

5 Lessons Learned

on My Thought Leadership Journey

By Deanna Utroske

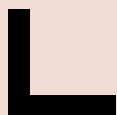


Beauty is overflowing with valuable voices; and yours is one of them!

You already know that one voice has the potential to influence an entire industry. And you know that to establish trust, build relationships, and make a meaningful difference, that voice—your voice—needs to be heard. Thought leadership is the strategy to makes it happen.

In 2014, I was a complete unknown in the beauty world. Not only was I an unknown, I didn't even work in beauty—I had never even considered it. But today, you likely know me only because I am a beauty industry thought leader and business content specialist.

On my journey from 'unknown' to 'industry influencer', I have learned a lot about sharing ideas and insights to become a thought leader on the B2B side of the cosmetics and personal care industry. And here, I'm sharing those lessons with you.



1. *You're Ready For This*

Now is a very good time to start sharing your knowledge and perspective. In fact, until you do start sharing your insights, it will be difficult for your colleagues and (prospective) customers to know just how wise and wonderful you are.

The very same week I was hired to work at Cosmetics Design, I began writing and publishing beauty business news articles for a readership of 60,000 unique monthly site visitors—CEOs and decision makers at the industry's top multinational corporations, highly skilled cosmetic chemists, new product development experts, marketing pros, and leaders in packaging, ingredients, and manufacturing. Not long after that, I was called upon to share my observations and market predictions for the year ahead, on-camera no less. And before I knew it, I was invited to speak at international industry trade shows and provide commentary to global market research firms. Was I ready? Did I know what I was doing? No. Did I deliver useful, meaningful, actionable information? Yes. And so can you.

Valuable ideas sparkle without polish! So there is no need to wait until you're camera-ready or until you have carefully scripted your message. You already think for yourself and trust yourself to get your job done well every day. **Expand your circle of trust:** Start sharing your wisdom widely today. Say what you see, share what you know, and watch your business grow.

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2. *Keep Speaking Up*

Effective **thought leadership is not a one-and-done enterprise**. Thought leaders are memorable in part because of the quality of the ideas they share but also because of the quantity of their contributions. Repetition improves recall and it takes the pressure off for one performance or utterance to be perfect.

Throughout grade school, high school, and university, I had the luxury of first drafts, feedback, revisions, edits, and in the end, my writing had to hold the attention and meet the expectations of a small audience—of only one instructor or a small group of my peers. As a professional writer, often tasked with publishing breaking news, I have learned to **create and share** within the same hour. It's not (ever) perfect, but it's good (enough). And over time, the preponderance of the content I share diminishes the missteps and compounds the merits.

Creating an abundance of content has another advantage. You see, showing up and speaking up is good practice. Doctors **practice** medicine, yogis **practice** meditation, and outstanding business pros **practice** thought leadership. Practice is a clever way to refine your ideas and your style, to get comfortable with your personality in the public gaze. With practice, you find your niche and your network and your audience.

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3. *Listening Is A Superpower*

All the best insights and ideas come when our intuition and our intelligence is informed and inspired by the experience and expertise of others. You've likely heard me say before: I don't know what's happening in beauty unless you tell me. Which really means that as much as I'd like to believe that my thoughts on all things beauty and business are fabulous, what's actually fabulous is the information and insight that I gain through observation.

On any given day, I **listen** to founders and funders, to chemists and consumers. I **read** press releases and email pitches from ingredient makers, packaging companies, product manufacturers, brand leaders, industry organizations, and decision makers.

I **tune in** to events here in the US and around the world; keep an ear turned toward the reports and activities of market researchers

and forecasting agencies; and I **converse** with executives, aspiring entrepreneurs, beauty consumers, MUAs, nail techs, and stylists. I **observe** beauty retail, beauty media, and our culture at large (albeit through my individual and incomplete lens). Oh! I **eavesdrop** too—on brands, businesses, and the people that make them tick over social media.

Somewhere along the way, I am thinking, writing, and speaking to **amplify the wisdom** that I've picked up.

But there's a lot of listening. I'm listening even now and know that I have more to discover about thought leadership. So please do drop me a note and let me know what thought leadership means to you and why you're eager to learn more about it.

[Click here to drop me a note.](#)

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4.

Wisdom Works On Any Platform

I have a little how-to book that, along with my well-worn 1946 edition of Roget's International Thesaurus, has been a mainstay of my bookshelf for over a decade now.

Other resources have come and gone. And the books that motivate and inspire me change with the seasons of my life; but *Business Notes: Writing Personal Notes That Build Professional Relationships* by Florence Isaacs is a keeper.

Business Notes is a terribly quaint book and truth be told, I don't think I've ever actually read an entire chapter, let alone the full 160 pages cover-to-cover. But I take it off the shelf all the time. And that's because the prompts and practices that Isaacs shares work not just for hand-written note cards sent by mail but also for email notes, social media comments, voice texts, etc. etc. etc.

And that's a lesson I've learned about thought leadership too. No matter the platform or the medium, communication practices that have worked well for me and for you and for people all through history, work well now on Instagram, on Facebook, on Clubhouse, on Twitter, on LinkedIn, on Pinterest, on TikTok.

Sure! There are functionalities and nuances unique to each media style and every new social platform, and they are well worth learning.

Just remember, **your communication skills and distinctive style have gotten you this far**. So be open to sharing your ideas and knowledge in a variety of places and spaces; on an array of platforms; and as video, audio, text, and whatever come next.

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5.

Borrowing Best Practices Is A Best Practice

I've studied dance, automotive technology, and English. In hindsight, I can see quite clearly that my affinity for systems and rhythms guided me to and through each of these disciplines.

Where thought leadership is concerned, systems and rhythms come in quite handy too. For every thought leadership channel, there are formats that work. And there is no reason that you should hesitate to find and **follow templates, ask for tips, and study techniques** of successful thought leaders in and beyond beauty.

What makes your thought leadership output distinctive is that delightfully cliché quality we call authenticity—it's your personality and your particular view of reality.

Once you're acquainted with the basics of public speaking, of blogging for business; of sharing commentary with the media; of drafting articles, posts, and comments that get engagement on social platforms, your creativity and individuality will naturally shine through!

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Deanna Utroske

Deanna Utroske inspires women in beauty and wellness to become thought leaders and attain success as entrepreneurs and business leaders. A cosmetics and personal care thought leader in her own right, Deanna is a globally respected beauty business content specialist and a keen observer of the personal care, fragrance, and cosmetics value chain—from ingredient sourcing and production to product development, manufacturing, and beyond.

Learn more at DeannaUtroske.com