

# 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; 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



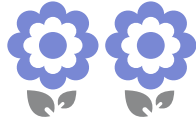
## Our criteria for assessing quality in thought leadership

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

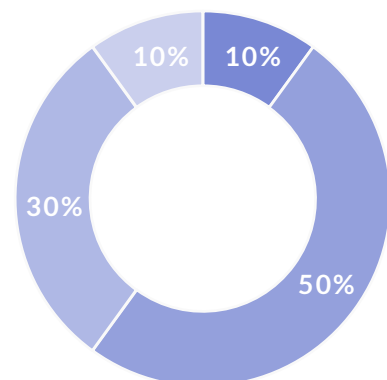
**We create a score for each of the four criteria:**

- Each piece receives a score ranging from 1 to 5 against each criteria
- This is generated from a set of 15 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 15 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)
<b>A</b> 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>B</b> Is it different to what others are doing—either because of the topic or the 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
<b>C</b> 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)
<b>A</b> 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>B</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
<b>C</b> 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
<b>D</b> 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
<b>E</b> 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)
<b>A</b> 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>B</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
<b>C</b> 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
<b>D</b> 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

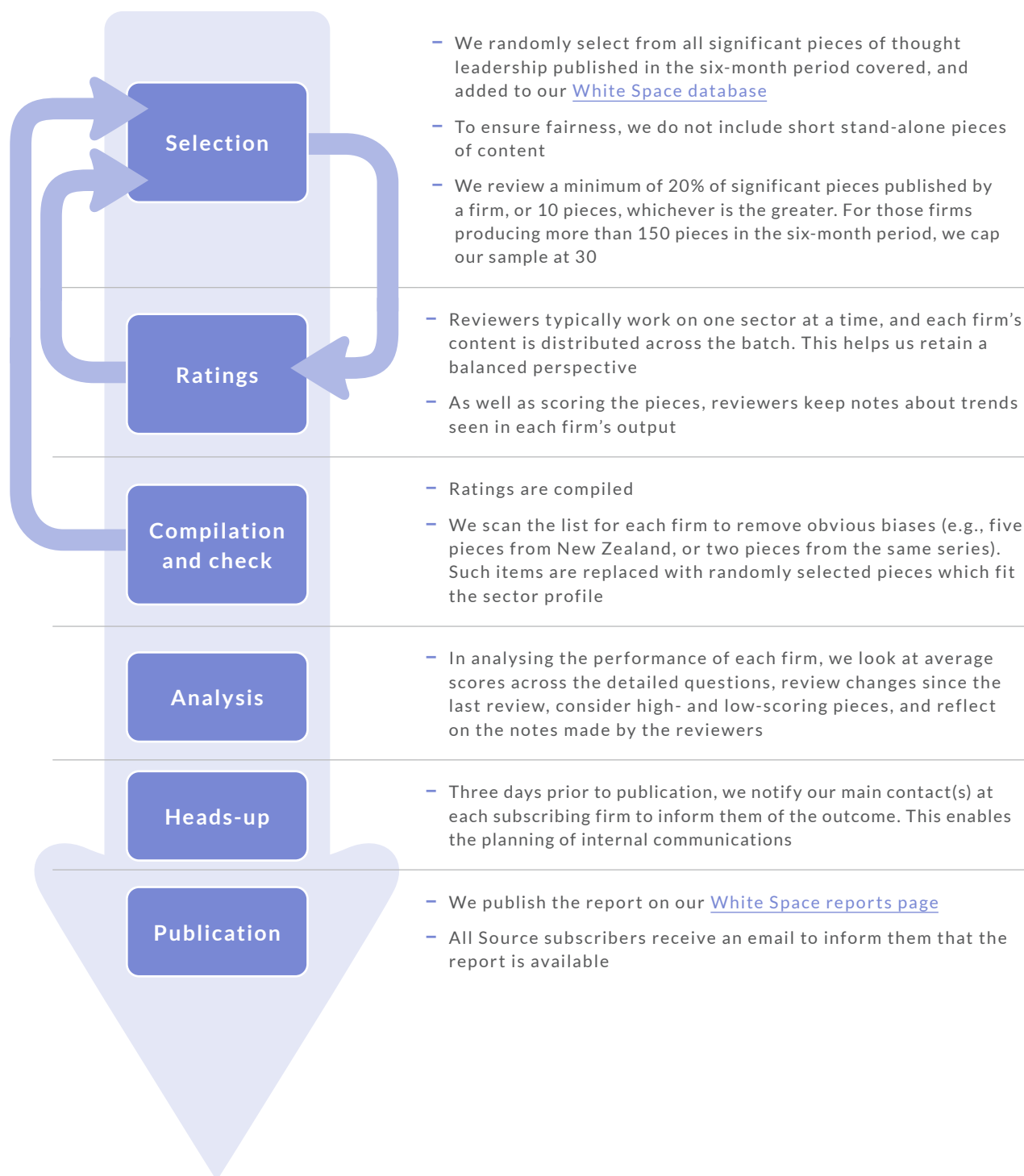


## Prompting action

	5 (maximum)	4	3	2	1 (minimum)
<b>A</b> 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>B</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
<b>C</b> 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 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 includes:

- An easy-to-search database of competitor content, making competitor analysis easy
- Insights including hot topics reports, blogs, and newsletters, based on research with both users and creators of thought leadership, designed to help you deliver even better thought leadership
- Bi-annual quality ratings reports that score firms' published content, enabling you to track the progress of your thought leadership efforts and learn from your competition
- Firm-wide access, allowing you to share insights with colleagues across your organisation
- Examples of high-quality thought leadership to provide inspiration

**We also offer bespoke thought leadership 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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