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How Challenger Brands Earn Attention In Crowded Markets

A MATTER COMMUNICATIONS PR PLAYBOOK



Executive Summary

Today's media environment is more accelerated, more crowded, and more competitive than at any point in recent history. Challenger brands struggle to break through not because their stories lack merit, but because traditional visibility channels have shifted. Reporters handle more beats with fewer resources. AI reshapes how audiences discover information. Organic visibility must now be earned, not assumed.

This playbook outlines how modern PR helps brands earn meaningful attention. It breaks down the foundations of visibility, offers practical strategies for crafting a narrative worth talking about, and demonstrates how earned media drives momentum when amplified across channels.

For any organization looking to become the brand everyone talks about, this guide provides a clear path forward.

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The Visibility Challenge

Attention is scarce. Brands are producing more content than ever, but audiences are consuming it faster, more selectively, and through AI-driven summaries that favor authority and credibility.

Challenger Brands Contend with Several Key Challenges

NOISE INFLATION

More content competing for the same limited attention

TRANSFORMED NEWSROOMS

Reporters covering more beats and using AI tools to screen pitches, while publications shift to paid content models

DECLINING TRUST

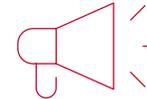
Audiences inundated by aggressive news cycle, ads and disingenuous content

AI'S ROLE IN DISCOVERY

Generative engines rely on credible third-party validation in addition to owned content like blogs

EXECUTIVE VISIBILITY

Individual leaders themselves now drive brand recognition, requiring them to have an open, public persona



To become the brand everyone talks about, organizations must approach PR as a visibility engine—not a single tactic.

The Foundations of Visibility

High-visibility brands follow a predictable pattern. They align message, credibility, visibility, and consistency in a way that makes audiences take notice.

What Challenger Brands Often Get Wrong

- ⊗ Relying on announcements instead of building a long-term narrative
- ⊗ Positioning around features rather than insights or tension
- ⊗ Underinvesting in thought leadership and content
- ⊗ Treating PR as occasional activity instead of a sustained drumbeat

What High-Visibility Brands Get Right

- ✔ A differentiated point of view
- ✔ Clear spokespeople with something meaningful to say
- ✔ A proactive earned media strategy
- ✔ Continuous investment and amplification across owned and shared content channels



The Four Elements of a Talked-About Brand



MESSAGE

The idea you want to own



VISIBILITY

Consistent presence in
the right conversations



CREDIBILITY

Proof that reinforces
the message



CONSISTENCY

Repetition over time,
across channels

Crafting a Story Worth Talking About

A brand builds buzz when its narrative reflects a timely tension, offers unique insight, and aligns to what audiences genuinely care about.

5 Steps to Create a Newsworthy Narrative

- 1 Define the market tension or “why now” behind your story
- 2 Translate your mission into themes reporters and audiences value
- 3 Identify internal experts capable of delivering meaningful commentary
- 4 Distill insights, data, trends, or proprietary knowledge into media hooks
- 5 Ensure the narrative supports both short-term news and long-term positioning

NARRATIVE BUILDER WORKSHEET

(for internal use)

What are we trying to be known for?

What industry tension makes our story relevant?

What unique perspective or insight do we bring?

What audience behavior or trend supports this message?

How does this narrative tie into the Problems We Solve framework?

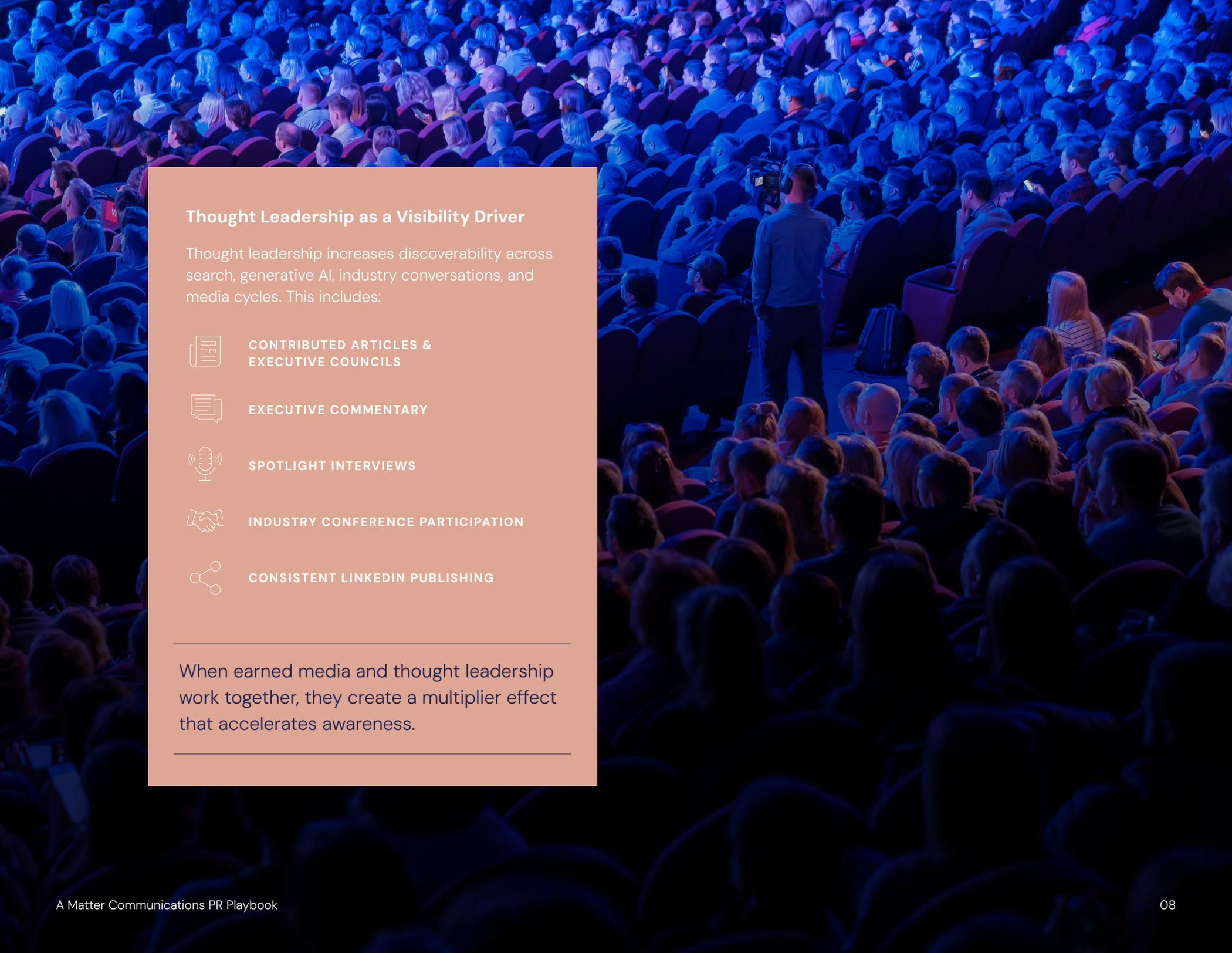
Activating Visibility Through Earned Media

Earned media remains one of the strongest validators of brand credibility. When used consistently, it generates visibility that advertising alone cannot create.

Tactics that Work in Media Relations Today

- ✓ Pitches highly relevant to the publication's audience
- ✓ Short, direct, insight-driven messages addressing timely issues
- ✓ Spokespeople who can react quickly to news cycles
- ✓ Data-backed storytelling
- ✓ Visual assets that support the pitch (quotes, charts, examples)
- ✓ Human, empathetic relationships with reporters





Thought Leadership as a Visibility Driver

Thought leadership increases discoverability across search, generative AI, industry conversations, and media cycles. This includes:



CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES &
EXECUTIVE COUNCILS



EXECUTIVE COMMENTARY



SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS



INDUSTRY CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION



CONSISTENT LINKEDIN PUBLISHING

When earned media and thought leadership work together, they create a multiplier effect that accelerates awareness.

Turning Wins into Momentum

A single press hit can spark a visibility surge when amplified properly. The impact comes not from the placement alone, but from how the team activates it afterward.

Tactics to Extend a Media Win

- ✓ Share it across LinkedIn from the brand and spokesperson
- ✓ Create social graphics or carousels summarizing the key insight
- ✓ Add the placement to nurture emails and sales presentations
- ✓ Develop a short video recap highlighting the coverage
- ✓ Repurpose the angle into a blog or internal point of view
- ✓ Package it for the sales team to show customers and prospects

MEDIA AMPLIFICATION CHECKLIST

For every earned media placement, ensure you:

- Post on LinkedIn (brand and executive)
- Repurpose it into 1–2 social assets
- Add it to the newsroom
- Integrate into upcoming thought leadership
- Share internally for advocacy

Momentum is built through repetition and reinforcement.



Conclusion

Visibility is no longer a “nice to have.” Brands that fail to maintain it don’t just fall behind – they disappear from consideration.

PR provides the discipline, credibility, and strategic storytelling needed to shape perception and influence conversation. When challenger brands activate a consistent visibility engine, they become the brand people talk about, share, search for, and trust.

If your brand is ready to build a lasting presence in the market, Matter is here to help. [Contact us](#) to begin shaping your visibility strategy for Results that Matter.

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About Matter Communications

Matter is an agency delivering proven PR, marketing and creative solutions that drive results. Founded in 2003, with offices spanning North America, Matter works with the world's most innovative companies across B2B, technology, consumer, and professional services markets. For more information, visit <https://www.matternow.com>.