

WEST HAVEN

**5 STEPS TO
BUILDING YOUR
AUTHENTIC AUTHORITY**

**A TRUE-TO-YOU APPROACH TO
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**

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A True-to-You Approach to Thought Leadership

Let me guess: You downloaded this guide because even though you've heard the terms "thought leadership" and "authority building" tossed around, the concept still feels a bit elusive and intangible to you.

You're not alone. The good news? I'm here to guide you so that you understand what a thought leader is and what it takes to become one. So, let's get into it!

At its core, thought leadership is a marketing and leadership approach that builds awareness, credibility, trust, and brand loyalty by sharing the unique perspectives you have about topics that are timely, relevant, and significant to your audiences.

This strategy uses your voice and opinions as powerful tools to educate, inspire, and influence positive change for your customers, prospects, partners, and community.

Building authority can feel intimidating, but I promise that becoming a thought leader in your industry is possible for you AND you can customize your version of thought leadership to whatever works best for you. In other words, this isn't one-size-fits-all.

Let me pull back the curtain and share how you can do this in five steps.

STEP 1: BUILD YOUR MENTAL AGILITY

As with all ambitions in entrepreneurship, it's important to take stock of what's going on in your mind. When we start thinking about putting our voice out into the physical or digital world, it's natural to have a bit of trepidation (or maybe run for the hills!). Putting yourself out there more publicly and sharing your opinion can be both exciting and incredibly uncomfortable, and that discomfort can bring

up all sorts of reservations and fears. So, the first step to building your authority is to strengthen your mental agility.

I know this step might sound unnecessary, but please consider how your beliefs can either positively or negatively impact your thought leadership experience and the results that follow. So let's look below the surface and see what's there for you.

Have you ever said to yourself:

- *"I have nothing to say."*
 - *"Who would listen to me? I'm not an expert."*
 - *"Ugh... I HATE the sound of my voice."*
 - *"I'd love to get some press for what I'm doing, but what if a journalist takes my words the wrong way?"*
 - *"What if the internet trolls come after me?"*
 - *"I feel like an imposter."*
-
- *"It feels vain to want to be in the news media/on a stage/grow a social media following."*
 - *"What will other people think—my friends, my network, and people who've never met me?"*



Now, it's time to get curious. Ask yourself: Are these statements or doubts thought or fact? In other words, would these phrases be universally true for everyone? For example, is Brené Brown vain because she has a Netflix special (Call to Courage) about the importance of vulnerability in finding joy, peace, and fulfillment? This is subjective, of course, but I'm yelling "no!" over here.

If you feel like an impostor, explore that, too. Is it because you don't feel like you're credible enough to speak about a certain topic? Let's dig deeper: How do you personally define credibility? Now, write down all of your credentials—do they match? If not, then go after the credentials—and most importantly, don't keep moving the goal post!

STEP 2: GET CRYSTAL CLEAR ON YOUR VISION

Thought leadership can take on many different forms, and just because someone does it one way doesn't mean you have to follow their lead. I want you to get really clear and honest on what you want, because pursuing opportunities you don't want is a one-way ticket to burnout and apathy. I want you to keep showing up for the things you believe in, so let's create a thought leadership program that's sustainable from the start.

For example, do you envision yourself boldly taking the stage to give a keynote? Or, would you rather share your perspective through your keyboard, through content like LinkedIn posts or blog writing?

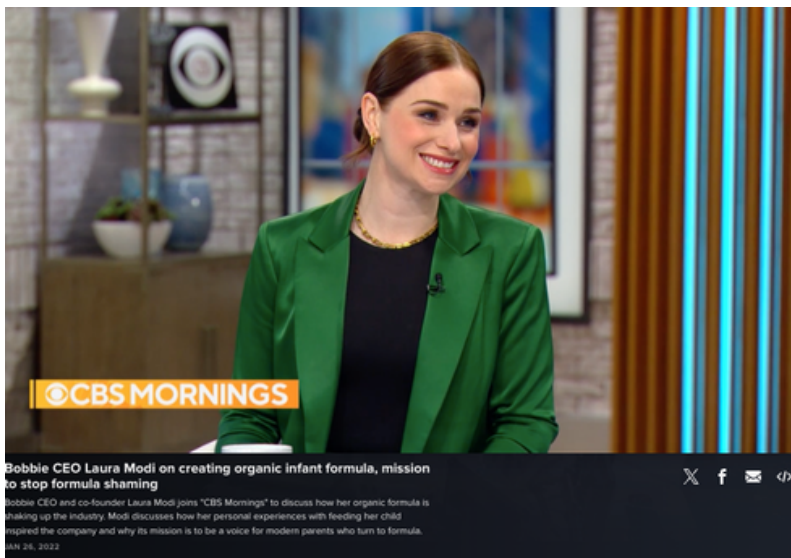
The great news is that it's completely possible to do both... but before that, I need to drop a little truth bomb: Building thought leadership takes time. It's a slow burn. Cultivating a thought leadership platform takes showing up consistently in a way that demonstrates that you're a solid expert, and you aren't going anywhere. Creating trust is even more important today in our world of social media where everyone can share whatever they want, whenever they want, with nothing to back up their claims.

Getting super clear on what you actually want to pursue will keep you motivated and help you find opportunities that feel aligned and energizing.

STEP 3: DETERMINE YOUR UNIQUE MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Here's the thing about thought leadership: you can't say the same thing that everyone else is saying. Even if you agree with "everyone else," you still need to say things differently. You need to add something new to the conversation. If you don't, you become just another voice in the crowd and won't capture the attention of your audience. After all, who has time to hear what they already know?

This is where your point-of-view (POV) comes into play. Your point-of-view is your stance on topics that are timely, relevant, and significant to your audience.



One of my favorite examples of this unique POV is Laura Modi, the founder of Bobbie. Bobbie is a baby formula that prides itself on their European-inspired, organic ingredients. Laura and the Bobbie team could simply market the features of their high-quality product and leave it at that.

Instead, the team is dedicated to "shaking up the stigma" on formula feeding knowing that not all parents and caregivers can (or want to) breastfeed. They have a really great webpage all about their stance that explains their "why" behind this messaging, allowing parents to focus on feeding their children rather than worrying about being shamed or judged.

The Bobbie brand takes it even further, though. Knowing that parents today have less time and resources, the company created Bobbie For Change, an extension of the brand that's dedicated to social impact and policy change. Under Bobbie For Change, the brand advocates for solutions to issues that deeply impact their target audience like the lack of paid parental leave in the U.S or the increase in breast cancer rates. And when you look at the personal thought leadership Laura is posting on LinkedIn, it's right in line with Bobbie's point of view.

Does this mean your thought leadership work needs to concentrate on advocacy? Not at all. If you feel called to advocate for a cause you deeply believe in, I commend you for it. However, if that's not where your heart is, that's okay, too! It's all about your goals—this example is simply here to expand your thinking as to what your topics and messaging could be.

Here are some questions to guide you as you think about your unique point of view:

- What do you want to be known for? What topics are on your heart? What do you speak with conviction about?
- In what ways is this relevant to the audience(s) you serve?
- What are 3–5 key messages you want to share? How might these messages be different from what's already being said by others?
- What credentials do you have? (Consider career experience, education, certifications, and lived experience.)
- What evidence do you have to support your message? (Think data, research, testimonials, case studies, and personal stories.)
- What level of risk are you open to? (Different opportunities have different risk levels. For example, you can control what you write about your brand. You can't control what other people write about your brand, but you can influence it.)

STEP 4: RESEARCH & PLANNING

As you're solidifying what you want to say—and what your audience needs to hear—it's good to also be thinking about the “where” of all of this: Where are the best opportunities to share your message?

There are a lot of options for sharing your message, and what you decide to focus on should be based on your goals, your comfort level with these particular channels, and where your audience goes to consume information. Some of these channels include:

- Your own content: Blogs, free downloads, social media, podcast, email marketing, webinars
- Media relations: Interviews with journalists, reporters, podcasters, bloggers
- Speaking engagements: Keynotes, panels, round tables, workshops
- Awards: National, local, industry, workplace
- Books: How-tos, thought-provoking reads, memoirs



Now here's the catch: Finding the right opportunities that won't waste your time or resources is a bit of an art form. You'll want to make sure you're getting in front of the right audience at the right time in a way that feels really exciting and good to you.

There are a few key lenses in which to vet your opportunities through:

- Vision: Does this align with my vision of my thought leadership?
- Audience: Does my audience read/attend/watch these opportunities? How much of my audience has participated in the past?
- Values: Does this align with my personal and business values? Does the publication/podcast/organization attract other people with the same values? Or do I find myself often frustrated by what I read, see, or hear? (Values are guideposts for working with the right people.)



- Message: Is my message new to this audience or have they heard this before? Is this opportunity aligned with my unique message?
- Cost: Is this a free, expense, or revenue-generating opportunity?
- Prep: Do I feel prepared to speak on the topic? Or do I need support? Sometimes, it's not that you don't know your stuff, but that you may have never talked about it in front of a certain audience, or to a media outlet before.

Here's where Media Training can be super helpful – [head here](#) to learn more!

STEP 5: TAKE ACTION

Hard truth time: You can do all the planning in the world, but if you don't take action, it won't get you any closer to your thought leadership goals. Now that you know your vision, message, and where to focus your attention. It's time to put this knowledge to work by setting goals, establishing KPIs, and then executing a manageable, intentional plan.

Keep track of which ideas you implement and the ones that secure results. And, remember that repurposing is your friend: before you move onto the next podcast interview or speaking engagement, think about the ways you can leverage the opportunity you just wrapped up.

The true magic of thought leadership lies in its potential amplification. When you take the time to promote the article, podcast interview, or speaking engagement clip you're a part of, more people outside of your audience and current network will hear what you have to say and become interested in you and what you have to offer. This is valuable content, and can be used time and time again to demonstrate your expertise.

For example, if you were interviewed by a podcast you could embed the episode on your website, include the logo on your sales deck, share on social media, include in your email nurture funnel, and even use parts of your interview for a series of social media posts.

If you're thinking, "Wow, this seems like a lot of work. How am I going to build my thought leadership and still find the time to run my business?" I understand. Here's the thing: you don't have to do all of this yourself. Many established and aspiring thought leaders outsource aspects of their thought leadership, so consider: What makes sense for you to do vs. outsource?

For example, speaking engagements and media interviews aren't something you can delegate if you're building your thought leadership. But you could outsource an op-ed to a ghostwriter who can write the piece using your tone, voice, and ideas—or hire someone to secure and schedule podcast interviews.

Above all else, listen to feedback from your audience. Building trust requires good listening skills and two-way communication. Refine your message and strategy accordingly. After all, the word “leadership” is in the term “thought leadership.”

HI, I’M CHLOE!

**Thought leadership expert,
agency executive turned
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founder of West Haven™.**

I help impact-driven women entrepreneurs and leaders, like you, build authority with authenticity and confidence.

For more thought leadership insights, catch me over on the ‘gram [@westhavencoaching](#) or send me a note at hello@westhavencoaching.com. I’d love to hear from you!

