

The ROI of Thought Leadership

Research Findings and Action Steps

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Stephen Woessner



- 20+ year business owner
- CEO of Predictive ROI for 10 years
- Author of four books including *Sell with Authority*
- Host of Onward Nation podcast with nearly 1,000 episodes
- Published in Inc. Magazine, Forbes.com, Entrepreneur.com, Washington Post and others

Susan Baier



- Founder of Audience Audit
- Helps organizations understand their best audiences based on attitudes and needs
- 30-years of experience as a marketing strategist and researcher
- Develops custom segmentation research for marketers and agencies around the world
- Host of the “Fun with Research” video series on YouTube





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JULY 4, 1776

THIS NOTE IS FOR ALL DEBTS.



What We'll Cover Today

- Why trust is now make or break
- Exec summary of our research findings and implications
- Action steps for your business

Slides Are Wordy On Purpose

- They will act like note taking for you
- And — you can easily share them with your team

We Are Living In the Era of the Authority

SPECIAL REPORT:
**BRAND
TRUST
IN 2020**

Edelman Trust
Barometer 2020

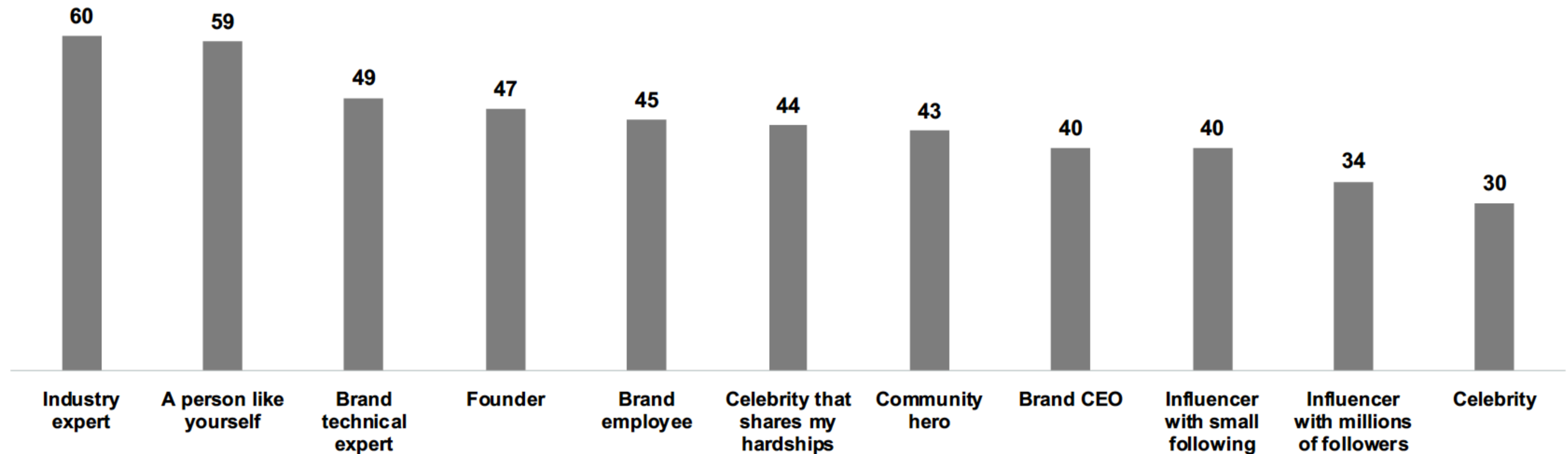


“Trust Is Now Make or Break”

INFLUENCE BUILT THROUGH AUTHORITY AND EMPATHY

Percent who say each is a credible spokesperson for brand trust

Credible voices have a personal connection to the topic or issue



2020 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Brand Trust. CRE_WRT. Below is a list of people. If a brand were to use each as their spokesperson to try and convince you they are a brand worthy of your trust, how credible would they be? 4-point scale; top 2 box, credible. General population, 11-mkt avg.

The Goals of our Study

- Explore how professionals think about the value of thought leadership and the traits associated with it
- Reveal audience segments based on shared and differentiated attitudes
- Developing practical and tactical insights that could be used to effectively reach thought leadership followers

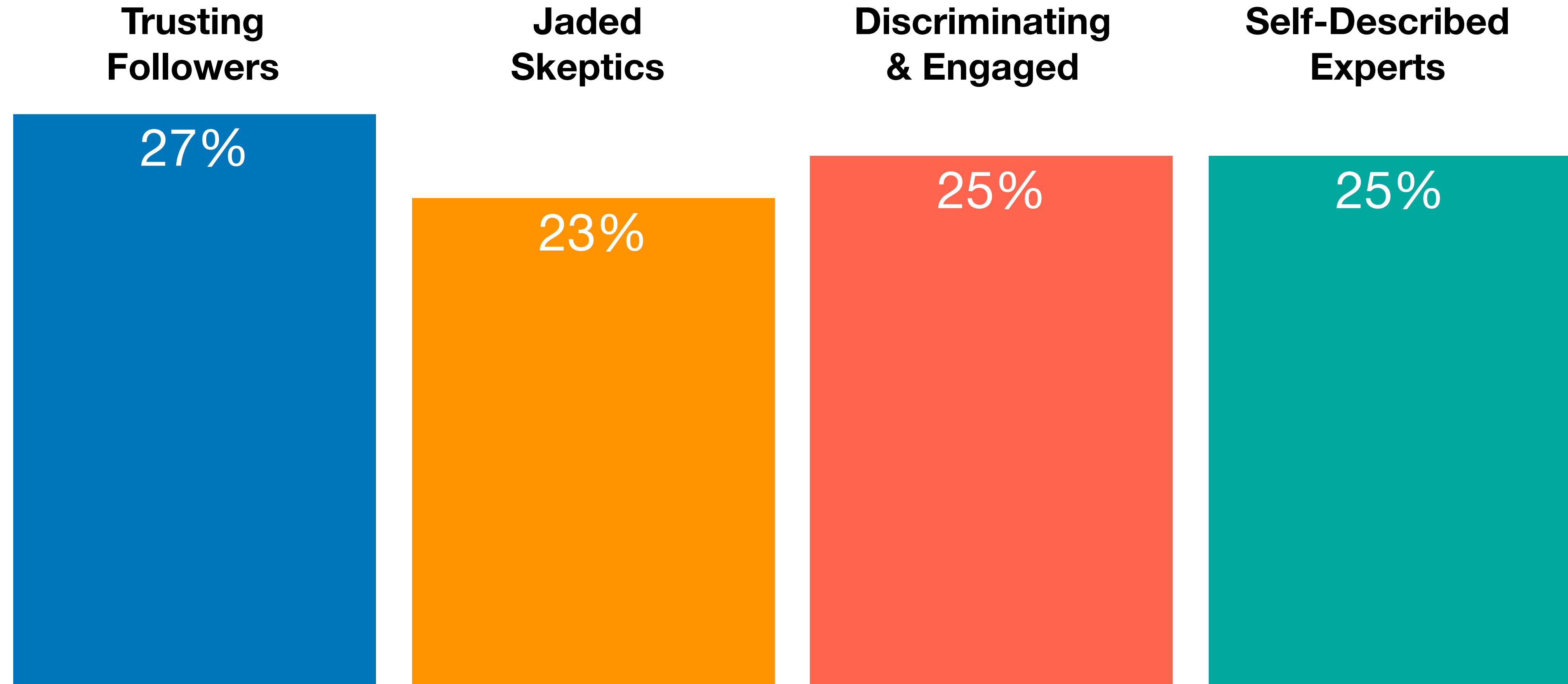
Study Parameters

- 325 professionals:
 - 250 professionals came from a panel of professionals in a range of industries
 - 75 professionals came from Predictive ROI's audience
 - All respondents indicated that they follow "*someone you consider an expert on a business topic or industry*"
- Overall margin of error +/- 5.4% at a 95% confidence level

Segmentation Approach

- Segments based on attitudes only
- Not predetermined
- Strong statistical validity

Follower Segments



TRUSTING FOLLOWERS

27%

Trusting Followers

- Rely on fame, visibility and signals from others to find thought leaders
- Actively seek them out — learn from them and trust their advice
- More likely than other segments to say they have a lot to learn about their industry — and trust that what they hear from experts is (for the most part) new and helpful information

14 Attitudes of Trusting Followers

- I typically trust the opinions and advice of those people others have identified as experts.
- Most experts are offering new and helpful insights and ideas
- Working with a recognized expert reflects well on my organization.
- I have a lot to learn when it comes to my industry.
- I actively seek out and follow experts.
- I worry that my industry is moving too fast for me to keep up with the latest thinking.

14 Attitudes of Trusting Followers, cont.

- *I am more likely to trust an expert who:*
 - Is mentioned often by people like me;
 - Offers innovative thinking that flies in the face of widely-held thoughts about an industry or discipline;
 - I can see in person;
 - Has published a best-selling book on the subject;
 - Speaks at a lot of events or is a professional speaker;
 - Hosts a well-known podcast on the subject;
 - Is under 40

JADED SKEPTICS

23%

Jaded Skeptics

- Least likely of all respondents to trust the expertise of thought leaders
- While they do follow thought leaders, they are far more likely to believe that most experts are egotistical and self-promoting and offer tired advice

7 Attitudes of Jaded Skeptics

- I listen to experts, but don't always trust their opinions and advice
- Most experts focus more on promoting themselves than trying to be helpful
- Most experts are sharing the same tired advice
- I am much less likely to consider someone an "expert" than most of the people I know
- Most experts are egotistical
- I am generally skeptical when it comes to taking advice from experts
- I rarely pay attention to who the current experts are in my industry

DISCRIMINATING & ENGAGED

25%

Discriminating & Engaged

- Expect the thought leaders they follow to have demonstrable success in their field and recognition as an expert in the respondent's own industry
- They appreciate helpfulness and are concerned that failing to stay abreast of the latest insights will negatively impact their organization

5 Attitudes of Discriminating & Engaged

- I worry that my organization will suffer if we don't keep up with the latest insights, resources and tools;
- I am more likely to trust an expert who:
 - Obviously works hard to be helpful
 - Has achieved success in their own business ventures
 - Has been in their field for a long time
 - Is widely recognized in my industry

SELF-DESCRIBED

EXPERTS

25%

Self-Described Experts

- Defined by their self-confidence in their own knowledge about their job, their discipline and their industry

3 Attitudes of Self-Described Experts

- I know as much about my job or discipline as most experts
- I know as much about my industry as most industry experts
- I am more likely to trust an expert who is businesslike and serious

NO DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

IMPLICATIONS



Implications...

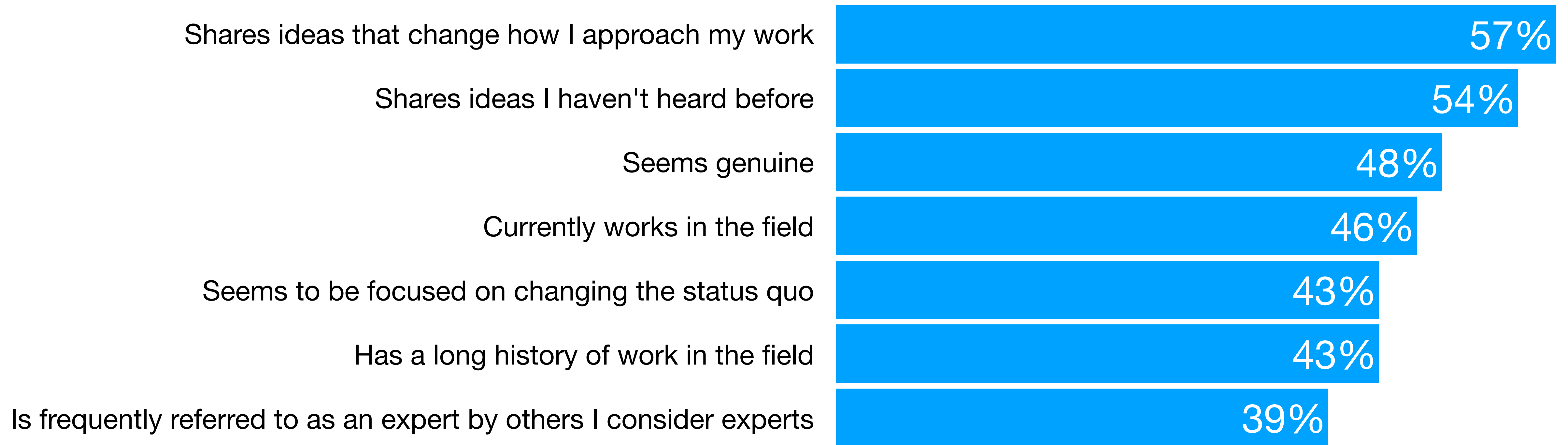
- Thought Leaders must carefully consider which “problems” they seek to solve for their audiences
- You can’t talk to all segments in the same way
- Not all of the attitudinal segments may be good for you
- Determine which segment(s) closely aligns with your qualifications, your abilities, your expertise, your goals

Implications...

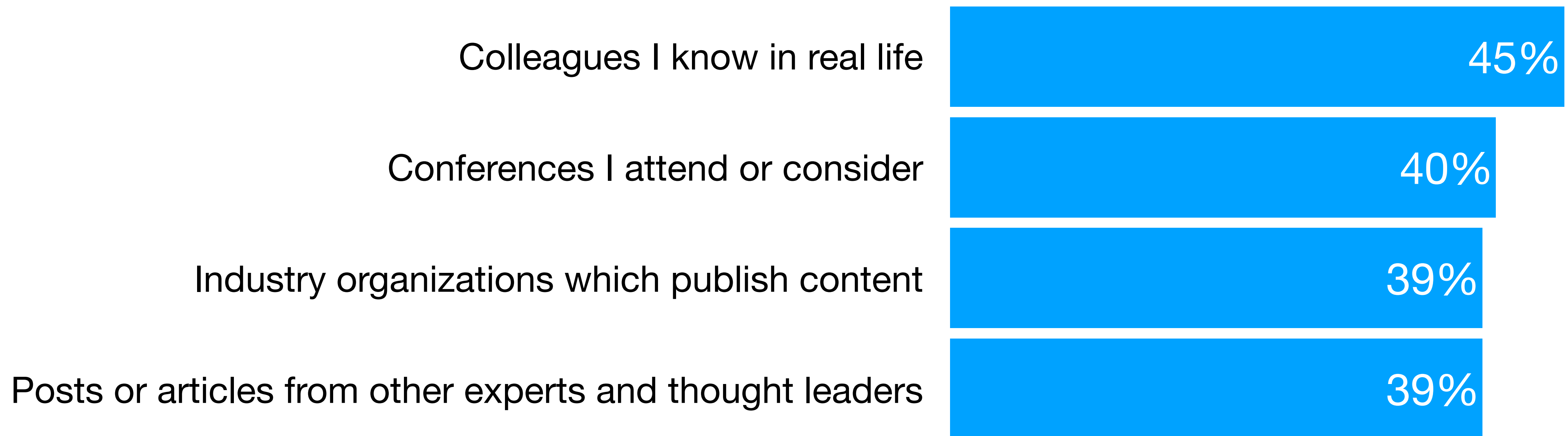
- **Trusting Followers:** May be less discriminating in the experts they follow as long as those experts exhibit the popular markers of “thought leadership” and who readily acknowledge their lack of expertise
- **Jaded Skeptics:** Don’t necessarily discount them — they follow thought leaders — but they follow the rebels...the rogues...and challenges to the status quo. Don’t like the term “Thought Leader”
- **Discriminating & Engaged:** Seeking deep experience, fresh insights, and have a high-bar for helpfulness and applicability
- **Self-Described Experts:** Already consider themselves experts so you really need to show them something they don’t already know — but — others are likely to trust them if they recommend you

OTHER KEY FINDINGS

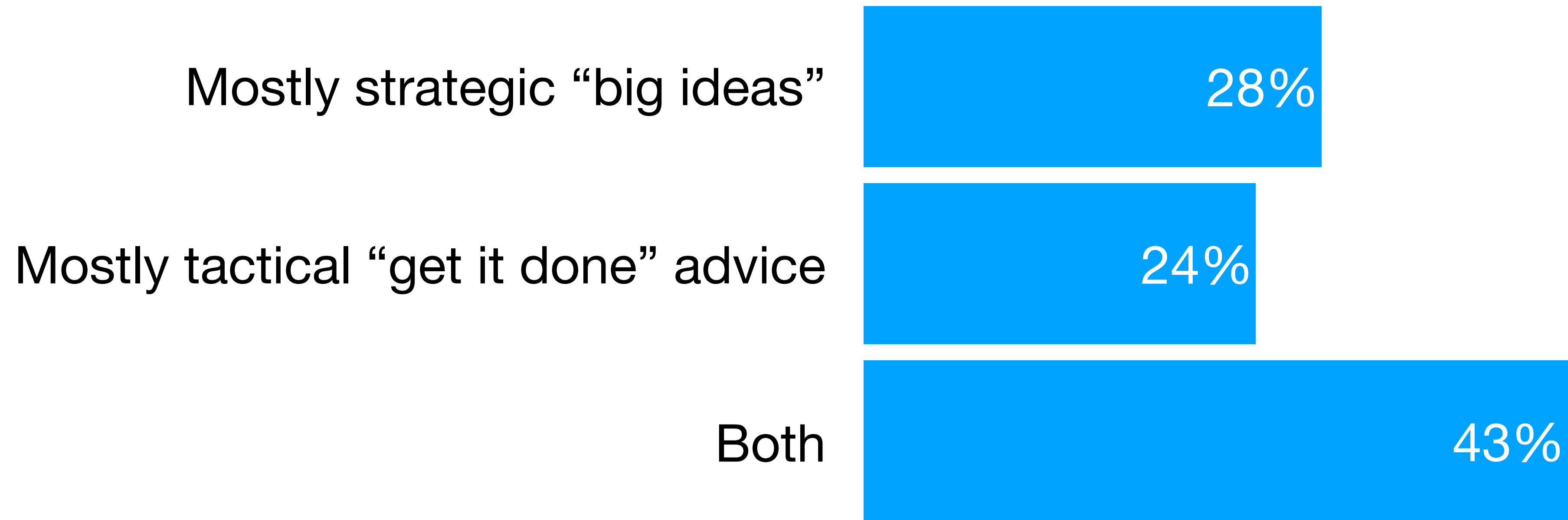
Respondents Want New Ideas that Drive Change



Colleagues, Conferences, Industry Organizations and Other Experts Help Them Find Thought Leaders



Many Want Both Strategic & Tactical Insights



Insights Gained Across Multiple Platforms



91%

have *recommended* an
expert or thought leader to a colleague

62%

are *more likely* to recommend a service provider who is also a recognized thought leader

61%

say thought leaders *impact decisions*

59%

would be *more likely* to continue to work
with a provider who is a recognized thought leader

62%

...say the recommendation of a thought leader they **TRUST**
has a *greater impact than advertising* by a provider

Action Steps to Get You on the Right Path







**THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE POINT
OF VIEW**

**YOU CAN'T BE
A ONE-TRICK PONY**





Action Steps

- Double down on your commitment to serve a niche
- Get clear on your point-of-view
- Create cornerstone and cobblestone content that helps you be findable across multiple channels
- And above all else — be helpful and generous in sharing your expertise

Q&A

How to Reach Us...

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