



Using White Papers to Generate Leads

Writing Tactics and Mistakes to Avoid

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Using White Papers to Generate Leads

In the last tutorial, we looked at how to write white papers, add them to your marketing plan, and help establish your authority.

That's fine but... 'Where's the beef'?

How do you use white papers to generate leads?

Do White Papers work for Lead Generation?

On a recent consultancy project, we wrote a five-page White Paper as the sole source of lead generation. It was 1,227 words and three images. Budgets were tight; that's all we could afford. Here's how we developed it:

- Wednesday - We wrote it over two days and published it on Friday. Minimal registration was required to download it. Our priority was to collect email addresses (not street addresses and telephone numbers) and then follow-up by email.
- Tuesday - Once the registration details came in, the Sales Team followed up the lead-generation opportunities.
- Twenty days – less than three weeks after publishing the white paper, the lead flow had increased from 23 leads per month to 77. Not a bad return in a recession.

White Paper Marketing: Where to Start

So, where do we start?

White Paper marketing can create new business opportunities very fast.

Indeed, if you know your product's standout features, and know your customers' most pressing needs, then there will be a demand for the paper.

But it has to be compelling.

Is the topic interesting enough to the person – who found in the search engine results or recommended on LinkedIn - to right-click, Save, open on her computer, and read past the first page?

Don't repeat what's already been written. Write about a niche industry or service and discuss this. Give it a unique twist that other writers hadn't thought of.

How to Find Your Angle

To do this, a few points need to be highlighted:

- White papers are an investment in research, people, and time.
- White papers work well if you have a unique product — or perceived as unique — with information your clients don't have.
- White papers have a long shelf life.

Mistakes to Avoid

Writing white papers is not for everyone. Be careful about who you chose to write the paper. Remember, white papers are strategic sales documents.

Engineers can't write these. Don't ask them – it's not fair to all concerned.

They can contribute to the technical details, but you need to have an experienced writer managing the overall delivery and coordinating all the resources involved.

If, however, you do have experience in writing, it won't take a lot of your time.

Setting Targets

If you have writing expertise, then you should be able to write around 1,000 words a day.

To do this:

1. Identify the core topic.
2. Define the problem that the solution addresses.
3. Write in a light conversational style, as if you were talking to a friend.
4. Though the white paper is designed to promote your product, the sales angle is played down and hidden in the useful information you're providing to prospective clients.
5. Include charts, diagrams or matrices that compliment your text.
6. Add a short bio at the end about yourself with contact information, including 1800 telephone numbers and email address.

Once you've written the white paper, get a reliable person to check the grammar and spelling. Make sure it's clear, concise, and to the point.

Then, leave it aside for a day or two. When you return to it, you will have a little distance and be able to see where it needs adjusting.

Now, you're ready to use it for promotion—and that's what we'll talk about next month. Let me know if you've got the returns you expected by writing White papers.

Is Your White Paper Compelling?

In the IT industry, the white paper has become a popular tool for promoting a product or service. It is frequently used in tandem with case studies, and other sales collateral, to promote a company's respective product or services.

In this article, we outline a suggested format to use when writing your white paper.

Like other business documents, such as Case Study or Request For Proposals, the White Paper has an accepted format that is recognized by its readers.

Before You Start

As with all writing, you first have to define your target audience. Once you have this organized, you can then begin to tailor your arguments towards their needs.

It is important to stress this point, as many novice writers—especially those with a technical background—will focus on the low-level aspects of the software. Though this has its place, it's probably not here.

Executives, and those in the management layer, are typical white papers readers. So, write with these readers in mind.

As mentioned above, you also need to determine the topic of your white paper.

This may sound obvious but many writers overlook this and ramble from one vaguely related subject to the next.

Setting Objectives

Your white paper is intended to achieve several objectives:

- It needs to **establish you as the definitive authority** on the subject in question, i.e. that you stand head-and-shoulders above the competition in this area.
- It needs to **create awareness of a new market** trend and/or a product offering that very specifically addresses a requirement. And it demonstrates how you are uniquely qualified to achieve this objective.
- It **ensures that decision-makers select you over your competitors** by providing them with persuasive arguments backed up with trustworthy references.

How To Structure Your White Paper

There are several sections required in every white paper:

- **Introduction** — this opening section covers the high-level issues and trends in the industry (or market sector) that you are involved with. It may also include the recommendations or conclusions that you have made about this main subject matter.
- **High Level Solution** — this describes the relevant technologies at a high level, especially those you have designed and intend to promote. In this section, it is recommended that you support your arguments with tables, charts, and graphics. All of these add weight to your argument and provide a contrast to the main text.
- **Solution Details** — this explains how the service, technology, or business model works. This is the heart of the white paper, and differs from the previous section in that here we detail specific aspects of the solution.

You can also use tables, charts, and graphics for this section, with cross-references to external supporting documents if required.

- **Business benefits** — this includes areas such as ROI (return on investments), usability, adherence to international standards, and value-for money. Quotes for customers who have used your solution are always very helpful.

It demonstrates that you have authority in this field and can back it up with an authentic reference. Don't take this for granted—not all your competitors will be able to supply such endorsements.

- **Summary** — close the paper with a concise summary of your main points. As many readers will skip the entire document and just read this section, you need to summarize here the main selling points about your solution.

Here's a suggestion: write the summary as if it were an entirely standalone document. Distill the entire solution into this one page and conclude it with the single most important point that you want the reader to consider. If this section is compelling enough, you might persuade them to go back and read the entire document.

- Finally, remember that your white paper is primarily a sales document; it is not a technical manual.
- Once you have finished it, leave it aside for a few days. Then go back and read it.

Ask yourself: would I buy this solution?

Hopefully the answer is Yes.

If not, don't be too hard on yourself as it takes time to write a persuasive white paper.

Instead, identify the areas you feel are weak and go about strengthening them. Soon, you'll have a nice, sharp document that you can proudly stand over.

Best Practices and Writing Tactics

Put the conclusion at the start

The introduction is the best place to summarize your findings - including the conclusions that you have made. [[White papers are read quickly for key content.](#)]

Other publications, such as newspapers, use headlines and paragraph summaries to hold the reader's interest: white papers benefit from the same approach.

Putting the conclusion at the end of your white paper make senses, but you need to be careful as this section is often overlooked by the reader, many of whom won't read to the very end.

Think of Customers as Investors

Try to think of your customers are prospective investors.

In addition, investors are a very discriminating audience. They judge technologies, products, and ideas based on objective information and the track record of those involved. They are hungry for real facts and will dismiss unsubstantiated claims. Maintaining their attention involves building trust and offering facts that are interesting, relevant, and true.

They will look for trustworthy evidence to substantiate your claims. By providing this evidence, you not only save them time but also increase your credibility. Finding meaningful testimonials is well worth the effort.

Avoid Assumptions

Product descriptions written by product managers, web designers, or marketing directors often contain assumptions (and IT acronyms) that are understood only by their peers. You need to avoid this at all costs.

Your readers will not understand these cryptic references and feel excluded. Before getting into the details of your solution, describe the high-level requirements first.

Start with the essentials:

- Is it hardware or software?
- What are the prerequisites?
- What platform is it designed for?

- Who will use the solution?

Laser Focus on the Specifics

After providing this preliminary information, get to the main issues. If you know that your readers are, for example, technology experts then don't try to teach them about the basics. They'll just skip past these sections.

Generalities and bland repetition drives such readers away. Instead, describe specific aspects that will ring true with your audience.

Make it Memorable

It is one thing to claim your product solves a problem, but it's more convincing to describe how it does this. You need to provide evidence that your solution is better than your rivals are—and then substantiate this with, for example, benchmark tests.

Balance the Text v. Graphic Ratio

Use graphics, tables, and charts to help the reader understand your product. Graphics are ideal for illustrating the relationship between concepts, technologies, and systems.

Also, remember that the readers will tire after several pages; graphics, tables and charts serve as an alternative to the text while still maintaining their interest in the subject.

Avoid Jargon, Use Clear English

Though the IT industry is global, many readers learned English as a second language. Such readers tend to get confused by lengthy sections, complex sentences, and new buzzwords.

Instead, try to use simple, plain English. Such writing carries real power—the power to explain and convince. If the best ingredient for an effective white paper is a terrific solution to a technical problem, then the next best ingredient is great writing.

You can improve your writing by cutting out excessive wordiness and deadwood phrases and replace them with better expressions. The following is a list of the 'most wanted' culprits. The "deadwood" comes first:

- according to our data -- we find
- accordingly -- therefore, so

- after the conclusion of -- after
- ascertain the location of -- find
- by a factor of two -- two times, double, twice
- come to a conclusion -- conclude
- give consideration to -- consider, examine
- give indication of -- show, indicate, suggest
- in close proximity to -- near
- in some cases -- sometimes
- in the event that -- if
- in the near future -- soon
- in the neighborhood of -- near, about, nearly
- in view of the fact that -- because, since
- it is our opinion that -- we think
- it is possible that -- perhaps
- it is well known that -- (nothing)
- it may be said that -- (nothing)
- make inquiry regarding -- ask about, inquire about
- manner in which -- how
- not with standing the fact that -- although
- on the basis of -- from, because, by
- on the order of -- about, approximately
- present in greater abundance -- more abundant
- prior to -- before
- provided that -- if
- put an end to -- end

- reach a conclusion -- conclude
- serves the function of being -- is
- subsequent to -- after
- the question as to -- whether
- there can be little doubt that -- probably
- utilize or utilization -- use
- with reference to – about

As mentioned before, an experienced business writer will guide his or her readers through the document and avoid confusing them with acronyms, convoluted sentences, and labyrinthine paragraphs.

Simple, clear writing is concise, effective, and persuasive.

You can significantly improve the effectiveness of your business documents by adopting a clear writing style, which in turns improves your chances of winning new customers.

About Klariti

Klariti develops 'content assets' using white papers, case studies, and industry reports.

We examine, develop, and benchmark content for Government agencies and Financial Service firms to support their social media, corporate blogs, and email communications.

Our website – [Business Writing For Smart People](#) - reflects what we do. If you find something there that's interests you, drop us a line.

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