

Creating and sharing intellectual capital for maximum impact

Creating and sharing intellectual capital can be an important and fun part of business development. The content you create may attract interest. If you develop and share your content in particular ways, the process of creating and sharing it may prove as valuable to you for business development as the content itself.

Creating intellectual capital provides outstanding material to talk about with clients, prospects, allies and others that is uniquely yours, is valuable to the people you are talking with, and is not "selling." You can show your professional passion and skills without doing anything that feels to anyone like a sales pitch. And developing and sharing intellectual capital can be very enjoyable.

The ingredients of great intellectual capital

Great intellectual capital has:

- *Insight.* Insight sheds new light onto known facts, or explains the implications of new facts. Insight answers the important question for the reader of "so what?"
- *Facts.* New information attracts people. You might have new information because you are the first to explore a new realm, or because you've asked different questions and so now have information others lack.
- *Applicability.* The ideas and information are relevant to the readers/listeners. They can see what your facts and implications might mean for them. Or you can show them in a conversation or workshop.



The flavors of intellectual capital

Most intellectual capital efforts are "thought leadership," e.g., surveys, articles, speeches. The professional gathers facts, offers insights, and describes applicability.

Typical topics of thought leadership include:

- What's happening in a market or function? What are people thinking about or worried about?
- Emerging important trends, often focused on a niche, e.g., How will sustainability affect agriculture? How will new legislation affect the salaries of financial service executives?



- An evaluation of an idea you have that might be of great value to some clients or prospects, e.g., What are potential new approaches to [some big problem]?

You can also consider “action research”. Take an idea and prototype it somehow. Then share what you discover; you are immediately personally an expert, because you've learned by doing. Implement at your own organization, or pro bono at a non-profit you know, or with a client or former client (at reduced rates since “we are trying something together”). One professional firm claims it tries every innovation itself before offering the solution to prospects or clients; developing practical knowledge this way will likely prove very attractive to clients.

Cooking your capital

To get the most out of your intellectual capital development process, do it as publicly as you can. Involve lots of people so they want to know what you create and so they'll introduce you to others who can contribute.

Surveys are good for this. Online is OK. Much better are phone or in person interviews, where you talk with fact-providers for 15-20 minutes. You are establishing relationships. Some of these people can be clients or prospects.

Ask people who else should participate. This is a great reason for a [warm call](#).

You can delegate some data collection, but do enough yourself to know much more than you write. Then your excitement, your knowledge, and your ability to apply what you know will be obvious when you talk with people.

Once you have some facts and emerging insights, visit with people. Let them help you think about what you've learned. Some helpers may suggest others to talk with, especially if you ask. These new conversations can be fruitful: one consultant got a new client when an old client suggested the consultant talk to a particular executive for input into a draft “white paper.”



Sharing the feast

Once you're finished, share what you've done. Disseminate both broadly and deeply.

For breadth, post your work product online and let people know it exists. If you are active online, publicize it in your usual haunts (blogs where you have commented before, for example). E-mail it to people you think would find it useful (including journalists and bloggers).

For depth, make some appointments and talk with people. Start by getting back in touch with people who contributed. Let them know you'd like to share the results with them.

Getting the payoff

You will surely have built your knowledge. Your creation will be valuable to your firm, as colleagues can promote it too. And you'll meet some people who are interested in knowing you when you will find them or they find you. And some of them may even want to work with you – on this topic or on some other.

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Something to try this week

Think about topics that have really piqued your interest lately. Are there interesting new developments facing your clients where fact-finding, developing implications, and sharing results would stimulate important conversations? What small-scale investigations could you do to begin an intellectual capital creation effort? Pick an investigation and do it. Don't forget to talk to some clients and prospects as part of your process

What are these tips?

These monthly tips help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.