



## THE POWER OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

### Surveys, Research Studies, White Papers, Executive Briefs

#### Thought Leadership Projects Have Amazing Impact

- Surveys, research studies and white papers are powerful business development tools.
- The end product – survey results or white paper – is important. But **the real payoff comes while engaging clients and prospects in the data collection process** through live interviews and electronic or mailed surveys
- Thought Leadership projects:
  - Position firm as innovative thought leader
  - Illustrate access to industry and market leaders
  - Serve as basis for high-level discussions with target audience
  - Establish hundreds of new relationships
  - Expand the firm's market footprint

#### EXAMPLE: [“Will You Be Ready? How the Communications Industry is Surviving While Planning for a Robust Future”](#)



Patty Block led numerous Spencer Stuart surveys and studies. Block secured industry and media alliances – e.g., Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA) – conducted face-to-face and phone interviews, and led electronic survey to TIA members/other targeted executives. This survey/study:

- Enhanced firm visibility
- Established new relationships with dozens of prospects
- Secured senior forum panel and speaking opportunities
- Led to \$ millions in new search work

#### The Process

- Create list of companies and executives that you want to work with.
- Brainstorm an appropriate subject, make the title relevant, news-worthy and compelling – i.e., about something that impacts you target audience’s business – and they will respond. Why?
  - People like giving their opinion because it makes them feel that their ideas matter, and
  - Executives want to learn what their peers and market leaders are thinking and doing.
- Develop a plan for data collection and writing survey results.
- Build high-level outline of assumptions, findings and conclusions.
- **Important:** Find appropriate Industry Association or Publication to partner with. This helps:
  - Enhance study cachet
  - Broaden market reach
  - Increase practice and firm visibility
  - Expand the firm’s business referral network
  - Secure numerous speaking and panel opportunities
  - Generate leads and new business
- Contact clients and prospects and invite them to participate in survey – **these data collection interviews open doors, establish and build relationships, and generate new and add-on work.**
- Draft survey results and highlight interview quotes. People look first for powerful commentary when reading newspaper stories, magazine articles, annual reports, etc.
- Obtain feedback on draft from colleagues, clients, PR firm, then edit and publish final survey report.

#### Leveraging Thought Leadership

- Email survey results to prospects before meeting and snail-mail to dormant clients to re-establish contact.
- Distribute at networking events, industry forums, conferences and speaking engagements.
- Media Relationships and Coverage
  - Use survey results to help get “foot in the door” and establish relationship with premiere business publications and local, regional and national media.
  - Excerpt and repurpose content for newspaper articles, business magazines and newsletters.
  - Leverage survey and study results as basis for business journal article or book.