



**Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought  
Leadership Outlook Survey**

In association with the British Computer Society



A study of the current and future state of B2B thought leadership  
from content creator and consumer perspectives

**RESEARCH REPORT | [THINKERS360.COM/ENTERPRISE](https://thinkers360.com/enterprise)**

# Survey Background



Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought  
Leadership Outlook Survey

Thinkers360 – Connecting global brands with the world’s premier thought leaders and authentic influencers for game-changing results

## 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey

- **Objective:** To examine the current and future state of B2B thought leadership from content creator and consumer perspectives
- **Date:** September – November 2022
- **Target Audience:** Thinkers360 Members, BCS Members, and other creators and consumers of B2B Thought Leadership Content
- **Question Set:** 16 questions (6 for thought leadership consumers and 10 for thought leadership creators)

**Acknowledgements:** Our thanks go to the Thinkers360 members, BCS members and all who participated in the study. Sincere thanks to [Brian Runciman](#) of BCS for his generous collaboration and support.

For questions about the survey, please contact [info@thinkers360.com](mailto:info@thinkers360.com)

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# Thinkers360

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leaders & authentic influencers for game-changing results*

# Key Findings: Thought Leadership Consumers

Current State

## *Thought Leadership takes its Own Course*

Today's thought leadership challenges both traditional *and* modern notions. It doesn't need to be counter-intuitive, peer-reviewed or even entertaining or concise



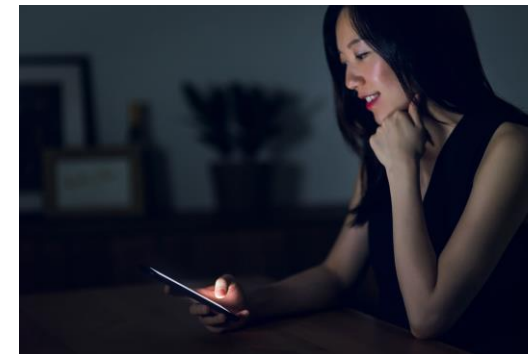
## *It's all about Insight that's also Actionable*

The key is **insightful** (94%), **forward-looking** (90%) and **engaging** (89%) content that's relevant and actionable

\*Rated as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership

## *Entrepreneurs on the Rise as Leading Sources*

**Authors** (43%), **Entrepreneurs** (42%), **Influencers** (42%), **Academics** (41%) and **Consultants** (35%) are the primary sources of thought leadership content



# Key Findings: Thought Leadership Consumers

Current State

*Thought Leadership informs the full Sales Cycle from Research to Purchase Decisions*

85% cited thought leadership content as moderately important or higher for making purchase decisions (up 11% from last year)



*The Secret for Marketers to Cut Through the Noise*

53% of readers are spending 4+ hours per week consuming thought leadership content (up from 42% last year)

*Specialist Communities Remain #1 Destination*

Specialist communities (62%) retained their lead over social media (48%) as the primary source for thought leadership content compared to last year



# Key Findings: Thought Leadership Creators

Current State

## *Driving a Powerful Brand Premium*

Close to **1/2** see thought leadership adding over **75%** to the brand premium they command in the marketplace



## *Unique Perspectives Build Customer Trust*

**Customer trust (84%), competitive differentiation (83%) and brand awareness (81%)** are the main business benefits of thought leadership content creation

## *The New Weekly Cadence*

*Thought leadership cadence is increasing with over **25%** producing over 4 pieces per month*

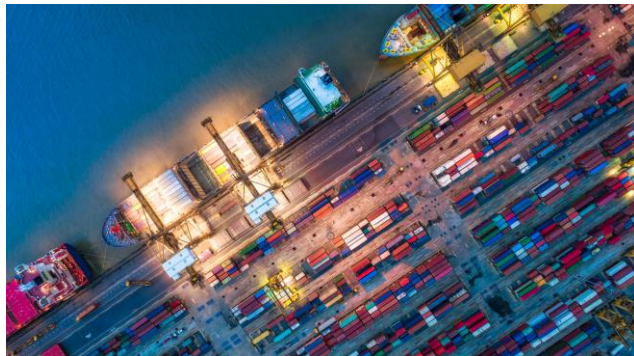


# Key Findings: Thought Leadership Creators

Plans for 2023

## *#1 Sales & Marketing Priority*

39% consider thought leadership the #1 Priority within their sales and marketing strategies for 2023



## *Continuing to Scale Up*

56% of thought leadership creators plan to produce more thought leadership in 2023 than in 2022

## *Specialist Communities Are Key*

Social media (74%), individual web sites (58%) and specialist communities (57%) are key for disseminating thought leadership content in 2023





# Thought Leadership Consumers



# Thought Leadership Attributes

Thought leadership consumers cited **“insightful”** (94%), **“forward-looking”** (90%), **“engaging”** (89%), **“relevant”** (88%) and **“actionable”** (84%) as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership.

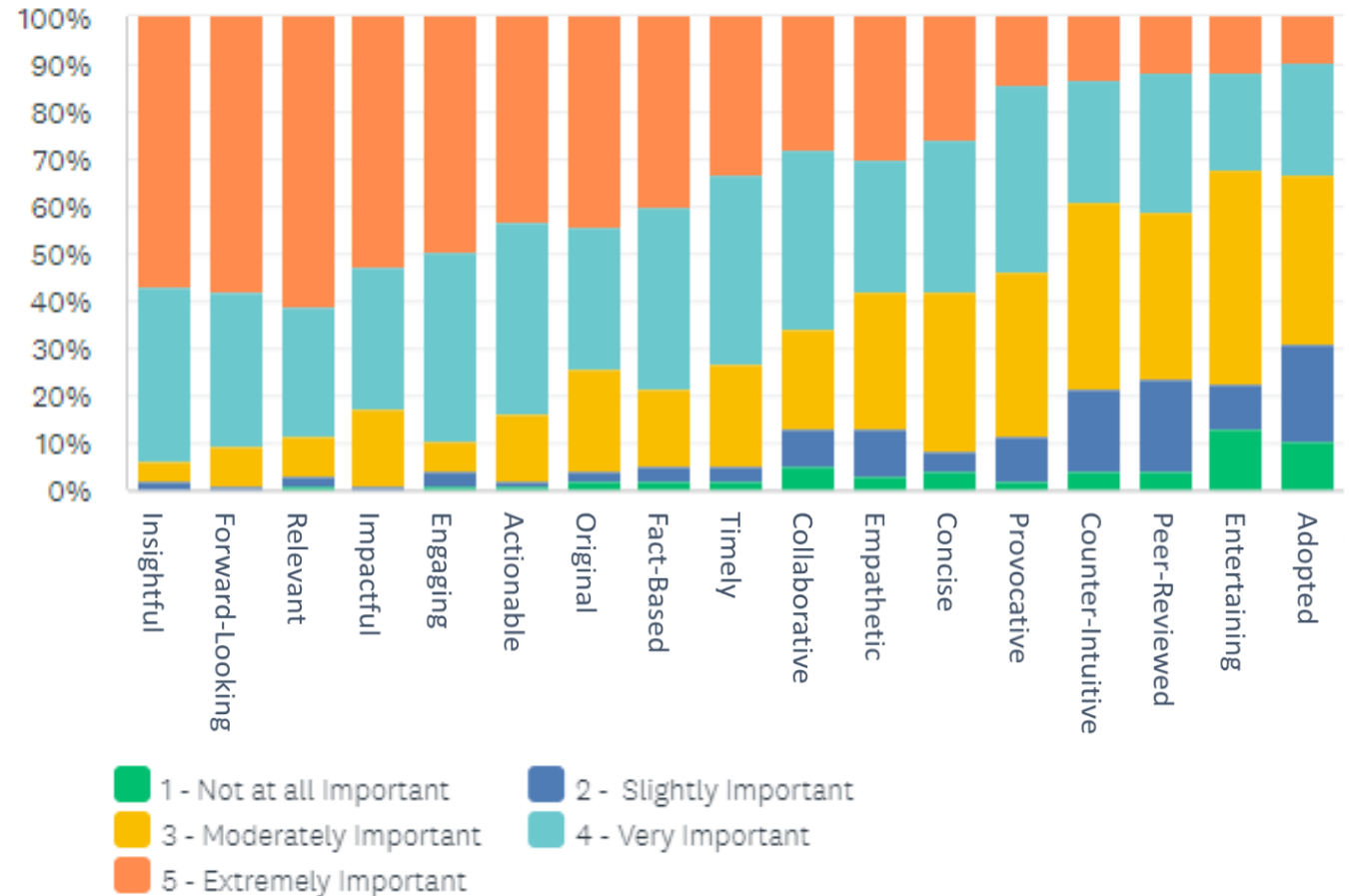
Traditional notions of thought leadership such as **“counter-intuitive”** (40%) and **“peer-reviewed”** (35%) were cited by the majority as only moderately important.

Even new notions of thought leadership such as **“entertaining”** (45%), **“adopted”** (35%) and **“concise”** (33%) were also cited as only moderately important.

Today’s thought leadership content is far different from traditional notions. It no longer has to be counter-intuitive, peer-reviewed or even adopted. The key is insightful, forward-looking content that’s relevant, engaging, and impactful.

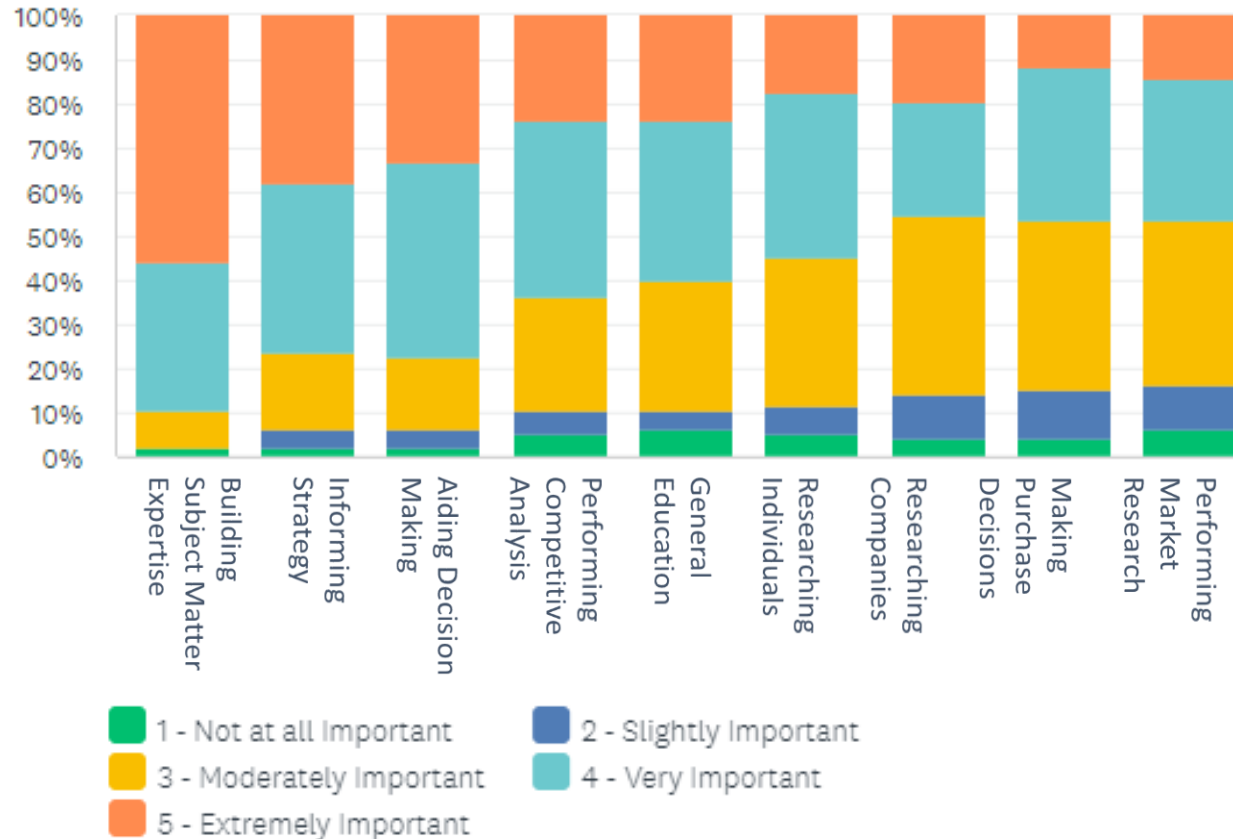
Compared to last year’s research, **“engaging”** (up 5%) and **“actionable”** (up 7%) content has moved up slightly in importance.

*Today’s thought leadership consumers challenge both modern and traditional notions of what’s important*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q2. Thought Leadership Attributes: Please rate the importance of these attributes in world-class thought leadership:

*Thought leadership is increasingly used for making purchase decisions, aiding decision making and researching individuals*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q3. Thought Leadership Benefits: Please rate the importance of thought leadership you consume in supporting the following:

# Thought Leadership Benefits

Thought leadership consumers cited **“building subject matter expertise”** (89%), **“aiding decision making”** (77%) and **“informing strategy”** (76%) as extremely important or very important

A change of +5%, +2%, -6% when compared to last year, but still the same top 3 benefits

**“Researching Individuals”** (88%) and **“Making purchase decisions”** (85%) were cited as moderately important or higher (up 6% and 11% from last year)

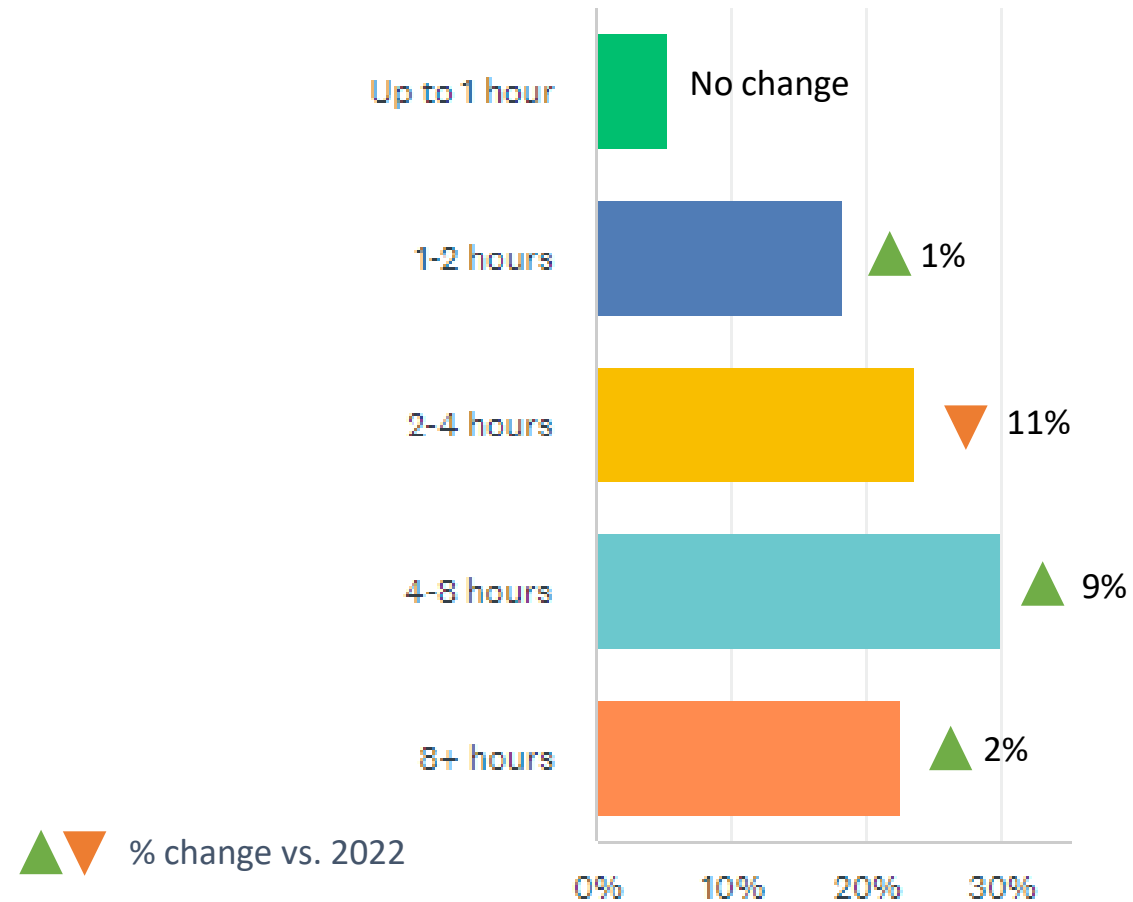
While motivations and benefits of consuming thought leadership vary widely, over 84% cited it moderately important or higher across **all potential benefits** (up 7% from last year)

# Thought Leadership Time Investment

Thought leadership consumers cited 4-8 hours (30%) as their average amount of time spent per week reading thought leadership content. This was up from 2-4 hours (35%) as the average amount of time spent last year.

Over 53% of respondents reported spending 4 hours or more (up from 42% last year), with 23% spending more than 1 day per week (up from 21% last year).

*Cutting through the noise: Over half of readers spend over 4 hours per week consuming thought leadership content*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q4. Thought Leadership Time Investment: On average, how much time per week do you spend consuming thought leadership?

# Thought Leadership Personas

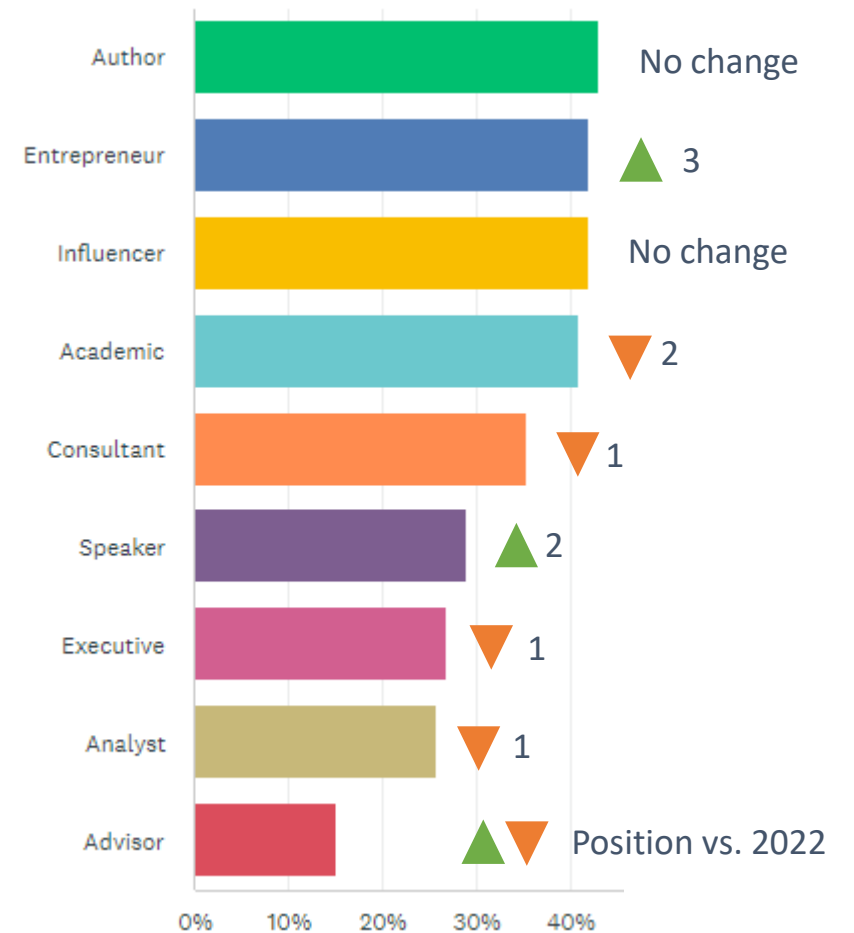
Thought leadership consumers cited authors (43%), entrepreneurs (42%), influencers (42%), academics (41%) and consultants (35%) as their primary sources of thought leadership content respectively.

As per last year, analysts and advisors fared less well with only 26% and 15% citing them as a regular primary source (among the top three sources), perhaps due to their less frequent ability to engage with these personas.

As in 2022, the trend appears to be towards “Always On Thought Leadership” where the most accessible, online and social thought leader personas are gaining the most traction.

Authors retained their top spot this year, with entrepreneurs on the rise jumping 3 places over 2022

Authors retain top spot, entrepreneurs on the rise

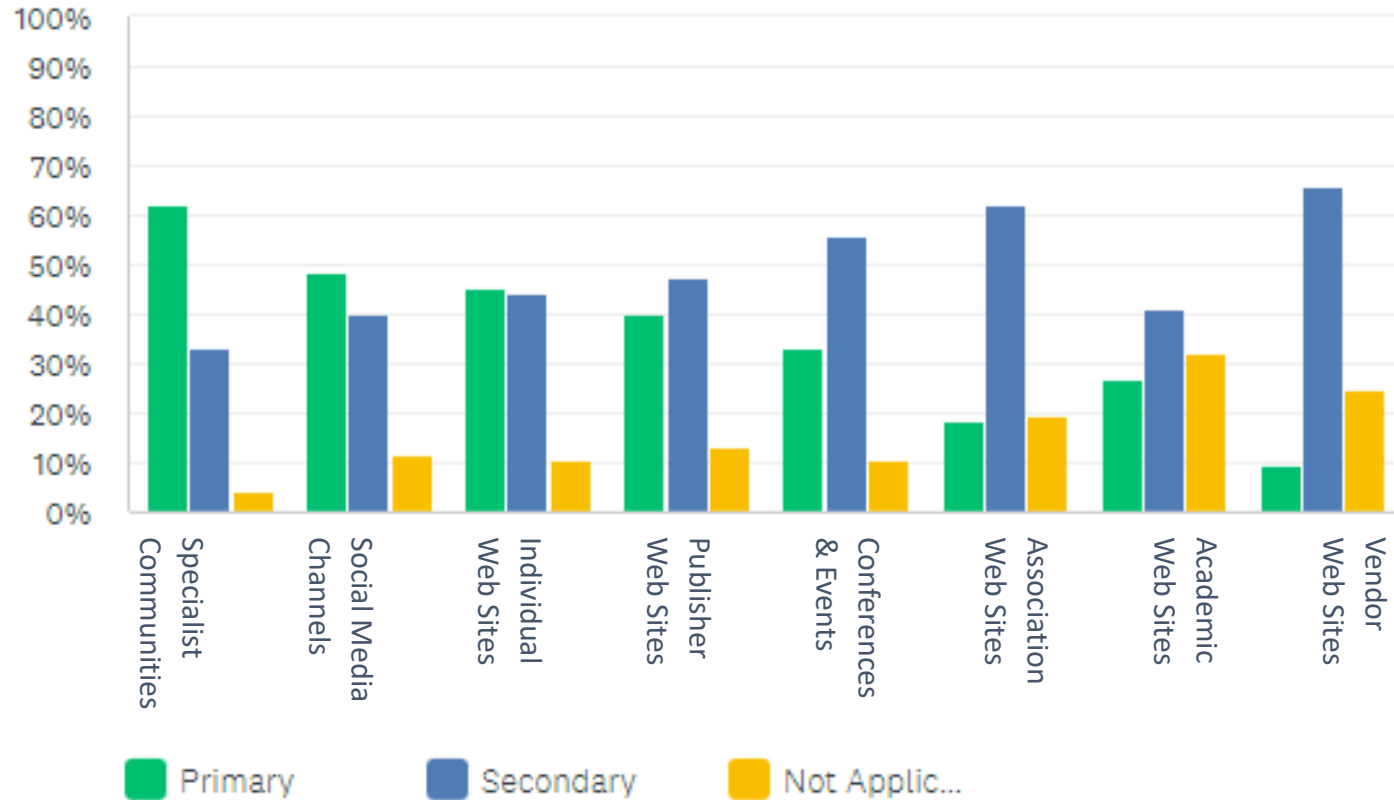


Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q5. Thought Leadership Personas: Which personas do you most regularly source your thought leadership from? (please select the top three):

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*Specialist communities remain well ahead of social media as the tip of the spear for accessing thought leadership content*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q6. Thought Leadership Sources: What are the primary and secondary sources for the thought leadership content you consume?

# Thought Leadership Sources

Thought leadership consumers cited “specialist communities” (62%), “social media channels” (48%) and “individual web sites” (45%) as their primary sources for thought leadership content.

All other destinations were seen more as secondary sources than primary sources with “academic web sites” seen by 32% as not applicable.

Specialist communities (such as Thinkers360) and social media continue to be the tip of the spear for access to thought leadership content.



# Thought Leadership Creators

# Thought Leadership Benefits

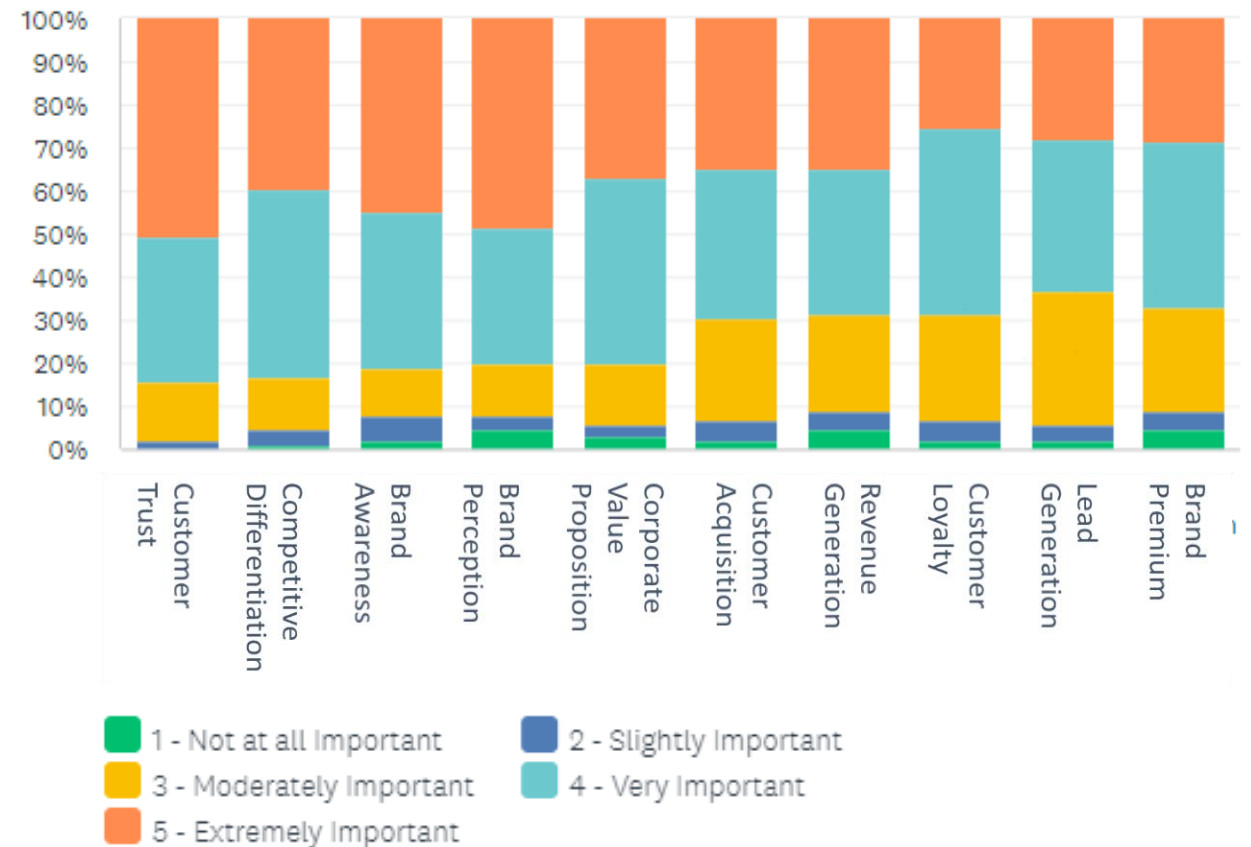
Thought leadership creators cited “customer trust” (84%) (up 10%), “competitive differentiation” (83%) (up 2%), “brand awareness” (81%) (up 8%) and “brand perception” (80%) (unchanged), and as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership.

All ten thought leadership benefits were cited as moderately important or more by over 91% (up 6%) of participants.

Today’s thought leadership creators are primarily using their thought leadership content for the front end of their sales and marketing funnel to improve their brand awareness and perception, customer trust and competitive differentiation.

Even downstream benefits such as lead generation, revenue generation and customer loyalty were cited by over 62% (up 10%) as either very important or extremely important objectives.

*Over 80% see thought leadership as extremely or very important for customer trust, competitive differentiation and brand awareness*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q7. Thought Leadership Benefits: Please rate the importance of thought leadership you produce in supporting the following business objectives:

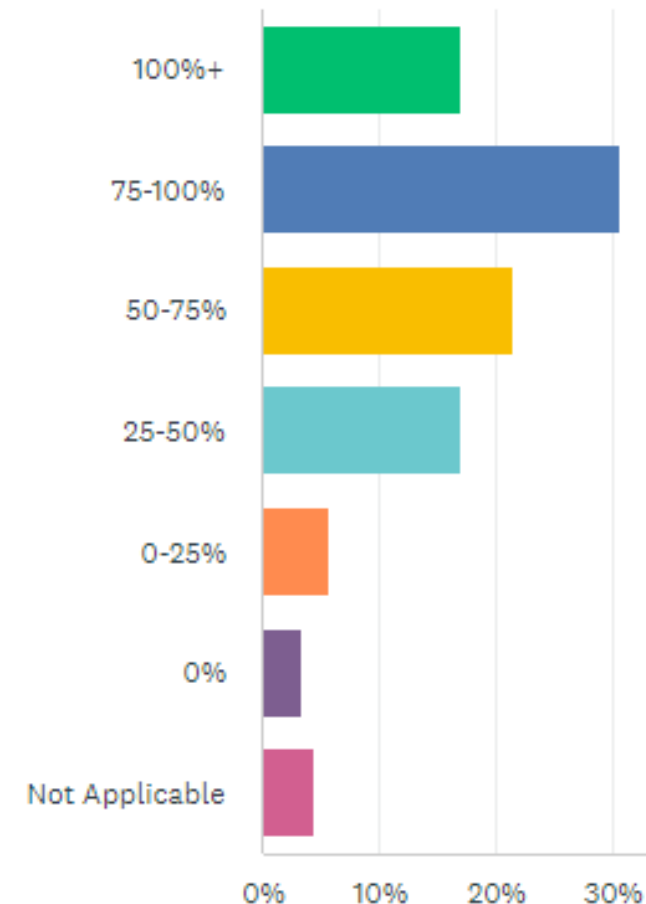
# Thought Leadership Premium

Over 86% (up 12%) of thought leadership creators rate their thought leadership content as adding over 25% to their brand premium and over 48% (up 17%) state it adds over 75%.

Fewer than 14% (down 12%) of thought leadership creators cited that their thought leadership content added less than 25% to their brand premium.

Thought leadership creators clearly see their content as contributing significantly to the brand premium they command in the marketplace for their products and services.

Nearly **1/2** see thought leadership adding over **75%** to the brand premium they command in the marketplace



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q8. Thought Leadership Premium: Please rate how much your organization's thought leadership adds to the brand premium you command in the marketplace for your products and/or services:



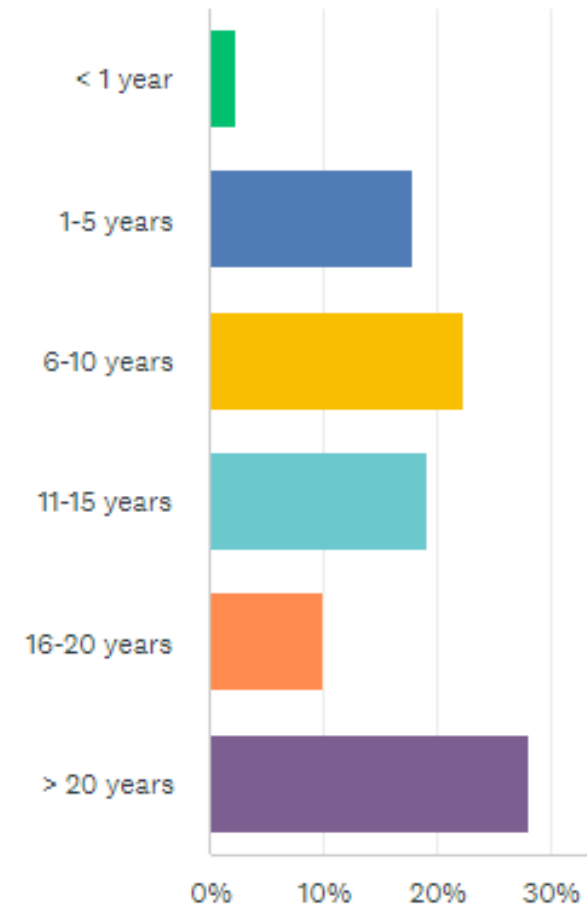
# Thought Leadership Experience

Over 80% of thought leadership creators who participated in the survey have been producing thought leadership content for over 5 years, with 57% over 10 years, and 38% over 15 years.

Close to 1/5 are relatively new entrants with less than 5 years producing thought leadership content.

Judging by the diverse mix of experience, thought leadership content production continues to be a vital ingredient to sales and marketing strategies.

As per last year, over **80%** have been producing thought leadership content for over 5 years with close to **60%** over 10 years



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q9. Thought Leadership Experience: Please specify how many years have you been producing thought leadership content:

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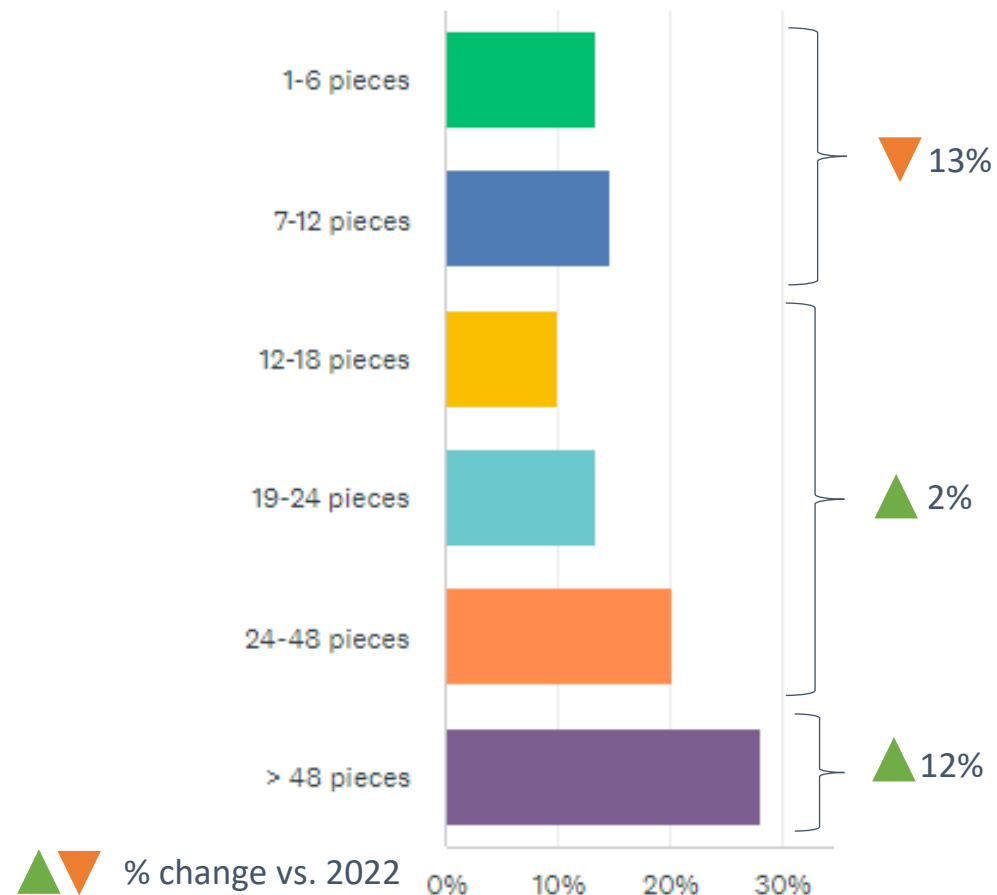
# Thought Leadership Production

In terms of thought leadership production, 28% (down 13%) produce 12 or less pieces per year (1 per month or less) and 28% (up 12%) produce 48 or more pieces per year (4 per month or more).

A larger number of 44% (up 2%) produce between 12-48 pieces per year.

Thought leadership cadence is increasing compared to last year with over 25% producing over 4 pieces per month although the majority produce 1-4 content pieces per month.

Thought leadership cadence is increasing with over **25%** producing over 4 pieces per month although the majority produce 1-4 per month



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q10. Thought Leadership Production: Please specify how much thought leadership content you produce per year on average:

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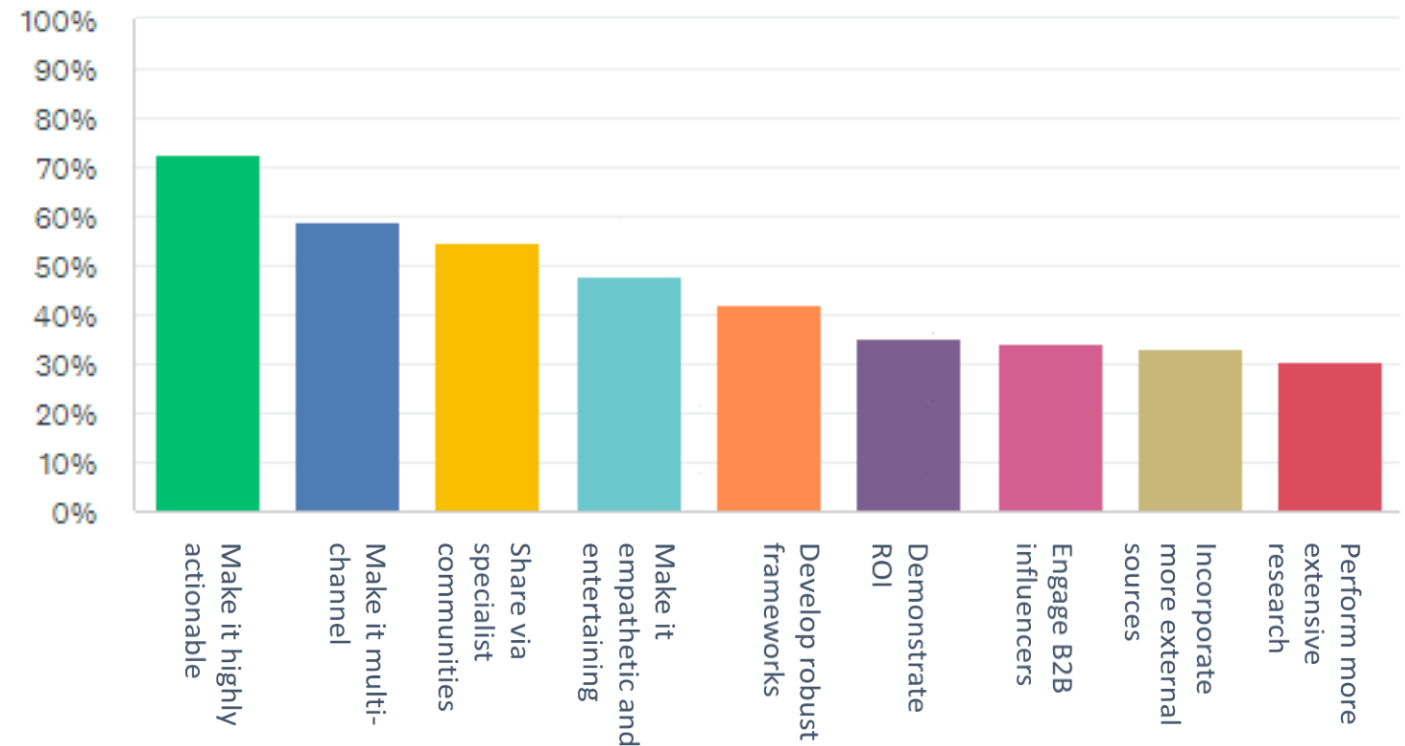


# Thought Leadership Strategy

In a post-truth era with increased competition for attention, thought leaders plan to cut through the noise by making their content highly actionable (73%), multi-channel (59%), and sharing via specialist communities (55%).

In addition, 48% plan to make their thought leadership content empathetic and entertaining, while another 42% plan to develop robust frameworks and 35% plan to demonstrate ROI.

*In a post-truth era, **73%** of thought leaders plan to cut through the noise by making their content highly actionable*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q11. In a post-truth era with increased competition for attention, how do you plan to ensure your thought leadership cuts above the noise in 2023? (check all that apply):



**Thought Leadership  
Creators  
Plans for 2023**

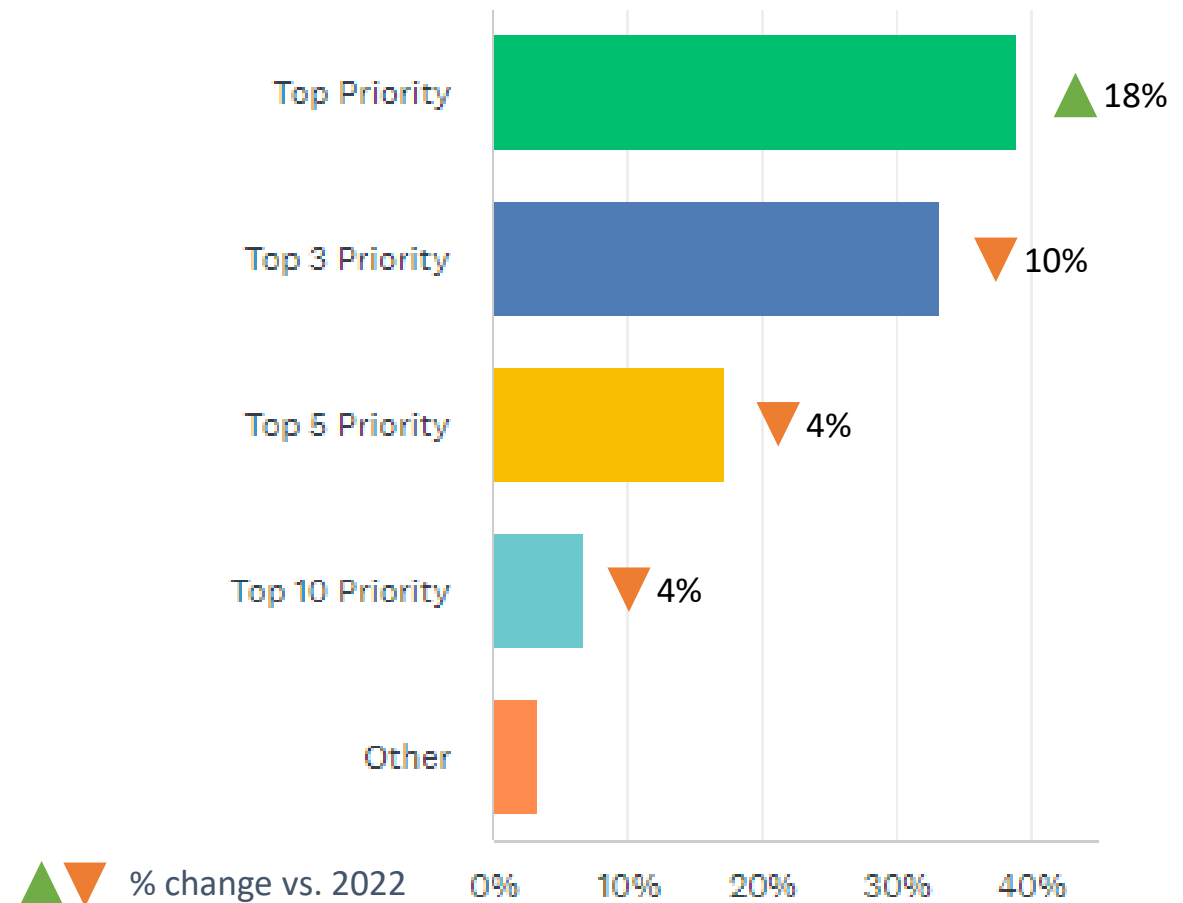
# 2023: Thought Leadership Priority

This year, thought leadership has moved to the top priority for the 2023 sales and marketing strategy of 39% of thought leadership creators.

It is a top 3 priority or higher for 72%, and a top 5 priority or higher for 89%, of all thought leadership creators who participated in the survey.

Whereas the majority of respondents saw thought leadership as a top 3 priority last year, this year it has moved to their top priority for sales and marketing.

**39%** consider thought leadership their **Top Priority** for 2023



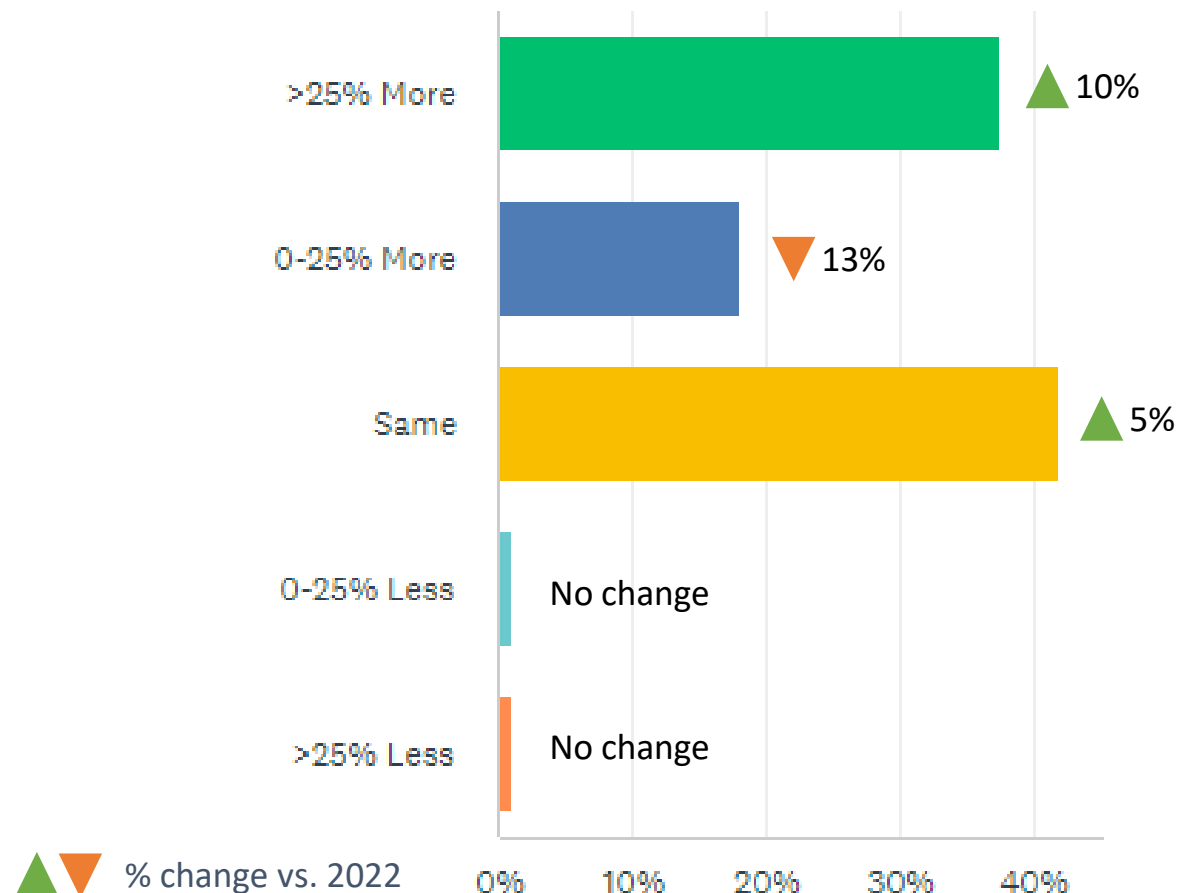
Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey.  
Q12. Thought Leadership Priority: Please rate the relative priority of thought leadership to your sales and marketing strategy in 2023:

# 2023: Thought Leadership Quantity

56% (down 4%) of thought leadership creators plan to produce more thought leadership in 2023 than in 2022.

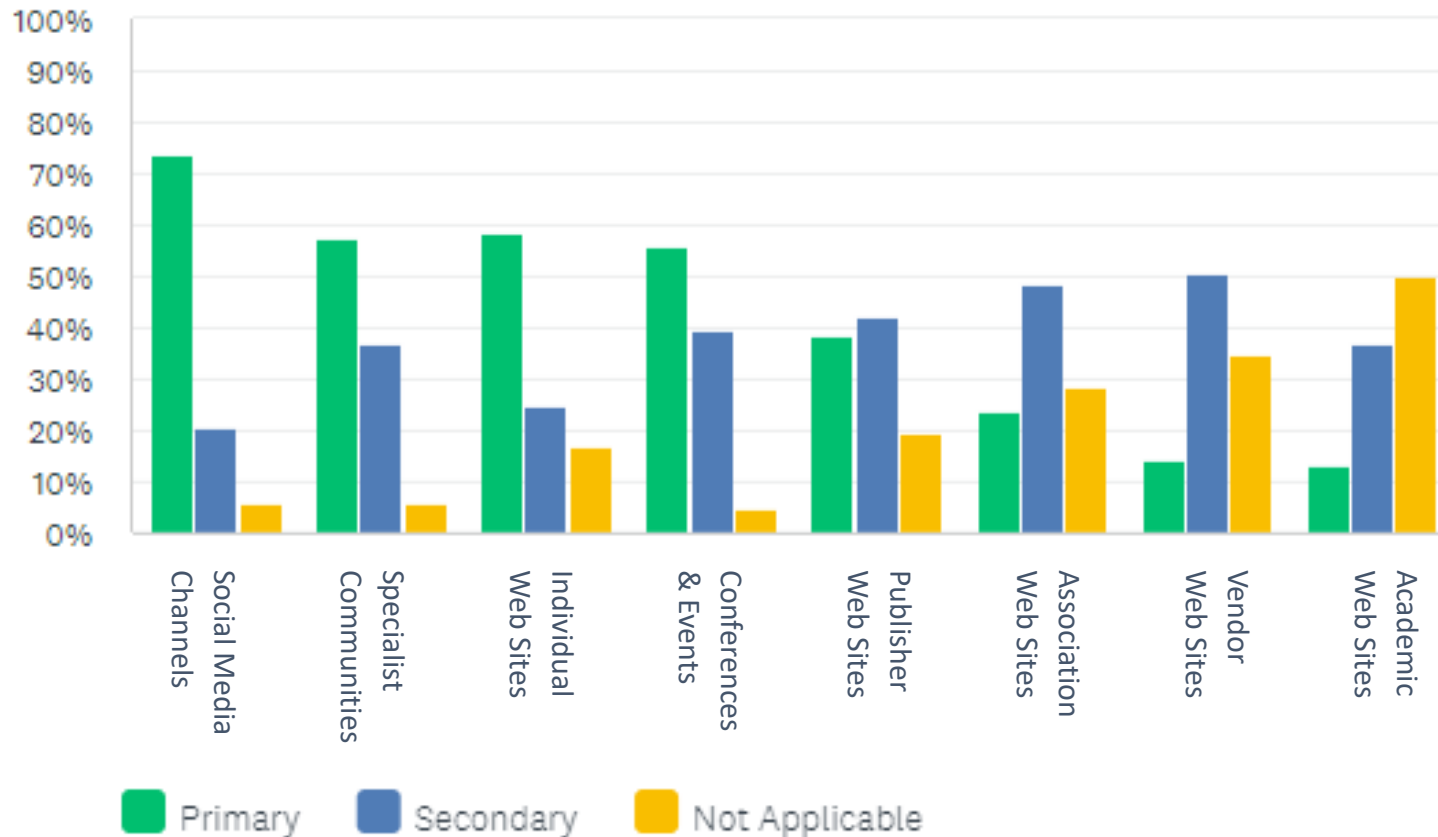
42% (up 5%) expect to produce the same amount of thought leadership content in 2023, whereas only 2% (down 1%) plan to create less content in 2023 than in 2022.

*Thought leadership creators plan to ramp up their production in 2023*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey.  
Q13. Thought Leadership Quantity: Please share the volume of thought leadership you plan to produce in 2023:

*Social media and specialist communities are the tip of the spear for disseminating thought leadership content in 2023*



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q14. Thought Leadership Outlets: What are the primary and secondary outlets for the thought leadership content you plan to distribute in 2023?



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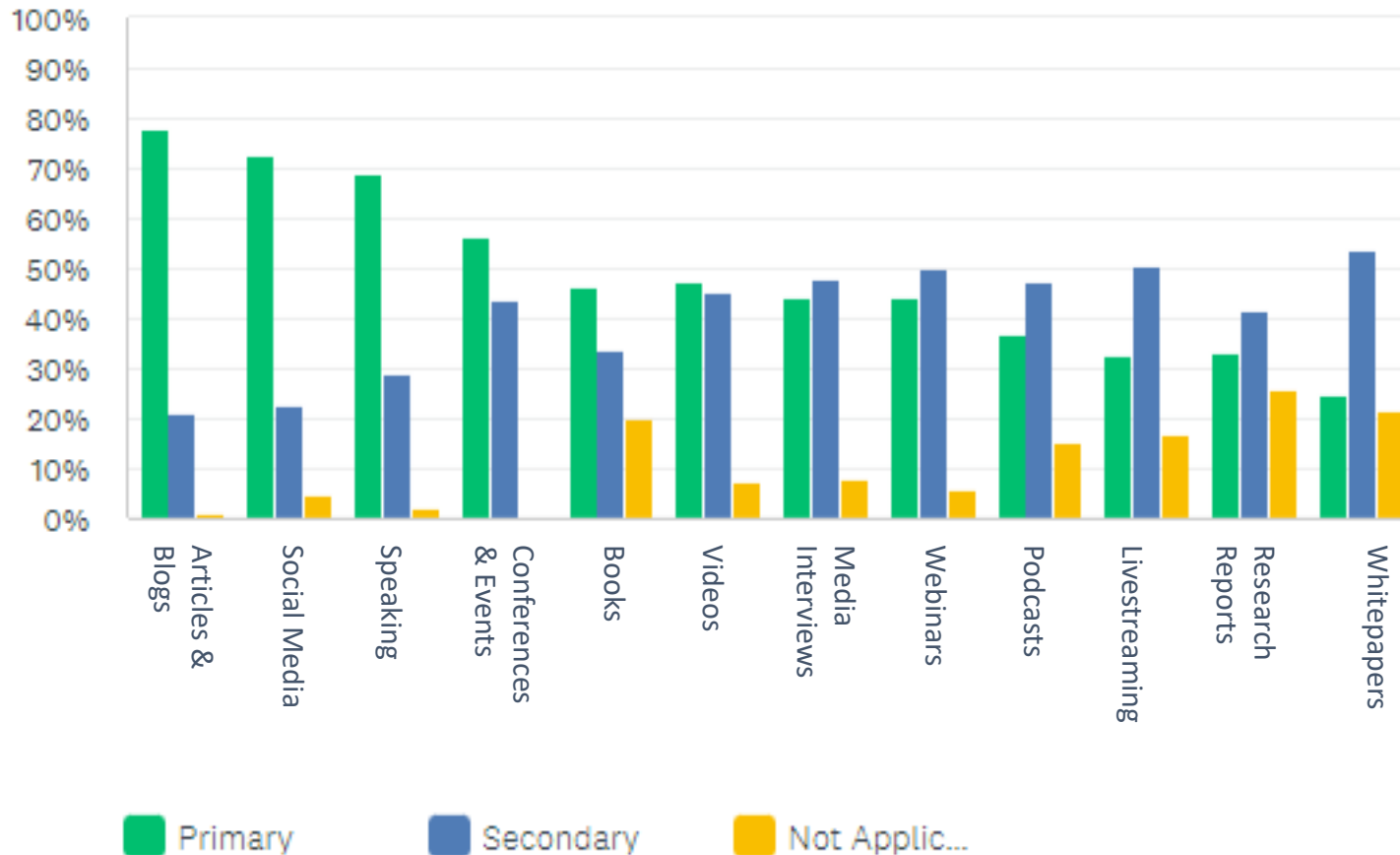
# 2023: Thought Leadership Outlets

Thought leadership creators cited social media channels (74%), specialist communities (57%), individual web sites (58%) and conferences and events (56%) as their primary outlets for thought leadership content.

All other destinations were seen more as secondary outlets than primary sources with “academic web sites” seen by 50% as not applicable.

Beyond social media, creators plan to leverage specialist communities (such as Thinkers360) as well as individual web sites and conferences and events as primary outlets for their thought leadership content.

Articles & blogs (78%), social media (73%) and speaking (69%) are the primary formats for thought leadership content production in 2023



Source: Thinkers360 2023 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q15.  
Thought Leadership Formats: What are the primary and secondary formats for the thought leadership content you plan to produce in 2023?

# 2023: Thought Leadership Formats

Thought leadership creators cited articles & blogs (78%), social media (73%), speaking (69%), conferences & events (56%), videos (48%) and books (47%) as the primary formats for thought leadership content they plan to produce in 2023.

Popular secondary formats for content production included whitepapers (54%), webinars (50%), livestreaming (50%), media interviews (48%) and podcasts (48%).





**Thank You!**



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