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Inspiring Innovation.  
Connecting Communities.



## A startup's guide to **Thought Leadership**

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**Content builds relationships.  
Relationships are built on trust.  
Trust drives revenue.**

– Andrew Davis, Author

# Thought Leadership

**It seems these days everyone is throwing around the term ‘thought leadership’, but what exactly is it, and how can it be used as a powerful tool for your startup or small business?**

The FoundX Thought Leadership Guide has been created as a free handbook to answer all those questions, and more! We believe there is huge and under-utilised opportunity for startups to leverage their vision and values, to create meaningful content that enhances their brand, exposure and credibility.

Who better to position themselves as Thought Leaders than entrepreneurs?

They have the vision, passion and tenacity to inspire others with their innovative ideas...

**And then turn those ideas into reality.**

# What is it?

## QUESTION

How can you stand out from the crowd as a startup or small business in your industry?

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## ANSWER

Use Thought Leadership to build your visibility and credibility by becoming the 'go-to' expert in your niche.

- To cut through the jargon, Thought Leadership is simply about becoming a trusted source and credible industry expert in your field by leveraging your innovative and thought-provoking ideas.
- Content is king: Thought Leadership involves using your experience and entrepreneurial journey to develop content that cuts through the noise, and offers something worth listening to.
- As a startup, Thought Leadership can include developing and promoting your unique perspective on your industry, or the hot topics relevant to your customers.

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**Thought leadership should intrigue, challenge, and inspire even people already familiar with a company. It should help start a relationship where none exists, and it should enhance existing relationships.**

– Daniel W. Rasmus

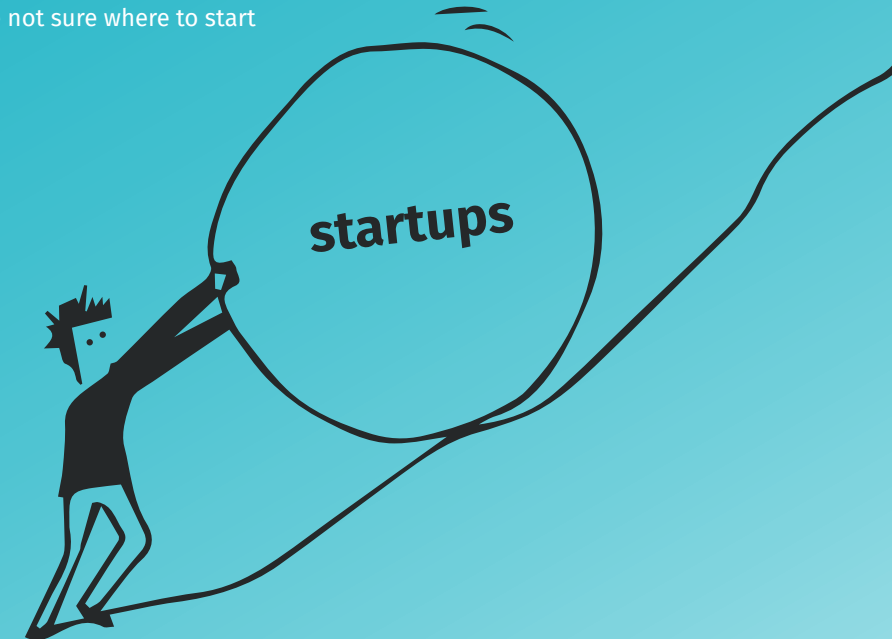
Former Director of Business Insights  
Microsoft



# Why Thought Leadership matters for startups

**We understand that Marketing & Thought Leadership generation for startups is tough. Firstly, entrepreneurs have to start from scratch, meaning:**

- You have little to no brand recognition
- Competition is fierce
- Marketing can be time consuming
- Your budget is limited
- You're too busy trying to get your business going to worry about anything else
- You're not sure where to start



# We're here to help!

There's no doubt that deep-seated and effective Thought Leadership can have a powerful impact on up and coming businesses. In fact, it's one of the most valuable marketing tools for entrepreneurs, and it's free!

High quality and regular Thought Leadership can accomplish several important things for startups including:



## NEW CONNECTIONS

Thought Leadership is a great way to gain exposure to new people.



## GET NOTICED

Give yourself some free PR and start building the buzz about your startup.



## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Use Thought Leadership to differentiate yourself from competitors and stand out from the pack.



## BUILD CREDIBILITY

Regular and thought-provoking content can fast position your startup as a reputable source in your chosen field.



## RECRUITING EFFORTS

If you're looking to scale up and bring a team onboard, boosting your business and personal brand is only going to help attract good talent!



## NEW CUSTOMERS

Reaching more people = reaching potential customers.



## INCREASE YOUR FOLLOWING

More traffic to your website and social media channels.



## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Once you scale your business and it's a raging success, marketing is going to play a huge role in your strategy... fact!

# Thought Leadership framework

## TOPIC

- Analyse industry/market or startup trends to inspire you.
- Select a topic that is aligned with the identity and expertise of both you and your business.
- Assess the opportunity for a novel point of view on your topic of choice.

## AUDIENCE

- Who is your target audience? Ensure your piece is relevant to that group. Are you targeting existing/potential customers? Investors?
- Ensure you tailor your content and style accordingly. Avoid using technical and complex language that only experts in your field are familiar with.

## CORE ANGLE

- What is the head-in-hands moment/problem that you want to be front of mind?
- Effective thought leadership often starts with a real-world problem and offers fresh, innovative and thought-provoking opinions on that issue.

## CALL TO ACTION

- Ensure the heading and opening stanza of your piece clearly communicates practical, real world problems and your call to action.
- How are your views different? Articulate your novel point of view and share your knowledge and experiences throughout. Use real life examples where you can.

## NETWORK

- Ask a colleague or friend to review your piece for feedback and to confirm accuracy where necessary.
- Once finalised, share it on LinkedIn, your social media platforms, and be sure to tag industry representatives you'd like to take note!

# How to write effective Thought Leadership

**Identify a topic that is closely associated with your personal brand and your role in the business.**

## FIND YOUR NICHE

You know the expression; “jack of all trades, master of none”? If you try to be a thought leader of everything, chances are, you will end up the thought leader of nothing.

## FOCUS

It needs a single overriding message that can be described in 1-2 sentences.

## KEEP PACE WITH THE SECTOR

Research what's trending in your industry and in the startup world.

## DON'T PLAGIARISE

If you use, or refer to someone else's work, make sure you attribute the content to them.

## WHERE POSSIBLE

Get a second opinion, and ask someone to review your piece before you publish it.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO FOLLOW YOUR COMPETITORS

Make sure you add to the conversation. Don't avoid a topic just because it has been covered by someone else.

## USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE AND CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE

Never use a long word where a short one will suffice!

# What makes Thought Leadership newsworthy?

News organisations have been overrun with content from companies looking to promote ideas via the media. The development of thought leadership pieces has exploded with writers developing short, sharp pieces looking to promote positions and align their business with larger social issues.

As a startup, grabbing the attention of the media is a highly valuable tool in spreading your vision and boosting your business' exposure.

To get some media coverage, you need to know the secret sauce...



# What editors look for:

This varies based on the publication but some key points to keep in mind are:

## The topic is relevant to the publication and is timely with ongoing discussions

- If you are writing a piece of content for the media, understand that the media relies on being topically relevant and their goal is to add to larger ongoing discussions
- Be aware of ongoing news surrounding your topic and universal dates that will attract attention.



## The writer has credibility on what they are discussing

- Editors will be more willing to read and publish content if the writer of the piece can demonstrate expertise on the topic.
- E.g. A good thought leadership topic for a fintech startup founder could be “10 things every business needs to know about blockchain”.

## Take a stance if you have one — and you should

- Media content thrives on conflict, holding a position and defending it with original thinking is much more attractive to editors than simply writing something summarising views on a topic.

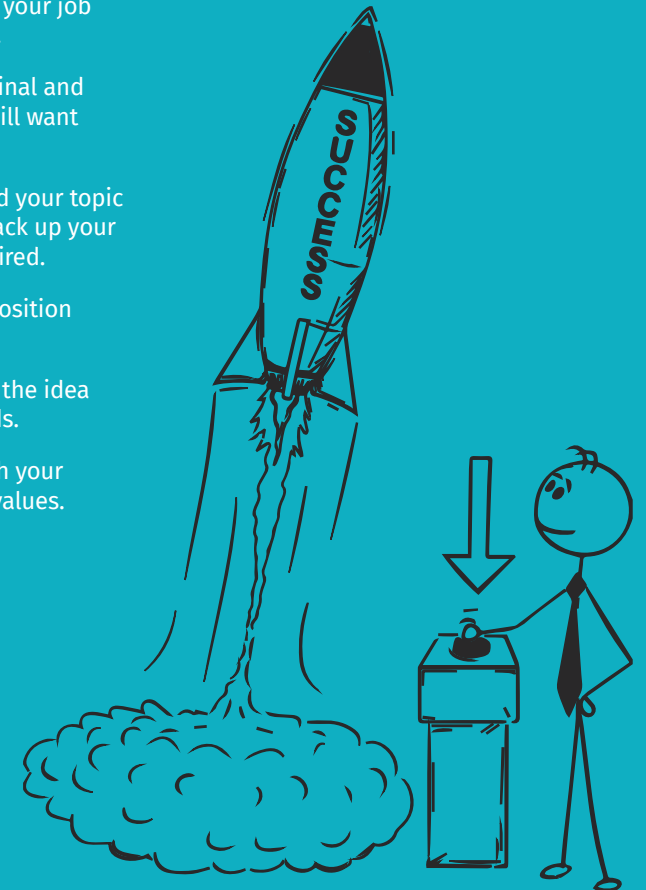
## Don't try and sell anything

- Thought leadership content is not about outwardly promoting your business, it is about promoting an idea you can attach to your brand.
- Too many brand or product mentions often kill an Editor's interest. The goal is to align a brand with an idea as opposed to converting every reader into a customer.

# The Checklist

**Before you put pen to paper, make sure the idea you have meets these requirements:**

- ✓ The topic you want to write about is relevant to your job and to your startup.
- ✓ Your opinion is original and something others will want to read.
- ✓ You have researched your topic and have facts to back up your opinion where required.
- ✓ You have a strong position on the topic.
- ✓ You can summarise the idea in 500 to 1,000 words.
- ✓ The topic aligns with your brand's vision and values.



# Thought Leadership in 30 minutes a day



**We know startups are strapped for time, but Thought Leadership doesn't have to be tedious and time consuming!**

In fact, by spending just 30 minutes a day on content generation, you can start to build your personal brand, and increase exposure for your business.

- 30 minutes a day... it's doable... come on!
- Whether it's writing articles, sharing interesting content or shooting off a quick tweet, it's all part of a good thought leadership strategy!

## 30-minute Breakdown

**SPEND 5 MINUTES** on social media sharing links to interesting articles in your startup's field. Add a quick comment with your opinion on the piece when you post it.

**SPEND 20 MINUTES** developing ideas for thought leadership topics, and start putting pen to paper!

**SPEND 5 MINUTES** emailing journalists - either to pitch an article you've finished writing, or to offer yourself as an interviewee for any hot topics of the day in your industry.

# CONTACT

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**Have any questions?**

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