

Thought Leadership

I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people. **Mahatma Gandhi**

With local, state and US presidential elections forming the political landscape of 2012, the question of leadership is definitely top of mind. Add to this the current controversy surrounding the ALP's ousting of Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister in favour of Julia Gillard.

Closer to home, we have just celebrated the induction of our daughter as a junior school house captain and council representative. She may only be 10 years of age, but the subject of leadership is already being addressed and quite rightly so. In a week's time she will join fellow student leaders from schools across Cairns for a full day workshop focussing on becoming a good leader and this is definitely something that should be applauded. It is not always easy to garner respect from your peers but one thing is certain, the message 'lead by example' will be broached.

While the sum of qualities that drives leadership differs from person to person, we expect our leaders to have such characteristics as passion, action, respect, innovative thinking and a deep perception. We want our leaders to be visionaries, inspirational, influential and at the end of the day, be the types of people that make us proud. Now that is not much to ask.

According to the Obama school of thought, you first of all, need to be a good speaker. And using your powerful oration skills, have the ability to inspire and motivate while communicating a strong sense of responsibility. You need to give hope through the promise of change and reforms and generally, create goodwill and faith among your constituents.

In the world of public relations, there is a relatively new buzzword afoot known as 'thought leadership'. It has always existed on both small and larger scales but now has its own area of specialisation so to speak.

While cynics say it is just an amped up expression for 'expert' or 'guru' – it is the concept of creating recognition within your industry for knowledge and insights. In effect, you will experience demand in the business arena, you will be asked to comment in the media about issues relating to your industry and no doubt you will be asked to share your knowledge at conferences, meetings and social engagements.

Thought leadership is an integral part of a successful brand strategy. Like brand leadership, thought leadership is claiming that you, as a person, are the best in the business. This is a very coveted position to attain and keep and therefore is something that people consider worth striving for with a step by step plan rather than relying on luck.

Thought leadership PR is proactive, personal and centres on a small group of company spokespeople who have intimate knowledge of their chosen field and are more than willing to talk about it. The thought leader needs to be available and a reliable media source, they need to be prepared with the facts that they can communicate with precision.

Thought leaders also need to be passionate, insightful and opinionated. As a thought leader you will have the ability to shed light using a new or different perspective – and always be testing the

boundaries. And finally, thought leaders need to be persistent and creative in their media opportunities using the tools of research, case studies, white papers and interviews.

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