

How to Develop, Write and Leverage Telecommunications White Papers*



****Delivering Bandwidth-on-Demand
to Your Customer's Brain***

Leveraging Telecom White Papers: Delivering Bandwidth-on-Demand to Your Customer's Brain

See if you don't agree with me. . .

I don't care how much the business world has changed over the past few years — the essence of marketing is the same as it's always been . .

You've still got to get your message in front of the right people. And they've got to understand it. End of story.

Problem is, in the hyper-competitive telecom market, the effort it takes to win even ten minutes of face time with key executives can be extraordinary.

The irony is that the innovations the telecom industry is driving -- low cost voice, web page proliferation, and the rapidly emerging wireless web -- all make it harder for you to reach those important folks.

Leading executives at incumbent LECs, LDs, ISPs, and wireless carriers these days are swamped with advertising, email, magazines, and other messages from you, your competitors, and a lot of other people with good ideas.

Has there ever been a better time for a fresh marketing approach?

A New — And Extremely Effective — Way to Put An Old Tool To Work for You

The “fresh” approach you're looking for is practically staring you in the face. You've seen it a thousand times... you've even used it before... but you may not have recognized or harnessed its true **marketing** potential.

It's the **industry white paper**.

The white paper is a perfect medium to cut through the clutter. That's because it delivers “more for less” -- a highly focused and compelling message to a targeted audience.

A good paper enables you to raise your marketing up a notch - a notch above the e-mail blasters and other noise -- helping to push your message through while other media are being routed to the circular file.

Unfortunately, most high tech companies produce white papers that are nothing more than simply “technical” reports. But a white paper can be much more than that — it can become a potent marketing weapon and a powerful messenger for your company's value proposition.

Compared to an ad in a trade journal, the white paper is a much more subtle form of persuasion. It lives and breathes on the philosophy that sometimes the best way to “sell” is to “tell.” In turn, the paper reinforces your position as a “thought leader” as opposed to just another “me-too” solution provider.

To help you jump start your white paper program, we have provided eight tips below that TRI considers essential to positioning, writing, and distributing white papers effectively.



Tip #1. Decide Which Telecom Prospect You Want to Persuade

The source of a white paper's power is its ability to laser beam a rich-content data packet to a very narrow audience of potential customers.

Remember, every reader is tuned into only one radio station, WII-FM, **W**hat's **I**n **I**t **F**or **M**e? All other radio stations are received as static.

In other words, you're on a fishing expedition. And the bait you select should be gourmet food to the fish you're trying to hook. . . but rather uninteresting fare to all other fish.

So if the fish you're after are telecom operations managers, your message should be about increasing efficiency and avoiding operational problems. If you're trying to land the product manager or sales V.P, you bait the hook with information about product time to market or your system's ability to flexibly change over time with minimal additional investment.

Think about the person you're writing your paper for. Like all people, he or she wants to solve problems, make more money, avoid misery, and take advantage of opportunity. Your challenge is to identify the special hot buttons of that particular reader.

Tip #2. Structure Your Paper for Dramatic Effect

While there are no hard and fast rules on how to structure a white paper, good flow is needed to achieve maximum impact.

Imagine you're writing an Oscar-winning screen play. In the beginning you set the scene by developing the characters, then you add a little creative tension and conflict, and in the climax the hero rides off into the sunset with the beautiful girl (or guy).

We recommend you structure your piece in the following sequence:

- **Surprise the reader** – Get the ball rolling with a provocative or interesting opener that gets the reader's attention.
- **Sympathize with the reader's situation** by talking to their special world and experience and thereby establish your authority to write a paper in their domain.
- **State your case** by describing the overall customer problem or opportunity that you will address.

- **Spell out the problem** or opportunity by analyzing it in detail, giving examples that the reader can relate to.
- **Suggest a generic solution** that relates to your expertise illustrating lessons learned and why other solutions have failed in the past.
- **Substantiate why your solution is best** by describing the unique capabilities and benefits of your approach or expertise.
- **Sell yourself.** In your conclusion, talk about your company's expertise, success stories, and other credentials. And be sure to close with an offer to help.

Tip #3. Save Your Trump Card

Readers know your paper is a thinly disguised advertisement, but they will forgive your sales pitch as long as you give them something valuable first.

You're going to be talking about the features and benefits of your product or service in the paper eventually, but if you sell your program too early it will turn people off.

Only after you've delivered your valuable insights and analysis upfront and people have confidence in you -- only then will they tolerate you taking some time to talk about your company's solution and expertise.

Unfortunately, too many white papers in our industry are what direct marketers call a "puff piece" -- a white paper or brochure where the author inflates the company's ego and makes bold claims of expertise that sound like mere chest-thumping.

To stay credible, you need to back up your assertions with facts, case studies, third-party research, and good examples.

For instance, merely stating that your company is a "leading supplier of provisioning software" is no where near as credible as saying a "leading supplier of provisioning software, having installed solutions at 14 carriers in the past year."



Even if your company is not the market share leader in your category, when you can attach a supporting fact to your "leading" claim, the reader is much more likely to believe it.

So all through your paper, you build a comraderie, a trust that only comes from knowing you're communicating with someone who understands your business well.

In short, when your paper offers genuinely helpful, objective, and factual information, it stands above the crowd of papers that are merely warmed over advertisements.

Your biggest accolade is the reader who finishes your paper saying: "I learned something valuable."

Tip #4. Talk to the Customer's Concerns and Unique Experiences

You begin your paper by identifying a key problem or opportunity that confronts your customers -- something they might not be fully aware of.

Very often these problems are complex and tough for your customers to get their arms around.

And as you write about this problem or opportunity, it should be very familiar to them. You achieve this by using language and terminology they know... a world they know... other companies they know... and situations they are familiar with.

So you creating a believable universe within the paper, through anecdotes and scenarios that get readers nodding their heads in agreement. "Yeah, been there, done that."

Tip #5. Help Your Prospect Discover a Whole New World

By shedding light on your customer's problems and opportunities and substantiating them through examples and case studies, you open up a "whole new world" and vision for your customers.

Suddenly your customer is made aware of obstacles that may be stopping him or her from realizing their full business potential.



The customer will say to herself, "Gee, I've sort of had some intuitions about this" or maybe "I've heard about this problem, but now that I see it explained here, it makes a lot of sense."

Now after you have defined the problem, analyzed it, and suggested a solution, the final step is to show how **your** organization -- and only your organization -- can help them either meet the opportunity or dodge the bullet.

You need to show what it is your company can do that no other company can achieve for them. You've got to credentialize your company -- tell them what makes your company a unique problem solver.

By the time readers finish your piece, they should either be slightly concerned about a particular problem that only you can help them fix or excited about an opportunity that only you can help them fully understand and grasp.

You understand their world... and you are leading them to a better one.

Tip #6 -- Jargonese is Sometimes Harder to Understand than Japanese

The power of a well-written paper versus a mediocre one can make all the difference in the world.

But too many telecom white papers we've seen are overly wordy and written in high-tech gibberish. For example, read the following paragraph (taken from an actual telecom industry white paper) and then see the translation below it:

What They Said:

“Companies want software solutions that make a lasting, positive impact on their mission-critical business needs -- enabling faster time-to-market, greater efficiency, significant cost savings, and improved responsiveness. To better manage the complexity of work that impacts the bottom line, businesses need process-centric workflow solutions. They also need solutions tailored to solve specific business problems. The key to building these software applications is to solve the problems companies face today, while anticipating the issues they will face tomorrow.”

What They Meant:

“Workflow software is a vital tool for managing today's complex businesses.”

When you write jargonese, you make it extremely tough for the reader to follow your thought processes. The writer of the above piece no doubt graduated from college, but may have slept through the lecture on “Delivering Concise, Knowledge-Rich Content.”

Tip #7. Don't Let Picasso Design Your Graphics

Looks count. If your white paper is attractively designed and printed, it will encourage people to pick it up and read it.

The text and the appearance of your white paper work together to create an overall impression of your company's expertise.

Above all, the design should encourage people to read the text and lead them quickly to the information they need.

- **Graphics.** Keep them simple. Art directors sometimes go wild and produce graphics that distract from the paper. Graphics should subtly support the copy and draw people into the text.
- **Typeface.** Choose a size that is easy to read. Use a plain, conventional typeface, and no more than two different ones. Use them in different sizes, in boldface, and in italics, but consistently and sparingly, to avoid a cluttered look.



- **Layout.** Use headlines, subheads, bullets and call-outs to help guide people through the text and entice them to read it, but use them judiciously.
- **Printing.** Industry expectations say a white paper doesn't need to be a glossy, four-color affair. In our view, you're better off saving money by printing in two-color only. Or another attractive alternative is printing black on a slightly heavier, finer grade of color paper. And by the way, know how much your white paper and envelope will weigh so you can maintain control of your postage costs.

Tip #8. Leverage Your Paper Across Multiple Channels

One of the nice things about a white paper is its versatility. You can leverage it in so many ways.

As a first step, mail a hard copy of the paper to everyone on your hot list -- your customers, your prospects, industry analysts, and members of the press.

How many copies should you print and mail out? It really depends on the size of your target audience and the unit printing and postage cost of your mailing piece. If you keep your unit costs down, you can afford to reach broader numbers of people in your market.

And don't be afraid to mail multiple times to a highly targeted hot list. Many people may not get a chance to read your white paper the first time it is mailed; others will pass the second copy along to a colleague.

An important principle of direct marketing is **RPI: Repetition, Penetration, Impact**. You often you need to **Repeat** your message enough times to **Penetrate** the reader's consciousness and eventually have an **Impact**.

Make sure to include the full text of your white paper on your web site. Search engines like Google rely heavily on the text of a site to determine relevancy. In other words, your white paper can actually help you pull more traffic to your web site. And be sure to offer a PDF version of the paper for those who want to download and print out a hard copy on their own.

In addition to mailing your paper and posting it on the web, here are some other ways you can leverage your paper:



- Hand it out at seminars, conferences, and trade shows.
- Give it to prospective clients at sales meetings.
- Include it in press kits and marketing packages.
- Use it as background material for multimedia presentations.

- Write speeches and presentations using, as background, the white paper and the research you've done to prepare it.
- Slim it and rework the message into a trade magazine article; then in the byline offer readers a copy of the full paper.
- Mention it in your advertising; tell people where to find it on the web, or how to contact you for a printed copy.
- Give it to people you meet when you do road shows and press tours.

Who Should Write Your White Paper?

Since the white paper is the distilled value proposition of your organization, your marketing director – even CEO if you are a small company – should drive the process of white paper creation.

Key engineering and technical people should also be involved because they often understand subtle customer “hot buttons” and “points of pain” that the marketing director may be unaware of.



But while all these people should supply input, having them get involved in the actual writing of the piece may be a poor use of their precious time.

Instead you should delegate the actual writing job to a professional writer. Your best bet is to hire a writer that regularly tracks and reports on telecom business and technology trends.

You need a writer who has a feel for the competitive climate you operate in, and appreciates the subtle nuances of our industry. He or she should be able to ask pertinent questions and provide advice on how to write the paper to give you unique positioning in the marketplace.

Outsourcing Your White Paper Writing to TRI

At Technology Research Institute (TRI), an independent market research firm, we've been tracking and writing about critical issues in the telecom industry since 1994.

In that time we've published several industry research reports on subjects as diverse as telecom billing systems, provisioning, telecom EAI, data warehousing, customer care, and advanced intelligent networks.

To keep abreast of industry developments, we interview scores of telecom industry executives and experts each year as we research our industry reports and multimedia training materials.

Though our main line of work is market research, we also ghost write white papers for our clients in the industry.

Companies who develop white papers and appreciate their value are usually at the forefront of new industry trends, so it's a good place for a market research firm like ours to spend our time. It helps hone our own industry expertise.

Our approach is to first interview your company executives and ask a lot of questions before we begin our writing. After we prepare the manuscript, we give you the opportunity to send it back to us for revision at least two times. At each step of the process, we get feedback from you to ensure we're headed in the right direction.

And we guarantee the quality of our work. If at any point during the writing you want to discontinue the project – for whatever reason – we terminate our work together, settle via an agreed upon kill fee and part ways as friends.

You may also want to take advantage of related TRI services. For instance, we can help:

- Provide design and print production services.
- Advise you on white paper distribution strategies.
- Enable you to mail your paper and brochures to our proprietary mailing lists at modest additional costs.
- Develop press releases that highlight the main points of the white paper.
- Give you tips on how to leverage the white paper to get you more web site traffic.
- Create audio and PowerPoint content based on your white paper for an upcoming conference or to use on its own.

If you'd like to learn more about TRI's telecom white paper services, please contact TRI's Marketing Director, Donna Kenslea at 978-443-4671 or donnak@technology-research.com.



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