

The Purpose of White Papers + Content Tips

Learn about what a white paper is, how it can be useful, and what you should include in it.

Introduction

Rob: Let's look at white papers. This is an internal document that we're talking about.

And it is critical from the standpoint it is the central repository of what you're about.



What is a White Paper?

It is a summary document, no more than three, four pages, because of how it's going to be used.

That in brief paragraphs one, two, three paragraphs at the most. In each of the topics that we're gonna put into this white paper, you explain some critical element of the work.

Right down to a definition of your terms. And so this is a centralizing document from this document, when you have it complete, you'll be pulling out your, the materials that go on your website, the materials that go into your proposals, your fundraising requests, and seeking of funds.

This will go into the recruiting of staff and volunteers, this will go into helping your board members, fully understand what it is they're embracing so that they can do advocacy.

This'll also help your advocates be able to better explain the work. And it's a place that you pick and choose what you wanna expose others to.

Now you can give people the white paper which gives them a comprehensive look at your work in very summarized form.

You may look at some of the tasks that go into the white paper and say well, this is several pages of information, if we were to do it correctly and you'd be right.

But what we're talking about in the white paper is a summarization of what might be in a much more expanded form or that you would use in some form or another.

So for example, some of you may be putting proposals out in front of governments.

And governments tend to be and corporations and others that are into a very institutional approach to their funding may have a whole bunch of things that they want on their applications.

That kind of information, will be behind the kinds of statements that are in your white paper.

So, there's a number of elements that go into a white paper. Excuse me a second, it's allergy season here on useless bay.

Brad: And Rob I've addressed in the chat room a statement about what a white paper is. So it's not a racial statement.

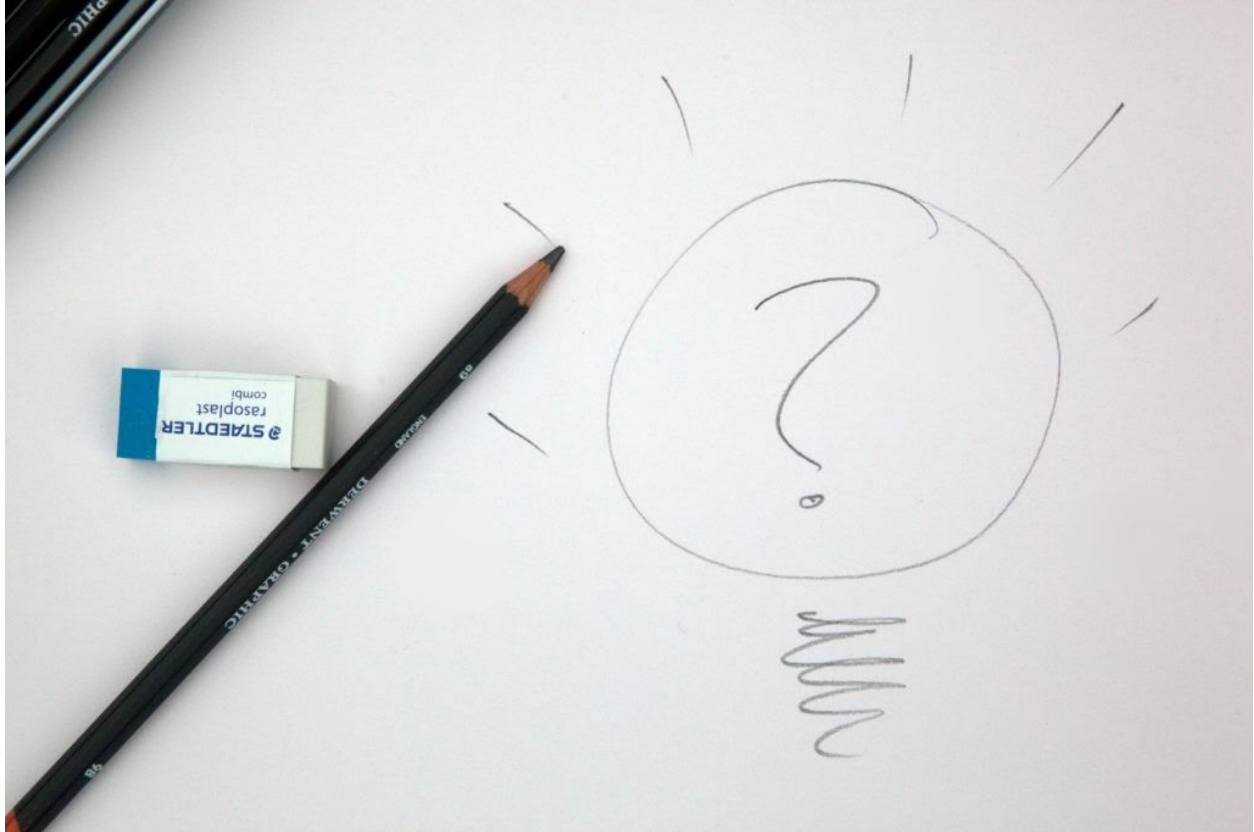
Rob: Oh that's right.

Brad: It's about a blank sheet of paper and that's important. And why it has a history.

Rob: Yeah, that's not a blindspot on our part.

It's just a phrase that we've been using for a document that you start with a blank piece of paper and fill in.

So maybe we should call it the blank paper or something. But for our purposes, we're gonna call it a white paper.



Include Your Purpose, Passion, and Values in Your White Paper

If you remember, in one of the earlier sessions we talked about [the three questions](#).

This is where you summarize the answers to those questions. What is God showing me? What's He telling me to do about what He's showing me? And how will I know I'm accomplishing what I'm supposed to be doing in His will?

Those three questions are gonna be answered in the white paper.

We're gonna talk about our passion. What gets us up in the morning? Why are we doing this? What drives us to this?

And we're gonna talk about our values. What are the critical ways that we approach our work our team, our supporters, [how do we work within our orbit?](#)

And what are those critical things? We'll have our operating principles in here perhaps.

That may be a much longer document, but we'll refer to it. That this is the way we go about our work.

This is our targets. This is what we do.



Define Key Terms in Your White Paper

I mentioned definitions your lexicon.

This is one of the most misunderstood parts of what we do. We all in our work use jargon, so much so that we're not aware that it's jargon anymore.

It's just a common way of not having to explain ourselves. Every time we use a phrase like, church planting.

That is one of my favorites for a white paper. What do we mean by church?

And what do we mean by planting? When I say church planting every one of us gets a picture in our mind.

That's the thing about words. They spark your imagination and every one of us will have a slightly different picture of what we mean by church.

Those of us in the West more than likely and many places across the world think of a building, and a community inside that building.

We gotta think further into what does the community mean? Is it our small group, is it our large church.

What is church? And you and I all know, no matter how engaged we've been internationally that church is small group, it's large group it can be focused in a number of ways.

But this is, where we explain what we mean by church. When we say church planting, what do we mean by planted? What's an established church? What does it look like?

I once knew a group that I think was effective. I didn't get to follow their work as closely as I would have liked. Because I was fascinated by their model.

But they were walking excuse me, the hills of what they call hills in Nepal. They don't even name things under 10,000 feet in Nepal.

They have so many high mountains, including Everest and others. That above 10,000, they get names. And so they call them hills below 10,000.

What we call mountains they call hills. They're walking these hills. and for them, they'd walk into a village.

Hospitality is a key element in the Nepali culture. And so you don't carry your store of food or your bedding with you. You have a very small amount of stuff when you're moving.

And in the hills of Nepal, you gotta walk. And so everywhere you walk, you're expected when you get to a village that you will be taken in, so that when those villagers are walking somewhere they know they're gonna be taken in it's part of their culture.

So they go into a village and they explain half the gospel. And then say, if you want to, they go in the morning explain half the gospel standing in the square.

People from the village come around and listen. And they say, "If you wanna hear the second half of the story," so they tell half the story.

"If you wanna hear the second half of the story, meet us out by this tree or this spot after your midday work or meal, and we'll explain the second half."

And then they go to that spot and whoever shows up, they consider a church.

And whoever asks the best questions they considered the pastor. And so they'd leave them with some resources whether it was a cassette tape back then or written materials could have been any number of things that they left behind.

They left lots of resources the person that asks the best questions they kind of put in charge.

They considered that church planting.

I don't know if that would fit everyone's definition but in their white paper they need to show that so that you understand that's what they mean by church planting.

Some of us are familiar with larger organizations. You have AIM, in others church planting could be a multi-year effort.

In which a full congregation is established and disciplined. And a pastor is prepared and released into that.

And all sorts of other things are brought to bear for that pastor including training institutions and on and on and on and relationships and further disciplining things setting up Sunday schools.

Whatever it is that they choose to do all of that goes into these definitions. It is really critical to understand how and explore the jargons of your work.

So that's a part of this is, is your lexicon, your dictionary. Everyone has one.

You need to work at discovering yours and making sure it's there.

Because most of us use jargon without understanding that others may not understand that word. When we use it in the same way we use it.