

The silver bullet in your content marketing arsenal

By  Sylvia Schutte

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With the B2B sales environment getting increasingly more competitive and decision-makers seeing little or no differentiation between competitors, there is a clever tactic that marketers should pay more attention to - thought leadership.



Seventy percent of B2B decision-makers make their decisions on potential suppliers or service providers before contacting them, and typically, there are six to ten people involved in the decision-making process of purchasing a complex B2B solution. And this begs the question – what do they base their opinion on if they have already made a decision before meeting a potential supplier, and from where do they get their information?”

A recent Gartner study – The new B2B buying journey – found that each decision-maker has four to five sources of information that forms their opinion of a potential supplier. These sources include Google, social media, company websites and the news.

So, what informs their decisions? Is it a community manager who answers their questions online? Do they make decisions based on the most reputable brands that are out there?

In a B2B context, there is no best brand – there is only ‘trust’. A combination of building trust through relationships and answering questions is key to a B2B marketing strategy.

“ *Thought leadership is a simple tactic to build trust and elevate a brand above other players in the industry.* ”

Thought leadership is about having an informed point of view about your industry, the issues that affect it and what the future holds. By leveraging the knowledge and experience within a business to provide expert opinion on relevant topics, and to best answer potential clients’ questions – especially ones that haven’t crossed their minds yet – B2B businesses are able to get valuable airtime beyond their product or service offering.

Thought leadership is by no means a new concept, but we find that companies often struggle to use the knowledge and expertise that exist within their businesses, to their advantage. This is because they are either too close to the business to see the opportunities, or they don’t have the expertise to extract the information and craft it into content that an industry would take notice of and engage with.



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Here are tips to help leverage thought leadership in your business:

- Determine what role you want to play in your customer’s lives. Do you want to make their lives more interesting, more relevant or more entertaining?
- Identify your thought leadership themes and key messages, so that you stay focused and only talk about topics that you know about and enhance your brand.
- Identify the experts in your business. What about that engineer who is has technical knowledge about a product? Or the financial advisor that understands a highly specialised industry? And even a digital developer who specialises in gamification?
- Ask your experts to write down the information or interview them to extract the information verbally.
- Write a thought leadership article which can then get atomised into a press release, blog and newsletter article, a video or infographic.

By measuring the response to your thought leadership content, you will be able to, over time, gauge the industry’s appetite for content around specific topics. You can monitor this from the stats on your website, social media and newsletter clicks, as well as when articles get picked up by the media and your brand starts getting publicity.

ABOUT SYLVIA SCHUTTE

Sylvia Schutte is the MD of Stratitude, a full-service marketing agency that provides strategic and creative solutions focussed on making an impact on their clients’ brands and their bottomlines.

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