

A THOUGHTPIECE FOR EXPERTISE-LED BUSINESSES

Marketing in the age of the zero click

*Why unmuting your experts will
become your point of difference*



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Unmute your experts is The Polka's guiding principle for marketing in expertise-led businesses.

The people behind your expertise are your point of difference

Your business is full of people who know things that could help your next client. They understand the nuance, the difficult decisions and the details that shape a way forward. The challenge is making that thinking visible to people who have yet to meet you, including those who are not looking to buy right now.

The buying journey is changing around us. People can find answers in search results, AI conversations and social feeds without clicking through to a website. The age of zero click is here. They are encountering your business and forming opinions before you ever get to see them. As these journeys become more personal and fragmented, and AI makes credible-looking content easier to produce, relying on website visits and polished company messages leaves too much to chance. We're all seeking human connection.

Unmute your experts. Help people get to know the thinking, experience and judgement behind your business.

At The Polka, we believe the people behind your expertise will become a stronger point of difference. Let them help audiences make sense of their world, weigh their options and decide what deserves attention, well before a buying decision. Useful advice with a recognisable human voice gives people a clearer reason to trust you.

This thoughtpiece explores what that means for your marketing and how to put it into practice. It brings together our thinking, published research and practical ways to make your team's expertise heard.

01

58%

Lower clickthrough for top-ranking pages when an AIOverview appears, against Ahrefs' estimate of the rate without one. Desktop, informational searches, December 2025. [7]

76%

Say it matters to be able to tell AI-made content from human-made, in Pew's 2025 US survey. 53% were not too or not at all confident they could. [8]

When an encounter is brief, a recognisable voice and a useful idea give someone a reason to remember you.

Why this matters now

The changing journey makes visible human expertise a more important part of marketing.

Useful encounters no longer default to website visits

AI answers can meet a need without sending the person to the source. Ahrefs' February 2026 study found that AI Overviews correlated with an average desktop clickthrough rate for top-ranking pages around 58% below its estimate of what the rate would have been without AI Overviews. [7] That is not a 58% fall in every website's traffic. It is evidence that informational search can send fewer visits even when a page ranks well.

For our 'unmute your experts' approach, this means giving useful thinking a life beyond the website and the people in your organisation are perfectly placed to do this.

The journey is more personal and fragmented

One person follows an expert. Another asks AI a series of questions shaped by their own circumstances. A colleague forwards a post. These routes intersect, but they are not the same journey. A brief encounter may introduce an idea, change a question or remind someone of an expert without producing a measurable action.

Trust is your asset

AI-generated words, images and advice make familiar cues of credibility easier to imitate. In our view, polished presentation alone is not enough to establish trust when you cannot tell who created it. In Pew's 2025 US survey, 76% said distinguishing AI-made from human-made content was very or extremely important; 53% were not too or not at all confident they could do so. [8]

Our view is that this erosion of familiar trust cues makes people's own credibility more important. An identifiable expert gives an audience someone whose experience, reasoning and reputation they can examine. Show who knows the subject, what their view is based on and how to speak to them. A human name alone is not proof; make the substance visible too.

02

Make your experts useful throughout that thinking, including before someone knows what help to buy.

Our lens, not Google's finding.

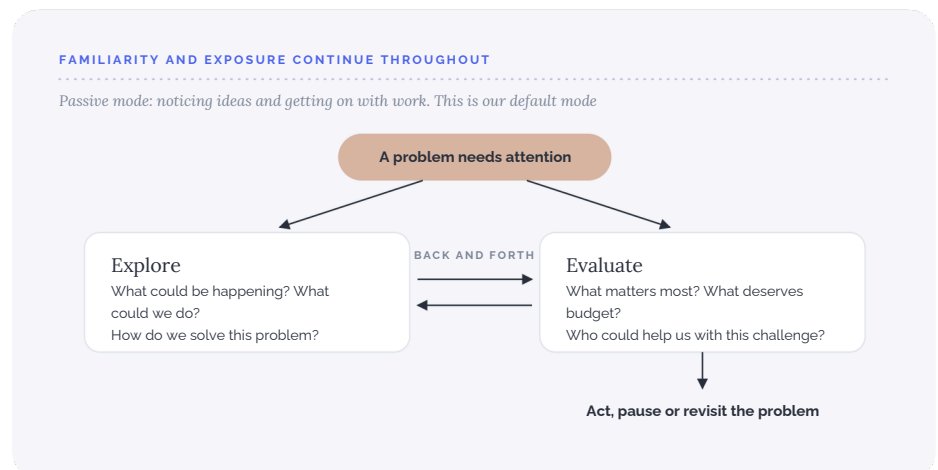
Google's research concerns consumer buying. We use it as a lens for business decisions, where colleagues, budgets and competing priorities can add further loops.

When does your audience need your expertise

Unmuting your experts starts with the questions people are trying to work out.

Your experts have something to offer while much of the audience is still in passive mode. Someone getting on with their job might notice a useful observation or hear your name in a conversation. They are building a view of the people and businesses around them, without actively shopping for your service.

A trigger changes the level of attention. A recurring problem becomes harder to ignore, a colleague raises a concern or a change outside the business creates a new question. The person starts exploring what is happening and what they could do about it.



The Polka's interpretation for expertise-led businesses, informed by Google's Messy Middle. Familiarity and exposure continue throughout; this is not a fixed sequence. [1]

Exploring and evaluating can happen more than once

Google's Messy Middle framework describes a space between a purchase trigger and a purchase. Exploration expands the possibilities; evaluation narrows them. People move back and forth between the two against a continuing backdrop of exposure to brands and information. [1]

Google's research concerns consumer buying. We use it as a lens for business decisions, where colleagues, budgets and competing priorities can add further loops. For your marketing, the practical point is to make your experts useful throughout that thinking, including before someone knows what help to buy.

03

Unmute the judgement behind your service. Help people understand when it would make a difference.

A request for more information is not always a buying signal. They may be trying to understand their world, defend a priority internally or establish whether there is a problem at all.

Help people set their priorities

Your experts can be useful before the audience is ready to choose a supplier.

Imagine a growing business whose new enquiries are not turning into enough work. Its first question might be whether it needs better marketing. A conversation with the team suggests that follow-up is inconsistent. A closer look reveals patchy information, stretched people and uncertainty about which enquiries are worth pursuing.

The possible answers now belong to different budgets. Marketing could attract more suitable enquiries. IT could improve the systems. HR could address capacity or capability. The business might need a combination, or a clearer diagnosis before spending anything.

POSSIBLE PRIORITY	THE QUESTION BEING EVALUATED
01 Marketing	Are we attracting the right opportunities and explaining our value clearly?
02 IT and systems	Can we capture information, follow up and see where the process breaks down?
03 People and capability	Do we have the time, skills and responsibilities needed to act?
04 Wait or investigate	Do we understand enough to commit budget, and what happens if we delay?

An illustrative business scenario, not a client case study or a finding from Google's research.

The journey moves across categories

A person may explore broadly, favour one explanation, then reopen the question after speaking to a colleague. A budget discussion can change the options again. Each participant brings a different concern, and each new piece of information can alter what seems most important. They are in 'exploring mode'.

That is why a request for more information is not always a buying signal (right now). They may be trying to understand their world, defend a priority internally or establish whether there is a problem at all.

AI can help someone explore these choices, while adding uncertainty about whose advice to believe. We believe this gives your experts a valuable role in helping people evaluate the answers. Let your experts explain the reasoning, including when your service would not be the first priority. That is how useful marketing gives people a firmer basis for trust.

04

A good next step matches the moment: something to think with while they explore, and someone to talk to when they need advice.

“The art (and the science) of serving the people you seek to serve.”

Seth Godin on marketing [2]

Earn a place in the conversation

Share thinking that helps the audience move forward, whether they meet it through AI or a person.

Start with the conversations your experts already have. Someone working through a problem with AI can question an answer, add context and test another explanation. They may cross departments and priorities before reaching a list of suppliers. Useful public expertise could help that thinking if the tool retrieves it, even when you never see the exchange.

Think beyond the first question

THE PERSON IS ASKING		USEFUL EXPERTISE WOULD HELP THEM
01	Why is this happening?	Recognise possible causes and the information needed to tell them apart.
02	What could we do?	Understand alternatives, dependencies and trade-offs.
03	What deserves budget first?	Weigh urgency, likely value and the consequences of waiting.
04	Who could help us?	Identify relevant experience and know what to ask in a conversation.

A generic service description offers little help with those earlier questions. Your experts can explain where the usual advice falls short, what changes their recommendation and what a sensible first step might look like. That thinking is useful through AI, on your website, social media and of course in real life.

Serve before you sell

This is how we think about the purpose of 'unmute your experts': earn attention by helping. Seth Godin's description of marketing as "the art (and the science) of serving the people you seek to serve" supports that view. [2] Someone scanning their marketplace needs insight that improves their understanding, without every encounter becoming a sales pitch.

Donald Miller's StoryBrand framework gives another useful perspective: the customer is the hero and the business is the guide helping them solve a problem. [3] Applied to our approach, your experts' experience matters because it helps the audience recognise their choices and take a sensible next step.

05

A company can say it understands a problem; an expert can show how they think about it.

Everyone can contribute in a way that suits them, without everyone becoming a LinkedIn influencer.

Make sharing expertise a team habit

Connect the marketing team's direction with the people who know the work.

Unmuting your experts means giving the people behind your services a supported way to be heard. A company can say it understands a problem; an expert can show how they think about it. Let audiences examine the experience behind the advice, recognise the person's voice and see who stands behind the judgement.

Show the substance where people encounter you

On an expert's LinkedIn profile and website biography, explain the work they do and the situations they know. In an article or video, name the person behind the advice and let their judgement come through. In a case study, show the decision, the reasoning and the evidence behind any claimed result. Each encounter should help someone understand why this person is worth listening to.

Build the habit into everyday work

This is a culture change as well as a content task. Treat the questions, lessons and useful observations that emerge from client work as knowledge worth sharing beyond the business. Build a short discussion into project debriefs or team meetings, and give people a place to record an insight while it is fresh.

The marketing lead can develop that insight into a LinkedIn post, website article, newsletter contribution or briefing. The expert checks the reasoning, evidence and voice before publication. Agree who coordinates the work, what needs approval and what time the team can give it. Protect client confidentiality, while making useful expertise more visible.

GIVE THAT HABIT A SHARED HOME

 ChorusWorks

Chorus Works connects the marketing team's direction with the people whose experience gives the material value.

Chorus Works is the content platform we built at The Polka to help teams capture knowledge, develop content and coordinate contributions around the business's messaging.

chorusworks.co.uk

06

Give each contribution a clear job

Plan around those needs, with enough direction that individual voices build a recognisable picture of the business.

Coordinate your experts' thinking around what the audience needs at that moment.

Unmute your experts gives the contributions a shared purpose. The same person may need different help as they explore and evaluate, and can return to an earlier question later. Plan around those needs, with enough direction that individual voices build a recognisable picture of the business.

MINDSET	WHAT WOULD HELP	A POSSIBLE FORMAT
PASSIVE	Notice a relevant change or remember a useful perspective.	An expert's observation, a short talk or an example from the work.
EXPLORING	Understand the problem and discover possible ways to respond.	A diagnostic article, an interview or questions to ask the team.
EVALUATING	Compare approaches, priorities and what would change the decision.	An options briefing, a checklist or a case study that explains the reasoning.
READY TO ACT	Assess fit and know what an initial conversation involves.	A clear service page, relevant experience and a named contact.

55%

Of hidden decision-makers said thought leadership was an important part of vetting potential vendors. Edelman and LinkedIn, 2025 US survey; self-reported B2B findings. [4]

Make room for the people you have not met

A useful briefing can be passed to a colleague with a different responsibility. In Edelman and LinkedIn's 2025 US survey, 55% of hidden decision-makers said thought leadership was an important part of vetting potential vendors. [4] These are self-reported B2B findings, but they are a helpful reminder that your main contact may not be the only person making up their mind.

Give that colleague enough context to understand why the issue matters and what decision is being discussed. An accessible explanation of the trade-offs can help your contact take the conversation further inside the business.

Give each brief encounter somewhere useful to lead

A short post can help on its own, while making it easy to find a fuller explanation. A podcast contribution can introduce a useful perspective and connect the listener to the expert's work. Keep names, themes and descriptions consistent so the audience can connect the dots.

Use the website for depth, evidence and a clear next step. Keep that material accessible: Google says established SEO foundations still apply to its AI search features. [6] The aim is a connected body of expertise that works whether someone stays on the platform, follows a link or comes back later.

07

Where should your experts be heard

Six questions to help you decide whose expertise to share, where and why.

01 UNDERSTAND THE DECISION

What are prospective clients trying to understand before they look for a supplier?

Review early conversations. Identify the uncertainty your experts can help resolve, before a service enquiry exists.

02 UNDERSTAND THE DECISION

What competes with your service for their budget?

Include other departments, internal solutions and waiting. Does your content help them decide what deserves attention first?

03 MAKE EXPERTISE VISIBLE

Which experts could give those decisions a useful perspective?

Choose people with relevant experience. Agree what they can contribute, how marketing will support them and who checks the material.

04 MAKE EXPERTISE VISIBLE

Where will the right people encounter that thinking?

Check with clients and referrers. Connect useful posts, articles, conversations and events to clear expert profiles and deeper evidence.

05 RECOGNISE USEFUL PROGRESS

Are you appearing for the problems you want to help solve?

Review priority search topics, a consistent sample of AI questions and relevant audience reach. Separate being named, cited and recommended.

06 RECOGNISE USEFUL PROGRESS

What tells you your expertise influenced a decision?

Ask new contacts what they had seen or heard and why they approached you. Record named experts and content alongside suitable enquiries and shortlist invitations.

Use the answers to give your experts' contributions a shared direction: the decisions you can help with, the people whose experience matters and the places your audience learns. Unmuting your experts becomes a working principle for your marketing.

REFERENCES

Sources and further reading

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The Polka's thinking.*

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Chorus Works product descriptions on the public websites. Support for expert contribution is distinct from a guarantee of trust, AI visibility or sales.
www.chorusworks.co.uk

Unmute your experts is The Polka's guiding principle for marketing in expertise-led businesses. This piece develops our thinking about the changing buying journey and the role of visible human expertise. Research and external frameworks are attributed above. Examples are illustrative.



THE POLKA / LET YOUR EXPERTISE BE HEARD

AN INVITATION

Unmute your experts

Let your expertise be heard in the age of zero click.

Your team already has knowledge that could help someone make a better decision. Our invitation is to give that expertise a useful place in your marketing, while audiences are exploring their world, weighing priorities and deciding whom to trust.

Start with the questions your clients ask and the people best placed to answer them. Give their thinking a shared direction and a supported route to the audience. Let people get to know the experts they could work with, before the first enquiry arrives.



Bring your team's knowledge into Chorus Works

Explore the platform we built to help expertise-led businesses capture insights, develop useful content and coordinate their experts' contributions. Make the knowledge in your business part of the conversation.

chorusworks.co.uk →



Talk through your direction with The Polka

If you want to work out what your business should be known for, where your audience is learning or how your experts can contribute, let's talk. We can help connect your positioning, people and marketing around the work you want to win.

thepolka.co.uk →



Unmute your experts. Let your expertise be heard.

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