ThinkWise:

The Power of Storytelling in Thought Leadership



iResearch®
research to relationships

Contents

Part 1: The power of storytelling 03

Storytelling in thought leadership 04

- Weaving storytelling into thought leadership 05
- Light bulb moments 06
- Thought Society 06
- Stories engage our emotions 07
- Storytelling and emotional connection 08

Part 2: The fundamentals of storytelling 09

- Brandpie's CEO Purpose Report 2022 10
- Defining your audience 11
- Crafting your message 11

Part 3: How to do storytelling 12

- Finding the story angle 13
- Bringing your story to life – emotional conncetion 14
- Bringing your story to life – descriptive language 15
- Bringing your story to life – inspiring your audience 16
- Bringing your story to life – converting your audience 17
- Bringing your story to life – creating urgency 18

Storytelling data 19

Measuring the success of your storytelling 20

Introducing TROI™ powered by iResearch Services 21

Visualising your storytelling 22

Change the narrative 23

About iResearch Services 24

Part 1:

The power of storytelling

"Storytelling is a powerful tool that can be used to connect with people on an emotional level and leave a lasting impression. When used effectively in thought leadership, storytelling can help to build relationships, establish credibility, and position you as a thought leader in your field.

In today's noisy world, it's more important than ever to stand out from the crowd. Storytelling can help you do just that by giving your thought leadership content a human touch. When people can relate to your story, they're more likely to remember it and be influenced by it.

So if you're looking to create thought leadership content that really resonates with your audience, don't forget the power of storytelling."

– Yogesh Shah, CEO at iResearch Services

In 2017, Berwin Leighton Paisner (now Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner), a global corporate law firm, created a campaign to demonstrate the risks of ignoring regulatory advice – and how they had the expertise to help businesses manage risk.

Drawing on the stylistics of Ocean 11 and based on a true story, the video opens with Senior Manager Lucy saying, "I should have seen it coming."

It describes how Lucy was promoted after her bank bought out 'Borrowers Building Society'. Lucy didn't do due diligence or enact an updated risk assessment, focusing solely on the potential for growth.

Because of the large amount of sub-quality loans on its books, the bank was over-exposed. External auditors investigated. Lucy was fined £135k and banned from holding a similar role in the future.

The video then outlines how Lucy should have updated a risk assessment, responded to the internal audit, and recorded her actions in detail.

The video ends with: "Proactively manage risks – don't become a cautionary tale."

That is the power of storytelling.

"There are two things everyone in business does every day. We all sell something...and we tell stories...We tell stories because, as cognitive psychology is beginning to discover, stories are how we as human beings organize our minds"

– Maxwell & Dickman, 2007

Storytelling is fundamental to human communication. People have told stories to understand and influence the world around them.

Approaching storytelling in your thought leadership can feel very daunting. We associate stories with great literature, not whitepapers or blogs. But we all tell stories every day. So it's about using that ability to communicate your thought leadership.

That's what this guide is about. We want to show how stories can, and are, integrated into thought leadership – and how they work to engage audiences, define purpose, and deliver ROI.

The campaign generated **515% more leads** than the original target and received widespread press attention.

Tip: Try not to be overwhelmed by the task of integrating stories into your content. We tell stories every day, from what happened on your way to the office to how your colleague solved a challenging sales problem.



Storytelling in thought leadership

Thought leadership means:

- Understanding the **challenges** your sector or industry has. They might include issues around technology, recruitment, policy and governance, organisational culture, and leadership.
- Walking a mile in your audience's shoes – showing you can take on their **feels** and respond to their **needs**.
- See the **bigger picture**. Being able to understand the issues facing your industry, and how they can be seen in a bigger context. Examples include the global challenges of the pandemic, political instability, or economic trends like the future of work.
- Being **authentic** and **purpose-driven**. We do thought leadership not just to deliver ROI but also to make meaningful change and impact.
- Because you've done the hard work of thinking, researching, and developing an understanding of current and likely future trends, you can be **agile** as an organisation.

Tip: Are you thinking about being a thought leader or writing thought leadership content? Start by thinking about your sector's problems and your company's USP in tackling them.

Weaving storytelling into thought leadership

Stories that companies tell might relate to their **brand history**, a new **product**, a **problem** they or their sector are trying to solve, **information** their customers always want to know year-on-year, or even **broader social issues**.

They tell stories to **show solutions to problems**, generate **insights** about the world that are meaningful to their audience, or **motivate** their employees and clients.

Everyone can recognise the value of those insights, told in a way that engages the reader.

Thought leadership most often uses data to generate new insights. You tell stories around that **data**. When analysing your data, what does it show about the issue you are exploring. How can you create a narrative around that data? What imaginative techniques can you use to bring it alive?

Case studies can also usefully deploy storytelling techniques – how do you resolve your clients' problems?

You can also use storytelling to construct **future scenarios** (if you implement a solution).

The storytelling part of thought leadership:

- Builds trust by establishing an emotional connection with your audience.
- Demonstrates your expertise by creating a great narrative around your data and experience.
- Solidifies your company's presence in the market by creating truly memorable stories.





Stand-out tips:

Know the goals

Creating a thought leadership strategy that boosts your ROI starts with a specific commercial objective. Are you going towards new market penetration, or trying to improve your market share already? In other words, what would success look like for the content strategy you are developing?

47% of those who digest thought leadership said it leads their decision-making process.

Source: Leading Lights: harnessing thought leadership superpowers for commercial and cultural success, iResearch Services 2022

Put your audience at the center

Remember: It's not about what you want; it's about what your audience wants. Unless your goals overlap with what your leads need at every stage of the funnel, everything you publish will be completely off base. Returning monthly visitors, branded mentions and engaged comments are all great metrics to start with.

55% of business decision-makers admitted to having increased the business they do with another brand or organization just because of the kind of thought leadership content which they were putting out.

Source: Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study, 2019

Light bulb moments



A core part of creating thought leadership is **ideation**. Ideation means creatively generating ideas and concepts – those 'light bulb moments'. It is meaningful at all stages of thought leadership creation, including:

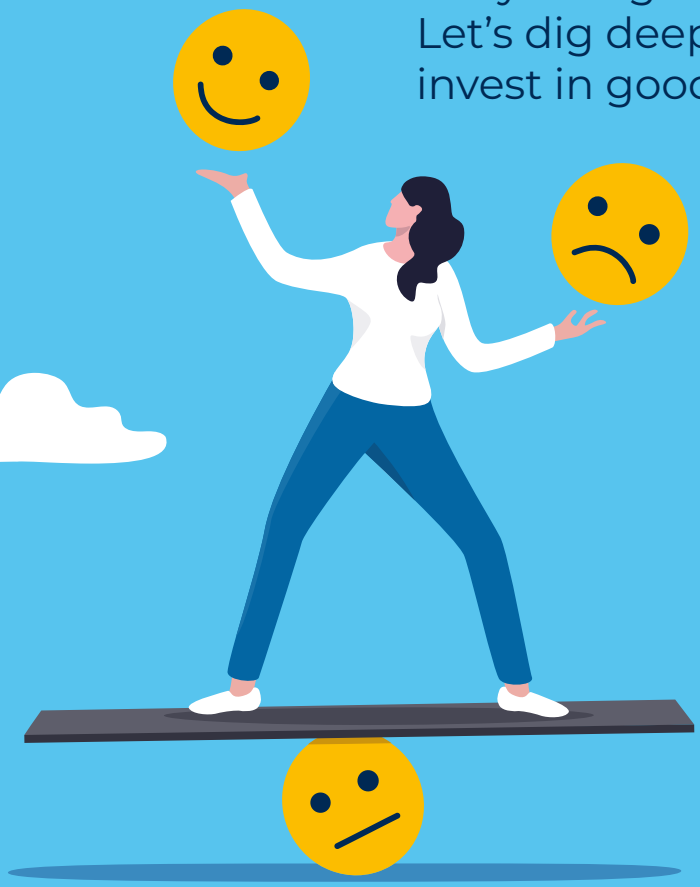
- Ideas about what to research.
- Creating a strategy for conducting the research.
- Evolving engaging concepts and insights from a deep connection to your research.
- Challenging assumptions and asking questions.
- Developing these concepts and insights into deliverables, such as articles, reports, webinars and other events, podcasts, videos, strategy, etc.
- Problem-solving.
- Using the insights and feedback to explore further thought leadership work.
- Creating narratives that bring ideas to the world in a fresh way.

Thought Society™

Powered by iResearch Services, Thought Society™ is an innovation hub that delivers fresh perspectives for original thought leadership programmes. A people-focused initiative, it brings together the brightest minds in thought leadership to collaborate and share knowledge and ideas that help businesses communicate their expertise in new and exciting ways.

Stories engage our emotions

We began this ThinkWise guide by talking about the connection between people and stories. We also talked briefly about how storytelling is intrinsic to thought leadership. Let's dig deeper into why brands should invest in good storytelling.



It's all about **emotional connection**.

Companies who connect emotionally with their customers create lasting relationships and are more trusted. Analysts have estimated that customers who are more emotionally connected are anywhere between 30% and 100% more valuable.

Research published in the Harvard Business Review found that fully connected customers are 52% more valuable than those who are just satisfied. Moreover, they found that focusing on turning satisfied customers into connected ones can have three times more return than focusing on turning dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones.

The researchers examined the emotional motivators behind greater emotional connection with a brand, and found that each company or sector was different. One example is a credit card designed to create an emotional connection with Millennials. Use among this group increased by 70%, and new account growth rose by 40%. The emotional motivators towards connection for this group were about protecting the environment and to 'be the person I want to be'.

Research has shown that when our emotions are engaged, we are more likely to remember an experience, a speech, or a piece of writing.

Each brand needs to explore their customers' emotional drivers, and create new strategies around them.

Tip: Have you done your research? What emotional motivators do your customers have? Whether you are B2C or B2B, find out your client's emotional buttons, and organise communications around them.

Storytelling and emotional connection

Storytelling is one strategy to increase a sense of emotional connection. Stories:

- Connect with our emotions by tapping into empathy, and they impact decision-making and how memorable experiences are.
- Personalise brands. We remember and connect to people, not logos.
- Create a sense of belonging. We relate to others through stories.
- Humanise brands by introducing values and purposes that we all share.
- Create drama by tapping into everyday lives rather than processes.
- Demonstrate what you do.

So when creating thought leadership, how can you integrate stories? And what kind of stories are most likely to connect to your audience?

We know that sustainability resonates greatly among populations, particularly younger generations. Creating a thought leadership programme around brand sustainability, describing the projects and the people who enact them – and telling it with drama and suspense – can connect in a way standard ESG reporting cannot.

Tip 1: Try to express what you feel, believe in and value, in your communication, and see its impact.

Tip 2: Make your storytelling strategy hold a collective purpose by involving customers in some way – 'we can all do something'. This is particularly meaningful post-pandemic and with growing awareness of global warming.

Patagonia – Freedom through fabric

Ethical clothing brand Patagonia is a thought leader in storytelling around its products and purpose-driven activism. It tells stories about its climate activism and the artisans who produce some of its lines.

For example, it launched a handwoven khadi collection made by 117 artisans in the Indian state of Gujarat, with checks in place to ensure the artisans were not exploited.

And in their content, they tell the story of how the new line came about, contextualising it within Gandhi's celebration of the spinning wheel, drawing on who they worked with, how they ensured that the clothes were being produced ethically, and how the women said used their earnings:

"Artisans usually prioritize new housing, education and healthcare. Some have also been able to buy smartphones, motorcycles for transport and pay for their own weddings. And since workers are paid by output versus set hours, they're afforded crucial flexibility to care for their children and homes on their own schedules."

It is a story that connects emotionally with people who care for people and the planet.

And this storytelling is aligned with Patagonia's values, which is to operate commercially within **planetary boundaries** while meeting **human needs**.

Part 2:

The fundamentals of storytelling

All stories have structures, and storytellers have different ways of describing that structure.

Stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The **beginning** is where the character is introduced, or the scene is set. The **middle** sets up the drama or plot – overcoming the problem of challenge. The **end** is the resolution.

Practically all corporate stories or presentations can be presented within adaptations of this framework – the **context**, the **problem or dilemma**, and the **answer**.

Some writers refer to the 'power of three' to describe this structure.

Richard Maxwell and Robert Dickman, in The Elements of Persuasion, expand this to say that each story should be written with five things in mind:

- The **passion** we use to tell a story – remember that thought leadership is guided by meaning and purpose, not just 'marketing with emotion'.
- A **hero** through which we see the story unfold and their struggles and challenges. In thought leadership, the hero can be an individual, a company, a sector, a project or a goal. But mostly, brands personalise the hero. It's the story of their CEO, their brand representative (think Michael Jordan and Nike, Richard Brandon and Virgin, Dale Vince and Ecotricity, or Oprah Winfrey – a brand in herself).
- An **antagonist** or obstacle the hero has to overcome. What is the challenge? Who is the enemy (or competitor)? There would be no story, no movement forward, without opposition.
- A moment of **awareness or learning** that allows the hero to succeed.
- The **transformation** of the hero, the project, the sector or the society that results.

Stories are more effective when the character is relatable, the drama is high, the narrative is straightforward, and it is emotionally driven. It must also be unexpected and new ('WOW stories'). In thought leadership, we reveal new insights and ideas, not ones already two to three years old.

Tip 1: What would it look like if you were to style your organisation or project as a story? Think about how stories work for the challenges you are engaging within your organisation or professional life.

Tip 2: Think about CEOs or company backstories you've heard or read about, and see how they fit into the story structure described above. What created the drama, and what was most interesting about the story?



Brandpie's CEO Purpose Report 2022

We worked with Brandpie to answer some critical questions about purpose-driven leadership post-pandemic. The pandemic changed the world in many ways, altering our values and how we wanted to work and lead into the future.

The story ends with a call to action – the need for adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership means shaping the future for the sector and society, being collaborative, listening, experimenting, and being stakeholder-orientated.

"In an age where belief leads to action, and action eclipses belief, we are seeing CEOs intensify their purpose practices."

– Dave Allen, Brandpie founder



Tip: The structure can be changed and creatively reworked once you've got on top of the simple narrative structure of person, dilemma, challenge and resolution. It's more important to know that when you are communicating information, you are telling a story, and it needs to work as a narrative.

Defining your audience

All thought leadership begins with defining your audience. Who is your audience, what do they want to know, and what kinds of stories will connect with them?

To find out about your audience, you need data, which may come from surveys, in-depth interviews, feedback from sales teams, and so on.

You need to know who they are, their problems, what they want to know or find solutions to, what you want them to do, and their emotional buttons. What do you and your customers have in common – values, goals, needs and desires? What is their culture – laid-back or formal, modern or traditional? What are their misconceptions or pinch points?

How do they see your company?

Tip: One marketer's tool is to create personas around market segments. These personas tell a story about your typical client. The more imagination and detail you put into it, the better the reward.

Instead of filling in a standardised template to create your persona, try creating a dynamic character story around your typical customer archetypes. It can help your employees communicate better with clients, and create better content.

Crafting your message

Your message will be one that your audience will find relatable. Whatever a company is selling will be the solution to their problem or need.

To craft a message that customers will notice, you have to write in a way that speaks to your audience.

Key points are:

- **What does your audience know?** Write in a way they will understand. For example, if you are writing for a tech audience, you need to know technical words and acronyms and show you are on top of trends. That's different to writing about tech for a primarily business audience.
- **Be solution-focused**. As a thought leader, you want to be the solution to their problem. Make sure that what you do as a thought leader problem-solves for your sector.
- **Address their fears and misconceptions**. For example, having a measured take on AI – neither dismissive nor too fearful – can make you stand out from the crowd.
- **Relate positively to their emotional buttons and triggers**. Communicate in a way that draws them in emotionally while avoiding triggers that would be upsetting. For example, showing purpose in ERG would enhance your emotional relationship with your audience, while being clumsy on DEI can alienate them.
- **Call to action**. Be clear about what you want your audience to do. This could be anything from clicking on a report or area of your website to listing clear recommendations and action points at the end of a report.

Tip: When creating recommendations and action points, don't include too many – nothing exhausts people more than a list. And identify the most important one, highlighting it as the 'one thing they could do to make a difference'.



Part 3:
How to do storytelling

The plot

The factors that'll drive your plot are:

- **Your goal**: What are you trying to achieve? Is it behavioural change, brand recognition (you want your audience to know you better), to educate, to solve a problem, or to demonstrate prowess in your field?
- **The challenge**: What's the problem you are trying to overcome?
- **The central character**: They might be relatable: someone struggling with a problem in their workplace or in the world (think about Greta Thunberg, and why she is so compelling). Or it could be a 'larger than life' figure: someone at the top of their field, or even a cartoon character.

In our Leading Lights series, we created superhero characters to create a more memorable and fun way of saying what thought leadership is, what it delivers, and how to do it.

- **The resolution**: What's the endpoint? Does the story's hero solve a problem or fail but learn critical lessons?

Let's look at a hypothetical case study of a B2B SaaS EdTech start-up. The case study would always look at the problem a client was trying to overcome, how they struggled to solve it but failed, and how your software helped them solve it. The resolution might be better workplace efficiencies, saving on administration, better student retention, etc. Case studies are better told through the stories of those involved, using quotes and experiences to drive the drama.

Tip: The best way of doing corporate storytelling is to read around and look at how companies have approached telling their stories. And read a lot of fiction. As entrepreneur Eric Stromberg recently said, "Read non-fiction to raise your floor. Read fiction to raise your ceiling."



Finding the story angle

Crafting a compelling story also means finding the right angle.

The angle comes from what is newsworthy, what your sector is talking about right now or what the big issues are.

Think about the **five Ws** – the who, what, when, where, and why?

Who is driving the story? Who is impacted?

What has happened, and what does it mean? Or what did you find in your research?

Where is the story set? What's the context?

When did it happen? What's the timeframe?

Why did it happen? Why should readers care? Why is this story or report worth writing?

The 'why' is how you find your story hook. For example, if you are writing a report on financial services, what is the sector talking about right now, and what do you have to say that will meaningfully add to those discussions?

Finding the right angle is not easy – a journalist will study and work for years to hone this craft! But asking 'why' will help shape your ideation and your narrative.

Headlines and titles

Lastly, it's all about finding a good headline and title. It needs to directly say what the report or article is about, to reflect the hook, and interesting enough to absorb the attention of the reader - without being clickbait.

The Media Insight Project estimated that six out of 10 people will read nothing more than the headline. It needs to be right.

Bringing your story to life – emotional connection

We've recently witnessed how people can get caught up in fake news and conspiracies; no matter how many facts we show them, they stick to their beliefs. That's emotions at work.

And if people are connected to their feelings, they are more likely to do something.

So how can you (ethically) draw on the power of emotions in your storytelling?

- **Show** emotion – reveal, for example, why you really care about sustainability or thought leadership.
- Use emotional **language** – it sounds obvious, but say 'feel' rather than 'think'. Use language like care, hope, love, commitment, and happiness.
- Focus on the **motivation** – why, not how, you decided to do a piece of research or set up your company.
- Appeal to **loyalty**, **community**, and **belonging**. These are values that unite most people. "We all want to..."
- Use **personal experience**. How you tried to resolve a problem and did/did not succeed.
- Acknowledge so-called **negative emotions** – for example, fear or anger – as a way of releasing feelings of shame in your audience and showing we are united by common feelings, even upsetting ones. But try not to **actively provoke** negative emotions in your audience.



Tip: Be authentic. Convey emotion, but keep it real. Most people will notice if you aren't what you say you are (or they will eventually). This might seem controversial, but if a major oil company said they care about the environment, would we believe them?

Probably not. The company would have to go a long way to change its actions before that statement could be convincing.

Bringing your story to life – descriptive language

Descriptive language conjures up an image in the reader's mind. It makes your writing more exciting and understandable.

Descriptive language plays upon our senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste.

It evokes past experiences, such as a place we visited or something we ate that was special. Using imagery can help people feel connected to your story.

Words themselves can be sensually evocative – consider the words 'stark' (when describing a trend, but it evokes a stripped-down environment), 'appetite' for (conveys a sense of being driven, hungry), or 'broken' (often used to talk about UK politics, but evokes an image of shattered objects).

Figurative language – similes, metaphors and hyperbole – can also be powerful. One example of metaphor is Dove's 2022 campaign challenging how bodies were represented in the entertainment industry, with the phrase 'Bodies are not punchlines or plots.' Metaphors like this translate complex ideas into easier-to-understand representations.

Simile – where you compare one thing to another..."The problem was as stiff and unyielding as a plastic bus seat."

Metaphor – where you apply a word or phrase that isn't literal to describe something...."We expect to reap the rewards of our innovations in a year or so."

Hyperbole – exaggerating reality to make a point..."This new software is revolutionary."

The same technique can also be used to describe statistics and numbers, for example, this striking example by urbanist Vishaan Chakrabarti:

"Consider some simple math about people and land. If all of Earth's six billion people were to live at the density we do here in the five boroughs of New York City, all of humanity would occupy less than one-half of one per cent of the earth's land mass. This equates to about 8% of the land mass of the continental US — roughly the size of Texas."

Tip 1: Keep it simple. Only use words or techniques if they are meaningful, and consider whether a direct approach might be more effective.

Tip 2: Avoid clichés. Ever spent too long on LinkedIn and seen the word 'passionate' too often? ("I'm passionate about sales"... do we really buy that?). A strong word like passion must have a believable motive ("I'm passionate about finding tech solutions to plastic pollution.").



Bringing your story to life – inspiring your audience

Thought leadership is almost always purpose-driven. Unlike content marketing, which is about ensuring you have the right hooks and keywords to drive reach, thought leadership needs to be meaningful – whether it's about problem-solving, addressing a broader socio-economic problem impacting your sector or doing 'big thinking' around issues like sustainability or DEI.

Yes, you want your audience to convert to customers, but more broadly, thought leadership is about making change and solving problems.

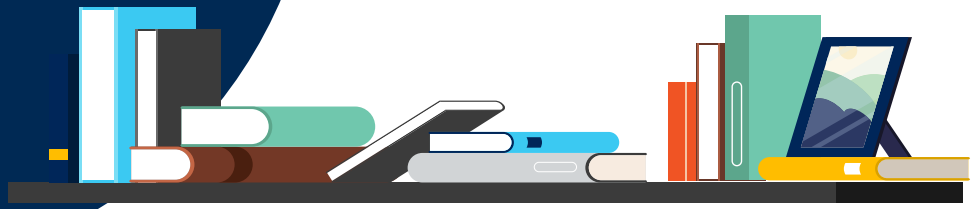
Ultimately...

- if your cause is authentic and you believe in it,
- if you have written for your audience, not to them,
- if you've tried to inject imagination into your writing without using clichés,
- If you are telling stories that connect emotionally...

...the content you produce will inspire your audience.



Tip: The best thought leadership will always be driven by authentic purpose. A company can't simply decide to do thought leadership because it's a great tactic (even though it is!). To be convincing, thought leadership must be aligned with values, vision, and purpose – to work on a problem of urgency for the sector or the wider community.



Bringing your story to life – converting your audience

But you want more than this. You want your audience to take some kind of **action**.

Having a ‘call to action’ is a key tool of marketing. Everything you do in your thought leadership must lead up to the action point.

So consider what action you want your audience to take. Do you want them to:

- Read the whole report you have produced?
- Motivate your sector to take specific steps on sustainability?
- Click on a product page?
- Develop new thinking inspired by your insights?
- See you as a thought leader?

To get them to take action, they must see a real **benefit** in acting and a **risk** in not acting.

Some writers refer to this as the pleasure-pain principle. Rather than focusing on needs, write about their pain points (“I’m simply overwhelmed by too many admin tasks, meaning I can’t focus on my strategic role. It’s really stressful”). The pleasure can be your solution, which really helps them solve their pain points.

Tip: It is important to be principled in using emotions in your content. Fear is a powerful emotion; using it poorly will backfire (causing you pain). Always be honest about the actual benefits of your offer, and don’t overplay the risks if they don’t take it up. Keep it real.



Bringing your story to life – creating urgency

Most businesses don't want their audience to take action at some undefined point in the future. People's lives are busy, and we mostly forget things we've read or seen. The point is we want them to do it now.

In storytelling, the way to inspire a sense of urgency is through a good drama. When people are emotionally hooked on the highs and lows of a story, they are more likely to act with a sense of urgency.

"Forests are under threat. They are vital to counter global warming. We need our partners to switch to sustainable sources now."

Notice the use of the word 'now'. Imperative words like this are everywhere in calls to action: 'Sign up...', 'Log in...', 'Show me...', 'Download...'. Also, be decisive: 'I want to (start my thought leadership campaign)', or 'Call us today to get our brochure' rather than 'Give us a call...'.



Storytelling data

84% of digesters of thought leadership in our current research felt that thought leadership can be an effective way of combating misinformation as part of a broader strategy.

Storytelling isn't just about creating a narrative; it's about drama – a big story that's compelling enough for people to be moved.

Data is one way you can up the stakes.

Consider this sentence from the previous page: "Forests are under threat. They are vital to counter global warming. We need our partners to switch to sustainable sources now."

Now let's see it with data.

"Forests are under threat. We are losing forests at a rate of 28 million hectares a year.

"Forests are carbon sinks that are vital to counter global warming. We need our partners to switch to sustainable sources now."

Statistics show the seriousness of the problem, increasing a sense of urgency. People may not know what hectares are, but it sounds like (and is) a large number.

Telling stories about data

Thought leadership most often involves a significant study of some kind. It uses primary data: quantitative (surveys and statistics) and qualitative (one-to-one, in-depth interviews).

Data analysts will look at any data and try to find significant patterns and numbers, and tell stories around them.

Take an example from our Leading Lights study on thought leadership impact.

What story do we tell around this finding? The total of 84% is a stand-out figure and tells us that in a world full of fake news and misinformation, people are looking for content they can trust. If you want content that cuts through fake news, being research-led is an excellent way to do it.

You could go further in your storytelling approach and use an illustration of how this finding can be made more alive by personalizing the story, as demonstrated in the example below:

'CEO Kate Mahony is typical of leaders today. Looking for insights to help her solve the problems of her sector and offer insights to create a resilient strategy for change, she's confronted by a world of fake news. It creates a real headache for her and the company she leads. In our research, 84% of people who read thought leadership said it was an effective way to combat misinformation. Is thought leadership the solution to Kate's problems?'

Tip 1: Avoid complex stats – round up numbers (nearly 800 rather than 767) and use one in five rather than 20%. Most people have not been trained to interpret statistics (although your audience may be exceptionally number-literate). Choose findings that stand out, are easy to explain, and always include a simple interpretation of the data that people can read even if they struggle with numbers.

Tip 2: Find ways to personalise data, which will make your findings sticky.

Tip 3: Visualise your data – we are hard-wired to see and understand visual stimuli. Create stand-out images, charts and diagrams to tell stories around numbers and ideas (see page 19).

A total of 74% of companies say they have no strategy for tracking the sales impact of thought leadership

(Edelman/LinkedIn 2020)

Measuring the success of your storytelling

Measuring impact is a thorny problem for most organisations, and only a few agree they are certain about how to do it.

But measurement is essential because you need to know how your content lands.

"What works best is a mixed metric, tiered approach to get a balance of various measures – reach, awareness, engagement, authority, relevance, trust and influence."

– Andrew Newby, Director of Global Operations, iResearch Services.

Potential measurement tools include:

- Website traffic, social media follows, shares, branded queries, and media mentions.
- Downloads of long-form thought leadership.
- Qualitative data from engagements – what are your customers saying or requesting?
- Speaking engagements or media requests triggered by your thought leadership.
- Length of time spent reading content.
- Reviews and feedback.



Introducing the iResearch Services Model: TROI™ metrics

Welcome to TROI™, the world's first interactive online tool that allows your organization to measure your position as a Thought Leader within your chosen industry.

TROI™ is an innovative Thought Leadership Assessment tool, perfected and backed by iResearch Services' decades of experience, industry thought leaders, science, media intelligence tools and survey insights.



First and third-party metrics, collated through data science

Expert qualitative and quantitative assessment from our team of researchers

Competitive analysis benchmarking key compititors and market

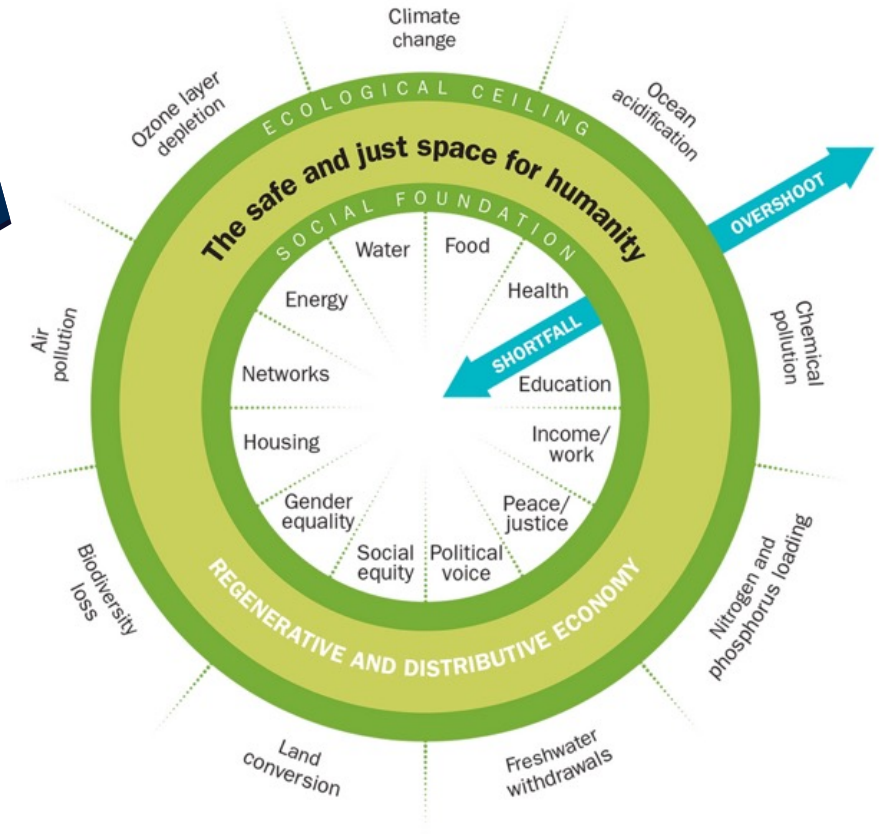
An independent, customized audience survey



Visualise your storytelling

Visualisation has a vital role to play in getting engagement for your storytelling. Visual images go straight into our long-term memory, whereas words enter our short-term memory, and much is lost.

Economist Kate Raworth explored how visual images shape the entire discipline of economics and, therefore, how we think of the world. In response, she created this compelling and impactful visual of doughnut economics (and also set up a thought leadership programme – Doughnut Economics Action Lab – to align organisations with ESG):



Visual tools for storytelling include:

- Infographics – one-page data visualisations with short insights).
- Data visualisation – charts, diagrams and images. They need to be simple and visually compelling. See, for example, this visual showing the most popular websites from 1993 to 2022.
- Interactive graphics – clients click on parts of the graphic, leading to more information.
- Short videos – telling a story around a part of your thought leadership, brand stories, sales, etc.
- Virtual and Augmented Reality Videos.
- Founder/leader talks (think TED Talks).
- Scrolly telling – online stories activated by scrolling the page. See this example from The New York Times.



Change the narrative

"Storytelling is our obligation to the next generation. If all we are doing is marketing, we are doing a disservice, and not only to our profession, but to our children, and their children. Give something of meaning to your audience by inspiring, engaging, and educating them with story. Stop marketing. Start storytelling."

– Laura Holloway, Founder & Chief of The Storyteller Agency.

Think of it this way. The world of business is changing. We are more inspired by values and purpose, and that's important because companies are central to acting on ESG, DEI and all the other issues that take our world forward.

Stories will help leaders deliver that transition by conveying emotions, energy and inspiration to encourage people to cooperate and act.

Storytelling brings a fundamentally new meaning to marketing – a bit less about selling whatever the cost and more about purpose. And that is thought leadership's 'sweet spot'.

To find out how we can bring your thought leadership to life, get in touch at thoughtleadership@iresearchservices.com

ThinkWise:

The Power of Storytelling in Thought Leadership



About iResearch Services

We are a global B2B thought leadership and marketing agency that supercharges growth through the fusion of data-driven insight, expert guidance and strategic activation. Research is at the heart of everything we do, which is why our evidence-based research knowledge empowers global brands across industry sectors to connect with their audiences, to build digital trust and, in return, be respected as thought leaders.

We provide enterprise companies and their executives with unparalleled, innovative insights, helping them to generate demand, build influence, and enhance credibility. Our proprietary research methodologies and innovative technologies ensure our insights are independent, objective, and bespoke. Our all-encompassing service, from research to thought leadership and lead generation, has made us the partner of choice for the world's biggest brands.

Book a strategy call: **https://iresearch.services/ThinkWise**
Email **thoughtsociety@iresearchservices.com**
Website: **www.iresearchservices.com**





Stay Connected

iResearch®
research to relationships