

# INTERVIEWS WITH 12 EXPERTS ON THE CHALLENGES FACING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN 2012

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I asked 12 people who I consider to be leading global commentators on thought leadership as well as a couple who have produced some amazing thought leadership programs in-house over the years to comment on four critical thought leadership questions for 2012.

Inspired by their answers I couldn't help chipping in with my own thoughts.

The interviewees include:

Bob Buday, Erica Klein, David Meerman Scott, Jeff Ernst, Rob Leavitt, Britton Manasco, Dana van den Heuvel, Matt Church, Fiona Czerniawska, Dale Bryce, Elizabeth Sosnow, Marte Semb Aasmundsen and me.



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**Jeff Ernst**, is the Principal Analyst, serving CMO and Marketing Leadership Professionals at **Forrester Research** and is probably best described as a thought leader in B2B marketing and sales strategy [www.forrester.com/rb/analyst/jeff\\_ernst](http://www.forrester.com/rb/analyst/jeff_ernst)



**David Meerman Scott** is one of the pre-eminent thought leaders on PR and marketing. He is a marketing strategist, keynote speaker, seminar leader, and author of the #1 bestseller ***The New Rules of Marketing & PR*** (which has been published in 26 languages) and the Wall Street Journal bestseller ***Real-Time Marketing & PR***. He recently launched his new online book: "Newsjacking: How to Inject Your Ideas into a Breaking News Story and Generate Tons of Media Coverage".

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**Dale Bryce** is the group manager marketing for **Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM)**, a global strategic consulting, engineering and project delivery firm. He has been instrumental in their successful 'client first' thought leadership approach [www.skmconsulting.com/Home/](http://www.skmconsulting.com/Home/)



**Marte Semb Aasmundsen**, graduated last year with her MSc Strategic Public Relations and Communications Management at The University of Stirling in the UK. Her thesis was on thought leadership.



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leadership marketing and sales enablement solutions. Britton produces a thought leadership strategy blog **illuminating the Future** and the executive journal, *Elevation Quarterly*.

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**QUESTION ONE:****WHAT WILL BE THE SINGLE BIGGEST CHANGE WE WILL SEE IN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OVER THE COMING YEAR/S?****BOB BUDAY**

"I'm not sure there will be any one major change in thought leadership in the coming year. I believe we'll continue to see small changes in the ways that current and aspiring experts create and market their ideas.

"Social media will continue to give us ways to more easily conduct research (to find organizations to study), as well as more easily spread our ideas. However, I don't ever expect social media to supplant the old ways of gaining expertise on an issue (talking by phone and in person to people who have dealt with the issue at hand) and sharing that expertise with audiences (seminars, books, whether online or print, management journals, online or print).

"So while I'm dubious that we will see a major change in the next year in the way companies create and market content to educate their target audiences, I do expect to see a fundamental change in thought leadership over the course of this decade, and I hope sooner rather than later.

"The change I'm expecting is that organizations (especially firms that sell expertise) will see the emerging discipline of thought leadership not just as a marketing initiative but also as a service innovation initiative. By far, the largest return that companies can generate from thought leadership comes from not just displaying expertise on an issue but actually having superior services that help clients solve the issue. I wrote about this in 2011 in a blog post (<http://bloomgroup.com/blogs/bob-buday/do-thought-leadership-marketing-and-knowledge-management-relate>).

"This is not the way most firms look at and use thought leadership today. A handful of consultants may write an article or book based on some research and client work. But they then typically use the article and book to generate more such work – not more internal capability in their organizations to deliver more such work.

"Using thought leadership as R&D for service innovation is the Holy Grail of thought leaders. As more

and more professional services work – architectural and engineering designs, consulting services, legal advice, accounting work, etc. – moves to locations that can provide that expertise at far lower cost, professional firms whose services aren't fundamentally unique and superior at delivering results won't be able to maintain their fees. Thought leadership, then, becomes the mechanism for de-commoditizing a commodity service."

**ERICA KLEIN**

"I believe each company that recognizes the value of thought leadership will begin to develop a strategic blueprint that integrates these programs into the overall framework of their business development and marketing efforts.

"I also think you'll see more of an attempt to integrate LinkedIn individual profile pages with company-wide thought leadership initiatives, significantly increasing the impact of these programs over the long term."

**MATT CHURCH**

"The need for those who are true thought leaders to be able to prove that depth of expertise in an efficient manner. Many will claim the title of thought leader but the challenge is for those who are to be as equally obsessed with the development of IP as they are in the promotion of same."

**ELIZABETH SOSNOW**

"We expect the biggest change to occur in the formatting of thought leadership. Companies are slowly beginning to recognize that traditional thought leadership packages such as "white papers" or "POV pieces" may not be nimble enough to survive in today's highly cluttered marketplace.

"Winners will embrace an exciting array of design opportunities, from e-books to cartoons and even songs."

**JEFF ERNST**

"Companies will get frustrated that even their most compelling thought leadership ideas/Point of Views get lost in the noise in the market and don't stand out from what everyone else is saying, so they will shift from taking a "random acts of thought leadership" approach (a webinar here, a whitepaper there, a blog post) to a more methodical, orchestrated approach.

"This will require them to develop a thought leadership platform in a similar manner to how political candidates develop a campaign platform."

**DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT**

"I'm big on real-time thought leadership. By this I mean people or companies that can respond to what's going on now. For example if there is a regulatory issue impacting their sector, can they comment on it right away?"

"I've noticed that traditional thought leadership content on the web is very campaign-like in its approach – it's planned well in advance. There is nothing wrong with that, except that the web is a very now medium and too few companies are taking advantage of this."

#### **DALE BRYCE**

"More will not be more!

"With the proliferation of digital and social media platforms, distribution of thought leadership will be easier. That's good. But with this, impact could be less unless we keep an eye on quality and intent.

"I have always thought that building and engaging with a select and loyal audience is the main game. Just think of the power of presenting thought leadership as a genuine and tailored gift to a particular client: "We were thinking of you just the other day, and believe this piece here is really relevant to you and your business."

"Cheesy? It depends on your intent..."

#### **MARTE SEMB AASMUNDSEN**

"I believe that thought leadership is the future of communication and reputation management.

"More and more companies have begun, and will continue, to realize the potential of the strategy; the competition within the thought leadership realm will thus be intensified and as a result, the

message will need to become more sophisticated.

"Thought leadership initiatives lacking substance will no longer be recognized as thought leadership.

"I also think that the strategy will be more recognized globally, which opens up the opportunities for cross-cultural thought leadership."

#### **BRITTON MANASCO**

"I spend most of my time working in the B2B arena, particularly with companies engaged in a complex sale. With regard to that type of company, I am seeing a definite focus on how to empower sales (as opposed to simply marketing) with thought leadership. So, I will venture that it's a significant trend: positioning sales people as thought leaders and trusted authorities.

"To become thought leaders, they must also be challengers – individuals who have the confidence and perspective to challenge the buyer's status quo thinking.

"They must offer a new point of view – a new angle on things. They must be, in essence, provocateurs. And they must be prepared to guide their prospective clients through a complex and demanding decision."

#### **ROB LEAVITT**

"I think we'll see another whole wave of thought leadership development and marketing.

"Clearly thought leadership has gained tremendous interest, support, and investment in the last few years, but we're still very early in a maturity cycle. Many companies are still getting a basic foundation in place in terms of defining issues to address, creating a publication engine, enlisting subject matter experts, and testing the social media waters.

"All this is critical, but much of it is not actual "thought leadership" if by this term we literally mean "leading thoughts."

"Many of us producing useful, non-promotional, educational content, but examples of more innovative and ground-breaking thinking is more rare, and requires far more investment, discipline, and experience.

"As more of us get past the foundation stage, I expect a great deal more innovative work in next few years."

#### **FIONA CZERNIAWSKA**

"There are lots of things I'd like to see change but am not sure will actually happen: seeing consulting firms produce less, but higher quality thought leadership and pulling more of their output around a small number of over-arching themes would both be high up my agenda, but that's hard to achieve in an environment where volume still matters.

"I would also like to see firms being more thoughtful in their use

of different digital formats and social media for thought leadership purposes, rather than the pretty random experimentation that's the norm at the moment. But I do think that 2012 will prove to be the year in which a minority of consulting firms will stand out in their ability to use these formats/media much more effectively."

#### **DANA VANDEN HEUVEL**

I believe that marketers are realizing that thought leadership is really a "supply side" construct, and in order to ensure that our thought leadership efforts are valid in the marketplace, we need to take a "demand side" approach and focus not only on what makes for great thought leadership, but rather what makes for great "attention leadership" where we're attracting and maintaining the attention of our audience over time."

#### **CRAIG BADINGS**

"We will see more sophistication in terms of focus, how thought leadership is researched, how it is targeted, packaged and presented and how it is integrated into the sales process.

"Cloud computing will also present a big opportunity in showcasing and ordering intellectual property but this will be a longer term play.

"Finally I think thought leadership will continue to gain traction as a strategic business tool as opposed to a pure communications/marketing tool."

## QUESTION TWO:

### FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN GETTING A THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND?

#### BOB BUDAY

"It's easy to get a thought leadership program off the ground. Many firms start by outsourcing a white paper to a third party like my firm and then do little else. In my experience, this rarely works because the expectations are so high ("We expect the white paper to generate hundreds of leads quickly") and the understanding of what it takes to have an effective thought leadership program so low.

"These firms typically have little appetite for creating a thought leadership machine because that takes budget and time. Even more important, they don't realize how much time that their internal experts will need to spend on the program – in writing, developing their ideas, presenting them publically, and in working with others to capture their ideas.

"So I'll change the question slightly and then answer it: The biggest challenge to getting a highly effective thought leadership program off the ground ("effective" defined as generating leads and revenue) is a recognition by those

who are funding the program that they will need to commit sufficient time (no quick miracle results) and resources (yes, budget, and as important people's time to participate in it) to the endeavor.

"If they don't, there will be initial excitement and eventual disinterest as they find "that thought leadership white paper didn't do much."

#### ERICA KLEIN

"As a thought leadership writer and consultant, I develop a detailed Project Brief for my clients upfront, something they generally don't have enough time to do themselves, but which can serve as a solid foundation for every step of the process.

"The single greatest obstacle in launching a thought leadership initiative is not having a detailed document that clearly articulates the desired results, expected budget range, the list of key approvers and important influencers, content and graphics development stages, and realistic timeframes.

"Many a terrific thought leadership

program has foundered on the rocks of project management and time management."

#### MATT CHURCH

"Mediocrity!

"A thought leadership program is not for the faint of heart, it's not a short-term trend or cool idea. It's about focussing on your best and brightest and communicating their uniqueness to the internal and external audiences.

#### ELIZABETH SOSNOW

"Thought leadership projects almost always falter without a differentiated, actionable idea. It's pretty simple. If you spend the time to get your ideas in order, the rest of program falls neatly into place.

"Another frequent challenge - finding the right thought leader.

"A good program requires an articulate thinker who understands how to inspire their audience segment. Ideally, that thought leader actually becomes the embodiment of the idea."

#### JEFF ERNST

"The biggest challenge my clients face is getting the commitment from senior management to make thought leadership a top priority and to allocate time from the subject matter experts in the company who are needed to define the thought leadership platform and develop the idea hierarchy."

#### DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT

"Typically marketing people spend their time talking about products and services. The average marketing person is very good at doing things like brochures and advertising but they have great difficulty in providing thought leadership-type content that has nothing to do with their products or services.

"In fact most of them are terrible at not talking about their products and services. Even a lot of the thought leadership campaigns out there currently contain too many product and service mentions."

#### DALE BRYCE

"The challenge in professional services is often to get the gurus to see the big picture. Ironic isn't it?

"Why?" is always a great first question to ask, or to answer.

"It is a delight working with such brilliant people, in my case engineering and before that the law, but even brilliant people need context. And that context usually needs to come from a deeper understanding of clients and their business – their commercial and technical issues and personal needs too.

"We have been running a Client Insights program for a while now. Our clients are clearly telling us they want us to stay in touch, "not just take the order". They want someone to bring forward valuable ideas. And, they

actually want unsolicited proposals that solve their problems.

“So, in terms of thought leadership, especially in professional services, time needs to be spent on the “Why?”, before we launch into the “What?”. And that can be a challenge.

“Subject matter expertise is a given in thought leadership. The key is connecting the dots, for clients and our thought leaders too.”

### MARTE SEMB AASMUNDSEN

“It is absolutely necessary to get backing from the board. Also, companies must understand that true thought leadership takes time to build, and needs a great deal of work and resources.

“It must be well researched and align with the perceptions and values of a brand and their stakeholders.”

### BRITTON MANASCO

“If I switch to the marketing perspective (as opposed to sales), I’d say that the biggest challenge is the creation of relevant, compelling and insightful content.

“It’s best if you are strong at drawing on outside and independent perspectives – whether they come from market influencers or buyers/practitioners. It takes rigor, discipline and a defined program to generate content that works in an ongoing fashion.

“You’ll probably want to hire empathic and proven content creators – people who can produce interesting content in many formats and for many buyers.”

### ROB LEAVITT

“I’m actually doing this myself these days so the question is far from academic!

“Three of the biggest challenges I’m facing right now are turning general interest across the organization into a focused program with agreed priorities, processes, and production; balancing the desire for ramping up content production with the need to build serious, deep, and credible points of view on key customer issues; and building a strong enough network of relationships with customers and sales people to make sure the program is truly focused on what is most useful with those two key groups.”

### FIONA CZERNIAWSKA

“Where to start? The best thought leadership comes down to picking topical issues, researching them thoroughly to a point where you have something new to say, and then writing the results up in an appealing and engaging manner.

“The first of these (picking topical issues) depends on having a) a clear view of what your clients are interested in – ideally more than a vague sense, but something itself grounded in research – and b) a culture / decision-making process which makes it

possible to make decisions. Many firms end up producing thought leadership on too many areas because they’re afraid to choose.

“The second (thorough research and new insights) comes down to what I term the ‘second day in the room’ syndrome: lots of firms are prepared to get their experts together for a day, but the firms that stand out in thought leadership terms are those who make them go back in for a second day – and that’s symptomatic of a commitment to research and investment.

“The third and final point (appeal and engagement) depends on recognition that there’s a lot of (too much!) thought leadership out there and you have to be brave if you’re going to stand out.

“So taking risks is a necessary part of doing thought leadership well.”

### DANA VANDEN HEUVEL

“I have seen a few hurdles that typically keep an organization from thought leadership success:

1. “The confidence conundrum. In order to be a thought leader, an organization’s leadership must have the confidence that they can pull off the thought leader posture in the marketplace. If anyone on the leadership team feels that the organization is under-qualified, then the idea of thought leadership will smolder, so to speak, but never really catch fire within the organization. Moreover, if thought

leadership can’t be sustained as an idea in the organization, it will never resonate with the market.

2. “I’m not a publisher” mentality. In order to be a successful thought leader, organizations need to both think and publish. Yes, there’s more to it, but good strong content is as the core of a thought leadership program. I hear from countless organizations who would like to ascend to the “expert in their industry”, thought leader or “trusted advisor” status who just can’t get it together when it comes to creating content.
3. “Differentiation in the marketplace. Taking a position as a thought leader requires that you have true differentiation not only of products but more importantly of ideas. Organizations need to be “original thinkers” in order to manifest thought leadership. While I always believe that any business that’s been around for even a few years has found its differentiation, knowing that you’re different and being able to articulate that in a thought leadership position to the market remains a challenge.”

### CRAIG BADINGS

“Three things: if it’s not centred on your client issues and challenges it will fail or at best limp along; a lack of resources to properly plan, leverage and maintain your thought leadership point of view; and a lack of commitment from senior management.”

## QUESTION THREE:

### WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE OUTCOMES OF A THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN?

#### BOB BUDAY

“One, increased awareness by your target audience that your firm possesses some expertise and a higher number of inquiries about it

“Two, higher and faster close rates because of the ability to far better demonstrate to a prospect that you indeed do have the expertise you claim to have.

“Three, higher fees because of the ability to differentiate your expertise, and thus higher and more profitable revenue from your work.”

#### ERICA KLEIN

“For my financial and technology clients, the most sought-after outcomes are:

“One, generating revenue from both new prospects and existing customers

“Two, building reputation and brand as insightful, innovative thinkers, and lest we forget;

“Three, establishing the boss as a thought leader!”

#### MATT CHURCH

“One, talent retention, attraction and development.

“Two, business growth through positioning activities in the marketplace.

“Three, innovation around process and professional subject matter expertise.”

#### ELIZABETH SOSNOW

“One, new or deepened relationships with prospects or customers.

“Two, better defined competitive positioning.

“Three, holistic “glue” that integrates previously siloed marketing programs.”

#### JEFF ERNST

“When you go from thinking of thought leadership as a campaign to thinking of it as a cornerstone of your go-to-market strategy, you can expect to have these outcomes:

1. “Customers, prospects, influencers, and competitors

admire your company as having ground-breaking ideas and incredibly insightful POVs on the critical issues your buyers face.

2. “People who engage with your thought leadership ideas are so inspired they immediately share them with colleagues within their company and within their professional and social networks.

3. “Prospective customers knock on your door, already philosophically aligned with your company’s approach to solving their problems, ready to engage with your sales executives.”

#### DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT

“First, content will be shared if it is valuable. People will share it on twitter, Facebook, blogs and the like with the result your content will reach far more people.

“Second, people will subscribe to your content either whether that is via e mail, RSS feeds, etc. They’ll want more if you do a good job.

“Finally, it will brand your organisation as one worthy with which to do business. People will seek you out if you’re smart about providing content that educates and helps them solve their problems.”

#### DALE BRYCE

“Client engagement, reputation building and winning the work you want to win.”

#### MARTE SEMB AASMUNDSEN

“Building expertise and reputation internally and externally. Changing industry standards and perhaps even drive paradigm shifts, and gaining influence and becoming industry leaders.”

“And I must add a fourth point; stakeholder engagement. Thought leadership encourages two-way communication and is therefore a great way to include stakeholders in the decision-making process.”

#### BRITTON MANASCO

“That would be: customer awareness (as measured by marketing qualified leads); customer engagement (as measured by sales qualified leads); and customer commitment (as measured by closed deals).

“SiriusDecisions has done a good job of articulating the relevant metrics.”

#### ROB LEAVITT

“Increased credibility with customers and market influencers (analysts, bloggers, media, etc.) that the company is an important voice on the issue; new relationships and opportunities with customers focused on forward thinking solutions; and increased internal support for a thought leadership-oriented approach to the market.”

#### FIONA CZERNIAWSKA

“A client who, having read your

article, acts on something in it. This may be quite a small, apparently insignificant action (forwarding an email to a colleague) but all of our research indicates that any action increases the chance that the ideas in the article and the firm associated with them will be remembered.

“A partner/consultant making a trip to see a client. We tend to think that the outcomes of TL should be external, but there are huge benefits to articles/reports etc, which galvanize account managers and partners to visit their clients, taking the material with them and explaining to their client in person why it’s relevant to them.

“The ability to own an issue. Thought leadership should be good enough to ensure that, on a particular issue, your firm will always be on the shortlist because you’re seen as the pre-eminent experts in that field.”

#### DANA VANDEN HEUVEL

“I like to refer back to my original “thought leadership marketing equation” and state that Share of Voice, Share of Mind and Share of Market are the key outcomes of any thought leadership campaign, but I have a few others that I believe are critical.

1. “Marketplace momentum. Thought leadership is cumulative where an advertising or promotions-centered approach

is diminishing. Pursuing the road of the thought leader, over time, builds tremendous momentum that can continue to propel an organization’s message long after the original piece of content was published.

2. “Quicker cycle times. In our experience thought leadership actually helps the customer decide (as opposed to helps the organization sell) who is best for them based on the advance knowledge they can obtain about an organization and how they think, act and work via their content.
3. “Category of One companies. I’m a fan of Joe Calloway’s book “Becoming a Category of One” and I believe that the thought leadership approach allows an organization to tell a customer-centric story in a way that positions that organization as the only one telling that story and give that organization an opportunity to be seen as truly unique.”

#### CRAIG BADINGS

“For me the most powerful is the emotional connection you forge with your client.

“If, as a result of your thought leadership campaign, your clients or your target audience get a sense that you really get them and the issues they face and that you are helping

them overcome these it leads to the second outcome – differentiation.

“Your thought leadership needs to differentiate your brand from the competition.

“Finally it should position you as the go to expert in your field and with that comes that all important brand quality – trust.

“I have created a list of 70+ *thought leadership benefits* on my blog if you want to take a look [www.thoughtleadershipstrategy.net](http://www.thoughtleadershipstrategy.net).”

## QUESTION FOUR:

### CAN CONTENT CURATION ALONE TURN AN INDIVIDUAL OR COMPANY INTO A THOUGHT LEADER?

#### BOB BUDAY

“No – especially if all you do is collect articles. There are tons of automated ways to do it without a human intermediary – Twitter feeds, Google alerts, etc.

“At the very least, content curators need to provide more value to readers than simply identifying and collecting content on a topic. They need to explain why some piece of content is worth someone’s time – what new light it sheds.

“Yet still, even if you add that kind of value – providing commentary on interesting content – playing the role of content curator doesn’t go far enough to demonstrate that you are a leading expert on a topic.

“All to say there are no short cuts in becoming a thought leader.”

#### ERICA KLEIN

“This may be totally self-serving on my part, but I think aggregating content marks a company as a “me too” provider and not a distinctive brand able to offer prospects and

customers real, quantifiable value.

“True thought leadership can do so much more for a company than round up content at the OK Corral!”

#### MATT CHURCH

“In the next 36 months maybe. But after that those who synthesise, aggregate and curate Thought Leadership will lose position. It’s about extending the conversations or contradicting them. This means you have to go beyond ‘here is a good idea’ and start to say ‘here is what I think about X idea’.

“It’s about contribution and contradiction as ways of extending an idea. A reader reads a book and goes ‘cool’, a curator reads an idea and goes ‘how can I share that?’ a Thought Leader reads an idea and goes ‘What do I think about that?’

#### ELIZABETH SOSNOW

“I love this question – it’s one I’ve debated myself. I think the short answer is “yes,” but the long answer is “no.”

“In the short term, curation is a way to signal to your audience that you understand industry trends and “what’s ahead.” However, longer term, curation signals a “me, too” marketing posture.

“True thought leadership requires differentiation to succeed, so curation just isn’t enough.”

#### JEFF ERNST

“No, content curation alone is not enough to be a true thought leader.

“For people to trust you to curate or filter content for them, they need to already view you as an authority and trust that you are able to filter through the noise to deliver the content that is most useful to them.

#### DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT

“No. While content that is interesting will be passed on, I am a perfect example as I tweet interesting content, however, some component of original content is important.

“Content simply created by others is not nearly as valuable.”

#### DALE BRYCE

“Content curation is an essential ingredient in the overall mix that is thought leadership.

“Great content needs to be relevant of course but it should act as a social lubricant for engagement with an audience. Ideally content is just the

conversation starter; a catalyst to a real dialogue about how people might react and respond to the idea just placed on the metaphorical table. And from that first conversation, big things can come....!”

#### MARTE SEMB AASMUNDSEN

“No, I don’t think so.

“I think content curation may perhaps be a reason why critics are inveighing against thought leadership in the first place.

“Of course it is a useful way of identifying and re-branding an issue. But I think the trend will be to move towards more sophisticated thought leadership initiatives. For that to happen, a thought leader must be authentic.

“Authenticity, transparency and trust are values that will become even more important in the coming years.”

#### BRITTON MANASCO

“Yes, but only if they are a skilled curator.

“Among other things, I have billed myself as a “connoisseur of contrarians.” I seek out unexpected perspectives and provocative points of view. By tapping into their contrarian insights of others, I’m able to generate content for my clients that truly resonates with their customers.

“I’m thrilled that I can get paid to do it.”

**ROB LEAVITT**

“Definitely not.

“Curation is useful both internally (for education and customer/competitive/market perspective) and externally (to build interest, traffic, and credibility) but it is no substitute for your own content and conversation that provide strong and different points of view.

“I’m all for curation initiatives but strictly as a complement to your own more substantial research, publications, and presentations. Done well (which itself requires a great deal of work), curation can help you become a useful and valued resource for information and ideas, but if they are not your own ideas you are still not a thought leader.”

**DANA VANDEN HEUVEL**

“No, it can’t.

“I’ve seen a lot of back and forth on Twitter this year about this, but at the end of the day, curation is helpful and even essential.

“I often tell my clients that the best leaders don’t always have the answers, but they know where to get them, which is how the thought leader should approach curation. Know where to get good content, know who to trust and know what your audience values but never think for a second that curation = thought leadership.

“The Bloom Group has articulated, what I believe, to be one of the

staples in thought leadership discipline with their “seven fundamentals of a thought leadership point of view”, which every would-be thought leader should use to check their work. Moreover, “novelty”, that is, saying something new about an issue and “validity”, having proof, are two of the most critical points of a thought leadership position.

“Curation satisfies neither of those.”

**CRAIG BADINGS**

“Find me one recognised thought leader who has attained their position as a result of curating content only.

“If you can I will be convinced that content curation can create thought leaders.

“The very nature of the term ‘thought leadership’ implies original, creative or innovative thought. In contrast, curating content implies that you are not the original generator of that content and therefore cannot claim to be a thought leader off the back of it.

“That said, I believe that curated content can play a very important role in supporting and informing a thought leadership content program. Furthermore, if the person curating the content arrives at new ideas or insights as a result of that content then it could be construed as thought leadership.”

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