

# How to Write a Lead-Generating White Paper for a Medical Device

By Alec Alpert

Unlike other products, a medical device presents special challenges to a white paper writer. For example, writing methods that effectively sell DVD players are ineffective for selling MRI machines to hospitals. Why? Because a medical device directly interacts with human bodies, and therefore gives rise to risks of injury. Actually, the main concern of medical device manufacturers is to mitigate the risks to patients or users while delivering the maximum benefits. All medical device manufacturers are required to comply with the medical device regulations that ensure safety and efficacy of devices. Hence, when writing for the medical technology industry, a writer enters a highly regulated world where even marketing collateral tends to be written in an academic style.

This means that to write a successful medical device white paper, a writer needs not only good writing and marketing skills, but also a thorough knowledge of engineering, and the regulatory environment. A writer should be able to grasp the complex science and technology behind the device, and translate them into persuasive writing without any hype. The paper has to engage the logical mind of scientific readers, not so much their emotions, which is the opposite of methods used to market consumer goods.



A lead generation white paper for a medical device is a hybrid between an educational essay and a sales brochure. It educates and gracefully sells at the same time. The writing process starts with determining the topic, the released device, or the scientific principles and technology used (or to be used) in the device.

The next step is to identify the ideal target reader. This is crucial. The writer must clearly see who the paper's audience will be. A medical device paper is usually written for a diverse audience of professors, doctors, medical physicists, scientists, technologists, hospital administrators and regulatory agencies. Knowing the audience sets the paper's level of sophistication, scope, tone, structure and vocabulary.

In the case of a medical device, a white paper usually talks to two predominant groups. One includes readers with a scientific mind who are mainly interested in the device's features and an in-depth analysis of its technology, often at the atomic level. The other group comprises administrators looking to grasp a device's business benefits and see how it can save labor, cut costs and improve regulatory compliance. Hence, a writer is challenged to strike a balance

between discussing a device's benefits and features. In fact, it is not unusual for a writer to be pulled in opposite directions by a device's manufacturer; engineers and scientists want a technical paper, but marketing managers want a sales document. It's vital to get the balance right.

So how is a writer to successfully resolve this dilemma? A good starting point is to prepare an outline of the paper and discuss and approve it with the manufacturer. The writer, however, should advise these people that a lead-generating paper needs to focus on a device's benefits, rather than just its features, or how great the company is. The outline will establish the paper's direction, focus and final destination before the writing even begins.

Once the outline is approved, the next step is to interview subject matter experts who have an intimate knowledge of the topic. They are the design engineers, scientists and other professionals working for the medical device manufacturer. Nobody knows the device better than the people who designed and made it. For this reason, a writer must take these interviews seriously and allocate sufficient time for them. He has to polish his interviewing skills and prepare for the interviews well in advance.

Besides interviewing, a writer should also access the relevant product documentation. The law requires all medical device manufacturers to maintain a Design History File, which contains product development documents, such as product specifications, drawings, validations, operator manuals, and so on. Many questions also can be answered by simply searching the Internet. And, of course, a library or bookstore also provides valuable information.

What is a white paper's structure? It naturally begins with the title which is a crucial part of the paper. This can make or break the paper, and must be relevant, compelling, and engaging, enticing the readers to read further. It should be simple and focus on the benefits that the device delivers.

Then comes the first page, which sets the stage. The remainder of the paper evolves from the first paragraphs. The paper can be only as good as its first page. Readers will continue reading only if the first page convinces them to do so.

The rest of the paper is divided into manageable sections. As with any writing, the process is repetitive: writing drafts, refining, editing, and re-editing many times until the paper is nearly perfect. The writer must stay focused on appealing to the target audience, and strike the right balance between the benefits and features.

Sentences and paragraphs have to be concise, with wide margins around the page. Bullets and headlines should be used generously, instead of long passages of uninterrupted text. The paper needs to be laid out so that a reader can quickly grasp the gist of it just by scanning the sub-headlines.

The end of a white paper is a call to action, which asks readers to contact the manufacturer for a meeting, demonstration, evaluation, analysis, discussion or some sort of next step(s).

A lead generation white paper is typically 5 to 12 pages long, and mostly comprises text with minimal graphics.