

Thought Leadership Training

Synopsis: *The key to visibility isn't self-promotion; it's taking on a new role in your community.*

Takeaways: *This is your chance to articulate why you chose to be a professional instead of a sales agent, and why you're passionate about what you do—and to effectively communicate your mission inside the community you serve.*

How many times have you looked at a consumer newspaper or magazine article, or an interview featuring a competitor on the news, and said to yourself: “How is it possible that this [huckster/salesperson/broker/agent] is getting all this great publicity instead of an actual professional like myself?”

Of course, you know the answer. Most real professionals put their time into helping their clients, while the individuals with a sales agenda are spending their daily allotment of time getting themselves out in the public eye.

But it's actually more basic than that. Most real professionals have never taken the time to articulate why they prefer to work for the benefit of clients rather than in sales (the most important real distinction between them and brokers), which would require them to put into words their particular passion for helping others.

On top of that, most fiduciary advisors and financial planners have an allergic reaction to self-promotion, which causes them to

avoid marketing altogether. After all, what is marketing but trying to put a series of self-promotional messages out into the world? Right?

Marie Swift, of Impact Communications, and Maribeth

Few true fiduciary advisors have taken the time to articulate their mission and their value.

Kuzmeski, of Red Zone Marketing, believe that this attitude is depriving huge sectors of the public of the opportunity to find the value of working with a real professional. “If you're reluctant to share the meaning behind the service that you're providing to your clients,” says Kuzmeski, “then the loser is the future clients who will never know what you could have been doing for them.”

She adds that if you don't clearly articulate your value, then it's difficult for clients, who are

genuinely enthusiastic about all the thing you've done for them, to articulate your value to their friends and neighbors in referral situations.

Swift adds that the conversation with the outside world doesn't have to be self-promotional. “It's about talking about their passions and their purpose, who they serve and why,” she says, “so that people can know them in a truly authentic way.”

In other words, instead of being self-serving, the advisor would take on a new role in his/her community—not trying to sell, but provide information and guidance and meaning around financial services.

“We are,” says Kuzmeski, “trying to get some of the best advisors to step up and accept the role of thought leader.”

Building Celebrity Status

To help advisors take a very long first step toward that thought leadership role, Swift and Kuzmeski have teamed up to create a program called The Advisor Thought Leader Summit, which will take place November 9 at the Gleacher Center at the University of Chicago, in downtown Chicago (<http://www.AdvisorThoughtLeaderSummit.com>). The day will include presentations by Swift and Kuzmeski on basic marketing techniques, body language and presence, and group exercises where each participant will finally take the time to articulate his/her unique story, and explain the how

and why of their work.

In addition, co-faculty members Angie Larson and John Wasik will address the process of building your celebrity status. Larsen's expertise is TV and video; she's a former news anchor for ABC's Salt Lake City affiliate, host of a program called "Good Things Utah" and a producer of TV shows featuring Dr. Oz and other TV celebrities. Wasik is a print/content expert; he's written more than 1,000 articles, including consumer finance work for CBS Moneywatch and the "Ecology of Money" columns on *morningstar.com*. His resume includes a stint as a magazine editor and newspaper reporter, and he's published 17 books, including his latest: *Lightning Strikes: Lessons in Creativity from the Life and Work of Nicola Tesla*.

Larson will coach the first-day attendees on their camera skills, and give everybody a chance to do an individual video interview (which will be recorded and available for attendees to take home with them). Swift will provide insights on working with the media, and present with Larson on what TV producers are looking for in their on-camera segments.

Everybody will learn how to set up their own low-cost, high-quality video studio in their office, and all attendees will be coached to craft their own press release, with a professional photograph taken on-site. When they go home, they can start their thought leadership by letting the local news outlets know that they attended something called the Thought Leader Summit at the

University of Chicago. (Everybody will also have a chance to have a photo taken with Wasik, which might be included in the press package.)

For an additional fee, advisors who signed up for the Summit will be

be a "thought leader" as opposed to a self-promotional advisor? And... How is the thought leader role likely to lead to a better marketing outcome?

"A thought leader is someone who advances the conversation,"

An experienced on-camera TV journalist will coach on camera skills, and provide everybody with an individual video interview to take home.

eligible to participate in a "Premier Advisor Day" the following morning. There, they will basically enter a studio environment at the Gleacher Center. A production staff will help them produce their own customized, scripted 8-10-minute TED talk on their purpose, the reason they get up in the morning and why they became a financial professional in the first place. The TED talk will be written with the help of Swift and Kuzmeski prior to the meeting, and produced (with their coaching) on-site.

"We'll have a couple of different cameras, so we can splice back and forth, and then in post-production we will make them look really polished and professional," says Swift. "Those who don't want to have us produce the videos are invited to stay for the second day," she adds. "We think it will be an excellent learning opportunity."

Thought Leadership

What, exactly, does it mean to

Swift explains. She contrasts a thought leader with a subject matter expert. The subject matter expert happens to know a lot about technical topics. The thought leader provides insights and perspective to the community—in this case, around personal finance, where just about every consumer is floundering as they sort through basic budgeting and investing issues. There is so much misinformation flying around.

Kuzmeski contrasts the thought leader with the sales agent or self-promoter. The agent or promoter is primarily trying to draw attention to him/herself, while the thought leader is trying to help the community come to a better functional understanding of what's important and why. "A thought leader is somebody who is recognized as an authority," she says. "To achieve that, you have to say things that give you credibility. People say, *if I need answers, this is the person I should speak to*. It's about positioning," she adds. "The

number one takeaway from the entire conference is that thought leadership is about positioning.”

A key part of the positioning is the ‘why.’ *Why* would somebody want to help guide the community to achieve better financial outcomes? *Why* would somebody

tell me the same stuff over and over again. And so to Maribeth’s point,” she says, “they really need to take the time to think about this, to write it down, go through the mental exercise so they can truly step forward and say, *here’s how we’re unique.*”

Inside Information readers with a 30% discount. If you apply the coupon code VERES30, your cost for that first day will be \$1,540.

What about that second day? The cost for the Premier Advisor Day is a supplemental fee of \$4,000, which is not discounted with that aforementioned coupon code. (As mentioned earlier, there is no additional cost if first-day attendees simply want to stay and observe.)

Isn’t that kind of pricey? “It’s very expensive to go into a video studio to create video,” Kuzmeski explains. “And it’s not cheap to hire somebody to help you put together the content that you’re going to deliver. Our cost, working with the group like this, is probably half the price of what it would be if you were to go out and do something like that one-on-one in the marketplace.” In other words, the one-day price already represents a 50% discount.

Kuzmeski says that, for advisors especially, it’s hard to pull together a really nice video. “Typically,” she says, “they’re kind busy, they go in, they do one take, and it’s not that great. I’ve done a lot of writing for video scripts, but then we aren’t doing the on-camera training that we’ll be providing here.” She adds that one professionally-produced TED talk video is probably the fastest way to express your value proposition to prospects and the community, and also communicate your respect for quality production.

How, exactly, will it work? Advisors will already have gone

A professionally-produced TED talk video may be the fastest way to express your value proposition to your community.

provide impartial advice to clients, rather than promote themselves and win sales awards? If people can relate to that personal ‘why,’ that motivating drive to function as a professional, then they’re far more willing to give you credibility and their attention.

Of course, as mentioned before, this is an area where many of the best advisors have traditionally been weak. “I’ve spent a lot of time working on value propositions for advisors,” says Kuzmeski. “The first thing I’ll ask them is: *what’s unique about you? What’s unique about what you do?* And it’s as if I’ve asked them to redefine the Theory of Relativity or something,” she says. “You are basically talking about yourself, and advisors whose focus is on helping others typically don’t do that very well.”

“A lot of the best advisors I’ve met over the years have a hard time stepping out and saying anything that might feel self-promotional,” adds Swift. “When I ask advisors: *what makes you different?* They

TED talk video

The first day of the Summit is about helping advisors overcome their marketing paralysis, and articulate a passion that may be the biggest thing distinguishing them from self-promotional sales agents. “Part of this process is not only to help them articulate their value proposition,” says Kuzmeski, “but then delivering it in a way that is compelling and memorable and easy to watch.”

Every Summit attendee will leave not only with the video and press release, but also Impact Communications’ Executive Media manual (which is given to all Impact clients) on the best ways to work with the media, and a digital copy of Kuzmeski’s book, entitled *85 Million Dollar Tips for Financial Advisors*.

The first day will cost \$2,200—although after a very tough round of negotiations, Swift and Kuzmeski agreed to provide

through a day partially devoted to on-camera training with Larsen. In the weeks leading up to the conference, they will have worked with Swift and/or Kuzmeski to hone their content. On the second day, with other would-be thought leaders in the audience waiting their turn (or staying the extra day to watch how videos are made), they'll come forward one at a time to record their 8-10 minute video, using a teleprompter, in front of two cameras. They'll be coached on their delivery, and there will be

two and possibly three takes that will ultimately be spliced together into a finished product.

Swift calls the first day of the Summit "media training on steroids." She adds that something as simple as shifting a professional's mindset from trying to get your name in print to serving as a thought leader resource for the community can go a long way toward overcoming the low profile that you typically find at the community's best advisory firms. The materials

you bring back might equal what would normally require weeks of work in a less-focused setting.

So the next time you look up from your desk and notice that somebody who provides a lot less value has a higher profile than you, well, now you know the formula. If you want the "how to" of it, you'll have to sign up for the Summit.

Here's the web address again for the best marketing day's work you're ever likely to experience: (<http://www.AdvisorThoughtLeaderSummit.com>) ■