

maru/BLUE

FUELLING

THE

USING INSIGHTS  
TO WIN

PURSUIT

You're in the pursuit.  
You know your  
competition.  
They're smart.  
How will you stand out  
and win the business?

### By knowing something they don't.

When your agency prepares for a pursuit you pore over information aggregators, scan social media and Google till the cows come home. But so do your competitors.

Everyone uses eMarketer or Mintel or similar information sources to inform their pitch. The client sees the same information in presentation after presentation. It's no wonder they don't look engaged when you present the situation analysis. They already know this stuff. The agency before you just showed it to them too. What you need is something different, something fresh—something they don't know.

We've helped many agencies find unique insights to fuel their pitches and developed this guide as a thought starter for finding ways to come to the pitch with insights your competitors don't have.

We've divided the piece based on two ways of generating unique information. One is **short term** and specific to a particular pitch, and the other is **long term** and produces information that will draw clients to you, and something you can use for every pitch going forward.

### **The pitch next week**

Often you don't have the time or money to invest in exhaustive research for your client pitch. You need something quick, disruptive and memorable. In our section on preparing for "the pitch next week" we outline ideas for very targeted, elegantly simple and inexpensive ways of generating insights that make clients stop, look up and listen.

### **The art of the long view**

Thought leadership is the longer term way of generating information that no one else has. It's knowledge that opens doors. It's information not just on the clients' brand, but also their competitors. Or it could be data that makes you the go-to-source for monitoring important trends.

It doesn't have to be an expensive investment, but it does need to provide value. It's an approach that understands the art of the long view. In this section we look at five hallmarks of excellence in thought leadership.

### **If you like this, you might also like...**

We believe that bringing great insights to the pitch is just the beginning. We think agencies should own insights, because they are the ones that have to use them. So we developed a guide to incorporating an insights roadmap into your pitches and beyond – throughout the life-cycle of your relationship with your clients. It's full of fresh ideas for gathering knowledge that will help fuel your ongoing success. To learn more, download [In the Pursuit: A Survival Guide to Owning Insights](#).

### **Now, about that pitch next week...**

## The pitch next week: nuggets that make them sit up and take notice

Desk research is great, but it's pretty hard to find something that is news to your client. Quick custom research can help you find the insights that matter.

Here are four ways you can pan for nuggets of news. Each one of them has been designed specifically to help agencies win new business.

### **Market momentum in a minute**

Companies often extensively track their brands on micro-level attributes like “has fewer carbs” and “friendly service.” It’s like trying to understand the forest by taking pictures of individual leaves.

What is often missed is a crucial aspect of the big picture: who in the market has momentum and who is faltering. By asking a single simple question like “hot” or “not” for each key player, you get a clear sense of momentum—and where the client stands.

Our research on research has shown that simple measures like “hot” or “not” are excellent predictors of market share. But, don’t let the simplicity of the measure fool you.

This is a powerful measure of market momentum. And you can ask about a whole market in a single question on an omnibus.

Every brand manager wants to know if their offer is “hot” or “not” and you can tell them, and show how your agency will make them hotter.



**Bringing customers into the boardroom**

Having video of customers dishing the good, the bad and the ugly of the brand you are pitching is always an attention grabber. But sending a crew out into the street to interview random people is expensive and too often is like trying to finding a needle in a haystack.

By doing webcam video open-ends as part of a survey—even as a part of an omni—we can make sure the people that are videoed have been screened to be part of your target’s user group.

We can get them to talk about the brand you are pitching, and the competitors too. We know how to uncover uncomfortable truths and identify opportunities. You want to bring the people’s voice into the boardroom.

With video-open ends you can unleash the power of the consumer’s voice, and come away with enough clips to create a show stopper.



### **Proof you have a better idea**

You know the idea you are pitching is brilliant. The client might want to believe so too. But what's better than being able to prove it in the court of public opinion?

We've done many quick tests for agencies where we exposed half the people to a summary of the current campaign. The other half saw a summary of the new idea. When your idea scores higher on the client's outcomes, you have proof it's a winner. Nothing is more appealing to the bean counters than hard data proving you have the winning idea.

Our [Idea Filter](#) approach to screening ideas is radically focused and lets you gather the key measures in a minute. It's been validated in multiple ways through extensive [research](#) on [research](#).

Don't just make them fall in love with your idea. Show them the people love it too.



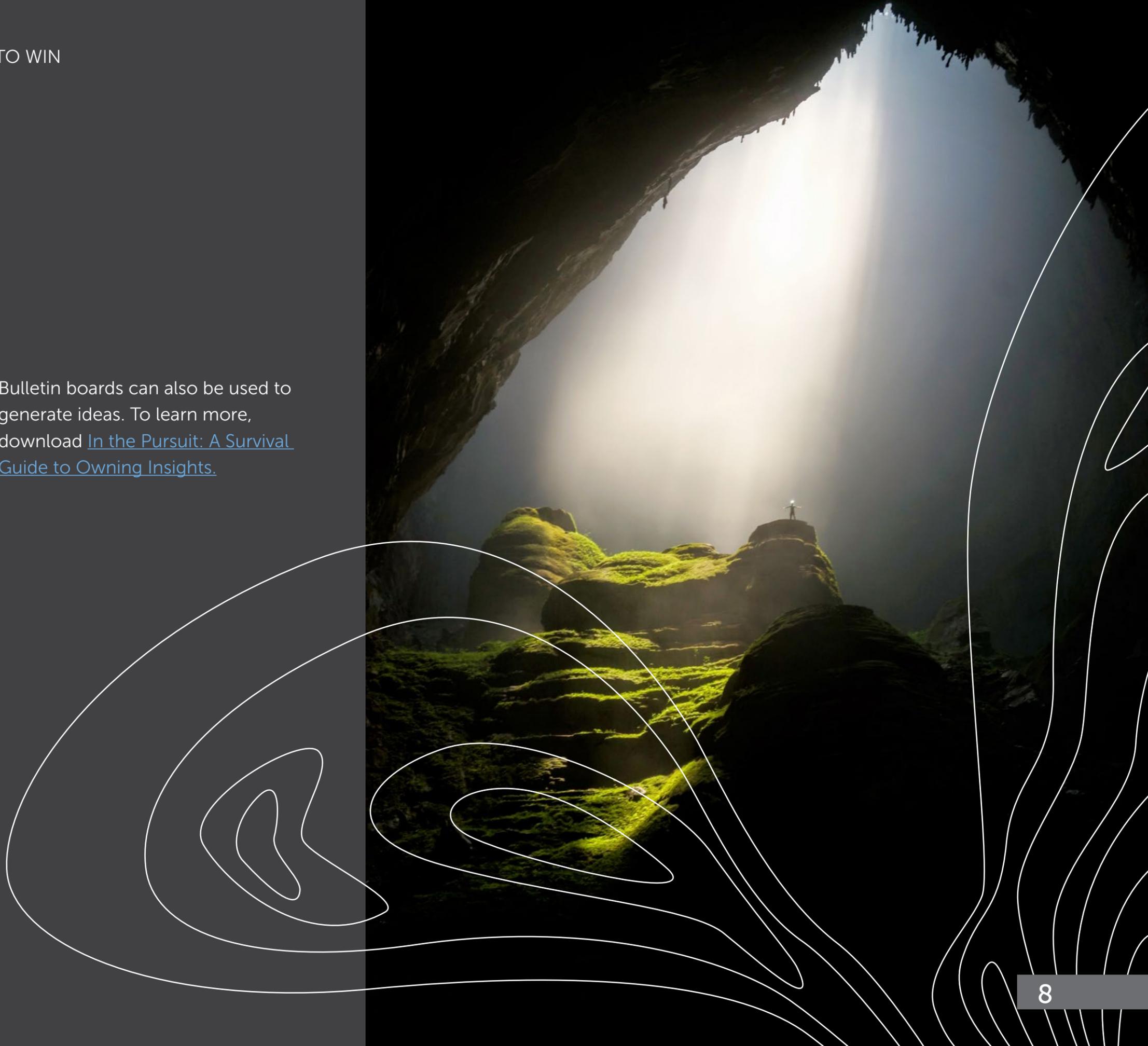
**Dig deeper, for the big nuggets**

You have a starting point, a big hypothesis, but it needs customer feedback to be refined. Qualitative bulletin board exercises have allowed many of our agency clients to explore questions, dig deeper, get feedback and work the seam until they find the nugget.

Bulletin boards allow you to pose questions and then follow up with probes until you have chased down the answers you need—all without having to spend your evening watching expensive focus groups and eating too many M&Ms.

Clients love the customer quotes, and we all love the flexibility to probe and follow up leads until we get the insights we need.

Bulletin boards can also be used to generate ideas. To learn more, download [In the Pursuit: A Survival Guide to Owning Insights.](#)



**Thought Starters for the Pitch Next Week—more solution examples:**

These are just few of about four millions ways you can use quick, simple custom research to generate fresh information that will make potential clients sit up and take notice. We'd be happy to brainstorm with you about your specific challenge. But in the meantime here are a couple more ideas, in brief.

**Risk Assessment** lets you examine how at-risk your prospective client's loyal customers are. Find out what other brands they are considering, and identify which competitors they might be flirting with. Wake up your potential client by pointing out unexpected threats or opportunities.

**Identifying whitespace through market drivers.** Measuring usage and association with brand attributes allows you to quickly determine which benefits are driving purchase, using our advanced analytics techniques. Identify where the gap is between how the potential client is positioned and what is really driving sales in the market. Open their eyes to opportunities to better sell their offer on the attributes that matter.

# Thought Leadership: Five Hallmarks of Excellence

Using research to demonstrate thought leadership is not new or unique. But done well it leaves you with a feeling of “I wish I’d thought of that.” FutureBrand’s work with us is one of those kinds of thought leadership efforts. They produce a report which looks at the brand image of each of the 50 U.S. states, plus some territories and major cities. It’s an amazingly comprehensive piece of work.

From their efforts, we see five hallmarks of excellence.

“An overview of our investigation - We set out to answer one simple, but previously unexplored question: how does U.S. State brand marketing influence potential visitors’ awareness, perception, and intent to visit? We were guided by an ingoing hypothesis: the most successful states build brands that not only connect to drivers of visitation—but do so in an authentic way that leverages existing associations. In addition to conducting a survey of 2,700 domestic tourists, we paid special attention to the role of digital marketing, analyzing the website and social media content of each state.”

- FutureBrand: [The State of State Branding Report](#)

**There are multiple targets, all of whom are thirsty for fresh information.**

This information has appeal not only to all 50 states and their tourism boards, but it also is important information for the cities within those states, and their business associations. By making sure there is a wide and varied set of potential targets, they set the stage for excellent return on investment before they even start.



**The piece delivers unique value to those targets—giving them context they could never afford to get themselves.**

Lots of states and cities do brand research but they rarely have enough budget to do it for more than a few competitors. This report not only provides information on all 50 states, it also covers Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. No single state could afford such an undertaking.

The report delivers information on each state, a key finding about the competition and who the target markets are. One of the valuable and intriguing insights is that your neighboring state or city is not necessarily your target or your competitor. That kind of knowledge is only available if your scope is comprehensive, which brings us to our third marker of excellence.

Here is what they say about Idaho: "Idaho is the top performer for the 'Invite,' category and study at large, increasing the intent to visit of an impressive 53% of those surveyed. To what do they owe this success? With a highly neutral initial impression as a destination (43%), and very limited top of mind associations, they are essentially a blank slate. Their website and travel guide introduce images that are beautiful (like a breathtaking view of a waterfall). But more importantly, these images connect to key drivers of visitation, resulting in an increased perception of 'outdoor activities,' and 'adventure.' The messaging is clearly successful, and 71% of those more interested in visiting said the stimulus showed them something they didn't know about Idaho. Idaho's brand messaging does the important job of getting people past 'potatoes' to consider the many activities the state has to offer."

**The content is substantive.**

The report is 138 pages and contains detailed information on each state and territory, as well as some large cities. It is not superficial. It delivers tangible value. You can engage deeply with this report and use as a reference, which has multiple benefits.

It creates credibility, because it's clear that there is strength to the research. It also creates stickiness. When a state tourism director notices another state launches a new and interesting campaign, they can look back at the report and see how they were positioned, whether they are a competitor or not, and whether this new campaign seems to be pushing the right buttons. Their substance means their thought leadership is a brand ambassador, sitting on their target's desk day in and day out.

**They are strategic and willing to give away valuable recommendations.**

The content is not just descriptive. It's prescriptive too. In the report they divide the states into four segments and unpack recommendations for each type of state and what the key challenges and opportunities are.

For example, one of the segments are "Invite" states. The "Invite" segment includes states like Delaware, Idaho, New Hampshire and South Dakota. They write "Most neutral initial impressions = highest chance of increasing intent. Why? You've got a blank slate!" They recommend "Brand messaging must invite people in by connecting to proven drivers of visitation that are authentic + ownable."

They then move on to a state by state analysis and commentary.

By using insight to provide recommendations and quantify the size of opportunities, FutureBrand demonstrates they have depth and confidence. This invites you to think, "I wonder what they could do for us?" For thought leadership, that's mission accomplished.



**Their approach to thought leadership is consistent and persistent.**

This is not the only piece of thought leadership FutureBrand produces. While this was the first year for the State of the State report, they have a Country Brand Index which is now in its second decade.

This consistency allows them to identify and track trends, so that they can make authoritative statements like “Over the last 5 years, our work in country branding has highlighted the increasing importance of ‘country of origin’ in understanding country brand strength.” This adds considerable value to the study and cements its role as an authoritative resource.



**Thought Starters for Thought Leadership—more solution examples:**

**Community portraits** are a great opportunity to position your agency as being deeply connected to a specific cohort and category. Creating something like the “everything guide to” specific cohorts like Gen Z and virtual reality, or Hispanics and food culture, allows you to own that space. It gives you a credible demonstration of your ability to connect with this community.

**Market segmentations** allow you to identify vivid personas or tribes that resonate with people. Personas work when readers instantly identify people they know who fit the bill. Segmentations allow you to demonstrate strategic thinking by identifying how different groups might be messaged and what the innovation opportunities are. They also showcase tactical skills by suggesting ways to reach these segments based on their media habits and practices. Segmentations are a great way for your agency to “own” a space and add value to your relationship with current or prospective clients.

**Brand indexing** studies allow you to demonstrate the agency’s point of view on branding, while also providing competitive information for your clients. It provides perfect fodder for pitches, demonstrating you already know their market. And maybe even something about their brand that they don’t know. Young and Rubicam’s Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) is one of the grandfathers of this type of work, which they have turned into a stream of business.

**Trend watch** studies allow you to track market movement and explore emerging trends. By returning to the same subject, you become the go-to source for information on that matter. [Edelman’s Trust Barometer](#) is a classic example and shows the incredible value of tracking consistently and persistently. But not every trend watching study needs to be that ambitious (or long running). In fast moving areas like virtual reality or food trends, it is possible to track key measures quarterly and also delve into hot topics, while they are evolving. What’s key is that using insight to stake your claim on important trends establishes your agency as a leader in the space and gives you the evidence you need to propel your client relationships forward.

# As you prepare for the pursuit

We'd like to remind you of four things:

**You will stand out if you can share something the potential client does not know.**

Everybody mines the usual sources. You need quick, cost-effective research to help you find nuggets of new information.

**One quick way to gather information for the pitch next week is through super focused and lightening quick probes into the market.**

We have a multitude of methods for finding the information that will inform your strategy and make them sit up and pay attention.

**Thought leadership can provide you with a reason for them to seek you out. It becomes a calling card and a resource for every pitch.**

The investment in thought leadership does not need to be large. But it does require big picture thinking and consistence and persistence. You know it works. Let's think it through.

**When you plan the pursuit pitch, include a research roadmap.**

You need insights to make you campaign super successful. You should own those insights, so that you get the information you need. For ideas on what to include in a research roadmap check out [In the Pursuit: A Survival Guide to Owning Insights.](#)



For more information, contact [sales@marubluen.net](mailto:sales@marubluen.net)

FUELING THE PURSUIT: USING INSIGHTS TO WIN



maru/BLUE