

## CHAPTER 35 DRAFT BLUEPRINT: THINKING KPIS

**Explore the importance of knowledge, a unique point of view, the power of initiative, and sharing that perspective in the context of thought leadership.**

*Remember:* This is not about having the 'right' answers, but about learning how to ask the right questions, specifically how you would ask those questions from your perspective.

### HELPING YOU THINK YOU CAN BE A THOUGHT LEADER

Working through this framework should give a better understanding of readiness to embark on the journey of becoming a thought leader. Thought leadership is a continuous process of growth, learning, and impact – commitment and consistent effort will play a significant role in success. Establishing such thought leadership may require stepping out of the comfort zone and exercising knowledge and expertise in new and creative ways.

To reiterate, the process, at a high level, entails:

- Identifying your primary area of expertise or interest.
- Reflecting on your level of expertise, how passionate you are about this area, and your commitment to increasing knowledge to make a positive impact within it.
- Exploring your experiences, including any viewpoints that differentiate you from others in your field or add a unique insight, and identifying what you hope to achieve or change.
- Developing a vision and accompanying strategy to articulate how you will exercise thought leadership that can benefit your industry, community, or audience.



### KNOWLEDGE

Thought leadership is largely about provoking thought in other people. How can you use your knowledge to provoke thought in other people? The steps below can help identify the areas that may be of interest to you from developing a thought leadership perspective.

- List the areas or subjects you are passionate about and can see yourself becoming a thought leader in. Choose one and highlight it; start there.

For example, in my case, the specific area was STEM advocacy, a thought leadership journey I embarked upon after my appointment as Chief Science Advocate.

- Identify the resources (books, courses, experts, etc.) that you will use to deepen your knowledge in these areas. If you feel confident about the subject area – perhaps you are working in that area – list additional resources to baseline and benchmark your own expertise in current contexts.
- Estimate the amount of time you want, or are able, to spend on this. Set a realistic timeline for acquiring this knowledge and mark it on your calendar.

Brainstorm: Subjects of Interest

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Potential Resources

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Primary topic that I will explore

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Starting resources ..... Date .....

Time estimate ..... Check-in date .....

***When do you think you will have enough knowledge?***  
 (How do you know you have enough knowledge?)

For me, I sense that I have a reasonable amount of knowledge when I start having independent ideas. When I haven't seen what I'm thinking about discussed, I wonder, *"Is that an interesting thought?"* or *"Hey, has anybody done this?"*

That’s how I know my wheels are turning and my brain is beginning to be active on the subject. The process I outline here plants the seeds to make uncommon connections.

*When to seek more knowledge?*

Curiosity (or insecurity) strikes the interest in more knowledge. That leads to the process of exploration and the development of a narrative. When you feel like you know enough to speak, you may start to feel compelled to speak about it. This will lead to more and more opportunities for curiosity and further exploration in search of more knowledge, initiating a positive cycle.

Knowledge about a topic is never done: **knowledge->curiosity->exploration->knowledge**



**PERSPECTIVE**

Identify your distinctive point of view, key messages, or vantage point related to the areas you want to be a thought leader in.

- If you need help, reflect on your unique life experiences, professional journey, and personal insights. What were your formative experiences? A teacher? Travel? Childhood? Relate to those.
- How do these perspectives differ from others in your field? Write down specific examples.
  - What unique experiences do I see other practitioners discuss?
  - Which new perspective do I bring that validates or informs what is being discussed?
  - What new evidence, data, or fresh thinking can I offer or draw upon?

My perspective on the subject:

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Formative experiences that shaped my perspective:

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Unique qualities my perspective brings to the subject:

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The key message I bring to this subject:

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**Hypothetical example:** Let’s say you want to advocate for accessibility in a specific manufacturing process.

Start by asking: Why am I advocating for it?

You may have a friend or family member who is colorblind, which led you to ask, “Why is marking certain areas done in colored tapes when those who are colorblind cannot see?”

You may take this step to explore why that manufacturing area uses those specific tapes.

You may seek the perspective of others to see what else could be done.

You may prompt others who may benefit from you asking, “What if we started using other colors or color and text together?”

For me questions emerge when: I see patterns. I see gaps. I see gaps in patterns and patterns in gaps.



**INITIATIVE**

- What specific action items can you take? Outline action items that can help to demonstrate thought leadership in your chosen areas that are consistent with who you are and who you want to be. How do you want to project yourself?

*Tip: Include goals like publishing articles, speaking at conferences, commencing a meeting, starting a blog or podcast, or launching webinars.*

- Break these goals into smaller, manageable tasks and set deadlines for each one.

- Commit to doing it

If you find it challenging to identify steps for yourself, benchmark other thought leaders in the area. What are they doing toward their stated goals? What can you embrace for yourself?

When you take the initiative, it has to be something that will feel authentic to you and your style.

Key goals:

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Actions I can take:

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Specific tasks:

.....Date.....

.....Date.....

.....Date.....

People who are in the process of developing their thought leadership typically find their specific niche and speak to that almost exclusively. That, I found out, was not for me. I do it slightly differently. For me to be authentically a thought leader, I cannot stay in a lane, because I am not a singular lane person, if you will. I have to be true to my style. At my core, I am a human being pursuing science with a willingness to embrace inspiration from many sources. I write about art, poetry, cooking, travel, and nature as well.



**SHARING**

- Research and list platforms where you can share your expertise, such as social media channels, industry-specific websites, community events, or webinars.
- Iterate and develop a cadence for sharing your insights,

including topics, formats (articles, videos, infographics), and frequency. Consistency builds credibility.

- Determine how you will engage with your audience, such as responding to comments, participating in discussions, or collaborating with other thought leaders.

*Note: Sharing is not exclusively related to social media – it is an experience in community – whether the workplace or area of interest outside of work. If you're struggling to identify the relevant community, consider a few of the following questions: How well-connected are you in your industry? Have you collaborated with others in your field? What joint projects or initiatives might provide connections for sharing? Have you actively engaged with your industry or community through events, conferences, or associations?*

Platforms:

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Actions:

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Engagement and Frequency:

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What are you going to do, when are you going to do it, how are you going to do it, and where?

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***Tips for Developing a Thought Leadership Content Strategy***

*Reflect on your written and verbal communication skills. Are they strong and effective, or do they need improvement?*

*What form of content would be most effective to meet your goal(s), including articles, blog posts, videos, or presentations related to your area of expertise? How consistently do you think your goal(s) require(s) creating and sharing content? What kind of schedule or routine would support content creation?*

*Are you familiar with your target audience's needs, interests, and challenges? How do you plan to tailor your content to meet these needs?*

*How influential are you currently in your area of expertise? What are instances where you've had a positive impact, influenced others, or inspired change in your field?*

### SELF-ASSESSMENT (KPIs)

Try to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that support your efforts and measure your thought leadership success. Examples may include the number of articles published, speaking engagements, followers gained, or comments received.

Create a timeline for assessing your progress at regular intervals (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually). Note any adjustments or changes to your approach based on the results of your self-assessment.

In my case, I have finally settled on posting on LinkedIn almost every day. I write an article every month, and I also try to appear on podcasts every two months. It is what I have found I can manage given all my commitments and responsibilities.

My KPIs:

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Regularly think about what challenges you anticipate facing on your journey, or have encountered, to becoming a thought leader. Keep fine-tuning a plan on how to overcome them. Seek feedback, including from other thought leaders.

Thought leadership positions you as a recognized expert and influencer in your field, ultimately opening doors to new possibilities and success in your career and professional life. Beyond expertise it requires skills in communication, critical thinking, content creation, and networking.

These skills, combined with a passion for their subject matter and a commitment to making a positive impact, are what make thought leaders stand