



Secrets of the Great White Paper

by Elinor Teele

Great White Papers are the big fish in a crowded sea, the ones that grab the attention of a reader. Before you start writing, here are 5 secret strategies to consider:

1. Lay Out a Problem

Your prospective customer is looking for **answers to their problems**. The job of any Great White Paper is to find the most pressing challenge your audience faces and address it. Readers, sadly, won't care about your company's newest breakthrough or gadget unless they know how it will work for them.

2. Explain & Educate (Never Tell & Sell)

Great White Papers are not written to provide a hard sell. Think of them instead as the equivalent of a housewarming gift, given without an expectation of payment in kind. They should be balanced, informative pieces that **answer a problem**. They are not a simple description of your services or a hymn of praise to your innovative solutions.

Of course, the ultimate aim of this "gift" is to build up your company's reputation as an expert and establish your employees as the go-to people for a solution to the problem your audience faces. So don't be afraid to ditch the marketing speak - the more straightforward your writing, the more your customers will trust your advice.

3. Target a Specific Audience

Aim for key players and tailor your content accordingly. Before writing even begins, sit down with your employees and the writer to establish a target audience. Are they CEOs, developers, marketing coordinators, etc.? What kind of problems are they facing (each group will have different ones)? What will they need to know to solve those problems? What kind of tone and length will they expect?

Many white papers make the mistake of aiming too widely, trying to hit all kinds of people with all kinds of challenges. You end up with a paper that nobody can relate to. Be specific.

4. Have a Thoughtful Angle

After establishing the problem and your target audience, think about how you wish to approach your topic. Great White Papers might:

- discuss the impact of emerging market trends on your target audience's *problem*
- detail the pros and cons of various products that your target audience might use for a specific *problem*
- introduce a new concept that may benefit your target audience's current *problem*

By the end, a Great White Paper will have given the audience an informative view of the topic and a clear sense of your approach to it.

5. Suggest Solutions

And we're not just talking "My Product A, B or C." We're talking market-wide solutions that will benefit your target audience and help them prosper. Remember: the customer always comes first.

Want to know more? Download my free accompanying tip sheet, **Writing the Great White Paper**, in the Resources section of my website: www.squamcreativeservices.com/Copywriting-Resources.php.