

White Space

CONTENT

**Which firms' thought leadership
rate highest for quality?**

**Quality Ratings of Thought
Leadership for 2024**

Mar 2025



Contents

1

Introduction

Why relevance is the foundation of impactful thought leadership.

>> Pages 3-14



2

Quality rankings for 2024

Breakdown of firm rankings and distribution of scores.

>> Pages 15-22

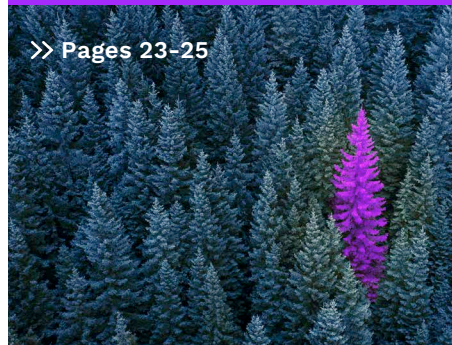


3

What really matters

Key messages for each of the four quality pillars.

>> Pages 23-25

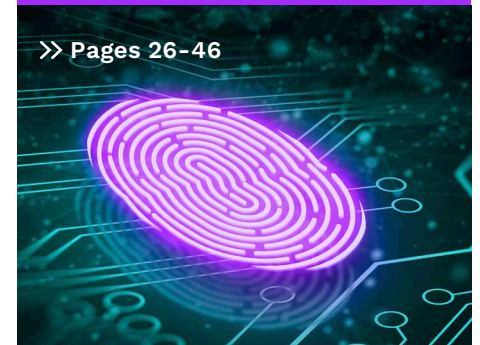


4

Firm-by-firm commentary

A profile for each firm in the report.

>> Pages 26-46



Methodology and about this report

>> Pages 47-53

1



Introduction

Why relevance is the foundation of impactful thought leadership.....4

Four pillars of the Source methodology8

Trends over time9

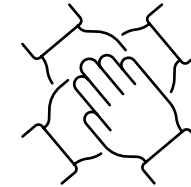
What does “relevance” mean in this context?

In a highly competitive environment, firms need to continually demonstrate their relevance over and above the competition, but what does that really mean? Is it just another marketing buzzword?

The Oxford English dictionary defines relevance as the “quality or state of being closely connected or appropriate.” (Interestingly, the term has been around for centuries, with the earliest recorded instance of the noun dating back to 1625.)

If we think about this in the context of the consulting industry, this tells us that relevance is not simply about being “present” in the minds of the client, nor is it just about reputation; it’s about ensuring that what you have to offer is deeply connected with the needs and expectations of your buyers. And this is not just about current needs, but future (even latent) needs. Firms must foster trust in their ability to provide guidance and solutions to meet those needs. Staying relevant as a firm requires anticipation and continuous adaptation, or they risk losing clients to competitors that are more attuned to the changes in the market.

Professional services and consulting firms often talk about the importance of relevance, but what about their clients? What does relevance mean to them? When we asked senior executives about what it means for a firm to be relevant to them, the most important thing to them was that a firm understands their needs. Over and above anything else, clients want to feel heard and understood—and perhaps even want firms to enlighten them on needs that haven’t yet crossed their radar.



It’s about ensuring that what you have to offer is deeply connected with the needs and expectations of your buyers



“Subject matter expertise and a breadth of knowledge are the main factors we look for when deciding which consulting firm to use. Breadth of knowledge, especially beyond our industry, is becoming super relevant, as we consider some [of the] changes and interests that we have.”

Direct report into CxO/board-level management, healthcare, Japan

Another key component of relevance is being an expert in technology, with this emerging as the second most important thing for clients. This holds true for CxOs, sitting at third for direct reports and heads of department collectively. To some degree, this falls under the umbrella of understanding clients' needs: Digital transformation and improving technology infrastructure are clients' top two priorities after growth, so technology expertise is now not just a nice-to-have but an expectation. With new technologies like GenAI generating so much buzz in the last few years, clients are looking to leaders in the technology space to help them understand how such tools can add real benefit to their organisations.

Clients also think that relevance relates to firms demonstrating value and having expertise on issues that are important to them—with CxOs in particular concerned about seeing how firms can add tangible business value. The C-suite, those determining the strategic direction of the business, are concerned with staying on top of new topics, opportunities, and technologies to keep ahead of competitors—and will be turning to firms' thought leadership to help them do this.



“It’s difficult to bring something truly new and innovative to the table. Firms stand out when they show that they’ve got expertise in a certain sector. Industry relevance is important.”

Direct report into CxO/board-level management,
retail, Canada

The role marketing and thought leadership can play

It’s not hard to see the pivotal role that marketing and thought leadership play in helping to continuously demonstrate a firm’s relevance—and to reinforce that firm’s credibility. Thought leadership helps firms articulate and amplify the voices of experts, positioning them as trusted advisors who can offer strategic direction and support, not just point solutions.

Done well, thought leadership can be a powerful tool to shift clients’ perceptions by helping firms differentiate themselves and showcasing their people as leaders in their fields. As we know, the thought leadership marketplace is already a crowded one (with GenAI only set to lower barriers to entry even more). Effectively cutting through the noise to remain relevant in the eyes of buyers will be ever more critical.

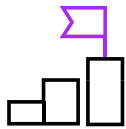
So, how clearly have firms differentiated their content in the last year? Which firms are most successfully showcasing their experts? Which are approaching their topic selection in the most novel ways? Which are putting their best sector foot forward? Which reports have our reviewers been particularly taken with? We explore it all in this *Quality Ratings report*.



“Some [firms] get chosen because they’re stronger and they have the track record that they can demonstrate success in the past, or unique thought leadership backed by data that differentiates them.”

CxO, financial services, USA

The four quality pillars of the Source methodology



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?

[For more information about our quality ratings methodology >>](#)

2






Quality rankings for 2024

Quality rankings for 2024	16
Leading firms for each of the four criteria	17
Distribution of scores by firm	18
Firms’ scores for past reviews	19
Top 10 reports	20

Top 10 reports

Figure 13

Top 10 reports with pillar scores and links

							
	Title	Publisher	Differentiation	Appeal	Resilience	Prompting action	Total
1	A world in balance 2024: Accelerating sustainability amidst geopolitical challenges	Capgemini	3.00	3.60	3.25	3.00	12.85
2	Decoding Global Talent 2024: Dream Destinations and Mobility Trends	BCG	3.00	2.80	4.00	2.67	12.47
3	Why and how the telecom sector should accelerate its autonomous networks journeys	Capgemini	3.33	2.60	3.50	3.00	12.43
4	The Global Integrity Report 2024: ESG integrity reaches a crossroad	EY	2.33	3.00	4.00	3.00	12.33
=5	Risk is everywhere: Global Risk Study	Accenture	3.00	3.00	3.50	2.67	12.17
=5	All supply chains are digital	IBM	2.67	3.00	3.50	3.00	12.17
6	Work, workforce, workers	Accenture	2.67	3.40	4.00	2.00	12.07
7	Denmark's GenAI Paradox: From Lagging to Leading	BCG	3.33	2.80	3.50	2.33	11.97
8	Reindustrialization of Europe and the US	Capgemini	3.33	3.00	3.25	2.33	11.92
9	Net Zero Economy Index 2024	PwC	2.67	3.40	3.50	2.33	11.90
=10	Women in the workplace 2024: The 10th-anniversary report	McKinsey & Company	2.67	2.80	3.75	2.67	11.88
=10	Net Zero Game Changer: Reducing Scope 3 Emissions In Europe's Retail And Wholesale	Oliver Wyman	2.67	2.80	3.75	2.67	11.88

Best practice spotlight

Capgemini

A world in balance 2024: Accelerating sustainability amidst geopolitical challenges



The third edition of Capgemini Research Institute's "A world in balance" series, [Accelerating sustainability amidst geopolitical challenges](#), is a research-backed examination of the progress organisations have made in environmental and social sustainability in the three years prior. Targeted specifically at the CSO, the report carefully balances insight on the challenges faced by businesses and the recommended actions that this audience should take to overcome them.

A strong example of using unique tactics to differentiate the piece in a crowded space

The opening to the report works hard to ensure that the desired audience is instantly aware of what it stands to gain from investing time into reading through a unique page dedicated to "who should read this report and why?", a tool the firm is increasingly using.

Despite this being a heavily saturated topic, Capgemini's objective annual progress tracking (rather than progress pointing) and inclusion of both organisational and consumer perspectives make this piece stand out above the usual corporate angle taken on sustainability.

Who should read this report and why?

This report is – first and foremost – for Chief Sustainability Officers (CSO). It offers recommendations to help CSOs accelerate their sustainability journeys. Given the importance of sustainability to both corporate (e.g., strategy, marketing, finance, human resources) and value chain functions (e.g., R&D, procurement, manufacturing), this report will also make an interesting read to the wider C-suite.

This report offers insights into important sustainability trends, both environmental and social, for the global corporate sector, analyzing shifts in key trends over the past three years. Large organizations across sectors and industries with the aspiration to social and climate impact, including aerospace and defense, agriculture and forestry, automotive, consumer products

and retail, energy and utilities, financial services, healthcare and life sciences, industrial manufacturing, public sector/government, and telecom, will find this report valuable.

This report is based on original findings from a comprehensive industry survey of 2,152 senior executives (director level and above) from 727 leading organizations across 13 countries with annual revenue above \$1 billion. Half of surveyed executives work within corporate functions, and the remaining 50% come from value chain functions. We also interviewed senior sustainability executives at leading organizations and conducted a global survey of 6,500 consumers. Please see the research methodology at the end of the report for more details.



Differentiation	3.00
Appeal	3.60
Resilience	3.25
Prompting action	3.00
Total score	12.85

Creativity in visuals and tone of voice maximises appeal for the audience

An interactive executive summary sits front and centre on the landing page—which itself is compelling. The content of the summary successfully promotes the credibility of the research and provides a set of thought-provoking questions that wouldn't fail to encourage the curious or data-hungry reader to continue. For the time pressed, there is also a downloadable infographic, which summarises the key data points and messages from the report. If we were to suggest an area for improvement, it would be to bring this to life with more creative and visually appealing presentation of data.

The tone of voice and simple but effective use of section headings and sub-titles help maintain pace and engagement throughout. Of particular note are the "Discussion with..." elements which not only bring voices of the market into the narrative but also neatly complement the research.


The piece's impressive data collection and robust analysis demonstrate credibility

The backbone of this report is a solid dataset of survey responses from 2,152 executives, as well as research into the traits of 6,500 consumers and 12 qualitative interviews. All of these are described in a comprehensive methodology, which charts the demographics of respondents and provides secondary data point references. The subsequent analysis is strong and goes beyond just relaying the data points, resulting in an excellent research-backed narrative and high level of insight.

“

Our 'World in Balance' annual report series was designed by our marketing team to create a unique Capgemini sustainability narrative and complement our existing thought leadership portfolio. This third edition introduced several key innovations for us: the inclusion of three years of data for year-over-year comparisons, high-level executive interviews with chief sustainability officers, and the creation of a new sustainability index assessing progress at both country and sector levels. Combined with consumer insights, this comprehensive approach provides a unique 360-degree view of sustainability and organisational progress. The report has sparked high-impact conversations with clients, especially during major events like New York Climate Week, demonstrating its value as a powerful engagement tool.”

Marisa Slatter, Director, Capgemini Research Institute at Capgemini



A discussion with
Kristen Siemen, Chief Sustainability
Officer at General Motors

What is your mandate at General Motors (GM)?

"My mandate is to drive sustainability into all aspects of our business. We must ensure our decisions are good for the company but also good for the outside world."

How do you prioritize sustainability investments at GM?

"The biggest impact we can make is through a transition to an all-electric future. That said, other initiatives are also important, including supply chain, logistics, and Scope 1 and 2. We also consider priorities such as saving water and eliminating waste from a financial perspective. However, just as in school, you can't ignore any subject - you just might have to put more effort into some areas than others."

How is GM developing inclusive products?

"Through our GM Able team, we have a Center of Excellence that focuses on product engineering and designing products for the disability community. We look at it from both a retrofit and a new product standpoint. In 2023, we received the Accessible Product of the Year Award from DisabilityIN for our accessible conversion of the Chevrolet Traverse, in partnership with Brainability."

A discussion with
Kristen Siemen, Chief Sustainability Officer at General Motors

Will sustainability regulations enhance measurement and tracking?

"Regulations, transparency, and standards are critical, allowing everyone to talk a common language. The possibility of over-reporting does concern me, however. For example, designing vehicles for European or US safety standards sometimes influences design choice without directly benefiting the customer. One set of standards is not better, they are just different. If there were more consistency across countries, we could spend more time working on outcomes."

Is the auto industry prepared for an all-electric future?

"GM is well positioned but the entire ecosystem has a lot of work to do. Charging infrastructure is not where it needs to be. More time and resources need to be spent on customer education and knowledge building. We must prioritize vehicle-to-grid, energy transition, and the decarbonization of the grid nationwide. Of course, domestic policies can open up long-term opportunities. GM beat its original renewable energy commitments to the US by 25 years. But we can't do it alone."

What recommendation would you offer to other companies looking to embed sustainability into their operations/supply chain?

"I would advise them to just get started. Often, identifying the opportunities and setting a goal is the biggest obstacle. It's also very important to be thoughtful and intentional on sustainability. For example, consider how material shows up in your facilities. If we package a cardboard box rolled to a wooden box, it requires more time and energy to separate and recycle than if we were to use another adhesive."

Source: Capgemini Research Institute interview with Kristen Siemen, July 18, 2024

Detailed recommendations and a strong commercial link strengthen the likelihood of audience engagement

An exemplary chapter is dedicated to Capgemini's recommendations, which not only outlines the suggested actions and brings them to life with short, real-world examples, but also provides data evidence that supports the suggestions. That said, the actions could be more granular and more tailored to the individual roles or groups being targeted, and the conclusion could be "beefed up" to drive action within an audience's business.

Many organisations shy away from describing the services they offer that align with their recommendations. But Capgemini's decision to showcase their relevant offerings at each stage of an organisation's sustainability journey, aligned to the roles most associated with those stages, successfully demonstrates the firm's relevance and capabilities without being overtly salesy.

Capgemini supports organizations throughout their sustainability journey, from commitments to sustainable achievements

We designed a comprehensive portfolio of offerings, that can be activated at any time of your environmental transformation

Commit	Act			Monitor & report
Sustainability Strategy & Governance CEO, CFO, CHRS/IO, CSO, HR, CDO	Sustainable Products CPO/productIO, CMO	Sustainable Operations, Manufacturing & Supply Chain COO, CPO, R&D, CDO	Sustainable Technology CIO, CDO	ESG Management & Reporting CFO, CEO, CDO, CSO
We help you consistently activate sustainability by defining sustainable strategies, developing measurable commitments, creating concrete action roadmaps, closing investment gaps, identifying new business models, and creating value through proactive governance for all stakeholders and time period at large	We create, engineer and redesign your products by holistically considering the planetary boundaries, the product life cycle, current and pending regulations, values to delight your customers and assess competitive advantage through patents, green energy, product digital properties, circularity, and climate tech	We drive transparency and reliability while unlocking innovation across your entire value chain by leveraging technologies and data to make more informed decisions on procurement, traceability, biodiversity, resource efficiency, and waste resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, higher market share, and improved profitability	We enable to champion sustainability through built Green IT and IT for Green initiatives that reduce the digital and technological impact, and leverage digital and data to optimize regulatory bodies by instantly knowing the power of data across your entire ecosystem, ensuring impact for both the present and your bottom line	We help you measure commitments, monitor progress, identify opportunities, and report on ESG performance to provide transparency to consumers, investors, regulators, and the media, while ensuring regulatory bodies by instantly knowing the power of data across your entire ecosystem, ensuring impact for both the present and your bottom line

Learn more here: <https://www.capgemini.com/services/sustainable/>

3



What really matters

Key messages for each of the four quality pillars.....24



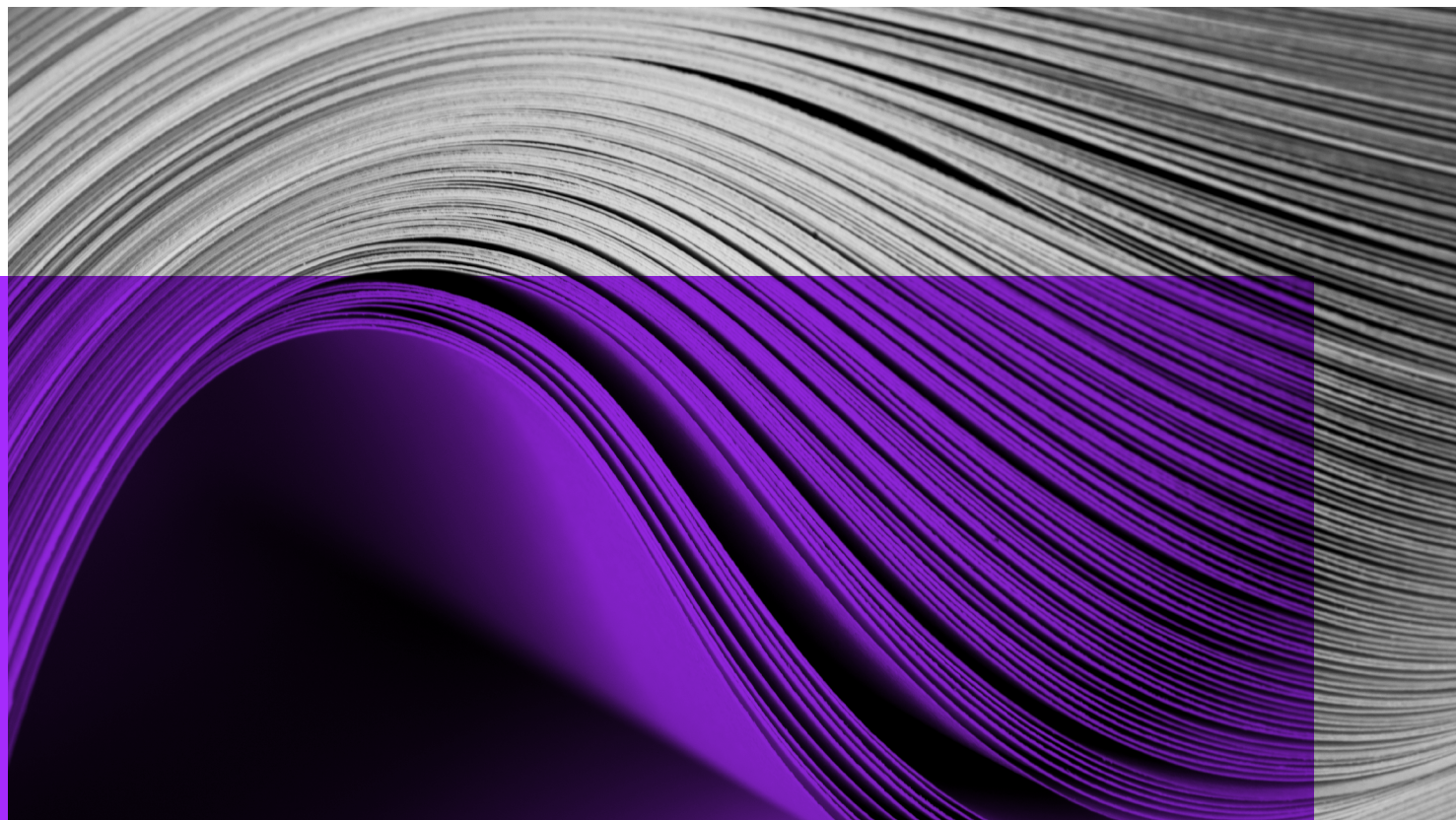
We use the following terms throughout this commentary section:

- **2024:** Our ranking of firms based on content published throughout 2024
- **2023:** Our ranking of firms based on content published throughout 2023
- **2022 H2:** Our ranking of firms based on content published in the second half of 2022.
- **2022 H1:** Our ranking of firms based on content published in the first half of 2022.
- **Differentiation, Appeal, Resilience, Prompting action:** the four criteria, under which sit a total of 15 questions, that make up our ratings methodology. Please [see page 8](#) for more information and our quality ratings methodology for full details.
- **8.0:** Pieces scoring below this benchmark may have a negative impact on the audience.
- **12.0:** Pieces scoring above this benchmark are very high quality. We recommend this as a target for all content.

Firm-by-firm commentary

Accenture	27	IBM.....	37
Arthur D. Little	28	Infosys.....	38
Bain & Company.....	29	Kearney	39
Boston Consulting Group	30	KPMG	40
BDO.....	31	McKinsey & Company.....	41
Capgemini.....	32	Oliver Wyman.....	42
Deloitte	33	PA Consulting.....	43
EY	34	PwC (including Strategy&).....	44
FTI Consulting.....	35	Roland Berger	45
Grant Thornton	36	Tata Consultancy Services	46

5

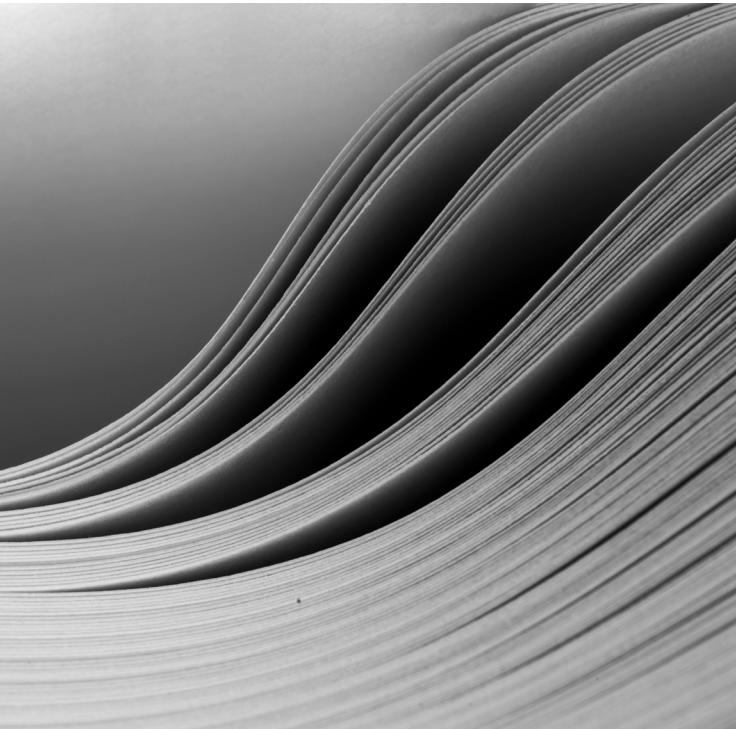


About this report

Methodology	48
Meet the experts	50
Our custom thought leadership work.....	51
About us	52
Publication schedule for 2025	53

Methodology

Our definition of thought leadership



We include material that is intended to say something new about business, technology, or the economy, and is positioned by the firm as such (e.g., as thought leadership, insight, or research). We do not include material that:

- is primarily and obviously designed to sell a particular consulting service or solution, or is clearly straightforward marketing material
- describes a single case study, except in cases where a firm is doing so to illustrate a broader point it is making about a subject
- outlines the results of a survey with minimal analysis
- provides factual operational guidance on legislative or accounting changes.

However, what seems perfectly clear on paper can, at times, be less clear when applied in practice. The first challenging boundary to manage is material around guidance on legislative or accounting changes. On this one, we do our utmost to separate factual guidance (which shouldn't be included) from material that brings the firm's experience and perspective to bear in order to add value to the reader (and so should be added to our list).

A second challenge is generated by firms themselves when they decree some material to be “thought leadership” and other material (although it fits our criteria) as something other than thought leadership. In order to be fair to all firms, we take the intelligent reader's perspective: If they would view this in the same light as other “thought leadership”, then we do too.

The third and final area we often find ourselves debating is around material produced in conjunction with outside bodies. On this one, if the intelligent reader would assume the consulting firm is the key driving force behind the piece, then we do too, and we add it to the list.

Formats

We include material that the reader would perceive as thought leadership—this may be a traditional PDF, an online report, or material presented through an interactive site. In order to compare like with like, we exclude blogs and blog-like material as well as standalone videos. In order to ensure that we look at substantive material, our focus is on material that exceeds 2,500 words in length.

Where content is presented in multiple ways, we always aim to score the optimum format or mix of formats.

Sampling

We review a random sample of each consulting firm's thought leadership based on a minimum of 20% of output or 15 pieces, whichever is the greater. For those firms producing more than 150 pieces of thought leadership in the one-year period, we cap our reviews at 30.

Firms included

This report is an independent review of the thought leadership marketplace for professional services and consulting firms. The primary driver for inclusion in our list is the size of the firm. However, some large firms produce little thought leadership, and some smaller firms produce a significant amount of high-quality content. The former we exclude from our process (although we keep a close eye on output), and the latter we consider including if we see a persistent commitment to thought leadership. In order to ensure we have a list of 20 firms that is representative of the landscape, we have revisited the list of firms included in the ranking this year. Therefore, we have added BDO to the report and, after a period of absence, we welcome Grant Thornton and Tata Consulting Services back into the rankings.

The following firms have appeared in our rankings at some point but have been excluded and not reinstated due to a scarcity of relevant content: BearingPoint (last appeared 2018 H1), Booz Allen (2015 H2), Cognizant (2021 H2), DXC Technology (FY 2020), L.E.K. (H2 2019), Mercer (2015 H2), North Highland (FY 2020), Aon (H2 2022), Korn Ferry (2023), and Willis Towers Watson (2023).

Please do let us know of any firms we are not analysing that you believe merit inclusion.

Our quality criteria

Our criteria are based on primary research with senior executives in large organisations that assesses the factors that drive individuals to pick up a piece of content; to read past the first paragraph and beyond; to have confidence in the value of what they have read; and to take action based on what they have absorbed.

Each piece is rated individually against a series of 15 questions. For each criterion, the piece of content receives a score between 1 and 5. This generates a total score for each piece of between 4 and 20.

We continually refine some of the variables that we look at within each criterion in line with trends we see in the market, for example changes to digital content or advanced research techniques such as use of generative AI or data modelling.

Full details, including information about how each question is scored, can be found on White Space [here](#).

A separate note on our Quarterly Survey Report. Each quarter we survey senior executives on their views of the consulting market. For our Q1, we surveyed 200 senior executives in January 2025, all of whom had been prequalified as buyers/users of professional services.

Meet the experts

Natasha Cambell

Natasha is a Principal Thought Leadership Consultant in Source's Marketing Advisory team and is deeply passionate about content and actionable insights. In her role, she works with clients to help them shape and execute impactful thought leadership and content strategy. Day to day, Natasha works on thought leadership ratings and reviews, authors reports, and leads on bespoke client projects.

With over 15 years of experience driving and delivering global, regional, and sector-focused thought leadership strategy and flagship campaigns within the Big Four, Natasha brings a broad perspective, leadership expertise, and a hands-on approach to her work with clients.

Natasha Cambell

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Nicola Kostrzewska

Nicola joined the Marketing Advisory team at Source as a Senior Thought Leadership Consultant. After working in a variety of broad marketing roles, Nicola found a passion for content marketing and has been designing, writing and activating thought leadership campaigns in the professional services industry for over 10 years.

Her role at Source combines this experience with her desire to provide practical advice to others and involves thought leadership ratings and reviews, writing insight reports and bespoke projects that inform client content strategies.

Nicola Kostrzewska

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- William Bickford
- John Bird
- Peter Curry
- Sophie Gunn
- Ali Rahimi Jamnani
- Faith Kanu
- Omaro Maseli
- Anna Young

With thanks to the wider Source team...

- All things design and creative, Kirsten Buckle
- Our excellent wordsmithing team, Alice Moore, Hannah Walker, and Violetta Rybczynska
- Our sales and marketing team

Our custom thought leadership work

Alongside off-the-shelf reports on the professional services industry, we also provide custom advice and research-led consulting services to the world's biggest and most successful professional services firms, **helping them identify the best areas for investment and plan their strategic responses.**

We can help by:

- Speaking to and surveying senior buyers of professional services to understand what they want to know more about, and what they expect from thought leadership and other forms of content;
- Bringing our extensive knowledge of the industry to bear on your thought leadership challenges;
- Conducting reviews of a sample of your content against our tried-and-tested methodology, and providing overarching feedback with suggestions for improvement;
- Reviewing thought leadership campaigns and providing actionable recommendations on how to improve the campaign;
- Helping you to find the white space in a crowded competitive landscape by assessing what your competitors are doing in a certain space.

Our goal is to ensure that you get the maximum possible return from your investment in thought leadership and content marketing. In everything we do, we ask “How could this be even more helpful to your target audience in building awareness, understanding, and trust?”.

About us

We help professional services firms *understand what really matters* when facing decisions of vital importance.

The best decisions are based on evidence, objectivity, and a willingness to change. That's why, at Source, we tell you what you need to hear, rather than what you want to hear.

We draw upon our deep roots within the professional services sector to provide firms with a clear picture of their clients' worlds. Through comprehensive research and meticulous analysis, we pinpoint what truly matters and deliver actionable insights that help firms map out the right way forward.

We believe in thriving individually and succeeding together. And we would love to help your firm crack its latest conundrum.

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Publication schedule for 2025

2025		Market Trends Reports	Market Trends Briefings	Client Perceptions Studies	Emerging Trends Programme	White Space Reports	White Space Insights
Q1	January	Forecasts for 2025 UK US GCC France		UK US GCC France			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	February				ET1		
	March					Quality Ratings Report (QRR)	
Q2	April	Nordics DACH Australia East Asia South East Asia Africa	India South America	Germany Australia China Japan Retail Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms	ET2		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	May						
	June				ET3	Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	
Q3	July	Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms Sustainability	Healthcare & Pharma	Risk Tax			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	August				ET4		
	September					Thought Leadership Innovation	
Q4	October	Tax Risk Technology Planning for Growth in 2026	Public Sector	Audit Technology	ET5		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	November						
	December				ET6	Hot Topic Report	