

**A White Paper on White Papers**

## **Content Glut?**

# **White Papers: The Indirect Marketing Solution**



**By John Seiler**

## Content Glut? White Papers: The Indirect Marketing Solution

Marketing today demands getting inside a prospect's brief attention span, bombarded daily with thousands of selling pitches. There's a way to do that: White Papers, which sell by not selling.

People see through traditional marketing. They don't want to be "sold." They see literally hundreds of ads per day: on Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Not to mention newspapers, magazines, billboards and TV. So anything that smacks of marketing likely is ignored.

The fracturing of media also has fractured attention spans. It makes it difficult for a business to "tell its story" to a potential client or customer. This will continue and accelerate as social media occupy more and more of people's lives. Which will make it even more difficult to get past the mental gatekeeper in each person's mind.

A business trying to attract new customers finds itself facing hurdles not experienced in the past. Even White Papers, which use what I call "indirect marketing," can be ignored if not properly written.

If a White Paper sounds and looks like a normal marketing tool, then it won't be read – because it is not a real White Paper. Indeed, a badly written White Paper even could turn off the potential client or customer, who suspects he's being hoodwinked. Coming to the White Paper for some honest information, he instead is "sold."

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### Traditional marketing: still not working

Individuality. That's the key nowadays. People's attention spans have been shattered by Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and who knows what's next. They are repulsed by the old methods of mass advertising. Even TV is shattering as a mass medium. More new shows have moved off the old air waves, or even cable, to the whims of viewers on Netflix, Amazon, Hulu and other watch-on-demand services.

"Mass advertising has lost its ability to move the masses," warned former Coca-Cola Chief Marketing Officer Sergio Zyman. "Technology has given people many more options than they had in the past and created a consumer democracy. Everybody has a thousand choices for any product they might want to buy, and there are a million different products

competing for their wallets. So marketers increasingly need to find ways to speak to customers individually.”

Choice used to be easy. Three TV channels. The Big Three car companies. White bread or hot dog buns. Now choice chokes the market. Executives and consumers alike tune out anything that blares at them. They don’t want to hear it, see it, smell it. They want to ignore it.

“It’s a paradox: The more brands consumers have to choose from, the more they need to cling to one good brand,” said former John Hancock CEO David F. D’Alessandro in his book, *Brand Warfare: 10 Rules for Building a Killer Brand*. “The incredible plethora of choices consumers now possess has a downside, and it’s called exhaustion. An overwhelming number of possibilities complicates every buying decision.”

But things now have gone even further than he thought. The warfare is not direct. It’s guerrilla warfare. It’s indirect marketing that doesn’t even look like marketing.

### **How About Spending More on Better Ads?**

One solution might be to spend a lot more on the number of ads. Double, triple, quadruple – octuple – ads on Facebook, Google and other social media. Get more weary eyes on your ads and hope the eyes aren’t rubbed out. Throw in some TV ads, maybe billboards. On top, try some newspaper ads, assuming print publications still exist in your area or industry.

That doesn’t work either. “Attention has two dimensions: intensity and duration,” wrote Thales X. Teixeira in a paper for Harvard Business School, *The Rising Cost of Consumer Attention: Why You Should Care, and What You Can Do About It*. “Intensity is a measure of the quality of attention during an interval, while duration refers to its quantity.”

Another solution might be to spend more to make ads better, especially more entertaining. People love to watch clever things, including ads. Most years, the Super Bowl’s ads gain almost as much attention as the game. Online, clever ads pop up on YouTube with jingles as catchy as pop songs. Facebook and Google ad creation has become a science.

The problem is online companies’ rules keep changing almost as fast as viewers’ tastes. *Business Insider* reported on the disaster that hit Raaj

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Kapur Brar, who runs “a small but successful empire of online fashion magazines from his base just outside Toronto. Some of his titles are huge online brands, such as *Fashion & Style Magazine*, which has 1.6 million Facebook fans. That's more fans than *Elle* magazine has.”

Facebook helped Brar build his online empire – until it didn't. Then his Facebook ads lost him \$379,000.

### **White Papers Score Leads With Indirect Marketing**

The real solution to scoring leads is indirect – a White Paper. It provides crucial information to a potential client, without a sell of any kind. If properly written, a White Paper is informative, direct, even entertaining. It's a “sell” so soft it isn't a “sell” at all. Instead of browbeating a client with a sales pitch, a White Paper provides value with no pitch. Only at the end is contact information provided. It also is just information, not a sell.

A White Paper works better than spending more money on more ads, or better ads, because it is something the potential lead actively seeks. It's like searching for something on Wikipedia, finding it and reading it. You just want the information, nothing else, not even the pop-up ads from a Google or Facebook search.

A lead likely is familiar with White Papers on numerous topics, and is eager to get the information you provide without any kind of “sell.” As Sgt. Friday said on the *Dragnet* TV show: Just the facts, ma'am.

According to expert White Paper writer Len Smith, “They are a fantastic way – and a fantastically cost-effective way – of becoming a *Voice in your Industry*. But they're much more than that. They are probably the best sales-lead generation technique available in the B2B environment.”

### **White Papers: They “Sell” Without Being a Pitch**

Leads are harder and harder to get in this age of multiplying social media. Who wants to read another ad? Or fill out another form? Potential leads suffer from Pitch Fatigue.

A White Papers solves Pitch Fatigue by not being a pitch. A potential lead gains something valuable, new information, without being “sold” anything. There isn't even the hint of a pitch. All inquisitive people seek

“White Papers are a fantastic way – and a fantastically cost-effective way – of becoming a *Voice in your Industry*.”

more knowledge, in particular about their area of business. Providing that extra information, at no monetary cost and no “pitch cost,” is a great way to give something valuable to a potential lead, with nothing added but your contact information. A White Paper makes finding new leads almost effortless. The leads like you, and come to you.

“The point of view is what creates the loyalty and the interest,” said SAP Editorial Director Chris Koch. “Content marketing powerhouses like McKinsey and IBM get attention and a loyal following for their content, not because of the format they choose.”

Multiple ads saturate potential lead clients, who no longer pay attention. Putting another ad on top of that is pointless. It only adds to the mind clutter people want to avoid.

Potential leads seek out the non-sales information in a White Paper. It’s like reading a Wikipedia article: only the information is provided. No icing on the cake.

Actually, it’s better. A Wikipedia article tends to be dry and boring. A White Paper can be as exciting as you can make it, drawing the reader in. You can describe a product, process or whole industry. Just make sure to leave out anything concerning your own company. No sales! No pitch! You’re describing, not pushing. You’re gaining a follower, not a client (yet).

According to John Walsh of Iron Creative, “In this day and age, where people are literally absorbing, I don’t know, a million and a half, two million marketing messages a year.... I mean, you have literally a one in a million shot of being heard.” White Papers better those odds.

Meanwhile, ad prices keep going up, even on social media. It costs more to reach your target audience with something that actually will be read.

A White Paper is very cost-effective. You even can write one yourself. Just follow the format in this White Paper on White Papers. You should write it in your own perspective in your industry. Cite your own sources. This makes your White Paper unique, without it being a “sales” paper. If you hire someone to write the White Paper, make sure to convey exactly the (non-sales) information you want in it. The “art” in a White Paper should be minimal, such as quote cutouts, so it doesn’t look too sales-y.

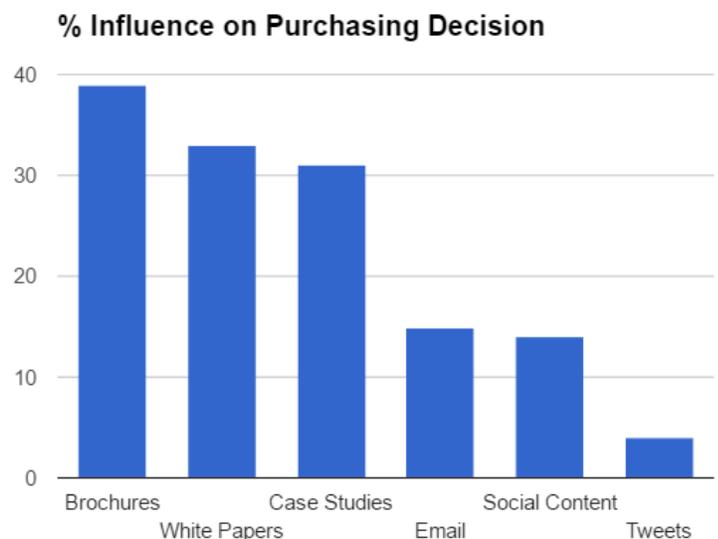
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“Here’s the beauty” of this marketing method, urges White Paper writer Gordon Graham. An effective White Paper “can generate leads 24/7 for a year or two with no further effort. No other marketing tactic can do that. Of course, one white paper alone may not bring in all 500 leads that generate \$10 million in sales. But it might.”

The number of leads the White Paper generates can be tracked. The data then can be used to project potential leads from other White Papers.

### **White Papers Dominate Emails, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. for aiding a purchase.**

According to a 2015 study by Eccolo Media, “Most buyers, in fact, only consume 2 to 5 assets before they are ready to make a purchase. What should those assets be? Buyers reported they read the same number of emails as white papers. But when asked which of those two assets were more influential in their purchasing decision, they picked white papers by a large margin,” 33% for White Papers to just 15% for emails. “But when respondents were asked to rank the top 5 assets they found most influential, they said”: 39% product brochures/data sheets; 33% White Papers; 31% case studies/success stories; 15% email; 14% social content: Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.; 4% tweets.



### **White Papers Generate Leads**

Equinet Media explained, “White Papers Generate Leads. This is probably the most popular benefit of using a White Paper. As they contain both educative content in the form of a long magazine article and direct marketing material in the form of a corporate brochure, they have a high conversion rate. The combination of learning followed by persuasion makes them one of the most powerful marketing tools available.”

Some companies provide the White Paper only after the potential reader first gives an email, which then can be put on a mailing list. But in recent years it has become more common simply to put the White Paper up on

your company's website for anyone to read, with no email required. Contact information only is provided at the end of the White Paper.

When your potential lead clients read your White Paper, they will be compelled to go from beginning to end. They will learn a great deal about something they're interested in, and be happy you provided them the information in a concise and entertaining way. They will not feel they are being manipulated. They will enter the realm of your company and your products without even being called to do so.

Just by publishing the White Paper, in your potential lead's eyes you will become the "expert" in your field. If they have questions about the subject, you will get a call or an email. They will check out other areas of your Website, including the direct sales areas. You will have "sold" without selling.

According to a business story by Justin Pugsley in *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, "If you sell relatively complex and expensive products and services to businesses, then you should probably be publishing White Papers. A client is unlikely to commit to an expensive and complicated product or project until they first have all the facts.

"They'll probably hold meetings with other people in their organization to assess what you're offering. Therefore, the more compelling information they have at their fingertips about your company and what it offers, the better the chances of you closing the sale. White Papers are ideal for explaining everything from new manufacturing processes through to the impact of new government rules on business....



"A truly great White Paper is educational and even groundbreaking. It should have your prospects nodding in agreement as they read it. They should come away better informed and believing that you clearly grasp their problem and understand how to fix it.

"A well-produced White Paper also places you as the go-to expert in your field. That not only helps justify buying from you, but possibly paying a premium, as your company's expertise makes you a safer bet to do business with."

In these days of data overload and information overflow, White Papers are a fantastic way to get your company's information out in a way that doesn't "push" a sale – and push a potential lead away. It should be a key part of every company's marketing strategy.

### **About John Seiler**

John Seiler is the President of John Seiler Marketing. Prior to that, he was a writer, columnist and editor for 29 years at *The Orange County Register* newspaper in Santa Ana, Calif.

John also writes business studies and articles for Laffer Associates, the Fleming Foundation and other organizations and media.

He is a veteran of the U.S. Army, where he was a Russian linguist.

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