

The Business Value of White Papers for Lead Generation in Content Marketing



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The Truth About White Papers

White Papers work. To achieve the leading marketing objectives of raising brand awareness, identifying leads, educating customers and driving sales; White Papers work.

They are the unsexy marketing strategy that often gets overlooked, yet over three-quarters of top business decision makers use White Papers to research and make business purchasing decisions (*Source: 2015 DemandGen Report*).

The reason for this reliance is that they educate the reader on an industry issue, an available opportunity, or a new product. Crucially, this information is supported by hard facts and delivered without bias.

The information a White Paper holds is a valuable asset that supports the reader while making an important decision that could affect an entire company. Business buyers and top decision makers deal with kind of this pressure on a regular basis, which is why they appreciate White Papers.

“Over three-quarters of top business decision makers use White Papers to research and make business purchasing decisions”

Source: 2015 DemandGen Report

Buyer Insight

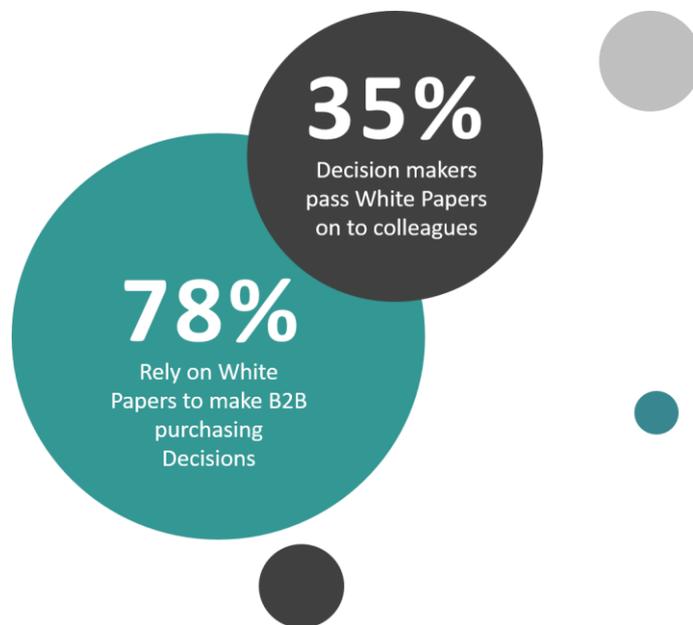
White Papers offer statistics and information without the pressure of sales targets demanding a response. This lack of forced interaction means they are digested at the reader’s convenience, making them extremely popular with the target audience.

These figures from industry commentators highlight just how popular they are:

- When business buyers begin the process of researching a B2B purchasing decision, the first step is a general web search (*Source: 2015 DemandGen Report*)
- Consistently in business surveys, 80 percent of users reported they were willing to register online for a White Paper, the highest of any content offered (*Source: GillCommunity*)
- 35% of top decision makers said that they pass White Papers on to colleagues (*Source: 2015 DemandGen Report*)
- This sharing means that an incredible 78% of buyers use White Papers to research and make B2B purchasing decisions (*Source: 2015 DemandGen Report*)
- 67% of B2B buyers rely more on content than they did a year ago (*Source: 2015 DemandGen Report*)

What These Figures Mean to Business:

1. Offering an informative White Paper on your website as part of a content marketing strategy means that your product data is in the first place business buyers look when making a purchasing decision
2. Registering for a White Paper means the prospect is already invested in the paper even before reading it, increasing its potential impact, as well as providing you with a lead's valuable contact information
3. Your target market shares the paper amongst itself, lending a higher value to the paper since an incredible 97% of B2B buyers chose 'peer referrals' as the highest point of trust when seeking opinion regarding a B2B purchasing decision *(Source: 2015 DemandGen Report)*
4. The overwhelming majority of business buyers rely on White Papers for making purchases
5. This figure is growing



Source: 2015 DemandGen Report

Why Are White Papers So Successful?

The success of White Papers stems from the value they offer the target audience and the benefits enjoyed by the authoring company.

The days of the sales pitch are over

Now more than ever before, people avoid intrusive advertising and react negatively to aggressive sales approaches. One of the most important aspects of selling to businesses is one that many marketers forget; business buyers are people too.

Professional White Papers nurture trust by educating potential customers about your area of expertise and potential opportunities without pushing a product or service. They offer something of value. Information.

White Papers save the client from having to find the information themselves

Deadlines, targets and expectations take their toll on us all, in life and business. So, when presented with an impartial business document discussing a topic, highlighting a risk or presenting an opportunity, we take notice. These information assets contain not just data-supported facts, but the time and effort they took to find and compile them.

Data is valuable. So is time. And you are giving this to your audience for free.

People give you their email address

White Papers sit near the top of the typical sales funnel, with the goal of getting leads to identify themselves. An honest and descriptive title on a relevant topic is enough to convince prospects to provide their name and email address in exchange for a downloadable White Paper.

Getting this information means the paper has done its job. Now you can call in the sales team to follow through on the lead.

“These information assets contain not just data-supported facts, but the time and effort they took to find and compile them.”

You will be seen as an authority in your industry

White Papers demonstrate thought leadership in the act of writing an informative business document about a particular topic. By avoiding the desire to 'sell' the product or service in the paper, this information asset provides value to prospects, nurturing a relationship of trust.

Every time that person thinks about this topic, your business name will be tightly associated with that thought because you have proven that you are an authority on this subject. Over time, this fact turns customers into brand advocates that inspire referrals.

Low cost, high perceived value

At its core, a White Paper represents digestible, actionable data that can be downloaded by prospects at will. We have already seen how many decision makers share White Papers with colleagues (35%), adding a valuable trust factor to organic distribution.

Once written, it is incredibly low-cost to distribute White Papers via a website. And depending on the topic, they can be used in multiple campaigns over many years. A relevant, well-written White Paper pays for itself many times over, and keeps on giving.

\$20 Million of Software Sales Using a “Special Report”

As VP Marketing for a firm selling barcoding software for Enterprise Resource Planning systems in the early 2000s, Gordon Graham sought the help of copywriting master Ivan Levison. Together, the pair wrote a detailed paper titled “How to Unlock the Power of Your ERP System” that highlighted the many benefits of the data collection system they were selling.

That little book drove sales of over \$20 million worth of software over the next two years by offering relevant and relatable information to prospects, helping the firm stand out from the crowd.

Mr Graham later became a full-time, independent White Paper writer.

Source: ThatWhitePaperGuy.com

Additional Benefits of White Papers

- Promote your brand and attract prospective buyers
- Educate prospects on the unique value of your product or service to their business
- Provide a comprehensive understanding of your company's competitive value within your market
- Support the sales team with a powerful document that strengthens their position
- Help to raise capital by providing fact-based information to prospective investors
- Ensure all employees have a firm understanding of the company's products and services, and their value in the market

Scoop.it's Content Marketing Strategy

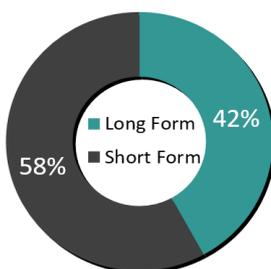
Content marketing platform Scoop.it documented their content marketing strategy, tracking the time spent creating content and the leads that content generated.

The results covered Long Form copy (White Papers, eBooks) and Short Form copy (Blog Posts, Curated Content Posts).

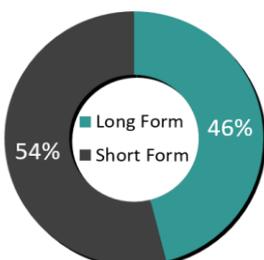
These benefits to prospects and authors make White Papers a core component of content marketing strategy, but they should be supported by other content marketing techniques. Blogging regularly about the topic, for example, is a proven way to raise brand awareness.

Be sure to offer multiple inbound channels to ensure you provide something of value to all types of audiences. But, a targeted White Paper will be a powerful addition to your marketing toolset, allowing you to capitalise on the current successes of content marketing techniques.

Time



Leads Generated



Content Marketing for Business Growth

“It is better to be the content that that holds a reader’s attention than sit on a page opposite the content.”

Over the last few years, content marketing has emerged as the preferred method for engaging customers. The technique involves the publishing of non-interruptive, branded, informative content (such as blog posts, articles, eBooks and White Papers) to engage customers and drive inbound traffic.

The idea is that it is better to be the content that that holds a reader’s attention than sit on a page opposite the content, as is the case in many traditional marketing techniques. Providing customers with engaging content builds trust to nurture long-term relationships.

According to a Curata study, 76% of marketers increased their investment in content marketing in 2015, keeping the content marketing software market on track to grow to \$32.3 billion in 2018 (*Source: 2014 IDC research*). This surge represents the pursuit of the top three content marketing objectives;

- Drive Sales and/or Leads
- Engage Customers/Buyers/Influencers
- Boost Brand Awareness

Source: Curata Study

These objectives align with the benefits that White Papers offer. In fact, my copywriting mentor and the man who taught me how to write White Papers, Len Smith from Copywriting-On-Demand, boasts these response rates from a selection of his White Papers:

Len Smith’s White Paper Response Rates

Consumer Credit Act.....	24% response
Traceability in Food Processing.....	19% response
Flexible Working in the Legal Sector.....	25% response
Evaluating Clinical Trials Systems.....	18% response
IT in Shipping and Freight.....	20% response

A White Paper’s ability to get leads to identify themselves offers a framework for achieving business objectives. However, many companies struggle with the burden of creating regular, quality content for marketing endeavours.

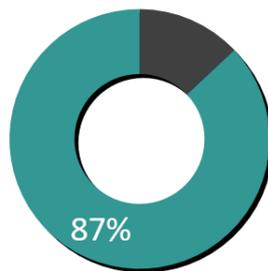
The Barriers to Effective Content Marketing

According to multiple studies into common challenges associated with content marketing, two issues come up time and time again:

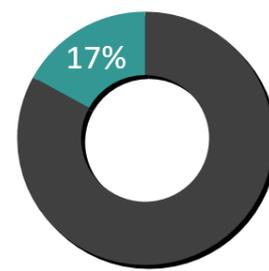
Producing truly engaging content, and a lack of time and resources to create content are major concerns for marketing professionals today.

“The risk with this approach is that engineers often tend to get caught up in the technical details, alienating a non-technical audience.”

Marketers That Struggle to Produce Engaging Content



Content Created by Outsourced Staff



Source: Forrester B2B Marketers Survey, Curata Study

According to Forrester’s survey, 87% of B2B marketers say they struggle to produce content that truly engages their buyers, yet only 17% of content is created by outsourced staff, according to Curata’s related study.

These findings show that the vast majority of marketing content gets written by internal team members who may not necessarily be writers at all, potentially compromising on the effectiveness of the papers.

This is especially true in the IT industry where the common misconception is that the engineer or technician who worked on the technology should be the person to write about it. The risk with this approach is that engineers often tend to get caught up in the technical details, alienating a non-technical audience.

Writing is certainly a craft that can be learned, but few employers can afford staff members the time to learn the necessary skills of writing a technically-advanced paper under the constant pressure to deliver work in today’s busy office environment.

The Business Benefits of Outsourcing White Papers

A professional White Paper copywriter understands how to achieve the underlying objective for each particular client within the framework of an optimised information asset. No two white papers are the same, but they can deliver more impact by following a proven format.

Investing in a professional copywriter to plan, structure and write these business documents offers a fast route to maximising the paper's potential. These properly executed White Papers help businesses generate more leads and, ultimately, make more money.

White Papers are knowledgeable, factual and reliable, in the same way the authoring company hopes to be perceived. Respecting these guidelines when producing a White Paper will go a long way to strengthening that perception, and professional White Paper copywriters do this as a habit.

By blending White Paper writing experience with the expertise and knowledge provided by the client in that particular niche, professionally written White Papers achieve outstanding results, and should be one pillar of your business' marketing endeavours to achieve commercial objectives.

“White Papers are knowledgeable, factual and reliable, in the same way the authoring company hopes to be perceived.”

Summary

White Papers are a powerful sales lead generation tool offering information assets that inform business purchasing decisions, and their popularity is growing among top decision makers and business buyers. They are an important part of a comprehensive content marketing strategy for increasing brand awareness and driving sales.

High-quality White Papers also lend credibility to establish your company as a thought leader in your industry, building trust between you and your customers to encourage long-term relationships.

Despite these benefits, many companies are missing this opportunity by getting internal team members or engineers to write professional copy, losing the subtle nuances of what makes White Papers such a powerful resource.

However, outsourcing this writing to a professional copywriter with White Paper experience is an investment that can help your paper stand out above the noise and enhance the White Paper's impact in achieving sales targets.

We Write Words: For business communications

We Write Words is a business communications consultancy built on honesty and a deep satisfaction in using the right words in the right way. In particular, We Write Words helps tech companies tell their stories to nurture ongoing business relationships.

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