

White Papers

When we think of copywriting niches, we often break them down by marketplace, i.e., financial, health, nonprofit, self-help, etc.

But, you can also carve out a nice living for yourself by becoming an expert at a specific copywriting service. For example, many copywriters have found writing autoresponder copy to be an extremely profitable and fulfilling niche.

Today I'm going to talk about another such service-based niche opportunity: writing white papers.

A typical white paper takes from 30 to 50 hours to write, depending upon the complexity of the topic and the amount of research needed.

When you're just starting out, you should be able to ask for a fee of at least \$2,500 per white paper.

If you do a good job, that figure will rise quickly.

By your fourth white paper, you should be able to bump up your asking price to \$4,000 per white paper. And after a year or so, you should be able to charge \$5,000 (or more).

As you can see, it can be very lucrative ...

If you write just two white papers your first month, you'll make \$5,000. By your second, you could potentially be on track to make \$8,000 a month (\$96,000 a year), again by writing *just two white papers per month*.

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Like everything in life, the more you do something, the faster and better you get at it. After a while, you should be able to write three to four white papers each month and bring in between \$150,000 and \$200,000 per year!

To give you a feel for whether writing white papers is a career you might want to pursue, the following is a quick overview of the white paper marketplace and what's required — starting with the basic question:

What is a white paper?

A white paper is a document that both educates and persuades. It identifies a problem and then offers a solution. It is a marketing tool exclusively used in the Business-to-Business (B2B) marketplace.

White papers are ideal for introducing new products and new technology innovations. They help key decision-makers or influencers reach a decision about implementing a particular solution.

In addition to creating leads and driving sales, they are also a great way to generate awareness about a company and its products and services. Plus, they are a way for a company to build up its credibility within its marketplace and establish itself as a thought leader.

White papers are usually between 5 and 10 pages in length.

As a White Paper Specialist, your objective is to get prospects thinking about the problem and the solution featured in the white paper, and to then introduce one of your client's products or services as the best choice for that solution.

Is writing white papers something you'd enjoy?

While you can make great money, writing white papers is not for everyone.

You have to be part writer, part investigative reporter/detective ... because doing research is a very important element of the job.

A lot of your time will be spent digging up facts and scanning through data. You should also be comfortable interviewing business experts both inside and outside your client's company. It's important that you have a knack for asking the right questions so you can quickly unearth the answers you need to make your case.

You'll still be required to write in an easy-going, informal style. That won't change. But, you'll be writing informational documents with a more objective point of view, versus writing something with a sales spin.

Do I have to have a working knowledge of B2B copywriting to do this?

The answer is that while it's not absolutely necessary, it's strongly recommended.

In addition to it helping you write copy that really connects with your audience, having a strong knowledge of B2B copy will allow you (should you choose) to take advantage of your client's other related B2B requirements.

B2B is a 6-trillion-dollar industry. According to the Direct Marketing Association, Business-to-Business companies spend over \$55 **billion** per year on B2B marketing.

And here's the thing, when most people start out to learn copywriting, they initially focus on Business-to-Consumer (B2C) copy. So, there tends not to be as much competition among copywriters in the B2B arena.

How big is the demand for white papers?

According to a study by B2B magazine and Junta42 Match, about a third of a marketer's budget is spent on custom content and creation — *and half of that portion of the budget is spent on white papers.*

In the United States alone, there are 240,000 B2B companies with over 50 employees.

I couldn't find the exact figure of how much money is spent on white papers every year, but I think you can see from the above statistics, it's in the billions and billions of dollars.

Why is the demand for white papers so huge?

The simple answer is people use them and they work.

According to a study by Eccolo Media, 84% of businesses find white papers either extremely or moderately influential in their purchasing decisions.

The study also found that 77% of business decision-makers said they read one or more white papers last year.

They also found that white papers are the most viral piece of marketing collateral with 89% saying they pass them along to others. One in three said they shared them with three or more people.

What you should do before you start writing

Define your target reader — Like writing a sales letter, knowing your audience is the key to writing a good white paper.

It's important to identify all the different potential readers of your white paper. Their hot buttons are usually quite different. For example, if you're writing about accounting software, the CEO will want to know that it has a huge ROI while the Accounting Manager wants to know that it is easy-to-learn and is backed up by excellent technical support.

It's not unusual for businesses to hire you to write multiple white papers, each one addressing a different segment of their audience. Which means more work for you!

(Note: In these situations, clients usually expect a discount of 20 to 25% on the alternative versions of the "same" white paper.)

Interview key people — Ask your client who the best people in his company would be to interview. Ask him for names of people in the industry that it also might be helpful to speak with. Do online research to identify anyone who can help your cause that might be interested in talking with you.

Gather information — Search Google for analyst reports, other white papers, industry articles, case studies, etc. Check out the competition's website, white papers, and news releases.

Here are some Google sites that will help you with your search:

- Google News — to search for recent news about your topic
- Google Books — searches a wide variety of books
- Google Scholar — searches scholarly and academic publications
- Google Groups — searches newsgroup content
- Google Uncle Sam — searches U.S. government sites

Six steps to writing a successful white paper

When writing a white paper, it's important to back up any claims you make with examples and information from third-party sources. When appropriate, you should include any charts, diagrams, or graphs that will drive home the points you are making.

The following is a breakdown of the six main components of a typical white paper:

1. **Identify the problem** — The first thing you do is identify the problem your reader is facing.

2. **Offer proof that the problem exists** — Next, you offer proof that the problem exists and highlight the pain that will result if it's left unattended.
3. **Talk about any additional problems that may arise** — If there are additional problems and issues that the reader should be aware of, mention them here. The bigger and more numerous the problems, the more likely they are to invest in a solution.
4. **Talk about the solution** — Explain how the problem can be fixed. Don't get specific in terms of your client's products and/or services; offer a general solution to the problem.
5. **Talk about your client's solution** — Describe the benefits of it and why it's better than the competition's solution.
6. **Add a call-to-action** — You end by telling the reader about the next step you'd like them to take. Maybe it's downloading a demo version of a software package, or calling a toll-free number if they have any questions, or going to a website to look at case studies.

Ways your client can promote their white paper

White papers are often used as an incentive to get people to sign up for a company's newsletter (they'll need a landing page to do this, which represents another money-making opportunity for you).

To encourage sharing, some businesses offer them as a free "no strings attached" download on their website or blog.

They may also want to distribute printed copies at their trade shows or include in their company press kit.