

# Becoming a Thought Leader

To establish yourself as a thought leader, it is important to develop a unique online identity and personal brand.

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The term “thought leader” has become somewhat of a cliché in today’s healthcare environment. We frequently see it used in publication and at the podium, but what does “thought leader” mean and what constitutes one? In short, a thought leader is someone who gives direction to conversations, encourages idea generation, and influences perceptions. When others begin to turn toward you in areas where new knowledge is emerging, it indicates that your voice carries weight as a thought leader.

Thought leadership will not only help you promote your content to a wider audience, but it will also eventually help create your personal brand in the field of dermatology. However, to become a thought leader, you need to have certain attributes that distinguish you from others. Fortunately, physicians have a venue by which they can establish themselves as thought leaders: the Internet.

## LOOK FOR ORIGINAL AND UNIQUE STORY ITEMS

Thought leadership will not occur if you publish the same run of the mill content as everyone else on your website, blog, online magazines, social media, or other online platforms. To achieve greater traction for your content, you need to develop the knack for seeing a potential story where others do not. It will happen if you are passionate about your profession, and stay abreast with the latest news, events, and developments in the field of dermatology.

You should make time to engage in social conversations and stay on top of current news and happenings in the industry. When a new story is breaking, you should be able to look at it from an original perspective that pushes the story further or addresses the unanswered issues in that story. That is when your target audience as well as peers in the profession will begin seeking your informed views more keenly.

## TELL THE STORY IN A CAPTIVATING MANNER

Once you know that you have a fresh and compelling viewpoint or story to share with the world, it is important to package it in an interesting manner that captivates your target audiences. Online space abounds with effective writers, but if you combine your original content with a unique storytelling ability that allows you to connect with the most diverse range of audiences, readers and colleagues will take notice.

Your writing style may have elements of humor, surprise, drama, or it may be extremely serious. You can stay true to your natural style and yet present your thoughts, ideas, and content in a manner that resonates with your readers. Wherever possible, make use of captivating images, videos, or infographics to enhance the visual impact. A serious topic does not necessarily have to be dull and boring. You can enliven it with real-life examples, quotes, and anecdotes from your personal experience.

## BE AUTHENTIC AND BUILD CREDITWORTHINESS

One of the most essential pre-requisites to becoming a thought leader in dermatology is to build a very high trust quotient. Trust can be built over a period of time when you enjoy the loyalty of your patients



in your practice and command a strong online reputation at the same time. Make sure that whatever content you produce and deliver for potential patients and other audiences is authentic, original, accurate, and relevant. Check and verify your facts as far as possible, cite recognized sources, and take care to consider all aspects before forming and presenting your original point of view or opinion on an issue.

Sometimes your views may be controversial, but if the intent is honest and the betterment of your patients lies at the heart of your every write-up, you will win the battle of trust over time. Trust and reputation cannot be built overnight. Take out time to produce high quality content, con-

duct painstaking research at times, and stay committed to the core mission of helping potential patients improve their quality of life through your thoughts and ideas. When you demonstrate this commitment repeatedly and consistently, people will start paying keener attention.

## PROACTIVE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Social media networking should play a significant role in your campaign. Prominent social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+ must be used creatively in order to promote your original content as well as develop social engagement with the target audiences. The reach of social media can be very wide, considering the fact that your message can be shared by the people within your network at their own respective networks.



Therefore, a compelling message or a unique piece of content can set off a chain reaction of social communication and reach out to the masses to provide you a very strong audience. However, success through social media will not happen in a day, and it requires a consistent engagement process. Additionally, social media can also provide you with an opportunity to get in touch with a variety of online influencers and bloggers who can help to promote your content more effectively.

## DEVELOP A DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY

To establish yourself as a thought leader, focus on developing a unique online personality and identity through your content. If you recycle the information that is already available through other sources, it cannot help you build a distinctive identity. You can achieve this by consciously building on your intrinsic strengths and knowledge and keeping your content focused in the area of your specialization.

Your goal must be to build such a consistent body of online content that people eventually identify your personality with the content. Be natural, original, and committed to your profession. It will not only help you build a strong personal brand identity, but will ultimately result in greater traffic of patients in your dermatology practice. ■

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