

# *Get Storied*

## **How to Brand Yourself as a Thought-Leader: Seven Must-Ask Questions**

### **1. What are you selling – a commodity or signature solution?**

We all have to pay the bills. Often we end up taking the work clients ask us to do, even when it's not our core competency, passion, or expertise. It happens all the time. Frequently, clients don't know or realize what they really need. Which means you need to educate them on the value of your breakthrough solution, or else accept your fate servicing the status quo. In comparison, thought-leaders provide a fresh perspective and focus on the systemic issues at the root of the problem. It takes courage to be a thought-leader.

Desired Outcome: You are hired for your true value and unique expertise.

### **2. What do you want to be known for and associated with?**

Your brand is only as strong as the stories that people tell about you. What do people say about you? In the effort to "fit in", it's easy for many of us to come off as "middle of the road." It's not that you have a bad reputation; you just haven't made a distinctive impression. Or perhaps you're too bold and provocative, to the point where people get confused what you're really about. People need help; signposts really, to reinforce the story you want associated with yourself.

Desired Outcome: You are remembered and thought of for the right reasons.

### **3. How are you inspiring interest and curiosity?**

You want to give people a reason to talk with you and about you. When asked what I do, I say that – "I'm a business storyteller". This invariably leads to a question, to which I respond, "I advise companies, entrepreneurs, and nonprofits on how to get others to believe in their story." And from there, an opening is created to explore the topics of trust, perceptions, and communications. The possibilities are endless. I shape the dialogue by first catering to people's natural curiosity, and connecting it back to what they do or care about.

Desired Outcome: You have a consistent and effective way to engage people.

### **4. Why must you invite others into relationship?**

In today's world, social capital is your rocket fuel. Whether you're facebooking, linking-in, twittering, or doing it old school – you need to keep building

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connections. Leverage comes from the width and breadth of your social network. Of course, it's not just about "collecting" friends. Your network is only as strong as the strength of the relationships themselves. It's more than just the act of networking or making yourself accessible. The ambitious thought-leader creates the gathering places, forums, and mechanisms for their worlds to connect. Shape the network and you naturally become a central node, connected to everything.

Desired Outcome: You have activated a network of people around your ideas.

## **5. What structures will expand your marketing footprint?**

Many aspiring thought leaders are guilty of voodoo marketing; the act of believing, wishing, and praying that new business will just appear from the sky. While a little magic never hurt, new business is built on the principles of trust, familiarity, and reach. People need to become exposed to your ideas on a repeated basis. Whether that's a newsletter, an interview series, or live gatherings – if you're a thought leader, you have to be in the business of publishing and education. Get used to it. Thankfully there are countless negligible or low-cost ways to build a platform that translates into a growing footprint.

Desired Outcome: You have a meaningful way to expand your reach.

## **6. What tables would you like to have a seat at?**

You have a fresh perspective, a deep sense of purpose, and a desire to share your gifts with the world. Yet, you're frustrated by the limits of your current standing. What kind of projects will allow your gifts to have the biggest impact possible? When you play at a bigger level, you gain access to new kinds of linkage and leverage. Being a real thought-leader translates into opportunities across geography, sectors, and culture. It starts by getting clear on what circles you want to be a part, and what you can contribute as an active member.

Desired Outcome: You are playing at the level you need for greatest impact.

## **7. What will make others believe and trust you?**

If you make your living on your ability to sell "ideas", you need to consciously cultivate your reputation – whether that's based on pedigree, authenticity, or originality. Align yourself with existing ideas and institutions that make your thought-leadership and ideas more approachable. Yet, don't let yourself become confined. Real thought leaders don't wait around for permission, they lead by example. That's why we call them thought-leaders.

Desired Outcome: You are recognized for guiding the path forward.

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## About the Author

Hi, I am Michael Margolis, the founder of Get Storied - an education, publishing, and consulting company that works with diverse world-changing efforts. I advise businesses, nonprofits, and entrepreneurs on how to get others to believe in their story. You can download a free copy of my storytelling manifesto for change-makers and innovators - [www.believethebook.com](http://www.believethebook.com).



## Free Upcoming Telecall

Join me for a free 60-min telecall on How to Brand Yourself as a Thought-Leader.

**Date and Time** - Wed, February 10, 2010, 2pm EST/11am PST.

I'll be speaking about the seven must-ask questions in this article. I'll provide examples and ideas on how you can move forward with your own thought-leadership agenda. I'll answer questions you might have, and I will tell you about my upcoming 4-week TeleCourse that expands on all of these concepts in very practical ways.

**Dial-in Information** - (712) 432-0075 – Participant Code 405468

If you have any questions you would like me to answer on the call, email them in advance at [michael@getstoried.com](mailto:michael@getstoried.com)

## Next 4-Week Course

Starting February 18, 2010, I am leading a 4-week TeleCourse on positioning and branding as a thought-leader. It's a hands-on interactive program, designed to help creative entrepreneurs, change-agents, and aspiring thought-leaders get clear on the right story to tell. Visit - <http://www.getstoried.com/training/quickstart/>