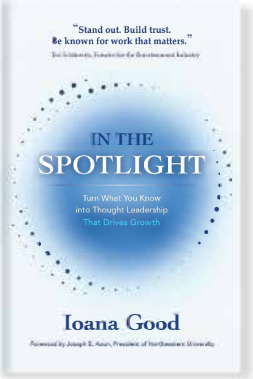

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Turn What You Know into Thought Leadership That Drives Growth

Ioana Good

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Preface

Before I understood the machinery of headlines, interviews, reputations, or influence, I understood two things that would shape my life: silence and proof.

I knew what it felt like to live in a place where truth had to be whispered, where words carried risk, and where the absence of a free press was not an abstract political idea, but a daily condition of life. Leaving communist Romania for the United States gave me more than a new culture to immerse myself in; it gave me a lifelong reverence for the power of voice. It taught me that words can protect, expose, connect, persuade, and, when used carelessly, distort.

At home, proof mattered just as much as voice. My parents are both scientists. They met in the lab, and many of our dinner conversations revolved around the latest discoveries and inventions emerging from cultures in petri dishes and slides examined under microscopes. My father's work in biochemistry and biotechnology took him into marine ecosystems, where he studied how to restore balance in the water and draw fish back to areas where their numbers had declined. During my summers as a child, I would join my mother and her colleagues along the Danube Delta as they monitored mosquito habitats, collected samples, and helped ensure that malaria, which had been eliminated in Romania in the 1960s, was not reintroduced by Anopheles mosquitoes.

Between those two forces—the silence of a society without a free press and the proof demanded by science—I began to understand what credible communication requires. It requires courage, but also evidence. It requires voice, but also responsibility.

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When I announced that I would pursue an education and career in journalism, my family questioned my path. Given how many questions I asked and how often I came armed with a rebuttal, they urged me to consider law school as an alternative to the rigorous science track they had imagined for me. But I was drawn to the media with a pull unlike anything else. Now, years later, they see my drive and recognize that the path I chose, while different than the one they envisioned for me, was the right journey for me.

Still, I carried their influence with me. From my parents, I inherited a respect for rigor, a hunger for discovery, and the discipline to look beneath the surface before drawing a conclusion. Those instincts became essential in journalism, and later in corporate communications, public relations, crisis communications, and reputation-building.

Over time, that work has helped many leaders become credible, trusted voices, navigate high-stakes media interviews with confidence, and use visibility to grow their businesses and create jobs. But my perspective on media has never been limited to publicity. For me, media has always been connected to something much larger: access to information, the responsibility of influence, and the real consequences of being misunderstood or misrepresented.

I have been fortunate to work across the media ecosystem, first as a journalist, then directing communications for firms. I have managed PR agencies and led in-house teams. I created the first new-media course at Rollins College in the early 2000s, which soon led to the development of an entire PR track, for which I served as an adjunct professor. At Northeastern University, I guest lecture on topics including the future of media relations, crisis management, copyright infringement, artificial intelligence, and shaping a narrative to succeed in the media. With the Legal Marketing Association, I helped develop the first program that brought marketing into law schools.

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In 2019 and 2020, together with my business partner, Adrien Maines, we founded two companies to bring competitive advantage to clients. First, Promova, a woman-owned firm focused on PR, communications and branding. Second, *Find A Rainmaker*, a behavioral analysis platform that helps organizations identify the right people to train for media and business development. The platform was built after we analyzed and surveyed thousands of highly successful business leaders across different industries and identified the key behavioral traits that propelled them to advance quickly.

Along the way, I published hundreds of articles in publications such as *Law.com, New York Law Journal*, *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, *Engineering-News Record* and *Law360*, and presented at industry events such as the Legal Marketing Association, Society of Marketing Professional Services, Tech Incubators, and American Builders and Contractors.

I am particularly proud to have partnered with Northeastern University to launch a co-op program within our companies that provides internships for the next generation of leaders. This keeps us connected to the latest academic research, emerging challenges, and cutting-edge advancements. It also reminds me that leadership is not only about what we build for ourselves. It is about what we make possible for others.

Across the years, I came to see the clear thread that connected it all: my parents' scientific work, my early understanding of life without a free press, and the leaders I have advised across industries. Whether the subject is law, biotechnology and public health, artificial intelligence, crisis response, or business growth, every challenge is rooted in communication. Can you explain something complex with clarity? Can you back it up with research or case studies and make it useful for others? Can you earn trust before you ask people to act?

That is the backstory. Here is the purpose.

I want to help hard-working leaders and entrepreneurs accelerate growth, tell their story with intention, and build

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solid reputations that gain momentum over time; the goal is to strengthen not only their businesses but also the markets and communities they serve. I also want to encourage content that's clear, useful, and accurate—the kind that cuts through the noise instead of cluttering the feed.

Because in a world overflowing with commentary, the leaders who make a lasting impact are the ones who bring clarity, usefulness, credibility, and humanity to the conversation.

This book is for them.

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Introduction

Open your phone for five minutes and you'll feel it: constant posting, commentary, and instant reactions. Everyone is publishing, reacting, and weighing in, often before the full story has taken shape. In that environment, trust has become harder to earn and easier to lose. What cuts through the noise is deeply human: judgment shaped by experience, empathy for the audience, and the courage to say something that matters. Thought leadership is how expertise travels, how reputations take root and rise, and how leaders earn the right to shape the conversation. This book offers practical guidance and clear frameworks to help you become a successful thought leader, build a foundation of trust, and turn visibility into sustained growth.

What thought leadership really is

Thought leadership has become a popular label, and it gets applied to almost everything. It's been used to describe frequent LinkedIn posts or press-release victory laps. But real thought leadership is something quieter and more durable. It's the consistent practice of offering useful insights that shape conversations, reduce uncertainty, and help people make better decisions. It's built by being genuinely helpful, drawing from industry experience, adding a distinct point of view, and showing up with integrity when the stakes are high.

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Why credibility is the currency

When people hire you, they expect you to be good at what you do. They're also buying confidence in your judgment, and a clear story they can trust about who you are and how you work. Research backs up what experienced communicators already know: narrative builds trust and moves behavior. Nielsen shows storytelling can lead to a 23% increase in sales.[1] A Bloomreach and EMARKETER study (2025) found that emotional connections drive brand loyalty in today's economy.[2] In a joint study, 63.6% of respondents reported that customers are less brand-loyal than they were five years ago, which makes credibility and connection even more valuable. It's also why corporate storytelling, and by extension thought leadership, continues to gain momentum.

Clients are always auditing credibility. The real question is: "Is this person the first call I make when a complex problem lands on my desk?" Thought leadership creates credibility through clarity, evidence, and repetition. Third-party validation does the work. When others cite you, quote you, and invite you, your authority travels further than any ad budget.

In other words, people have more choices than ever. They also have more reasons to be skeptical. That is why credibility has become the currency of modern leadership.

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1. Tamás Rausch, *Advertising + emotions = increase sales,* Nielsen (Apr. 2022), https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2022/advertising-emotions-increase-sales/#.
2. *See Bloomreach and EMARKETER Study Finds Emotional Connections—Not Discounts—Drive Brand Loyalty in Today's Economy,* Bloomreach (Apr. 9, 2025), https://www.bloomreach.com/en/news/2025/bloomreach-and-emarketer-study-finds-emotional-connections-not-discounts-drive-brand-loyalty-in-todays-economy/.

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Where public relations fits

Modern PR lives at the intersection of storytelling, reputation, and visibility, delivered consistently. Here's an analogy: Thought leadership is like a steady drizzle at the mountaintop—quiet, persistent, and shaping what grows. A summer storm can make noise and headlines, but it passes. Consistency is what turns attention into traction, and traction into trust.

That's how authority becomes long-lasting. The impact isn't always immediate, but it keeps building beneath the surface until something real begins to show. Continual, bite-sized value builds reputation and relationship equity. Short reactions, clear points of view, and recurring insights can keep you present, while larger pieces such as op-eds, media placements, and industry presentations create punctuated peaks.

This is what building a voice looks like in practice: consistent usefulness. Especially in technical fields, clarity becomes a competitive advantage. When the topic is complex, the advantage often goes to the expert who can explain it in plain terms that are consumable and understood by a large audience. Journalists and audiences remember experts who help them understand what matters now and what to do next.

The technological moment

Technological advances can draft, summarize, and scale communication. Artificial intelligence is the most present example, and it will not be the last. Tools cannot replace the lived judgment, ethical sense, or the human understanding of why one message earns trust while another rings hollow. In a world where information is abundant, discernment is scarce. As new technologies make it easier to create, manipulate, and distribute content at speed, leadership is increasingly tested not just by what you say, but by how quickly you can verify what's real. What still separates leaders is responsible expertise communicated with clarity, even amid the constant churn of content and opinion.

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These tools can be useful. They can help leaders move faster. But they cannot replace the human responsibility to know when to speak, what to verify, and how to communicate with care. Intelligence may help us solve problems faster, but wisdom tells us which problems deserve our attention in the first place.

Building a thought leadership system

This book will demonstrate how to:

- Become the trusted expert people call first, and the media call back.
- Replace self-promotion with value that earns attention.
- Define your expertise sweet spot: what you know deeply, what the market needs now, and what makes you distinct.
- Build a messaging platform that holds together interviews, articles, podcasts, panels, and client conversations.
- Equip leaders and teams to communicate with confidence and consistency.
- Turn visibility into qualified inbound opportunities, then into enduring relationships.
- Measure what builds trust, so you can repeat what works.
- Protect credibility in an era of manipulation, deepfakes, and fast-moving misinformation.

In the chapters ahead, we will move from ideas to systems. You'll build a narrative that holds up in the first few sentences, and a cadence you can sustain without burning out. You'll also see how steady, useful communication outperforms sporadic heroics, and how reputation becomes one of the most efficient growth engines you can build.

Thought leadership is one of the clearest advantages you can build. If you don't shape the conversation in your space, someone

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else will. The good news is you already have what you need: your expertise, your experience, and your voice. Shared with intention, it can change your career, your business, and, over time, the industry around you.

So, step forward. Use what you know. Build trust before you need it and use your voice to drive growth in a noisy world.

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