

White Space

**Spotlight your specialists:
How thought leadership teams can excel
in an era where expertise is everything**

Hot Topic Report

Dec 2025

About us

We partner with professional services firms to turn insight into strategic advantage. Our proprietary research and tailored, firm-specific studies provide clear, actionable guidance to inform your firm's strategic decisions.

Through our work, we help professional services firms to:

- Anticipate key industry trends
- Identify and evaluate growth opportunities in existing and emerging markets
- Understand client perceptions and competitive positioning
- Refine propositions and messaging to better align with client needs
- Maximise the reach, impact, and commercial value of thought leadership

To dig deeper into the insights in this report, explore our other publications, or learn more about bespoke research for your firm, please [get in touch](#).

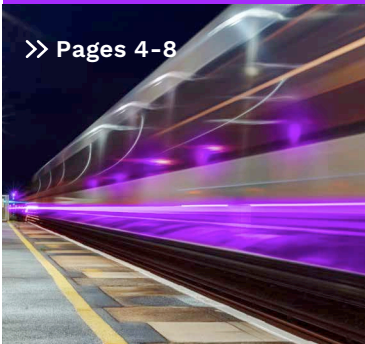
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Tectonic shifts

In this seemingly endless era of geopolitical and macroeconomic turbulence, we explore why clients are looking to firms' expertise as a guiding beacon.

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How thought leadership can help firms live up to their brand promise

Thought leadership is the mouthpiece for your brand. We lay out the importance of using your content to share truly novel perspectives loaded with expertise.

>> Pages 9-15

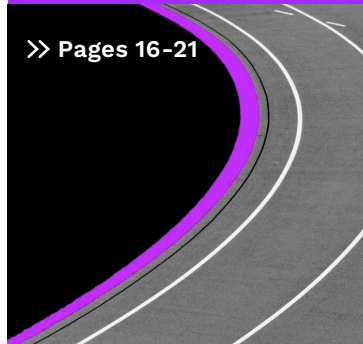


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What skills does your team need to succeed?

Thought leadership is a team sport. We dive into the most critical skills for impactful content and how to harness them for the best results.

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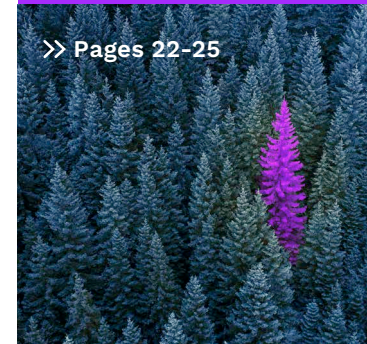


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Know what really matters

Your roadmap to success. Here is our step-by-step guide on how to spotlight your specialists to deliver thought leadership that is a cut above the rest.

>> Pages 22-25

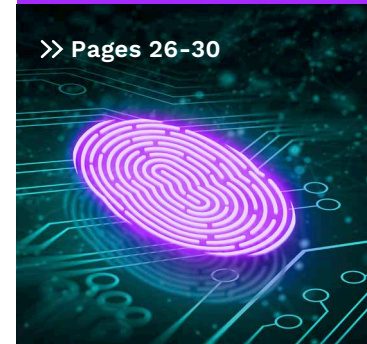


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Best practice spotlight: PwC – Value in motion

We appraise PwC's *Value in motion* campaign, unpacking how it delivers original, appealing, and authoritative insights that stand out in a saturated market.

>> Pages 26-30



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Tectonic shifts

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Tectonic shifts

If there is one lesson to take from the last few years, then it's that change has become as pervasive as it is constant. A confluence of geopolitical, technological, and even demographic factors has come to a head, challenging markets as we know them.

We have had countless conversations with senior business leaders throughout the year, and the challenges they face are increasingly palpable. This year alone, tariffs have challenged market stability and artificial intelligence (AI) has brought with it new challenges as well as opportunities—the combined effect of which has disrupted workforces around the world.

The professional services sector is no exception. We spoke to Oliver Jones, Partner in Research & Insights and Client Work at EY, who highlighted how these shifts impact organisations: *“We can debate whether these trends are cyclical or structural, but these challenges—and opportunities—are very real for our clients, and they are looking for our help in navigating the uncertainty. The realist in me thinks that this is a fundamental change.”* As a result, firms are embracing change like never before. They're braving new technological frontiers to inject greater efficiency into their operations and adapt to fast-evolving client needs. Evolution is happening on every front. And with it, a new recipe for success is in the making.

What does that look like for professional services?

For one, new faces of competition are emerging. Market consolidation has enabled more firms to expand their offerings into the technology space and capitalise on the growing appetite for related services. Private equity firms are also increasingly investing in the sector. Tim Wright, Content Lead at Grant Thornton told us that a recent investment into their firm has given them a boost to push forward their brand: *“That confidence has played a big part in our brand journey this year to move our brand forward in the market, and to be bold and more confident in our differentiated voice.”*

Secondly, technology is challenging the traditional consulting model. Many firms have now deployed their own proprietary assistants. Take McKinsey's *Lilli*, which 72% of its workforce now use—it apparently reduces research and synthesis time by 30%. Others are using similar tools to create decks at breakneck pace or optimise internal workflows. This is prompting firms to rethink their models. In a *Harvard Business Review* article exploring the changing structure of consulting firms, the authors argue that the traditional pyramid model (a wide base of junior consultants at the bottom) is making way for an obelisk model that is tall and narrow, with leaner teams.¹ Where scale once mattered, they write that “what matters now is delivering sharper thinking with greater speed [...]. As AI takes over routine tasks, human energy can be reallocated to what matters most: insight, judgment, and trusted partnership.”

“That confidence has played a big part in our brand journey this year to move our brand forward in the market, and to be bold and more confident in our differentiated voice.”

Tim Wright, Grant Thornton

¹ Harvard Business Review, *AI Is Changing the Structure of Consulting Firms*, Sep 10, 2025 (accessed Nov. 24, 2025). Available at: <https://hbr.org/2025/09/ai-is-changing-the-structure-of-consulting-firms>.

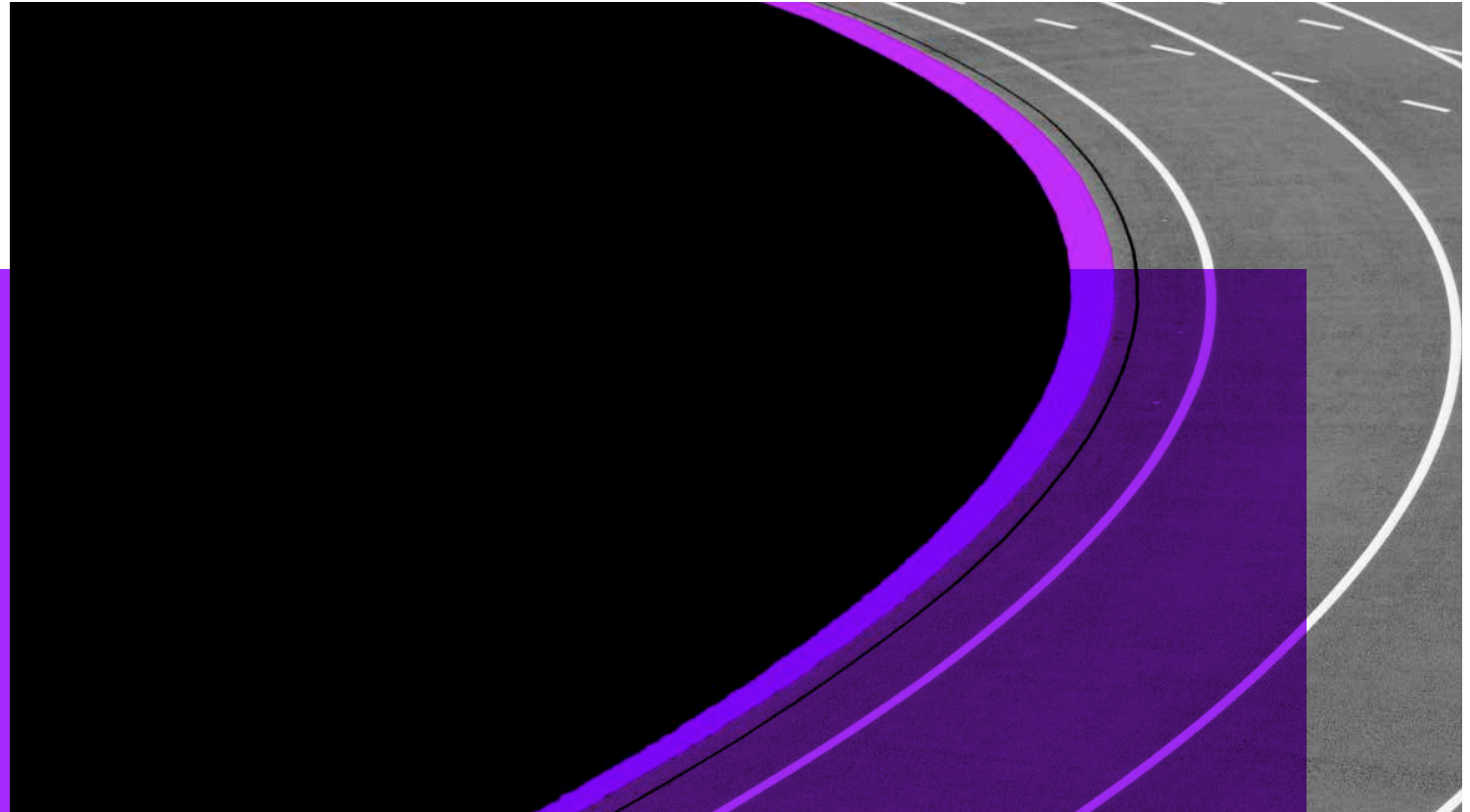
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How thought leadership can help firms live up to their brand promise

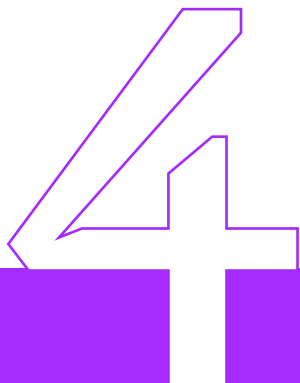
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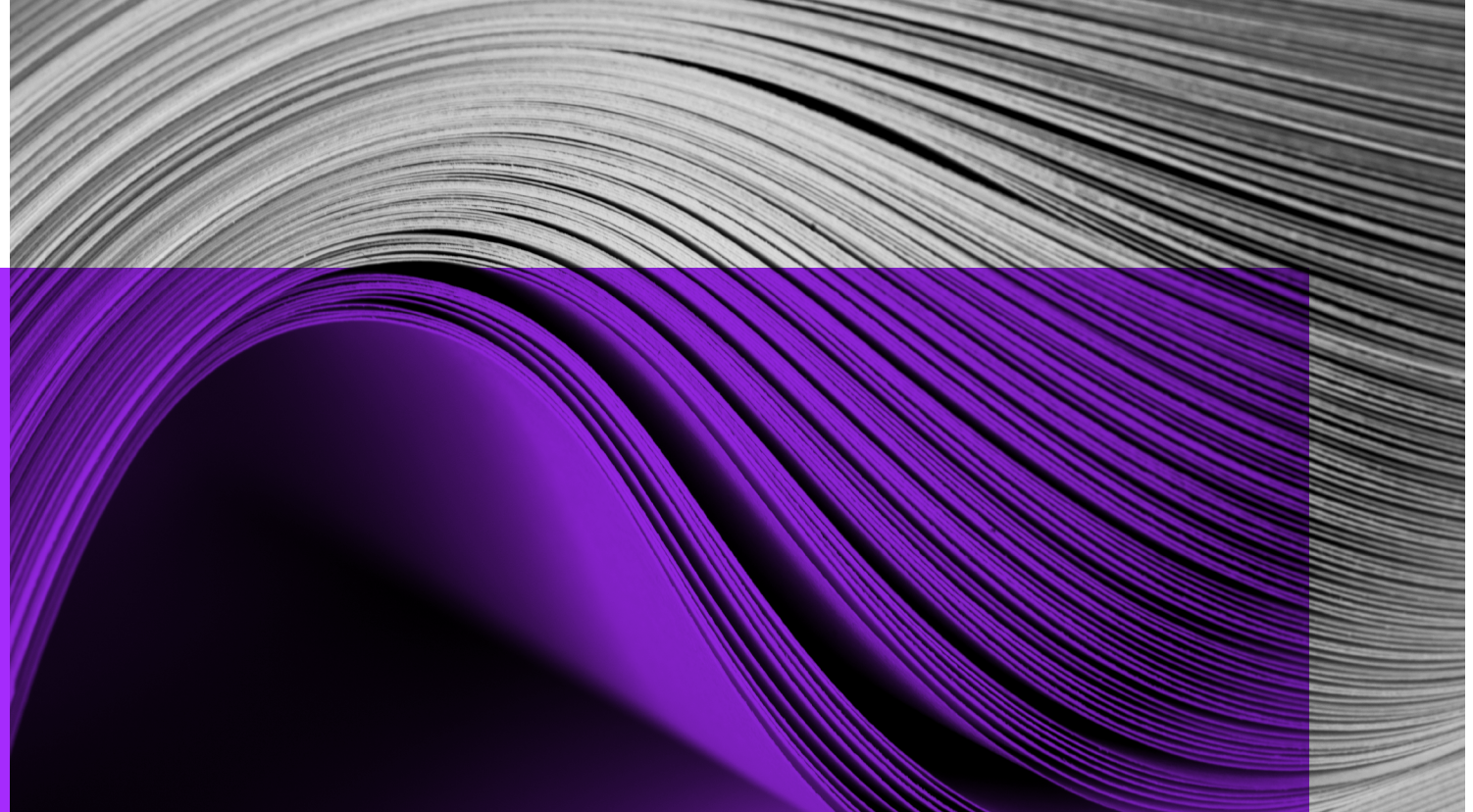
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Meet the experts

Natasha Cambell

Natasha leads Source's thought leadership programme, as well as lending her expertise to bespoke marketing advisory projects. She is deeply passionate about impactful content, working with our clients to help them execute powerful thought leadership that can cut through the noise in a crowded market.

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Omaro Maseli

Omaro is a key member of the Marketing Advisory Team at Source, where she also lends her expertise to a wide range of bespoke projects. She uses her extensive experience in shaping thought leadership to advise global professional services firms on their content strategy.

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Sophie Gunn

Sophie leads our Client Perceptions programme, where she oversees the production of reports that help professional services firms understand how they're perceived in the market and the factors that influence firm choice. Sophie also applies her sharp analytical lens to a wide range of bespoke projects.

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Nicola Kostrzewska

Nicola works in Source's Marketing Advisory team, where she rates and reviews thought leadership pieces, authors insightful reports, and provides practical guidance to firms looking to elevate their content strategies. Nicola's expertise helps professional services firms create more effective content.

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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?”

White Space subscription

Stay ahead in the professional services thought leadership landscape. Our White Space programme delivers unique insights, proprietary data, and expert analysis to help your firm increase the value of its thought leadership.

It includes two core reports: the **Quality Ratings Report**, benchmarking outputs from leading publishers, and the **Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership** report, capturing the views of 4,000 consulting services buyers. For subscribers and non-subscribers, we also publish an **Innovation report** on emerging trends and leading approaches, alongside **Featured Thought Leadership** each quarter, showcasing a best-in-class example.

These insights will help you understand how your firm compares to competitors and guide strategic decisions on content, client engagement, and marketing priorities.



Programme highlights:



Our **industry-leading thought leadership quality benchmark report**, with a **30-minute executive briefing** on results and the implications for your firm



Five reviews of your key thought leadership publications, rated with Source's proprietary methodology, with actionable recommendations for enhancement



Client perceptions report access, revealing what thought leaders' clients value most and why



Tailored 60-minute leadership briefing on marketing, content, and industry trends, with strategic recommendations



Webinar series deep-diving into report insights and providing opportunities to learn from high-performing teams

Want to find out more? [Get in touch](#) to discuss how the White Space subscription could help your firm.

Publication schedule for 2026

2026	Reports	More insights
January		
February		Featured Thought Leadership* Quality Ratings Webinar
March	Quality Ratings Report (QRR)	
April		Featured Thought Leadership* Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership Webinar
May		
June	Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	
July		
August		Featured Thought Leadership*
September		
October	Thought Leadership Innovation*	Featured Thought Leadership* Thought Leadership Innovation Webinar*
November		
December		

Also included with the programme:

- A **30-minute briefing** on *Quality Ratings Report* findings
- A **tailored 60-minute leadership briefing**
- **Five expert reviews** of your key publications

*Elements available to non-subscribers