

Whitepapers: Content That Drives B2B Engagement

What is a whitepaper? Traditionally, whitepapers were the realm of academia and think tanks where the content reads like a thesis. The private sector then adopted whitepapers as part of their content strategy where they'd rely on firsthand market research, data collection, and interviews that would help explain the benefit of a product and why the reader would be interested in this information. However, whitepapers have assumed a different meaning in the modern content marketing world in that they are still long-form content conveying more information than a blog post but not as much as a full-length e-book.

The old way that businesses handled whitepapers wasn't working because readers got bored reading about studies and product features. Today, whitepapers are highly effective when it comes to both increasing brand awareness and getting leads more interested in working with the business that published the whitepaper. Whitepapers are considered to be the [second-most important piece of content after a sales brochure](#) when it comes to the sales cycle.

Why Do Whitepapers Work So Well for B2B?

Whitepapers are primarily used in the B2B realm to get leads interested in making a purchase or at least learning more about the brand. Long-form content can be helpful for B2C marketing but content geared towards consumers typically needs to be on the shorter side. It's often assumed that the typical consumer is facing an incredibly noisy world and seeing incredibly long pieces of content is only going to detract them from staying on the page longer before deciding whether or not to make a purchase. E-books can work well as part of B2C content strategy, but even though you have the reader's full attention they aren't going to be interested in a very long piece with lots of details. Images and the design should take up more room there.

Whitepapers don't need to be devoid of graphics to work well, but it's more acceptable for them to be text-heavy since they're intended to provide a lot of detailed information for a B2B audience. Consumers need to have their attention held with aesthetically-pleasing design but text that cuts right to the point. Hence, whitepapers work well with a business-oriented audience that is trying to get as much information on a topic or problem as possible.

Using Whitepapers to Drive Lead Generation

Whitepapers are particularly important for B2B because they are excellent lead generators: [76% of decision-makers are comfortable handing over an email address](#) in order to gain access to a whitepaper that contains answers to burning questions and other helpful information. Even if the whitepaper itself doesn't have

any traction immediately with the people who signed up for your mailing list, people aren't likely to immediately unsubscribe either. This leaves plenty of opportunity to use email campaigns in the distant future, and subscribing in order to receive the whitepaper can also be part of an automated email campaign that helps sell another digital product in addition to services.

Whitepapers should strive to answer a few burning questions and provide helpful insights that the audience derives value from. They should also leave enough unanswered so that the lead is compelled to spend more time on your website than buys the product or requests services. Delivering the answers that the audience is looking for while not quite providing the entire solution is a powerful lead generation tactic that makes whitepapers work so well.

Whitepapers can help with positioning just as much as published articles and help establish your brand as a thought leader in your industry. The better your positioning is, the more quality leads that you will attract.

What to Look For in a Whitepaper Writer

Writers aren't a monolith and some are better-suited to longer pieces than others. Writing a product description takes a different talent than writing a blog post, and the same is true for whitepapers. Long-form content requires a more granular approach than most business communications where you must get to the point as soon as possible. The writer should have experience with long-form content like e-books and other whitepapers and the ability to delve into single topics or concepts with great detail, but also the conciseness that a B2B audience is expecting.

A writer who has a lot of knowledge and/or experience in your industry or with your type of product or service is often a great fit for a whitepaper because this type of content needs to have a vast amount of information to truly deliver value to the audience. Think about how your blog is likely to be a mile wide but an inch deep because you have several posts that gloss over a variety of topics: a whitepaper is only a few feet wide but several miles deep. Familiarity is a plus.

Whitepapers Are Surprisingly Effective for SEO

A common misconception in strategizing web content is that blog posts and landing pages are the only content where you need to pay attention to keywords and other important SEO factors. A majority of whitepapers are published as PDFs which can be optimized for SEO purposes in most PDF editing programs. The text is fully searchable and comes up in search engines as a result and it works just like a regular outbound or inbound link whenever anyone links to the whitepaper. The more outbound and inbound links it has in addition to the desired keyword density, the higher the whitepaper will rank in the search engine.

Putting lots of useful statistics in the whitepaper can increase your chances of it being heavily linked, and you should also link to your own whitepaper provided that it doesn't require an email subscription to obtain or is behind a paywall. Having both the inbound and outbound links will cause the placement to be higher on search engine result pages and because whitepapers are so much longer than

blog posts by default, the keyword density will be much higher which can make it even more of an SEO powerhouse than a blog post.

Whitepapers help drive B2B engagement by solving lead generation and SEO problems in addition to providing long-form value to the readers. They shouldn't be overlooked in B2B content marketing efforts because they're a boon to positioning and raising brand awareness. Longer content may not always work in B2C, but it really shines in the B2B sphere.