

November 2019

Missing the point

Why consulting firms might be targeting the wrong people with their thought leadership



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Our latest research into how people use thought leadership reveals a stark divide between people at the very top of organisations and those underneath them.

The good news is that CXOs, by and large, love thought leadership. The bad news is that the senior managers sitting underneath them don't. That's a problem because, while it can't do any harm to have CXOs on your side, the senior managers are the ones buying consulting services.

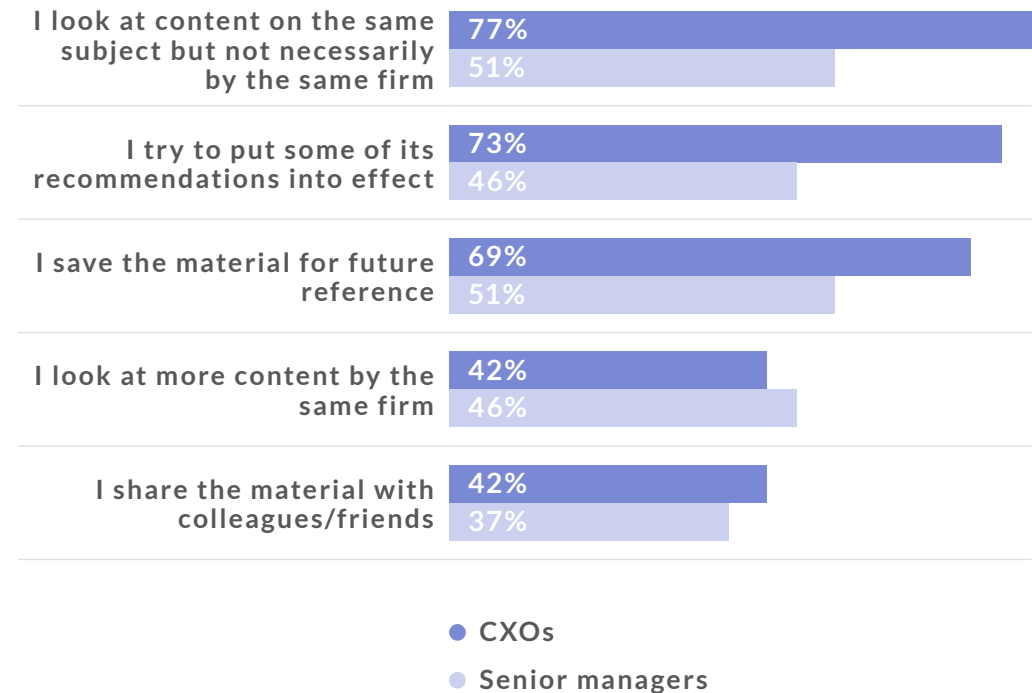
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The great divide

Across a range of topics, the difference between the opinions of CXOs and their subordinates is significant, but perhaps the most persuasive and important evidence of this is found at the end of the thought leadership journey that we tracked in our research: What the two groups do as a result of reading content. Across the five types of responses we asked about, an average 60% of CXOs said they took action, while just 46% of senior managers* did so. And nowhere was the difference more marked than it was around the question of whether people actually put the recommendations in a piece of thought leadership into effect: 73% of CXOs said they tried to do so, while 46% of senior managers made the same claim. Why? What’s working so well for CXOs? And what, by contrast, is not working for senior managers?

*We refer to “CXOs” and “senior managers” throughout this report, for the sake of simplicity, but a more detailed breakdown of the two groupings can be found at the back of the report.

What, if anything, do you do as a result of reading business-related content?



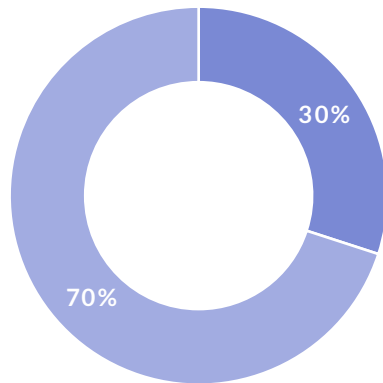
Conclusion

It's hard to find fault with the work consulting firms have done to target people at the top of organisations with their thought leadership, and the fact that it's so much easier to find and please these people than anyone else makes it all the more understandable that they've become the priority.

But if that's happening at the cost of making real inroads with people lower down, who may be the ones most likely to buy consulting services, then this seems less easy to excuse; particularly when theirs is a need being less well served by anyone else. They may be more demanding about the content they need than their colleagues at the top, and they may even be more lazy when it comes to looking for it, but right now there's a very real chance that the people who matter most are getting the least.

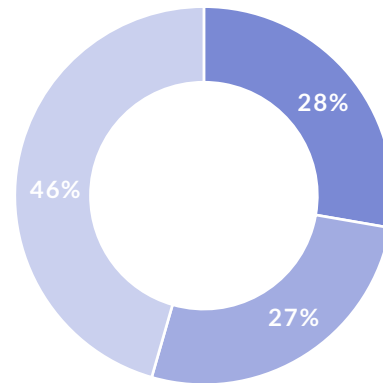
Respondents (N=97)

Respondents by organisation size



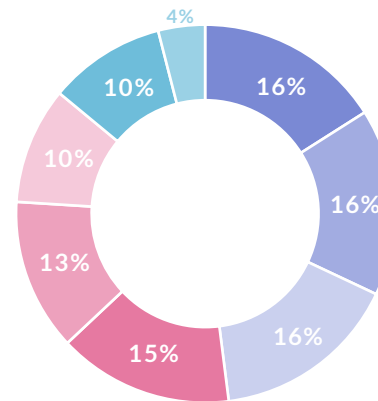
- 1,000–4,999 employees
- 5,000+ employees

Respondents by organisation responsibility level



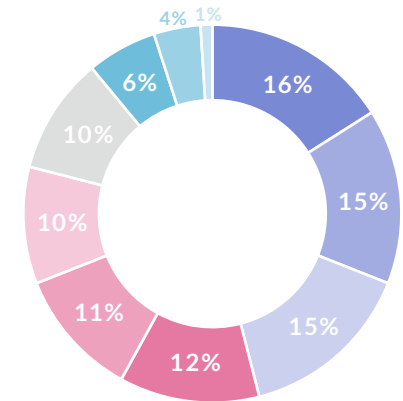
- CEO or other CXO/ board level management
- Head of Department
- Direct report into CXO/ board level management

Respondents by organisation function



- Technology
- Operations
- Strategy
- Financial management
- Customer services
- Sales & marketing
- Risk
- Other

Respondents by organisation sector



- Retail
- Technology, media & telecoms
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Financial services
- Public sector
- Other
- Energy & resources
- Pharma & biotech
- Services



Programme schedule for 2019

Reports 2019	Market Data and Analysis	Client and Brand Insights	Emerging Trends
January	Forecasts for 2019		
February	UK	UK Nordics GCC	
March	GCC Benelux Nordics	France Germany US	The Future of Pricing
April	France DACH Southern Europe	Energy & Resources Financial Services Healthcare Technology, Media & Telecoms	
May	US Eastern Europe & Russia		The Value Problem
June	Canada		
July	South America Australia	Perceptions of Audit Firms Perceptions of Risk Firms Perceptions of Tax Firms	
August	Africa Risk		The Make-Buy Decision
September	India Energy & Resources Planning for Growth in 2020	Talent Attractiveness in 2019	
October	Financial Services China South East Asia		
November	Japan Healthcare Technology, Media & Telecoms		The Future of Delivery
December	Tax		

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