

Thought leadership on demand

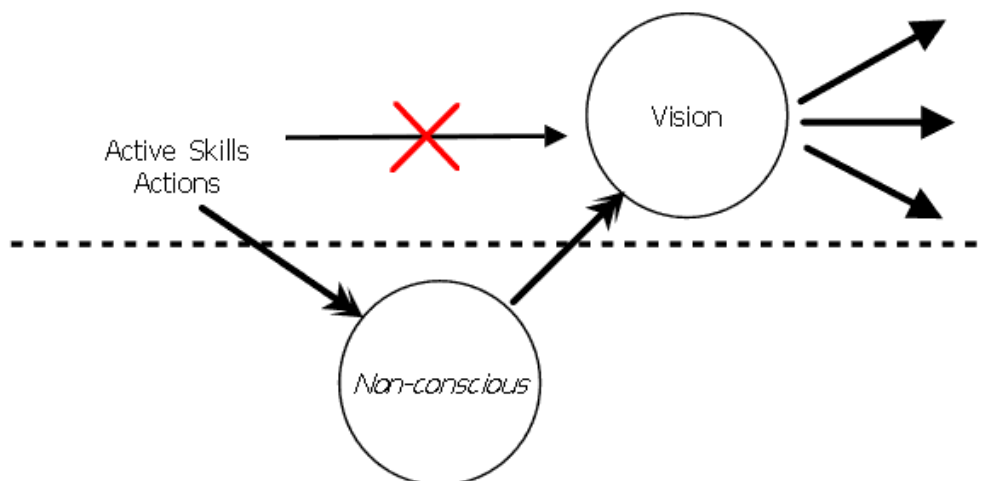


Thought leadership came into the conversation with Forward Plane a few years ago with senior manager from New York. I was struck at the time that he wanted thought leadership in his industry – a laudable aim. It was obvious he did not have a game plan on how to get there.

Thought leadership is about having better vision than competitors and generating more ideas and concepts. One way to do that is to recruit (poach)

the top people. An alternative is to grow your own. Forward Plane can help you grow or foster your own.

The two costs involved are getting the entire team up to speed with the Forward Plane tool set, and setting up a work stream that works for every body. The first aspect is no more difficult or time consuming than taking driving lessons to the level of taking the driving test. Normally 15 hours coaching and 15 hours own work on average. The latter is a standard workstream, which can run smoothly in the background under the expert guidance of a part-time project manager.



Building vision

Vision can be built with specific steps. This is a process similar to creating a shopping list before you go to the supermarket, but taken a few degrees further. I like to think of these steps as consciously taking actions for the non-conscious mind. This is my model and other people may have their own. If this seems a little far-fetched for you, let's just say that it is no different to

the process of learning to play musical notes by just looking at the score, or knowing what song is coming on when listening to a cd.

Generating ideas

Creativity and idea generation is not the preserve of the few. There are a few rules to learn, a few fallacies to unlearn and regular steps to take. It struck me some while back when I was training a lady with years of experience in HR (in a major, major UK bank) that she did not have the basic tools that Forward Plane includes. Idea generation is a specific skill, which also involves 'bouncing things off the non conscious' (in a very practical way). In my experience you can have options generation when the field is limited.

The key here is to realise that ideas do not need to be new to mankind for them to physiologically be new to you. Any loving mum or parent knows that for their toddlers. This probably gets forgotten by the time we are adults and the competitive field of work. I suggest if you're going to be successful in your career, you probably need to generate 15-30 new ideas a day, or something like 10,000 a year. Then you are on your way to thought leadership.

Finally

Thought leadership may not be appropriate to all industries, but I can have some merits. Especially if woven in with sensory or style based client offering (think iPod, hotel, sandwich chains, products).

1. Vision does not come automatically, but it can be built.
2. Decide whether the thought leadership needed is graphical or tangible or sensory. It could be a mixture of all.
3. Emotional management is key. Fear acts as a damper, so does perceived uncertainty or perceived risk.
4. Contradiction can act as a generator. So can confusion.
5. Teamwork will almost always generate solutions or fix more problems than a 'guru', and yet a guru is needed to trail-blaze.
6. Completeness of ideas: the more complex the environment and the harder it is to achieve completeness of ideas. Incompleteness of ideas speaks for itself...

As a final note, and I would prefer to finish on an optimistic note, the business unit of the manager mentioned at the beginning has been disbanded.

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