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White paper marketing tips

How to use white papers to attract and educate prospects while building your mailing list

Michael Stelzner wrote the book on white paper marketing



Michael Stelzner,
author of
[Writing White Papers](#)

Michael Stelzner is an expert on white papers. He's been preparing them for years.

Michael was a guest on one of my recent Guerrilla Marketing Association teleconferences, [details](#). He discussed his book, [Writing White Papers: How to Capture Readers and Keep Them Engaged](#).

His site, www.writingwhitepapers.com, contains his [blog](#) and information about white papers. Another one of his sites, www.whitepapersource.com, offers a discussion [forum](#) and numerous articles.

What are white papers?

White papers are short, formatted, reports read by decision-makers before they purchase complex products and services.

White papers are a cross between articles and brochures. Like articles, white papers are intended to educate readers, although they often contain product information.

Unlike brochures, though, product information is limited to the last few pages.

White paper characteristics

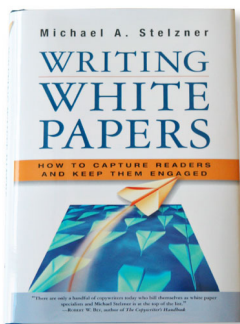
Here are some of the ways white papers differ from other types of marketing:

- *Perspective.* White papers focus on prospects and their needs, rather than product details. Their success is based on credibility and an obvious affinity, or empathy, for the prospect's frustrations and goals.
- *Buying information.* White papers help prospects make intelligent buying decisions by showing what to look for and how to identify quality and value.
- *History.* White papers often review the origins of a problem and previously attempted solutions. This provides context for the suggested solution and displays an understanding of the prospect's needs.
- *Story.* Research and interviews dramatize and add human interest to white papers.

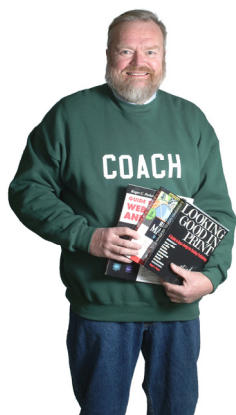
Length and formatting

White papers are usually limited to 12 pages, or less. Their conciseness contributes to their effectiveness communicating with busy decision-makers.

*White papers
attract and
educate
qualified
prospects*



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Careful formatting is crucial for white paper success. They must be easy to read and project an image consistent with the firm's other marketing materials.

How are white papers used?

Some white papers are used to communicate technical information to non-technical decision-makers. Others are intended for technical audiences. Some are hybrids. In all cases, conciseness and education pave the way for later marketing.

Promotion and distribution

Firms promote white papers on website home pages and blog sidebars. White papers frequently provide the core incentive for pay-per-click search engine marketing.

White papers can be downloaded from websites or sent as e-mail attachments, following registration. They also can be printed and mailed to, or handed to, the press and important prospects.

The right choice depends on the firm's goals, target market, product complexity, and the length of the sales cycle.

Who should prepare them?

Often, the best individuals to prepare white papers are not those involved in a new product's research and development.

Insiders frequently suffer from the "curse of knowledge." This occurs when technical individuals write about issues they are familiar with and address every day.

Outsiders approach topics from a fresh perspective. This helps them ask the "obvious" questions that prospects often

ask, but a firm's employees may take for granted.

In addition, outsiders can perform time-consuming interviews, research, and writing without interfering with an employee's day-to-day responsibilities.

Contents and sequence

Michael's book provides a road map for success. You learn what should be included in white papers, and in what order.

More important, you also learn *what you should leave out*, (or briefly describe at the on the last few pages). It's a guide that provides assistance and examples for newcomers plus resources for those looking for advanced ideas.

WRITING WHITE PAPERS is for both those who create white papers for themselves and those who prepare them for clients.

Michael Stelzner also offers seminars for those interested in learning more. [Details.](#)

Where else can you get help?

After visiting Michael's sites and reading his book, download my new free report, [White Paper Design that Sells: 16 Easy-To-Implement Best Practices](#). It's focused specifically on white paper readability.

Help choosing topics is available from my [Content Catalyst](#). It contains over 400 ideas for articles, blogs, newsletters, teleconferences, speeches, workshops, and—of course—white papers.

[E-mail me](#), or call me at 603-742-9673, for personal assistance or more information.