InboxInsight



Using Thought Leadership and Content Syndication for B2B Lead Generation

~ WHITEPAPER ~

InboxInsight

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~ CONTENTS ~

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

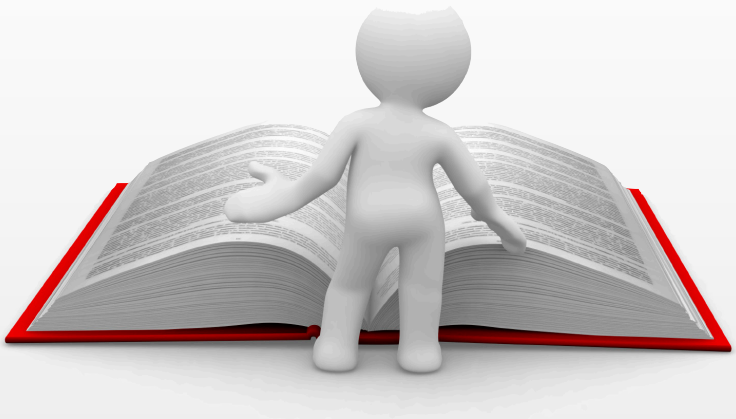
INTRODUCTION
- 1.1 Introduction

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
- 2.1 Introduction to Thought Leadership
- 2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation
  - Address a Problem
  - Utilise Market Research
  - Be Different
  - Plan and Deliver Content Regularly

CONTENT SYNDICATION
- 3.1 Introduction to Content Syndication
- 3.2 Content Syndication and B2B Lead Generation
- 3.3 Outsourcing Activity
- 3.4 Objectives of Content Syndication
- 3.5 Lead Nurturing and Marketing Automation

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS
- 4.1 Email Marketing
- 4.2 Social Media
- 4.3 Blogs/Website
- 4.4 Public Relations

INBOX INSIGHT
- 6.1 About Us
- 6.2 Download our Media Pack
- 6.3 Contact Us



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

You cannot buy 'thought leader' status – you have to earn and develop it. How?

One way of doing this is to create content on a higher level than your competitors. Dedicate the time, research and resources to developing a content marketing strategy into a thought leadership marketing strategy. But why?

Once the content is planned and ready to roll out, giving it the necessary exposure to the right audience(s) is the next crucial step. Failure to do so leaves potentially powerful content almost redundant.

By carrying content to your marketplace via the correct distribution channels and the right partners, you begin to solve business's and people's problems. Thought leadership and content syndication can merge to form a powerful B2B lead generation tool – producing targeted sales leads, new business prospects and increased brand and company awareness.

This whitepaper, produced by Inbox Insight, covers elements of thought leadership marketing and content syndication – including tips on successful content creation and choosing distribution channels – with a focus on how these two practices can be combined to achieve extremely successful B2B lead generation (and lead nurturing) programs.

INTRODUCTION

The development of marketing assets and collateral is commonplace amongst many B2B organisations today. The large majority of websites who sell business-to-business will contain a '*Resources*' or '*Knowledge Centre'* webpage, including a catalogue of whitepapers, guides, eBooks, webinars, blogs, infographics and other pieces of content relevant to the company's industry and/or products and services.

The term 'thought leadership' is not a new one. However, it is a term which is becoming more and more recognised, as companies strive to become thought leaders within their given marketplace.

Thought leadership marketing in essence aims to establish a heightened reputation, whilst introducing a sense of innovation – by producing market-leading content – amongst both your current and potential customers, as well as your competitors. Once a thought leadership marketing strategy has been developed, 'content syndication' (or 'web syndication') initiatives play a crucial part.

Why? Thought leadership and content syndication sit hand-in-hand. They now form intrinsic elements of marketing strategies (especially in B2B marketing) and have achieved prominence amongst marketing professionals who have increased focus on both content marketing and lead generation strategies.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

2.1 Introduction to Thought Leadership

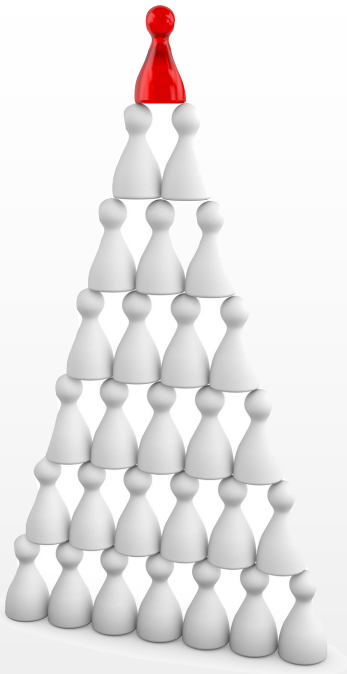
What does 'thought leadership' mean?

> *"Companies are under an increasing amount of pressure to make their propositions stand out. More than being just another supplier to their trade, clever B2B companies are showing they have the inside track on the issues their customer base faces and ideas on how to solve them."*
>
> – via B2B Marketing[1]
>
> *"Thought leadership marketing is a way to stand out from the competition, create interest, and earn the trust of potential buyers early in their problem-solving process"*.
>
> – via Forrester[2]

Companies who spend time, money and effort developing an ongoing thought leadership marketing strategy may experience a much higher level of engagement and interaction from their customers.

They become more than just a product or service supplier – they become more of an 'agony aunt' or 'troubleshooters' – solving problems, thinking of solutions, identifying current and future market trends, potential business threats and also lucrative gaps/ opportunities.

Thought leadership ties in perfectly with content marketing and whitepaper marketing – both of which are great for search engine optimisation (SEO) and lend themselves well to in-house and external email marketing activity (including lead generation). Read on to discover "4 Tips for Successful Content Creation" when approaching thought leadership.



[1] Source: B2B Marketing; http://www.b2bmarketing.net/knowledgebank/social-media-marketing/features/demand-generation-what-does-thought-leadership-really

[2] Source: Forrester; http://blogs.forrester.com/jeff_ernst/11-06-07-its_time_to_take_a_stand_in_your_marketing

2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation



Content creation with long term ambitions of establishing you and your company as a thought leader is something which requires planning, expertise, research and execution.

Here are 4 top tips we've compiled to help you with successful content creation for thought leadership marketing:

1. Address a Problem

> *"Business buyers don't 'buy' your product; they 'buy into' your approach to solving their problem"*
>
> – via Forrester[3]

For example: if your organisation offers payroll solutions, a guide or whitepaper titled 'Selecting The Best Payroll Provider' will be immediately recognisable as as a very sales-driven piece of content. It will also just repeat what has already been produced as competitors vie to unashamedly 'sell themselves'.

However, developing content which is driven to solve problems many organisations may face because of their payroll provider/software is an instant workaround and becomes a more desirable and valuable piece of content.

To give an example, your whitepaper or guide could be based around:

'Payroll: Improve Collaboration Between HR and Finance' or...

'How Payroll Solutions Can Ensure Compliance with Employment Law'

Immediately, you show an understanding of the market and issues that potential customers may face. Having empathy via your content is crucial to becoming a thought leader.

(2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation cont'd...)

2. Utilise Market Research



Market research should be at the forefront of any thought leadership and content marketing strategy.

Having readily available statistics, trends and opinions can be developed into comprehensive content, helping establish any organisation as 'thought leaders'. Being highly reliant on market research to develop content has the following benefits:

- Improved reputation – research highlights that your organisation truly values its customers' opinions.
- Keep your target audience(s) informed of current and future industry trends.
- Statistics enable the development of a self-sustainable content creation strategy (including Press Releases), opening up opportunities to produce…
- 'Benchmarking' reports – market-leading expertise documents, containing in-depth analysis of statistics and trends. This in turn will help your organisation establishing a…
- Competitive advantage – being the 'go-to' company and maintaining the edge within your market.
- Regularly analysing statistics can be used internally too, to identify opportunities, growth strategies, refining business processes, gaps in the market.

A perfect example of using market research to develop thought leadership material would be Silverpop, who produced:



"2012 Silverpop Email Marketing Metrics Benchmark Study"

This report has allowed fellow email marketers access to Silverpop's ongoing research throughout the year, on both B2B and B2C email marketing metrics.

Competitors, current and future competitors and industry experts will use this to measure up their own email marketing performances – whilst this type of content lends itself excellently for syndicating across various distribution channels, especially of course email marketing.

(2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation - cont'd...)

3. Be Different

Thought leadership is all about innovation – releasing something new to the marketplace that hasn't been seen, read or covered before. Here are some steps to ensure your content creation initiatives are guaranteed to give you that competitive advantage:

➔ Dig deep into your competitor's websites:

- What content/marketing assets are they producing?
- Do they have an extensive 'Resource Page' or 'Knowledge Centre'?
- Are there any visible content gaps?
- Do they fail to provide problem-solving content?
- Are you able to give their content a new 'twist' or approach it from an entirely different angle?

➔ Are there any FAQs within your area of expertise? Explore:

- LinkedIn groups/discussions
- Forums
- Industry-related websites
- Twitter
- Colleagues - what questions do they regularly face?

➔ Consider witty, humorous, topical and 'controversial' titles – by differentiating your communications from the competition, you'll ensure you stand out from the crowd and be remembered.

Here's some examples of a few we've encountered (and haven't forgotten!):

"38 Kick Ass eBay Tips to Help You Make More Money Online"
– via Brightpearl[4]

"What can you do if one of your employees 'does a Tevez'?"
– via RealBusiness[5]

"7 Foolish Ways Email Marketers Leave Money on the Table"
– via Silverpop[6]

[4] Source: Brightpearl; http://www.brightpearl.co.uk/resources/whitepapers/38-kick-ass-eBay-tips-to-help-you-make-more-money-online

[5] Source: RealBusiness; http://realbusiness.co.uk/advice_and_guides/what-can-you-do-if-one-of-your-employees-does-a-tevez

[6] Source: Silverpop; http://www.silverpop.com/marketing-resources/white-papers/download/ken-magill.html

(2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation cont'd...)

4. Plan and Deliver Content Regularly

The acronym R-E-P-E-A-T can guide you through planning content creation:

- **Research**

  Spend time researching current content to find topics that are highly saturated, or identifying new areas and opportunities you can exploit.

- **Evaluate**

  Evaluate your research findings to then develop your content ideas, including writing response driven titles, the format of your content, what you aim to include, what solutions you're going to provide the marketplace, what angle your copy is going to take and who content is looking to target.

- **Plan**

  Set up a plan or schedule for your content, including:

  - Timescales - how long will it take to create each piece of content?
  - Copywriting - do you feel confident outsourcing some of it?
  - Channels - how do you intend to syndicate your content?
  - Objectives - what are you aiming to achieve from each piece of content? Set some SMART objectives or KPIs.
  - Analysis - how do you expect to analyse the results?

- **Execute**

  Execute your 'Plan' stage, throughout your specified timescales.

- **Analyse**

  Revisit your objectives and analyse the impact of your content creation - have they been met? Look at the statistics? Analyse specifics for each piece of content you've created. If you need to make a business case to your boss for further investment into thought leadership marketing, content syndication and lead generation campaigns, this is the perfect ammunition.

- **Tweak**

  Inevitably content becomes out-of-date. Tweaking your content on a regular basis will ensure it's still relevant to the marketplace and allows you relaunch old pieces of content. Quality control your processes too - if something didn't work, learn the lessons and implement it next time round.

CONTENT SYNDICATION

3.1 Introduction to Content Syndication

'Content syndication' can mean different things to different people and organisations. A combination of the following two definitions sets the concept up very well:

> *"Content syndication – a content sharing strategy that can be used to promote your whitepapers, articles, news releases, etc. on other websites for greater reach and engagement".*
>
> – via Marketo[7]
>
> *"Content syndication refers to distributing content through publishers and requiring registration in order to capture contacts".*
>
> – via B2Community[8]

The term has come to prominence after the boom of content marketing.

All is well and good dedicating budget towards the creation of thought leadership pieces, but finding avenues to take this content to market is the key element – hence the term 'syndication'.

There are many different avenues available (see section 4. Distribution Channels), but these are dependent on your organisation's specific marketing objectives and targets.

If you're considering any 'content syndication' campaign, the ultimate aim should be to get your content in front of as many prospects, customers and business professionals as possible, whilst improving your organisation's reputation within the marketplace and gaining a competitive advantage via thought leadership marketing.

[7] Source: Marketo; http://blog.marketo.com/blog/2012/07/content-syndication-compelling-content-targeted-leads.html

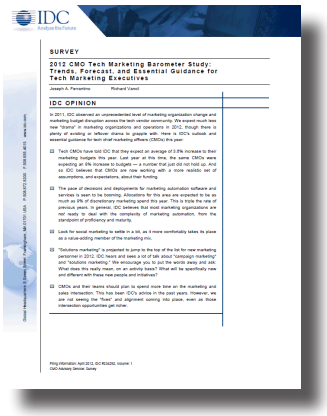
[8] Source: B2Community; http://www.business2community.com/b2b-perspective/content-syndication-options-for-b2b-lead-generation

3.2 Content Syndication and B2B Lead Generation

According to a recent survey conducted by IDC, lead generation remains a top priority for B2B marketers in 2012[9], with that trend set to continue into 2013.

Content syndication can utilise either lead capture technology or web registration pages for B2B lead generation, both of which require an exchange between the customer and the content provider, usually for contact detalils.

Before the customer requests your thought-provoking content, there is the perfect opportunity to capture as much or as little information about the lead, as you see fit...


IDC

SURVEY

2012 CMO Tech Marketing Barometer Study: Trends, Forecast, and Essential Guidance for Tech Marketing Executives

IDC OPINION

Email Address
Company Name
Telephone Number
Address/Postcode
Employee Size/
Industry Sector
Specific Information*

(* e.g. a technology firm may ask 'How many PCs does your organisation currently use?', or an HR firm may ask 'How does your organisation currently employ it's members of staff?')

...whilst also asking the new lead to "opt-in" to further communications from your organisation – allowing further internal lead nurturing programmes to be implemented.

3.3 Objectives of Content Syndication

Setting objectives of content syndication campaigns is crucial. Before embarking on content syndication, think about measurable achievements, what you aim to achieve and how you'd define the content syndication of your marketing assets being a "success".

Potential objectives for content syndication could be:

- Use content (e.g. marketing collateral) to generate ___ new/qualified sales leads, via in-house email marketing, or outsourcing to a lead generation partner.
- Increase unique page views by ___% (measured by Google Analytics).
- Generate ___ inbound enquiries and ___ closed sales by the end of the quarter.
- Achieve a ___% ROI on the costs of content creation and syndication campaigns.
- Increase the organisation's social media influence (measured by LinkedIn/ Twitter/Pinterest page follows, Facebook likes etc.).
- Increase new CRM contacts for lead nurturing programs by ___%.

[9] Source: IDC; http://www.idc.com/downloads/IDC-2012-Tech-Marketing-Barometer.pdf

3.4 Outsourcing Content Syndication & Lead Generation



If generating targeted sales leads is a crucial KPI from your content syndication activity, outsourcing to a lead generation partner can be time and cost effective, whilst providing measurable results.

Being a lead generation partner ourselves, here is a comprehensive list of questions you should be asking, before running this type of outsourced marketing campaign:

What assurances do I have on lead volume?

What happens if we don't meet that minimum?

As a lead generation partner, what distribution channels can you offer us?

What will my cost-per-lead (CPL) price be?

Agree a rate. This price will be dependent on a few factors:

- Budget/campaign spend
- Timescale for delivery of the leads
- The volume of leads to be generated
- The audiences you are looking to target
- Agree what makes a 'qualified lead'
- Profiling question(s), to glean more information about each lead
- The quality and quantity of your content/marketing asset(s)

What type of content can I syndicate?

Potential options may be whitepapers, guides, eBooks, reports, webinars, free trials, presentations and brochures.

What's a typical lead volume for a whitepaper/guide in my area of expertise?

This will help you understand the 'value' and 'importance' of your marketing assets. Lead generation partners will have extensive experience in what works and what doesn't.

Can I include a specific 'opt-in'/disclaimer message?

You may wish to consider including an opt-in message that is specific to your organisation, allowing for future permission-based lead nurturing programs by staying in touch with your newly generated contacts on an ongoing basis.

Which marketing assets should I be syndicating?

By hand-picking response-driven assets for such marketing campaigns, lead generation partners can advise you to include assets that will:

- Cause the greatest demand and be of most relevance
- Generate the maximum amount of leads (& impressions)
- Produce the lowest CPL rate, based on content quality.

3.5 Lead Nurturing and Marketing Automation

Not all leads you generate via content syndication will be 'sales ready' and will require 'lead nurturing' (potentially via a marketing automation platform).

Conversions can be dependent on multiple occurrences of engagement with your organisation and brand, therefore monitoring these occurrences is crucial. Potential customers may require numerous offline and online re-touches, while you keep them notified of new market developments, trends and new thought leadership pieces. This is where lead nurturing plays its part.

Marketo's 'The Definitive Guide to Lead Nurturing' explains;



"Lead nurturing — the process of building relationships with qualified prospects regardless of their timing to buy, with the goal of earning their business when they are ready. Building a relationship with a prospect is the same as with any long term relationship — you can't force someone to commit (to a purchase, in this case) — but you also cannot afford to lose individuals because their willingness to buy doesn't match your readiness to sell."

– via Marketo[11]

'Lead scoring' can define what type of lead you've generated, how they've responded to your organisation's messaging and how they should be nurtured:

MAL: Marketing Accepted Lead
MQL: Marketing Qualified Lead
AQL: Automation Qualified Lead
TAL: Teleprospecting Accepted Lead
TQL: Teleprospecting Qualified Lead
TGL: Teleprospecting Generated Lead
SGL: Sales Generated Lead
SAL: Sales Accepted Lead
SQL: Sales Qualified Lead

– via B2Community[10]

Marketing automation is a fantastic way of ensuring all your sales leads are regularly contacted to ensure your organisation doesn't forget its (potential) future customers:

"Marketing Automation is the art and science of automatically managing the targeting, timing, and content of your outbound marketing messages in response to prospects inbound actions and online behaviors."

– via Eloqua[12]

[10] Source: B2Community; http://www.business2community.com/marketing/42-b2b-marketing-acronyms-and-abbreviations-0192246

[11] Source: Marketo; http://docs.cdn.marketo.com/definitive-guide-to-lead-nurturing.pdf

[12] Source: Eloqua; http://www.eloqua.com/topics/marketing-automation.html

DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

Content syndication opens up multiple channels of distribution for marketing collateral and thought leadership pieces.

4.1 Email Marketing

Via a lead generation partner

- Often lead generation partners have their own unique databases (formed via partnerships, third party agreements, event registrations, outbound call centres and telemarketing activities) – reaching many target markets. This gives your organisation the chance to put your content in front of a new audience and gain a greater brand awareness. By outsourcing your efforts, you avoid sending marketing campaigns to your own customers/audience(s) with repeated content, whilst still generating business-relevant sales leads.

Via in-house marketing campaigns/customer newsletters

- Emailing your own CRM database with regularly produced content allows you to touch base with your organisations' contacts regularly. Producing new content that is relevant to the profile of your CRM database and sending it out as part of a branded HTML email, or feature within a customer newsletter provides a softer approach to 'selling'.

4.2 Social Media



Content syndication via social media – using the likes of Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest – is another effective way of distributing thought leadership pieces on a large scale.

Although not nearly as targeted as email marketing, there is the potential for content to be shared across a worldwide audience. Success with content syndication via social media is having 'shareable' content – for example, tweets are restricted to 140 characters, so don't make your content title 100 characters long!

Equally, being different (see '2.2 Tips for Successful Content Creation') allows you to 'stand out from the crowd', hopefully receiving more retweets, likes, clickthroughs and shares. This will having a significant impact on your organisation's social media engagement.

The statistics generated by market research surveys have formed the key driver behind the 'boom' of infographics too – or 'information graphics'. These are fantastic visual representations of statistics and many go viral after being shared across some of the biggest social media sites, like Mashable and Pinterest. There's also dedicated websites for infographics, such as Visual.ly.

4.3 Blogs/Websites

Blogging and updating your website with re-written/new content has a hugely beneficial impact on your Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). Google reflects the regularity and originality of your content by pushing newly formed webpages higher up page rankings for specific searches, increasing the amount of impressions and clickthroughs you're able to generate.

New content also gets delivered to people who subscribe to receive Google Alerts, based on specific 'keyword' terms. This links in with email marketing, but is all formed off the back of website activity. Syndication of blog posts is also becoming commonplace as website owners look to re-host the most relevant and interesting content they can find, within their area of expertise.

Dedicated pages for whitepapers, guides and eBooks on websites also open up opportunities for Google Adwords campaigns too, via pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. Promoting a specific marketing asset using keywords and meta-descriptions is another way of successfully syndicating your content to those who are actively searching for solutions in your marketplace.

Small Google Adwords campaigns will provide you with very telling analytics too (at a relatively small cost). By launching a test ad campaign and analysing for example 'How many clicks per impressions are generated?', you may wish to refine your content, the message and keywords used, before launching into a bigger content syndication and lead generation campaign.

Asking people to register their details in exchange for web-hosted marketing assets is a simple method of generating top-of-the-funnel (ToFu) sales leads, on a consistent basis. It may start slowly, but with the potential to go viral, the rewards could be massive and it'll keep a supply of leads coming through to your sales team for follow up.

4.4 Public Relations

As previously mentioned, market research can form the basis of a successful thought leadership marketing strategy – the findings from research can also form very powerful Press Releases for PR. Up-to-date statistics on specific topics are desirable today, being used by organisations and business professionals looking to support their arguments, build a business case for change, revise ongoing strategies or to monitor market trends.

Such Press Releases can often gain media attention when you're least expecting it too. To give you an example, in January 2012, Inbox Insight had statistics from a Social Media Survey we conducted amongst small business owners, published in the Financial Times[13]. Achieving this kind of exposure improves your SEO, increased general company awareness and promotes what you do as an organisation.

[13] Source - Financial Times; http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/63687ba4-3858-11e1-9f07-00144feabdc0.html#axzz23if032eX

INBOX INSIGHT

Unrivalled, Skilled Experience

Inbox Insight was founded in August 2010 by a group of email direct marketing experts. We excel in providing platforms for B2B organisations to engage their target audiences via email. We encourage all of our clients to educate and inform their chosen market with thought leadership content such as whitepapers, which are a valuable tool for attracting leads, capturing an audience and keeping them engaged.

Execute your Marketing Campaign Instantly

With a variety of audiences to choose from, Inbox Insight can take your message to market within 48 hours.

Receive Instant Results

All sales leads generated from your campaign are compiled and sent to you in daily reports to allow your sales team to follow up the prospects as soon as possible.

Free Assistance from Our In-House Creative Team

Our in-house creative team will advise you on any changes that could be made to your advertorial to increase response without impacting on the quality of leads or volume of site visits you will receive.

Email your marketing assets to creative@inboxinsight.co.uk and receive feedback on how many leads you can generate via a content syndication, lead generation campaign.

Alternatively, you can contact us on the telephone number below, or request a Media Pack.

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