

# Penny for Your Thoughts? By Christy Vogel

Have you noticed the increasing emphasis on thought leadership in recent months? The topic is once again a corporate buzzword as more and more organizations showcase their pertinence in the marketplace via expert articles published by company leaders. Top executives talk about the need to engage in this kind of practice, but are unsure why or how to begin. What exactly is thought leadership and why is it important, especially now?



## Defining Thought Leadership

The Oxford Dictionary defines thought leadership as “the practice of developing important new ways of thinking that influence others.” The concept is not new; in fact, it’s been in use since the late 19th century. However, the phrase ‘thought leadership’ or ‘thought leader’ has evolved to the extent that it is currently of great significance, relevance and importance.

Today, Wikipedia refers to a thought leader as “an individual or firm that is recognized as an authority in a specialized field and whose expertise is sought and often rewarded.”

According to Huffpost Contributing Writer Gabriel Shaoolian, ...[\[read more\]](#)



## Speak to Your Customer Persona

Understanding your 'customer persona,' i.e. the typical prospect for your company's product or service, is a critical component to successful thought leadership. Rebecca Riserbato with HubSpot suggests conducting surveys, interviews and other means of research to find out what motivates and inspires your company's target audience and what hurdles they are having to overcome.

"It is important to know your audience and to keep learning about them as needs and challenges change over time," Rebecca says.

"Continuously check in and reevaluate your buyer personas. People evolve, and so will your audience."

Once you have determined your customer persona, you can begin answering their questions with thought leadership content.



Lead Strategist James Wallace

"Thought leadership is directly intertwined with the concept of customer persona," says James Wallace, Lead Strategist, Marketing Direction. "While thought leadership can be visionary or detailed—or both—its success depends on the receptivity of the listener, which is heavily influenced by demographics, current circumstances, etc. So, to become a compelling thought leader, one must first understand the persona of the customer and then relate his or her ideas with the needs of the company's clients."



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