

White Space

Our Quality Ratings Methodology



Helping you to achieve your goals



Our goal is to help you to create thought leadership that:

- Addresses a topic that is relevant to your target audience, and delivers meaningful insights
- Quickly engages your target audience and keeps them engaged
- Gives them confidence in what they are being told
- Makes them want to take action, now. And to speak to you about how to do so

Grabbing someone's attention is the easy bit, but unless your thought leadership achieves these four things it's unlikely to have the lasting impact you're looking for.

Taking the perspective of your target audience



We aim to put ourselves in the shoes of your target audience

We take the perspective of a person who:

- Has worked for a number of years in the sector, or function, you are targeting
- Sits in the C-suite, or one level below in a large firm (unless you are obviously targeting a different audience)
- Is open to gaining new insights through thought leadership
- Is busy and receives many suggestions about what to read

This isn't always easy. We make it easier by:

- Ensuring all our reviewers have worked (typically as consultants) with people at this level of seniority
- Keeping a close eye on content produced, for this same audience, by leading organisations (e.g., HBR)
- Surveying and interviewing hundreds of consulting clients each year



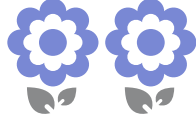
Our criteria for assessing quality in thought leadership

We focus on four things that really matter to your target audience



Differentiation:

- Is this piece of thought leadership relevant to me right now?
- Does it tell me something useful that I didn't know already?



Appeal:

- Am I encouraged to read on?
- Is it easy and enjoyable to use?



Resilience:

- Can I trust what I am being told?
- Do I know who is writing this and why I should believe them?



Prompting action:

- Do I have a clear sense of what I ought to do now?
- Will a conversation with this firm be useful to me?

What our scores mean

We generate average scores for each firm

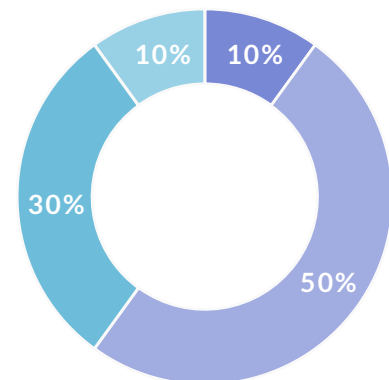
We create a score for each of the four criteria:

- Each piece receives a score ranging from 1 to 5 against each criteria
- This is generated from a set of fifteen questions
- For each firm, we present the average score for differentiation, appeal, resilience and prompting action

These four scores add up to generate a total score:

- The total score is the sum of differentiation, appeal, resilience, and prompting action
- This score can range from 4 to 20
- A score below 8 is weak and suggests that the impact could be negative
- A score of 12 or more indicates a high-quality piece that sits in the top 10% of content we review
- Achieving a score of 12 requires an average score of 3 for each of the fifteen questions

Typical distribution of total score for all pieces reviewed



- <8.0
- 8.0-9.9
- 10.0-11.9
- 12.0+



Differentiation

| | 5 (maximum) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 (minimum) |
|--|---|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| A Is it obvious what it's about, and what the intended benefits are to the target audience? | What it's about is clear from the start. Specific target audience is identified. Intended benefits to this audience are clear and substantial | What it's about is clear from the start. Intended benefits to assumed audience are clear and substantial | What it's about is clear from the start. Intended benefits to assumed audience are clear | What it's about and intended benefits become clear over time OR What it's about is clear from the start but intended benefits are unclear OR Specific target audience is identified but what it's about is unclear | What it's about is unclear |
| B Is it different to what others are doing—either because of the topic or angle taken? | Subject and approach different to what has gone before | Subject different to what has gone before | Subject has been written about before but angle is different | Covers the same ground as some other consulting firms | Has been written about extensively |
| C Is it revelatory? | Presents a revelatory and challenging viewpoint | Challenges current thinking in some areas | Raises a number of interesting points | Some interesting points but in the main states the obvious | States the obvious |



Appeal

| | 5 (maximum) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 (minimum) |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| A Is the user likely to continue beyond the first 20 seconds of their experience? | User compelled to continue | User likely to continue | Experience provides some encouragement to continue | Experience does nothing to encourage the user to continue | Experience is off-putting |
| B Does it look good? | Appealing format Easy to use on tablet Visual devices make key messages easy to grasp immediately | Better than (3) but falls down on at least one of the requirements for (5) | Meets user expectations of a professionally produced piece of content Easy to use on laptop screen Visual devices are clear | Better than (1) but falls down on at least one of the requirements for (3) | Looks unprofessional or is difficult to use e.g., illegible text or charts |
| C Does the structure make it easy to use—whether start-to-finish or browsing? | Structure is obvious from the outset and makes sense It is easy to find key sections Structure is used to lead audience through an engaging story | Better than (3) but falls down on at least one of the requirements for (5) | Content divided into meaningful sections | Has some structure | Jumps from topic to topic with no obvious rationale from the audience's perspective |
| D Is the style clear and engaging? | Engaging and identifiable voice Concise, easy to understand sentences and paragraphs Stories used to inspire the reader | Better than (3) but falls down on at least one of the requirements for (5) | Language clear and appropriate to the target audience | In places, language is unclear or tone is inappropriate | Throughout, language is unclear or tone is inappropriate |
| E Is the length appropriate to the insights delivered? | Excellent ROI for the target audience—all of the content adds value | Between (3) and (5) | Acceptable ROI for the target audience—could have been shorter but not noticeable to most users | Between (1) and (3) | Requires far too much time from the target audience compared to the value of insights delivered |



Resilience

| | 5 (maximum) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 (minimum) |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| A Is it clear who is delivering these views and why they are worth paying attention to? | It is clear who is delivering these views and why their experience makes them a very credible expert on this topic | It is clear who is delivering these views and that their experience relates to the topic of the report | Authors or experts named and basic information is obvious (e.g., role) | Authors or experts named but no further information provided, or information not immediately obvious | No information provided about the individuals behind the content |
| B Is the approach to generating insights/recommendations credible and clearly explained? | Audience very likely to understand what underpins key insights throughout the report Approach is very credible All sources are clearly referenced | Better than (3) but falls down on at least one of the requirements for (5) | Audience very likely to understand principal approach used Approach is credible Most sources are referenced | Audience very likely to have a sense of the principal approach employed but it is not explicitly described OR Approach is described but obviously flawed OR Approach described and credible but many sources not clearly referenced | No sense of approach behind insights/recommendations OR Audience would guess it is based purely on the author's point of view |
| C Has the firm collected or created relevant data? | Firm has collected or created an impressive and relevant body of primary and secondary data | Firm has collected or created an impressive and relevant body of data. One type of data only | Firm has collected or created a solid and relevant body of data | Firm has collected or created some data | No collection or creation of data |
| D How good is the analysis of this data? | Approach goes well beyond the obvious to deliver relevant insights | Approach goes beyond the obvious to deliver relevant insights | Basic approach that leads to relevant insights (e.g., simple segmentation) | Very basic approach e.g., simple presentation of responses to individual questions OR Audience likely to assume some analysis has taken place but it is not visible | No analysis of data |

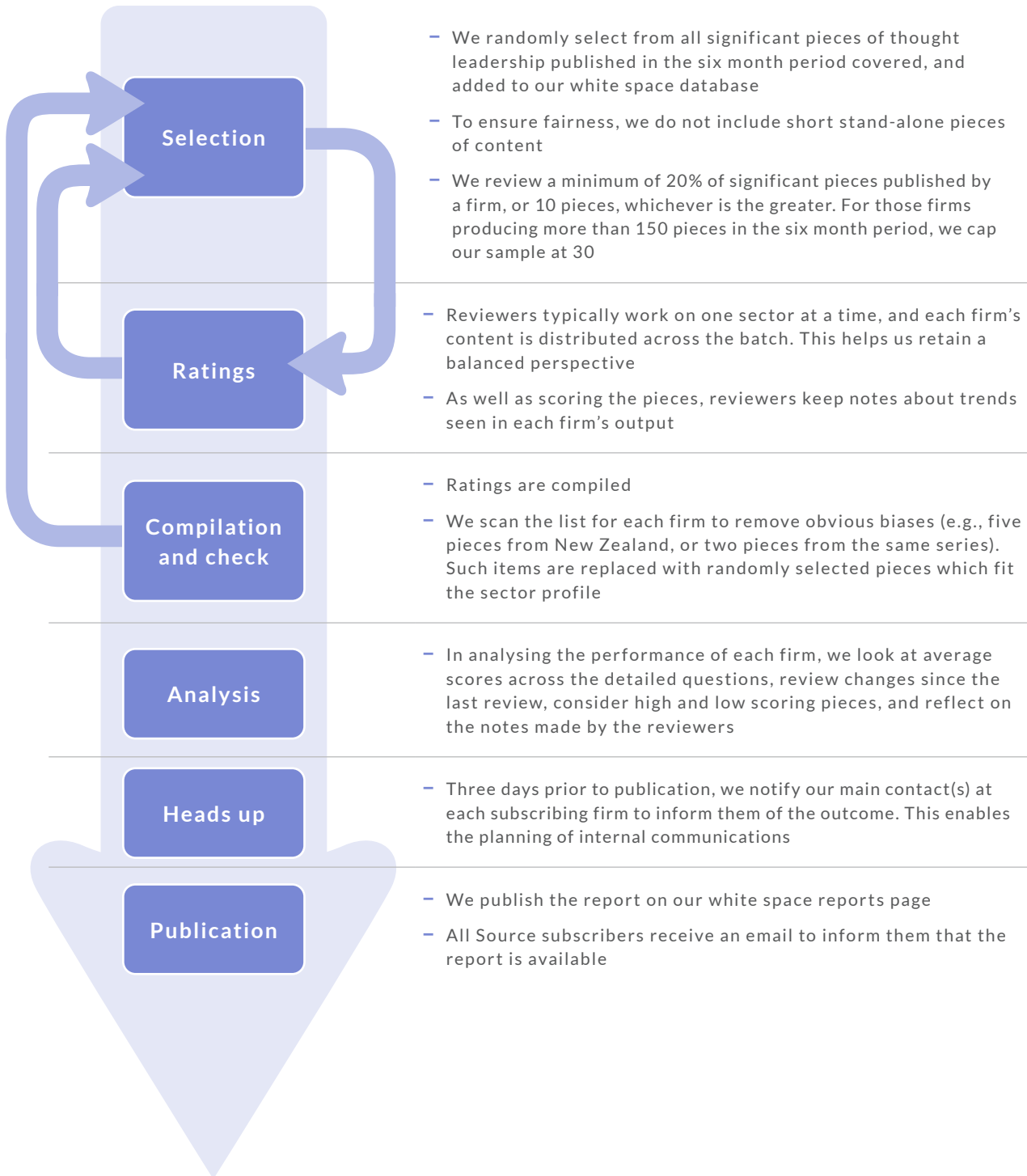


Prompting action

| | 5 (maximum) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 (minimum) |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| A Is the audience given justified and actionable recommendations to apply within their own organisation? | Offers specific actionable recommendations that are a logical outcome of the content and are drawn together to describe a coherent approach | Offers specific actionable recommendations that are a logical outcome of the content | Offers specific actionable recommendations | Offers recommendations but they are generic and/or too high-level to be actionable | No sense as to how the audience ought to apply the content to their own situation |
| B Does it give the reader a clear idea of how the consulting firm could help whilst avoiding being a thinly disguised sales pitch? | Provides information, relevant to this specific topic, about what the firm does, what experience it has, and what is unique about its approach | Provides information, relevant to this specific topic, about what the firm does and what experience it has | Provides information, relevant to this specific topic, about what the firm does | Contains information about a relevant practice area | No obvious link to the firm's services OR a standard boilerplate description |
| C Is the target audience likely to conclude that this is a topic they need to take action on? | Delivers a compelling argument that this issue must be addressed immediately | Delivers a compelling argument that this issue must be addressed | Persuades the audience to consider this issue with colleagues to decide if action is required | Makes the audience aware that this issue might be worth considering further | Fails to make the case for further consideration |



Our quality ratings process



We can provide further guidance

We apply our experience of reviewing thought leadership to help our clients create even better thought leadership

Detailed analysis of ratings:

We can provide a detailed breakdown of the publications reviewed, providing information about the strengths and weaknesses of each against each of the 15 questions.

Detailed review of a specific publication:

In addition to providing scores, we offer detailed feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of a specific publication.

If this is carried out prior to publication, we can work with the publishing team at any point from concept through to publication, to recommend how to maximise impact and brand differentiation.



Are you making the most of White Space?

This report is only available to White Space subscribers. Are you making the most of your free access?

Our White Space portal enables users to:

- Search—quickly and easily—for competitor content
- Know immediately—through a tailored monthly email—what competitors have published around a specific topic or industry
- Benefit from Source research, analysis, and advice around thought leadership
- Access our bi-annual quality ratings
- Offer access to colleagues across the firm

We also offer bespoke services to our White Space clients. We can help you:

- Develop a compelling concept for new thought leadership
- Benchmark your publications against those of your competitors
- Identify opportunities to improve the quality of your thought leadership

If you would like any further information, please contact
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