

# Thought leadership

By Monica Wofford

**B**eing a leader of a practice is one thing. Being a leader in the community is another. And being a thought leader is something altogether different.

A thought leader is well known among his or her peers and perceived as an expert. Thought leadership is the strategic component of the new marketing mix and is something that can be done inexpensively or on a grand scale.

Establishing yourself as a thought leader can provide the framework from which to build a large-scale career as an expert. Put into practice just a few or all of these elements and you will be well on your way.

**1. Work with the press.** To be taken seriously in the academic world, university professors must publish. The same applies to the professional community.

Are you published? If not, identify publications to which you might be able to contribute. Also, list everyone you know who runs a newspaper, newsletter, or magazine to which you could contribute.

Editors look for content for print publications and Web sites, and if you have some to provide, you will be well received. Keep in mind that publishing articles is different from buying or running an ad about your practice. Thought leadership is about building a relationship and a reputation, and this is almost impossible to buy.

**2. Write, write, write.** Put your ideas, stories, and expertise into a format that will help others. Articles often follow a simple format that includes a storylike opening, a series of tips, and a summarization paragraph.

For topics, think of mistakes made, experiences gained, and lessons you can share. Your writings could turn into blogs, newsletters, articles, columns, special reports, or white papers. The choice is almost limitless.

When you are writing, be mindful of your audience and what it needs and wants to read. And mind the confidentiality of those involved in the things you have learned and stories you tell. You are looking to make friends, not betray them.

**3. Weave in your Web site.** Your Web site can be a vehicle to establish a reputation. Take a look at what you

offer. What you want on your site is helpful information (articles) that readers can download at no cost. This type of information gives a reason for people to go to your site.

**4. Be creative in describing yourself.** This is probably one of the first questions people ask at parties or networking events. The answer you give can help you become a thought leader.

Here are some suggestions:

- "I help people avoid the need for prescription drugs."
- "I help people stay friends with their pharmacist, even when they don't need him anymore."
- "I wage a war against bad office furniture, airlines, and poor posture."

These types of responses help spur conversation; the listener wants to know more. The point is you can't build a relationship with people if you are unable to get the conversation going, which is the aim of these types of responses.

**5. Give people something to talk about.** Quirky or humorous answers about what you do are memorable. They create a buzz for people to talk about.

You can also do this being funny, controversial, or highly informative in a conversational way. Give people something to share with loved ones, or to stimulate their curiosity and ask for more information.

As you cultivate relationships, your reputation will spread. This may be a slow process, but it is effective.

Thought leaders are individuals to whom people look for answers. Over a period of time and with some concerted effort on your part, you can establish yourself as an expert in any area you choose.

The areas that need your attention right now are writing articles, updating your Web site, and clarifying what you do. Save the marketing budget for now and find those folks you wish to connect with. ☎



*Monica Wofford is a nationally known trainer, author, and coach. The author of Contagious Leadership and Contagious Customer Service, she inspires audiences to produce results. She can be reached at 866-382-0121 or through her Web site at [www.monicawofford.com](http://www.monicawofford.com).*



**You can develop "power leadership" skills. Learn more at [www.ChiroEco.com/powerleadership](http://www.ChiroEco.com/powerleadership).**