



Five Reasons White Papers Work

Why progressive companies get results with these powerful marketing tools

Every company wants to generate sales without spending a fortune. Promoting new products and battling entrenched competition are expensive, time-consuming efforts. Simply finding new leads is a challenge. More and more, companies are turning to white papers to help propel their growth.

This paper examines the benefits of white papers and why they can help boost business results to new levels.

What Are White Papers?

The term “white paper” is often misused. It appears on 30-page technical instructions and on 2-page product sheets. A white paper is actually a document that helps the reader solve a problem or make a decision. White papers are:

- ❑ Highly informative
- ❑ Written for professionals
- ❑ Persuasive without appearing to be so

White papers aren’t glossy or graphics-intensive like an ad or brochure. They are plain-looking, but the content – a rich combination of information and persuasion – makes them unique. A great white paper grabs attention at the title and makes readers feel they can’t afford not to read it.

Buyers Read White Papers

Decision-makers and subject matter experts read white papers because they provide solutions to their challenges.

A great white paper makes readers feel they can’t afford to ignore its message.

White papers provide solutions for decision-makers and subject matter experts.

Reader's challenge	White paper solution
Struggles to keep up with trends	Educates on new, innovative solutions
Needs facts to make an informed decision	Provides information to support an intelligent buying decision
Must get up to speed on a topic quickly	Is an easily accessible, efficient, subject-specific briefing tool
Has a constrained schedule and juggles many demands	Is portable – document, file or podcast – for review at the reader's convenience
Must obtain buy-in from other decision-makers or peers	Informs colleagues in a concise manner

Why White Papers Work

1. White Papers are the #1 Way Businesses Evaluate Solutions

Nearly 71% of respondents used white papers to evaluate new technology – more than any other source of information.

White papers are the dominant tools businesses use to evaluate technology and help make buying decisions.

- ⇒ In a 2007 study, nearly 71% of respondents said they used white papers in the last three months to evaluate new technology, followed by email newsletters (59%), product literature (51%), articles (50%), software downloads (50%), webcasts (39%) and case studies (29%).¹

2. White Papers Generate Qualified Leads

White paper downloads are effective lead generators.

- ⇒ Apani, a software company, started offering white paper downloads. The number of leads that registered for the download quadrupled all other

¹ Source: <http://itresources.whatis.com/document;99514/tech-research.htm>, study by CMO Council and TechTarget entitled "Technology Buying and Media Consumption Benchmarking Survey."

The number of leads quadrupled, and the number of highly qualified leads increased by 100%.

types of marketing combined. The percentage of highly qualified leads increased by 100%.²

- ⇒ When the economy started declining, a major consulting firm knew they needed to try something different to generate business. They had relied upon web-generated contacts, existing relationships, and marketing databases. The firm added white papers to the mix and contracted to syndicate their papers.³ Then they delivered their white papers proactively to prospects that met their profile. One of four downloads became a quality lead, and the \$30,000 syndication cost generated over \$600,000 in sales.

3. White Papers Help Close Sales

More than 55% of readers take action on the white paper topic.

- ⇒ VistaPrint is an online printer serving small business customers. They wanted to generate more leads for future email marketing. They offered a white paper download in exchange for registration and generated over 5,000 new leads in 60 days. *Ten percent* of those registrants converted to a sale.

10% of white paper downloads converted to a sale.

4. White Papers Help Your Business Stand Out

Sixty percent of readers confirmed that white papers establish thought leadership and credibility.

- ⇒ A small company with a new product needed to improve visibility and differentiate itself. They submitted a white paper to the organizers of a huge industry conference, who were impressed with the thought leadership expressed in the paper. They invited the company to teach a session, giving them unimagined exposure to ideal prospects.

White papers enhance visibility, establish thought leadership and build credibility among prospects you've never met.

² Case studies source: <http://www.whitepapersource.com/case-studies/>

³ For an example of white paper syndication, see <http://www.findwhitepapers.com/>

White papers enhance your visibility on the web.

- ⇒ Keywords contained in VistaPrint's white paper boosted their Google search relevancy to first-page results. Search "business cards" on Google to see their positioning.

5. White Papers Are Viral Marketing Tools

White papers are passed around more than any other marketing material – and have a long shelf life.

White papers are shared more than any other piece of marketing material. Nearly 3 in 5 technology professionals pass white papers along to colleagues and coworkers. Blogs that link to your white paper can expand the reader base exponentially.

- ⇒ A high-tech company with a limited marketing budget had an innovative, complex product. Their white paper explained the technology concepts their solution enabled. They promoted the paper inexpensively on their website. The editor of a major publication received a copy of the white paper. He passed it on again, this time to the publication's 150,000 readers.

Creating a White Paper

A great white paper can be extremely valuable, but a mediocre one is an immediate turn-off. White papers are difficult to write well. They don't simply recite features or technical facts. They combine these elements with subtle persuasion and education.

The Writer

Research proves that writing specialists produce the best white papers. Why?

- Writing good white papers requires a learning curve.
- White papers take significant time and effort.

Experience and credentials are essential traits for effective white paper writers.

- They require the elusive skill of persuasive writing.

While your marketing manager or product specialist may have the expertise you want to share, they rarely have the time, training or perspective to produce this type of document.

Skills

Writers who can produce an effective white paper are hard to find. Any company you consider to write your white papers should have the following traits:

- **White Paper Experience:** You want writers who concentrate on white papers, not ad copy or brochures. These are specialized documents, and white paper experience is essential for a quality result.
- **Industry Expertise:** Writers familiar with your industry and its jargon and nuances can get started quickly. They can spotlight the key issues, and their work requires fewer revisions.
- **Highly Credentialed Writers:** Published authors and writing educators produce quality writing. They are experienced in grabbing and keeping the reader's attention.
- **Ability to Understand Your Ideal Reader:** A writer who can "get into the head" of the ideal reader is a tremendous advantage. A professional background involving executive, technical, or subject matter expertise helps the writer produce a targeted and effective message.
- **Knowledge of How to Put Your White Paper to Work:** A white paper doesn't market itself. It's critical to work with someone who can advise you on how to get the white paper into circulation and trigger the viral marketing potential.

The benefits of white papers are continuous, long-lasting, and powerful.

Conclusion

In an increasingly competitive, sophisticated business environment, efficient marketing is paramount. White papers help:

- ❑ Generate leads
- ❑ Validate buying decisions
- ❑ Close sales
- ❑ Establish credibility and thought leadership
- ❑ Provide an automated, pro-active marketing solution

Studies prove the value of white paper marketing as a best practice. Readers are eager to find them, and pass them around. The benefits of white papers are continuous, long-lasting, and powerful. Progressive companies are moving quickly to put these powerful marketing weapons to work.

For More Information

Sundance Research is a premier provider of white papers and business copywriting. With extensive experience in technology, professional services, medical, and financial industries, their professionals bring unparalleled expertise and credentials to your critical writing needs.

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