

# Wanna be a thought leader? Go on and sell yourself

Some may think that to be a thought leader you must be famous, hold an advanced degree or have won multiple awards in a specific area. Well, these things certainly don't hurt. However, the truth is, anyone is capable of being a thought leader. Owning the title of "thought leader" means that you are knowledgeable and passionate about an idea, product or service and that you can articulate that expertise to others. If you are a sales professional with experience



## Perspective on People

Todd Cohen

and an expertise selling a specific product or service you can be a thought leader. If you are a "go-to" person in your

space you are a thought leader. Are you the person people call when they have questions about your area of expertise?

A salesperson is able to speak about a product or service. A highly successful sales professional not only knows the ins and outs of the particular product or service, he or she adds value to the sales process, the client and the field.

For example, if you are selling knowledge management systems to catalyze education, you need to familiarize your-

self with the current thinking of the experts, the state of the technology, and keep current on industry and product trends. You must be able to express an informed opinion beyond the clicks, bits and bytes of the actual product. If you cannot hold your own with other experts then you are not a thought leader and run the risk of being "just the salesperson" in the client's eyes.

Being a thought leader increases your value to the client. You get the appointments and the client's time more readily. Professionals who distinguish themselves as being thought leaders are more likely to close the deal and that means money in the bank. Thought leadership equals differentiation.

Thought leaders add something of value to every conversation. They earn the respect of others. Thought leaders share information, generate ideas and provide clarity on various topics. Sales professionals as thought leaders? Yes. Can anyone be a thought leader? Of course! We all have to sell ourselves and our ideas ... every day.

How do you become a thought leader? Becoming a thought leader is not difficult. In fact, it is easy. If you like to learn, it can also be fun! Make it your business to educate yourself about your space. Read and engage in conversations with other thought leaders, attend industry meetings, and network! Learn everything that you can.

When I sold online education, I made it my business to study the theories of adult learning and to talk to everyone in the field. My clients respected the fact that I took the time to learn about the product, the needs of my target audience and the happenings in the industry. Clients trusted me and valued my ideas and opinions. This translated into sales calls that were fun and productive, more effective inter-company networking, stronger relationships and bigger deals.

Scour the information that is available on your topic. Absorb as much good information as possible. This empowers you to educate your clients and prospects. Becoming a thought leader also means being able to know what information and data makes sense and can add value to your sales campaign — and which does not. There is so much being offered in so many venues about everything we have to learn to grab the great stuff. Also, your clients are being educated as well, so be clear about what you know and what you don't!

Being a thought leader shows you care about what you do and about your clients' business and their passions! Elevate your sales calls to discussions on concepts, developments in the market, and industry news. Take a dive in the cerebral pool with your clients. You will earn more respect and become a more effective consultative sales professional.

So, go climb the knowledge mountain and claim your thought leader status.

TODD COHEN is the principal of Sales Leader LLC, a speaking and consulting firm focused on growing sales through sales culture. Visit [www.ToddCohen.com](http://www.ToddCohen.com) for more information.

## Women to Watch:

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Meet the region's women who are moving the meter for the good in their industries, in their communities and reaching out to others who are coming up behind them.

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**When:** Wednesday, September 14, 7:30am-10:00am  
**Where:** The Union League

**Speakers and Topics Include:**

 <p><b>Joan Carter,</b> President, The Union League</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Executive Breakthrough Strategies</p>	 <p><b>Caren Levine,</b> CPA, C.F.T.C., CFPS, Financial Planner* First Financial Group/ MassMutual*</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Women as the CFOs of their Household</p>	 <p><b>Susan Notaras,</b> Director of Marketing, First Financial Group/ MassMutual*</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Sandwich Generation -Women as Caregivers</p>
 <p><b>Sue Schick,</b> President, UnitedHealthcare</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Work Life Balance</p>	 <p><b>Leslie Stiles,</b> Executive Director, PA Commission for Women</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Power of Mentorship</p>	

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\$45, includes plated breakfast. All attendees are automatically entered into a one-on-one mentoring lunch with one of the Roundtable Leaders, an experience sure to make an indelible impression on the recipient.

Event questions? Contact Jennifer Wolf at [jenniferwolf@bizjournals.com](mailto:jenniferwolf@bizjournals.com)

\*Caren Levine is a registered representative of and offers securities, investment advisory and financial planning services through MML Investors, LLC, Member SIPC ([www.sipc.org](http://www.sipc.org)). Supervisory office: 2 Bala Plaza, Suite 901, Bala Cynwyd PA 19004, (610) 766-3000.

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