

Thought leadership: An integral part of the modern PR plan

 By [Louise Hunt](#)

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While companies compete for headspace in a noisy and crowded environment, thought leadership as a tried and trusted PR tactic is coming into its own in the South African media space.



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The rise of thought leadership demonstrates how content marketing and PR are drawing ever closer together. As a linchpin between traditional and contemporary exposure, well-researched, useful and credible thought leadership articles should be an essential part of the modern PR plan.

Traditional and contemporary content

The line between traditional and contemporary content sharing is becoming more and more blurred as companies work harder to create relevant content not only to be shared with the media but across their owned media platforms as well. If people are following you or connected to you online, it means they value your thoughts and input.

Thought leadership is a great way to capitalise on this relationship as it allows a business the chance to put out editorially relevant and content-rich articles that are simultaneously useful to your online community and publishable in the media across all channels.

But the story must count. A thought leadership piece is not a press release, it's a tactic that requires finding a strong angle, researching topical or trending issues and pairing the findings with a client's intellectual property. This is intended to draw out information that can be shared with a predetermined target audience who will, in turn, find the content compelling and valuable to their business or appealing to their intellect.

With media often looking for unique and newsworthy publishable content, the content possibilities and benefits of thought leadership articles are numerous and varied. If your piece is credible and backed by a strong industry leader then you are likely to gain significant traction and third-party endorsement from the press.

All about context

Traction could extend further as journalists and editors may take the story further by incorporating your information into existing features or using the content to build a story of their own. Similarly, an opinion put out via a thought leadership piece would be well-received within online communities with LinkedIn being one example of a platform where businesses can engage directly with their audiences.

For the client, it gives them a greater share of voice and allows for top thought leaders to be profiled in a credible manner. Rather than pushing product ideas onto editors and audiences in the hope of likes or being published, the thought leadership piece is curated through a detailed process of collecting and collating information and does not necessarily focus on one brand or product. This makes it extremely valuable especially when it's powerful enough to stimulate debate.

When sending out that carefully created piece, it is important to consider who you are trying to reach and what the objectives are. It's all about context so always ask who cares about this information and why, so you can keep your research and commentary on point and relevant.

As the art of storytelling in the market place continues to gain importance and brands continually strive to personalise themselves, the thought leadership piece should be an integral part of the modern PR plan. There is huge scope for proactive PR in this area of communication. It's all about doing the background research and finding the most compelling angle before setting out on the thought leadership journey.

ABOUT LOUISE HUNT

Hunt PR founder and director, Louise Hunt, has been entrenched in the world of PR for over 20 years. Her experience in the field is fast gaining her a reputation as a thought leader and pacemaker.

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