

The logo for ThoughtWorks360, with 'ThoughtWorks' in white and '360' in blue. The background of the entire slide is a dark blue gradient with a subtle pattern of concentric, curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement.

ThoughtWorks360

Staying ahead of the curve

Why some thought leadership programs succeed, and others fail

A pulse survey briefing

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How to keep your thought leadership relevant in a hyperconnected, data-driven world



Marketing directors are boosting their investment in content marketing and thought leadership in 2015—spending well over \$100 billion according to eMarketer, a research firm. But are they getting their money's worth?

Not really, according to a recent pulse survey by ThoughtWorks360. Less than a third of the organizations are successfully generating leads and closing business through their thought leadership programs. And one out of six admitted that their programs have just not worked.

The challenge: We now live in hyperconnected, data-rich world—where data is growing at 2.5 quintillion bytes a day, websites have multiplied past the half-billion mark, and mobile devices (7.2 billion) now outnumber people. In a world deluged with information, how can thought leaders stay relevant, original, and distinct, and not get lost in the noise.

To find out, ThoughtWorks360 conducted a pulse survey of 52 thought leadership organizations in July 2015. Why are some firms successful at thought leadership, while others fail? We ran correlations to see how organizations achieved the best results (Sparkman rho tests), and this is what we found:

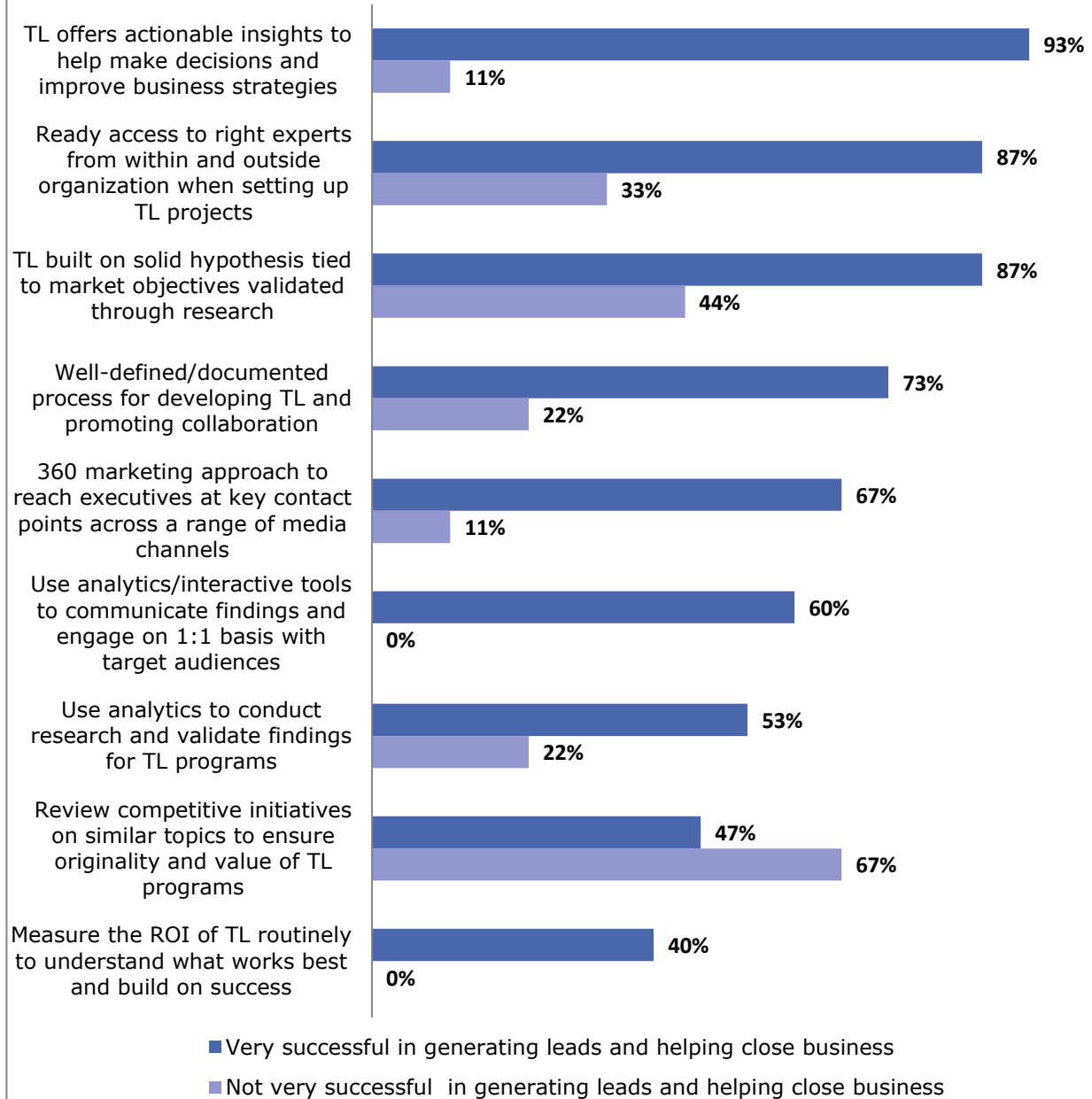
- The most successful thought leaders offered actionable insights and valuable foresights to help clients make decisions. A whopping 93% of successful firms did this, versus only 11% of unsuccessful firms.
- For each project, 87% of the most successful thought leaders brought together the right experts and skills from within and outside their organizations. In contrast, only one-third of less successful firms tapped the right talent.
- The highest achievers put analytics at the center of their programs, both as a research and communication tool. Three-fifths of successful firms used analytics and interactive tools to communicate findings—but *none* of the less successful firms did.
- In a hyperconnected business environment, reaching executives at key contact points across a range of media channels should be the norm. It is for two-thirds of successful firms, but surprisingly only 11% of less successful firms have adopted a 360 multi-platform approach.
- And how can you achieve results if you don't even measure them? That is why almost half of successful thought leaders now assess the ROI of their thought leadership efforts, while every one of the less successful firms is finding it difficult to take this important step.

Maybe Yogi Berra was right: If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.



Thought leaders vs. thought followers

How approaches of succesful thought leaders compare with those of less successful ones



To create this chart, we segmented the respondents in two groups: those that said their thought leadership was very successful in generating leads and business, and those that said their thought leadership was not very successful in generating leads and business. The dark blue lines show how very successful firms answered each question; the lighter blue lines show how the less successful firms answered each question.



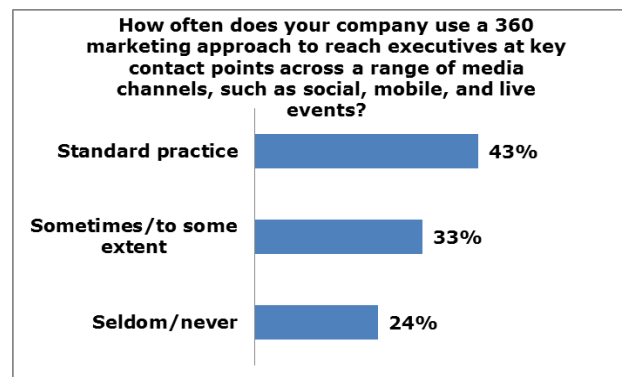
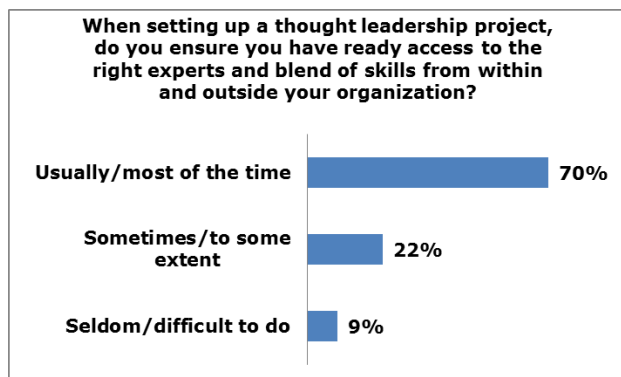
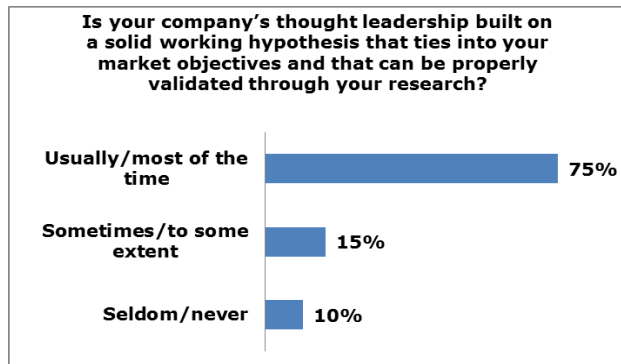
To illustrate, in the first row of the chart, 93% of the very successful firms offer actionable insights to help make decisions, whereas only 11% of the less successful firms do so. This shows a clear correlation between offering actionable insights and successful thought leadership. Or restated, companies that offer actionable insights in their thought leadership have a significantly better chance of generating leads and new business from their thought leadership.

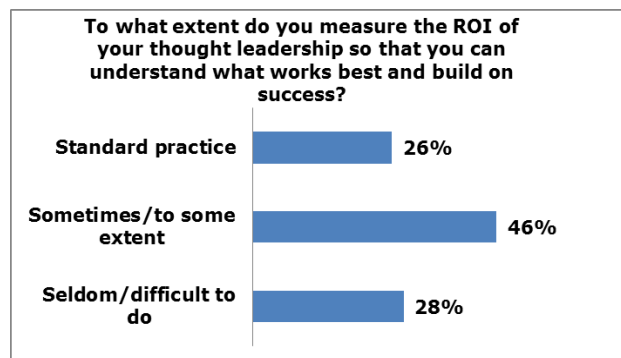
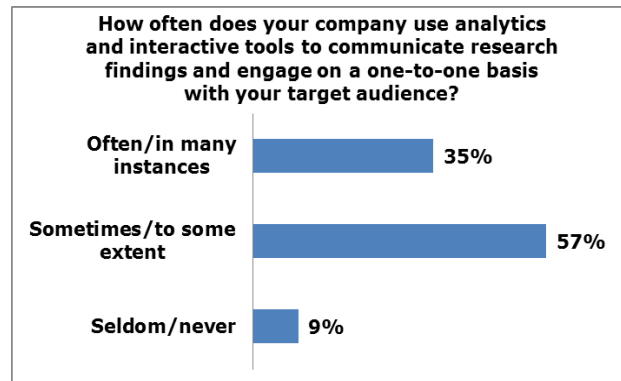
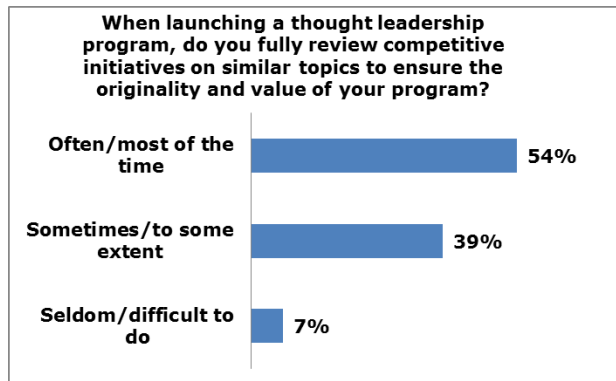
We also ran Sparkman rho tests, which is a statistical technique for establishing the correlation between non-parametric variables (for example, is there a high correlation between those offering actionable insights with those firms that are very successful at thought leadership). The Sparkman rho tests confirmed the findings shown in the table.



Appendix I: Full survey results

The charts below present the responses to each of the 10 questions included in the ThoughtWorks360 pulse survey conducted in July/August of 2015.







About ThoughtWorks360



Without analytics, thought leadership is just another opinion

Engaging executives in today's hyperconnected, data-driven world requires fresh thinking and quantitative insights delivered through a 360-degree thought leadership program.

ThoughtWorks360 is a trend-setting thought leadership consultancy that partners with organizations to develop successful strategies for building business with executives in today's hyperconnected, data-driven world. Unlike traditional thought leadership providers, ThoughtWorks360 blends the right mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, content formats and media channels to create distinctive, ground-breaking thought leadership that generates business, not just awareness.

An agile, collaborative enterprise, ThoughtWorks360 draws on the diverse skills of its management team, alliance partners and expert network to deliver the highest quality, end-to-end solution. The firm was founded on the principle that the best thought leadership is created by a multidisciplinary team of experts. Our partners include top macroeconomic research firms, like Roubini Global Economics; innovative microeconomic boutiques like Econsult Solutions; global strategic advisors, like Oxford Analytica; respected media brands, such as Forbes, and Fortune; academic thought leadership groups, such as Knowledge@Wharton and HBR Analytics.

ThoughtWorks360 is headed by Lou Celi and Barry Rutizer, pioneers in building thought leadership programs and decision-support tools for executives. Over their 35 years of experience, they have founded and developed the thought leadership activities at the Economist Intelligence Unit, Business International, and Oxford Economics. They have worked with top thought leaders, including PwC, IBM, EY, Deloitte, Accenture, CapGemini, McKinsey, SAP, Booz Allen Hamilton, Oracle, IBM, AT&T, Cisco, Towers Watson, Mercer, Bain, GE, MasterCard, Citi, Putnam Investments, Clifford Chance, and Baker & McKenzie.

Strategy · Project management · Analytics and modeling · Qualitative research
Industry expertise · Storyline development · Corporate case studies · 360 marketing
Social media · Website development · Market research · B2B, B2C and B2G surveys

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