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# Fundamentals of White Paper Writing



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55%

of B2B buyers prefer white papers to other forms of content

White papers are staples of today's B2B tech marketing. In fact, nearly half of all content marketers use white papers in their marketing plans<sup>1</sup> as part of their content plan because 55% of buyers B2B buyers prefer them to other forms of content, evidenced by the fact that over 40% will share a good white paper with other members of the buying committee<sup>2</sup>.

These essential assets provide useful information for readers seeking to understand an issue, solve a problem, or do their jobs better without the typical hype of other marketing materials. But not all white papers are created equal.

Here are five fundamental rules of effective white paper writing to get the most mileage from your white papers — whether you're looking to create more buzz, generate more leads, or accelerate your sales process.

## RULE

# 1

### Don't make your white paper overly promotional

Buyers don't want to hear a sales pitch; they want to learn something. In fact, research shows that nearly half of all B2B buyers put the least amount of trust in vendor-branded content<sup>3</sup> and 92% of B2B buyers don't trust the promises businesses make because their content doesn't provide enough insight or additional valuable information<sup>4</sup>.

The best white papers educate prospective customers by introducing and explaining a specific challenge they may not have fully understood, the best approaches to overcoming it, and what the ideal solution should look like. Since nearly the average B2B buyer consumes 13 different pieces of content in their purchase process<sup>5</sup>, it's imperative that your paper deliver some additional value that competitors' pieces don't.

So, while a white paper is intended as a persuasive essay, it shouldn't be a sales-heavy piece pushing your company's particular product or service. That's why you have a website, a blog, and actual sales support materials.

<sup>1</sup> "B2B Content Marketing — Budgets, Benchmarks, and Trends North America." Content Marketing Institute. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Paunovic, Goran. "The Most Effective Content Marketing Tool Your Strategy May Be Missing." Forbes.com. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> "2020 Content Preferences Study." DemandGenReport.com. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Rodriguez, Michael. "Trust And Transparency Becoming Essential To Engage Current B2B Buyers, According To New Sirius Decisions Research." DemandGenReport.com. 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Sterling, Greg. "B2B buyers consume an average of 13 content pieces before deciding on a vendor." ChiefMarTech.com. 2020.

48%

of B2B buyers want content that directly addresses or solves a business problem<sup>6</sup>

**RULE**

2

## Don't use "Useless Crap Paragraphs" (UCPs)

Our good friends at [The Boot Factor](#) came up with this term and allowed us to borrow it. UCPs are incredibly common at the beginning of white papers and often involve thanking the reader for downloading the paper or detailing a company's commitment to their customers. While both are nice sentiments, they're also distracting to the reader and fail to add any value to the business insight or lesson you're trying to convey. Leave the thank yous and corporate boilerplate for your landing pages and email campaigns. Instead, focus the beginning of your white paper on capturing the reader's attention with relevant or poignant statements about the topic you're going to cover and give them a reason to care.

**RULE**

3

## Make sure you're actually solving a real problem

Creating content for content's sake is rarely a good idea or smart use of your marketing dollars. It's also a terrible waste of your reader's time and a surefire way to turn them against you. Maybe not outwardly, but they'll definitely hold it against you and your brand.

Often, white paper subject matter reflects topics a company wants to talk about instead of trends and issues that matter to prospects.

Enlist the help of your salespeople, customer support team, and even your social media marketers to zero in on issues that matter. No one has time to write a paper that won't be read; neither do you. Make sure your paper addresses an actual need from the people you're hoping to attract.

**RULE**

4

## Do NOT use first person in your writing

It's easy to believe that using first-person pronouns like "I" and "we" seem friendly and approachable. The reality, though, is that B2B buyers are serious professionals who expect to gain useful, credible information from your piece in a professional business context.

The casual tone of the first person language betrays that professional context and undermines the authority you're trying to develop. Depending on your company's brand guidelines, you may be able to use second-person (you, your, yours) language in your papers, but using the third person is almost always a better choice for professional business writing.



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<sup>6</sup> Sterling, Greg. "B2B buyers consume an average of 13 content pieces before deciding on a vendor." ChiefMarTech.com. 2020.

RULE  
5

## Use and cite third-party sources often

The effectiveness of a white paper depends heavily on the credibility of the company putting the paper out to the public. Few things highlight integrity and expertise like including well-sourced and fully cited stats and information from respected organizations outside your own.

Take advantage of the various reports and studies from well-known industry analysts, non-profits, or industry associations to weave in details that support the paper's position to strengthen your argument and increase trustworthiness. Don't worry, you can still assert your thought leadership and expertise and take all the credit for being super helpful and smart. But backing up your assertions with similar findings from other credible sources will do wonders for the impact and weight of your argument.



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## Build trust through better, smarter, and more honest white paper content

White papers have long been a preferred source of information for discerning B2B buyers. But increasingly, they're placing greater value on vendor-branded content that actually educates them instead of just continuing to sell to them. Trust between a buyer and a business can make or break the buyer's journey and decision-making process. Follow these five fundamental rules in your white paper creation and begin building trust with a new crop of prospective customers in ways your competitors could only imagine.

## SCOTT STRANSKY



Full Funnel Content is a boutique content and copywriting service exclusively serving the B2B tech community. Its founder and content lead, Scott Stransky, is a seasoned content professional with more than a decade of serving some of the world's most recognizable tech brands and innovative, high-growth companies. With an expansive portfolio of thousands of completed assets, along with years of direct hands-on experience managing client-side marketing programs, few other content teams can match FFC's blend of practical corporate marketing experience and content writing expertise to help fill in the gaps for your over-tasked and under-resourced tech marketing team.

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