

How to Get Unstuck

When Writing Your White Paper

At the Beginning — You don't know where to start

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

1. Do you have a good understanding of what a white paper is?
(If you need a refresher, see my YouTube video "[What Is a White Paper?](#)")

POP QUIZ

A white paper is a _____.

It argues for a _____ solution.

To back up its assertions, it uses _____.

True or False: A white paper discusses good arguments *against* its solution.

2. Why is a white paper appropriate for your marketing problem?
3. Who *exactly* are you writing it for? (Be very specific. E.g., "Owners of coffee shops without drive-up windows.")
4. What is the big problem that your reader will be able to solve (or at least move toward a solution) by reading your white paper?
5. By releasing a white paper you are saying, "We have valuable industry knowledge, things you don't know." So what do YOU know that THEY want to know? (This is what will motivate them to start reading.)
6. In 20 seconds or less tell me what your white paper is about. Sell me (your target reader) on reading it. (Hint: It better have something really good in it for ME.)

Don't worry if you can't answer these right away. Or your answers change as you think about them. Keep going until your foundation is rock solid.

Somewhere In the Middle — You're stuck on what to write next

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. When you can't write, stop and plan.
2. If you don't have a detailed outline, create one.
3. If you have an outline, but you're still stuck, it's not detailed enough. Add in the sub-points and the sub-sub-points you need to reach your conclusion.
4. Find authoritative sources to quote for each of your points. Don't let a skeptical reader say, "That's just your opinion."

No Authoritative Sources — You can't find supporting quotes

OPTIONS TO TRY:

1. Create the research you can't find. Have your company or client conduct an unbiased survey designed to give you the data you need. (The downside is that this can be expensive and time consuming.)
2. Analyze data your company or client has already collected. Sales statistics, measurable market trends, any other concrete info your company has collected while doing business. Slice and dice to get the supporting stats you need.
3. Try the potluck approach. Set aside your chosen white paper topic and just look for the kinds of quotes that *are* available about other topics. If you can collect nine good quotes that are related in some way and can support an argument related to your original one, rebuild your outline around them.
4. Widen your search. You can include authoritative sources from outside your industry niche. For example, you some quotes about staffing strategies in the fast food industry. Look for quotes about staffing in other kinds of businesses that are also applicable to your niche.