

The Unspoken Key to Thought Leadership: Curating Other People's Content

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If you are working hard to credential your expertise and become a thought leader in your practice area and the industries you serve, you aren't alone—and that is a problem.

The proliferation of firms and attorneys vying for coveted “thought leader” status since the Lehman collapse is remarkable but understandable; to be economical, smart firms have focused their spending on the most rewarding marketing and business development efforts. Thought leadership campaigns qualify, given that thought leaders lure to their firms interesting work that often commands premium-billing rates, both of which enable the firm to attract and retain the best talent.

But clutter is an issue. It is hard to make headway as a leading thinker in your field when everyone else has created a mix of content similar to your own—perhaps a few bylined articles, a presentation or two at an important industry conference, quotes in leading trades, recognition in *Chambers*, etc. So what should you do? Curate as well as create.

The fact that you have created your own content is important—indeed, vital—but you can use Other People's Content (OPC) as a second opportunity to demonstrate your value to clients and prospects.

There's a wealth of OPC out there, and your clients, suffering information overload, have limited time to sift through it. So, do it for them.

Sharing the content of other thought leaders in your field doesn't diminish your expertise; it shows you to be engaged, confident, and knowledgeable about your clients' interests. To borrow a line from *Naughty by Nature*, recipients of the “OPC” that you share—via email, blogs, or social media—think, “this lawyer knows me (and isn't afraid of competitors).”

Your effort doesn't need to be limited to business-related information either. Perhaps your energy-industry prospect is a music fan or a marathon runner. Considering how inundated she might be with client alerts about the latest developments in off-shore oil rig leasing, she'd probably appreciate receiving an article from *Rolling Stone* about her favorite band or from *Runner's World* about the latest training techniques.

The point is to break through the clutter by demonstrating holistic interest in your clients and prospects—not just the things they are working on with you.