

Thought leadership or leadership profiling is essential for business growth

 By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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Before we delve deeper into this topic, it's important to start by defining this PR concept. According to Western Governors University, thought leadership is the expression of ideas that demonstrate that leadership in a company have expertise in a particular field, area or topic.



As PR agencies, we always do our best to advise our clients to use this effective yet under-utilised PR and reputation management tool. This PR tool can be used to position leadership in various companies as thought leaders to their stakeholders, including both existing and potential customers.

Many clients we have worked with in the past think that it's more important to talk about their products and services than to focus on thought leadership. Other clients do not want to be profiled because they believe that their products and services can speak for them; however, they don't realise that a business is not just bricks and mortar.

Who is behind the company?

Unfortunately, both existing and potential customers want to know the faces behind a company and the credentials of the leadership that runs a particular business. When customers know the credentials of the leadership in an organisation, they

can trust that their business will be in good hands should they decide to use their products or services.

We always do our best to explain to them the importance of positioning themselves as experts in their various fields. We also stress how crucial it is for them to show their stakeholders how knowledgeable they are in their field regarding challenges facing a particular industry and opportunities, trends, and best practices.

It's vital for leadership in a company to show their stakeholders that they know where their industry is going, to give perspective on international business trends and how these can be localised to suit the dynamics of either the South African market or the African continent as a whole.

Customers need to know that they are dealing with company leadership with insight into their respective industry and where it's going. Stakeholders want to see that company leadership can look at the bigger picture from an international and local business point of view.

We always tell our clients that building a thought leadership profile in the market also positions company leadership as a media-go-to for commentary on various business topics. This commentary is generally used by the media when writing in-depth opinion pieces.

It's not only about products or services

Company leadership needs to be known as experts that the media can go to when they need perspective on the industry. A business leader cannot be known for being able to speak on their company products and services only. For instance, in conferences or other business dialogue settings where a company leader is asked to be one of the speakers – they are not given the platform to talk about their products or services but rather insight on issues affecting that business industry.



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When clients are adamant that they only want to talk about their products and services, they don't realise how important it is to be positioned as gurus in their respective fields. Only talking about products and services when communicating with stakeholders via media platforms or others; gives clients the impression that the company leadership is oblivious of his surroundings and is not aware of issues affecting the whole industry where they are operating.

The issues that I am referring to are not limited to those that pertain to business operations only, but also community issues that could hurt the business in the long run. I always look at businesses that operate in communities that face several socio-economic issues, and they continue working as if nothing is happening around them. A company making money from people who come from disadvantaged communities cannot sit back and watch while its customer base suffer.

Giving back to the community where a business operates is another way of positioning itself as thought leaders in their space – this is essentially being socially aware and responsible. However, this act of giving back to customers' needs to be done because it is the right thing to do and not just as a PR exercise. It is important to remember that customers are loyal to companies that care about their needs.

ABOUT MIRANDA LUSIBA

Miranda Lusiba is the Founding Director of Strangé Consulting - a boutique PR Agency specialising in Communications, Freelance Writing, Media Relations, Reputation Management and Media Training.

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