

Thought Leadership Enablement Checklist



A practical guide for marketers activating real experts

The age of performative thought leadership is ending. The experts who never wanted the spotlight are now the ones audiences trust most.

This checklist helps you turn reluctant executives, engineers, and operators into credible public voices —without turning them into “influencers.”

☐ **IDENTIFY YOUR REAL EXPERTS — NOT JUST THE LOUDEST VOICES.**

Action: Audit who in your org teaches or mentors others; start there.

Example: The CTO who writes internal explainers may have stronger audience pull than the VP who’s always pushing to be on panels.

☐ **SECURE EXPLICIT EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP.**

Action: Get a 15-minute slot on the exec calendar to align around why authentic expertise builds trust faster than brand campaigns.

Example: The CEO endorses the program and encourages participation in team meetings.

☐ **DEFINE EACH SME’S “LANE.”**

Action: Pair each expert with 2–3 recurring themes tied to their expertise.

Example: CFO → metrics and growth discipline; Engineer → behind-the-scenes process lessons.

☐ **LOWER THE BARRIER TO ENTRY.**

Action: Offer 3 participation options: recording, outline, or interview, so no one gets stuck on writing.

Example: Ask for a 5-minute Loom instead of a 600-word draft.

☐ **BUILD CONFIDENCE BEFORE VISIBILITY.**

Action: Collect peer feedback, then graduate the best ideas to LinkedIn or Substack.

Example: Test the first piece internally (Slack, newsletter) before publishing.

☐ **CONNECT PERSONAL INSIGHT TO CORPORATE NARRATIVE.**

Action: Use a simple structure: What I’ve seen → Why it matters → How our team approaches it.

Example: A CTO post on “tech debt” links to the company’s broader message about operational excellence.



☐ **PROVIDE FAST, PROFESSIONAL POLISH.**

Action: Create a service-level agreement: turnaround time, feedback loop, approval path.

Example: Your content team turns a rough transcript into a LinkedIn draft within 48 hours.

☐ **PREP FOR RISK AND PUSHBACK.**

Action: Build a “what if” grid covering legal, competitive, and reputational risks before launch.

Example: An engineer’s opinion sparks debate in the comments; have pre-approved talking points ready.

☐ **MAKE CONTRIBUTION PART OF THE RHYTHM.**

Action: Add publishing cadence to personal development goals to normalize participation.

Example: Each SME commits to one major idea per quarter and two short reflections per month.

☐ **CELEBRATE IMPACT, NOT VANITY METRICS.**

Action: Ask thought leaders to share personal performance data on a regular cadence. Track qualitative wins (mentions, speaking invites, sales references) alongside engagement data.

Example: Highlight how a post sparked customer conversation or improved recruiting, not just impressions.

NEXT STEP

Once your experts are engaged, use our [Messaging Framework for Multi-Voice Thought Leadership](#) to keep every story aligned with your brand’s narrative.



Book a free working session with our team to think through how to bring these best practices into your business.