

newstalk 3, 2008: Educate with white papers

Buyer's guides, competitive reviews, technology backgrounders – white papers go by many names. But what are they? Why are they so popular? And how can you market with them?

The what: a marketing tool that educates

In plain English, a white paper outlines how businesses can best overcome a particular challenge. Some are highly technical, like the lengthy *Quality of Service* paper published by Global Knowledge, an American company specializing in IT and business training. The document explores one way to prioritize certain types of network traffic. A manual, if you will.

But a white paper is also an excellent way to spell out how a business benefits from a course of action. Take Inovis, a US-based provider of business community management solutions. Titled *Accelerating Trading Partner Performance*, the paper “examines the challenges facing retailers and manufacturers in managing trading partner data and introduces the advantages of on-demand supply chain solutions.” It's concise, easy to read, and makes a clear point.

White papers see the big picture, delve into pressing issues. Compare this with brochures – they sell a specific product or service. In white papers, selling is done very discreetly, if at all.

The why: people always want to learn

Hand out a white paper – and your expertise with it? Hardly. Your audience will recognize you as a leader, thinking, “This company is an authority. How can we benefit from this?” Tired of transparent sales pitches and deluged with information, executives are looking for resources to help them make sound decisions.

Apani Networks, an IT security company, is a perfect example. After switching from hard-sell collateral to informational pieces, the business saw a 12% jump in the number of leads. With the sales pitch taken out, people were more willing to listen to Apani Networks.

The how: make it one-to-one

Tailor your white paper to your ideal reader. Writing about switching technology (like Adept Technology does)? C-level executives want to know how the technology keeps their company competitive, whereas production managers want to hear the nitty-gritty of which automation boosts productivity, and how. Each reader has different needs – so zero in.

What expertise will you share?

German companies are recognized the world over for their technical expertise. International readers would no doubt be interested in gaining access to these capabilities through white papers and learning who is at the forefront of a specific industry. So overall, these documents have tremendous potential for German companies to create growth.