

# What Exactly Is a White Paper?

## A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

There's nothing magic about a white paper. It's simply a document that's written to grab the reader's attention and gain their trust.

### Definition

A white paper is a report that makes a factual, dispassionate case for a particular action. In business it's used as a marketing tool to persuade decision makers that your kind of company or product makes the most sense.

### Tone

Because it's a report, the tone of a white paper should be objective, as if it's being written by a journalist. The goal of the paper is to convince the reader of a conclusion and demonstrate the expertise of the company releasing it, not directly sell a product or service.

### Effort

Researching and writing a white paper is a significant investment in time and energy.

### Why are white papers effective?

It's the kind of document that even a skeptical prospect will think is worth reading. This is because it promises the reader that he or she will learn something.

### Types of White Papers

- *Backgrounder*: Gives the benefits of using a certain product or method, and demonstrates how it fits into and improves the current situation.
- *Numbered List*: Presents a set of tips, questions, or points about a certain business issue.
- *Problem/Solution*: Promises a new solution to a significant problem affecting the target reader.

### Main Reasons to Release a White Paper

- You need to reach prospects who won't pay attention to your other marketing materials.
- You need to establish authority for your product or service, or for yourself professionally.
- Your prospects are willing but constrained by best practices. They need evidence to gain a consensus decision in their organization for using your product or service.