

Mini eBook Series

# White Paper Marketing:

Intelligent Persuasion without Hype



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# WHITE PAPER MARKETING: INTELLIGENT PERSUASION WITHOUT HYPE

## INTRODUCTION

### CONTROVERSIAL RESEARCH PAYS OFF

How do you stand out when competitors are plenty but you refuse to compete on price alone?

That was the challenge facing Montreal-based email filtering solution provider, Vircom. In a flash of genius, the company decided to publish a white paper entitled, *Why Spammers Spam*.

As white papers go, it was unique in that it consisted of direct, unedited quotes from a handful of email spammers the company interviewed.

But like any white paper, the piece was well researched and more informative rather than promotional. In a groundbreaking undertaking, the Vircom team reached out to spammers and engaged them in an honest, authentic dialog about their work.

They said:

*Our goal for this paper was not to criticize or judge what these people do or how they conduct their business. Instead, we wanted to gain a unique window on the world of spamming; to shed the cloak of mystery regarding who spammers really are... and Why Spammers Spam.<sup>1</sup>*

The white paper proved to be controversial, and it paid off.

Consider these results:<sup>2</sup>

- Over 2,200 downloads



- Major media coverage
- Sales worth \$96,500

In addition, Vircom came to be recognized as an authority in the field. They became the go-to source for journalists.

“Our white papers have given us a very solid relationship with journalists who see us as experts on certain topics,” marketing manager François Bourdeau said in a previous interview.<sup>3</sup>

Vircom's experience demonstrates the power of white papers in positioning and promoting a business by embarking on research and providing objective information.

It's a power that you, too, can harness in your marketing.

## WHITE PAPER MARKETING 101

A white paper is a persuasive document, but unlike other marketing materials, it's more informative, educational, and objective than promotional. It accomplishes this by providing research and information.

White papers have been described as "a crossbreed of a magazine article and a brochure."<sup>4</sup> It's common for white papers to focus on a problem and present the product as the best solution for it--in an objective, hype-free way.

White papers are popular in B2B markets, where purchasing decisions are made by several people who need to support such decisions with facts. In B2C, the role of white papers is fulfilled by short reports, eBooks, and even web articles.

Because white papers rely on research and objectivity, many writers find them intimidating to write. However, white paper creation does not have to be daunting, as you'll learn in this eBook.

## HISTORY

The term "white paper" or "white book" was first used by the British government to refer to an official document that explains policy. It refers to the color of the document's cover (to distinguish it from a "blue book"). A famous example is the Churchill White Paper of 1922.<sup>5</sup>



As its history implies, a white paper is persuasive, but it isn't promotional. It makes an argument for why a certain course of action is the best--and supports it with research and data.

Because they need to be backed with research and facts, white papers can be more intimidating to write than other types of marketing content. However, if you keep in mind the goal and tone of a white paper, then you'll be in good shape!

More on that later.

## BENEFITS OF A WHITE PAPER

Selling may be a possible outcome, but it should not be the goal of a white paper. Nevertheless, a white paper brings many benefits, including:

- **Credibility.** A white paper positions your company as an authority in your field. This can make you and your company the go-to source for solutions and answers in your industry.
- **Lead Generation.** White papers are typically given away in exchange for contact information. This helps you attract people who are interested in the solution you offer. People who read white papers are usually considered "warm" leads. They are highly motivated to solve a problem and are shopping around for a solution.
- **Exposure.** A good white paper gets shared around. People talk about it. As in Vircom's experience, this can lead to media coverage and exposure.
- **Sales.** Even though white papers aren't intended to close a sale, they can be enough to push someone over the fence and purchase your product.

Some marketers worry that white papers are too technical, long, or boring to interest readers. It's true that, to the general public, your white paper is probably as dry as cardboard. But to the serious buyer who's looking for the solution you offer, your white paper can make for riveting reading!

The numbers prove it.

## WHITE PAPER MARKETING BY THE NUMBERS

- In a survey of B2B buyers, the top 3 most requested content formats are white papers (78%), case studies (73%) and webinars (67%).<sup>6</sup>

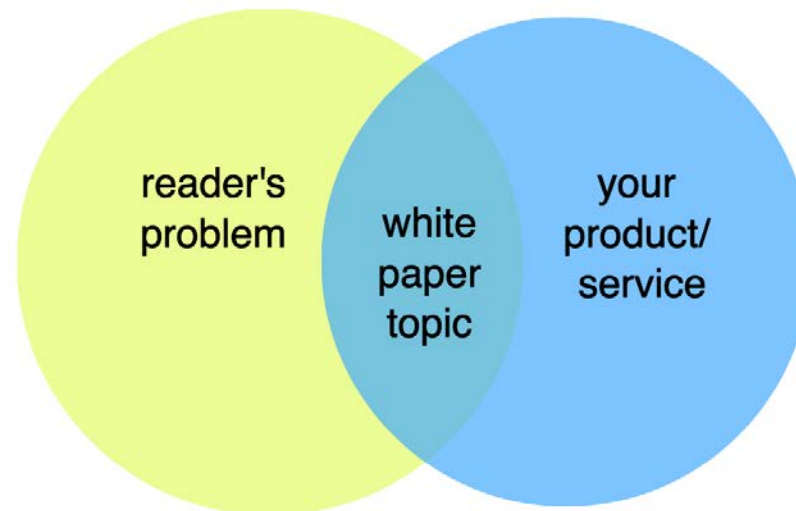


- According to the DemandGen Report–2016 Content Preferences Survey, the most popular types of content used to make B2B purchasing decisions are white papers (82%), webinars (78%), case studies (73%), eBooks (67%), and blog posts (66%).<sup>7</sup>
- In Eccolo Media’s 2010 B2B Technology Collateral Survey, 76% of respondents said they read a white paper to help them evaluate a technology purchase.<sup>8</sup>
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents also said white papers were moderately to extremely influential in their decision-making process.<sup>9</sup>
- White papers also top the types of content B2B buyers are most likely to share with their colleagues (79%), followed by webinars (68%), and infographics (67%).<sup>10</sup>
- On average, a well-written white paper takes around 40 hours to complete.<sup>11</sup>

## WHITE PAPER MARKETING QUICK TIPS

### SUBJECT MATTER

White papers cover the intersection between an important problem your readers experience, and a service or product your offer.



CoSchedule advises:

*Start by asking a few questions: Which problems are top priority? Consider starting with ones that are most pressing or timely. Which problems can I tie back into my business? ...Find ideas that align your goals with your audience's. What are we experts on? If you have deep knowledge or expertise on an area you're known for, a white paper can help reinforce that perception.<sup>12</sup>*

## tone

White papers are more formal and academic in tone than other marketing materials. Blog posts use the same language and tone you would use at the water cooler. In contrast, white papers use the same language and tone you would use in the board room. It's business-appropriate, but still straight to the point and clear.

## structure

According to the Purdue Online Writing Lab, the typical structure for a white paper is as follows:<sup>13</sup>

### **Background/Problems**

Give general background information on a specific issue from your readers' perspective. Describe the problem from their point of view and explain why it's important for them to address the problem.

### **Solution**

Propose your solution, which should tie into a product or service you provide. Remember, though, that the white paper isn't meant to be an advertisement for your business. You can strike a balance by describing the solution in broad strokes or general terms, such as by focusing on the technology or process, rather than your branded solution.

### **Advertisement**



Relate the problem and solution to your product or service. This is where you can mention your specific offering that directly relates to solving your readers' problem. Again, don't make it overly 'salesy' by offering more information instead of directly asking for the sale (e.g., "Book a consultation with one of our product experts" vs "Order today!").

## **Conclusion**

Wrap up the white paper and enhance your readers' understanding. Reinforce the importance of the problem and why the solution you offer is the best one. Remind the reader how they can get more information when they are ready.

## **References/Works Cited**

Cite research sources to back up the information you provide. Don't draw statistics out of thin air, but provide proof for your assertions by sharing your sources.

Of course, the above is only a general guide. You may change the structure of your white papers, depending on your target readers and topic.

## **FORMAT**

As with any other marketing material, format your white paper for easy readability, branding, and professionalism. Use images, graphics, and illustrations to make concepts more understandable and memorable. Professional photographs can also enhance the impact and credibility of your white paper.

## **LENGTH**

White papers usually vary in length from 4 to 25 pages.<sup>14</sup> Go shorter than that and you'll end up with a thin white paper without much substance. Any longer, and you'll risk losing your readers' attention.

## **NEW TO WHITE PAPER MARKETING?**

### **TRY THIS QUICK EXERCISE TO GET STARTED**

Set aside at least 30 minutes to come up with a list of possible topics for your white paper. Follow these steps:





1. Who are you writing the white paper for? Write your answer on a sheet of paper or white board for future reference. Be as specific as possible. If you have a customer avatar or persona, review your avatar's description and keep them in mind.
2. What problems do you want to solve for your reader? List your answers.
3. What areas do you have specific knowledge and expertise on?
4. Highlight the topics that appear on both lists (your answers to questions 2 and 3).
5. Out of the highlighted topics, which ones have you already conducted research about? What topics would be easy for you to research? Make those your top priority for writing a white paper.
6. Decide: Who will write the white paper? Will it be somebody in your company? Or will you hire someone to do it?

## MOVING FORWARD WITH WHITE PAPER MARKETING

White papers are one of the most in-demand, influential, and shared marketing pieces. If you are in the B2B space, you need to make white papers an important part of your marketing arsenal.

Of course, white papers take time to create and are not the easiest marketing pieces to write. However, the investment you make to develop and publish high-quality white papers will pay off in the form of increased credibility and authority, higher-quality leads, exposure, and even sales.

**Do you need help getting started with white papers? MintCopy can help. We also provide search engine-optimized blog posts, as well as copywriting, web content, email marketing pieces, and news releases that are easy to read and wonderful to share. Contact us to explore how we can make content marketing easier for you.**

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