THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

How to differentiate your company and stand out from the crowd: thought leadership

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This is a manuscript in progress and currently shared for the purpose of exchanging knowledge and ideas with peers and other parties interested in thought leadership.

Introduction

Increasingly, B2B and B2C businesses are using thought leadership to build their brand, develop brand awareness, create an unique platform for competitive differentiation, build deeper relationships with customers, be "heard above all the 'noise' in the marketplace" and engage important stakeholders on board with a company's strategic plans. [1]

Businesses are using an array of delivery mechanisms such as white papers, events, webinars and the like, but what constitutes effective thought leadership is either vague or misunderstood. Some companies confuse their use of new delivery mechanisms with having a thought leadership strategy (e.g. 'we have white papers therefore we are a thought leader'). Furthermore, the thought leadership mechanisms that lead to positive outcomes are either not known or have not been properly studied and articulated.

To create a better insight into what thought leadership means, its business value and how organizations pursue it, we conducted case studies of six corporate thought leaders. The results underpin our definition of thought leadership – one that is based on the two key pillars of trust and novelty. They also help in identifying a framework for creating corporate thought leadership.

In this e-book, we explain our definition of thought leadership and review our four-step Thought Leadership Framework ™. We explain each of the four steps, relate each step to actual case studies and use theory to explain why these steps generate the results that they do. In doing so, we hope that this book will support managers in successfully pursuing their thought leadership strategies.

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Why thought leadership?

In an era in which stakeholders are keen to hear refreshing viewpoints that overturn status-quo thinking and trigger change, thought leadership provides companies with a means to substantially raise their profiles among customers and other stakeholders (e.g., employees, business partners, the government or non-government organisations).

Customers (and other stakeholders) are constantly seeking novel perspectives and new insights into issues that matter to them. This happens in the business-to-business and the business-to-consumer market. For instance, city architects around the world are searching for novel ideas on how to keep cities livable in the future in the face of soaring populations. Two companies on which we focus, IBM and Philips meet these needs by providing convention-challenging solutions drawn from their corporate expertise on complex issues surrounding these challenges.

Consumers are attracted to brands that challenge the *status quo* of themes that touch their daily lives (e.g. beauty, health, lifestyle, connectivity, etc). For example, Dove (a personal-care brand owned by Unilever) has tapped into women's concerns about society's unrealistic standards of beauty by seeking to widen the definition of beauty to include all women.

Thought leadership gives companies with novel perspectives and solutions the opportunity to substantially raise their profiles and remain on the cutting edge of developments in their markets and societies. Customers are drawn to thought leaders because of their refreshing viewpoints on wider issues and challenges that matter to them and as a result, come to regard the firm as their trusted advisor in the market.

What is thought leadership?

Definition of thought leadership

Business literature suggests a number of definitions: Crainer and Dearlove wrote that thought leadership is a strategy that 'positions the brand as intellectually superior to the competition' while Celi and Miller called thought leadership an 'intellectual engagement.' [2]

Vanden Heuvel and Badings defined thought leadership as 'the successful promotion of a company's unique point of view, insight, or solution which leads to significant customer engagement.' Manasco asserted that thought leadership is 'the presentation of insightful, provocative and compelling perspectives that frame the way people think about key issues and even guide them to smarter decisions.' [3]

We define **thought leadership** as *'The action of promoting thought-provoking viewpoints that reframe the way customers think about their key issues, helping them toward new insights and solutions.'*

Figure 1: Definition of thought leadership

There are several important components within our definition of thought leadership. First, our definition focuses on customers but thought leadership can be directed at any key stakeholder. Thought leadership is not a broad based or mass appeal activity, rather it is targeted to specific members of stakeholder groups depending on the corporation's desired outcome and the needs of those stakeholders (customers, business decision makers, employees, policy makers, the media, local governments, business partners, NGO's etc.). For the purpose of practicality in explaining our concepts, the majority of this e book focuses on customers or prospects. We do highlight examples where other stakehol-

ders are targeted to give a fuller picture of how thought leadership can work across multiple audiences.

Second, thought leaders seek to change how customers think with the introduction of a Novel Point of View. Companies already have an arsenal of tools with which they attempt to persuade customers: advertisements, product features and benefits, logic, etc. But thought leaders are not just clever advertisers, although advertisements may play a role in a thought leadership strategy. Rather, thought leading companies are at the forefront of their industries—not necessarily in terms of sales value, but in terms of ideas. In a crowded marketplace, the natural human tendency to seek out novelty means that customers will notice novel ideas and spend time considering them. Novelty helps the thought leader stand out from the pack. Of course the products, solutions or services have to work, but their novelty is what attracts customers and makes them consider the possibilities offered by the thought leader.

Lastly, thought leadership is about converting interest in a new idea into acting on that idea to the mutual benefit of the thought leader, the customer or other stakeholders. In its purest theoretical form, thought leadership is about changing how customers think about a given issue. However, corporations do not pursue thought leadership for theoretical reasons: they need to attract customers, address their needs and deliver

a return. Thought leadership should aim for an improved situation for the customer (e.g. decreased cost, improved performance, better policy, increased profit, a better way of doing something) and – in some cases – society at large.

Thought leadership is not just innovation or having a strong vision

To get a better handle on the term *thought leadership*, we need to make a distinction between two related concepts: *innovation* and *vision*.

Innovation is the process that translates an idea or invention into a product or service for which customers are prepared to pay. Innovation disrupts the status quo in product and service use (e.g., a new flavour of toothpaste or replacing horse-drawn carriages with automobiles), but does not necessarily entail novel thinking that goes beyond the product or service. Thought leadership implies having a strong thought-provoking viewpoint on an area of interest that goes beyond the product or service.

In an era in which society is facing truly daunting societal, economic and environmental issues, innovative products by themselves are no longer enough. Customers are on the lookout for refreshing viewpoints that break from old thinking. IBM, for instance, didn't come up with a good idea on how to use their innovative analytical system to reduce energy consumption in homes and offices: they developed a novel and thought-

provoking perspective on the entire spectrum of energy. Thought leadership needs innovation in order to thrive: innovation delivers the new products and services that thought leaders provide to meet their customers' needs. However, new products (no matter how great or revolutionary) do not make companies into thought leaders. They are a necessary component, but not the whole. Thought leadership is a differentiated

competitive position that leverages the power of insight and innovation and applies it to customers' biggest needs, issues and challenges.

A company's vision is what it aspires to be in the medium to long term future. Companies' visions can be inspiring and ambitious, but not all visions challenge the status quo. Thought leadership implies having a strong thought-provoking viewpoint on an area of interest to its customers which may overlap with the corporate vision in some way. Regardless, thought leaders generate a point of view or perspective that flies in the face of conventional wisdom and stimulates new thinking. They see the world differently and are willing to share their unique insights first and foremost and only then see how their products and services can help solve their customers' issues.

The two pillars of thought leadership: novelty and trust

Thought leadership is based on two important pillars: novelty and trust

(see figure 2). First, thought leading corporations have a novel point of view (NPOV) which they promote to their stakeholders as an idea, insight or solution for a market or societal issue. The novelty of the viewpoint attracts the attention of the customer and incentivizes them to spend time considering it. Second, thought leaders must create trust with their stakeholders in order for their NPOV to be accepted and, ultimately, adopted and implemented.

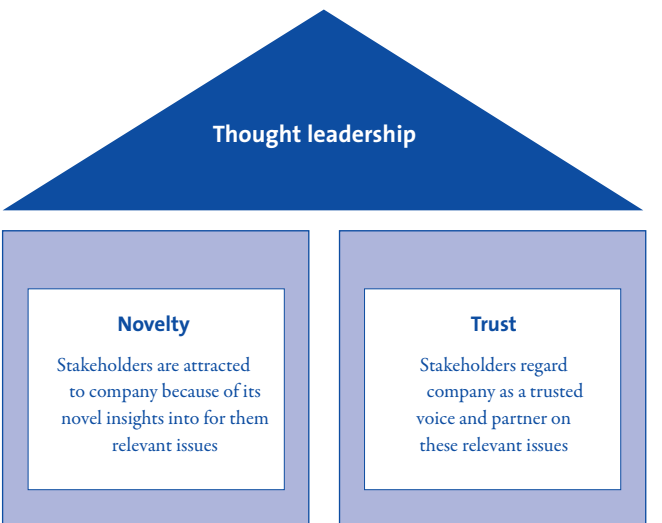


Figure 2: Thought leadership rests on novelty and trust

Novelty

The starting point for all thought leadership is a novel point of view (NPOV). Thought leaders have to own a NPOV created from their market/societal insight and preferably linked to their central, enduring and distinctive identity characteristics and their pools of expertise and innovation. The NPOV should offer new ideas or insights and in the process break conventional thinking leading to a new way of addressing stakeholders' needs. [4]

The novelty of the viewpoint should act as a schema-cracking catalyst, garnering attention and attracting stakeholders. This aspect of novelty is well explained by schema theories which we explain briefly to illustrate the link to thought leadership.

Schema theories underline why stakeholders are attracted to the 'novelty' component of thought leaders. Schemas are defined as 'cognitive structures that represent knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among those attributes.' [5] These schemas help people make sense of their environment because they provide the perceptual filters through which a person notices or interprets new information. [6]

Schemas act as shortcuts in interpreting data by offering ready-formed

categories. We learn these categories as we age, so—using cars as a simple example—a young boy will learn what a car is from what he is driven around in. He understands that a car has four wheels and four doors and a steering wheel—that is his schema for cars. He then sees a truck and thinks that is a car because it has four wheels and four doors and a steering wheel. But he then learns that is a truck. He now has a schema for trucks as well as for cars. As he gets older, he doesn't need to relearn what a car is every time he sees a new one in a different colour or with more or fewer doors: his schemas help him to instantly identify these various machines as 'cars'.

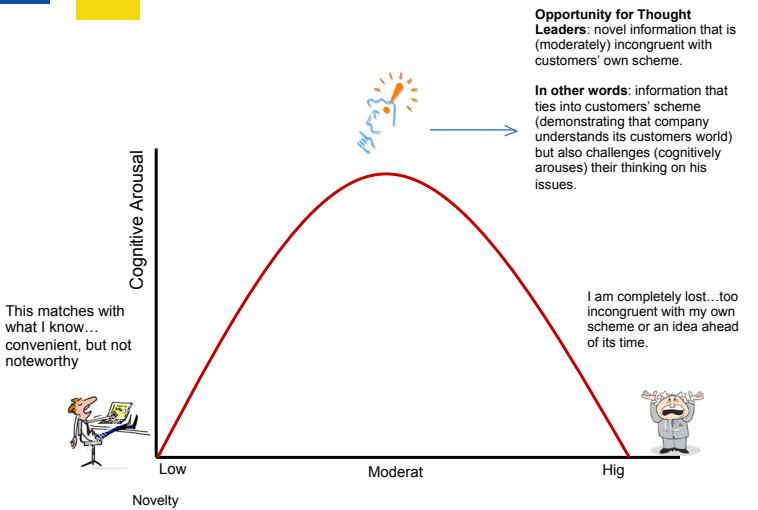
Conventional wisdom in a market or industry can also be seen as a schema: 'the market has always acted in such a way—that's how this market works' or 'we've always used product x to do y'. Schemas are convenient, handy and comfortable. So how do we change them? Novelty!

Despite the comfort of schemas, people are innately hardwired to seek out novelty: we pay more attention to novel stimuli than to familiar information [7]. Novel ideas will get noticed more than run-of-the-mill ones simply by virtue of being novel.

When people are confronted with moderately novel or schema-incongruent information, they are aroused by it and are motivated to solve

the incongruence, especially if the information is relevant to them (see Figure 3). Continuing the car example from above, we might all know that cars have doors that open outwards. In fact, the boy doesn't even bother to look at how car doors open because he knows that they open outwards. Then we see a 'car' whose doors open upwards, like a Lamborghini. This doesn't fit with the boy's existing schema but is interesting and pleasurable. The boy from the example will pay attention to this novel type of car door and adapt his schema for cars to include those types with doors that open in other ways than what was previously 'normal'. In other words, people are cognitively stimulated to adapt or replace their existing schema to include the new information when that information is moderately novel.

We stress the term 'moderately' novel here, because when an idea or thought is extremely novel or too far from stakeholders' existing schema, cognitive arousal may end up in a level of misunderstanding (people don't understand the idea) or scepticism (they view it with mistrust). In this case, the novelty has gone a step too far for a schema to be adapted to it.



Adapted from: Berlyne, D. E. 1970. Novelty, complexity and hedonic value. Perception & Psychophysics, 8: 279-286.

Figure 3: Novel information and customers' schema

Yet, when people successfully integrate new information into their schema, they tend to be more favourable towards the new information.[8] And that is why novelty is so powerful in thought leadership: novelty draws attention to the point of view, incites people to think about it and adapt their schemas to it, and the very act of integrating this novel information generates a favourable response.

The premise of every thought leader or thought leadership strategy should be that their stakeholders are looking for novel solutions and that satisfying these needs with convention-challenging points of view will lead to favourable responses and engagement.

For example, a teenage girl encounters Dove's 'Real Beauty' campaign and sees images of 'beautiful' women that look more reasonable and attainable than the models typically featured in beauty magazines. This might help her break down the stereotypical view of beauty (e.g. adapt her schema for beauty to include women who look more like her) thus enabling her to redefine the concept of beauty and satisfying an unmet desire to feel accepted for how she looks.

Ultimately, by attracting attention and helping to crack schemas, novel ideas allow corporations to create differentiated and difficult-to-replicate competitive positions. Their NPOV is more likely to be heard above the noise in the marketplace which may position them 'top-of-mind' among their stakeholders.

For example, in 2009 when the American president was setting up a new Economic Advisory Board to help jumpstart the economy, corporations such as General Electric (see Table 2 for their NPOV) wanted to be top of President Obama's mind in order to be considered for this potentially

influential role. Indeed, CEO Jeffrey Immelt was selected by President Obama to sit on this government roundtable. But ultimately corporations want to be top of mind when customers are considering which product or service to buy.

Box 1: A Novel Point of View on 'what'?

The NPOV is a strategic choice which should reflect a company's desired thought leadership positioning. The choice of a NPOV can fall into one of two general categories: industry/market relevance or societal relevance.
These categories align with Brown and Dacin's16 definitions of corporate ability (CA) and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which are the associations that top managers would like their organisation ′s audiences to hold about their company. Corporate ability is defined as 'expertise in producing and delivering product and/or service offerings' while corporate social responsibility is 'the character of the company, usually with regard to important societal issues.' Most companies nowadays combine both aspects in building thought leadership.

For example, IBM positions itself as a thought leader in 'making the world smarter'. They do so by 'advocating a thoughtful and serious POV on how

technology could make the world better' [10]. More concretely, their idea is that 'all data – past and present, from inside and outside a company – can be streamed, processed and analysed in real time.' This idea is reflected in their business solutions like smarter energy grids, smarter water management, and smarter traffic management. As such, they connect Corporate Ability associations (their expertise in technology) with CSR associations (global issues such as energy, water or health care).

With GE's Healthymagination program, the company also strongly links its CA to CSR. GE used World Health Organization reports to demonstrate that the majority of the world's population has little access to healthcare, and that what is available is either inadequate or too expensive. While *countries* normally seek to address societal problems of this magnitude, GE has the NPOV that – within five years – they (as a *company* and not a *government*) can 'provide better health for more people at lower cost through powerful technology, innovation, and the talent of our people.' [11] Healthymagination's specific goals include reducing the cost of healthcare by 15%, improving the quality of healthcare by 15%, and improving access to healthcare *around the world* by 15%. GE wants to be positioned as the leading authority on solving healthcare access, quality, and cost issues and believes that they can persuade stakeholders to support them because of their 100 years of experience and expertise in the healthcare industry.

Trust

Trust is an essential component in the relationship between thought leaders and customers. While customers may be attracted to an idea based on its novelty and relevance (as discussed in the previous section), customers may only want to relate with the company's idea and its products and services if they trust the company. In the academic management literature, trust is well-defined by Mayer and colleagues as "the willingness of one party (the 'trustor') to be vulnerable to the actions of another party (the 'trustee') based on the expectation that the trustee will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the trustor's ability to monitor or control the trustee". [12]

While trust is not necessarily important to convince people of a NPOV's value or plausibility, it is important for developing and sustaining valuable stakeholder relations based on this NPOV. Trust is also an important outcome of what happens when your NPOV enables a customer to re-examine or adjust their existing schemas, helping them to solve their relevant issues. To explain our point, we will explain the two components of trust.

Trust results from two different psychological mechanisms. [13] The first type of trust is *cognition-based* trust and results from the perception that the trustor can rely on the trustee's competence and expertise. Cogniti-

on-based trust is an inherently important component for overcoming any sense of risk that a customer might have in implementing a novel idea that goes against the conventions of an industry. The second type of trust results from the perception that the trustee has one's interests and welfare at heart. This form of trust is labelled as *affect-based* trust and has to do with the degree to which the trustee is benevolent toward the trustor. Affect-based trust is critical in building longer term relationships.

Expertise is an important component of thought leadership through which companies can build *cognition-based* trust. Companies showcase their expertise by issuing a variety of verifiable and factual information such as case studies, white papers and fact-finding reports that they commission from reputable third parties. This information should substantiate not only the thought leader's expertise, but also the validity of the convention-challenging ideas they are promoting. IBM is an excellent example of this with over 25 case studies for different industries shared on their Smarter Planet website.

Cognition-based trust allows stakeholders to feel confident in the thought leader's NPOV and in their ability to implement it. The second form of trust, affect-based trust, helps to build longer term, sustainable relationships.

Thought leaders can create affect-based trust through relational exchanges. Social exchange theory posits that affect-based trust grows through relational transactions. [14] Particularly in B2B situations, it is normal for 'people [to] develop personal relationships that supplement and reinforce their formal roles.' [15] While formal roles may be based around transactions supported by cognition-based trust, personal relationships engender affect-based trust, which has to do with believing that the trustee is benevolent towards the trustor or that the other person in the relationship has your best interests at heart.

'Having your best interests at heart' could be construed in a business situation as dealing honestly, fairly, and considerately with a trading partner not because this will result in benefits for the company (i.e. purely calculative), but because one party likes the other and values the relationship (i.e. from a basis of goodwill).

Box 2: Affect-based trust between Philips and Laurie Orlov, an industry analyst

Philips has established a Center for Health and Well-being (the 'Center') aimed at building its thought leadership position through a variety of channels, including think tanks. One of Philip's think tanks on Active Aging involved Laurie Orlov, an Industry Analyst from Aging in Place

Technology Watch. The analyst had previously been involved with Philips Lifeline, a personal medical alert emergency response service for seniors and caregivers and thus had established a relationship with Philips.

After the Active Aging think tank, Ms. Orlov provided valuable feedback to Philips about its portfolio, strategy, new products that could be delivered, and how competitors deal with aging along with coverage in her blog. Ms. Orlov was not paid to provide this information nor did she receive any other form of compensation from Philips for providing this information and support. Furthermore, she commented favourably on a piece in the Wall Street Journal and started signing off her reports citing her affiliation with the Center.
Laurie Orlov demonstrated affect-based trust in Philips as a result of the interactions that she had had with them: she took the risk of associating her name with the efforts of a newly launched and not-yet-validated Center.

Affect-based trust is a component of affective commitment, which is a measure of the willingness of parties to stay in relationship with one another without the necessity to do so. Thought leaders ultimately build cognition-based trust to validate their NPOV and affect-based trust to create and maintain longer term relationships.

How to pursue thought leadership strategies?

The decision to provide thought leadership is a strategic choice, but not one that should be exclusively made by the company's Corporate Branding or Corporate Communication Department. Thought leadership is a positioning strategy that needs to be underpinned by the company's corporate strategy, expertise and capabilities. The Thought Leadership Framework™ provides insight into how companies can pursue thought leadership successfully.

Figure 4: The Thought Leadership Framework™

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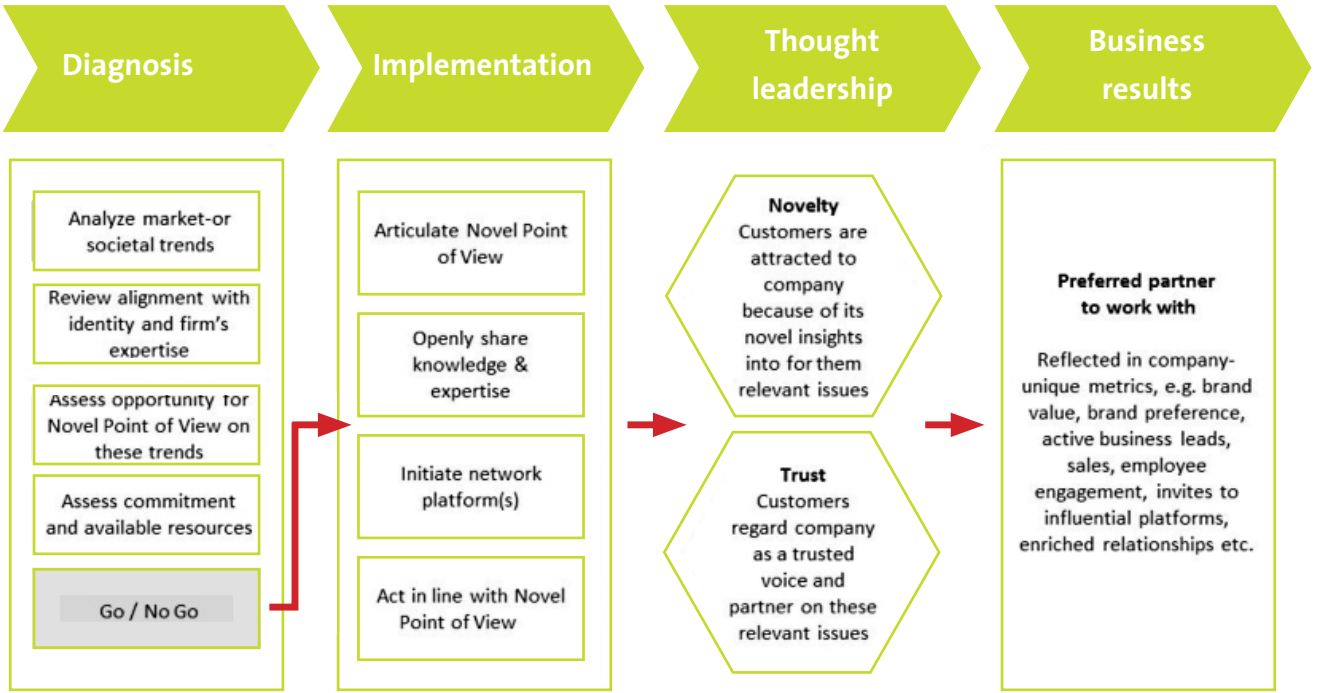
Figure 4: The Thought Leadership Framework ™



You can think of a thought leadership strategy in terms of four phases:

1) Diagnosis
2) Implementation
3) Establishment of thought leadership position
4) Business outcomes.

As shown on the left side of Figure 4, creating thought leadership starts with a diagnosis phase in which companies need to reflect on several important decision drivers of thought leadership before they make a Go/No Go decision. If companies conclude their company has the 'right ingredients' for pursuing thought leadership, the four implementation steps can be followed. In some cases, these steps might be followed linearly, but it is more likely that the implementation steps occur simultaneously *and* reiterate. Once a company's thought leadership strategy is underway, companies can track it against their desired business outcomes (phase 4). Below, we describe each phase of the model and offer case examples from our case-studies to illustrate the different steps. See the appendix for detailed examples of how the different companies worked on each implementation step, as well as the specific outcomes of their thought leadership strategy.

Diagnosis: does your company have thought leadership potential?

The hidden trap in the nowadays fashionable trend of thought leadership

is that companies are taking a 'me too' approach: 'We need to come up with a piece of thought leadership because our competitors are doing it' or 'We publish whitepapers therefore we are thought leaders'.

Before engaging in a thought leadership strategy, aspirant thought leaders need to examine whether their company has the ability and commitment to properly activate thought leadership.

Companies can do so by following the steps in the diagnosis phase of the Thought Leadership Framework™. Four questions are vital:

a) What are the key market and/or societal trends in the near or longer-term future?
b) To what extent (and how) does this align with our identity and expertise?
c) Do we have, or could we develop an important novel point of view on these societal trends that has not (yet) been adopted by our competitors? (*And*, of course, that clearly aligns with our identity and expertise?)
d) Can we show real commitment and allocate sufficient resources to implement this NPOV as part of our strategy?

These four questions need to be answered to reach a go/no go decision on pursuing thought leadership. In Box 3, we illustrate how General Electric and IBM went through this diagnosis phase.

Box 3: Diagnosis phase at GE and IBM

General Electric´s Ecomagination campaign is a clear example of a thought leadership strategy that tracks these four decision drivers. In 2005, the CEO of GE, Jeffrey Immelt, identified the growing importance of three issues: climate change, energy reduction and the 'greening' of companies' activities. While many companies now focus their visions around these issues, Immelt was one of the first in his industry to align these trends with what the people from GE have always been good at: imagination and innovation (Thomas Edison, the inventor of the electric lamp founded GE in 1890). Immelt had the intellectual capacity to articulate a point of view that connected his company's expertise to these societal trends. One way through which Immelt articulated this point of view was by saying that "Green is Green", pointing to the green colour of an American dollar bill. In other words, being "green" (environmentally responsible) does not have to exclude high-growth and profitability. He launched the "Ecomagination" campaign, demonstrating GE's commitment and track record of expertise around its core activities (imagining and developing a broad spectrum of innovative products such as efficient locomotives and jet engines, wind turbines , water purification systems, etc.) while at the same time linking them to the three market/societal issues [16].

IBM's strategy is similarly based on these three decision drivers. According to the case study of the IBM Golden Effie Award [17] , the company created their own insight into how the world was changing by listening and trying to understand what opinion leaders of the world were saying. For example, IBM took note of Friedman's thoughts in his book *Hot, Flat and Crowded* in which he argues that technology is the solution to some of the world's macro-economic problems. They also took note of Fareed Zakaria's ideas in his book *The Post-American World* and the ideas of other opinion formers to understand global changes. They realized that the globalised world was becoming increasingly digitally interconnected and that the possibilities for smarter energy use, water management and other societal issues were endless. Based on their own experience and expertise, they knew that the technology already existed to help make the world smarter. Through 3000 top scientists working in IBM's labs, they had the expertise in-house to build a smarter planet but they needed to 'muster the will to build it'[18] .

GE and IBM are exemplary for thought leadership strategies that have started from a solid diagnosis of how future changes and trends in the external environment fit with who the company is, what it stands for and what it is good at. Companies that rush into a thought leadership strategy and neglect the diagnosis phase run the risk of creating a thought leadership platform that may be irrelevant to the market. The resultant NPOV will more than likely appear hollow and disconnected from the

company's identity and core expertise, and will gain little traction in the market at which it is aimed.

Implementation, step one: articulating a Novel Point of View

The heart of thought leadership is the Novel Point of View. In order to be effective, a company has to articulate its NPOV so that it can be communicated to customers and other stakeholders. With its Smarter Planet campaign, IBM's challenge was to 'get people to rethink the way the world works', to get them to see things in new ways[19]. They did this through an effective articulation of their novel point of view. As the NPOV is meant to challenge and overturn conventional thinking, it must be packaged in a way that will facilitate this. This is called *framing*. Frames are intimately related to schema theory. People use schemas as shortcuts to understand and process new information. But the choice of which schema to use depends on the frame through which the new information is viewed. Since frames are the access point to schemas, thought leaders need to engage in *framing* in order for their NPOV's to successfully challenge the schemas that make up the conventional thinking of their stakeholders or their industry. King and Kuypers asserted that frames 'induce us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways, essentially making some aspects of our multi-dimensional reality more noticeable than other aspects. They operate by making some information

more salient than other information.' [20]
Framing is thus the process of choosing which information should be most salient and then packaging that rhetorical information in a manner that encourages one interpretation over others. Thought leaders want their stakeholders to view the issues in their world through the 'lens' of

the novel point of view; that is, thought leaders want to reframe an issue so their novel insights or solutions are seen by their stakeholders as the key to resolving the issue.
The best way to illustrate framing is to use an example. In Box 4, we illustrate how Dove framed its NPOV in a way that successfully challenged the schemas that made up the conventional thinking in the beauty industry *and* society at large.

Box 4: How Dove articulated its Novel Point of View

In 2003, Unilever's Global Brand Team for Dove was charged with reinvigorating the fifty-year old brand. They commissioned research on the perception of beauty in ten countries and received some startling results. The research showed that only 2% of women described themselves as beautiful and only 12% were satisfied with their physical attractiveness [21]. Women also indicated that they felt pressured by the

beauty industry to do something about their appearance.

The Dove Brand Team used this research to create the NPOV's for the thought leading 'Real Beauty Campaign' which included using average-looking women instead of professional models to promote their products.

However, to get this campaign approved, the team had to frame it in such a way that it challenged the existing schemas of the Unilever Board. They needed the Board to view the sale of personal care products through a different lens: that of the women made to feel less than beautiful by beauty products.

Advertising and PR agency Ogilvy and Mather made a short film with the daughters of senior Unilever executives talking about beauty. This comprised mostly the pre-teen daughters of the Unilever executives talking about their own bodies and the cute noses, freckles, hair and tummies they wanted to do away with or change.

The poignancy of these little girls talking about their wish to be free of some of their most adorable aspects was compelling. It wasn't possible to watch the three-minute DVD without reaching for a tissue. It was a testimony to the hurt and damage unintentionally caused by the beauty industry and the current marketing approach.

The film hinted at how these lovely girls longed to be acceptable, to be pretty, to feel good about themselves. [22]

The Dove Brand Team used words, video, and poignant testimonies to frame the existing practices of beauty promotion in such a way that they were seen as harmful—and not just to anyone, but to the *daughters of*

Unilever executives. It challenged the Board members' existing schemas and conventional thinking on the sale of beauty products, realigning the Board's frames on the topic of beauty and therefore how their products should be marketed.

The result was that the Unilever Board agreed to allow the Dove Brand Team to go against industry convention and use real women in place of professional models.

From that moment, Dove started to articulate its 'real beauty' perspective through various channels and messages (e.g. "No wonder our perception of beauty is biased" and "Beauty Has No Age Limit") to different female consumer groups: teenagers, mothers, daughters and 50+ women.

Some people might argue that Dove's campaign is merely smart branding, that there is no real substance behind the NPOV or that its

initiatives are hypocritical (e.g., some take issue to the fact that Dove is selling creams claiming to reduce cellulite).

Yet, since the campaigns launch in 2004, Dove's actions have reached much further than these initial campaigns. We will describe some of their initiatives in the next implementation steps of our Thought Leadership Framework™.

Implementation step two: sharing knowledge and expertise related to the NPOV

One way in which thought leaders create trust with stakeholders is by openly sharing information about their NPOV. Thought leaders have an 'abundance mentality' [23] that views open information exchange as a hallmark and a requirement of thought leadership. This abundance mentality indicates that thought leaders understand the theoretical mechanisms of social exchange.

The social exchange theory (SET) views interactions between people as 'an exchange of goods, material and non-material' [24] and expects that relationships 'evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments.' [25] Relationships evolve when the interactions follow certain rules of exchange, and the most commonly cited rule of exchange is that of reciprocity. A reciprocal exchange is an interaction where the action of one party leads to a response from the second party without any explicit bargaining or negotiation. If the second party responds, then the first party may respond by offering more of the same good or another good. Parties can exchange a variety of tangible or intangible goods, one of which is *information* and another of which is *trust*. The SET argues that information exchange engenders trust.

For example, when thought leaders freely offer stakeholders valuable

knowledge and expertise, these stakeholders are likely to perceive the thought leader as someone who *has* the relevant expertise, competence or experience. This demonstrates a cognition-based trust.

Moreover, the open sharing of information may also indicate that the organisation has the best interests and welfare of the client at heart, and this perception may create affect-based trust. [26] Trust can be viewed as a tradable good within the SET as well as an outcome of relationship development.

Open sharing of information takes many forms, depending on the type of organization, the industry or sector in which it operates and the types of stakeholders involved. For instance, the cornerstone of Booz & Company's sharing strategy is their Global Innovation 1000 study which examines the R&D spending of the 1,000 largest public companies and explores a different "deep dive" topic on innovation each year. The Global Innovation 1000 study serves as an umbrella for a range of other viewpoints, articles, and speaking engagements on innovation. Booz & Company release the results in October each year to the public via a press release, targeted media outreach and distribution to their client community. In addition, at launch, Booz & Company conducts a series of webinars for its firm's alumni, study participants, and clients.

If a company has a thought leadership platform based on social relevance or corporate social responsibility, they may share more information related to the social issue to prove their deep understanding of the issue and that they are qualified to address it. For instance, Philips commissioned a research company to study people's perceptions of their own health in 25 countries. The reports do not mention one word about Philip's products or their NPOV, but the reports were quickly picked up by the media in those countries and served to bolster Philip's image as a thought-leading company that truly understands health and well-being.

Philips further shares its insights through various communication platforms and channels, including a CNN Webcast on 'Livable Cities', a Philips digital debate on the website of The Economist, online social jams on the topic 'Aging Well', and their 'Insight Series': white papers in which they share the progress of the Think Tank (a multi-disciplinary panel of experts operating within the Philips Center of Health & Well-Being). On top of that, Philips uses the usual forms of social media such as Linked In, Twitter but also Pint interest to share and connect with interested stakeholders.

Dove's type of information sharing is again of a different character. Dove initially did not have much knowledge of young women's biased and often troubled view of beauty. Just like Booz & Company, Dove first inve-

sted time and effort in a global research into the perceptions that women have about their looks. They also started conversations with (young) women and experts on the subject. Gradually, the brand started to share its insights with its target groups (teenagers, mother, fathers and teachers), in order to promote a more positive self-image among teenagers. For instance, Dove offers "manuals" with tips on how parents can approach their daughters grappling with insecurity about their appearance. Dove also writes blogs and articles and helps to develop teaching material for schools with the aim of making teenagers more resistant against society's pressures to follow unrealistic standards of beauty.

Thought leaders openly share information and insights to gain trust from their stakeholders. An additional benefit of sharing information is that these exchanges help develop the relationship between the exchange partners. The relationships between the thought leader and its stakeholders are further enhanced by the interactive networks they build. We discuss these networks in the next section.

Implementation step three: initiate network platform(s)

A third important step in a thought leadership strategy is to create a network platform around the NPOV. Thought leaders naturally create networks in the course of daily business, but *network platforms* focus specifically on the topics addressed by the NPOV. Companies can invite

experts, opinion leaders and key stakeholders to share and advance insights with them and to come up with solutions to the important issues connected to the NPOV. Such experts or opinion leaders can be business analysts, policymakers, trend watchers, customers, consumers or academics. If a company takes the role as a facilitator of such a network, then the company will also take centre stage in the network. Initiating network platforms has three important benefits:

1) It cultivates cognition-based trust,
2) It builds affect-based trust, enriching useful relationships,
3) It creates direct access to extensive pools of knowledge and expertise.

Let's discuss each of these positive outcomes of building network platforms.

Network platforms cultivate cognition-based trust

Social network theories help us to understand why thought leaders are keen to create interactive networks. Network embeddedness refers to the degree to which an organisation (or an individual) is linked to other parties in a social network [27]. For example, organisations are often bound together with competitors, suppliers, clients, politicians, or opinion leaders with each having their own interests, stake, or opinion in the specific market or society in which the network is operating.

The more centrally the organisation is located in the network and the stronger its ties with other members of the network, the stronger its network embeddedness. [28] Thus, taking centre stage in a network platform creates a stronger position in the network. Box 5 shows how Philips did that.

Box 5: How Philips' Center for Health & Well-being networks through think tanks

Philips has given us an insight into some of their processes which enable this sort of networking. They set up the Center for Health and Well-being in September 2009 with the aim of changing Philips' reputation from one of a consumer goods company to that of a health and well-being provider. While consumers are one important stakeholder, this positioning change was aimed more at investors and other resource-holding stakeholders. The need to improve Philips' reputation in this area was exemplified when an influential EU commissioner remarked to a senior Philips executive that he thought the company was in ICT.

In addition to the publication of white papers and position papers, the Center created think tanks around two of their health and well-being themes: Active Aging and Livable Cities. Philips' goal was to gain insight into the key trends and needs of active aging and livable cities as

expressed by these experts, and then use the outputs of these think tanks as inputs to the business and as a platform for further thought leadership development.

The first think tank on Active Aging included eleven participants. As depicted below, these participants came from different disciplines: the CEO of an Academy of Nursing, the Vice President of a European Patient's Forum, two professors of Public Health, an industry analyst in the Aging Industry (Laurie Orlov, see also box 2) and the CEO of the Global Health Council. Ten of the eleven participants had agreed to be regular participants at these think tanks into the future. The think tank now meets four times a year. The think tank experts define their own charter of work for over a two year period while the Philips Center facilitates the process and invites guest speakers to the quarterly meetings.

Prior research has proposed that network embeddedness increases trust for two important reasons. First, stakeholders may perceive the company as more resourceful and more competent and, therefore, more reliable, leading to higher levels of cognition-based trust. Centrally embedded companies have greater access to information and resources as well as

status and power.[29] It is these assets which give the embedded company the competencies and means to act leading to perceptions of credibility and reliability among their stakeholders.

Thought leaders should seek to build cognition-based trust by establishing a central position within a network of stakeholders including their targeted stakeholders as well as interested parties who can validate their expertise.

Booz & Company builds networks around their Innovation 1000 study. The company has a 60 plus year commitment to consulting on innovation. The firm conducts a wide variety of engagements and research on product development process improvement, R&D strategy, engineering effectiveness, and innovation organization for a broad range of clients. Innovation is just one of the eight core functional client service areas it offers but they see The Innovation 1000 study as a critical conversation starter with senior executives which they use to build the long-term relationships with their clients.

Networks also carry a social learning mechanism for those involved, [30] facilitating cognition-based trust. Typically, thought leaders will do everything possible to demonstrate expertise around its NPOV, with third parties more likely to further disseminate their ideas through their networks.

Network platforms build affect-based trust, enriching useful relationships

While the position of the thought leader within a network can impact cognition-based trust, the density of the network can lead to affect-based trust. Network density has been defined as 'the extent of interconnection among the actors of a network—the greater the interconnectedness, the higher the density.' [31]

Prior research has shown that participants in dense networks believe that their network members are trustworthy and have their best interests at heart. [32] This form of trust—affect-based trust—indicates the *willingness* of companies to remain in relationship with each other vs. the need to remain in a relationship. If the *willingness* to remain in relationship weights stronger than the need to remain in a relationship, relationships generally *enrich* (meaning that the relationship generally is more intrinsically *valued*, become more smoothly and often enduring).

We showed in Box 2 how affect-based trust was built between the external analyst Laurie Orlov and Philips in the course of building their network platform around Health and Well-being and how this enriched the relationship. In Box 6 we offer an example of how Dove builds affect-based trust and enriches relationships with consumers, mothers, fathers and different experts.

Box 6: How Dove initiates network platforms and cultivates affect-based trust

Dove has initiated several network platforms. It teamed up with partner organizations like NEDIC (National Eating Disorder Information Centre), ANEB (Anorexia and Bulimia Quebec) and Girl Guides of Canada to help young women building "a positive relationship with beauty and reaching their full potential"[33]. With NEDIC, for instance, Dove has created the Real Me Experience which is a "fun, interactive online program developed to show young women aged 14-17 the ways in which internal and external factors connect to self-esteem and body image"[34]. They also organize a bi-annual conference bringing together parents, educators, health professionals with experts, authors, academia and other opinion leaders to talk and learn about self-esteem and body image. These sessions have little to do with Dove's products; they are focused on young women helping them to develop a positive self-esteem at a young age. Yet, Dove also has a strong online community on Facebook with more than 10 million likes. Here it does combine product promotion (e.g., "Try NEW Dove go fresh Body Mist in Revive ...Get your FREE sample today!") by discussing topics related to self-esteem, a positive self-image, the meaning of beauty. Posts include videos from mothers and daughters talking about what beauty means to them or from the global ambassador for the Dove Self-Esteem Fund, discussing self-care and achieving a positive relation-

ship with beauty. Dove says on its Facebook page that it is committed to help all women realise their personal beauty potential by creating products that deliver real care.... Dove believes that beauty should be for everyone, because when you look and feel your best, you feel better about yourself. From a skeptic viewpoint, this may be seen as cheesy marketing. Yet since the launch of its Facebook page (March 2009), Dove has 10 million followers and people seem to like Dove's human approach. On the Dutch Facebook page for instance, Laura the community manager introduced herself personally (including her picture) asking people whether they liked being part of the Real Women Community. Laura received 73 reactions varying in nature, yet mostly positive (you can find Laura's comments and the reactions on Dove's timeline: July 31 2012 [35]). One reaction is illustrative: "How nice, Dove has a face! You don't see that with many brands on Facebook. It's good to see who you are".

Despite people being skeptical of Dove's initiatives (see step 4; act in line with the NPOV), Dove has found its own way in cultivating affect-based trust and building relationships with like-minded consumers who take interest in Dove's Real Beauty thought theme.

Network platforms offer direct access to extensive pools of knowledge and expertise

While dense network embeddedness can lead to greater trust in the thought leader, this network also provides the thought leader with new insights. Prior research has shown that 'embeddedness fosters the sharing of information and knowledge' and centrality within a network can lead to enhanced flows of information, assets, and status in comparison to competitors.[36]

Thought leaders share information but they also need information in order to sustain their thought leadership positions. They build their NPOV's from their intellectual capital, stakeholder insights, and industry expertise. Multi-dimensional information exchange with stakeholders helps companies to build stakeholder insights which are critical to innovating around their NPOV.

Thought leaders can use information flows from their networks to innovate better than their competitors when they have unique connections. This requires thought leaders to seek connections with stakeholders to which their competitors may not have access. Box 7 illustrates how Philips is seeking these unique network connections.

Box 7: How Philips' extends its relationships through the think tanks

Through figures such as below the Director of the Philips Center of Health & Well Being, Katy Hartley, captures the dynamic of its networking through the Thinks Tanks. It helps Katy to show her directors how the Center's networking initiatives lead to new knowledge and expertise, and to new connections that are valuable in terms of potential business leads or improving their thought leadership position. Let us guide you through this picture:

In 2010, Professor Ilona Kickbusch, who is a leading expert on health topics and member of the Active Aging Think Tank, invited Philips to speak at the World Demographic and Aging Forum (WDA Forum) during a closed session including 19 global opinion leaders on the subject of aging. This first invitation led to follow-up invitations to the WDA Forum in 2011 and 2012, but also to a variety of other network activities. For instance, a United nations expert referred the Philips Center to a researcher in Russia on aging, studying the impact of light (a key expertise of Philips!) on shift workers. The first meeting also led to an invitation to a roundtable of the World Economic Forum (focused on aging and demographics) leading in turn to a speaker request for a Swiss Re (www.swissre.com) conference in London on aging. During the next invitations to the WDA Forum, both the Think Tank of Philips and the World

Economic Forum decided to meet again and share further insights. Besides these network activities, the Philips Center generated contact with Merck on EU Healthy Aging in 2012, gathered the names of interesting stakeholders in the home healthcare (which were fed back to the Philips country organizations) and received further content sharing requests by different parties. In addition to this, the Philips Center decided to broaden these conference debates to the online area by initiating live debates on Linkedin where the Center is connected with more than 4000 members interested in Philips' thought leadership theme Aging.

We all know that networking is not a static process. However, what companies often overlook is that the above-described milestones *during* the networking are concrete and valuable outcomes. By capturing these outcomes in a figure as below the Philips Center continuously evaluates relevant key outcomes of their thought leadership activities.

Implementation step four: act in line with the Novel Point of View

Although we discuss this step last, it is perhaps the most critical one for thought leadership to succeed. Acting on the NPOV in a continuous fashion demonstrates the company's commitment to the NPOV, which is an important precursor for stakeholder trust. As noted earlier in the paper, thought leaders demonstrate expertise around their NPOV to build cognitive trust with stakeholders. Acting in line with the NPOV thus continues this process of trust building. But an even more important rationale behind this step is that it shows that you are emotionally connected to your cause. This is necessary to win stakeholders hearts through affect-based trust.

As we mentioned earlier, thought leadership is a strategic choice: it should not be solely owned by the corporate communication or branding function. Hence, the company's Novel Point of View as chosen in step one of the Thought Leadership Framework™ should be grounded in the company's identity, strategy, core expertise and daily activities. This requires strategic, or organizational alignment.

Strategic alignment comes in many different forms, processes, and styles, depending on the type, size, structure and culture of the organization. One recipe for strategic alignment is hardly there, although numerous books and articles have been written about the topic.

While this booklet is not the place to elaborate on strategic alignment we believe that three things are important for thought leading companies. First, acting in line with the NPOV already starts in the diagnosis phase. We earlier described in box 3 how GE and IBM's thought leadership strategies started by observing what was happening in the world and aligning this to what was already *in* their company. They did not try to re-invent themselves but simply leveraged their heritage, expertise and unique identity to a point where it valuably connected to the challenges that the world is facing today. For IBM this was vividly reified in their motto "Think". IBM's founder, Thomas Watson, once required that every employee put this motto on their desk. In his words: "All of the problems of the world could be settled easily if men were only willing to think. IBM should be a company of thinkers"[37]. "Thought", he said, "has been the father of every advance since time began. 'I didn't think' has cost the world millions of dollars." Nowadays. IBM is a company of 3000+ scientists and other experts who use their knowledge and expertise to find "smart" solutions for the challenges that we are facing today.

Second, real thought leading companies create an internal passion and inspiration around their NPOV. They understand that the NPOV should not be a "far-off notion but real and happening"[38] . They understand that the NPOV is not to be imposed on employees, but should in fact be the *reification* of their thoughts, expertise and personal meaning.

This means that thought leading companies are sensitive to what their employees have to say, what they do (or think they should do!). Thought leading companies make sure they equip themselves with "radars" to look for the innovators, the idea generators, the rebels and to allow them to speak up, to get to know them and to interact with them. Thought leading companies take this seriously and connect the dots by aligning this with strategy, market and societal trends thus creating a shared meaning in the organization. For instance, when Jeffrey Immelt entered as CEO of GE he invited line managers to dialogue sessions where they were asked about their perceptions of future technological changes and the changing environment to conceive ideas that could be developed into concrete projects over the next 15 years. [39] As such, he not only gave them an outlet for expressing their thoughts and ideas but also put them centre stage in making the business case for Ecomagination.
Looking through the lens of their "systemic view" IBM'ers were encouraged to share stories of what they were working on and to provide solutions for a smarter planet such as "using math to cure disease" or "finding new oil in old wells" [40]. As such, IBM ensured that their NPOV connected with its best asset: its people.

Third, acting in line with the NPOV requires setting long and short-term goals and materializing these through 'concrete wins': concrete projects that not only "proof" the substance of the company's NPOV but also

increase pride and further inspire and increase employees' confidence in the NPOV. IBM's projects in major cities like Stockholm, London and Singapore are excellent examples of how a system perspective can be translated into real-world activities and achievements. For instance, in cooperation with the City of Stockholm, IBM built a dynamic traffic toll system in the Swedish capital. This has reduced traffic congestion by 20%, travel times by 25% and harmful emissions by 12%. Noteworthy is that through such projects, IBM actively *engages* with its customers. A project in that regard was in cooperation with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Together with PNNL, IBM designed a demonstration project to help consumers participate in the operation of the power grid (i.e., "smart grid"). The project was designed to demonstrate a number of technologies that would enhance participation between company and consumer in increasing their energy efficiency at home through the use of the smart grid. In that way, consumers were not only shown what was possible with technology and how it connects to IBM's "systemic viewpoint" (energy does not flow one-way from company to consumer but as a loop system where both consumer and company play a role in directing energy flows) but they were also given "a share in the action"[41]

The demonstration project included 112 homes who were given control technology to respond automatically to instant information on their energy consumption. As such they can make conscious choices on when

they use their washing machine or dryer and what temperature they will set the heater on[42]. This project led consumers at the Pacific Northwest witness a 10% reduction in their energy bill.

This example illustrates how IBM connects the dots; IBM's NPOV intersects with societal trends (climate change, rising energy prices) and is grounded in the company's core expertise and continuous innovation. As IBM puts it on its website:

Climate change, rising energy prices and technology advances are all forces that have been reshaping the collective mindset of consumers, turning many from "passive ratepayers" to highly informed, environmentally conscious customers who want a role in using power. And now, with the emergence of the technologies that make smart grids possible, companies can provide their customers with the information and control they need to actually change their behavior patterns and reduce usage and costs that show up on the utility bill.

Above we offered some examples of IBM and GE's efforts to act in line with their NPOV. But how does this work for companies or brands whose NPOV's are difficult to reflect in their products and services? It is hard for a brand like Dove to have its viewpoint on beauty reflected in its soap bars, shower gels or body lotions. Nevertheless, the brand tries to walk

its talk in different ways. It established the Dove Self-Esteem Fund with the objective to make beauty as a source of confidence instead of anxiety. So far, the brand says that it has reached more than 9 million girls and is committed to reaching 15 million girls by 2015 (although the brand is not explicit about what it means with "reach"). Through its partnerships (see box 6), workshops and visits to schools, Dove is "committed to help all women realise their personal beauty potential"[43].

But Dove's Real Beauty programs have also faced controversy; for instance when some of the advertisements of Axe (a brand owned by Dove's mother company Unilever) sharply contradicted with Dove's NPOV. Central in the advertisement were overly beautiful women flocking behind gents who used Axe as a deodorant. These controversies were certainly also heard at the headquarters of Dove's mother company Unilever; particularly when Unilever started harmonizing its numerous brands around its "Vitality" mission in 2004. Could Unilever support both Dove and Axe? Was Unilever hypocritical in supporting Dove and Axe under the "Vitality" mission? [44] According to a blogger on Marketing week, a lesson that campaigns no longer exist in isolation[45].

There was also critique when Dove launched its firming-products campaign, featuring products to reduce cellulite. Psychologist Mary Pipher said: "Any change in the culture of advertising that allows for a broader

definition of beauty and encourages women to be more accepting and comfortable with their natural appearance is a step in the right direction. But embedded within this is a contradiction. They are still saying you have to use this product to be beautiful". [46]

Dove was also accused of taking a "a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing approach". [47] When Dove ran its campaign during the 2006 Super Bowl, Seth Stevenson of Slate Magazine remarks: "...this is the most cynical ad campaign of the last several years. Women, do not be duped! Dove is not selflessly interested in your (or your daughters') well-being. It is a multinational beauty-products company, which hopes to sell expensive cellulite cream to these same little girls just a few years down the road." [48]

Dove decided to embrace the critiques and to see them as a way to further fuel the debate and strengthen their viewpoint.

For instance, Deb Boyda, managing partner at Ogilvy and Mather, Chicago (Dove's PR agency) said in response to critiques: "We are telling them we want to take care of themselves, take care of their beauty. That is very different from sending them the message to look like something they're not." Stacie Bright, a Unilever spokesperson added that the product "is for women of all shapes and sizes, and a lot of women want firming products. It's about feeling good about yourself. And that's about bringing products that matter to women... Let's face it, if you had a firming product, and you had a size 2 woman selling it, what would really

be the contradiction." [49]

While Dove has been praised for questioning conventional thinking about beauty, it remains to be seen if Dove can take its NPOV through in the longer term. This not only depends and whether Dove will be able to alter society's perceptions about beauty on a long- term bases, but also on whether people will perceive Dove's products in harmony with their message.

A less successful thought leadership story: BP

At the end of the 1990's, BP relished the role of thought leader; claiming a position that was in many ways progressive, or ahead of existing logics on the issue of climate change. Over time, however, it became increasingly obvious that BPs stance was decoupled from its practices, leading to severe legitimacy challenges around its position. What happened with BP thought leadership strategy? And what can we learn from it? In Box 8, we summarize BP's story. In this section we offer our interpretation on why BP's thought leadership strategy failed.

Box 8: How BP started as a thought leader but eventually failed

In 1997, BP surprised the energy sector and wider society with a convention-breaking viewpoint on climate change. During this period, the global debate on climate change had just started, particularly after 1995 when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, an organisation tasked with evaluating the risk of climate change by human activity), reported that the climate had changed over the past century and that human influence was a likely cause. Despite this report, however, there was still ambiguity about the nature, causes, and risks of climate change, and the oil industry largely ignored the subject.

How BP articulated its NPOV

BP anticipated that climate change would become a major global issue and decided to take a progressive stance on the issue. It began to articulate a novel point on view on climate change. This started with a much-acclaimed speech by its CEO, Lord Browne at Stanford University in which he announced that BP was going to play its part in tackling climate change. As Lord Browne put it during his speech: "To be absolutely clear - we must now focus on what can and what should be done, not because we can be certain climate change is happening, but because the possibility can't be ignored..." [50] As part of this new positioning, the company rebranded its name from British Petroleum to Beyond Petroleum,

unveiled a green sunburst as their new logo and launched two high-profile campaigns in 2000 and 2002. One of its taglines was for instance: "Solar, natural gas, wind, hydrogen. And oh yes, oil".

What BP did to act in line with its NPOV

To support its claims, it withdrew from the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), a US industry group battling forced reductions in greenhouse gases. The GCC was an industry group that was outspokenly sceptical about climate change. Given that the major companies, including Exxon and Shell, were part of this industry group, BP was perceived as 'leaving the church.' The media described BP's positioning as "a maverick position in the oil industry" and "a break as stunning as that which shook the tobacco industry...when the Ligett Groups acknowledged that smoking causes cancer and heart disease". [51]

BP seemed to put some money where its mouth was. It set various objectives. For instance, it would reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2010 by 10%. It developed its own Emission Trading system, ahead of the European Emission Trading system. It acquired solar, wind and hydrogen factories and its investments in alternative energy were around 2-3% of its capital expenditures [52]. In 2002, BP reached its first greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 10% from 1990 levels, eight years ahead of schedule.

Stakeholders had mixed attitudes toward the company's initiatives. An institutional investor remarked "All else being equal, I would choose to invest in BP rather than Shell". [53] Greenpeace was, however, critical about the, in their opinion, small investments that the company was making in renewable energies.

Events that severely contradicted BP's NPOV

Critiques particularly arose when the company's high profile Beyond Petroleum campaign coincided with Lord Browne's announced interest in exploring for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). As one US investor commented during an annual shareholder meeting: "The Arctic natural refuge is part of America's crown jewels. It's analogous to you drilling in Westminster Abbey". [54]

To make matters worse, the oil giant caused three major environmental crises, including the one in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2005, one of the company's refineries in Texas exploded, killing 15 workers. In 2006, 790 cubic meters of crude oil was spilled from one of BP's pipelines in Prudhoe Bay in Alaska. BP insisted that the two crises were a "series of unrelated events" and that they did not reflect a more basic underlying problem within the organisation. Nevertheless, the CEO Lord Browne stepped down by July 2007, one year earlier than planned. Browne was succeeded by Tony Hayward whose immediate task was to restore the integrity of

BP's safety system, to reduce organisational complexity and strengthen the company's operational and financial performance. Hayward's strategic focus on operational and financial performance elicited critiques that the company had "turned its back on the alternative energy industry" [56].

If these two crises weren't enough, BP faced its most recent disaster in 2010: the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent oil spill. Tony Hayward stepped down and the company disposed $29 billion in assets to fund the clean-up and compensation agreements with the US government. [57] BP's intended thought leadership position all but disappeared – their actions couldn't match their NPOV.

BP failed to act in line with their NPOV

The three crises as described in Box 8 were moments of truth that BP failed to act in line with their NPOV. Acting in line with the NPOV requires strategic alignment [58]. Not only should the NPOV be reflected in the company's core expertise, products or services but also in daily activities and routines. This was an enormous challenge for BP. As one BP employee remarked: "The values are real, but they haven't been aligned with our business practices in the field" [59]. Indeed, BP's NPOV (as packaged in their tagline "Beyond Petroleum") was decoupled from

operational reality. BP had the aspirational goal to become "the leading player in alternative energy...on a global basis" [60]. The reality was that their core expertise resided in the exploration and production of oil and gas, not in the development of alternative energy.

Of course, BP was fully aware of this gap between vision and reality. But they chose to take a leap of faith: they took the bet that alternative energy would become a primary source of energy and they would become a leading player. Says a managing director of BP in a Harvard Business case study: "Our attitude, when confronting new challenges like climate change or e-commerce, is: don't let's intellectualize for too long. Instead, let's experiment, and learn by doing. The central point is that we do not know what we will learn until we start learning." [61]

Taking a leap of faith is important when pursuing thought leadership. Thought leaders set aspirational goals, and these are generally achieved by taking leaps of faith and working hard to reach these goals. Organisations that don't do so have little chance of moving forward or breaking away from old logics. Besides, leaps of faith (linked to an inspiring NPOV in which people believe) are motivating; they carry a 'we're not there yet' notion that inspires and stimulates people toward reaching that aspirational goal.

The question at BP is if the company was ready for taking a leap of faith and embarking on this thought leadership strategy. Not only did the idea of going "Beyond Petroleum" seem unrealistic for a major oil company as BP, the three crises revealed that BP's environmental and safety issues were far below normative standards. In the words of a reporter in Fortune magazine: "when it comes to corporate social responsibility, the first duty of any oil company is to run its oil operations to a high standard...Instead of trying to be the non-oil oil major, BP would be better served by trading in the sunflower ethos for a steely-eyed rigor in running its core business. Because in the end, the best thing it can do for the environment is to be a good oil company, rather to pretend it is something else." [62]

To prevent risky leaps of faith, it is the diagnose phase of the Thought Leadership Framework™ in which companies should ask themselves critical questions:

- *Does it severely contradict operational realities?*
- *How are we going to deal with these contradictions? What's the acceptable time-span in which we are expected to solve these contradictions? What's the acceptable time-span in which we think we can solve these contradictions?*
- *In the meantime, do we have the right arguments in place to make our NPOV debate proof?*

- *Who (which stakeholders) would potentially dislike our NPOV, and why? What's our stance on that?*
- *Who (which stakeholders) will potentially like our stance? How can we encourage them to be our ambassadors?*

BP's high profile campaign may create a boomerang effect

BP's thought leadership campaign was high-profile. One of the benefits of BP's strategy was that the company (at least for a period) was recognized by the media, industry peers and influential (governmental) decision makers as the thought leader on climate change and renewable energies.[63] This enabled BP to influence debate and collective action on climate change in desirable ways. For instance, through its clearly-stated point of view, BP gained strong connections with (non) governmental bodies that supported the company in its activities on climate change and renewable energies. [64] As such, the company was able to pro-actively define and steer the issue on climate change in desirable ways. Pursuing this thought leadership position enabled the organisation, as put by Rindova and Fombrun, to "negotiate and enact their organisational surroundings". [65]

Despite these relationship building benefits, however, BP's high-profile messaging strategy has also been risky in that it had a boomerang effect when the three crises poignantly contrasted with the company's "Beyond Petroleum" claims. While the crises, in and of themselves, negatively

affected stakeholders' perceptions of the company, these negative effects were contrasted sharply against the high standard that the company had publicly set for itself.

This is consistent with psychological research on contrast effects, [66] which argues that existing attitudes of, or expectations about, an object or event can distort future perceptions of the object or event. BP had clearly raised normative expectations about its company in a positive way; hence, the subsequent crises may have been evaluated even more negatively than if the company had not created such positive expectations around the company in the first place.

So BP's high-profile communications was double-edged; it enabled the organisation to build useful stakeholder relationships and influence debate and action on climate change, but it also acted as a sharp contrasting device during the crises, which was devastating to stakeholders' trust in the company's Beyond Petroleum position [67].

It raises the question: How far should a company turn up the volume on its NPOV? Is it wise to voice the company's viewpoint as explicitly and intensively as BP did? Our answer would be: yes, but differently to BP. Thought leadership strategies require courage to openly voice one's viewpoints. Nowadays, organizations are expected to speak out and take

a stand on issues that matter to their clients or to society. They are expected to take a lead in the conversations that matter to their stakeholders. Thought leading organizations take a proactive role in this process; they speak up about their NPOV and join the relevant conversations, time and time again. Most of the companies that we looked at used high-profile campaigns, inspiring leadership speeches and all forms of social media to voice their viewpoint and, by doing so, trigger meaningful conversations. Thought leadership is all about engagement with a particular audience.

What BP should have thought-through better were the consequences of their "Beyond Petroleum" message. As long as their internal operations were contradicting their green message, they would have be better off turning their voice down a notch or, at least, reframing their viewpoint about "conscious and responsible companies" to something less extreme as "Beyond Petroleum". BP was raising the bar too high by saying that the company would go "Beyond Petroleum" and connecting that to a high-profile campaign without having fully considered what this meant with regards to internal re-organizations and change.

Thought leaders should be open and intense in voicing their viewpoints and they often speak in "future tense', but they do so without losing touch with their operational realities and stakeholder expectations. They

internalize their novel viewpoint and stay in touch with what stakeholders, often going well beyond what is expected from them.

Thought leaders attract stakeholders to their cause with their novel viewpoints, but keep them in valued relationships through trust building. We have depicted this in the upper right part of the two-dimensional matrix in Figure 5 summarizing positioning choices from a thought leadership point of view. Companies that internalize their novel viewpoints but don't clearly voice their NPOV are merely the "Silent good Guys". Companies who assertively claim their novel viewpoint without fully working on the trust aspect of thought leadership end up as window dressers in the lower right side of the matrix. BP clearly managed to articulate a compelling NPOV, but failed in generating trust and was eventually seen by outsiders as "window-dressers". Obviously, companies falling in the lower left side of the matrix are far off becoming a thought leader. They do not have any NPOV and should first work on building levels of trust before considering any form of thought leadership.

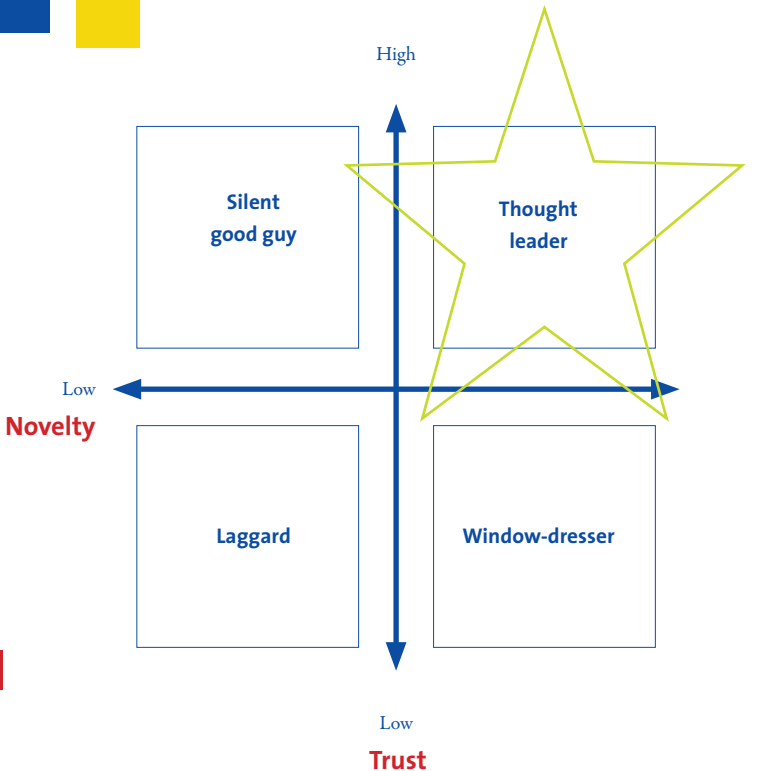


Figure 5: How does your organization position itself on the dimensions Novelty and Trust?

Business outcomes of thought leadership

Thought leadership works like a magnet. By virtue of the thought leader's refreshing and insightful viewpoints customers and other stakeholders are attracted to the organisation. Our case studies show that this form of attraction is reflected in several concrete business outcomes, all of which come down to one key result: customer and stakeholders regard the company as the preferred partner with which to work. Below, we illustrate some of these outcomes and related metrics.

IBM tracks its status of preferred business partners though various metrics. One important metric is *brand preference*. According to the IBM case study of the 2010 Gold Effie Award, the company reported in 2009 an increase in brand preference of 5%-10% [68]. But they also track their brand value. In 2009, they reported an increase in brand value by 20% (from $55.3B in 2008 to $66.6B in 2009) [69].

Another way through which IBM tracks its status of preferred business partner is through business leads that follow from the company's thought leadership strategy. As described by the IBM case study of the 2010 Gold Effie Award, IBM closed 61 'smart' new deals in 2009,

compared to 14 in the same period a year earlier.

GE launched their **Healthymagination** campaign in 2008 and so are only five years into it. Hence, specific outcomes are still somewhat difficult to find. However, in the first two months after the launch of Healthymagination, GE reported $100 million of active leads and projects in progress as noted by Beth Comstock, GE's senior Vice President- Chief Marketing Officer.

Philips is in the early stages of building a thought leadership campaign, but they track annually the impact that the Center for Health & Well-Being has on the *perceptions* that key influencers have about the Philips brand. So they ask influencers to indicate to what extent the Center has changed their perception of Philips across key areas. Philips also has a number of key metrics to track stakeholder engagement, e.g.: number of stakeholders reached in their think tank work and number of stakeholders reached via their think tank (the extended network part of their think tank, showing that they created new relationships). They also do the more usual tracking such as the number of articles in media across various countries, number of website visitors on the Center website, and the number of followers on social media (e.g., Linked In members in their "Creating, Healthy Livable Cities" group and Twitter followers).

Because GE's **Ecomagination** viewpoint is so directly related to designing and delivering innovative products, the resulting revenue is a logical metric to track their success. In 2011, GE introduced 34 new Ecomagination products and solutions and from 2005 – 2012 earned $85 billion in revenue on Ecomagination products (see Table 2). On top of that, GE expects that its sales from Ecomagination products will grow twice as fast as the rest of the company.

Dove figures are difficult to acquire as its parent company Unilever does not share much data on the impact of the Real Beauty Campaign. Yet, according to an article on marketingprofs.com, Dove boosted their sales after they started the first chapter of their Real Beauty Campaign in 2004 (much-acclaimed for its viral Evolution video [70]). Sales rose in the US by 600%, within two months of the launch. Within six months of the campaign launch, Dove's sales rose by 700% in Europe. The brand revenue has grown by more than €1 billion since the campaign started.[71] Admittedly, these sales figures are for a large part also the result of clever product marketing, but the convention-breaking message of the campaign ('our perception of beauty is biased') triggered consumers' sympathy for the brand, inducing women to prefer the Dove products above competitive brands.

Although less tangible, one of the more interesting outcomes of thought

leadership is the engagement it provides companies with their stakeholders. Celi and Millar [72] wrote that thought leadership is 'intellectual engagement.' Indeed, thought leadership enables a company to build intellectual, conversational relations with inquisitive stakeholders.

Booz & Company says its Global Innovation 1000 study is a conversation starter with senior executives and as a result of the study they have been invited to join not only client advisory boards but also innovation-related associations such as the global Product Development and Management Association.
They have various metrics with which they track their status as a preferred conversation partner. They compare their *speaking engagement* targets against the number of speaking engagements in prior years. In addition, they *track top tier global media coverage* (e.g., their study is cited each year in nearly 200 publications around the globe, spanning 27 countries), *social media mentions*, and *traffic* to booz.com and their website strategy-business.com[73].

According to Booz & Company, the top three outcomes of their thought leadership campaign are:

1) Top Tier media coverage globally, client interest and engagements
2) Building a strong brand as a firm with proven expertise in innovation (from ideation to process to execution and everything in between)
3) Being ranked as one of the top firms in innovation consulting.

While our case studies offer less insight into the internal outcomes of thought leadership, we should not overlook the benefits thought leadership has within organisations.

In her Master of Science thesis, Stefanie De Witte[74](2011) shows that if employees perceive their company as a thought leader, it gives them the feeling of self-distinctiveness, resulting in higher levels of rigor, dedication and absorption with respect to their job'. In similar ways, Craig Badings describes on his blog thoughtleadershipstrategy.net how thought leadership is a very powerful way for motivating employees and attracting new talent. "It can play a big role in your retention strategy and act as a great talent magnet. These days talent scans the sector for the innovators and lead thinkers in the industry – they want to work at these organisations because the perception is this is where the action happens and where the leaders in their industry congregate." Craig argues that companies who take their employees on "the thought leadership journey" will reap benefits in different ways. To cite a few from his blog:

- It gives employees something to talk about over and above the products or services you sell empowering them to have conversations externally they previously wouldn't have.
- It delivers a deep sense of pride about where they work, what they do and the difference the organisation makes to its client's lives.

- It makes them feel part of a now, happening brand – an industry trendsetter.
- The positivity it generates rubs off on their enjoyment of being at work and the way they talk about their company to friends, family and new business prospects.
- Through a process of osmosis, thought leadership campaigns that run over a period of years (e.g. Booz & Company's innovation studies) results in the employees becoming extremely well-versed on the topic.

Although **BP** failed to convincingly act in line with its NPOV, parts of its thought leadership work did seem to stir internal enthusiasm and pride. According to a Harvard Business case study[75], one of BP's thought leadership related goals was to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 10% by 2010. This aspirational goal released creativity among employees and increased their commitment to their jobs. As one spokesperson put it, "Do not underestimate the power of pre-emptive, aspirational target-setting... The role of leadership is to invent actions that naturally have the consequence of transforming people's thinking (p. 13 of the Harvard Business case study)". Indeed, as we defined at the beginning of this e-book: thought leadership is the action of reframing the way people think about their key issues. BP did exactly that, arousing and engaging employees by setting new targets related to the company's thought leadership strategy.

Conclusion

Thought leadership is a pro-active response to the changes we face in business across the social, environmental, political and economic landscape. It is a new way for a company to set itself apart from the rest of the field, in a world where demand for novel insights, knowledge and expertise is the currency to build trust and engagement.

Organisations that pursue thought leadership in a half-hearted, non-committed fashion are wasting their time, money and other resources. Only those prepared to fully commit themselves to a thought leadership strategy will have the ability to respond to changing market needs and distinguish themselves from the competition.

While thought leadership may be seen as an aspect of corporate branding, it should be part of a company's corporate strategy. The companies who are using it successfully are sophisticated in its use, its application and its measurement. They are not investing in it because it is a nice-to-have, but because it delivers business results beyond those achieved through traditional forms of branding.

Those who pay lip service to it will fail. Those who use the term glibly to deliver content that doesn't offer a NPOV or that is not empirically based will merely be another content provider. But those who are prepared to spend the time, money and resources to get it right, will truly differentiate their company from the competition, engage with and deliver great value to their stakeholders, become recognized as the trusted expert in that field and reap the rewards over time. We believe that the Thought Leadership Framework™ is a helpful guide for managers who embark on a thought leadership campaign and wish to build a sustainable and relevant positioning in their sector.

APPENDIX

Study approach: desk-based case-study research

In this paper, we aimed to define and explain thought leadership as practiced by corporations. To do this, we combined theoretical insights with desk research-based case studies of six corporations seeking to establish thought leadership positions in their industries or markets. The companies studied in this paper are Philips, Dove (Unilever), General Electric, Booz & Company, IBM and BP.

The choice of these six companies was based on purposeful sampling. That is, we selected companies that seemed (based on our initial reading of the management literature about thought leadership) to be focused on thought leadership. The selection of cases was not chosen beforehand, but accumulated during our research process, until we felt we had reached a saturation point in developing our framework. For instance, we started with Philips, simply because we became acquainted with the director of its thought leadership division: 'The Centre for Health and Well Being.' The company was willing to share their experiences with us. We started to compare their thought leadership intentions and activities with other companies such as Booz & Company (whom we observed were practicing some interesting thought leadership activities) and BP.

One of the two authors had studied BP in previous research and realized how BP had pursued similar thought leadership activities as observed in our study, but had to certain extents failed in its thought leadership objectives. Hence, BP was a valuable contrasting case in our sample. Furthermore, Dove was chosen because we observed that the underlying key message of its 'Real Beauty campaign' reflected the 'convention-breaking' theme that we found coming back in the literature. Hence, we became interested in how they pursued this idea.

Over the course of our research process, colleagues and experts advised us to have a look at IBM's and GE's recent campaigns, as their features seemed to align with the key themes of thought leadership that we had developed so far. Hence, the two cases were an opportunity to corroborate and further fine-tune our findings.

Data collection

As summarized in Table 7, we used (1) archival materials (books, reports, articles and websites on the relatively new concept of thought leadership), (2) company materials (through the companies' websites or handed to us by the companies themselves), and (3) online media articles, describing the thought leadership programs of each company.

Archival materials were used to get a first understanding of how thought leadership is described in the managerial literature. Most of the archival materials were focused on thought leadership in general; not specifically focused on a particular company. They consisted of reports, articles, books and websites on thought leadership.

Company materials were mostly retrieved from the company's websites. They included annual reports, separate websites about the thought leadership program, press releases, speeches and advertisements. In addition, we received company materials from sources at a few of the companies that we were able to talk with (Philips, BP, Booz&Co and Unilever).

We browsed through (online) media selectively (mainly through the use of Google and Factiva). That is, if certain observed aspects in our research became a recurring theme, we started searching for additional articles on these key themes.

Table 7 Most useful data sources

	Archival Material	Company Materials	(Online) media articles
General	Some key sources were: • The Economist Intelligence Unit (2007) – Megatrends in B2B marketing. • Brand Stand (2009) Seven steps to thought leadership. Australia: BookPal. • www.bloomgroup.com/content/reengineering-white-paper • www.thoughtleadershipstrategy.net • www.marketingsavant.com	Not applicable	Not applicable
IBM	• Case study 2010 Gold Effie Winner. 'Let's Build a Smarter Planet' <www.effie.org/ winners/showcase/2010/4625>	• www.ibm.com	• Makower, J. (2008). A closer look at IBM's 'Smarter Planet' Campaign. < www.businessgreen.com/bg/analysis/1802857/a-closer-look-ibms-smarter-planet-campaign>
GE	No useful sources found	• www.ge.com • www.healthymagination.com	• Clifford, Stephanie (2010). For G.E., a Human Face on its Role in Health Care. < www.nytimes.com/2010/02/12/business/media/12adco.html>
Booz & Company	No useful sources found	• www.booz.com • www.strategy-business.com • Interview with Barry Jaruzelski, Senior Partner at Booz & Company.	• The Economist (2010). 'Why expensive consultancy firms are giving away more research.' <www.economist.com/node/16994439?story_id=16994439>
Philips	• Unpublished case study by the Corporate Communication Centre, Rotterdam School of Management. 2009 'Transformation of Philips from high-volume electronics to a global leader in health and well-being.'	www.philips.com www.philips-thecenter.org Presentation 'The Philips Center for Health and Well-being & thought leadership' by Katy Harley,	• http://www.economist.com/debate/sponsor/192/Philips • http://advertisementfeature.cnn.com/philips/livable_cities/index.html • PR News wire. 'New Philips Study:

	• Van Riel & Berens (2009). Creating Strategic Aligned Behavior among Employees at Philips (working paper), Rotterdam School of Management. • Van Riel (2009). Leveraging the power of total stakeholder support. New York: Routledge, forthcoming in 2012.	Director the Philips Center for Health and Well-being, presented at RSM, March 16, 2011. Hartley, K. 2010. Update on Philip's Center's Think Tanks. Internal report; <http://www.lifelinesys.com/content/home>. Various informal conversations with the Director of the Philips Center for Health and Well-being	Americans Not as Optimistic or Realistic About Their Health and Well-Being as They Claim to be.' January 12, 2010.
Dove (Unilever)	• Case study 2008 Silver Effie Winner. 'ProAge' <www.effie.org/winners/showcase/2008/2862>	• www.dove.com • Presentation 'Thought Leadership Playing to Win' by Unilever spokesperson during an executive lecture at the Rotterdam School of Management in 2011.	• Canada.com (2007) Ready for their Close-Up. <www.canada.com/national/nationalpost/story.html?id=e2e95710-bd0a-46c5-8208-725975e9ec88> • Jeffers, M. (2005). Behind Dove's 'Real Beauty'. Adweek 46 (35): 34-35 • http://www.marketingprofs.com/7/dove-pro-age-primetime-women-barletta.asp • http://www.thoughtleadershipstrategy.net/2009/08/thought-leadership-case-study-dove
BP	• Ibarra, H. and Hunter, M. (2007). 'Vivienne Cox at BP Alternative Energy (A)'. Case no. 10/2007-5473, Wharley End, European Case Clearing House. • Purkayastha, D. (2007). 'Putting Profits Before Safety?' Case no. 707-014-1, London, European Case Clearing House. • Reinhardt, F. and Richman, E. (2001). 'Global Climate Change and BP Amoco'. Case no. 9-700-106, Boston, Harvard Business School Publishing.	• www.bp.com • 2 interviews; one with the (global) communication managers and one with the director of BP Benelux. • Browne, J. (1997). Where BP stands on global climate change. Address at Stanford University. < www.bp.com/articlelisting.do?categoryId=98&contentId=2008132).	• Frey, D (2002). How green is BP? < www.nytimes.com/2002/12/08/magazine/08BP.html?ex=1040449849&ei=1&en=9a1746ddc7b40b54> • Catan, T. and Harvey, F. (2005). BP earmarks Dollars 8bn for green investment. Financial times, November 29:22 • Corzine, R. (2000). Oil's giants vow to punch their weights. Financial times, August 8:17

Table 1 Summary of IBM's thought leadership strategy

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Act in line with NPOV	Outcomes
IBM	2008	All of the information that exists in the world from non-IT sources (i.e. water meters, electricity meters, etc.) can be digitally collected, monitored, and analyzed to make a more efficient, 'smarter planet.' [2] IBM challenges the conventional thinking on how the world's issues should be viewed; offering a systems point of view that can solve these problems through the collection, monitoring, and analysis of systems data.	• www.ibm.com • Smarter Cities Technology center opened in Dublin to develop and share ideas around smarter cities (i.e. cities with less congestion, lower energy use, less waste generation, and less water use—without sacrificing quality of life) • Speech from the CEO entitled 'A Smarter Planet: The Next Leadership Agenda' • Opinion-advertisement campaign • Print/TV/billboard/ online advertisements about the Smarter Planet • For each of 25 areas of focus, IBM presents their ideas, 3rd party research, conversations, case studies, and solutions	• Blog 'asmarterplanet.com' intended to provide thought-provoking information and a place to discuss that information • IBM hosts discussion communities around particular IBM topics on its website • Numerous client/ expert interactions with IBM in order to deliver the case studies and research—300 recent partnerships noted in the 2009 Annual report.	• IBM publishes updates of what they're doing around this theme, including case studies, on their website • IBM spent $50 billion on acquisitions necessary to prepare the company for 'a seismic shift in business' • IBM has been shown to be working with: o Stockholm- to reduce congestion o CenterPoint Energy in Houston Texas – implement a 'self-healing' grid to reduce power outages o Norway – implement total transparency into the supply chain for meat	According to the IBM Golden Effie Award: • Clients' preference for IBM increased with 5%-10% • Brand value increased by 20% (%11.3 bln dollars) • Stock price increased by 64%

2) http://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/?cm_re=masthead-_-solutions-_-asmarterplanet, accessed March 10, 2011.

Table 2 Summary of GE's thought leadership strategy for Ecomagination

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Acting in line	Outcomes
GE Ecomagination	2005	GE believes that the idea that we should pick between strong economic performance and great environmental performance is a false choice. Through the company's core expertise and strong history in innovation, it can design, develop and deliver both. As a result, GE will grow faster and win. The company believes that this viewpoint is not just any vision, but a value proposition on which they can deliver	• Ecomagination.com • Ecomagination annual report and citizenreport • Twitter, Facebook • Speaking opportunities such as on the 2011 World Innovation Forum • Youtube – GE's channel, featuring all kinds of videos linked to Ecomagination products, ideas, insights etc.	• In 2010, GE started the ecomagination Challenge. A web-based platform to crowdsource ideas for a smarter electric grid. In 10 weeks, GE received nearly 4,000 ideas and created a community of 74,000 people across 150 countries.[3] The Challenge was more than a "contest"— GE sees it as business and helps commercializing some of the winning ideas. • Engaging with interested publics through twitter and Facebook, by inviting them to join debates on sustainability/green themes	• 34 new ecomagination products and solutions were introduced in 2011. • To qualify for the ecomagination portfolio, offerings must significantly and measurably improve customers' operating performance or value proposition and environmental performance. This is verified by an independent party.	• From 2005 – 2010, GE earned $85 billion in revenue on ecomagination products • Ecomagination sales are expected to grow two times faster than the rest of the company • 22 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions • 30 percent reduction in water use • $130 million in energy efficiency savings

3) http://files.gecompany.com/ecomagination/progress/GE_ecomagination_2010AnnualReport.pdf

Table 3 Summary of Booz & Company's thought leadership strategy

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Acting in line	Outcomes
Booz & Company	2005	After a 60 year commitment to consulting on innovation, starting with a seminal article in 1950 in the Harvard Business Review which defined the concept of the Product Life Cycle for the first time, Booz & Company decides it needs a conversation starter with senior executives and something that can serve as an umbrella for a wide range of intellectual capital on various aspects of innovation. It launches the Global Innovation 1000 study, which investigates the relationship between how much companies invest in R &D and their overall financial performance. Each year since then the research's core conclusion is that there is no statistically significant correlation between the two.	• Releases and interviews in top tier business media worldwide • Social media • Publish material on booz.com and strategy-business.com	• Engage with clients and prospective clients through multiple touch formats including multimedia, social media and media-friendly formats • Speaking engagements for key Booz & Company personnel at conferences and events globally. • Face to face meetings with clients	• Company takes a long view and builds something that is sustainable and focused on quality • Time, money and resources spent on building a smart and strong team • They begin with a set of "candidate" subject focus areas. These are discussed among a diverse set of partners and principals from various practice groups and debated for relevance and interest among clients as well as overall feasibility. Potential topics are discussed with clients and they are invited to participate in the research via interviews on the "deep dive" topic.	• White Space tracks intellectual capital efforts of the consulting industry and rated Booz & Company #1 in Thought Leadership for two consecutive years • The study is cited each year in nearly 200 publications around the globe, spanning 27 countries • Tracking interest, leads and sales generated directly or indirectly from Innovation 1000 • Invitations to write bylined or guest articles in other publications • Invited to join advisory boards of clients and innovation-related associations (e.g. PDMA)

Table 4 Summary of Philips' thought leadership strategy

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Acting in line	Outcomes
Philips	2009	By 2015, Philips wants to be a global leader in health and well-being, becoming the preferred brand in the majority of their chosen markets [4] and a leading expert in solving Active Aging and Livable Cities. Philips is challenging the conventional thinking of aging as a sedate process concerned with ill-health as well as the conception of cities as unsafe and unhealthy.	• Philips.com and philips-thecenter.org • Blogs on latest developments and plans at the Center • Advertising (especially online) to support Philips' Health and Well-Being strategy • Release of data from research on perceptions of health in 25 countries around the world (Philips Index for Health & Well-being) • TV interviews about the Index research that has been released • Release of Global Index report on health and well-being • Global media event on sleep using index data • White papers, including collaborating with Wall Street Journal on healthy workspaces white paper	• Blogs • Think tank events • Speaking events • TV interviews • Stakeholder events • E-mail communication • Linked-In • Twitter • Urban planning action team • EU Open Days • Livable Cities judging panel • On corporate advisory board for the Global City Indicators Facility	• Publishes think tank reports and articles online at The Philips Center • Launches new products that can be positioned as part of Health & Well-being • Partial divestment of TV unit in line with Health & Well-being focus • Some controversy: shaveeverywhere.com	• Acquisition of 29 businesses since 2007 in line with Vision 2010, mostly in healthcare and lighting • Limited outcomes as Philips began actively pursuing thought leadership in September 2009

4) http://www.philips.com/about/company/missionandvisionvaluesandstrategy/index.page, accessed March 12, 2011.

Table 5 Summary of Dove's thought leadership strategy

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Act in line with NPOV	Outcomes
Dove	2004	• Every woman is beautiful (and we'll prove it!) • Dove challenges the conventional thinking—or stereotype—of beauty used by personal care manufacturers and offers a wider definition of beauty in its place.	• dovecampaignforrealbeauty.com along with local country/language sites • Release of two global study reports on beauty • Distinctive advertising (print, billboard, and TV) using real women • Viral videos on YouTube, such as Evolution • Blogs about beauty-related information • Facebook – for latest updates • Articles on the beauty stereotype • TV appearances and press coverage driven by people talking about the campaign	• Blogs • Interactive website activities • Mom and daughter workshops/events • Sleepover events • Facebook community • Dove Self-Esteem Fund • Partnered with various NGO's and/or charities(depending on country) such as B-eat in the UK (charity supporting people affected by eating disorders) to support the Dove Self-Esteem Fund with activities tailored to the specific country	• Continues to use real women in advertising campaigns in selected sectors • Continues to fund and support Dove Self-Esteem Fund in a variety of countries • Reached 9 million girls so far . Committed to reaching 15 million girls by 2015. • Some controversy: o Axe advertising not in line with Dove ideals o Dove's firming products were seen by critics as being in contradiction with their NPOV. o Unilever also sells Fair and Lovely, a skin-whitening product	Within two months of the launch, sales rose in the US by 600%; while within six months of the campaign launch, Dove's sales rose by 700% in Europe The brand is estimated to have had an 11% increase in revenues in Q1 2005 as well as double-digit growth in Q2 2005 Sales have grown by more than $1.5 billion in revenue within 5 years after the campaign's launch

5) http://www.dove.us/Social-Mission/Your-Purchase-Counts/default.aspx accessed February 4, 2013

Table 6 Summary of BP's thought leadership strategy

Company		NPOV	Share	Interact	Act in line with NPOV	Outcomes
BP	1997	In 1997, when the issue of climate change was still uncertain and controversial, BP announced that—despite the uncertainty—it would take climate change as one of its key responsibilities and would help to solve it. BP broke through the oil industry's conventional thinking about climate change. To articulate their NPOV, BP changed its name to 'Beyond Petroleum' and introduced the green & yellow helios as its symbol in 2000.	• bp.com • Speeches – BP launched its thought leadership campaign in a speech by Lord Browne in 1997 • YouTube – BP videos • Flickr – BP photos • RSS feeds for up-to-the-minute BP news • Reports on the website such as BP Statistical Review of World Energy • Tools on the website to calculate energy consumption and find petrol stations	• Various presentations by senior executives to various stakeholders such as universities, government bodies, etc., including a series of 3 presentations by Lord Browne in 1997 to launch BP's NPOV • Intensive collaborations with the UK and EU government to help setting up the European Greenhouse Gas Trading system. Also open talks with NGO's like Greenpeace	• Withdrew from the Global Climate Coalition in 1997 • Went ahead of the Kyoto Protocol and set itself the target of reducing emissions 10% by 2010 from a 1990 baseline. In 2002, BP met its target. • Acquired companies in alternative energies but divested parts of their alternative energy business in 2009. • Invests an average of 4% of its capital investments in green technologies; seen by opponents (e.g., NGOs) as a tiny proportion compared with its investments in oil exploration and productions (70% of its capital investments).	• A 2007 Landor Associates survey of consumers in the US showed that 21% of them thought BP was greenest followed by Shell (15%), Chevron (13%) • BP said that its brand awareness went from 4% to 67% from 2000 to 2007 as a result of the campaign • Since 2010, BP's intended thought leadership position has been harmed by the accumulation of three crises, signaling to the external environment that the company's NPOV was not aligned with core activities.

6) The Global Climate Coalition was an industry group that was outspokenly skeptical about climate change. Given that the major companies, including Exxon and Shell, were part of this industry group, BP was perceived as 'leaving the church.'

7) http://www.environmentalleader.com/2008/01/15/beyond-petroleum-pays-off-for-bp/; http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising/bp-coloring-public-opinion-91662 accessed July 17, 2012.

Notes

1) C. Badings, Brand Stand - Seven Steps to Thought Leadership, (Australia, Sunnybank South: BookPal, 2008); S. Crainer and D. Dearlove, "Branding Heavyweights", Management Review, 88/9 (1999): 22-28; A. Morgan, Eating the Big Fish: How Challenger Brands Can Compete Against Brand Leaders, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2009); D.V. Heuvel, <http://www.mpdailyfix.com/thought-leadership-alone-is-not-enough.>, accessed February 17, 2010.

2) L. Celi and B. Miller, op cit.: 5; S. Crainer and D. Dearlove, op. cit.: 27.

3) C. Badings. op cit.: 12; B. Manasco, "Want to Build Trust? Want to be a Market Leader? Be a Thought Leader", (December 2009), <http://www.brittonmanasco.com/thought_leadership_strategy>, accessed October 20, 2010; D.V. Heuvel, <http://www.marketingsavant.com/2009/01/the-thought-leadership-marketing-equation>, accessed February 17, 2010.

4) Albert & Whetten have introduced the concept organizational identity, arguing that it is made up of those attributes of an organization that members perceive as central, enduring and distinctive. In our view, companies aiming for thought leadership should define their central, enduring and distinctive identity characteristics and use these as a logical springboard in creating their NPOV. S. Albert and D.A. Whetten D. A., "Organizational identity", Research in Organizational Behavior, 7 (1985): 263-95; D.V. Heuvel, "Do You Have The 'Four As' To Be a Thought Leader?", <http://www.mpdailyfix.com/do-you-have-the-four-as-to-be-a-thought-leader>, accessed March 24, 2010.

5) S. Fiske and S. Taylor Social Cognition (Singapore: McGraw-Hill, 1991): 98.

6) R. Reger, L. Gustafson, S. Demarie, and J. Mullane, "Reframing the organization: Why implementing total quality is easier said than done", The Academy of Management Review, 19/3 (1999):565-584.

7) M.T. Bardo, R.L. Donohew, and N.G. Harrington, "Psychobiology of novelty seeking and drug seeking behavior", Behavioural Brain Research, 7 (1996):23-43.

8) D.E. Berlyne, Conflict, arousal and curiosity (London: McGraw-Hill, 1960).

9) T.J. Brown and P.A. Dacin, "The Company and the Product: Corporate Associations and Consumer Product Responses", Journal of Marketing, 61/1 (January 1997): 70; See also: T.J. Brown, P.A. Dacin, M.G. Pratt, & D.A. Whetten, "Identity, intended image, construed image and reputation: an interdisciplinary framework and suggested terminology", Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 34/2 (Spring 2006): 99-106.

10) http://s3.amazonaws.com/effie_assets/2010/4625/2010_4625_pdf_1.pdf

11) www.ge.com/innovation/healthymagination>, accessed March 14, 2011.

12) R.C. Mayer, J.H. Davis, and F.D. Schoorman, "An integrative model of organizational trust", Academy of Management, 20/3 (July 1995): 712.

13) D.J. McAllister, "Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations", Academy of Management Journal, 38/1

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Biographies

Mignon van Halderen (PhD)
is the owner of Leading Thoughts, a company that offers consulting, research and executive teaching on thought leadership and strategic positioning. Mignon supports organizations with making choices on their thought leadership strategy, finding or clarifying their novel point of view, aligning the novel point of view with the company's goals and actions and engaging employees and stakeholders with the novel point of view.

Through her 10 years' experience at the Corporate Communication Centre (bit.ly/IUnfjX) of the Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University), Mignon has become skilled in combining research, consulting and (executive) teaching. She is adept at taking an evidence-based approach to business problems and can help organizations with conducting simple but effective studies to gain the necessary

stakeholder intelligence for successfully building a thought leadership strategy (internal identity analysis, stakeholder research, company's thought leadership position benchmarked against competitors).

Mignon teaches a 3-day Master Class for Corporate Communication Managers on thought leadership at the Rotterdam School of Management and facilitates in-company thought leadership training.

Kym Kettler-Paddock

studied Chemical Engineering at Michigan State University before post-graduate studies in Chemical Engineering at the University of Minnesota. She started work in 1993 for a Unilever subsidiary called Uniqema in Chicago, USA, where she worked in technical service and product management, interacting with every level of the company as well as with suppliers and customers. In 1998, Kym moved with Uniqema to The

Netherlands where she then worked for six years in European and global product marketing in the business-to-business chemical sector before taking over as the head of corporate communications.

Kym's entry into corporate communications was a baptism of fire with cost reduction projects, redundancies, and the continued introduction of a new strategy and company culture all within the first year. Kym enjoyed mastering all of the challenges that came her way, as well as managing her team and watching them develop in to a true company asset.

Craig Badings

has 22 years experience advising major corporations and senior executives in Australia and South Africa, providing counsel on thought leadership, issues and crisis management, media relations and profile management

across the financial and professional services, biotech, property, FMCG, telecoms, IT and government sectors.

He is the author of *Brand Stand*: *seven steps to thought leadership,* the blog post www.thoughtleadershipstrategy.net and the book #THOUGHT LEADERSHIP Tweet: 140 Prompts for Designing and Executing an Effective Thought Leadership Campaign.

Craig is passionate about thought leadership. His focus is on how companies or individuals arrive at a robust thought leadership position and then how best to leverage their thought leadership and other related content to maximum effective through a multiplicity of channels including social media.

Craig is a director at Cannings Corporate Communications in Sydney. Cannings is part of the ASX listed STW Group.

He holds a BA and Higher Diploma in Education from the University of Cape Town, a Business Management Diploma from Damelin College and a Public Relations diploma.

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