



WHITE PAPERS

**THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
CREATING & PROMOTING
FOR CONVERSIONS**

**THE DIGITAL
ELEVATOR**

thedigitalelevator.com
info@thedigitalelevator.com
561.692.3719



Table of **CONTENTS**

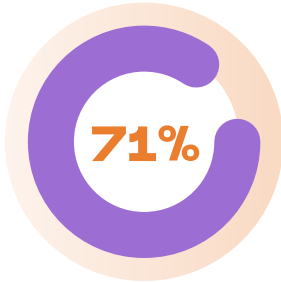
What is a White Paper?	3
What is the Purpose and Importance of a White Paper?	3
Why Do People Write White Papers?	3
How Do You Pick a Topic for A White Paper?	3
Are White Papers Still Relevant?	4
What is the Difference Between a White Paper and a Case Study?	4
What is the Difference Between a White Paper and an Ebook?	4
How Do You Format A White Paper?	5
Should You Cite References in a White Paper?	5
Does Your White Paper Need a Table of Contents?	5
How Long Should a White Paper Be?	5
Should You Have Graphics in Your White Paper?	5
How Should the Graphic Design of the Finished Piece Look?	6
How To Promote Your Content & Generate Leads	6
Repurpose Your White Paper As Blogs	7
Share Images On Social Media	8
Email Your Current Database	8
Pop-Ups On Your Site For Lead Capture	9
Paid Advertising	9
What Should Be In My Lead Gen Form?	12
The White Paper Conclusion	13

What is a White Paper?

A WHITE PAPER IS A REPORT OR GUIDE THAT EDUCATES YOUR READERS ON A PARTICULAR SUBJECT OR ISSUE.

A white paper is a report or guide that educates your readers on a particular subject or issue. They are not meant to be highly graphic-based, but simply full of information, which is why they are aptly named.

And by the way, the preferred, and more commonly accepted language is “white paper,” not “whitepaper,” although you wouldn’t raise too many eyebrows if you used the latter.



What is the Purpose and Importance of a White Paper?

A white paper aims to help your readers understand something, whether helping to make an informed decision or addressing an issue or problem. **71% of businesses seek out and read white papers to make buying decisions. This is why they're essential for B2B marketers.**

Why Do People Write White Papers?

There are various great reasons that a business may create a white paper. In addition to being informational in general, they’re a fantastic way to collect B2B leads.

White papers are a way to connect with your audience, make readers aware of your products or services, and position your company as an expert in the field. It’s important to determine and understand your own company’s goals before deciding on a topic for your white paper.

Why Write White Papers?

Lead generation

Support for sales teams in the varying stages of the sales cycle

Bringing awareness to a new and/or best practice or a product offering

Positioning the organization as a thought leader

Elaborating on the unique selling proposition (USP) of an organization, product or service

How Do You Pick a Topic for A White Paper?

Once you’ve determined your company’s goals, be it lead generation, sales support or expert information, you’ll need to figure out exactly who you’re targeting.

Your business may have a wide array of buyer personas, so it’s imperative to narrow down which audience you’re writing your white paper for. For example; with this white paper on white papers, the audience is most likely a marketing specialist within a company, or perhaps the owner of a small to medium sized business.

Most importantly, white papers are not meant to be hard sells of your product or service. Choose a topic and outline that will present helpful information without being “salesy”.

**71% OF B2B
BUYERS HAVE
USED WHITE
PAPERS IN THE
LAST 12 MONTHS
TO RESEARCH
PURCHASING
DECISIONS.**

Are White Papers Still Relevant?

One might think white papers have lost relevance due to the appeal of striking, graphic-rich pieces to the recent generations. But in actuality, white papers are still relevant.

According to data from a Demand Gen Content Preferences report ¹, **71% of B2B buyers have used white papers in the last 12 months to research purchasing decisions.**

What is the Difference Between a White Paper and a Case Study?

Both document forms are written to help you make an informed decision on a product or service by offering solutions to problems. The main difference between the two is that a case study utilizes real-life examples of the solution in action.

For example, a white paper may show you how to generate leads utilizing Facebook advertising. A case study would detail how ABC Marketing successfully generated leads using Facebook advertising (likely with the help of your company's tools or expertise).

What is the Difference Between a White Paper and an Ebook?

An ebook, short for electronic book, is a complete guide to something but doesn't necessarily solve anything. On the other hand, a white paper is meant to help the reader solve a problem.

For example, what you're reading right now - while it's a guide to white papers, our primary focus is to teach you how to promote your white paper in a way that increases conversions. So if you're not getting enough traffic to your white paper, we will solve your problem by showing you how.

Writing a white paper not only takes a great deal of knowledge on the subject you're writing about, but it also requires knowing how to put it on paper.

THE MOST COMMON WHITE PAPER LENGTH IS ABOUT SIX PAGES.

How Do You Format A White Paper?

White papers follow the format of a **basic business report**. It is best to begin with an introduction to the topic, then answer all of the readers' questions and help them to understand the problem throughout the document. The conclusion should be where your primary problem solving "ta-da" is.

Should You Cite References in a White Paper?

References should always be cited, either with links throughout the document or by sourcing them in the footnotes. Providing links to resources not only cites your information to give credit where it's due, but it also adds validity to what you're saying. It also provides the reader with additional content to research, since you can't possibly fit everything into one document.

Does Your White Paper Need a Table of Contents?

It's always best to include a table of contents, especially one with **anchor links** that can help the reader navigate to specific topics. Not only does this make the document more user-friendly, but it lets your reader know what problems they can solve by reading it.

How Long Should a White Paper Be?

The length of your white paper is entirely dependent on the purpose of your white paper. People don't necessarily read them in their entirety, so the length isn't always the first thing to worry about. They're reading the white paper for information, so being as in-depth and detailed about what they're seeking to educate themselves on should be a top priority.

In the **past 15 years or so**, long white papers have become obsolete. The 50-page essays that were once the norm have shifted to be ten pages or less. **The most common white paper length is about six pages.**

Should You Have Graphics in Your White Paper?

Despite the name white paper, you can have some graphic appeal to it. It should mostly consist of information through words, but it's not against the rules to have photos, graphs, or other art.

How Should the Graphic Design of the Finished Piece Look?

There are a few key things to look out for when designing your copy into a finished piece. Here are a few tips:

- 1.** Avoid long horizontal lines of text. The **rule of thumb** is only to do 12 words per line or about 60 to 66 characters. Following this rule helps make your document more readable.
- 2.** Avoid awkward page breaks. Don't start a new topic at the very bottom of the page; go to the next page to continue the next subject.
- 3.** Avoid just using giant blobs of text. Break up content with graphics, shading, bullets, headings, etc. And don't forget to break up your paragraphs! In most writing, **three to five sentences** should be all you see before something breaks it up.
- 4.** Don't make pages too busy. Again, while you can include graphs, art, photos, etc., the purpose of a white paper is to share knowledge and solve a problem. Don't let your graphics take attention from your content. Stick with one appropriate illustration per page.

With these tips, you'll have a design and format that keeps the reader's attention. But all of this is only advantageous once the white paper has actually been downloaded.

So how do you promote the white paper and get it in the readers' hands? Promotion is the first step in getting this downloadable content to generate leads for your business.

How To Promote Your Content & Generate Leads

There are various tips and tricks we will give you to generate leads and create conversions using your new content.

As we know, conversions are best **defined** as any desirable outcome of a user's visit to your website. This outcome isn't always a purchase; it can be whatever your goal may be. Generally, a white paper's initial goal is to collect data from your visitor that converts them into a lead for your business.

There are various ways to drive visitors to your white paper's landing page to download the content.

Repurpose Your White Paper As Blogs

Once you have created an in-depth white paper, you may notice you can break it up into subtopics where you can further elaborate.

For example, if you create a white paper on **best SEO strategies**, and reverse engineering is one of the mentioned strategies, you may choose to break this topic into its own standalone blog.

There are quite a few benefits of breaking a white paper into blogs.

Blogs change the point of view a bit. A blog is intended to be from one person's perspective, rather than from a business's perspective as a whole. In other words, a blog is more of "here's how I see it" rather than "here are facts on how to solve a problem." Blogs can create their own unique form of engagement.

White papers are meant to be information coming from an expert in the industry that is targeting an audience that is early on in the sales cycle. Depending on their content, blogs can target different parts of the sales cycle.

White papers are not usually SEO optimized, as they're generally a gated PDF download. While the landing page can be optimized to contain the best keywords, the content itself may not appear in searches since it's gated. By repurposing the white paper into blog content, you can better utilize SEO strategies to encourage visitors.

Breaking a white paper up into four separate blogs gives you four different paths for a visitor to get to your white paper.

So while the blogs themselves have different ways to encourage readers, consider them the lure to download the white paper. Each standalone blog can now funnel your readers into conversion by their desire to read more. It's almost as if the blog was their small "taste" of what they can learn by downloading the full white paper.

You can also share the blogs and the white paper itself to social media and get even more exposure to them. We have some hints on doing that as well.

Share Images On Social Media

Social media is undoubtedly not going anywhere anytime soon, and leveraging it to advertise your white paper is critical. Sharing it to your followers on social media is free (we'll get into the paid methods later).

Using hashtags to draw attention to your posts is also a great way to get awareness from non-followers. There are various hashtag tools available that allow you to put in your topic and generate the most popular relevant hashtags.

A great example is best-hashtags.com. Utilize this tool to get the best hashtags to use on your shares to encourage engagement. From this new engagement, you hope to get conversions.

For example, when we use the tool to search for hashtags related to #SEOTips, it lets us know that the most liked relevant hashtags are:



#digitalmarketingservices #blogging
#googleranking #ppc #webdesign #backlinks
#marketingstrategy #seoconsultant #keywords
#sem #internetmarketing #linkbuilding
#seoexperts #searchengines #marketingagency
#branding

So, if we were sharing a white paper on SEO Tips, it would be beneficial to utilize the recommended tags to attract people looking for content on this topic.

Email Your Current Database

While your white paper's primary goal is usually to generate new leads, touching on your current lead database can be beneficial as well. Emailing the white paper to your existing contacts may not only open up new interest in your business, but they may very well share it if they found the information interesting and useful. So emailing can, in turn, create all-new leads or even convert your existing leads into customers.

Pop-Ups On Your Site For Lead Capture

White paper pop-up offers are a highly effective way of saying, "well, now that you're here, let me offer you some great content!" According to a study by Sumo of nearly two billion pop-ups, the average pop-up converts at 3.09%, with the top pop-ups averaging 9.28%. So even with only 150 visitors to your website per day, a pop-up would give you, on average, around 138 white paper downloads per month.

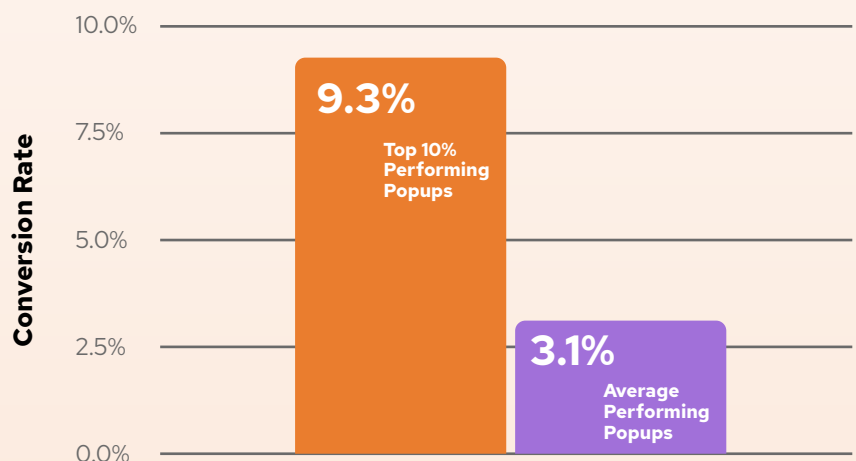
The above ways of promoting your white paper are both free and effective. If you're willing to spend a little bit of money, there are even more productive ways of generating leads with your white paper.

Paid Advertising

Digital advertising is ever-changing, and the techniques available to display what you're selling or offering are always being updated. While many forms of digital advertising are often incorrectly labeled as **pay-per-click**, this umbrella term actually has many variations. It is no longer as limited to only paying for each click.

HIGHEST CONVERTING POPUPS VS. AVERAGE CONVERTING POPUPS

Graphic by [Sumo.com](https://sumo.com)



SINCE WHITE PAPERS MOST OFTEN TARGET B2B, LINKEDIN IS OUR RECOMMENDATION FOR THE BEST PROMOTIONAL RESULTS, AS THIS DIGITAL AVENUE IS MORE DIRECTED TOWARDS BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS.

Here are a few paid advertising options available:

> **LinkedIn** - Since white papers most often target B2B, LinkedIn is our recommendation for the best promotional results, as this digital avenue is more **directed towards business professionals**.

LinkedIn, like many digital advertising options, offers an **auction-style** advertising platform. This means that you will compete with other advertisers that want to reach the same target audience when you run an ad. **Auction-style advertising** turns your spending into a bid, so you'll never spend more than you're willing to spend.

LinkedIn also allows you to decide how you'd like to be charged. For example, you can pay based on:

- how many clicks your ad gets (cost-per-click, or CPC - you pay only when people click your ad)
- how many times the ad is shown (cost-per-1000-impressions or CPM - you pay each time people see your ad), or in the case of messaging ads:
- how many are sent (cost-per-send or CPS - you pay each time your ad is successfully delivered to a recipient)

> **Facebook & Instagram** - Like LinkedIn, **Facebook and Instagram** also offer an ad auction. You'll set a **budget**, along with your objective (impressions or conversions), and only pay for what you budget. You'll choose your target audience. This can be demographics like age and gender or geographic locations like cities or regions.

You can even target behaviorally, which means you can display your ad for people with specific interests or who have previously initiated certain actions. For example, if you advertise your white paper called "How To Save The Most on Your New Mortgage," you may find it beneficial to target those who have recently been searching for a new home. Finally, you'll decide how you want your ad to look with texts, images, or even video.

> **Google Ads** - **Google ads** allow you to choose your goal, whether it be calls, store visits, or an action taken on your website. In the case of promoting your white paper, you're likely to have the latter goal. You can then decide whether to advertise everywhere or locally, by choosing the geographic location of your ad reach.

The difference with Google Ads is that you will be targeting keywords as opposed to demographics. You'll have to pay special attention to the intent of your keywords in the search engine rankings pages (SERPs) and target accordingly.

Once you've determined your purpose and audience, you'll create three short sentences or a compelling banner ad. Like the former advertising options, you'll set a budget cap that you can adjust or pause at any time.

> **Retargeting Ads** - Retargeting ads, or remarketing ads, are cookie-based ads that essentially revisit a user that has left your website. In general, **only 2% of visitors convert** on the very first visit. Retargeting helps to re-reach the 98% who left the site.

Have you ever shopped for a pair of shoes and later found that same pair of shoes staring you in the face on the sidebar of another website later on? That's retargeted ads.

Your customers are **more likely to convert by 43%** when they see an ad again. Not only that, but **25% of online viewers** enjoy seeing retargeted ads because it reminds them of what they were previously looking at (60% remain neutral).



ONE MAJOR BENEFIT TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA OPTIONS IS THAT THEY OFTEN HAVE THEIR OWN LEAD GENERATION FORMS. THESE BUILT-IN FORMS PREVENT THE VISITOR FROM HAVING TO LEAVE WHERE THEY ARE. YOU'RE ABLE TO COLLECT THEIR INFORMATION AS A LEAD WITHOUT THE ADDED FRICTION OF LEAVING THE PAGE TO GO TO YOUR OWN LANDING PAGE.

So in the case of your white paper download, retargeting ads can be very beneficial in generating the leads you desire.

One major benefit to the social media options above is that they often have their own lead generation forms. These built-in forms prevent the visitor from having to leave where they are. You're able to collect their information as a lead without the added friction of leaving the page to go to your own landing page.

Facebook Lead Ads & LinkedIn Lead Gen Forms

Facebook allows you to customize your leadgen form and integrates with your own CRM to deliver the lead to the proper database. **LinkedIn** is another that offers seamless forms that a potential customer can even fill out through messages.

Utilizing the built-in options on the social media platforms not only allows you to more easily track your campaign's success, but it prevents the drop off of visitors that have to travel from one site to another.

What Should Be In My Lead Gen Form?

So you've learned ways to get your white paper offer in front of your audience, but now what? The next step is crucial.

Your lead capture should be short and to the point in order to reduce friction in your conversion process. **Friction** is anything on your landing page that can distract a visitor from completing the action that you intended. This can result from having too long of a form, navigational distractions, other CTAs besides what you're promoting or even social sharing links. You want the guest to get from point A to point B without displaying anything that could take them off the page or change their direction.

Now for the form contents. You only get one shot to ask for the information you need, and it has to be a fair trade. In other words, your content has to appear to possess enough value to make it worthwhile for the person offering up their information to you. Don't ask for too much, or they'll be turned off and exit.

To start, think of the information you absolutely need in order to nurture this lead. This may be as simple as an email address. You have roughly **six seconds** from the time a potential customer visits your page until they decide whether to hit that 'X' button or continue on. We generally recommend requesting an email address unless it is absolutely necessary to get additional information.

Decide what information would be nice to have vs. what information is pertinent to the nurture. The absolute must? A way to contact the person. All information after that is up to your own choices and how valuable your content is perceived to be.

The less information you ask for, the quicker you complete the conversion. **Studies show** short forms aren't always the answer to higher conversions, but it depends what you're asking in relation to what you're offering.

Some other things you can ask for: Other ways to contact (email, phone, address), job title, how they found you, their company name, company size, website URL, etc. These fields, when answered, can add value to your CRM database and allow for more personalized nurturing.

The White Paper Conclusion

While creating an informative white paper that delights your audience is a definite goal, the essential strategy is in the promotion. After all, you can spend weeks perfecting the content, but if nobody is there to see it, does it even exist?

Attract your potential customers to your white paper download by using the tips we included here, and you'll allow your business to generate the most leads possible for tremendous success.

About Digital Elevator

Digital Elevator helps companies with SEO, content marketing, PPC, website design, brand building, and digital marketing. Our goal is to "Make our clients far more than they invest in us" and our results have seen us winning awards as a Top Advertising & Marketing Agency (Clutch), Top SEO Company (The Manifest), and a Top Web Designer (2018).

We work with high growth companies who are interested in long term relationships and building sustainable brands. We work with SMBs, SMEs, and large enterprise clients in a few carefully selected verticals we are passionate about.

We work with business owners, marketing directors or teams, and other marketing companies. Contact us today to learn more about how we can help you realize your goals.

DIGITAL ELEVATOR

West Palm Beach, FL
Dallas, TX

561.692.3719
info@thedigitalelevator.com



Daniel E. Lofaso

President & CEO
dan@thedigitalelevator.com



Jennifer Spicola

Content Marketing Specialist
jen@thedigitalelevator.com