

Thought Blog

March 2007
Patricia Coate
emerson consulting group



How "Thoughtleading" Can Grow Your Business

Patricia Coate, our West Coast Manager, recently spoke to members of the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC), Northern California chapter on the topic "How Thoughtleading Can Grow Your Business." Here is a recap of the program's Q&A:

Q: What exactly is "Thoughtleadership?"

PC: Well, actually, we at emerson consulting group refer to this business development strategy not as "thoughtleadership" but rather as "thoughtleading." That way we treat the process as a verb, not a noun, something action-oriented not static. Thoughtleading, to work, needs to be practiced in a very proactive manner.

Q: Why should one practice thoughtleading?

PC: Being perceived as a thoughtleader enables you to keep your clients hiring you again and again as well as win the attention of qualified new prospects. Business owners and managers like to hire consultants who are thoughtleaders because they are perceived as more knowledgeable than their competition. They are elevated to a higher plane than those they consider "just another vendor."

Also, the media prefers to interview and spotlight thoughtleaders because of a higher credibility perception, and conference planners, too, like to bring in thoughtleaders for their speaker slots because any speaker who publishes books or articles (or both) may very well have something important to say to their audiences and knows how to organize that information. Often those audiences include prospects eager to learn more about your services.

Q: How does one become a thoughtleader?

PC: The way to get started is by advancing your thoughtleading ideas in the marketplace via writing and publishing articles and books. Your articles and books should be based on your core knowledge and expertise, as manifested by your work with your clients. Whatever you do or offer that results in satisfied cus-

tomers translates into thoughtleading ideas that are uniquely yours. Build your article/book ideas around them.

Q: How does “writing” differ from “publishing”?

PC: When I talk about publishing, I mean writing that goes an extra step. If you put your ideas into article or book form – and not just on your Website -- there will be added credibility as a result of the implicit endorsement from a publication or book publisher that has shown a willingness to publish your ideas. Prospects will recognize this and treat you accordingly, as the go-to authority, head and shoulders above all the rest.

Q: My clients won't allow me to quote them or divulge our work. Does that limit what I can write about?

PC: Not in the least. Many publications understand this confidentiality issue and are willing to accept generic information about companies you have helped as case studies to support your points. Or you could disguise the name of your client. One way or the other, you can absolutely draw from your client work to compose your articles and books.

Q: But how do I find an outlet to publish my articles?

PC: Business news outlets are on the rise, online as well as offline, and all are looking for new material. The problem is NOT finding a place to be published. There are so many opportunities just waiting for you.

I have written (and published) an article that outlines steps to take to get an article published. You can find it on our website.

Q: What about books? How do I go about publishing one of my own?

PC: There are two major ways, via “traditional book publishing” and via “self-publishing.” Many people shy away from the second due to negative images they have, but the self-publishing industry has changed radically, and for the better, so it’s best to look into this option, too.

Since these two options are very different in terms of how you go about successfully publishing your book, I should point you to two great links on our emerson-group website for further info:

- This one outlines “book publishing options” including details on the newest

self-publishing developments:

http://www.thoughtleading.com/tblog_0705.htm

- This one focuses on how to compose a “book proposal.” If you prefer to search for a commercial publisher for your book rather than go the self-publishing route, this article by one of our staff will tell you what you need to do: http://www.thoughtleading.com/mg_BookProp_0805_rev.pdf

Q: What about speaking engagements?

PC: Speaking opportunities are an excellent way to build credibility and to reach your target market. To be a true thoughtleader, you must both write and speak about your core expertise. For example, I came here to speak to you today about thoughtleading, which is my core service, and I handed out a reprint of a published article that I wrote on this subject. All of that contributes to your perception of me as an expert on this thoughtleading subject.

The publishing component helps you to win speaking engagements in the first place; it then enhances an audience’s view of the speaker’s credentials, especially when an article is used as an impressive handout. That’s why we highly recommend that you write and publish first.

To be a speaker at the highest levels, you need to publish a book. Thoughtleading taken to its peak involves writing and publishing books on an ongoing basis.

Q: What about websites and e-letters?

PC: We very much encourage having a professional website that is updated frequently with valuable information. Today, everyone pretty much *has* a website just as everyone has a business card. Of course, the best info you could add to your website would be found in your published articles. Keep writing and publishing them, and posting them on your site. In this way, you house ideas that keep increasing your thoughtleading credibility and people searching the Internet for your expertise can find you.

As for an e-letter, or e-zine, we pretty much insist that our clients send out a monthly email campaign to keep them in front of their former and current clients, their prospects, and their colleagues and other contacts. And an e-letter does not need to be complicated or voluminous. Your “e-blast” should be viewed simply as a way to keep communicating your new ideas, as well as other ideas in the marketplace that you believe your clients and prospects, to announce successful client engagements, to reprint your articles and where they were published, to an-

nounce a new books you recently published, or to announce a recent speaking engagement.

In other words, continue to remind your “client community” that you are the thoughtleading expert in your field, but without doing it obnoxiously or obtrusively. Emails are a valuable form of self-marketing that you can use creatively and proactively. Ignore this advice at your peril: If you choose to keep your ideas and accomplishments to yourself, trust me: even your most satisfied customers will forget about you.

To learn more about the value of “using email to build your business,” click here: http://www.thoughtleading.com/pr_rotary0705.htm

To learn more about Patricia Coate, click here: http://www.thoughtleading.com/pcoate_bio.htm

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