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GUIDE 2019

**How to write a
white paper
....that people
actually want
to read**

How to write a white paper...that people actually want to read



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

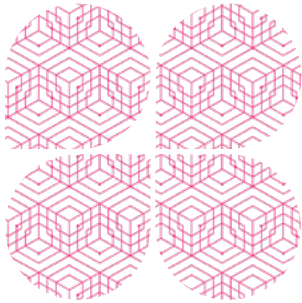
Cathy Hayward is managing director of Magenta Associates, and a communications specialist with more than 18 years' experience in a range of journalistic, publishing and marketing roles. She founded Magenta in 2011 after a journalistic career spanning a number of different titles including *FM World*, the award-winning magazine for the British Institute of Facilities Management, *Marketing Week*, *Financial Management*, *Soccer Analyst*, *Supply Management*, *Unions Today*, *People Management* and *Director*. She holds a Masters degree in journalism, as well as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' post-graduate diploma in PR.

Introduction

White papers are documents originally devised to help to explain Government policies. They are designed to first present a problem and then describe what can be done to solve the issue. Their suitability as a marketing tool which uses the power of persuasion makes the white paper the ideal conduit for the corporate world. A well-written white paper can enable a business to showcase its expertise, help clients to understand key issues and offer them effective solutions. Whether you are a software firm explaining a technical development or a property company describing key trends in office leasing, a white paper can be a powerful way of promoting your business.

Unfortunately, it's all too easy for white papers to turn off rather than draw in readers. Those that are written as a blatant sales tool, that use turgid over-technical language or simply fail to engage their target audience can actually undermine the brand and have a negative, rather than positive effect.





This short guide takes you through the process.

So follow these rules for writing a white paper and you'll find they're an asset to your marketing mix that people will want to read and follow up...

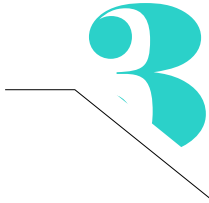
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Who do you want to read the white paper? In order to write an effective document you need to identify who is going to read it, and that means determining the sector, job function and level of seniority. What differentiates white papers is their attractiveness to specific types of readers; so for instance if you're producing a white paper on workplace design, are you aiming at the FM in charge of refurbishment, the HR manager who coordinates the change management programme or the architect who comes up with the new design? All will have different levels of expertise and particular interests so to deliver something fresh and relevant to their needs you will need to decide who is your ideal reader – in this scenario say it's a senior facilities manager – and the 'secondary reader/s' are the HR manager and designer.

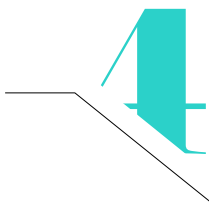
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What is the topic of the white paper? Have you identified a need for a white paper that describes a problem and offers a solution that people will want? If your white paper doesn't offer anything of value to the reader, it won't be worth doing, but if it is something people need and want they'll respond positively to you as a brand and hopefully want to learn more about how your organisation can help them further. For example, say there is a change to the pensions law; if you can present a white paper that explains how the law has changed, what that could mean to businesses and offers advice on what you need to do next, you will have pointed out to the reader that something has changed they didn't know about but it's ok you've got suggestions on how to fix it.

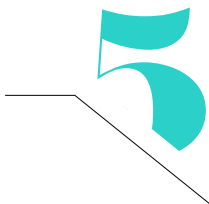




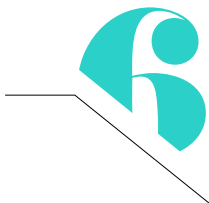
In order to draw the maximum marketing capital from the white paper, before you offer the reader a solution to a problem it's important to ensure the topic draws on the services and expertise of your business. There is no point drafting a brilliant white paper if it concentrates on an area where your organisation has little or no impact. For instance, a property company which serves the blue chip corporate arena won't gain much business from a white paper that deals with procurement within the public sector property market.



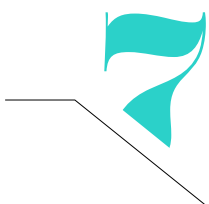
Once you've decided on a subject, you'll need to research the topic and write a brief synopsis. It doesn't have to be long, but should outline the problem to be addressed, the evidence that the issue exists (including relevant research) and what steps should be taken to address the issue. The synopsis should confirm there is enough of a reason to produce a white paper in the first place and it can also be presented to the experts you consult within the organisation to help you pull the data together.



Armed with your synopsis, you can then confirm the key people to speak to within the business and beyond, for the material you need. Along with a copy of the synopsis try to come up with specific questions you'd like them to cover, to help establish the what, why, when, who and how.

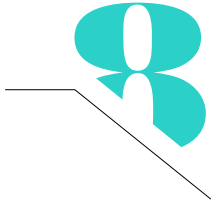


When you have conducted your interview/s you're in a position to produce a first draft of the white paper. During this process don't just rely on the opinions and comments of your interviewees, but back up their assertions by referencing any relevant academic and professional resources. Throughout this process always keep in mind how your readers will fare if they don't solve the issue, and bring in any third party statistics or quotes that will support your arguments. And don't be afraid to insert some information which shows how your organisation can help them solve this problem in the future. It doesn't and shouldn't be a hard sell, but you can utilise relevant examples. For instance; 'our room booking software at XYZ corporation helped them reduce the amount of wasted space from XX% to YY.'



The white paper draft should then be submitted to the relevant expert/s within the organisation to check for accuracy and that the solution to the issue is one which is both feasible and casts the business in a positive light. It is at this stage where you can insert your 'call to action' with some additional data on how the organisation can help with this and other problems in the future.

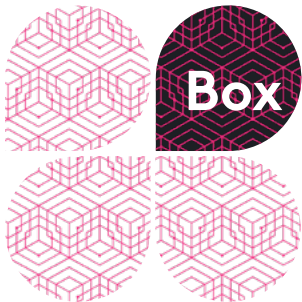




Once the white paper has been approved, it is essential it is properly proofed, the references double-checked and it is presented in a professional and attractive manner. You may want to include relevant tables, images and infographics to help to enhance the finished appeal.

The process shouldn't end with the publication of the white paper. You don't want to spend time and effort on something that sits quietly on your website, so follow these promotional tools:

- * Produce a press release about the white paper including some of the key content
- * Approach selected press about writing an article around the contents of the white paper; is there an opportunity for, or benefit from, an exclusive with a key title?
- * Promote the white paper through yours and any external contributor's website
- * Use social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to help to promote the white paper further
- * Promote white paper through your sales database
- * Decide on any advertising/ advertorial for the white paper, plus hosting options
- * If you are a corporate member of a relevant professional body approach them about inclusion on their site or newsletters.



Example of a good synopsis for a white paper

White paper on condition-based maintenance

Overview:

This white paper aims to provide an overview of condition-based maintenance within the facilities management context. It is targeted at the practising facilities and maintenance professional with some knowledge of maintenance and asset management. It looks at the importance of the role of maintenance within the four phases of an asset's lifecycle: planning and acquisition, operation, maintenance and disposal. It then explores the different types of maintenance and when a condition-based maintenance approach is beneficial. The guide then examines the role of technology in managing condition-based maintenance. A useful glossary at the end explains some of the commonly-used abbreviations and acronyms in the field of condition-based maintenance together with some areas for further reading on the topic.





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