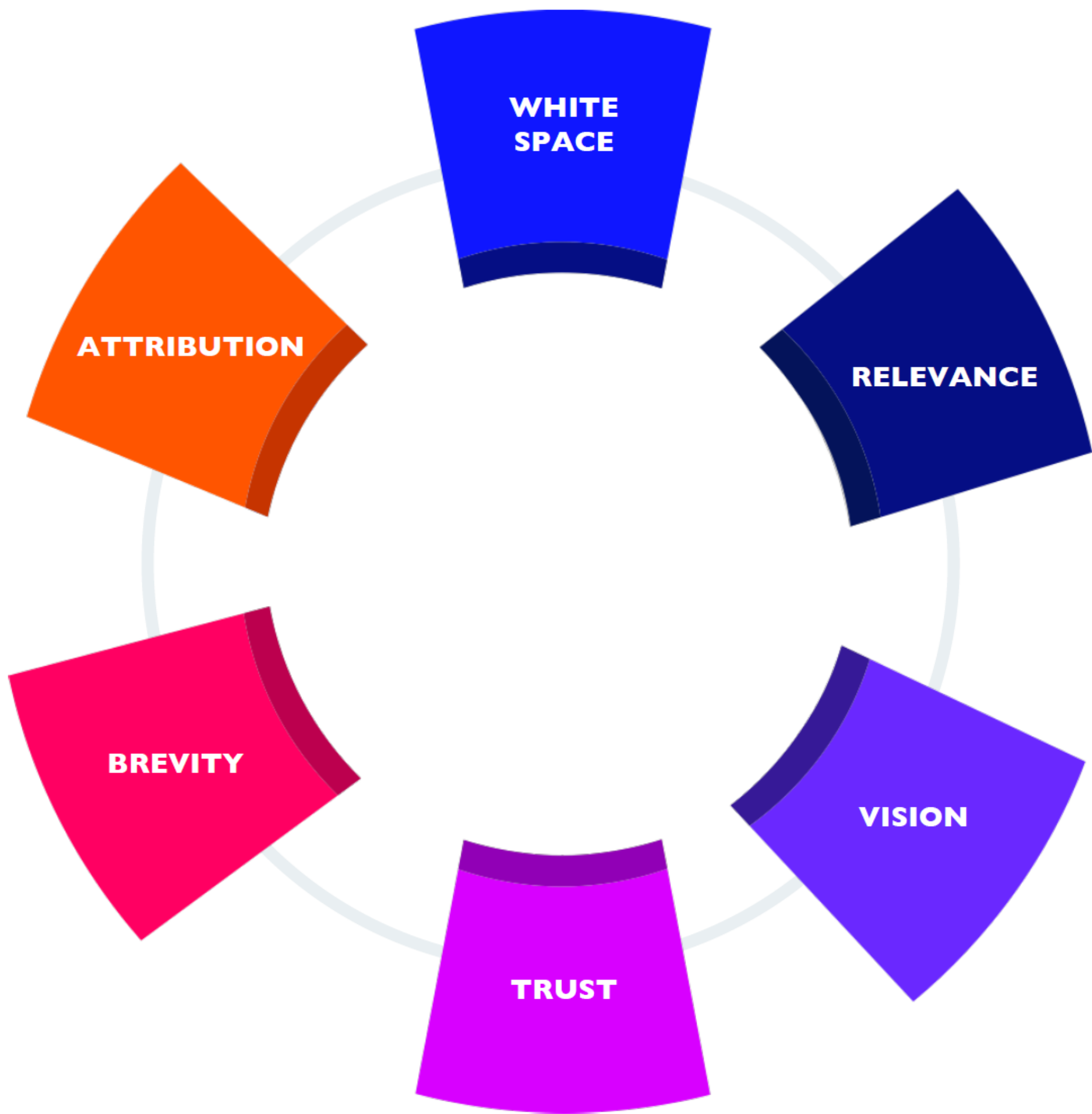


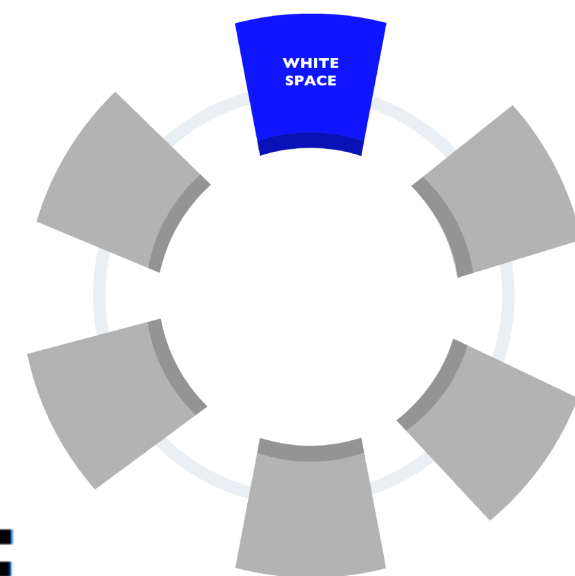
- Explores potential challenges or new opportunities I had not considered before
- Points out things that I had overlooked in thinking or strategizing
- Includes guidance on how to respond to the issues raised



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.

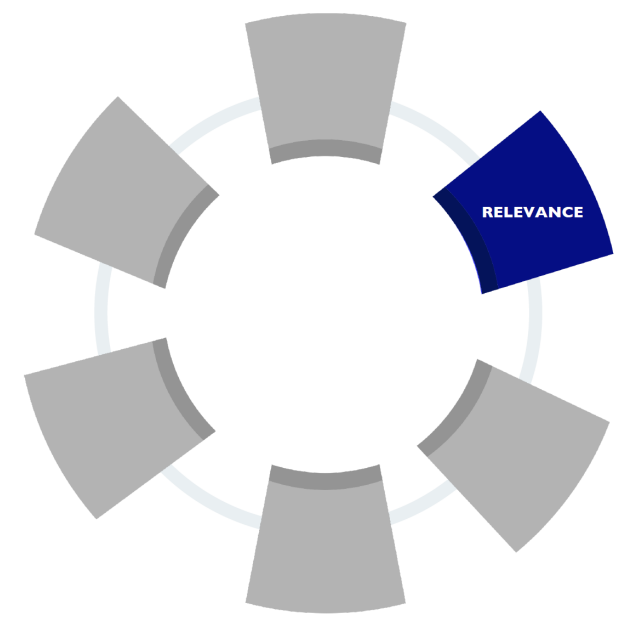
Play the contrarian or unexpected angle

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.

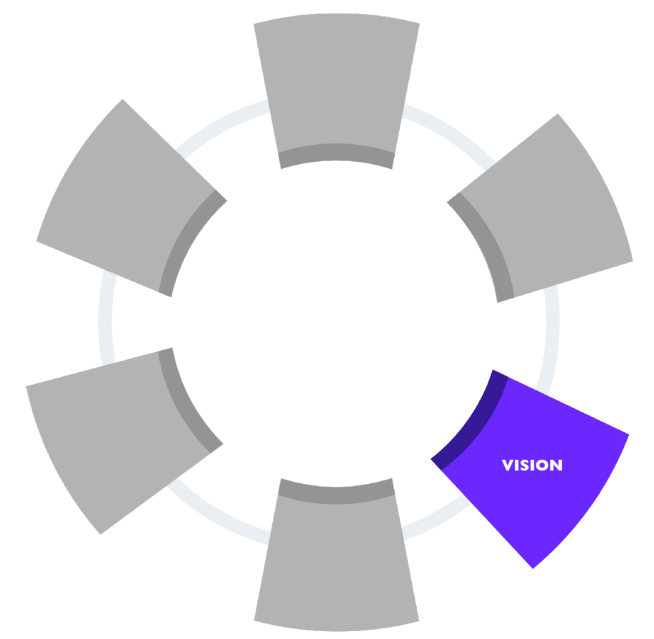
Find customer insights in the trenches

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.

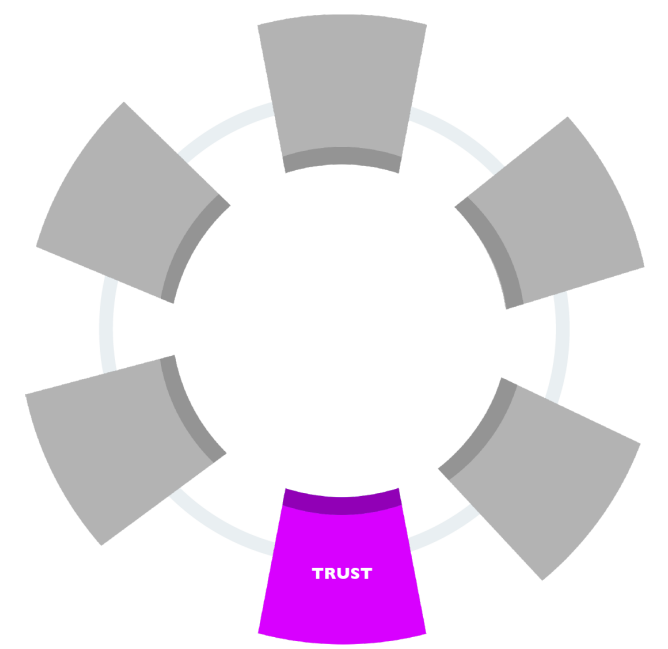
Uncover what's next for your customers

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.

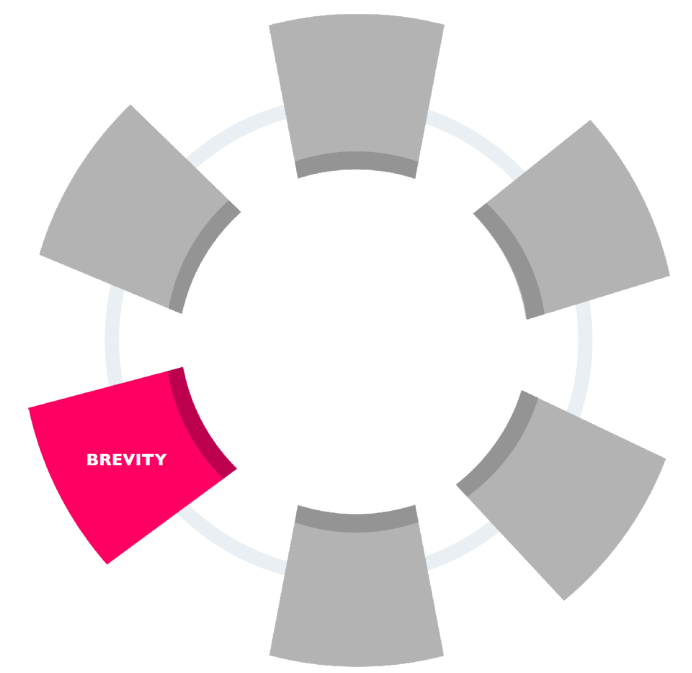
Aspire to consistency and longevity

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

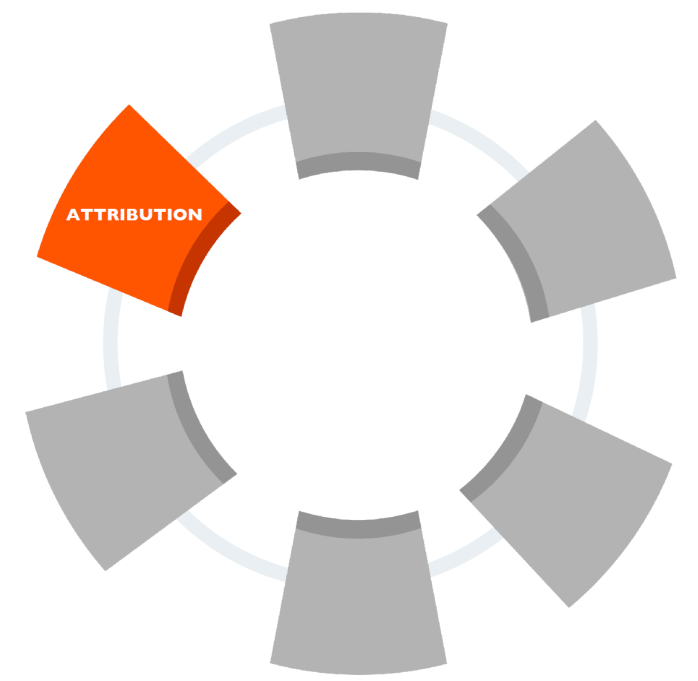
Imagine how a journalist would write a story about your Thought Leadership. Anticipate the key messages and insights that people would want to pass along to others. Craft your story around the most memorable and quick-hitting ideas.

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.

