

Ad Astra Per Aspera

On the west edge of Topeka alongside Interstate 70 is a sign proclaiming “Home of Astronaut Ron Evans.” Millions of people knew Ron Evans as one of the six who went where no man has gone before – or since. A privileged few knew Ron Evans as the 1955-56 Commander of Nu Chapter, Sigma Nu Fraternity.

Kansas' founders were wise, practical, optimistic, and inspiring when they adopted the state's motto, usually translated as “To the Stars through Difficulties.” Given the conditions of Kansas' origins, they could not deny Difficulties. On the other hand, they did not dwell on Difficulties. Nor did they limit possibilities. In their day the actual Stars were out of human reach. They still are, but Ron Evans did orbit the Moon, and who knows what will come?

Other noted Nu alumni have reached metaphorical stars. For example, each April theatre notables and aficionados gather for the William Inge Festival held in memory of the playwright who won a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award. The second Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was Clarence Kelly. John Hadl and Mike McCormack were long-time stalwarts of the National Football League. Comedy writer Phil Hahn won an Emmy.

From this perspective the challenges facing Nu Chapter are less formidable than the difficulties of settling “Bleeding Kansas,” traveling to the Moon, or winning an Oscar, but they are difficulties.

Between 1984 and 1996 Nu Chapter was named a Rock Chapter six times. This means it was one of the top chapters in the country. So to hear in the fall of 2005 that the chapter was suspended shocked most alumni. First they asked “What happened?” Then the more important question “How can we fix it?” While the suspension was a serious setback, it is also an outstanding opportunity to come up with something special.

We want to fix it, because this Fraternity means more to us than just a place where we slept and ate during University days. At the same time we do not want to expend time and energy to return to business as usual as it was the last few years.

At a meeting on April 15, 2006, Chapter alumni unanimously elected a Board of Directors committed to re-colonizing the Chapter for the fall semester of 2007 and to take advantage of this opportunity to re-form Nu Chapter into a model for fraternities across the country, and we are planning – literally – to succeed.

To succeed, by definition, we need objectives –objectives spelled out so specifically that we know that we can measure them, see, hear, and feel when they are achieved. We also need to know the objectives of our partners in this project, Sigma Nu Fraternity and The University of Kansas. Starting with those objectives, we need to lay out specific steps for reaching them. That is how we plan to succeed, and this document spells out that plan.

With more active alumni involvement, specific objectives, and specific steps for achieving them we are optimistic. We do recognize the difficulties and will deal with them as necessary, but we will always remember we are headed for the Stars.

Thought leader

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Thought leader is a [buzzword](#) or article of [jargon](#) used to describe a [futurist](#) or [person](#) who is recognized among their [peers](#) and [mentors](#) for [innovative ideas](#) and demonstrates the confidence to promote or share those ideas as actionable distilled [insights](#) ([thinklets](#)).

Thought leadership is an increasingly vital driver of business success. The term was first coined in 1994, by [Joel Kurtzman](#), editor-in-chief of the magazine, *Strategy & Business*. The term was used to designate interview subjects for that magazine who had contributed new thoughts to business. Among the first "thought leaders," were British management thinker, [Charles Handy](#), Stanford economist [Paul Romer](#), Mitsubishi president, Minoru Makihara, and University of Michigan strategist, [C.K. Prahalad](#) and his co-author, [Gary Hamel](#), a professor at the London Business School. Since that time, the term has spread from business to other disciplines and has come to mean someone who enlivens old processes with new ideas. As a result, there are thought leaders in the sciences, humanities and even in government.

This term can also be applied to an [applied research](#) Center of Excellence, or [company](#) - often a [small business](#) that integrates [professional ethics](#) with highly-effective [leadership development](#).^[1]

According to commentators such as Elise Bauer, a distinguishing characteristic of a **thought leader** is "the recognition from the outside world that the company deeply understands its business, the needs of its customers, and the broader [marketplace](#) in which it [operates](#)."^[2]

Leadership is deliberately causing [people-driven actions](#) in a planned way to accomplish the leaders agenda. Phil Crosby^[3]

Some visions of thought leaders are "to fuel the evolution of leaders who choose to contribute to sustaining life (body, mind and spirit) in ourselves, our organizations, and our communities". With the belief "that leadership development is rooted in personal development & organizational transformation is rooted in individual transformation."^[4]

Thought leadership is also an emerging discipline in its own right. Our ability to understand its core practices, then to effectively apply them, are the keys to positioning ourselves and our companies for next level growth.^[5]

References

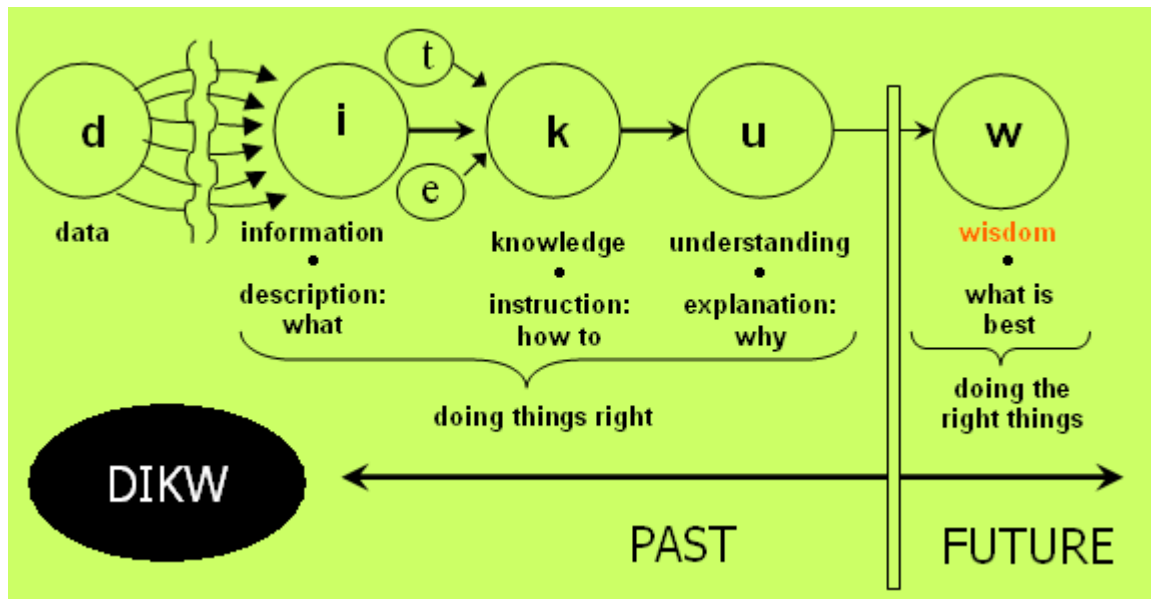
1. [^](#) [Emily Taylor Women's Resource Center](#) *MentorshipART*
2. [^](#) [Be A Thought Leader](#)
3. [^](#) [Phil Crosby: Absolutes of Leadership](#)
4. [^](#) [Heartland Circle Thought Leader Gatherings](#)
5. [^](#) [Elevation: From Thought Leadership to Market Leadership](#)

See also

- [Anticipatory thinking \(futures\)](#)
- [Futures studies](#)
- [Robert L. Gernon](#)
- [Marshall McLuhan](#)
- [Strategic management](#)
- [Faith Popcorn](#)
- [Edwin W. Rawlings](#)
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