WHITE PAPER

Definition	A white paper is a persuasive document that usually describes problems and how to solve them. The white paper is a crossbreed of a magazine article and a brochure. A white paper is a technical or business benefits document that introduces a challenge faced by its readers and makes a strong case why a particular approach to solving the problem is preferred. A white paper usually proposes a solution to a problem, but can also introduce a new concept or describe how to perform technical tasks.
Needs Assessment	**Needs Assessment** A good house needs a firm foundation or eventually cracks will appear that produce all sorts of problems. Similarly, a white paper needs a solid gathering of facts to ensure every written word is reinforced by a clear goal and pre-approved course of action. • **Selecting the Topic.** Understanding the topical scope of the white paper early is important. If you have the task to write a white paper on a broad subject, it is important to drill down to specific areas of focus. • **Identifying the Ideal Reader.** Determining who will be reading the document is an important early step when preparing to write a white paper. Often, white papers will be targeted at more than one group of readers. • **Determining the Objective**. When writing white papers, it is critical to identify a clear objective. Start with the end in mind. Objectives come in many flavors, including overt and covert objectives. *Overt objectives* are the goals you would not mind sharing with the world. However, *covert objectives* are the secret goals you hope to achieve with your white paper.
White Paper Outline	**White Paper Outline** Adopting the problem-solution approach to writing a white paper is a very successful model. Simply stated by leading with some challenges faced by your readers and suggesting how to solve their problems, you can develop a compelling white paper that engages readers. A good white paper will include many of these four basic elements: • **Problem.** Often, white papers lead with challenges faced by the ideal reader. By discussing problems faced by your reader and the implications of not dealing with those challenges, you set up an opportunity to reaffirm the reader's concerns and reveal new issues that may not have been considered. The goal of discussing challenges is to build affinity with your readers.

White Paper Outline

- **Solution.** The next logical step after laying out the challenge is to introduce the solution. Solutions can be generic or specific. If the paper is educational in nature, introduce the generic solution before the specific solution.

- **Considerations.** An overview of important considerations when seeking a solution is an effective way to add substance to a white paper. This section of your paper can be "the buyer's guide" that helps your readers set up a standard by which all of your competitors will be judged.

- **Benefits and Advantages**. A good discussion on the benefits of a solution is always a useful addition to a white paper. The benefits should be directly related to the problems you put forth. After explaining a generic solution, it may make sense to clarify the specific advantages your solution, product, or service brings to the market. There is a slight distinction between benefits and specific advantages. Benefits should be generic to the solution, and specific advantages should be highly related to your product or service.

Additional Outline Topics

If you want to take your white paper beyond the basics, there are many additional sections that can be added to augment some of the core elements outlined above. The following list is not exhaustive and not all of these topics are appropriate for any single white paper.

Additional Outline Topics

- **Market Drivers**. A persuasive white paper might reveal a need by building a solid market driver or trends section. Market trends tend to be used early in the white paper to demonstrate the key market movements that justify examining the solution is detail.

- **Historical Overview**. A historical overview can be a powerful addition to your white paper. In the world of technology, it's useful to discuss what has led to the modern-day dilemma addressed by your solution. The objective is to show how the needs of users have evolved and to set the stage for your new technology.

- **Process**. If your paper is technical or on a process-related topic, a section describing how your product works may be in order. Diagrams can be used to augment your writing and can visually convey the steps or components involved with a solution.

- **Examples**. It is always useful to explain situations where your solution would be particularly effective. You can be as specific or as generic as you like. Sometimes it is helpful to talk about specific industries where the solution works well. Other times it makes sense to talk about specific customers who have found success with the product.

Additional Outline Topics

- **Tips**. If you are writing a white paper that is educational in nature, it may make sense to include a section on tips or pitfall to avoid. These tips can be treated as sidebar material or integrated into the paper.

- **Comparisons**. For some white papers, doing side-by-side comparisons of two options, or the pros and cons of a product or service may be appropriate. This can be a useful tool to quickly identify the advantages of one product over another.

- **Features**. Features belong mostly in documents other than white papers, such as brochures and data-sheets. However, when implications are added to the list of features, they may be appropriate for some white papers. Features are best conveyed in a table or a bulleted list.

Introduction

Introduction
The introduction of your white paper is the first bite of a big meal. It the taste is right, your readers will sit down and enjoy the entire document. Essential elements of the white paper introduction include the following four elements.
1. Identify the reader.
2. Summarize the challenge.
3. Summarize the solution
4. State the goal

Resource

Resource
Stelzner, M. A. (2007). *Writing white papers: How to capture readers and keep them engaged*. Poway. CA: WhitePaperSource Publishing.