

Take A Leading Role In Your Community With Thought Leadership Marketing

Thought Leadership Marketing is a concept that can dramatically alter the perception of chiropractors in their communities, but in order to maximize the potential benefits, you must first understand exactly what it is. Then you can consider if you want to make the effort to experience its benefits.

Cultural authority

Many chiropractic leaders talk about the need for individuals to have more “cultural authority.” They see cultural authority as reaching a level of credibility whereby people accept the information you provide as being trustworthy. And I agree.

But what is often left out of that discourse is the question of “*how do I gain cultural authority, if I don’t already have it?*” If cultural authority is the brand or position that you are striving for, then thought leadership marketing is the strategy that will get you there.

Thought leadership marketing

Thought leadership marketing can be defined as the effort to create a leadership position or leadership brand by providing a steady, ongoing stream of valuable information and education in order to build or enhance one’s credibility and the ability to influence.

Thought leadership marketing has been a part of marketing for some 60 years. But technology has greatly expanded the potential applications of this concept. The Internet and its easy-to-use applications have made it possible for any one of you to benefit from this strategic approach to building your practice.

The benefits of increased credibility or cultural authority can be measured in a number of ways that affect your practice: enhanced patient loyalty, increased referrals, more new patients, better patient

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acceptance, improved word of mouth, enhanced reputation, and more people looking to you for your guidance, advice, and care without you seeking them.

Two primary aspects

There are two main parts to thought leadership marketing. The first is the message. Carefully consider what area of expertise you are trying to claim. Is it something you truly believe in and practice? Is it something you are confident staking a claim in? Are you passionate about this? Do you have enough information, evidence, support, or experience to provide a steady stream of information? Do you understand the arguments and counter points you’re likely to encounter? Can you develop enough key messages that are interesting, appealing, engaging, and truly informative? It’s the value of these key messages that will reinforce your claim to be a “thought leader” on your chosen subject.

The second aspect covers the applications you use to ensure your audience has the opportunity to hear your message as often as possible. Frequency of message is a critical aspect of establishing and reinforcing the perception that you are a thought leader. The more times a person can hear your ideas and rationale behind your positions, the easier it is for them to consider your position in relation to their lives. And this is where technology has

made it possible for anyone, no matter how successful you may currently be, to create a thought leadership marketing effort.

It is the synergy of two elements: the strategic, holistic educational messaging aspect, combined with the applied tactical system that brings out the real power of Thought Leadership Marketing.

The former without the latter is like talking to a mirror. You may have a great message, but who’s listening? The latter, a system, without the former, the message, is like spinning your wheels, lots of effort, without any results.

Different levels

There are different levels and different states of thought leadership marketing. No matter your current status as a thought leader, you can develop a higher level. As long as you’re realistic about where you currently stand, what you want to achieve, and you are willing to be patient in getting there — you can enhance your thought leadership position in your community.

In fact, thought leadership marketing, as I see it, is contrary to the old-thinking that says leaders must be great public speakers and highly motivational. I know for a fact that you don’t have to be a great speaker, funny, or even motivational to be a highly effective thought leader. It isn’t necessary to have inspirational influencing skills; if you can explain your message, support it, and have the conviction of your beliefs, you can do it.

A starting point

Ideally, your thought leadership marketing efforts come from a strategic perspective; meaning that you have a clear message to share. But if not, don’t despair, because it

is also possible to take a more tactical approach and build your desired brand positioning based on your thought leadership marketing efforts.

Now let's take a look at how you can utilize these concepts in helping to build your clinic. The starting point is to decide on your messaging theme. That is, what is the message platform from which all of your individual messages derive? The key to your theme is to make it as broad as possible.

For example, a great thought leadership position for chiropractors would be "a more natural approach to healthier living." This is a position that chiropractors should consider. One that chiropractic has had a leadership position in, but most chiropractors haven't staked out or claimed.

First, it is a position that resounds with today's consumers who are buying hybrid cars, recycling, and looking for more natural options in everything they do. If there was ever a time to become a leader in a more natural approach, this is it.

Secondly, within this theme there are hundreds of topics you can talk or write about. As a general rule of thumb, when the topics you are speaking about are in the news, this adds credibility and relevance to your chosen theme.

You will find health issues that fit under this theme in the media on a regular basis, and even better, these news stories often cover current trends and research which can be important in supporting your message.

Following through

Once you have a theme, then you can start working on your topics. Under the theme of "a more natural approach," you could talk or write about the ability of the body to heal itself, or how the nervous system affects all organs of the body, or exercise, or nutrition. All aspects of healthcare that consumers want, and that you are fully qualified to talk about.

The number of topics you need to create will depend on your delivery

system. For example, if you will use a blog as one of your delivery systems, you will need at least one short blog a week. But if you are using an e-newsletter, which usually only goes out once a month, one article will do.

While news or recently released research can make your topic "top of mind," it is your job then to make the information, news, or research answer the question of "so what?"

The key is to start out slowly and determine your messaging capabilities first. That is, how many messages can you write or deliver, then build a delivery system to best help you deliver them. Make sure you don't over commit and then end up under promising. Those that build the delivery system first, or allow the delivery system to dictate their messaging often find themselves with a delivery system that dies due to a lack of messages.

The delivery system

Now you'll want to create a delivery system from which to share your message. In the old days, your delivery opportunities were limited. And, it was very expensive to do and to build the frequency that is so crucial. In today's world however, technology has created a cornucopia of opportunities to help you deliver your message.

Beyond your personal delivery,

there are many ways you can deliver the desired message. The most direct way to do so is via the e-marketing options that technology offers such as blogging, e-newsletters, your website, and social media.

But you want to make sure that your delivery system is fully utilized and that your message can get to all of your audiences in ways they appreciate. So don't forget more traditional ways to deliver your messages, such as verbally by you and your staff, speaking opportunities such as lay lectures and workshops, and in-office communications, brochures, and patient handouts.

We've introduced the concept of Thought Leadership Marketing and we've clarified that you can benefit from it, no matter the stage your practice is at or the extent of your current marketing efforts. We've explained the benefits. We've also outlined the two key aspects of thought leadership marketing, shared ideas for your messaging themes and topics, and outlined some of the ways you can deliver your messages. Whether or not you take advantage of this opportunity is completely up to the leader that resides within you.

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Levels Of Thought Leadership

There can be different levels of thought leadership:

1. You could choose to be a thought leader with a niche group of patients.
2. You can be a thought leader in your clinic.
3. You can be THE thought leader in your clinic.
4. You can be a thought leader in your community.
5. You can be THE thought leader in your community.

The Thought Leadership Funnel

- You're unrecognized
- You gain recognition
- You start staking your position
- You begin to gain recognition
- You gain value

- You become a trusted source of information

Steps to Thought Leadership Implementation

1. Understand who you are...vision and brand.
2. Understand your strengths and weaknesses.
3. Choose your theme.
4. Outline as many topics as possible under your theme.
5. Identify all the different ways your message/topic could be delivered.
6. Determine how many topics you can write in a given time, say a month.
7. Write two or three months' worth of topics.
8. Start slowly; under-promise and over-deliver.