

## In this issue:

Six secrets of thought leadership, 2020 content survival tips, Baby Yoda (sort of) and more.

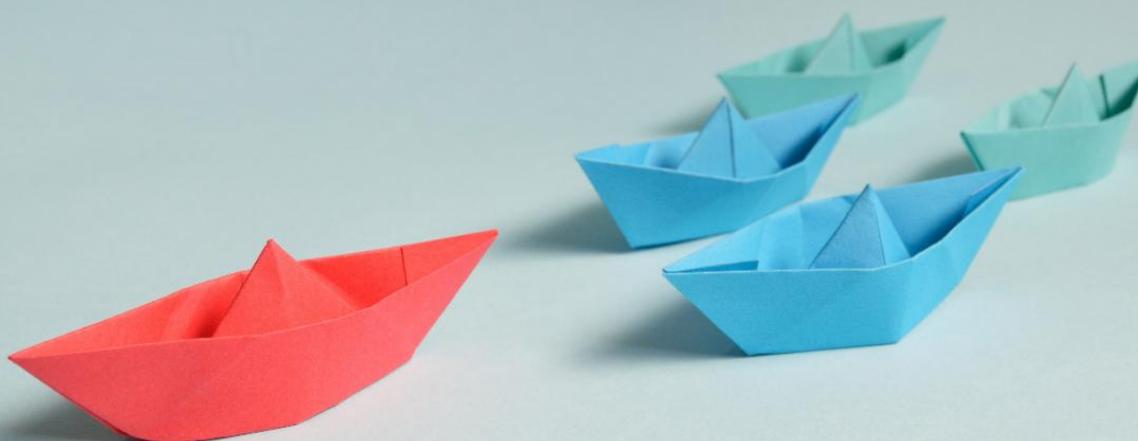
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## Insights and smart practices from your content team

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## HOW TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER

Content marketing has put organizations under pressure to generate fresh output on a continuous basis. But not just any content will do: audiences are looking for thought leadership to guide their strategies and decisions.

While that creates an opportunity to deliver richer-value content and elevate your brand, coming up with “leading thoughts” can be anxiety-inducing -- especially if you’re deep in the weeds and not sure which of your thoughts qualify as “leading”.

Here are **six secrets to help you generate solid thought leadership content:**

### **1. Small insights are still insights.**

You don't need to have big, “paradigm-shifting” ideas. Offering a fresh spin on a familiar topic or focused perspective on a common issue is authentic and valuable to your audience.

### **2. Got feelings? Then you’ve got topics.**

The most powerful thought leadership emerges from what matters most to people -- what stirs emotion. That includes the people inside your organization. Unpack those feelings and you'll find gold: raw material that will give you something authentic to talk about.

### 3. It's OK to join an established conversation.

Being a thought leader doesn't mean you have to be the first to say something. You can add to a dialogue that's already underway in your industry. Check third-party sources, social media and other forums to see what's on the minds of your audience. Consider how your perspective maps to those topics to keep your content current and sought-after.

### 4. It's not about you.

Thought leadership is about perspective: seeing the world in a unique way, especially the challenges and opportunities facing your customers and stakeholders. People want to know how your insights relate to what *they* care about. Look beyond your own walls and context.

### 5. The best ideas come from collaboration.

Get out of your own head and bounce ideas off your colleagues to ensure your thinking will hold up to the scrutiny of your audience. Consult, collaborate and take whatever constructive feedback you can get.

### 6. You don't have to say *everything*.

Once you know what you want to say, invest time and energy in communicating it effectively. Focus on what's relevant to your audience and make it complete enough to advance the dialogue, but don't feel you have to be exhaustive.

If you have to generate thought leadership content and need an objective third party to validate your thinking and help express your ideas, drop us a line: [dale@ascribeinc.ca](mailto:dale@ascribeinc.ca).

## WHAT MAKES A WHITE PAPER GREAT?

Companies are under pressure to prove thought leadership. B2B buyers are hungrier than ever for content with real substance. White papers are uniquely able to meet both sets of needs. Find out what makes them such a heavy-hitting part of the marcom mix in our new [White Paper on White Papers](#).



## spotlight\*

### CONTENT TIPS FOR 2020

The past decade saw massive changes in how marketers think about -- and generate -- content. Based on those changes and where things seem to be heading, here are some content survival tips for 2020:



#### 1. Get in their heads, then get personal.

Because people's time and attention are limited, all content needs to reflect what matters to the audience right out of the gate. Listen first, get clear on your stakeholders' struggles, and don't start talking until you know why they should care about your thing. Personalization will hit whole new levels soon with the growth of AI and machine learning, enabling unprecedented precision in campaign targeting.

#### 2. Reuse, recycle, repurpose.

We've talked a lot about "content mileage" in recent years: giving existing content new life in a new form to keep up with the demand for output. Take a webinar and turn it into an e-book or several blog posts, or extract quotes for social media. The idea of repurposing content itself is by no means new -- Disney, for instance, has done it for years, famously recycling footage in many of its animated classics. (Search "[Disney reused animation](#)" on YouTube to see.)

#### 3. Write like a human.

Google's latest algorithm is better able to interpret and process natural language, meaning web writing will become less keyword-driven and more reflective of how people actually talk. This is good news because your audience is made up of humans. Write with heart, not jargon, and you'll forge stronger connections. Remember that even the most substantial topics can be covered in light and engaging ways.

#### 4. Bring your content alive.

Not everyone in your audience wants to read a 600-word blog post, so when you're planning content, think about how to make it experiential. Different media affect people's brains in different ways, which can influence what they do next. Video, dynamic text, side-scrolling frames, full-width imagery and more are all being increasingly blended to immerse readers in stories. The use of these techniques will continue to grow and approaches to content creation will evolve to seamlessly integrate them.

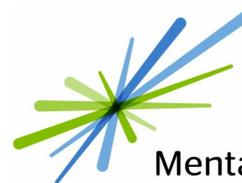
#### 5. Think like a marketer.

That's easy for people who *are* marketers, but the need for constant communication and thought leadership is getting everyone involved in marketing efforts. Content experts have to think like marketers to produce readable, meaningful content that aligns with marketing goals. Content creation, as a result, has become highly collaborative. That's only going to evolve and grow as global enterprise teams gain opportunity to connect within the "virtual workspaces" of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## shout-out\*

### PROMOTING RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE

When it comes to mental health, "recovery" is about living a satisfying and hopeful life and contributing one's skills and talents even when there are ongoing limitations caused by mental health problems or illnesses. To help drive the uptake of recovery-oriented practices, the Mental Health Commission of Canada is asking stakeholders what kinds of tools they need and what will work best. Ascribe is proud to be supporting the effort with meeting capture, consultation support, editorial advice and creative development services that will produce a blueprint for a recovery-oriented practice toolkit in 2020.



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

## practice point\*

### HOW TO AVOID "CITATION STRESS"

With many organizations generating substantial thought leadership pieces these days, including industry research reports, we're all having to dust off our knowledge of citation styles and standards to ensure proper referencing of third-party sources. Here are some tips from our editing team on how to make citing sources simple and hassle-free:

Creating a footnote is easy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> You can use a footnote to cite a source or share more information.

#### Think of the reader when choosing a citation style.

Inline citations, footnotes and endnotes are the three main reference types. The first are used mainly in research publications. They can make text hard to read, so we prefer footnotes or endnotes for marketing materials. If you have a small number of references, footnotes are easy for readers to check without leaving the page. If your list of references is long, endnotes are your best bet for keeping your copy clean.

#### Put footnote and endnote numbers at the end of the sentence.

This keeps them out of the reader's way and makes your document more scannable. Most English style guides call for these markers to come right after any punctuation.

#### Mind your "ibids".

The Latin abbreviation "ibid." basically means "same as before" and is useful shorthand when you cite the same source two or more times in a row. But until you've finalized your document, it's better to give the full reference in each note, because if the order changes, your "ibids" will be wrong.

#### Feel free to mix it up.

Beyond citations, you can also use footnotes and endnotes for "overflow" content -- tangential ideas or lengthy parenthetical remarks to support your main content. If you're going to blend notes and citations extensively, consider using endnotes for the citations and footnotes for any other notes.

Most word processing programs today handle reference formatting for you. In Microsoft Word, if you're using tracked changes and make edits to citations, the numbering can sometimes get out of whack. Don't worry: once you've accepted all changes, they'll renumber correctly. Of course, it never hurts to confirm!

## STORYTELLING IN THE STREAMING AGE

With Apple and Disney getting into the streaming game, it's no surprise that 2020 will see the number of [Canadian households subscribing to at least one streaming service](#) surpass those paying for cable TV.

But streaming hasn't just changed how we consume content: it's also had a big impact on how stories are told. Binge-watching has led creators to craft more complex, long-form stories. The absence of commercials means there's no need for artificial cliffhangers to keep people tuned in, altering narrative pacing and flow.



What's next? We're already seeing it happen on Disney+. *The Mandalorian* was a huge success (thanks in no small part to the undeniable cuteness of Baby Yoda) -- but unless you've watched the animated Star Wars series *Rebels* and *Clone Wars*, the season one finale may have left you scratching your head. With all of Star Wars available on a single platform, should you be expected to watch, well, *all* of Star Wars to keep up with the latest series?

The goal, of course, is to keep viewers glued to the platform. While drawing on a vast vault of narrative lore may help creators enrich their "cinematic universe", casual fans who just want to see a cool bounty hunter do Star Wars stuff could feel left behind.

One thing is certain: we're in for all kinds of content experimentation in the years to come. Maybe the biggest challenge will just be keeping track of which services our favourite movies and shows are actually on.

## moments in storytelling\*

*This is where we look back at some of the big milestones in storytelling history. If you're interested in learning more about our take on stories, check out our [Story Book](#).*

In the past half-century, storytelling formats have undergone pretty much continuous evolution and reinvention -- with every new platform redefining how we engage with narrative content.

### 1972

The world's first subscription-based satellite television service takes to the airwaves -- Home Box Office, or as it is universally known today, HBO -- marking the dawn of the pay TV era, which continues to the present day.



### 1976

The world's first consumer VHS player hits the market, ushering in the massively lucrative home video industry. No longer limited to cinema schedules or whatever was on Sunday afternoon TV, people can go to a video rental store to choose whatever they want -- subject to availability -- and watch at their own convenience. This more personalized experience also allows the entertainment industry to start producing films for increasingly niche audiences.

### 2010

Netflix expands its home video delivery service to include something called "streaming" -- and in virtually no time overturns the entire home entertainment industry, rendering brick-and-mortar video rental stores obsolete and opening up whole new opportunities for content creation.

Questions? Suggestions? Send us an [email](#). To find out more about us, visit [www.ascribeinc.ca](http://www.ascribeinc.ca).

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