

Growing AUM Via  
Thought Leadership:

creating impact  
and engagement

An Investment Marketer's Guide to Content



# Contents

▶ Foreword	3
▶ An Investment Marketer's Guide to Content	4
▶ <b>1: Know your audience</b>	5
▶ <b>2: Be strategic</b>	8
▶ <b>3: Communicate intelligently</b>	10
▶ Contributors	12
▶ Contact details	14
▶ References	15





# Foreword

As the world continues to move towards a new era of instability, the competition for investors' attention is becoming increasingly fierce. Allocators must pay attention to a growing list of market, economic and geopolitical risks. Their inboxes are constantly flooded with data, reports, newsletters and news.

How can communications and marketing professionals at asset-management firms capture and maintain investors' attention in such a demanding environment?


Blogs are a great way to provide timely updates on market or economic events, but they lack in analytical depth. Social media posts can improve a firm's share of voice on various platforms, but they are often forgotten. Thought leadership, however, offers a unique medium to meet the informational needs of professional investors in today's fast-paced world.

Written, designed and delivered in the right way, at the right time and to the right audience, thought leadership has the power to capture investors' attention and provide them with practical and timely insights into various aspects of the capital-allocation process.

For thought leadership to yield great results – from stronger brand awareness to growth in AUM – everything about the piece must be crafted to capture and maintain the attention of investors.

This document is intended to be a resource on how to produce thought leadership that delivers on your communications and marketing goals.

## Savvy Investor



Thought leadership, however, offers a unique medium to meet the informational needs of professional investors in today's fast-paced world.

# An Investment Marketer's Guide to Content



Thought leadership is inescapable in the asset-management industry. But is it effective?

According to The Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Study<sup>1</sup> of 2021, the answer is a resounding yes – but with serious qualifications.

The 2021 study found that, as in so many other areas, the pandemic hastened B2B sales and thought-leadership trends that were already in motion. Research from Gartner<sup>2</sup> shows that prospective buyers spend just 17% of the pre-purchase engaging with the seller, and the Edelman-LinkedIn survey said that 54% of B2B decision-makers were now spending at least an hour a week reading thought leadership from vendors.

But with sales channels severely restricted in 2021, many decision-makers were finding the resulting surfeit of thought-leadership content overwhelming, and had serious questions about its value. Seven out of 10 of respondents said that less than half of the thought leadership they read provided any useful insights at all.

Which brings us to another question: What makes thought leadership good in the eyes of the reader? Indeed, what is good thought leadership?

## Definition of thought leadership:

According to Savvy Investor, thought leadership is a piece of content intended to educate, offer an alternative perspective and increase awareness of a particular issue or topic. Grounded in evidence (some of which may be gathered through proprietary research),<sup>3</sup> it delivers a balanced view on a subject and includes actionable insights for the reader.

The Edelman research found that 81% of respondents want “provocative insights that challenge their assumptions”, supported by “third-party data from trusted sources”. Our own research<sup>4</sup> backed this up: in a survey we conducted specifically among senior marketers at asset-management firms, respondents overwhelmingly said that to qualify as thought leadership, content must contain “thought-provoking and original commentary” with “original thought” and “depth of knowledge”.

So much for the theory. How about the practicalities? How do you craft the thought-leadership piece that generates those original insights that capture your readers' precious time? We outline a few of the critical elements to creating impactful and engaging thought-leadership content:

# 1 Know your audience



## Find the right tone.

With thought leadership, as with all marketing communications, what might be right for the retail investor may not work for the large pension fund. Levels of understanding will differ between the DIY investor and the professional. This should always be borne in mind by the writer. This may mean different and adjusted formats of the same message so that the audience is properly targeted.

Take Ellevest, a US-based asset manager focusing on women+<sup>5</sup> investors. It found that women have different informational needs than men, mostly due to their different perceptions of and attitudes towards risk. Its communication style focuses on the issues faced by women approaching the world of investing and delivers information in an unassuming conversational tone.

This point can be broadened to include other differences among allocators, such as culture, geography and, ultimately, investment needs. Consequently, “investors” are not a homogenous group. Rather, they are a diverse audience with particular informational requirements.

A study by Peregrine communications<sup>6</sup> found that only 14% of marketing content on asset-manager sites was educational, with the other 86% split between promotional material and market commentary. Market commentary (if provided without context) can be difficult or unengaging for people who aren't seasoned investors, which is perhaps why sites containing mostly market commentary and promotional material earned a higher bounce rate than those that featured other types of content.

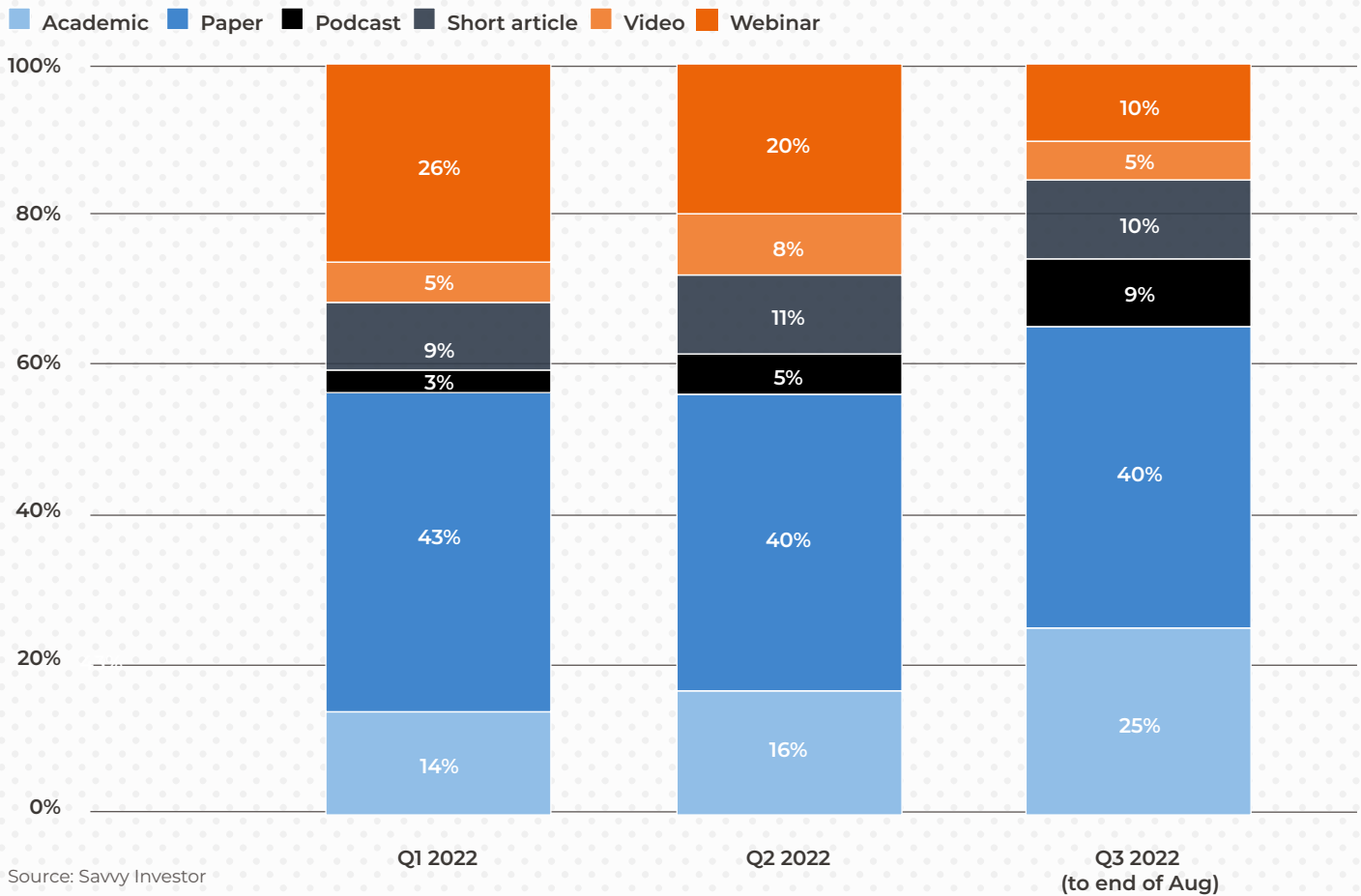
**Fun fact:** *Only 14% of marketing content on asset-manager sites is educational. The rest is mostly market commentary.*

## Find the right medium.

You know who your audience are, but how and where do they consume their content? The marketing world is awash with claims about the power of video or podcasts. But when it comes to thought leadership, does this hold true?

On Savvy Investor's platform, videos and podcasts made up on average 15% of all total downloaded content in the past three quarters. On the other hand, written content (in the form of articles, papers and academic pieces) made up 60% of downloaded material. Given the often complex subject matter in thought leadership - and, perhaps more importantly, the demographics of much of the audience - the vast - the vast majority of thought-leadership consumers continue to prefer the written word.

Figure 1: Downloads per content by quarter in 2022



According to the results of Savvy Investor's Content Marketing Survey and Forecast,<sup>7</sup> video emerged as among the least useful formats for delivering thought leadership. That being said, however, it's important to remember that audience preferences and time dedicated to consuming content will vary: some will have the time (and desire) to follow the beautifully designed charts and narration, while others prefer something to skim through on their daily commute.

Does this mean ditching the podcast and going back to short-form articles? Absolutely not. Audience preference can change, and being able to 'pivot' with your content is always good practice. See Figure 2, which shows how the informational needs of investors fluctuate in different months – note that after the quieter summer holidays, there is often a huge uptick in content consumed by allocators as the third quarter begins. What it does mean, however, is that knowing what your audience wants and how they want to consume it – and adjusting your output accordingly – can be a critical factor in your thought leadership standing out.

### Be topical.

While reading and learning about credit default swaps might be interesting to some (and they certainly were of interest to many during the global financial crisis), they've been less relevant in 2022. To be compelling to readers today, thought-leadership pieces have to be topical and current.

This is a more obvious error than you might think. According to recent data from The Dubs (Why Asset Manager Content is Stuck in a Rut),<sup>8</sup> while crypto was the topic of as much as 18% of all recent Google searches into various asset classes, just 3% of content from asset managers focused on the digital asset. This could suggest a disconnect: asset managers might be keener to write about what interests them – or what they think interests their audience – rather than planning and digging into the numbers.

Of course, markets move fast, and producing thought-leadership pieces can be slow to produce. So it pays to collaborate – getting

market insights from the fund managers, client knowledge from the sales team and analytics from the marketing team. It can also make sense to write thought leadership on more durable ‘mega themes’, and use recent news items as your introductory hook.

### Polish your prose, avoid the jargon.

Given that much thought leadership will be aimed at a knowledgeable audience, it is tempting to think that you should indulge in industry-speak and technical jargon. Tempting, but wrong. Research shows<sup>9</sup> that fund selectors, pension trustees and other relative experts are just as averse to dense language as your everyday reader. For the expert, every bit as much as for the layman, jargon is seen for what it usually is: unnecessary, confusing and a thinly veiled excuse to obfuscate.

You may have some of the most arresting insights in your industry, but your prospective reader has mountains of thought leadership to choose from. So what are they likely to prefer? Something that is elegantly written and accessible? Or heavy prose littered with jargon?

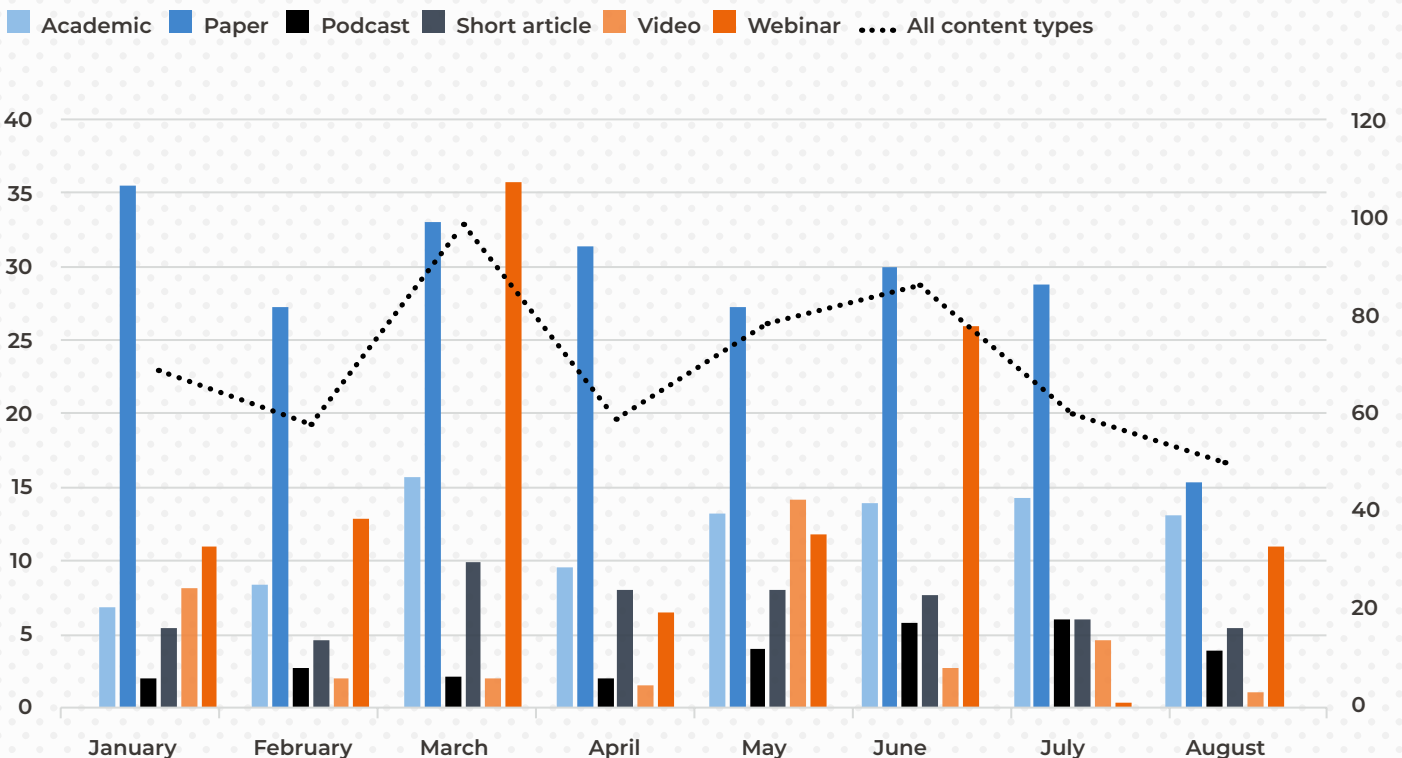
Occasionally, a piece will have technical terms that do not necessarily fall under the category of jargon. It may be difficult to find a Simple English way of describing collateralised loan obligations (and good luck getting it past Compliance if you do) – in this case, add an explainer page at the end of your document with explanations for any technical terms that you’ve used.

### Avoid the hard sell.

Given the amount of effort that goes into a thought-leadership piece, the temptation to do some product push, especially among fund managers themselves, can be difficult to resist. But in fact, a light-touch approach to displaying your services and products is more likely to win in the long run.

As journalists always say, “show, don’t tell”. Readers are drawn to thought leadership that delivers “provocative insights that challenge their assumptions”. If you can do that, the thought-leadership piece will sell you and your company for you, and you’ll have provided a far more compelling reason for prospects to consider your services or products than if you would have directly pushed for selling them.

Figure 2: Downloads by content type (year to date 2022)



Source: Savvy Investor

## 2 Be strategic

### Build the message.

Consistent messaging over a longer period is more likely to win your audience over. The reader needs to get to know the firm and its products, and to be comfortable with them and your culture. In our own research, only 20% of investment marketers had a clearly written and defined strategy for their content, and the majority had broad plans in place.

A scattergun approach to thought-leadership pieces will lessen their impact and could even indicate a broader lack of focus at your company. It is far better to have a planned pipeline of pieces that are well thought out, topical and informative. The drip-drip approach<sup>10</sup> of timely and insightful pieces will invariably generate more of a following than the one-off paper.

### Nail your niche.

Many asset managers attempt to cover all bases with their thought leadership, frequently resulting in superficial, forgettable content. But if the intention is to produce insightful and impactful thought leadership, maintaining a clear focus on specialities is a massive step in the right direction.

#### Consider Rabobank<sup>11</sup>

By focusing on the critical sectors of food and agriculture, the bank has become known for its research and thought leadership in those fields.

For larger asset managers with multiple investment desks, one way to establish this niche expertise is identifying sub-areas within asset classes and focusing thought-leadership efforts there. So, if the broader goal is to be known for ESG, a good starting point is establishing expertise in, for instance, renewable energy or corporate-governance structures.

If this niche credibility can be established and maintained, it can greatly assist in elevating what a manager writes to the status of thought leadership.

An effective content pipeline has structured, well-thought-out pieces, but maintains enough flexibility to respond to breaking news.





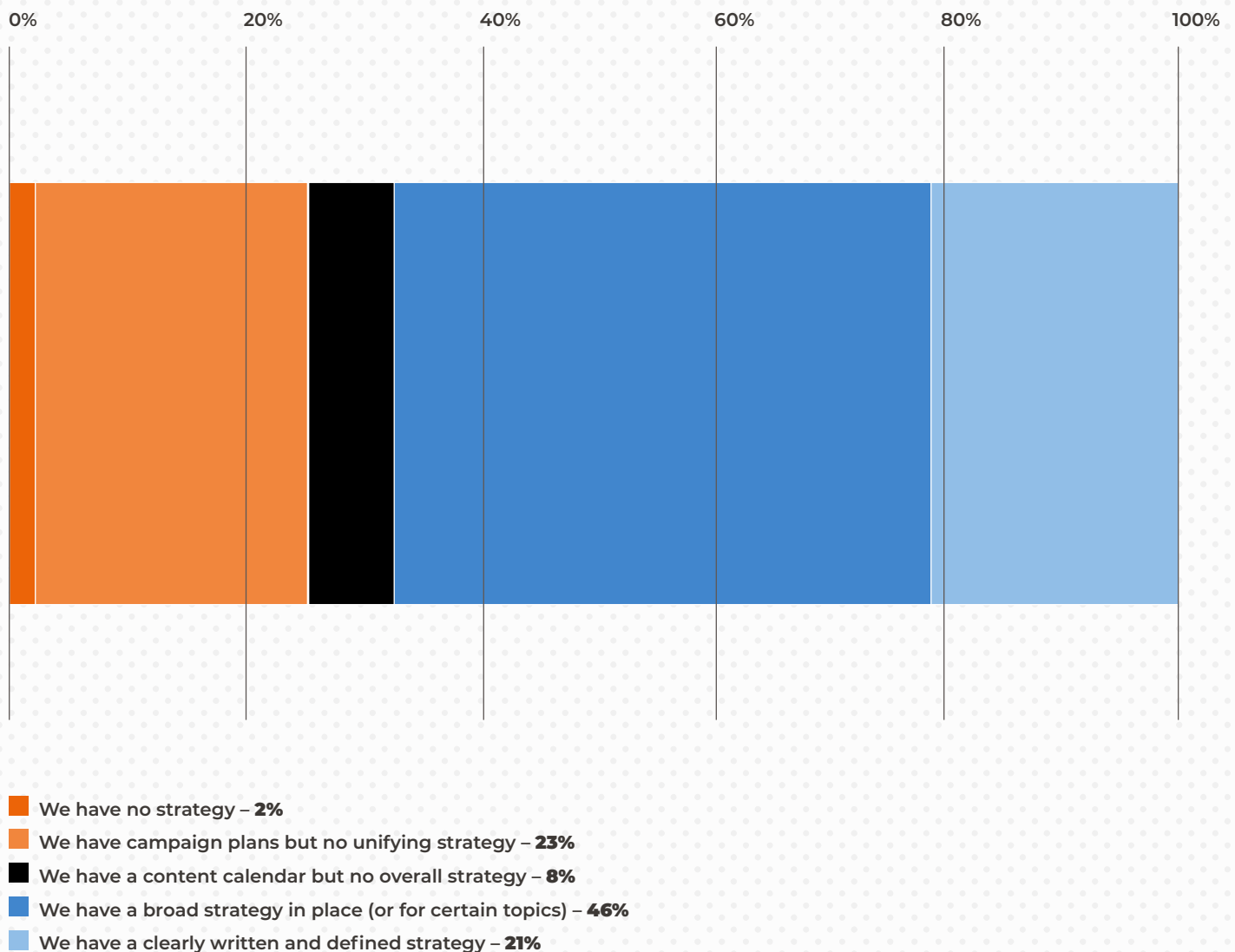
### Include keywords.

From the viewpoint of search-engine optimisation (SEO), keywords are important in attracting readers to your article. While your priority should always be the overall quality of the piece, you can help an article gain online visibility by ensuring you're including the appropriate words and questions throughout. Including the right keywords is just as important for PDF pieces as it is for blogs, as Googlebot is able to scan pretty much anything<sup>12</sup> at this point. Using keywords in the heading and subheadings of thought-

leadership pieces, linking to further reading, and having external links opening in separate tabs are some of the best practices that will improve your reader's experience and generate traction online.

One starting point is this: if you were searching for information on the piece's topic, what questions would you put in a browser? (Answer the Public<sup>13</sup> can be a useful tool for figuring this out.) It's best to keep keywords in mind as you go, rather than inserting them once the piece has been written.

Figure 3: Content strategy among investment marketers



Source: Copylab

## 3 Communicate intelligently

### Go deep – but make it worth the reader's time.

An oft-cited 'rule' about content states that it has to be short to capture readers' attention. But the reality, at least as far as thought leadership is concerned, is rather different.

In Savvy Investor's Content Marketing Survey and Forecast, nearly 60% of respondents said they preferred more in-depth reports. And despite the above-mentioned time pressures, seven in 10 said they preferred longer white papers to shorter blog posts. The clear implication here is that the way to people's attention is not through shorter pieces, but through longer and better ones.

The clear implication here is that the way to people's attention is not through shorter pieces, but through longer and better ones.

Report length is not an end in itself, but an opportunity to provide more challenging, original insights based on your deep sector knowledge. However, keep in mind that your average reader is very time-poor and has no time for waffle. To spark their attention, make your introductory section targeted, arresting and to the point.

A well-written introduction gives your reader a reason to continue with your piece. Once you've reeled them in, use the space you need to support your thesis with original, clear

and relevant research, along with the serious analysis that only your company's experts can provide.

### Measure your impact.

It is important to have robust analytics to be able to measure clicks, downloads and average time spent on articles. Without them, you'll have little way of knowing who's reading and why, and – crucially – how you can make your thought leadership and other content more effective in future. Here are some common ones used when marketing thought leadership:

Metrics like engagement, clicks, likes and comments are easy and superficially attractive ways to gauge the success of your content if it was shared on social media – and when it comes to working the algorithm, high numbers tend to win.<sup>14</sup> But on their own, 'vanity metrics' provide little insight<sup>15</sup> into optimising your content for future success.

To see if your impact metrics are viable, ask yourself the following questions: what courses of action or strategic decisions can you make with them? What can you (intentionally) do to recreate the result, and does the data reflect the truth? For instance, when tracking total downloads of your piece, the number will always go up. But following this metric on its own can distract from potentially important statistics like how many users are actually opening the piece or making their way to your website off the back of it. Similarly, it's important to account for externalities, such as changes in the Google algorithm, that can impact your success (or at least how it's presented in the data).

Number of accounts opened and amount of new money invested emerged as some of the lesser-used success metrics<sup>16</sup> by investment marketers. This could be down to thought-leadership's location in the marketing funnel, or simply lack of traceability in the process. A good way to combat this is placing your thought-leadership piece (or its full contents) behind a sign-up form, which will allow you to build a list of potential leads for further marketing. In this case, for SEO purposes, be sure to feature highlights or a short introduction to your piece on your landing page to improve crawl and reachability.

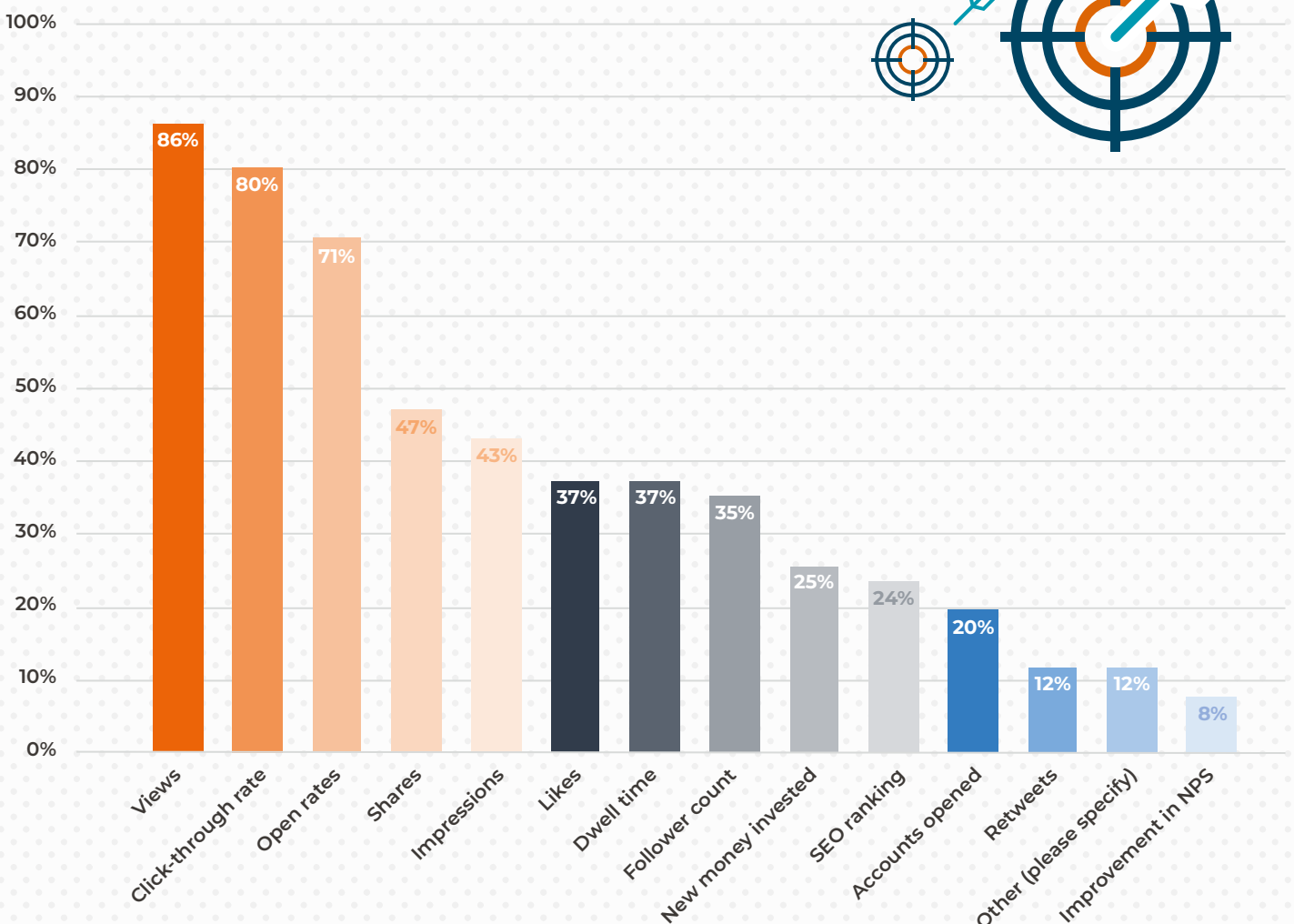
The metrics that matter most are the ones that give you as much insight as possible, and an up-to-date customer relationship management system can map out your lead-generation

journey and help tie marketing goals to wider business objectives.

Ultimately, it is clear that good thought-leadership pieces can enhance the profile of the company, support its brand and drive business. Communicating intelligent and insightful commentary wins over the would-be client's trust and respect. It should leave the reader feeling, "Here is a credible firm at the forefront of investment thinking. What else do they do and offer?"

In a field where insight and knowledge are frequently the decisive differentiators, thought leadership remains the most critical marketing tool many investment firms have. Do it right, and the rewards can be considerable.

**Figure 4: Metrics used by investment marketers to measure content success**



Source: Copylab

# Contributors

## Savvy Investor team

---



### Ximene Weaver

Director – Content & Product

Ximene leads the ResearchWith function of With Intelligence and heads up both Savvy Investor and Portfolio Management Research. Ximene started her career as a Content Writer at M&G Investments before becoming Senior Content Manager at Russell Investments, and afterwards Content Lead at NatWest Markets. Prior to running

the business, Ximene joined Savvy Investor as Head of Content before eventually heading up the Content and Marketing division. Given her work across a range of roles, Ximene specialises in creating content marketing strategies and offers deep insight into the writing, editing, consumption and promotion of institutional investment content.

---



### George Rowe

Investment Content Researcher

George is an Investment Content Researcher at Savvy Investor. He is a former investment manager at Quilter Cheviot managing high-net-worth private client portfolios. George spent the early part of his

career on trading floors, both as an equity contract for difference sales trader and also as head of dealing and execution at an London Stock Exchange member firm.

---



### Anton Balint

Senior Investment Content Specialist

Anton works as a Senior Investment Content Specialist at Savvy Investor, now part of With Intelligence. Anton's career includes communications and research roles at Woodford Investment Management, a long-only discretionary equity asset-management firm, and the

Alternative Investment Management Association, the trading body representing alternative investment managers globally. Throughout the years, Anton has produced a wide range of content across different media for institutional clients, retail investors and intermediaries.

## Copylab team

---



### Niels Footman

Managing Director, UK & Europe

Niels is Copylab's managing director for the UK and Europe, where he oversees business operations and strategy for the company's continued growth as a content marketing agency for the region's largest asset managers. Before starting with Copylab as an investment

writer, then marketing director, Niels variously gained an MBA from Cranfield, was the editor of Korean Air's inflight magazine and lived for 10 years in Korea's marvellous capital, Seoul. He lives in Tottenham with his wife and cat.

---



### Michael McNaught-Davis

Investment Writer and Head of Research

Michael has a wealth of fund-management experience, gained over the past 30 years. He previously worked at Morgan Grenfell, F&C, Martin Currie, Scottish Widows Investment Partnership and Investec, both as a fund manager and in client services/marketing. In this latter role, at Investec, Michael was responsible

for originating ad hoc articles as well as writing the monthly and quarterly client documents on behalf of the global equity team. He is a CFA charter holder and a graduate of St Andrews University, where he studied English Literature. He has a passion for writing and joined Copylab in 2015.

---



### Polina Atabekian

Marketing Executive

Polina is Copylab's Marketing Executive, overseeing the company's marketing operations and efforts to tell its story worldwide. Aside from her marketing responsibilities, Polina also works with Copylab clients to help them make sense of content

performance metrics and adopt a data-driven approach to their marketing. Polina holds degrees from the University of Glasgow and Erasmus University (Netherlands) and joined Copylab in January 2020.

# Contact us

In a sector constantly battling to achieve differentiation and regulatory compliance, insightful, expert thought leadership can be a hugely powerful marketing tool. To find out more, please contact:

## UK & Europe

Stuart Grant | Commercial Director, United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)7979 590797 e: [stuart@copylabgroup.com](mailto:stuart@copylabgroup.com)

## North America

David Skillman | Director of Business Development, North America

t: 617.669.2763 e: [davidskillman@copylabgroup.com](mailto:davidskillman@copylabgroup.com)

Copylab Inc, 276 5th Avenue, Suite 704, New York, NY 10001

[www.copylabgroup.com](http://www.copylabgroup.com)

# References

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.edelman.com/expertise/business-marketing/2021-b2b-thought-leadership-impact-study>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey#:~:text=In%20fact%E2%80%9A%20Gartner%20research%20finds,only%205%25%20or%206%25.>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.copylabgroup.com/thought-leadership-asset-management-tips-strategy/>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.copylabgroup.com/thought-leadership-asset-management-tips-strategy/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://support.ellevest.com/hc/en-us/articles/1500005156622-What-do-you-mean-by-women-#:~:text=Women%2B%20is%20a%20term%20that,%2C%20like%20non%2Dbinary%20people.>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.peregrinecommunications.com/insights/asset-management-marketing>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.savvyinvestor.net/blog/investment-marketing-content-engagement-study>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www.thedubs.com/why-asset-manager-content-is-stuck-in-a-rut/>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.visiblethread.com/blog/how-customer-experience-cx-has-suffered-at-the-hands-of-complexity/>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/benefits-high-quality-content-consistency-brand>
- <sup>11</sup> <https://research.rabobank.com/far/en/home/index.html>
- <sup>12</sup> <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://answerthepublic.com/>
- <sup>14</sup> <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-the-linkedin-algorithm-works-hacks/>
- <sup>15</sup> <https://www.tableau.com/learn/articles/vanity-metrics>
- <sup>16</sup> <https://info.copylabgroup.com/content-strategy-in-the-financial-services>