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# B2B THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OUTLOOK 2025

# 4TH ANNUAL RESEARCH REPORT

**An annual survey of the current and future state of B2B thought leadership**

*Connecting global brands & audiences with the world's foremost thought leaders, analysts & influencers for game-changing results*

# INTRODUCTION



Thinkers360

# 2025 B2B THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OUTLOOK

## Thinkers360 – Connecting global brands with the world's premier thought leaders, analysts and influencers for game-changing results

We're pleased to present Thinkers360's 4th annual ***B2B Thought Leadership Outlook 2025 Report*** which looks at the current and future state of thought leadership from both content creator and audience perspectives.

This year's findings show that it's all about insight that's impactful and relevant. Authors retained the top spot as primary sources of thought leadership content and 56% of audiences are spending 4+ hours per week consuming thought leadership content. Specialist communities (60%) retained their lead over conferences & events (46%) and social media (46%) as the primary destination for thought leadership content.

In the gen AI era, thought leaders told us they plan to leverage AI to ensure their thought leadership cuts above the noise in 2025 by using for research & analysis (67%), content optimization (61%), content customization (53%), and content generation & ideation (47%). These are just a few of the many findings uncovered in this year's report.

We hope you enjoy the research and if you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at ***info@thinkers360.com.***

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# SURVEY BACKGROUND



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# 2025 B2B THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OUTLOOK

## Thinkers360 – Connecting global brands with the world's premier thought leaders, analysts and influencers for game-changing results

## 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook

***Objective:*** To examine the current & future state of B2B thought leadership from content creator and audience perspectives

***Date:*** November – December 2024

***Target Audience:*** Thinkers360 Members and the global community of B2B thought leadership creators and audiences

***Question Set:*** 16 questions (6 for thought leadership audiences and 10 for thought leadership creators)

***Acknowledgements:*** Our thanks go to the Thinkers360 members and all who participated in the study. For questions about the survey, please contact *info@thinkers360.com*
For Thinkers360 Research & Insights, visit *https://www.thinkers360.com/tl/insights*
For Thinkers360 Enterprise Services, visit *https://www.thinkers360.com/enterprise*

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# Key Findings: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AUDIENCES Current State

## Thought Leadership takes Center Stage

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



## It's all about Insight that's Impactful and Relevant

The key is "insightful" **(94%),** "impactful" **(93%)** and "relevant" **(90%)** content that's forward looking and engaging. **Rated as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership*



## Authors retain top spot, consultants on the rise

Authors **(49%)**, Consultants **(43%)**, Influencers **(38%)** and Executives **(37%)** are the primary sources of thought leadership content



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# Key Findings: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AUDIENCES Current State

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

**82%** cited thought leadership content as moderately important or higher for making purchase decisions



## The Secret for Marketers to Cut Through the Noise

**56%** of audiences are spending 4+ hours per week consuming thought leadership content



## Specialist Communities Remain #1 Destination

Specialist communities **(60%)** retained their lead over conferences & events **(46%)** and social media **(46%)** as the primary source for thought leadership content



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# Key Findings: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CREATORS Current State

## Driving a Powerful Brand Perception

Over **75%** see thought leadership as extremely or very important for brand perception, customer trust and competitive differentiation



## Unique Perspectives Build Customer Trust

"Brand Perception" **(80%),** "Customer Trust" **(78%)**, "Competitive Differentiation" **(76%)** and "Brand Awareness" **(73%)** are the main benefits of thought leadership content



## The New Weekly Cadence

Thought leadership cadence is increasing with over **35%** of creators producing over 4 pieces per month



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# Key Findings: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CREATORS Plans for 2025

## #1 Sales & Marketing Priority

Over **1/3 consider** thought leadership the #1 Priority within their sales and marketing strategies for 2025



## Leveraging AI for Thought Leadership

**67%** of thought leaders plan to cut through the noise in 2025 by leveraging AI for research & analysis



## Specialist Communities Are Key

Close to **70%** of thought leadership creators plan to use specialist communities to build their thought leadership credentials in 2025



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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AUDIENCES

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

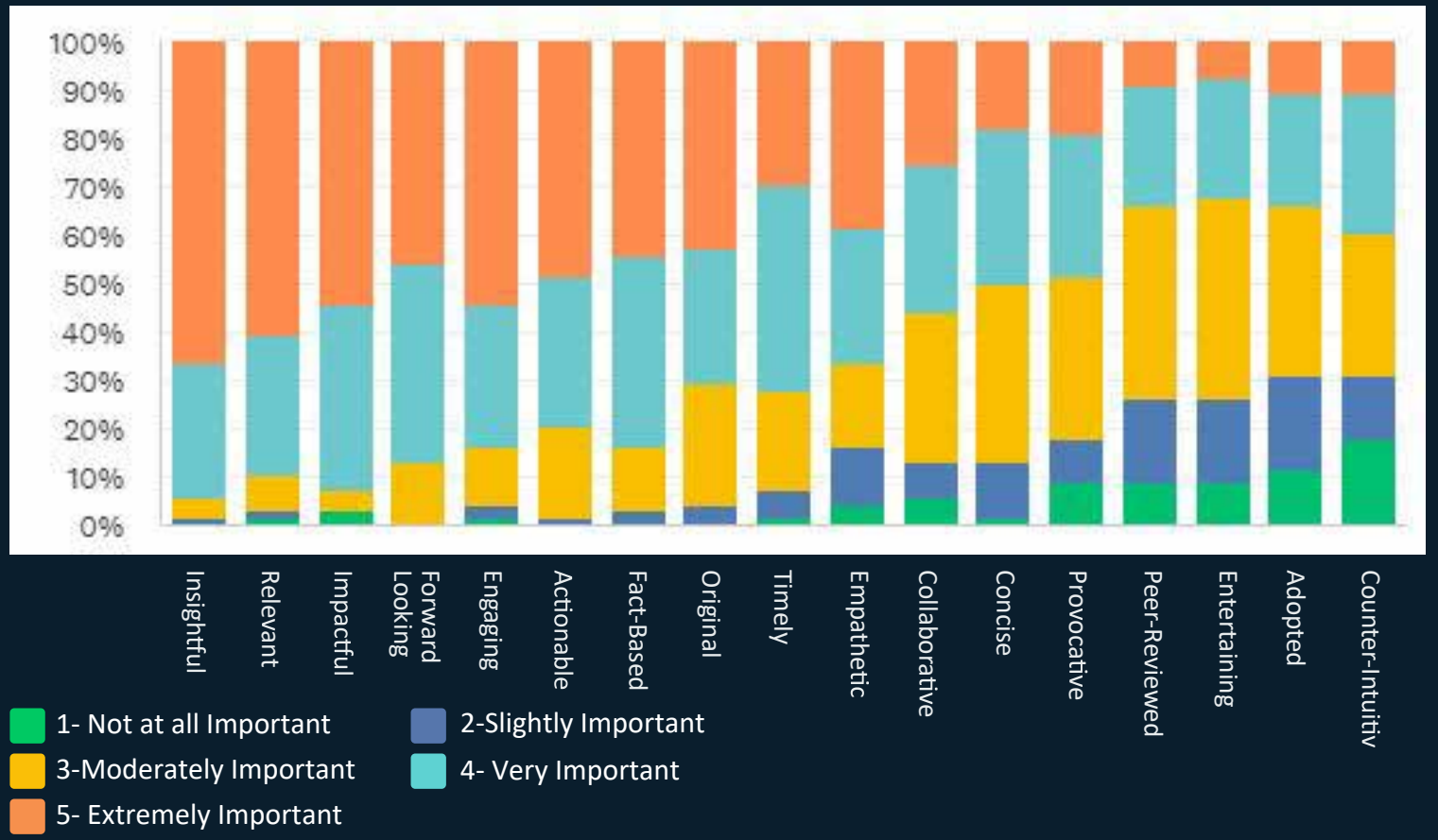
Thought leadership audiences cited “insightful” (94%), “impactful” (93%), “relevant” (90%) and “forward-looking” (87%) as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership.

Traditional notions of thought leadership such as “peer-reviewed” (40%), “provocative” (34%) and “counter-intuitive” (29%) were cited by the majority as only moderately important.

Even new notions of thought leadership such as “entertaining” (41%), “concise” (37%) and “adopted” (35%) where also cited as only moderately important.

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

## Today’s thought leadership audiences challenge both modern and traditional notions of what’s important




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q2. Thought Leadership Attributes: Please rate the importance of these attributes in world-class thought leadership:

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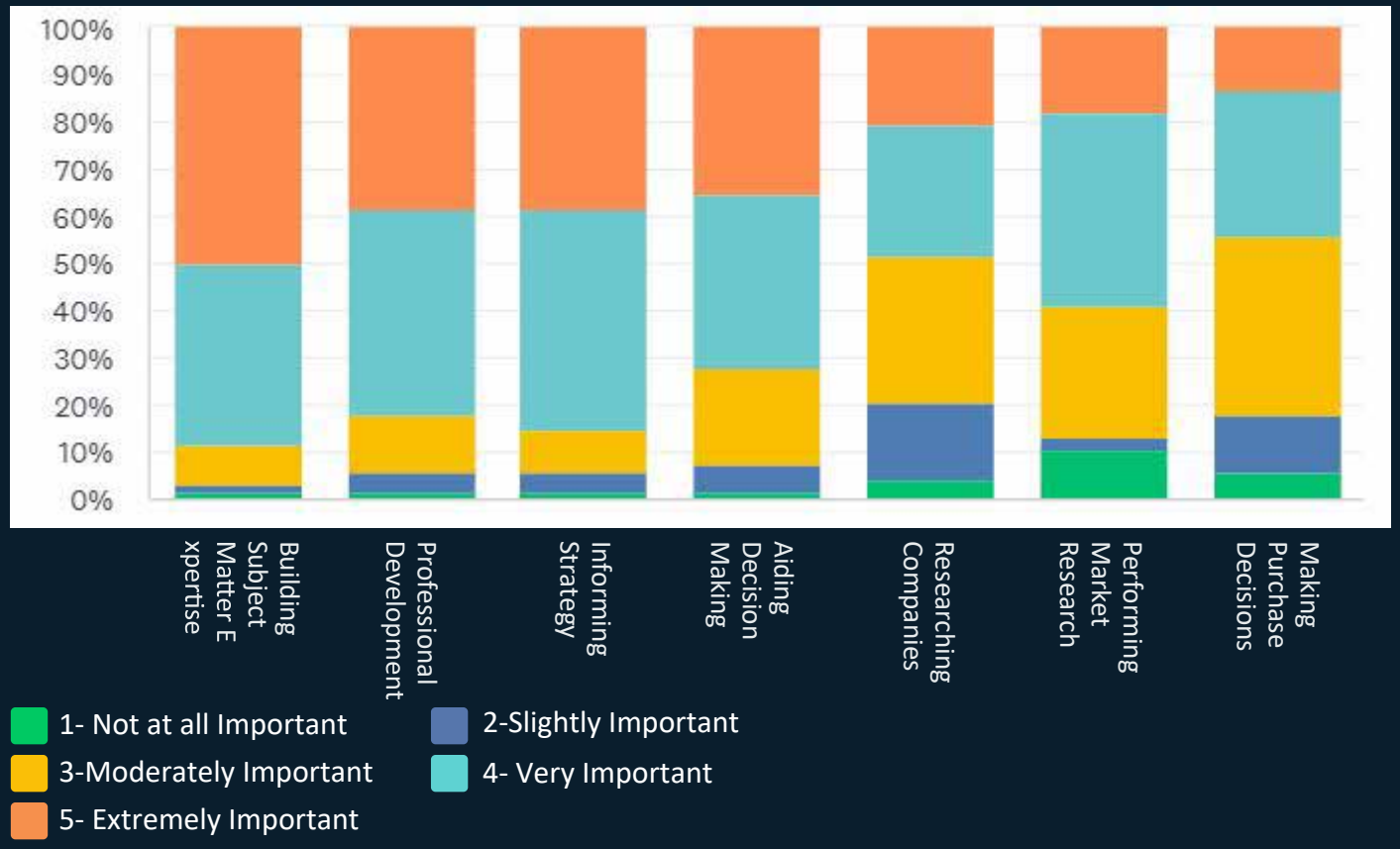
# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BENEFITS

Thought leadership audiences cited “building subject matter expertise” (88%), “informing strategy” (85%), “professional development” (82%) and “aiding decision making” (72%) and as extremely important or very important. “Making purchase decisions” (82%) was cited as moderately important or higher.

While motivations and benefits of consuming thought leadership vary widely, over 79% cited it moderately important or higher across all potential benefits.

Thought leadership is increasingly used for professional development & informing strategy as well as aiding decision making




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q3. Thought Leadership Benefits: Please rate the importance of thought leadership you consume in supporting the following:

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP TIME INVESTMENT

Thought leadership audiences cited 8+ hours (34%) as their average amount of time spent per week reading thought leadership content. This is a significant increase over prior years in our research.

Over 56% of respondents reported spending 4 hours or more, with 34% spending more than 1 day per week and only 13% spending less than 2 hours per week.

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




**Source:**
Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q4. Thought Leadership Time Investment: On average, how much time per week do you spend consuming thought leadership?

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PERSONAS

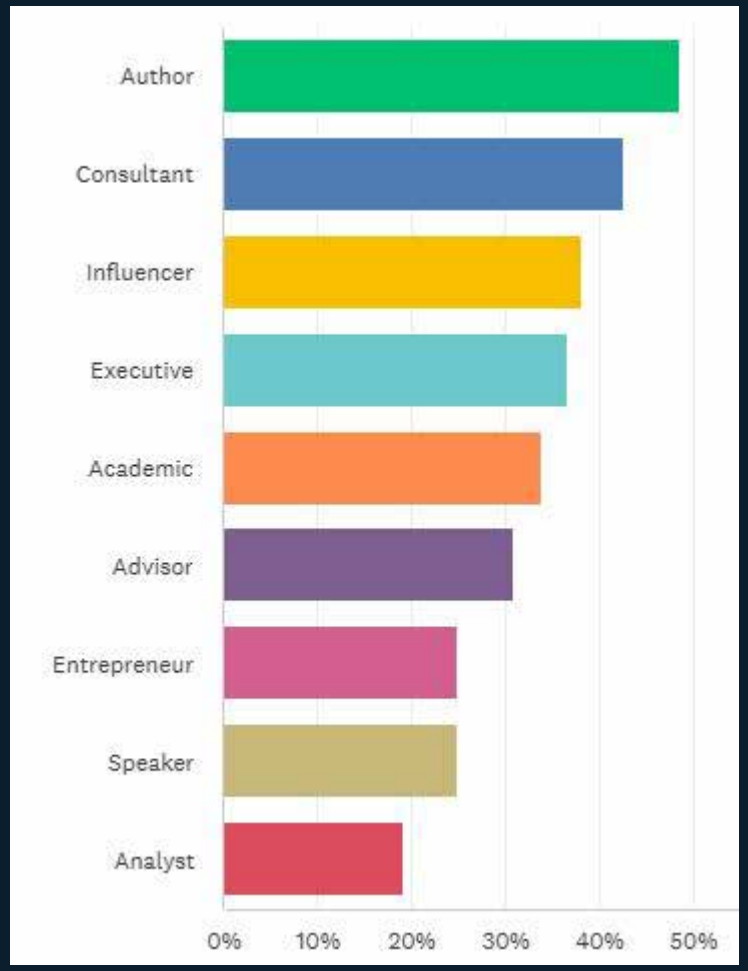
Thought leadership consumers cited authors (49%), consultants (43%), influencers (38%) and executives (37%) as their primary sources of thought leadership content respectively.

As per prior years, analysts and advisors faired less well with only 19% and 31% 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 prior years, 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 consultants on the rise.

## Authors retain top spot, consultants on the rise




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadershi 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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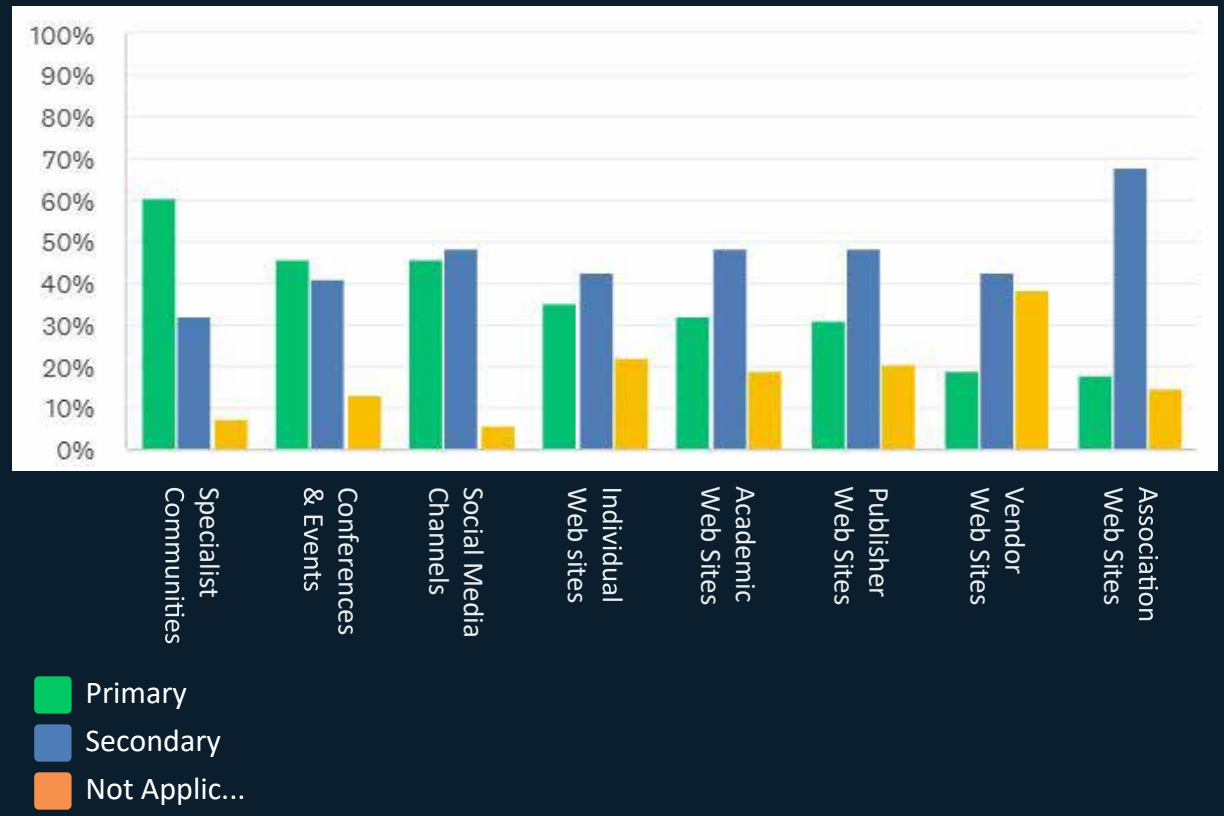
# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SOURCES

Thought leadership audiences cited “specialist communities” (60%), “conferences & events” (46%) and “social media channels” (46%) as their primary sources for thought leadership content.

All other destinations were seen more as secondary sources than primary sources with “vendor web sites” seen by 38% as not applicable.

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

## Specialist communities remain well ahead of conferences, events & social media as the tip of the spear for accessing thought leadership content




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q6. Thought Leadership Sources: What are the primary and secondary sources for the thought leadership content you consume?

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CREATORS

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP BENEFITS

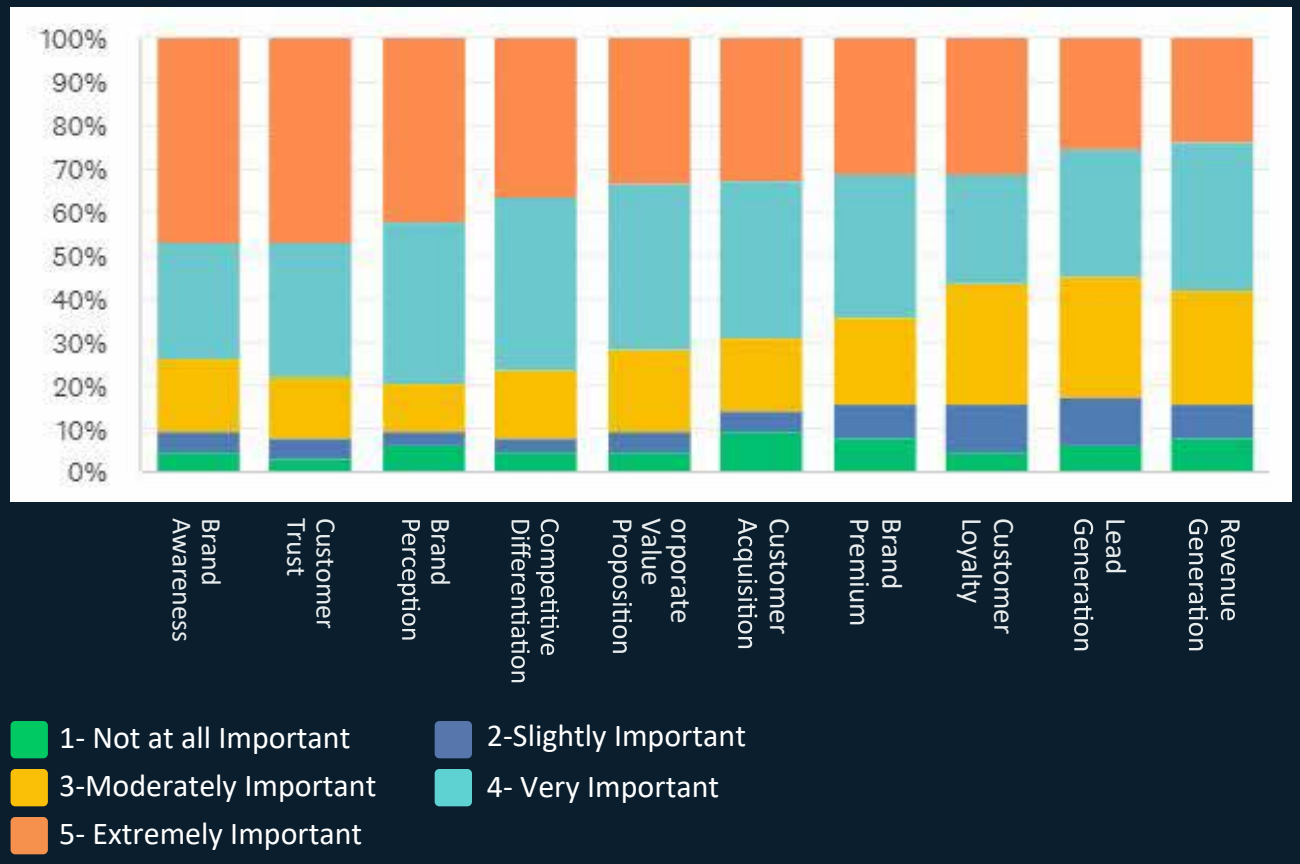
Thought leadership creators cited “brand perception” (80%), “customer trust” (78%), “competitive differentiation” (76%) and “brand awareness” (73%) as extremely important or very important attributes of thought leadership.

All ten thought leadership benefits were cited as moderately important or more by over 82% 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 54% as either very important or extremely important objectives.

Over 75% see thought leadership as extremely or very important for brand perception, customer trust & competitive differentiation




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q7. Thought Leadership Benefits:
Please rate the importance of thought leadership you produce in supporting the following business objectives:

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# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PREMIUM

Over 85% of thought leadership creators rate their thought leadership content as adding over 25% to their brand premium and over 37% state it adds over 75%.

Fewer than 5% 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.

## Over 1/3 see thought leadership adding over 75% to the brand premium they command in the marketplace




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 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:

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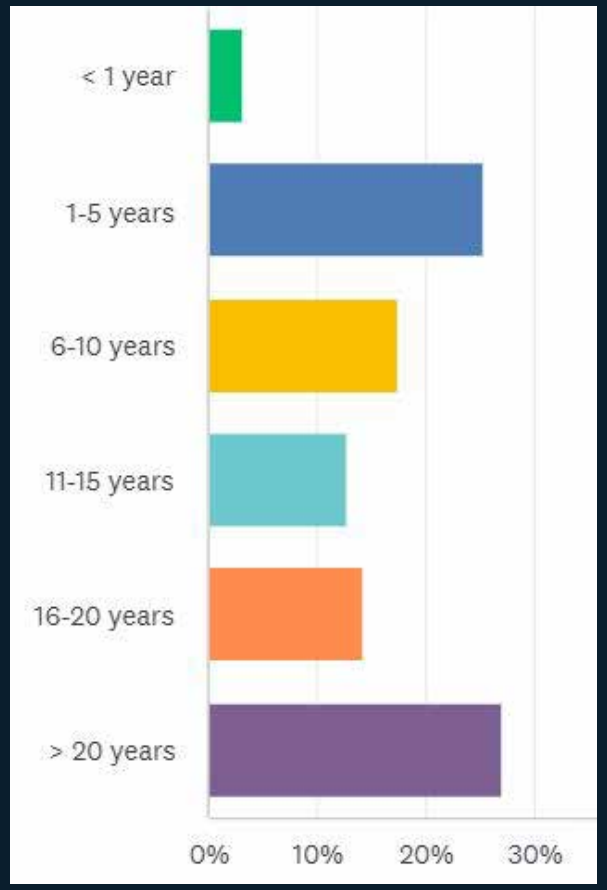
# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Over 71% of thought leadership creators who participated in the survey have been producing thought leadership content for over 5 years, with 54% over 10 years, and 41% over 15 years.

Close to 30% 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 & marketing strategies.

## Over 70% have been producing thought leadership content for over 5 years with close to 55% over 10 years




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 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, 30% produce 12 or less pieces per year (1 per month or less) and 35% produce 48 or more pieces per year (4 per month or more).

A similar number of 34% produce between 12-48 pieces per year.

Thought leadership cadence is increasing compared to prior years with over 35% producing over 4 pieces per month although a similar number produce 1-4 content pieces per month.

## Thought leadership cadence is increasing with over 35% producing over 4 pieces per month although the majority produce 1-4 per month




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 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 CREATORS PLANS FOR 2025

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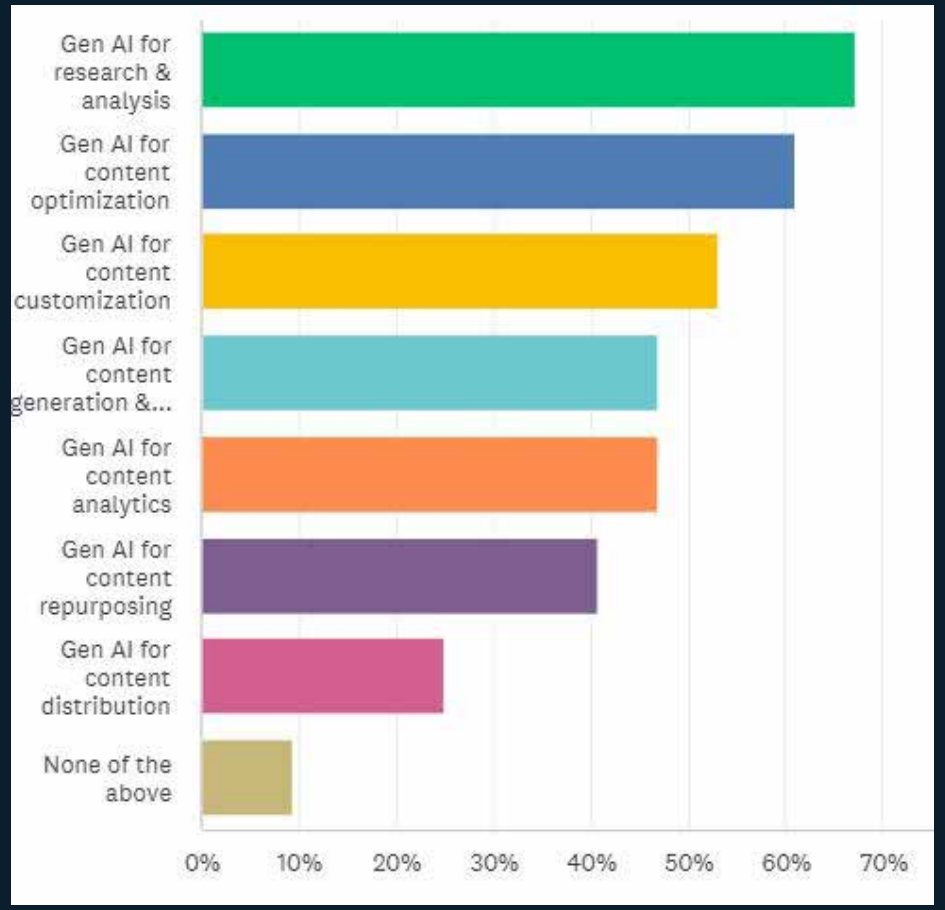
# THOUGHT LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

In the generative AI era, thought leaders plan to leverage AI to ensure their thought leadership cuts above the noise in 2025 by using for research & analysis (67%), content optimization (61%), content customization (53%), and content generation & ideation (47%).

In addition, 47% plan to leverage AI for content analytics, while another 41% plan to use for content repurposing, and 25% plan to use for content distribution.

## In the generative AI era, 67% of thought leaders plan to cut through the noise in 2025 by leveraging AI for research & analysis




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q11. In the Generative AI era, how do you plan to leverage AI to ensure your thought leadership cuts above the noise in 2025? (check all that apply):

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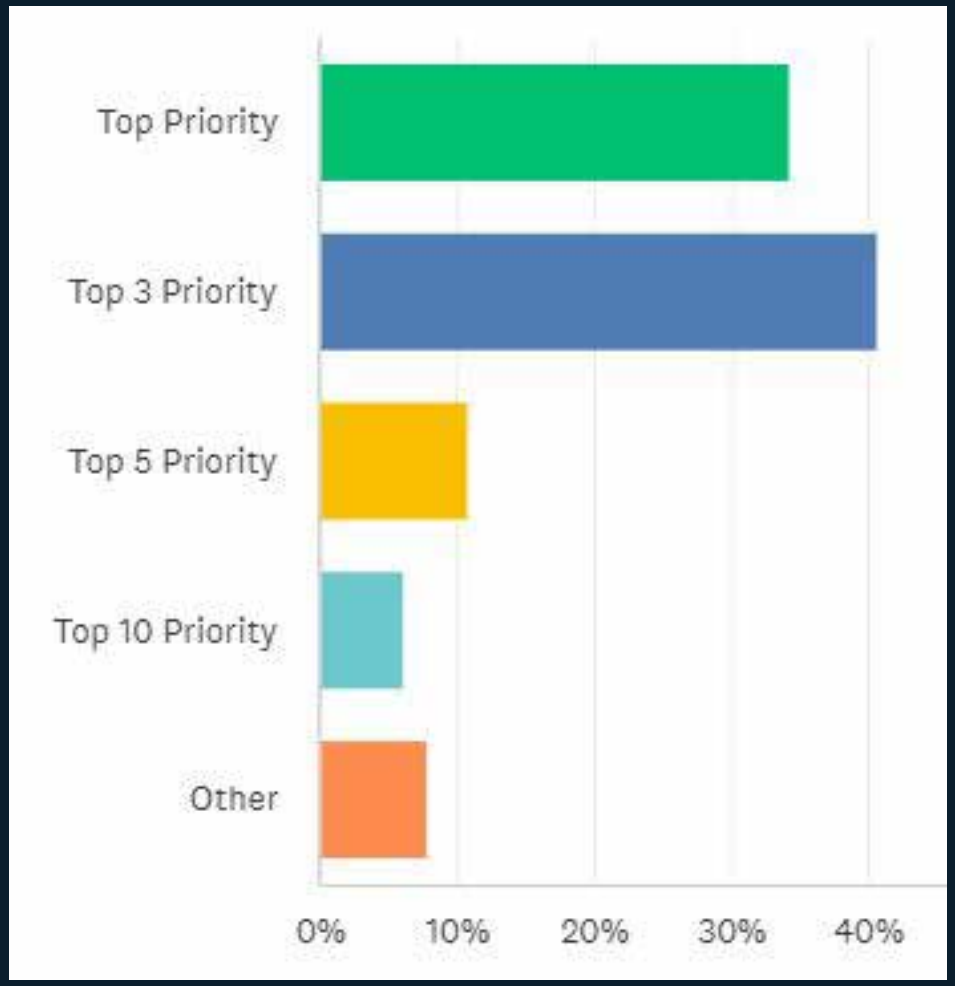
# 2025: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PRIORITY

This year, thought leadership has moved to the top priority for the 2025 sales & marketing strategy of 34% of thought leadership creators.

It is a top 3 priority or higher for 75%, and a top 5 priority or higher for 86%, of all thought leadership creators who participated in the survey.

## 34% consider thought leadership their Top Priority for 2025




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q12. Thought Leadership Priority: Please rate the relative priority of thought leadership to your sales and marketing strategy in 2025:

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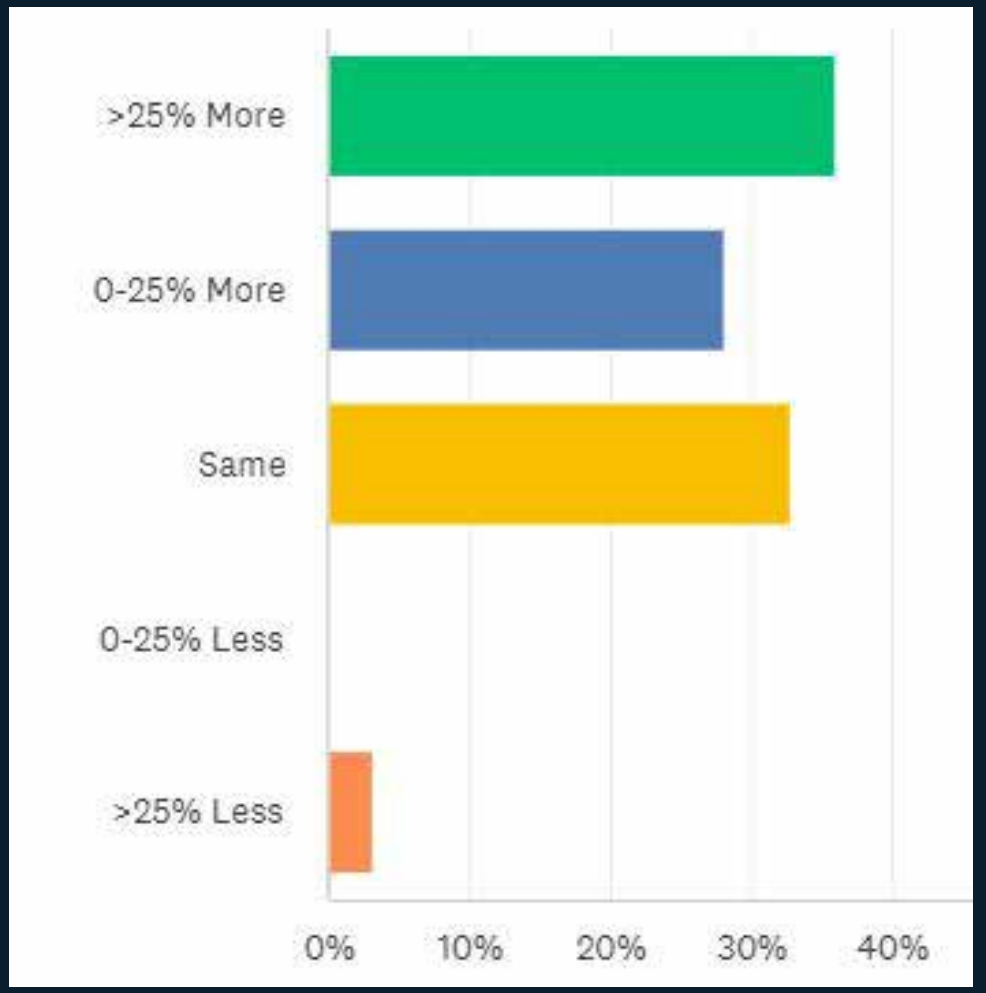
# 2025: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP QUANTITY

64% of thought leadership creators plan to produce more thought leadership content in 2025.

33% expect to produce the same amount of thought leadership content in 2025, whereas only 3% plan to create less content in 2025.

## Thought leadership creators plan to ramp up their production in 2025




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q13. Thought Leadership Quantity: Please share the volume of thought leadership you plan to produce in 2025:

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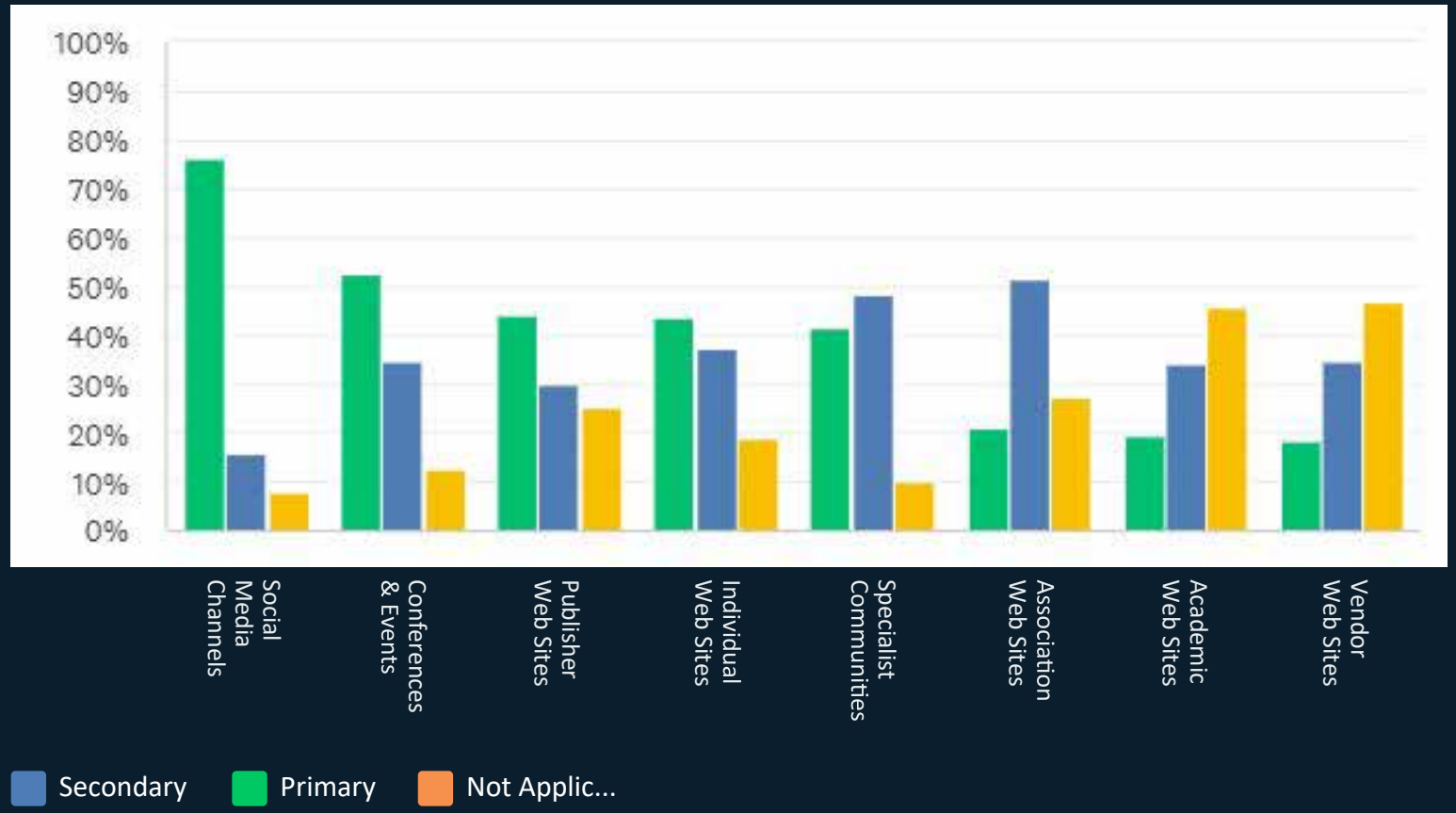
# 2025: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP OUTLETS

Thought leadership creators cited social media channels (77%), conferences & events (52%), publisher web sites (44%) and individual web sites (44%) as their primary outlets for thought leadership content.

All other destinations were seen more as secondary outlets than primary sources with "vendor web sites" seen by 47% as not applicable.

Beyond social media, creators plan to leverage specialist communities (such as Thinkers360) (90%) as either primary and secondary outlets for their thought leadership content.

Social media and conferences & events are the tip of the spear for disseminating thought leadership content in 2025




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 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 2025?

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# 2025: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES

Building thought leadership credentials (69%), expanding their thought leadership community (62%), & researching industry news & content (57%) are the most popular ways thought leadership content creators plan to use specialist communities in 2025.

Over 50% plan to use for amplification of their executives, thought leaders and content and over 45% plan to use for finding and working with experts.

Close to 40% plan to use to expand their sales & marketing funnel & to influence the influencers (e.g. analysts).

## Close to 70% of thought leadership content creators plan to use specialist communities to build their thought leadership credentials in 2025




**Source:**
Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q15. Thought Leadership Communities:
How do you plan to leverage specialist communities when building and sharing your thought leadership in 2025? (check all that apply):

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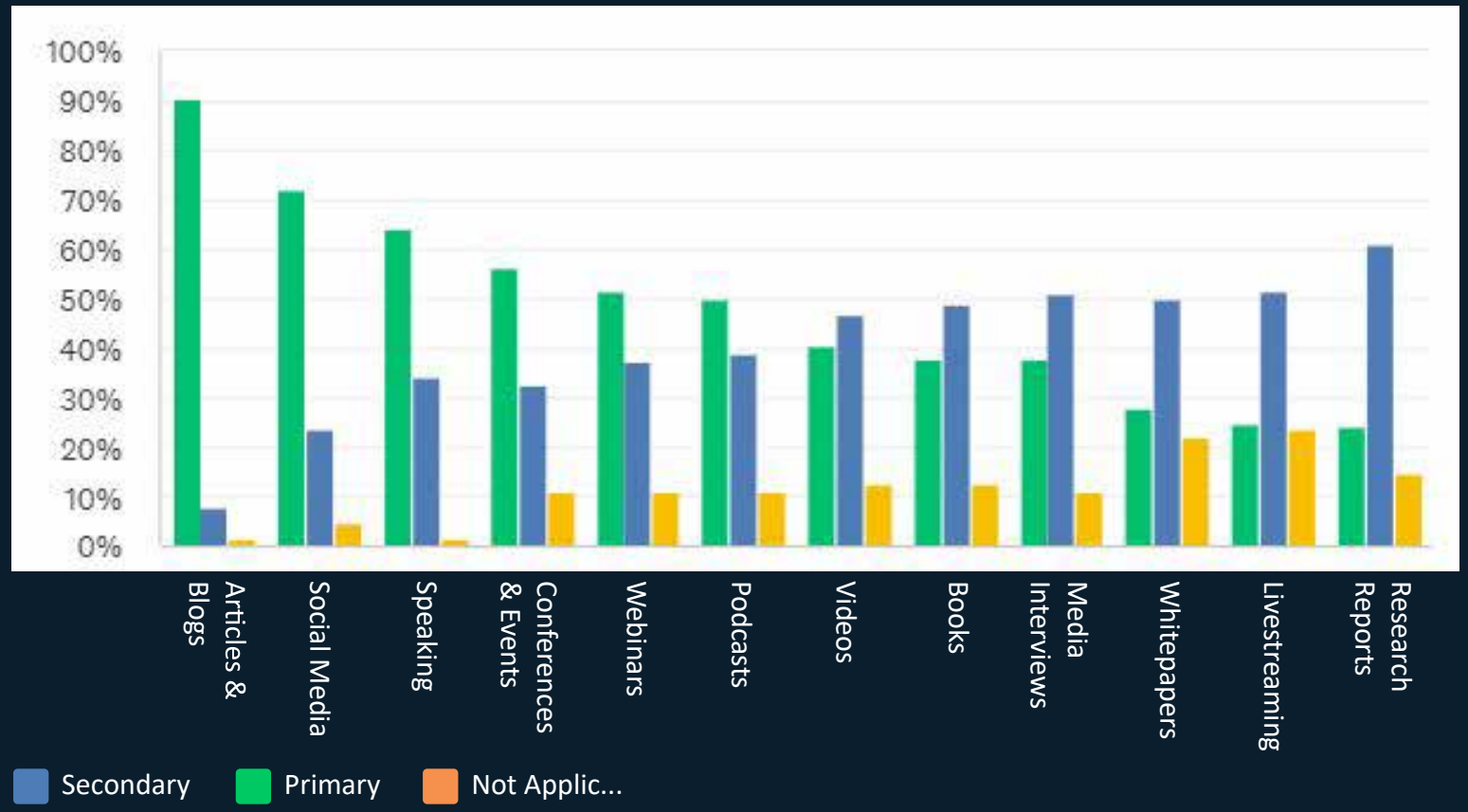
# 2025: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FORMATS

Thought leadership creators cited articles & blogs (91%), social media (72%), speaking (64%), conferences & events (56%), webinars (52%) and podcasts (50%) as the primary formats for thought leadership content they plan to produce in 2025.

Popular secondary formats for content production included research reports (61%), livestreaming (52%), media interviews (51%), whitepapers (50%), books (49%) & videos (47%).

Articles & blogs (91%), social media (72%) and speaking (64%) are the primary formats for thought leadership content production in 2025




**Source:**

Thinkers360 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Outlook Survey. Q16. Thought Leadership Formats: What are the primary and secondary formats for the thought leadership content you plan to produce in 2025?

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# THINKERS360 B2B SERVICES MARKETPLACE

# THE WORLD'S TOP EXPERTS. ON DEMAND.

***Connecting global brands with the world's foremost thought leaders, analysts and influencers for game-changing results***

Connect with and engage premier influencers from an opt-in community of the world's foremost B2B thought leaders ( >100M followers).

## Thinkers360 Speaker Bureau



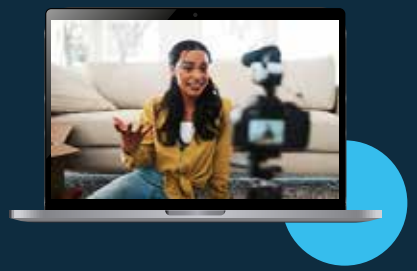
Save over 400% compared to traditional agents and bureaus!

## B2B Expert Network



Save $ tens of thousands per year compared to expensive advisory firms!

## B2B Influencer Marketing



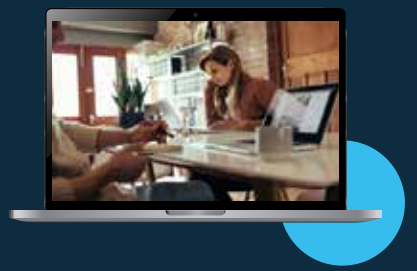
Save up to $97K yearly compared to in-house and expensive agencies!

## B2B Thought Leadership Marketing



Leverage thought leadership to raise brand premium by as much as 75%!

## Analyst & Influencer Relations Software



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# THANK YOU!

