

MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS WITH WHITE PAPERS

How to Successfully Use White Papers to Generate Sales Leads, Build Customer Loyalty, and Increase Revenues

About the Author

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By Michael J. Dowling

The use of white papers is growing at an exponential rate. In 2001, a Google search on the phrase *white paper* returned a mere 1 million responses.¹ Today a similar search generates more than 400 million hits.

Why this tremendous growth in popularity? Because businesses are realizing that white papers are one of the most powerful and cost-effective tools for boosting revenues, cultivating sales leads, and building customer loyalty. If you're not yet sure that white papers should be a key component of your marketing program, reading this paper could change your mind.

What Are White Papers?

Typically five to ten pages in length, white papers offer valuable problem-solving information to your identified target audience. They are primarily educational in nature, not self-promotional. However, their format provides a natural platform for promoting your capabilities and establishing your reputation as a subject-matter expert.

Because white papers offer useful information instead of directly soliciting business, they break through the marketplace communication overload more effectively than advertising and many other marketing techniques. Contributing to the success of your audience through white papers builds relationships, which in turn builds referrals and revenues.

White papers are at the forefront of an educational marketing revolution. Powerful enough to lure readers and able to persuade with unyielding strength, the well-written white paper is a super weapon in the marketing professional's arsenal.

Michael A. Stelzner, author,
*Writing White Papers: How to
Capture Readers and Keep Them
Engaged*

¹ Graham, G. (2001). The Art of the White Paper, http://www.gordonandgordon.com/STC_Chicago.html.

White papers can take a variety of forms, including

- **“Buzz pieces”** that describe problems faced by your target audience and offer your recommendations for solving them. This format allows you to present your approach and capabilities in a persuasive, soft-sell manner.
- **Special reports** that highlight industry trends and new developments of interest to your readers. This is an excellent way to establish your reputation as a thought leader.
- **How-to guides, checklists, and toolkits** that will help your clients and customers implement new procedures, avoid potential problems, and navigate through complex challenges.
- **Case studies** that will allow your readers to profit from the experiences of others. As you describe how you helped organizations solve their problems, you will subtly and convincingly be showcasing your capabilities.

Next to an effective website, creating a buzz piece is the best investment you can make in your business. And considering how easy it is to make, you'd be a fool not to have one.

Steve Slaunwhite, co-author,
The Wealthy Freelancer

Guidelines for Creating White Papers

If you've now decided to utilize white papers, here are a few guidelines for creating them:

- **Make sure your topic is interesting and useful to your target audience.** This seems obvious, but it's surprising how many people fail to view their subject through the eyes of their readers. Take the time to understand your readers' perspective. What issues concern them? What do they want to know? What questions are on their minds?

Some ideas to stimulate your thinking:

- Six Key Qualities to Look for When Purchasing...
- The Seven Biggest Mistakes Made by...
- Eight Questions You Need to Answer before You...
- Eleven Questions You Should Ask when Buying a...

- A Checklist for Avoiding Costly Mistakes When...
- How to Save Time and Money When...
 - **Write about your area of expertise.** Remember that white papers establish you as a subject matter expert (SME).
 - **Offer valuable information to your readers.** When you give your readers something useful, they will appreciate your thoughtfulness. Consequently, they are likely to give you their loyalty and ultimately their business.
 - **Create a title that captures your readers' attention** and a first page that holds their interest and motivates them to keep reading. "Marketing professionals refer to the '3-30-3' rule," says Michael Stelzner in *Writing White Papers: How to Capture Readers and Keep Them Engaged*. "If you tickle the interest of readers in the first 3 seconds, they will allocate another 30 seconds to read further. If your message is relevant and interesting, they will spend 3 more minutes with your white paper. Your goal is to get readers into the 30-second zone, and the only way to do that is with an excellent title."
 - **Attach a well-written bio** at the end of the document that briefly describes your services and provides your contact information.
 - **Make sure your white papers are professionally written and attractively presented.** If you plan to write your own, I recommend reading Michael A. Stelzner's *Writing White Papers*. To avoid major embarrassments and lost sales, be sure to have a professional editor review your white papers before you publish them.

High-quality white papers focus on problems and provide solutions. The goal is to build affinity with your readers by focusing on their problems. If they can relate to your writing, they'll be eager to keep reading so they can discover how to solve their problems.

Michael A. Stelzner, author of *Launch: How to Quickly Propel Your Business beyond the Competition*.

How to Use White Papers

Use white papers in a variety of ways to attract new business and increase the loyalty of existing customers. Here are a few ideas:

- **Enclose them with your quotations and proposals.**

They're a low-key, high-quality way to broadcast your credentials.

- **Offer them as downloads on your website** to generate leads and influence purchasing decisions. As a bonus, the additional content attached to your site can boost your rankings with search engines.

- **Offer them in your e-newsletters and in the signature block of your emails.** Readers who download your white papers will be favorably influenced to take the actions you prescribe, and some may forward your white papers to others.

- **Send them to your prospects, clients, or customers** as email attachments and via regular mail. Since you are giving rather than soliciting, your marketing efforts will be viewed with appreciation rather than resistance.

- **Hand them out at talks, seminars, and workshops you give.** In addition to augmenting your presentations, they can help cultivate relationships and increase business.

- **Use your white papers as foundational material for your books, articles, and website copy.** Leveraging their use increases their cost-effectiveness.

Serve your readers by giving them something of value, and they will give you their loyalty and ultimately their business.

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Michael J Dowling produces clear, concise, creative, and convincing books, white papers, and other print communications for individuals and organizations. He specializes in ghostwriting, editing, book shepherding, and self- publishing.

Mike's clients include successful business leaders, executive coaches, professional consultants, entrepreneurs, and other professionals. By offering turn-key services from idea conceptualization to book publication and distribution, he makes the writing and self-publishing process understandable, enjoyable, cost-effective, and time-efficient for his clients,

Mike has an MBA from Columbia Business School, where he was one of three Harriman Scholars. He is the author or ghostwriter of numerous books and articles.

Learn more about Mike's services and read samples of his writing and testimonials from his clients at <http://www.michaeljdowling.com>.

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