

What are White Papers?

*How white papers can accelerate
your sales strategy.*

Author: Ivan Walsh
Email: ivan@klariti.com

Date: 2/4/2005

What are White Papers?

White papers discuss a specific business issue, product, or competitive situation.

In many cases, they summarize information about a topic, for example the results of a survey and then suggest a 'proposal for action' with the research data providing the justification for the action.

In the IT industry, white papers and case studies are often produced in tandem. White papers, it's important to emphasize, are not technical documents—they're very effective sales document.

Purpose of White Papers

From one perspective, it's to share technical knowledge and business information with others in the same field; for example, CIOs who are interested in how web services can be used with Ecommerce applications.

Presenters will use them as collateral material at industry conferences, promotional drives, seminars and other such events.

From a business viewpoint, **white papers generate publicity**, especially when a company is starting out and trying to get media attention.

If you're working on an innovative area for a specialized audience, white papers can be very effective in demonstrating you're achievements in a way that standard marketing tactics cannot achieve.

The main difference between an IT white paper and an Academic research paper is that the IT wording will to be more guarded—so that competitors don't learn too much and steal their ideas.

The writing style of white papers tends to be formal, direct, and business-like. However, the most successful papers avoid 'marketese'—that boorish writing style that makes outrageous statements with over-the-top claims to greatness.

Supporting Sales & Marketing

You can use White papers to accelerate your sales strategy, in particular, when introducing new products. It serves as valuable collateral material for the Sales team when meeting clients. It is something they can leave with the client who can refer to it at their own leisure.

Sales-focused white papers tend to include:

1. Market analysis: this discusses potential buyers; business drivers; customer segmentation broken down by demographics, regions, sectors etc; and abstracts from research companies that support the main arguments in the white paper.

2. Solution Implementations: this section highlights the client's business objectives, technical obstacles, how the solution was implemented and benefits to the company.

3. Product analysis: this section includes tables, charts, and graphs. Technical specifications are distilled into a few pages in an easy-to-read format.

4. USP: details of the Unique Selling Points are supported with persuasive arguments that differentiate it from the competition.

Use your white papers as tools in your marketing arsenal and influence those in the decision-making process.