

Introduction

Any marketing discipline worth its salt has a maturity model, which is an important tool to assess the people, processes, culture and tools an organization needs to support and apply best practices to its programs. Maturity models help organizations:

1.

Determine the most appropriate approach for their program given its current resources and culture

2.

Allocate resources to sustain momentum in its current state

3.

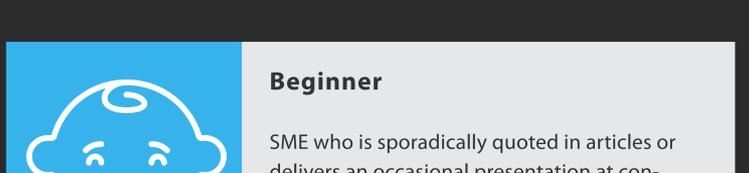
Understand the requirements for migrating to the next level

4.

Gauge if getting to the next level is realistic or worth the investment

The following Thought Leadership Maturity Model helps organizations assess current approach against best practices and requirements for each level. The model migrates from the most basic level which we categorize as "just getting started" to the pinnacle where the company has influence far beyond the boundaries of its own industry.

Thought Leadership Maturity Model: Turning your internal SMEs into external influencers



Beginner



SME who is sporadically quoted in articles or delivers an occasional presentation at conference; more a PR program than a thought leadership initiative.

Typical Assets or Approach

- Occasional presence in business or industry media
- News releases
- Quotes in articles
- Speaker decks

Organizational & Cultural Readiness

- Identified face(s) of the brand
- Defined process for earned media participation, expectations and compliance
- Ad hoc training for SMEs

Diagnostics

- Do you constantly scramble to find original thinking?
- Have you developed a strategic plan for matching your SMEs with relevant topics on which they could develop an authoritative voice?

Tips for Next Level

- Conduct topic modeling to uncover 2-3 topics for which you can present a POV and that is relevant to your business mission and market positioning

Proof of Concept



A single topic is created for use in a one-off campaign or in a pilot for a select business area.

Typical Assets or Approach

- Multiple pieces of content associated with a single topic, product or line of business
- eBook or white paper
- Infographic
- Blog post

Organizational & Cultural Readiness

- Facilitate the monitoring of trends and emergent thought and share this information across the enterprise
- Ability to measure and socialize success of specific topics and ideas
- Showcase internal "champion"

Diagnostics

- Do you do multiple, one-off campaigns vs. build an integrated strategy?
- Do your campaigns build on one another or leverage information and POV from previous work?
- Have you mapped the needs of stakeholders at multiple points in their discovery journey?

Tips for Next Level

- Create a thought leadership roadmap to build ideas and deepen POV over time for multiple audiences

Prolific Publisher



A strategic content marketing program with lots of content but not necessarily attributed to SME(s) to serve as face of the brand.

Typical Assets or Approach

- Multiple topics published in multiple formats
- eBook
- Infographics
- Webinars
- Videos
- POVs/Reports
- Blogs

Organizational & Cultural Readiness

- Invest in systems and processes that allow the organization to continuously gather and analyze pertinent information and data
- Encourage people to contribute to the ideation process
- Culture of collaboration across business units and functions

Diagnostics

- Do you publish lots of content with little attribution to an internal SME?
- Does your content offer new thought about specific topics?
- Do you "own" share of voice on designated topics?

Tips for Next Level

- Feature SMEs who add original ideas and a unique POV
- Present multiple aspects about single topic

Beacon Brands:

Visible Thinker



Sought-after expert who adds insights and unique POV to the conversation.

Typical Assets or Approach

- Influencer who shares content and ideas either solo or in partnership with other thought leaders
- Keynote speaker
- Prolific author
- Industry insider/roundtables
- Podcast
- Social following
- LinkedIn featured author
- Guest blogger

Organizational & Cultural Readiness

- Encourage and reward appropriate risk-taking
- Allow expression of new or innovative ideas; reward sharing POVs externally

Diagnostics

- Are your SMEs considered external influencers?
- Do your SMEs have name recognition within your industry?
- Do your SMEs have a significant digital and social footprint?

Tips for Next Level

- Create a plan to extend the footprint and authority of your SMEs

Beacon Brands:

Breakthrough Innovator



Contributes ideas about how to reinvent industries or business processes, invent new product or industry categories, etc.

Typical Assets or Approach

- Best selling business book
- Original research
- Keynote speaker
- Industry recognition/awards
- Cover story/major media
- Consistent inclusion in earned media

Organizational & Cultural Readiness

- Culture of innovation
- Visionary leader predisposed to create and share high-level intellectual capital

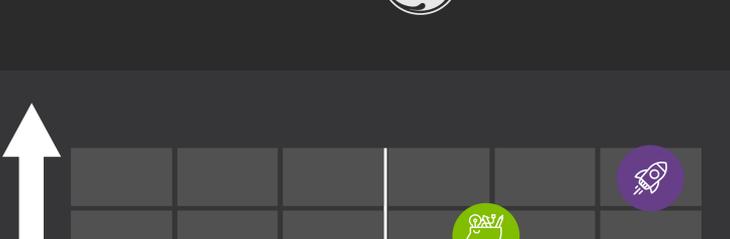
Diagnostics

- Does your rock star SMEs have name recognition beyond your industry?
- Is your thought leadership truly breakthrough or just interesting content?

Tips for Next Level

- Invest in a culture of innovation

Beacon Brands:



Get Started

Learn more about optimizing your thought leadership programs

Contact Us



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Lumenatti Blog

Links to: [Putting Some Thought into Thought Leadership](#)