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5 Reasons People Like Technology White Papers

By Christine Taylor

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A good white paper is a paper that makes you look good.

You look good when your white paper makes sense, when it's readable, when it concentrates on benefits and examples, and when it's easy to get. Here's why:

Reason #1. Many people would rather die than talk to a sales representative right off the bat, but they will read a white paper. When people start researching a product, they are not prepared to talk to a salesperson. They have no idea if the product is for them, or if they even need the technology at all. They'll also be resistant to new and innovative technologies. Well-written, benefit-laden white papers will qualify your product to the reader, and qualify the reader to you at the next stage in the sales cycle.

Reason #2. White papers build a bridge between the prospect and your organization's salespeople. When the salesperson does call, it's not out of the blue. If a user has downloaded a white paper, there is an established connection between user interest and your company. The call can even be welcome if the customer has more questions and is interested in moving forward.

Reason #3. White papers are simple to host on the Web, where people can easily download and read them. In addition to your own company Website, there are numerous sites that host white papers and make it easy for prospects to download the paper. Many companies take this opportunity to capture reader information, including if the reader wants to be contacted. If they do request contact, for heaven's sake contact them! They are coming highly qualified.

Reason #4. You're not just reaching prospective customers with white papers, you're also reaching journalists. Or you should be. This is why you should always include a solid technical section in a white paper: journalists doesn't want to download a white paper and find a brochure, it makes them cranky. But if you deliver a valuable white paper, the journalist is far more likely to speak well of you and your product. (This, of course, is the essence of media relations.)

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Reason #5. And speaking of journalists, what do they do when they pick up or receive expensive press kits? They throw them away, but they do keep valuable information like booklets and white papers. As a senior editor and editor-in-chief for data storage magazines, I can't tell you how many beautiful and pricey press kits I picked up, then threw away. What did I keep? White papers. Who did I think of when I was writing a story on that technology? The company that wrote the white paper.

The CLEAR Process

All white papers need to combine good writing, good structure, and clear technical explanations — high level or not, depending on purpose and audience — and case studies. The process is CLEAR: Clarify the problem List your technology's features Educate your customers on benefits Add proof points Restate your case

People like technology white papers if the paper is clear, useful, readable and available. Make sure your white papers fit the bill with the CLEAR process, or call a professional white paper writer for your next project.

Christine Taylor is president of Keyword Writing, which helps marketing and PR pros leverage their relationships with technology clients. E-mail her at

, call her at

760-249-6071, or check out Keyword's Website at

How Can a White Paper Support Sales and Marketing?

By Christine Taylor

A white paper supports PR, marketing and sales because it works for all levels of decision makers. Engineers and executives may not be too impressed by brochures, but they are impressed by well-written white papers. (The same thing goes for trade journal articles more about that in a subsequent piece.)

Good white papers sell products because they pack a lot of useful information into a clear and readable structure. Warning — dont take any old brochure or product brief, print it on 8-1/2x11" paper and call it a white paper. Decision-makers hate that, dont let this be you! Good marketing white papers contain both technical and marketing sections in a balanced format, and then throw in some other great stuff. A good white paper may start with an executive summary my general rule is a 5+ page paper needs one but it will follow the same structure as below, abbreviated to one page.

White papers should include:

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1) Throw down the challenge glove. Describe the pain the prospect is experiencing. (That you can help with, anyway!) Describe the problem from their standpoint, and be sure you know what that problem is.

2) Talk about how your technology will solve their problem. Bore in on the technology behind the product and how it will make their lives easier. Be sure to include some technical detail for the engineers and technology journalists who are sure to read it. (And who are sure to be annoyed if it lacks detail.) Many marketing white papers fail because they don't include technical sections, usually due to one of two reasons:

Extreme paranoia regarding proprietary knowledge. Shoot, no one is asking you to include the blueprints. But if you won't tell your customers what you're selling because you're afraid your competitors will find out, I suggest that you are not ready for the marketplace.

Uncertain writer. If the writer doesn't know the background technology, they can't write about it. Find an experienced technology writer and give them the information they need. (If necessary, professionals will understand the need for signing an NDA. Just don't try to get them to dump their other clients.)

3) Get specific on product benefits. This section combines with the technology section and includes ways that the product meets the challenge. You can also use this section to contrast your approach with other technologies, especially if your product is innovative. We all know the sad fate of disruptive technologies, but readers do want to know what your product does differently, how it does it, and why it does it better.

4) Push a positive return on investment. ROI has always been a big deal, and with reason. If you have great hard cost numbers, terrific don't hesitate to use them. Longer white papers have room for graphs and charts, but even shorter ones can refer to positive ROI. Newer ROI analysis methods factor in soft

costs employee time, improved infrastructure, etc. so don't hesitate to talk about those too.

5) Add some case studies. Actual case studies with actual customers are ideal, but if you can't mention customer names (common in the financial world), it's fine to speak more generally. A Fortune 100 finance company recently deployed

6) Conclude with how great your product is and contact information. Here's where you can use the marketing mottoes, just keep it to 1–2 paragraphs. And include your contact information!

Well-written white papers have lots of good uses. Here's a run-down: Sell a product its ultimate purpose, of course Differentiate product from competitors Place company in leadership role Promote bylined author as a subject matter expert. (Which they should be, even if a professional writer actually wrote the thing.) Help journalists research their stories (note: journalists are not helped by sales brochures)

There's a lot that goes into creating a useful white paper. For your next project, consider hiring an experienced writer to create a marketing white paper that just keeps on selling. Talk about good ROI!

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Call Christine Taylor today at 760-249-6071 or e-mail her at chris@keywordcopy.com, and start that white paper selling! Christine Taylor Keyword Writing P.O. Box 3499 Wrightwood, CA 92397

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