



How to...

Write a Good B2B White Paper

Introduction

Digital technology has made it much easier to share marketing materials with large numbers of people, both directly and through third party channels, such as industry news websites. As a result, over the past decade or so, white papers have become an integral part of the B2B communications mix.

White papers provide an opportunity to take a deep dive into any topic that's important to you and, most importantly, to your customers. They are flexible documents, with no set rules governing what information they must contain, or how they should look. In a white paper, what you say – and how you say it – is completely up to you.

Nevertheless, just as with any type of communications activity, it's essential to consider the factors that will increase the chances that your white paper will make an impact. In the ingredients sector, new white papers are published every day and competition for readers' attention is fierce.

With that in mind, we have put together this guide to creating white papers that will appeal to your target audience and influence the way they feel about your company. It's based on Ingredient Communications' many years of experience helping ingredients companies to produce engaging and effective white papers that have gone on to generate thousands of sales leads.



What is a White Paper?

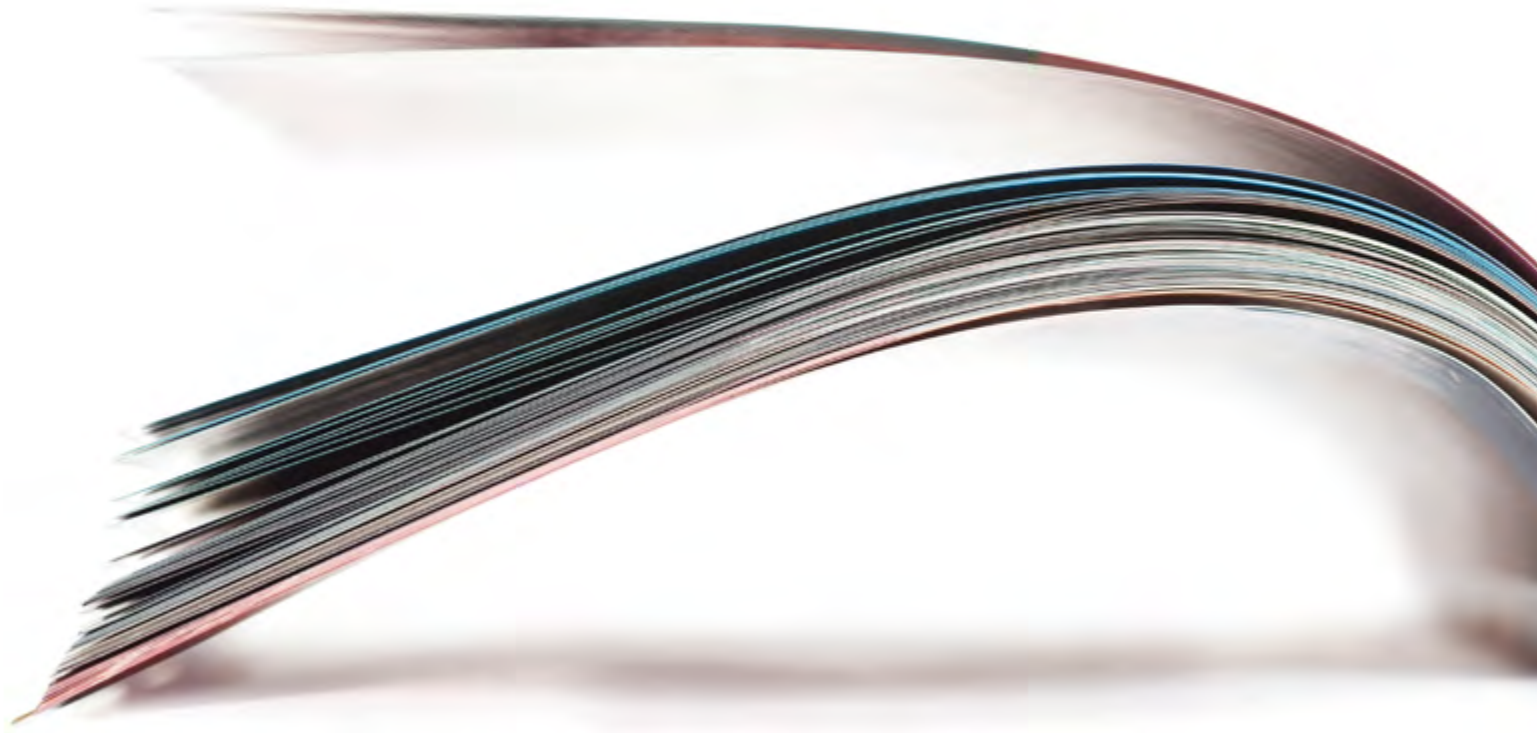
What you write about in a white paper is your decision to make. But, generally speaking, white papers focus on one specific topic, which is explored in depth. This could be technical or scientific, or it could be related to market trends and insights. It could even be a combination of these.

Unlike a press release or a feature article, there's no definitive definition of a white paper. It can mean different things to different people, and it can be presented in a variety of ways. However, in general a white paper is:

- Created by a business or organisation for B2B marketing purposes
- Produced as a standalone document
- Distributed in digital and/or printed form
- Longer than a brochure, but shorter than a report
- Focused on a specific topic
- Comprised of text and graphics and/or images, with a narrative theme running throughout
- Available free of charge to the target audience

There are also different options for format and presentation. For example, your white paper could be A4, or perhaps A5, or even another size altogether. It could be portrait, like this document, or landscape. You get to decide which fonts to use, which images to include, and how long the document should be.







White papers offer a lot of flexibility, making them an effective way to engage directly with your target audience and to tell your stories in an unfiltered way, in your own voice.









Why Create a White Paper?

When it comes to B2B communications, there are many options available to you. But creating a white paper can be one of the most effective.

The advantages of a white paper include:





-  You have complete control over the content and the way it is presented
-  The content is 'evergreen' – meaning it won't become out of date quickly
-  It can be updated easily with new information
-  Distribution is straightforward
-  It can be used as a resource for other communications activities, such as press releases and feature articles
-  It can establish you as a 'thought leader' – i.e. an authority on a particular topic

These are all great reasons to consider producing white papers. Another is that they can be used in multiple ways to promote your business, for example:

-  To generate leads through paid-for digital advertising campaigns
-  To drive traffic to your website
-  As a handout at trade shows and other events
-  To enrich customer meetings
-  For direct marketing, both print and digital
-  As an added-value source of information in press packs

It's a good idea to think carefully about how you plan to use your white paper. Producing one is time-consuming, so before doing so consider a strategy for getting it in front of your target audience.

If you can't envisage any circumstances in which you will be able to promote your business with a white paper, then perhaps another form of communication is more appropriate. Other options include:

-  Press releases
-  Feature articles
-  Media interviews
-  Videos and social media posts

However, if you are certain that a white paper is a good fit for your marketing strategy, then it's time to start the creative process.

What Makes a Good White Paper?

The definition of a successful white paper is subjective. However, Ingredient Communications has many years' experience of helping our clients to create them. As such, we have developed a good understanding of what works well – and what works less well.



Offer something new

A good white paper will give its readers something they can't find anywhere else, such as the results of new consumer research, or the findings of a scientific study.



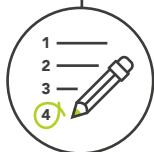
Write for the reader, not for you

The best white papers will engage readers by delivering information and insights that are relevant to them. This means it's a good idea to put yourself in their place and think about the content that will be most interesting to your target audience.



Make it non-promotional

Naturally you want to showcase your company in a positive way. But it's better to take a light-touch approach to self-promotion. If your white paper is impartial and objective, your readers will be more likely to value and trust the information it offers.



Map out a coherent structure

All the best stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. By ensuring your white paper has a logical narrative, you will keep the reader engaged for longer.



Turn it into a work of art

First impressions count. If your white paper looks great, it will capture people's attention and make it more enjoyable to read. Investing in the services of a professional designer is always worthwhile. You might also consider including infographics. They'll really help to bring your story to life on the page.

What Makes a Good White Paper?

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Use language that's right for your audience

Your writing style should be tailored to your target audience. For example, if you are addressing a very technical topic with scientists in mind, your copy should reflect this. On the other hand, if you are covering trends and insights for a largely marketing audience, your style might be lighter. In any case, the more accessible your white paper the better. If you're producing it in English, for example, remember that many of your readers will not speak English as their first language. That means it's a good idea to keep sentences simple and to avoid jargon, puns and idiomatic expressions.

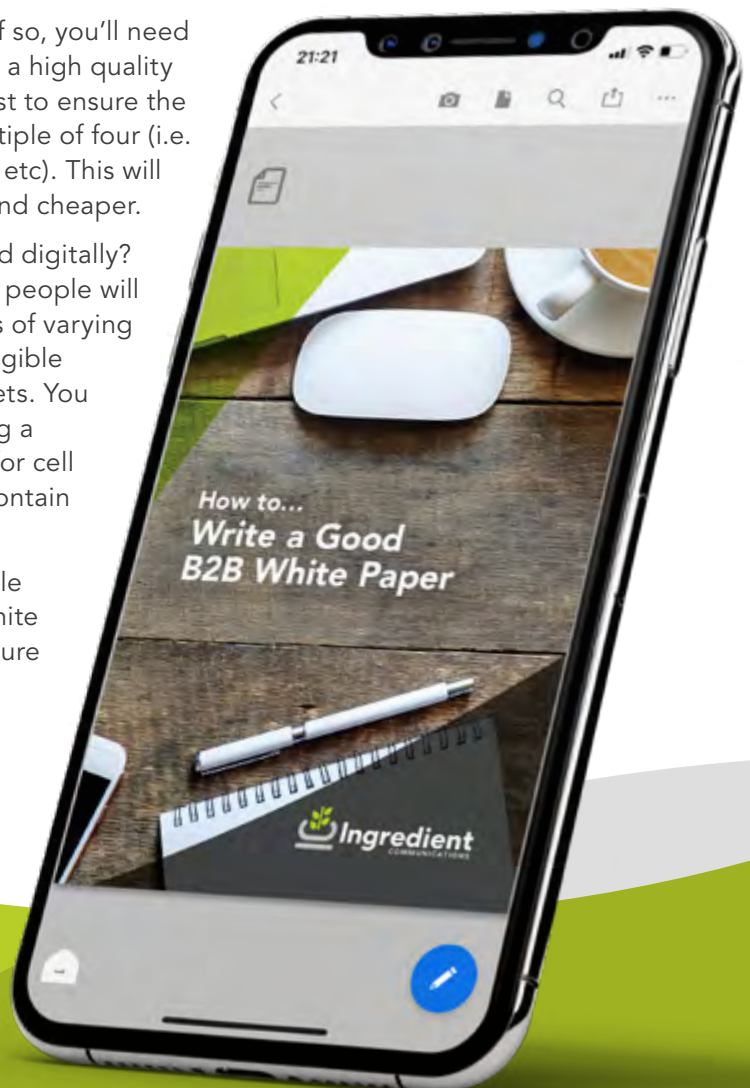


Choose an appropriate format

Will your white paper be printed? If so, you'll need to make sure your designer creates a high quality 'print ready' version. It's usually best to ensure the length of your white paper is a multiple of four (i.e. four pages, eight pages, 12 pages, etc). This will make printing and binding easier and cheaper.

Will your white paper be distributed digitally? If so, think about the ways in which people will read it. Many will view it on screens of varying sizes. As such, ensure that text is legible even on compact laptops and tablets. You might also wish to consider creating a mobile-friendly version optimised for cell phones. Digital versions can also contain interactive elements such as links.

Even in the digital age, some people will still prefer to read or share a white paper in a physical form, so make sure the document is easy to print.



What Comes Next?

You've written and designed your white paper. Now it's time to find your audience. Here are some ways to do this.

Paid-for advertising

Many B2B news websites will offer you the chance to showcase your white paper to their readers through paid-for advertising. A popular way to do this is through a promotional email (sometimes known as an e-shot or e-blast) inviting people to click through and download your white paper free of charge. Remember, however, that you will need somewhere to 'host' your white paper. You can host it on your own website, or some news websites will host your white paper on their site for you, which may incur an extra charge.

Either way, make sure that you have a way to capture the names and email addresses of the people downloading the white paper, so you can follow up with them later. Besides promotional emails, you can also promote your white paper through e-newsletter and website advertising. Promoting your white paper with digital advertising rather than print advertising is advisable, because it makes it easy for people to click through and register their interest.

Events and Meetings

Professionally printed, your white paper will make a great hand-out at trade shows and conferences. Your sales team can also give it to customers during sales meetings.

Direct marketing

If you have your own database of customers and sales prospects, you can email them your white paper directly.

As a resource

Your white paper contains valuable information that could be useful for creating press releases and feature articles for the B2B media. You could also include a copy of the white paper in digital and printed press packs.



Can We Help?

Do you need support with your white paper strategy? If so, Ingredient Communications is the perfect partner. We have lots of experience of writing and designing engaging white papers on a range of technical and marketing topics in the ingredients sector. We can also help you with consumer research and your distribution strategy.

We are:



Global

Based in the UK with media contacts all over the world



Experienced

A long track record in the food, beverage, nutrition, personal care and pharmaceutical sectors



Writers

With backgrounds in senior positions in journalism and PR



Connected

Our own database of hundreds of relevant journalists

To find out more about how Ingredient Communications can help you, get in touch with our friendly and professional team today:



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