



## CHAPTER 1

# FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION

I am fortunate to have a wonderful mentor, Intrigue Expert and author Sam Horn. She has taught me a lot about the world of thought leadership and urged me to “Find your uniqueness and exploit it in the service of others.” We both believe that everyone has a right and a responsibility to be one of a kind. But how do you determine that you *are* one of a kind? How do you find your uniqueness? The first step is to define your niche.

In this chapter we’ll cover how to narrow your focus and identify the one or two arenas where you are (or can be) a credible thought leader. Then we’ll explore what future you’d like to bring about and what trends you will align to that will ensure your success. We’ll also talk about the importance of passion—building your thought leadership in an arena that you care deeply about, one where you are committed to making a difference.

Why is a niche important? Think about the thought leaders we all admire—former president Jimmy Carter, for example. Broadly defined, his post-presidency niche is working for global peace. For

U2's lead singer, Bono, his niche is activism for Africa. Oprah is perhaps best known for her efforts in educating girls. Now I'm not suggesting that any of us will ever be a former president, win twenty-two Grammys, or be a globally recognized television personality (or maybe you will!). But we can take some direction from these examples.

Align your time, energy, and resources around one niche and you'll open far more doors than if you focus in multiple unrelated arenas. You'll have far greater impact and influence and gather much greater attention to your topic, idea, or cause if you don't try to "own" more than one niche. Since few of us have the kind of resources of Carter, Bono, or Oprah, it's all the more imperative that we don't fragment our efforts. Focus your talents in one or only a few arenas; you'll have the chance to make a real difference. (And once you have a well-established platform in one area, it's much easier to broaden to another rather than trying to tackle two at the same time.)

So how do you choose? How do you clarify and crystallize your niche?

Do you already have this figured out? Skip ahead to the section on your *What If?* future. If there is no one obvious arena, topic, or community that you (and others) can call yours, then the next section is for you.

## FIND YOUR NICHE

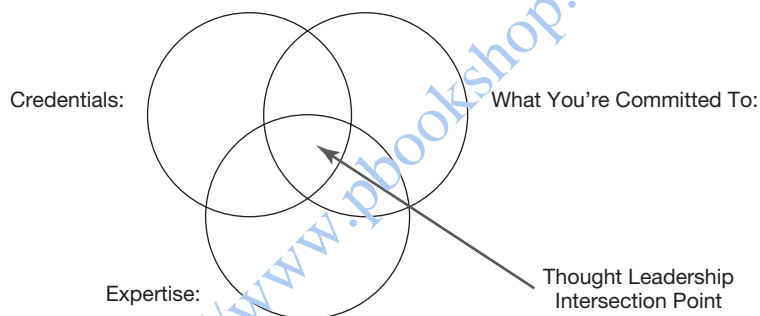
If you have worked in one field for a long time, your niche may already be fairly well established—particularly if you have built a distinguished track record or created a body of work in one arena. But if you've never really thought of your career from the perspective of thought leadership (or if you recently entered or want to enter a new arena), I invite you to use the following exercise to identify your niche.

If you are working with a group of people to develop a thought leadership strategy for your company or your cause, this exercise

may serve you better if you broaden the questions and include a wider group rather than just completing it yourself.

### Can You Pen Your Venn?

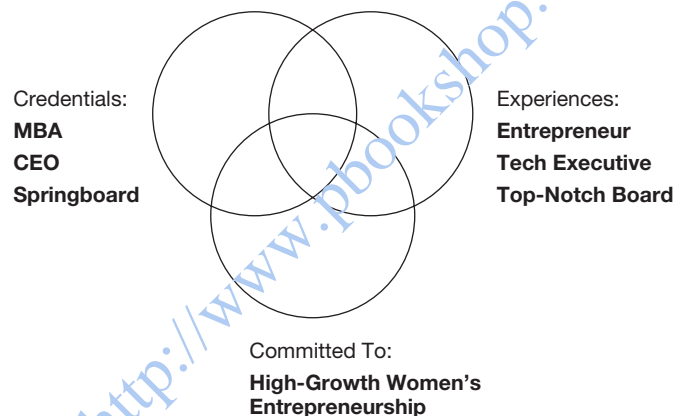
Think back to school when you learned about Venn diagrams. Remember those? Three circles overlying each other with an area in the middle where they all three overlap? In this exercise, the three circles are (1) your expertise or experiences, (2) your credentials, and (3) what you're committed to. The central, overlapping area is what I call your "thought leadership intersection point"—your niche. This intersection point will be an arena that can be uniquely yours, or where you'll be one of the few.



I'll use myself as an example so I can show you what I mean. In 1999, I became one of three or four people in the United States who were established thought leaders in the world of high-growth women's entrepreneurship. (For those who are not familiar with the term *high-growth* in this context, it refers to companies that are funded by equity financing, often angel investment or venture capital, thus allowing the company to grow quickly, often much more quickly than any other type of corporate structure.) I was the CEO of the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, an organization I had cofounded six years earlier to help women-founded and women-led companies build the knowledge, connections, and gain access to the resources they needed so they could raise equity financing for their companies.

Thus, what I was *committed to* was high-growth women's entrepreneurship—or getting more women entrepreneurs funded. My *credentials*, which helped people believe me to be credible as a thought leader, were that I had an MBA from Stanford; I was the CEO of an organization with a track record of serving women entrepreneurs; and I had cofounded Springboard, the first venture conference for women entrepreneurs. I also had had the *experience* of starting and running a successful business when I was twenty-six; I had worked as a technology executive at several Fortune 500 companies; and I had built a top-notch board for my organization.

My Venn diagram then looked like this:



I can't pretend that I understood all this back then. It was the outside world that defined my niche for me—particularly the press when they called me as a subject-matter expert on the dot-com boom and women entrepreneurs. I was then able to build on that credibility as I began to develop my own point of view about how the future should unfold and what changes were needed so that more women entrepreneurs could get funded. But that's jumping ahead; let's focus on *you* now.

## How to Pen Your Venn

Ready to create your own Venn diagram? Get out a copy of your resume or bio, a highlighter, and some paper and begin to answer the following questions. Create as complete a list as you can and don't hesitate to use multiple pages.

**Step 1: What Are Your Credentials?** Depending on your career choices, you may have gained your credentials by the letters after your name, by what jobs you've held, what licenses or certificates you've completed, or what status you've achieved in your organization. That said, I use the term *credentials* broadly—it doesn't imply only people with a formal education. I have met amazing thought leaders without a high school diploma. Here are a few things to think about as you complete this exercise.

*As an executive*, your credentials are often denoted by job title or rank, by the teams you've led or been a part of, the deals you've closed, the products you've shipped, or the services you've developed. If you've worked at Fortune 500 companies, that can add a certain amount of credibility as well.

*As an entrepreneur*, your credentials are most often tied to the revenue, brand, or popularity of your company or products. They can also be tied to the amount of money you raised or a successful exit you helped achieve. Serial entrepreneurs, even when they have had one spectacular failure, have stronger credentials than first-time CEOs.

*As a community or nonprofit leader*, your credentials include your title or rank, the size and reputation of your organization, and the type of challenge that you are tackling, as well as the impact you and your organization have had in that arena.

*As a service provider*, in addition to any professional certifications you've received, your credentials are defined by your title and rank but also by the size and reputation of your organization and that of your clients.

As an academic, in addition to your degrees, the reputation of your institution and your own rank within that institution are often your strongest credentials.

No matter which career choice you've made, other ways you may have established your credentials are by materials you've written (articles, white papers, books, blogs, research papers), awards or honors you've received, or other associations that you've affiliated with or where you have taken a leadership role.

Think objectively and imagine what others who know you well might say about you. Jot down everything that comes to mind. Don't limit yourself to work arenas. Add any leadership roles you've held, even as a volunteer.

### **Step 2: What Is Your Expertise or Unique Experience?**

Next start a new page and write down your areas of expertise and your unique experiences. Again we are not thinking narrowly here. What skills do you have; what events have you lived through; what talents have you developed? Have you had a unique experience—a transformative experience—that set you on a new path? What is one topic around which you are the guru? Have you invented anything or been the first to accomplish something? Are you more knowledgeable than 95 percent of the world about something? Have you survived or overcome something and then learned some lessons?

Where have you lived or traveled? Anywhere unusual? Have you completed significant research in an arena or figured out how to do something that others don't know how to do? Have you started a company or organization, led a merger, built a product, managed an initiative? Are you a great public speaker or storyteller, a renowned expert in cheese, or in command of more hockey statistics than anyone who ever lived? Write it down! What do others call you about to get your advice or counsel? What are you the known (or budding) expert in? What makes you stand out from the crowd? If you want more questions to spark your thinking, see "More Food for Thought" at the end of the chapter.

**Step 3: What Are You Committed to or Passionate About?**

Before we jump into this next part of the exercise, I want to set the stage by sharing a quote with you from the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation, Wilma Mankiller: “The happiest people I’ve ever met, regardless of their profession, their social standing, or their economic status, are people that are fully engaged in the world around them. The most fulfilled people are the ones who get up every morning and stand for something larger than themselves. They are the people who care about others, who will extend a helping hand to someone in need or will speak up about an injustice when they see it.”<sup>1</sup> I couldn’t have said it better myself.

What do you stand for? Take a new piece of paper and write down the things that you’re passionate about and committed to. Where do you devote your time, even when no one is willing to pay you? What group of people do you stand for and with? What can you speak about at length if someone gives you an opening? What is the one problem that you want to help solve, one situation that is occurring that you’d like to see halted, or one arena where new possibilities are opening up that you’d like to be the first to understand? Where do you disagree with the accepted point of view? Where do you see a new way of doing things that others don’t yet see? How would you like to transform people’s way of thinking?

What would others say you’re committed to that you haven’t included? In the last three months, what have you spent your spare time doing? What topics do you find yourself drawn to when you’re standing in the library, selecting a TV show, or reading a magazine? What problems are happening in your industry or in your state that you’d like to have an impact on? Think about challenges or problems you’ve helped to solve (or want to solve) in your company, region, or school district. What about bigger challenges you’ve been involved with—political, economic, environmental?

Think broadly; there are no limits here. Make a long list, maybe thirty or forty items. Whatever gets you up in the morning, whatever lights you up and makes you willing to fight for a cause

or an issue you believe in, could go on the list. If you want more questions to spark your thinking, see “More Food for Thought” at the end of the chapter.

**Step 4: Narrow and Hone** Now you are going to hone and narrow to find three potential arenas where you could develop your thought leadership. Start with your last list (what you’re committed to) first. You’re going to go through the list four times.

- The first time, cross off the things that at one time you cared a lot about or were committed to but that are no longer in your sweet spot or something you want to focus on.
- The second time through, put a star next to each item that is really important to you. (If you have only a few items left, skip the next step.)
- The third time through the list, take a highlighter and highlight up to ten items from the starred choices that are areas where you might be willing to develop yourself as a thought leader over the next one to three years.
- Finally, select the top three items on the list that you are most committed to and prioritize them 1, 2, and 3.

**Step 5: Identify the “Reasons to Believe”** Now that you have identified three potential areas that you are committed to, the next step is to determine the reasons others should listen to you on these topics. This is what advertisers call the “reasons to believe.” What experiences, expertise, know-how, and credentials make you believable as the best person (or one of the best) to speak out about these topics?

Before we get to the specifics, I want to add one caveat. Since you may be at the beginning of your thought leadership journey, I don’t want you to give up if you don’t have a whole list of credentials and expertise yet to support the niche that you most care about. You will need to build some of those “reasons to believe” over time (or align with a partner that has more credibility). We all



start somewhere. Rather than think about giving up, think of creating a road map to help you plan the steps you need to take for others to believe you, rely on you, and identify you as the guru within your niche.

**Let's return to your top three items:**

- Take a new piece of paper and write the number one item you're committed to at the top. Review your list of credentials and identify those that most give you credibility when you are speaking about this item. Copy these credentials to the page. Next review your list of expertise and experiences and copy those that best align to or inform your point of view.
- Take a second piece of paper and write down the second-most important item you are committed to. Review your list of credentials and experiences. Copy the most relevant items to this sheet as you did above. (Note: There may be overlap from the previous list.)
- Take a third piece of paper and write down the third-most important item you are committed to. Repeat the steps above.

**Step 6: Is There an Audience or Market Need?** Now that you have narrowed your lists, determined where you have the strongest commitment, and identified your related credentials and expertise, the last step in identifying your niche is to determine if there is an audience (or market need) in that area.

It is easy to overlook this step. Developing your reputation as a thought leader does not happen overnight—it takes time, attention, and focus. You can choose from a lot of arenas. To maximize your outcomes, choose one arena that meets some or all of the following criteria:

- There is a large and preferably growing interest in this arena—in your company, industry, or region. (What you define as “large” may vary, but if only five people care, it doesn't matter much if you're the go-to person on that topic.)

## 28 READY TO BE A THOUGHT LEADER?

- You are (or could be) one of the first or few to be known in this niche.
- There is a real problem in this arena that you want to solve or a challenge that you have the unique skills to address.
- You have a distinct point of view that is unique or counter to the expected wisdom.

At the completion of this exercise, you should have identified at least one topic or arena where you want to be the go-to person and which has a significant and growing group of people who share your interest. Hopefully, you have also identified some “reasons to believe” that will back up your expertise in that arena. Test your final selections with a few close associates. Would they have chosen that arena for you? Can they add anything to the reasons to believe in you?

If you are a little stuck, ask one of your colleagues or associates if he or she would be willing to get together for an hour so that you can both develop your thought leadership niche. Walk through the exercise together and discuss each section—first for one of you and then the other. Ask your buddy for their thoughts and suggestions along the way. Invite them to push you to think big!

If you’re finding it challenging to complete the Venn exercise because you absolutely hate to narrow your options and opportunities in any way, I understand. I tend towards that direction myself—I like to play outside the lines (or the circles). But that can also be limiting. If others don’t know what your niche is, they are less likely to send you the people you really need to meet—people who could hire you, present you with new opportunities, buy what you’re selling, or help you achieve the future you envision.

The goal of the Pen Your Venn exercise is to define a niche you can play in, not because it will limit you but because it will broaden your opportunities to be the trusted source and the go-to expert. Having a clearly defined niche will expand the likelihood that you’ll be able to have a meaningful impact in the world.

Now let's talk about what that impact might look like. What would you like the future to be?

## ENVISION YOUR *WHAT IF?* FUTURE

One of the Silicon Valley giants, venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, believes, "Great leaders invent the future they want."<sup>1</sup> He should know! He is a cofounder of Sun Microsystems, one of the early technology success stories, and has since funded numerous other entrepreneurial ventures, helping simple ideas turn into highly successful companies that continue to shape the future.

But what if anyone could invent a possible future and be a part of making it a reality? This is what I call envisioning your *What If?* future (WIF). A WIF is a single, simple, striking description or image of the future you want to see. All thought leaders need a WIF. They may not yet be sure how to get there, but an inspiring WIF can attract followers and galvanize them to take action.

In 1993, a simple statistic galvanized me into action. Less than 1 percent of the venture capital funding in the United States was going to women entrepreneurs. When my friends and I started the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs (FWE), the *What If?* future we envisioned was "What if women received 50 percent of the venture capital funding in the United States?" I called it "changing the poster" because if you had lined up all the folks who received venture funding for their businesses in 1993, the picture would have been 99 percent men. I wanted a lot more women on that poster.

The cofounders of FWE had impressive credentials: most of us had MBAs from top schools and years of corporate and entrepreneurial experience. We had deep expertise in the issues of building high-growth ventures, and we were all very committed to the success of women as entrepreneurs. But it was our WIF that really helped us to bring others on board.

Even if you don't have a lot of credentials and expertise but you have identified a clear *What If?* future, it is more than possible

to become the go-to person in a niche—particularly if it’s a pretty exciting future you are working to create. Others will get on board simply because they want to be a part of bringing it about. Over time, you’ll attain credentials and expertise by the actions you take to bring about that future.

Here are other examples of inspiring, even world-changing WIFs:

1. *Maria Montessori* (the creator of Montessori education): What would it look like if we created a classroom where children are rewarded for independence of thinking and acting?
2. *Robin Chase* (founder and former CEO of Zipcar, the world’s largest car-sharing service, and now CEO of Buzzcar, a peer-to-peer car rental company): What would the world look like if we replaced the industrial economy with a collaborative economy?
3. *Chip Conley* (founder and former CEO of Joie de Vivre Hospitality): What if we could structure a company so that every employee feels as if they are living their calling, from the hotel manager to the housekeeper?

Some people call their idealized future their “vision,” but I find that “*What If?* future” more quickly encapsulates what I’m talking about. Many people get hung up on the word “vision.” It can feel too nebulous, too pie-in-the-sky, or even a bit foolish to say, at the beginning of a thought leadership journey, “This is my vision.” Even those who understand the importance of having a vision may not be ready to state one publicly.

Starting with a clear WIF question has several advantages. Your *What If?* question—especially if it’s a big, seemingly unanswerable one—can open the door to conversations. Those conversations in turn will help you identify who might align with you and who won’t. Over time, you will begin to crystallize your thinking into what can more clearly be called a Vision, with a capital V, which will include a plan for how you want to bring it about.

## Define Your *What If?* Future

So how do you define your WIF? Start with the third circle in your Venn diagram—what you are committed to. With that in mind, answer these questions:

- What future am I committed to making happen in this arena?
- What if I could make one change related to this issue or problem? What would that be?
- What future do I stand for? What will I work to eradicate?
- What must happen? What do I want to make happen?
- What must I work to prevent from happening? What must no longer be allowed to happen?
- What injustices am I committed to correct within this arena?
- What malfeasance am I committed to undo within my community, company, or industry?
- What “way it’s always been done” is no longer the way it should be done?
- What do people not know yet that they must be informed about?
- What amazing transformation has already occurred that I know about and that needs to be shared more broadly?
- What new way of doing things have I created (or learned about) that needs to be more broadly adopted?
- What future do I envision that others don’t yet see?
- What legacy do I want to leave?

Have some fun with this exercise—push yourself to think big and then bigger. Don’t think exclusively about the next few months; think about the next few years or even decades. What improvement do you want to see in the world? What advancements are you already a part of bringing about? What progress do you already have under way in your organization or volunteer activities? What scares you a bit to take on? What inspires and energizes you to get moving? What are the boundaries of what is possible today and how can you push those boundaries?

If you find yourself constrained by all the potential challenges to accomplishing this WIF, start a separate page and jot all of these thoughts down in one place. Give yourself permission to consider them later rather than be overwhelmed today by all the reasons a better future is not possible. Stay focused on creating a WIF that is exciting and energizing, one that you would like to devote some time and energy to bring about.

This is not a onetime exercise—you won't necessarily be able to clarify a long-term future the first time you complete the exercise. Talk to more people. Do more research. Come back to these questions, iteratively, until a WIF emerges that seizes your imagination.

And don't worry if you don't yet "know." You'll figure it out! As you listen to and learn from others and from your own experiences, you will be able to revise and deepen and broaden your thinking. You simply have to give yourself permission to explore the known and test today's limits and boundaries.

### Think Big

Although you may not recognize the parallel at first, there is a lot of similarity (and overlap) between thought leaders and early-stage entrepreneurs. In both cases, the key to success is to think *big*.

Over the last twenty years, I have sat through many hundreds of hours of entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas to potential investors, and one thing I've learned: the bigger the idea, and sometimes the more crazy and improbable it might be, the more likely you are to get funding.

Now to many of us that seems counterintuitive. Why would someone want to invest in something big that has very little certainty of coming to pass when they could invest in a more incremental, milestone improvement that is absolutely possible?

I would give two answers to that. The first one may seem to have less relevance to your situation if you are not seeking venture funding, but hang in with me for a minute. Venture capital funders always want the possibility of a big return on their investments—10x to

100x returns—in order to make up for the many investments they make that have no return at all. If they invest in an incremental idea, there is very little possibility they will have an outsize win. This is true for all of us: if we don't invest our time, energy, and resources in big futures—even crazy futures—there is little chance that they will come about by accident.

Second, investors want to be inspired. Big ideas inspire.

People with big ideas inspire not just investors; they inspire us all—even if we think they're grandiose, over the top, or unachievable. We want to engage to make a big *What If?* future possible. After all, it often takes almost as much work to achieve something small as it does to have a big impact. When we can envision a big possible win sometime in the future, we are more likely to join others to make it happen. One group that has been amazingly successful at envisioning a big *What If?* future and galvanizing thousands to help bring it about are the leaders of the global environmental sustainability organization, the Pachamama Alliance.

The Pachamama Alliance was originally founded in the 1990s by a group of people from the United States, including Bill and Lynne Twist and John Perkins, and the elders of the Achuar, an indigenous people in the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador and Peru. Over the next twenty years, their combined efforts protected over 3 million acres of Amazon rainforest from oil development. The Alliance is committed to environmental sustainability through activism, education, and advocacy. But the founding idea that the Achuar elders posed to their U.S. colleagues was a much bigger WIF question: How do we transform the culture of overconsumption around the globe in order to save the rainforest?

This big WIF idea has attracted millions of dollars in private contributions, thousands of global partners, and hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours. Pachamama volunteers and staff have hosted symposia, workshops, and training programs in more than seven countries. In 2012 alone, they trained over 3,500 volunteer facilitators worldwide. They also took hundreds of people

to visit the rainforest to engage them firsthand in the Achuar culture.

With a cause this big, the Pachamama team knows there's no time to think small. They also know that many share their dream of a world without overconsumption. Their WIF may feel impossible, but it is worthy of the time, energy, money, and devotion it will take to achieve.

Now lest I scare you off with this story, let me assure you that your WIF does not have to be anywhere near this big. Not everyone is ready to tackle global overconsumption and save the planet. There are many engaging and energizing *What If?* futures that start (and end) much closer to home. Think about what poster you'd like to change or what you'd like to improve in your community, company, or industry.

Creating your WIF is an iterative process. Keep pushing yourself, and your team if you have one, to imagine an ever bigger future.

No idea yet what your WIF is? Get out and talk to people. Read blogs, books, or commentary that align with—or argue against—your thinking on a subject. Stop by the Pachamama site to get inspired (<http://www.pachamama.org>), or watch some TED talks (<http://www.ted.com/talks>). There you will find many visionary thinkers with big ideas. You'll not only be inspired; you'll also begin to observe some of the trends forming in the world that you may want to align with, or work against.

## ALIGN WITH (OR BUCK) TRENDS

Aligning yourself with emerging trends can inspire and inform your WIF. It can also help you overcome the natural resistance to change, whether in your audience, in the larger world, or in your own thinking. Think of what happens when you ride close behind another bicyclist: you don't have to work as hard, because the bicyclist in front of you serves as a windbreak, reducing your air resistance. Experienced bicyclists take advantage of this effect—they call it “drafting off” each other.<sup>2</sup> How can you draft off the momentum of others?



By aligning with the global trend towards sustainability, the Pachamama Alliance is able to attract a very large following to their efforts. My own efforts in support of women entrepreneurs were pushed forward by the dot-com frenzy in Silicon Valley in 1999.

*What trends will you align with?*

### Identify Key Trends

Most of the time the trends are pretty obvious (that's why they're called trends). They're wherever the conversation is happening now. You can think of the following as a market research exercise. Make notes on the trends you're uncovering in a spreadsheet or use Evernote. As you continue to notice and understand trends that are emerging or evolving, add to your notes

- Look for Facebook, Google+, or LinkedIn groups or meetups related to your Venn circles. What do people talk about in these gatherings?
- Go to Google or Twitter and type in some of the words, phrases, or keywords from your circles. Try the words separately and together. Try different combinations. Note the main topics and trends that are being discussed. What other keywords are related?
- Peruse a trade magazine, conference brochure, or website to learn what topics are being discussed.
- Seek out continuing education or webinar topics from your industry association.
- Identify a top expert in your arena and study what she or he is talking about.
- If you know someone who teaches in your niche, ask what new topics are being discussed in the classroom. If you teach in your niche, explore this question with your colleagues.
- Subscribe to a futurist newsletter.<sup>3</sup>
- Browse the funding pitches on Indiegogo or Kickstarter.<sup>4</sup>

**Answer the following questions:**

- What economic trends might have an impact (positive or negative) on whether my WIF will be possible?
- What local, regional, national, and global political trends might impact my WIF?
- What are the technological trends, and at what speed will new technologies begin to have an impact? What technology advancements will be needed to ensure that my WIF will be possible?
- What client, customer, vendor, market, and industry trends will impact my WIF?
- What local, regional, national, and global social trends may impact my WIF?
- What regulatory or legislative changes are under way?
- What trending meme, fad, style, perspective, or point of view is getting the most attention?

If you know the current trends in your arena, and their boundaries, you can push others to think in new ways, often far beyond what appear to be today's limitations. That's why determining the trends in your own industry is so valuable. Please don't skip this exercise. Stop and think through what trends you can align with that will move your efforts forward more quickly.

I realize that you may be thinking, "I don't want to be a lemming. I don't want to go along with the trends. In fact, I'm known as someone who bucks the trends and goes my own way." Great! There's nothing wrong with that.

Being counterintuitive or the dissident voice will definitely help you stand out and get noticed. People won't necessarily agree with you, and that's fine too. Those who buck the trends often make the most progress—they help people question the status quo and view things in a new light.

After all, we thought leaders are change-makers. We want to see (and make) the world go in a new direction.

While the world's leaders are calling for more oil development, the Pachamama Alliance advocates a different direction: curbing our overconsumption so that we don't need more oil. Its efforts have put it up against significant opponents, including major oil companies and the governments that support them. But the Alliance continues the fight—it's epic, it's daring, and it's worth it.

Another countertrend winner is Southwest Airlines. Going against his industry's trend for higher and higher baggage fees, Southwest's CEO Gary Kelly made the decision not to charge passengers to check their luggage. Why? Because he didn't want to turn Southwest flight attendants into baggage handlers, as passengers tried to stuff more and more luggage into the overhead bins. "That would make the flight attendants unhappy," said Kelly. "And that in turn would make passengers unhappy. We want our employees to feel that their job is a calling, and the people who most have to feel that way are the ones closest to the customer."<sup>5</sup> Now there's a rare, counterintuitive attitude: employees and customers over bottom line profits. Let's hope he eventually gets the whole airline industry on his side.

Lynn Price, the founder of Camp To Belong, has also worked against the trends since 1995, when she started the first summer camp for foster kids who had been separated from their siblings. Legislation and prevailing wisdom of the time said it was better that kids had foster homes rather than worry much about whether they ever saw their siblings again. Yet, Lynn's personal experience of being separated from her own sister as a child told her this practice was outdated and ultimately caused great harm to foster siblings.

Lynn's long-term *What If?* future remains the passage of legislation that will reverse the cruel practice of separating siblings when they are placed in foster care. In the meantime, she has spent years building a place for foster siblings to come together for summer fun. Today, Camp To Belong hosts ten programs across the United States and Australia. Price knows that her *What If?*

future will take years to achieve, and she believes that every Camp To Belong experience builds more momentum for her cause (<http://www.camptobelong.org>). *How can you buck conventional wisdom or push against prevailing trends?*

Now that you have identified your niche, crystallized your *What If?* future, and determined which trends you will align with or against, you are ready to move on to the next chapter. There we'll explore how you can begin to bring about that future, how to create and test possible transformative ideas and bring about the first ripples of change in your company, industry, or community.

## FIND YOUR DRIVING PASSION: A QUICK REVIEW

In this step of the thought leadership journey, successful thought leaders

- Identify the “thought leadership intersection point,” where their credentials, expertise, and commitments are aligned
- Envision the *What If?* future that they stand for and are ready to make happen
- Think big, creating a *What If?* future that inspires and engages others
- Identify the economic, political, technological, and other trends that they can align with or that they will work against

## MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### *Pen Your Venn*

If you would like additional questions to jog your memory or open up your imagination when you're doing the Pen Your Venn exercise, you'll find more below.

#### **Credentials Questions**

- What are some of your recent job titles?
- What industries have you worked in?
- Have you ever been named to a top 10 or 100 list? For what?
- Do you have an advanced degree? What in?
- Have you received any certifications?
- Have you filed for any patents? In what area(s)?
- Have you ever started a company or run a division? What was it?
- Have you served on a board or advisory board?

#### **Expertise Questions**

- When people say you're always in the know about something, what is that?
- What subjects have you written about for publication?
- If you were asked to write an article about something, what would it be?
- If you asked ten people to complete this sentence, "She/he is the best person I know at . . ." what would they say?
- What are you most proud to have achieved?
- Have you been invited to speak or write about any topics recently?
- What are your core professional skills sets? Personal attributes?

*(continued)*

- What do you know that others don't really know much about?
- Where are you considered a leader?
- Have you developed a new way of doing things? In what arena?

**Commitment Questions**

- What do you read about when you have a few spare moments?
- What do you think needs to be fixed or improved in the world?
- Complete these sentences:
  - Nothing makes me happier than working on ...
  - What I really care about is ...
  - Nothing gets me out of bed faster than my commitment to ...
  - What gives me goose bumps is imagining ...
  - I have unique ideas about ...

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