



# Writing the Great White Paper

by Elinor Teele

## Title

- The best titles offer to *address your audience's problem*. Titles that are company ads will never get posted to resource sites.
- Cut the Cute. Cute doesn't register on search engines or in subject lines. This is a paper by professionals for professionals. Consider what keywords might be needed. Be clear.
- Be unique, but be smart. Go ahead and appeal to their emotions, tap into their mindset and challenge them to action. Just don't, whatever you do, confuse them.

THE GOOD	THE JUST PLAIN UGLY
What Hackers Know That You Don't	Business Challenges of Large-Scale, Integrated Database Amalgamation
8 Simple Ways to Satisfy Online Customers	Industry Trends of MidMarket Real-Time Enterprises
Starting from Scratch: A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning Your Website	Whizzbang: The Most Innovative Product on the Market from Gidget Enterprises

## Abstract/Introduction/Executive Summary

This is where you lay out what your paper will cover. Inside this paper, for instance, you will find a discussion of:

1. Key layout sections that should be included in a Great White Paper
2. Tips on planning content that will improve your white paper's success
3. The pros and cons of using an in-house writer vs. a freelance writer

## Define A Problem & Explain the Background

All over the country, many companies are having the same big idea – we will write a Great White Paper and sales will go up. This is smart planning. In a recent survey,<sup>1</sup> 60% of respondents said they downloaded 5 or more white papers in the last 3 months. Yet companies can often find it confusing to know what to include and what to avoid.

From the same survey, here are two key issues to consider when planning your content:

- The top 3 reasons why respondents read white papers were:
  - to find a solution for a problem
  - to keep up with new/emerging markets or technologies
  - to obtain preliminary information about products and vendors
- Respondents were disappointed with white papers that:
  - did not solve a problem
  - were too long and product-oriented
  - led with misleading titles

Remember that audiences do not want to waste time. Real-life examples and statistics will be more effective than generic statements. Clean layouts, bullet points, charts & graphics will also help your white paper stand out from the pack.

<sup>1</sup> Technology and Media Consumption Survey, Report 2. TechTarget and CMO Council: 2007.  
<http://www.techtarget.com/mediaconsumptionreport/>



## Detail Possible Solutions

Every Great White Paper needs to consider all the angles of your audience's problem. If your company wants an effective white paper written, for example, there are two solutions available:

1. Use an in-house writer or skilled employee
2. Hire a freelance writer

## Explain Benefits & Disadvantages

Both of the above approaches have their own peculiar pros and cons. Here they are for comparison:

### IN-HOUSE WRITER

PROS	CONS
Already on Company Books – Less Paperwork	Not their Primary Job Training
Inside Knowledge of Industry	Too Close to Subject to Analyze All Angles
Easy to Visit for Consultation & Editing	Busy with Other Projects

### FREELANCE WRITER

PROS	CONS
Outsider's Perspective of Company & Leads	Needs Time to Collect Information
Unafraid to Ask Stupid Questions a Customer Might Ask	May Ask Very Stupid Questions
Can Focus Solely on Your Project	Requires Contract & Timeframe

## Conclusion

Whether you choose an in-house writer or a freelance writer for the job, a Great White Paper is a highly effective marketing tool. Short, informative and to the point, these papers can establish you as an expert in your field and a person of trust. If you have solved a customer's problem or provided them with helpful information, you have done your job.

## Call to Action

Always include a call to action for potential customers. Readers of this paper, for instance, might like to consult the accompanying tip sheet, **Secrets of the Great White Paper**, in the Resources Section of my website, [www.squamcreativeservices.com/Copywriting-Resources.php](http://www.squamcreativeservices.com/Copywriting-Resources.php). It lays out further strategies on finding topics, striking the right tone and targeting audiences.

## Contact Information

Have a question? Need a white paper written?

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