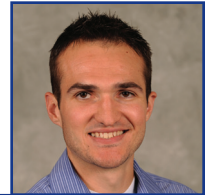


# Who Else Wants Free Exposure?



By Kyle Shumate

When dinosaurs roamed the earth, there was a time when potential clients had no choice but to listen to a law firm's advertisement. However, with massive technological advances, the world of law firm marketing has changed dramatically.

TV and radio ads have been losing their effectiveness for decades. More and more people now get their content from niche publications and the web. Those that still get their news from TV now have DVR so millions of commercials go unseen. As far as radio ads go, have you heard of satellite radio?

So how do you reach your target audience? Content marketing through "thought leadership."

## What is Thought Leadership?

The concept behind thought leadership is that you are recognized for your knowledge and insights within your industry or practice. Publications actively solicit your input for articles. You are called upon to speak at conferences. Clients and potential clients recognize your name and the experience you bring to the table.

## How do I Showcase my Thought Leadership?

A great way to highlight your thought leadership is through the publication of editorial columns. These columns can help introduce you and your knowledge to the general public as well as members of the news media. Having an editorial piece published boosts your overall media profile and can help create additional media opportunities with reporters and

editors as they learn more about your qualifications.

## What to Write?

Whether you are addressing a matter of national policy or compiling a top 10 best practices or "how to" article, you should choose a subject that is topical and relevant to a general audience. Selecting topics that closely align with your practice is the most logical and the best way to leverage your credentials.

When you have an idea for an editorial piece, the following advice will help you get published:

### Titles

According to BBC News, "The addictive nature of browsing can leave you with an attention span of nine

seconds - the same as a goldfish."

Therefore, titles are crucial for many reasons. Interesting, engaging titles will obviously capture more readers' interests and cause more people to actually follow through and read your article. As a best practice, the title should be five to eight words long and should not only engage the reader but also tell them why they should read your article. People now have a limitless supply of content at their fingertips and the only way you are going to compete is if you can capture their attention at a glance.

### Introduction and Conclusion

The opening paragraph not only grabs the reader's attention, it describes the main theme(s) of the



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article. The introduction should tell the reader why they should continue reading. End the article with a conclusion and encourage the reader to “read more” about the topic.

### Length

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Very few people want to read a 15-page scholarly essay on the history of XYZ Act, so go no longer than one or two pages (unless you are, in fact, writing for a law review). Typically, an article should be no more than 750 words, although each publication sets its own limit and the trend is toward shorter pieces.

### Clarity

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Avoid acronyms and academic or legalistic language. Articles that appear in general-circulation publications should be comprehensible to all readers. Use “plain English” language in an active voice and with a moderate tone. Additionally, endless footnotes tend to distract and confound, so remove them altogether if they cannot be easily included in the main text.

### Accuracy

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Double-check all your facts, the spelling of names and places, and make certain you have no grammatical errors. Even simple mistakes can hurt your credibility and cause an otherwise well-written piece to be rejected.

### Identification

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A short one- or two-sentence statement of your credentials should be included at the end of the article noting your name, title, department, and experience in the area. This explanation is normally 25 words or fewer.

## Writing Just Isn't for Me...

A response I often receive is, “I’m not a writer.” In fact, lawyers, by nature, are writers. Just think of the countless opinion letters, complaints, reply briefs and motions you tap out each and every day. Who wouldn’t want to build their credibility with potential clients by providing helpful information in their practice or differentiate their profile from their peers? Lastly, and most importantly, unlike advertising, writing is FREE publicity! 

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*Shumate is the Marketing Manager at Dinsmore and is primarily responsible for the firm's public and media relations. Learn more about Kyle at [www.linkedin.com/in/kyleshumate](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kyleshumate).*