



Beyond the brochure: Why thought leadership matters for real estate firms

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Commercial real estate companies have traditionally used press releases to announce new projects and glossy brochures to sell space. In between the release and the brochure came - not much. And until recently, not much was good enough.

But today's technology has transformed how businesses across the board communicate their brand value. New channels are opening unlimited space for real estate firms to speak directly to their target audiences. As a result, many are now developing and publishing innovative content in multiple formats in order to stake their claim to thought leadership.

CBRE has taken the lead in sustainability issues as they relate to the built environment, partnering with groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Business Roundtable to drive the discussion of environmental sustainability. Jones Lang LaSalle has taken a more service-oriented approach, helping tenants, owners and investors better understand such challenging issues as conflicts of interest in brokerages, landlord bankruptcy implications for tenants, and the benefits and drawbacks of sale leasebacks for owners. Cushman & Wakefield has addressed the need for the real estate industry to create innovative strategic initiatives around talent management, cost containment, workplace design, and corporate branding and culture.

These companies are covering trends and topics that affect the real estate industry as well as the broader public. Their purpose is to inform, intrigue and challenge audiences, with the end goal of inspiring new relationships.

Note that none of these initiatives include a sales pitch. Real thought leadership must reflect a vision that is bigger than the day-to-day business operations. Google isn't a thought leader in formulating search algorithms; it's a thought leader in organizing information.

Similarly, thought leadership in the real estate industry is not about square footage or new leases. Instead, it must provide an informed opinion backed by data, research and real-world expertise. These messages must be timely, focused and highlight a distinctive point of view that is:

- * Pioneering and innovative, pointing the industry in a new direction.
- * Forward-looking and ahead of the curve in what affects business.
- * Relevant in addressing key opportunities, challenges, trends and dynamics.

These requirements are best met if leaders and staff examine the issues they care most deeply about. What strongly held values or interests drive the company and the people in it? Consider as well the company's areas of expertise. How can these experiences help others establish more productive work practices - or even better lives?

With all the pressures they face, why should real estate professionals care about thought leadership? The answer is simple: it can have a direct impact on their success. With an articulate and authentic platform, a company becomes known for its strategic insights, guidance on best

practices, and professional counsel. Its spokespeople become go-to sources for media outlets seeking information and context. Well-executed thought leadership enables the business to safeguard and enhance its reputation while increasing brand recognition. And all of this is far more effective in today's competitive real estate market than even the glossiest of brochures.

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