

8 Ways to Become a Thought Leader and Grow Your FM Career

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Woody Allen has been famously quoted as saying, “Showing up is 80 percent of life.” But that doesn’t seem to be the case so much anymore. Now, as the world has gotten more connected and louder than ever, it seems that just showing up will no longer cut it. Now, you not only have to show up, but you also need to stand out.

But how do you do that, exactly? How can you separate yourself from the pack and get recognized so that you can grow your reputation and your career? One way is to position yourself as a thought leader. If you’ve been asking yourself how you can grow your career in facility management and get promoted, use these ideas to start building your platform and become a respected voice in your field.

Write, publish, and share content

Facility managers solve a myriad of problems daily and need information and solutions fast, which means one of the best ways to build your reputation—and help your fellow facility managers in the process—is to share your knowledge and advice with the FM community. Write down your solutions and lessons learned and publish them in a blog, a newsletter or by submitting to industry publications like FMJ or IFMA’s Knowledge Library. Chances are, if you’ve encountered these problems there are other facility managers out there that have too and they will benefit from your knowledge.

Connect with other built environment thought leaders

To be the best, you’ve got to learn from the best. Reach out to professionals you admire and follow them online to learn how they’ve developed themselves into a thought leader. Two of the best places to find great FM thought leadership is through IFMA’s Engage discussion platform and review the guests on Mike Petrusky’s Workplace Innovator podcast, or the Asset Champion podcast produced by Eptura. Or, even better, connect with leaders in real life at popular industry events like World Workplace and Facility Fusion.

Keep sharpening the saw and stay informed

As Stephen Covey describes in 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, one of the best things a person can do is become a life-long learner. Thought leaders are experts in their field and usually have the credentials and certifications to back it up. If you really want others to recognize you as a thought leader in facility management, you need to continue to “sharpen the saw” and seek out opportunities to continue your learning and development.

Become recognized as a subject matter expert

As you gain traction as a thought leader, you will eventually want to graduate from qualified professional to subject matter expert. Being recognized as a subject matter expert will build

your credibility and expand your influence. And, becoming one might even be easier than you think.

Speak at an industry event

There's almost nothing that adds more credibility to a thought leader than speaking at an industry event. While this is one of the more challenging things to do to boost your thought leader resume, it is also one of the most beneficial. Speaking at an event can be nerve-racking and does require a lot of preparation, however, it can be incredibly rewarding as well. Also, an added benefit to speaking at an event is that you can repurpose the content and the Do you find that other professionals are always coming to you asking for your advice or guidance? Or do you manage a team that looks to you for answers? If you feel like you answer the same questions repeatedly, chances are you're already a subject matter expert.

Get involved with your FM community

If you want to be recognized as a thought leader, you need to lead. Getting more involved in your local chapter or a council or community is a great way to meet like-minded FMs, share ideas and help less experienced facility managers grow. By first contributing at the local level, you'll gain valuable experience and confidence, and build a reputation as someone that gives back, which is a cornerstone of any great thought leader.

Connect with industry leaders on social media

Thought leaders are very well informed. They stay up to date on the latest topics and trends in their industry so that they can help others understand or use that information. This is also a great way to get ideas for topics to write about or discuss with other facility managers—and you'll also stay in-the-know about important news and events.

Become a qualified instructor

If you've followed this guide and have built your career and reputation to the point where you're certified, asked to speak at various events and have a decent following of peers and fans acknowledging you as a subject matter expert, it might be time to consider teaching others in a more formal setting. One of the best ways to give back to facility managers is to become a qualified instructor. This is an opportunity to solidify yourself as a thought leader while helping to push the entire facility management industry forward. If you have your degree and are certified by IFMA, check out the qualified instructor program.

BONUS TIP: Always offer exceptional value in every interaction

When building a reputation and working to position yourself as a thought leader, it's important to start small and be consistent. Showing up day in and day out offering solutions, advice and adding meaningful insight to the conversations going on in your area of expertise is a surefire way to stand out. Above all else, help others in the facility management community and provide exceptional value and you'll soon hear others saying what an incredible thought leader you are.