



5 practical takeaways from an analysis of 50 healthcare white papers

How are leading healthcare companies using white papers in 2023? Get ahead in your white paper planning with a breakdown of current trends and recommendations to help you boost visibility, leads and sales.

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Introduction

Short and snappy content has its place, but when it comes to healthcare technology and applied medical research, audiences are hungry for evidence and insight. White papers are a powerful tool to explain ground-breaking technology, share original research, and challenge conventional thinking in your industry.



Healthcare organisations use white papers to:

- share hot-off-the-press research findings to an expert (or not-so-expert) audience
- offer a walk-through of a newly launched medical device (and evidence that it works)
- shed new light on a thorny industry challenge
- suggest novel uses cases for healthcare technology
- provide an in-depth analysis of a specific topic to persuade decision-makers or help readers solve a problem.

These are evidence-based, long-form written reports that promote a product or idea.

A white paper isn't an overt sales pitch, but it can help you establish credibility and position your organisation as an authority in your industry.

Often, the aim is to generate leads and support sales conversations. Sometimes, the goal is simply to raise awareness of the brand or concept.

Used strategically, a stand-out white paper can power your entire marketing strategy, helping you build a relationship with potential partners and customers.



If you're planning to use a white paper as part of your marketing and communication efforts, perhaps you're wondering:

- How can we use our white paper to support sales and marketing?
- Do we need to have original research to share?
- Is there still a place for white papers alongside bitesize digital formats?
- What sort of structure should we use?
- How much should we say about our product or service? (We don't want to be salesy!)
- Should our white paper be gated or ungated?

To help you answer these questions, we analysed 50 white papers by leading healthcare, medical and biotechnology organisations to see how they approached the task.

You'll find a breakdown of 5 key takeaways so you can plan and produce your own white paper with better results.



How were the 50 white papers chosen?

Which healthcare companies were included in the analysis?

To get a flavour of how different types of health and medical organisations tackle white papers, we selected companies with published papers from a variety of industry lists for a mix of:

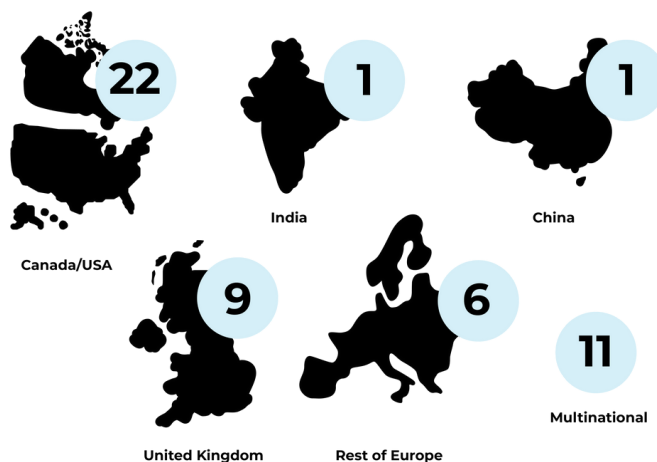
- sectors (healthcare services, health and medical technology, life sciences)
- geographical locations (US, UK, EU, global)
- type of organisation (multinational, start-up, non-profit)

**The industry lists are provided in Annex A.
The 50 companies selected are listed in Annex B.**

What counts as a 'white paper'?

In line with our working definition of 'evidence-based, long-form written report that promotes a product or idea', we included white papers, discussion papers, position papers, insights/trends reports and explainer documents, published within the last 3 years. We left out annual and corporate reports (though these would be interesting to look at another time).

The aim was not to provide a comprehensive review, but to get a sense of the different styles and approaches to white paper writing across the healthcare industry, and see what we can learn.



B2B healthcare



Health-related consumer tech



Medical research



Pharma



Medical technology/device



Non-profit



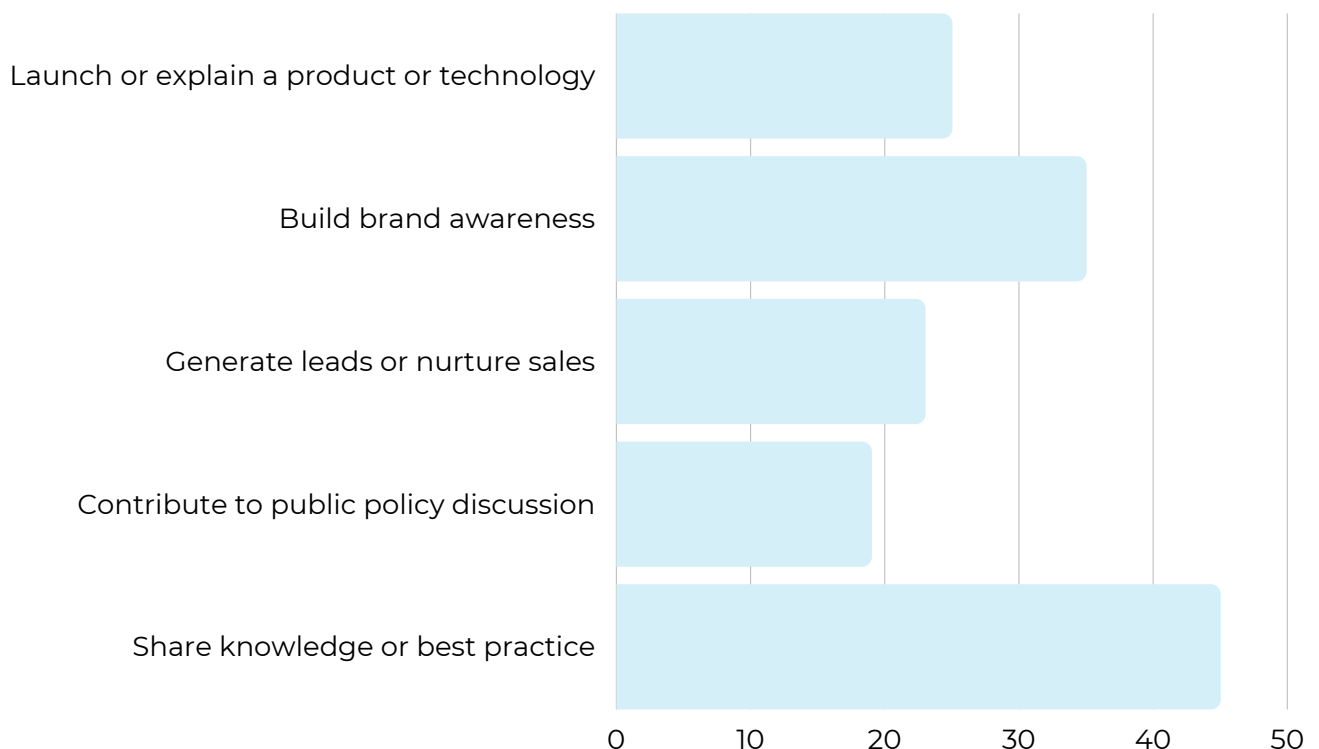
Biotech

Takeaway 1: Be clear about your purpose and audience

Before we get into structure and format, let's consider why healthcare organisations might use white papers in the first place.

Some companies in our sample were explicit about the purpose of their paper. For others, we inferred their likely goal from the paper's positioning and call to action. Most appeared to pursue more than one goal. Some of the most common white paper goals are discussed below.

Number of papers in each category



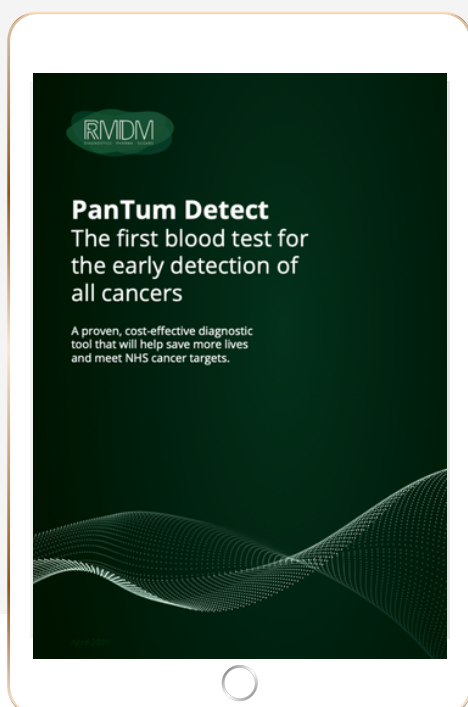
To launch or explain a product or technology

'Explainer' white papers were most popular with medical device and healthcare technology companies who want to present sophisticated technology, advanced scientific techniques and new applications to potential users.

Most explainer papers in the sample followed a similar approach: providing general context to set the scene, explaining relevant concepts, and then presenting evidence from clinical or real-world studies to prove the effectiveness of the device or technology.

For example, Hologic used a white paper to explain how their AI technology applies deep learning algorithms to breast cancer tomosynthesis. This paper discusses the role of AI in breast cancer imaging, then describes the company's software and how it aids radiologists in their work. As is common with explainer papers, it relies on data to demonstrate the technology's potential impact (in this case, using findings from a multi-reader, multi-case study).

With this type of paper, it's important to pay attention to what readers already know. Expert radiologists would expect detailed discussion of imaging techniques, but may be less familiar with the basics of artificial intelligence, so the paper had to provide the right amount of detail for familiar and unfamiliar concepts.



One of The Copy Prescription's clients, RMDM, needed a white paper to explain their novel blood test for the early detection of cancer to policymakers. Recognising that policymakers would want plenty of evidence of the test's reliability, but would not necessarily be familiar with the underlying science, the paper broke down the detail into bite-size chunks and focused on the benefits to patients and public health priorities.

To build brand awareness and demonstrate expertise

One of the most common reasons to produce a white paper is to enhance brand awareness. By producing well-researched and insightful white papers on emerging healthcare trends or critical industry challenges, companies can position themselves as an authoritative voice in the field.

As they disseminate these papers through their websites, social media, industry publications and conferences, they establish their brand as a reliable and recognisable source of information. This catches the attention of potential customers, funders, employees and policymakers, and elevates their status as a 'thought leader'.

Unlike explainer papers, thought leadership white papers don't directly discuss the company's product, and are more likely to position their product category as an attractive solution. Naturally, as the authority in that category, their product would be the top choice when the reader is eventually looking to purchase.

In our sample, CVS Health used a white paper to share an analysis of shifting trends in vaccine hesitancy among minorities, based on their own research. There's no direct reference to CVS services, but by shedding light on an industry challenge, they can position their brand as a helpful source of reliable data and insights.

Similarly, Big Health published a paper investigating the impact of poor sleep on health and happiness, authored by a subject matter expert. Readers will see the digital therapeutics brand as credible, evidence-based and approachable.



To generate leads or nurture sales

Out of 50 papers, just under half required readers to provide an email address in exchange for access. This suggests that one of their goals is to build a list of potential leads – readers who have a genuine interest in the topic and who may become customers for the company's products or services. These readers enter the company's marketing and sales ecosystem, and will likely receive follow-up emails with related resources. This process builds trust gradually, eventually leading to sales.



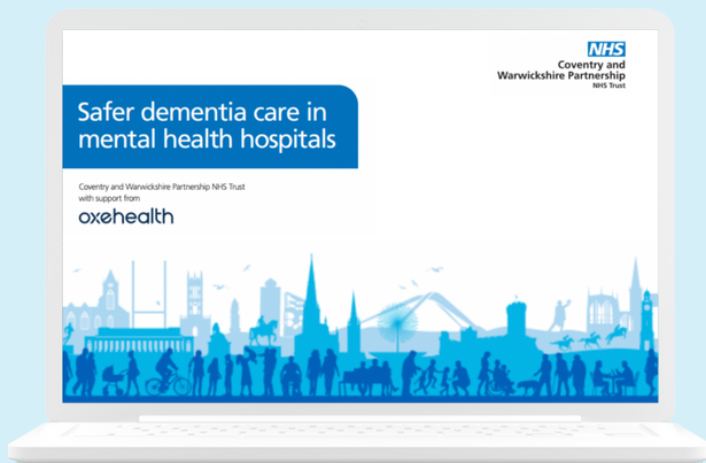
An example here is [Owlstone Medical](#), which develops non-invasive methods to analyse biomarkers on breath for early detection and precision medicine. Oliver Dean, Senior Marketing Coordinator at Owlstone Medical, explains how they use white papers to drive engagement:

“We use white papers to explain and share the latest features of our Breath Biopsy OMNI service, increase brand awareness and generate leads by gating the downloads. We also print them out for conference collateral which works well, as we can provide more immediate context if someone has questions. The white papers we release tend to be based on what’s coming through our research pipeline.”



To contribute to public policy discussion and share knowledge and best practice

Another reason to use a white paper is to advance knowledge within a particular field. This is common among government and non-profit organisations, who want to challenge conventional thinking, help translate research into practice or share what's working and what's not in a particular field.



NHS Coventry and Warwickshire, in partnership with Oxohealth, published an evaluation of an intervention to provide safer dementia care in mental health hospitals. Most publicly funded programmes require some form of evaluation to account for how money has been invested, but this is also an opportunity to take stock of what's working, identify opportunities for improvement and share learning with other organisations who may want to do something similar.

Who is your target audience?

All 50 white papers were written for expert or informed readers. While long-form content can be useful for consumers and the general public, white papers tend to be a better fit for professional audiences.

Understanding the needs and perspectives of your audience is essential. For example, a paper discussing advanced surgical techniques might be too technical for someone with upcoming knee surgery, but it could resonate with a surgeon who wants to expand their skill set. Similarly, a white paper focused on healthcare policy reform might emphasise data and real-world impact to engage policymakers, but steer clear of complex medical jargon.



B2B clients



Donors



Clinicians



General public



Patients



Charities



Government



Healthcare industry



Life sciences researchers

Does your white paper need to include original research?

Typically, white papers share original research or insights. But what if you don't have results from a big clinical trial or major customer survey to publish? Don't be put off: the aim is to add something new to the conversation.

The white papers in our samples achieved this by:

01

Sharing original insights from subject matter experts

02

Synthesising key findings from published studies (an original take on existing data)

03

Analysing primary research, such as in-hospital data, clinical studies or surveys

Proprietary data and client data were the most common sources of original data, but many also drew on findings from scientific journals, news sources and industry publications among others. Only 3 out of 50 papers included none of their own data or insights.

The nature of the research or insights to share can both depend on and influence the purpose, audience and format of the white paper.



Questions to consider:

- What is the purpose of your white paper?
- What message do you want to convey?
- Who is your target audience?
- What do they already know/want to know?
- Do you have original research or insights to share?

In the next section, we'll look at how best to present this.

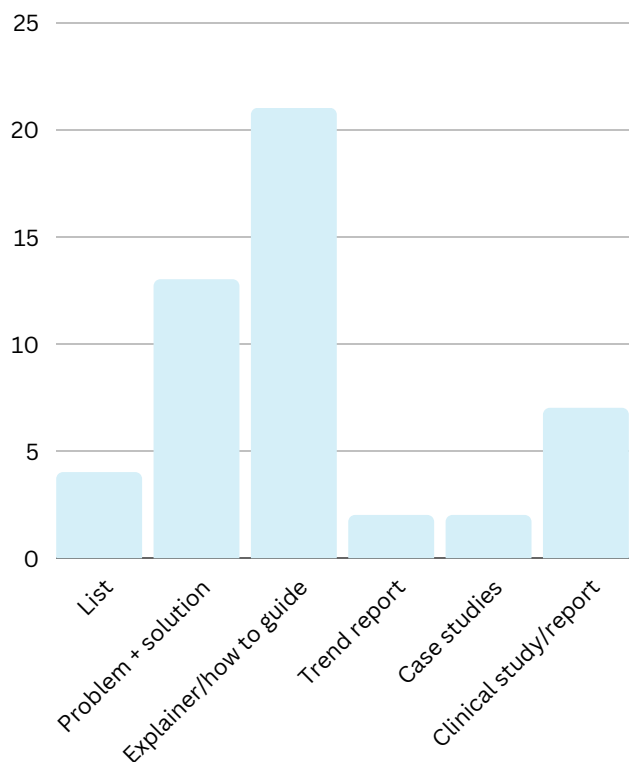
Takeaway 2: Choose the right format to convey your message

Once you're clear on the purpose, audience and type of information you have to share, you'll be able to figure out the best way to structure and format your white paper.

In our analysis, the most common structure was the explainer or 'how-to' guide. As noted, these are a sensible way to present complex products, and are popular with medical and healthcare technology start-ups for this reason.

The 'problem and solution' format was a close second. This checks the boxes for building brand awareness, establishing authority, and helping potential clients and customers.

Many UK companies, particularly those focusing on life sciences or clinical therapy, appear to prefer peer-reviewed academic-style papers over traditional white papers.



Questions to consider when choosing a white paper format:

- Is your white paper research-driven, product-driven or ideas-driven?
- How much does your audience already know?
- What style of content is your audience familiar with and most likely to engage with?

Think creatively about structure, but always write for your audience.

A non-exhaustive list of types of white paper

Explainer / technical white paper

Presents technical details of a product, technology or process, or explains complex concepts to an expert audience

Problem + solution white paper

Identifies a common problem the target audience may be struggling with and suggests an effective solution (often one that's offered by the company)

Educational white paper

Aims to give the audience fresh insights and improve their understanding of a topic, often with actions to take to achieve a desired outcome, such as how-to guide

This vs. that white paper

Compares two or more products, solutions or strategies to help readers make informed decisions, often listing pros and cons, pricing and features of each option

Listicle white paper

Presents information in a nifty list format, to help readers grasp concepts, strategies, tips, benefits or features quickly

Clinical study / research report

Uses data and analysis to persuade readers of a particular viewpoint and convey credibility, often by sharing findings from studies, surveys and experiments

Thought leadership white paper

Showcases the author's forward-thinking ideas and insights on a particular industry trend or issue, establishing them as an authority in the field

Trends report

Gives readers an overview of latest drivers, challenges and opportunities in the industry, drawing on market intelligence and expert predictions

Keep-it-brief white paper

Provides a quick and snappy summary of key concepts, takeaways and implications for busy executives

Case study

Focuses on a specific use case or real-world application of the company's product or service, to help others see how it could solve their problem

Often, the best fit for your project will be a "mix-and-match white paper, combining components from several formats.

Takeaway 3: Strike a balance between stories and statistics

White papers often rely on data, evidence and statistics to make their point. In our sample, stats, graphs, charts and tables featured heavily, lending objectivity and credibility to the arguments being made. Many papers presented this information visually, to help readers grasp complex data quickly.

However, qualitative data is just as important: case studies provide concrete examples of how the technology or idea in question works in real-world situations, while expert opinions and client testimonials add “believability” and corroborate the author’s position. A strong narrative gives context to quantitative data and helps make the argument relatable and memorable. Adding a human touch with unique insights and real-life stories is also an effective way to differentiate your white paper from those of competitors (and those written by AI!).

White papers in our sample used both quantitative and qualitative data to appeal to readers’ reason and emotion to build a compelling case.



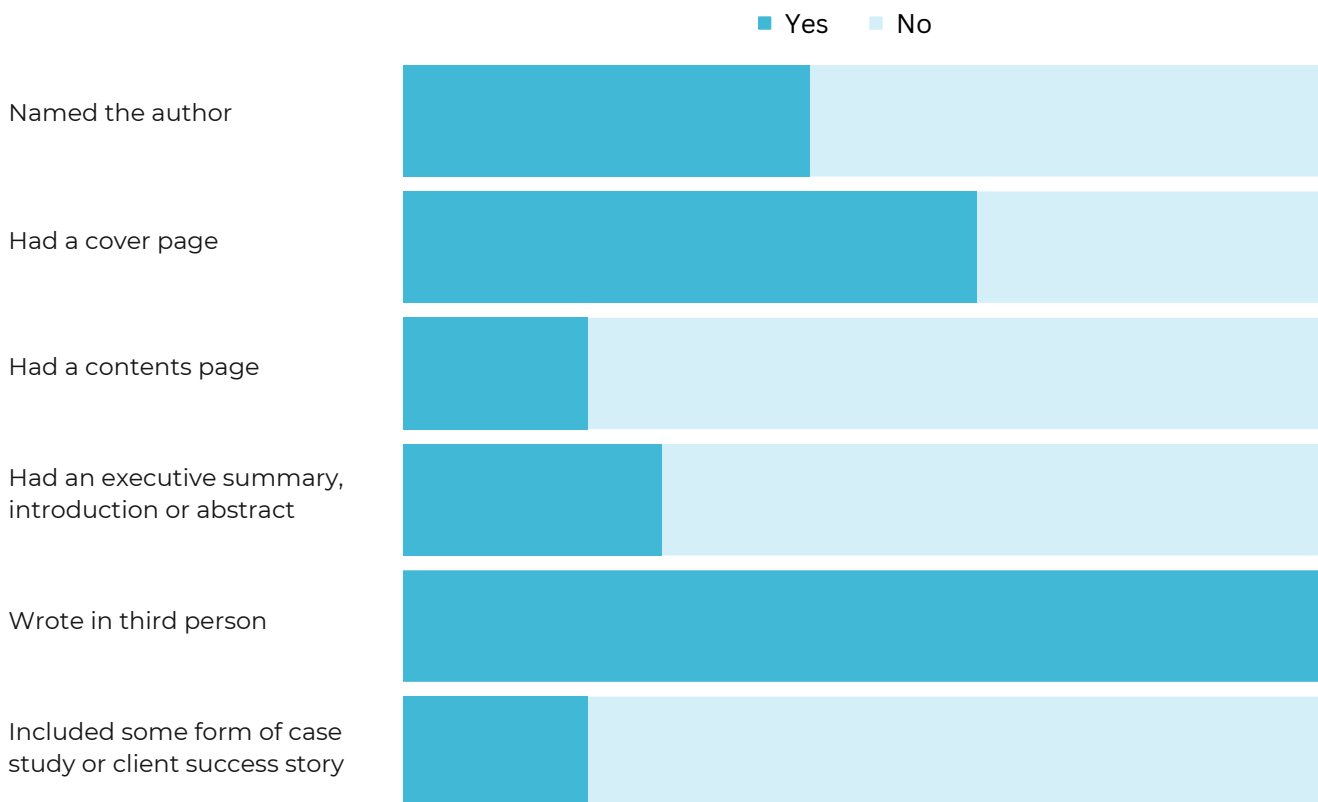
Kyle Willis, Chief Development Officer at [Intuitive MB](#), one of [The Copy Prescription's](#) white paper clients, says:

“As a start-up company with a new, innovative technology, we needed a resource to help educate our prospective clients around who we are, what we do, and how we can help solve their problems. We used a case study format to capture the great story we have to tell about the success we’ve seen in our partnership with one of our largest clients, so others can imagine how we might achieve the same for them.”

The nitty gritty of white paper formatting

It's easy to get bogged down in questions about style and formatting. Should you have a cover page? Should you name the author? Is it best to write in first or third person? Here's how the companies in our sample approached these questions:

Proportion of papers that...



Should you mention the product?

Coming across as too salesy is a common concern among those embarking on their first white paper project. Typically, white papers steer clear of promotional language. But isn't the whole point to support sales or spread the word about the organisation's work? So, should you mention the product? Our findings say yes:

60%

Mention a product, service or device (mostly explainer-style white papers)

32%

Did not mention the company's technology at all, though most advocated for a particular approach that aligned with their offer

8%

Only mention a product at the very end of the paper, in the "about us" blurb

Creating a compelling title

First impressions count, so choosing an eye-catching title for your white paper is crucial. It's the first thing that readers see. Will they choose to read on? A title that's relevant, intriguing and aligned with the target audience will entice readers to actually read it.

Of 50 white papers:

6%

Framed the title as a question (the rest used statements)

12%

Wrote the title in second person (interesting since the content was in third person)

16%

Mentioned the company's name or technology somewhere in the title

All titles were between 3 and 23 words in length.

Creating an even more compelling call to action

The title might bring readers in, but the call to action is what will encourage engagement and help foster an ongoing relationship. Interestingly, 30/50 white papers did not include a direct call to action at all, though most had company contact details somewhere in the paper. Even if your white paper isn't making a direct sales pitch, it's still a good idea to give readers suggestions for next steps.

6%

Included specific recommendations to help readers apply findings in real life – surprisingly few, considering the brand-building impact of helping readers get results

32%

Included links to "learn more" or "contact us"

Only **1 paper** encouraged readers to arrange a demo – a missed opportunity!

What if you have fantastic client quotes – but they have to remain anonymous?

Client testimonials (and their stats) bring credibility, humanity and believability to your claims.

But if you can't say where they came from, you might worry that your readers will think you invented them. One way to get around this is to consider the following:

💡 **More details** → **more likely to be true**

If you can't give the client's name or organisation, maybe you CAN include:

- their company's size, location or industry
- their job title, team size or responsibilities
- more details about about the scenario or idea they're describing
- quantitative data about costs, savings, numbers of hours/people/lives saved/accidents avoided/other impressive and relevant measure



Questions to consider

- How can you use quantitative and qualitative data to tell a compelling story?
- What is your call to action to readers? What do you want them to do next after reading the paper?

Takeaway 4: Don't forget about design

“Design can make complex information interesting, accessible and easier to share. Valuable information is only helpful if people actually read it. Design can help break up walls of text and turn it into a story, one that you are compelled to finish and think about long after.”

Malin Lernhammar, Partner at [Futureform Design Studio](#)



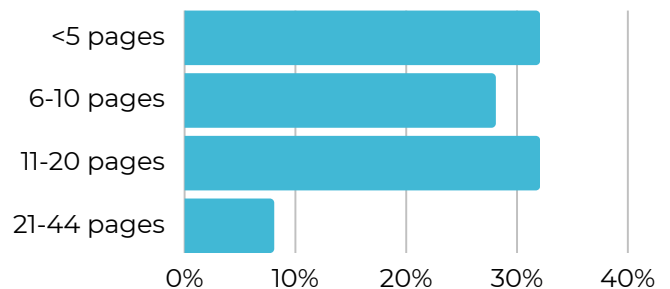
Gone are the days of long, prose-heavy white papers. Now, readers expect an engaging, visual design that helps them digest and remember key points, whether they're reading it in print, on desktop or on mobile. How did healthcare companies in our sample tackle design?

Balancing text and graphics

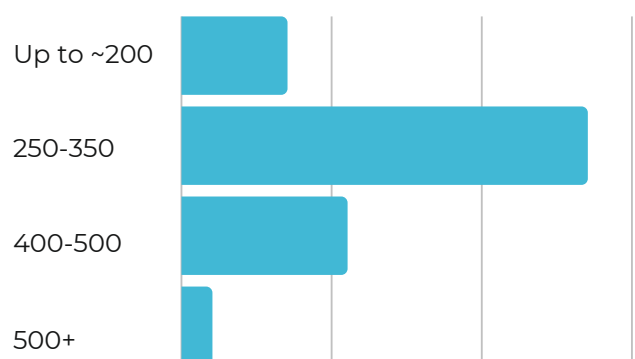
Most of these papers used a mix of copy and graphics, leaning towards text. Nine papers had more than 90% text. Only two had more graphics than text. This makes sense for authors and audiences in the healthcare and life sciences space, who are accustomed to dense research papers. But it also means there's an opportunity for brands to stand out by taking a risk with their design and using a more visual approach to convey their message.

The same goes for format: your white paper doesn't have to be a downloadable pdf, though this remains the go-to format. All papers in our sample were pdfs. Two were also available as a Flipbook or webpage. Again, while familiar formats can be user-friendly, don't be afraid to experiment.

Page count (% of papers)



Word count per page



When it comes to images, papers in the sample included the company's own photos, stock photos, illustrations and infographics. Many used charts, tables, sidebars and pull quotes to highlight important information.



Example from one of The Copy Prescription's white paper clients, [Unhide](#)

While a beautifully designed report is more inviting and shareable than 20 pages of unbroken Times New Roman, design is about more than aesthetics:



Design influences the reader's perception of the quality and credibility of your research and ideas



Using your brand's typography, colours and graphics supports brand recognition



Design also plays into how accessible your content is, so your content can be read by a wider audience



Design tells readers which bits of information are most important, so readers can follow the flow easily and you make sure no one misses the big takeaways and calls to action (information hierarchy)



A clean, organised layout with a mix of design elements like headings, subheadings, bullet points, side bars and featured quotes can break up walls of text, making it easier for people to read



Graphs, images and diagrams can help readers understand complex concepts and reinforce what's described in the text

Working with a designer can help you navigate branding and layout and bring your white paper to life

“A designer has an outside perspective and might not be an expert in your field. This means that they can be a translator that helps make the information in your white paper more relatable and easier to understand. From setting up a clickable index to creating beautiful illustrations that connect emotionally with your readers, a designer can be a partner that bridges the gap between you and the reader.”

Jeremy Jusoh, Partner at [Futureform Design Studio](#)

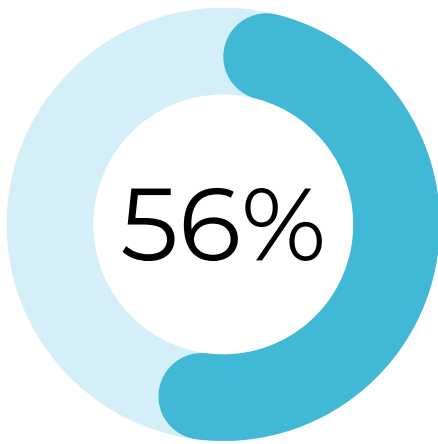


Questions to consider

- How can you present your ideas and insights in the most engaging way?
- How can you make your white paper as accessible as possible?
- Does your target audience have any specific needs or expectations when it comes to design and accessibility?

Takeaway 5: Ungated content is on the rise

How many papers were kept ungated?

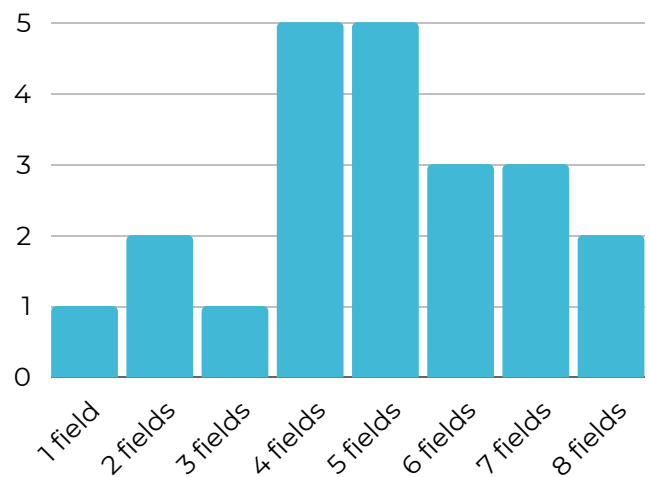


Should you gate your white paper behind a form to collect contact info for potential leads? Or is it smarter to sacrifice the data and make it freely available to anyone?

In the past, most companies would gate their white papers, but the tide seems to be turning. In this analysis, the results were pretty evenly split, with slightly more companies opting to 'ungate' their white paper (28 out of 50 papers).

How many pieces of data are companies collecting in exchange for their white paper?

Number of papers requiring each number of fields



Of the 22 papers that do gate their white papers, most ask for some combination of name, email address, phone number, job title, company, field of interest and number of employees. Five companies asked for more than 7 pieces of information before giving the reader access: they must be pretty sure these are hot leads!

Gated content

Pros

- Generates trackable leads
- Segments leads for sales calls
- Builds email list
- Offers insights into customer base

Cons

- Creates friction for readers resulting in fewer downloads
- Leads are not necessarily qualified
- New email subscribers unsubscribe quickly
- No SEO benefits

Ungated content

Pros

- Increases readership
- Boosts brand awareness and demand
- Can be indexed by search engines
- Easily shareable

Cons

- Generates fewer (but higher quality) leads
- Harder to follow up with leads
- Harder to measure ROI
- No direct contribution to list-building

If you do decide to gate your content, consider what information you really need from leads. Alternatives are to ask for a link to the reader's LinkedIn profile, or to add an optional survey on the thank you page to capture the details you need. In any case, make it clear what people are signing up for when they share their details with you (essential for GDPR compliance too). Don't add unnecessary friction.

Bottom line? If you want more eyes on your work, don't put a form in the way.

Gated white papers



lead generation

Ungated white papers



demand generation

Presenting your white paper to readers

Most gated white papers in our sample were available via landing pages. These typically included a headline to match the title of the white paper, an image of the white paper cover, and the form to access content. Some included a summary of the key points in the white paper, so readers can decide if it's relevant for them.

Several companies in our analysis published multiple white papers. These tended to be located on a single resources page on their website, with a small thumbnail and description next to the link.

While this analysis didn't specifically look at email marketing strategies or post-download automations, here are a few observations:

11 of those with gated white papers sent a single email with the link to the pdf, thanking the reader for their interest and providing links to additional resources

01 sent a monthly newsletter after the paper had been downloaded

10 didn't send any email, so it's not clear why they asked for contact details.



Repurposing white paper content

Producing a high-quality white paper calls for an investment of time and resources. To generate the biggest ROI, you need to get your paper in front of as many readers in the target audience as possible. Most companies in the sample appeared to share links to their white papers from their company LinkedIn pages and industry websites.

While this analysis didn't ask companies how they repurposed their white papers, 11 out of 50 appeared to use their white paper as the basis for a blog post or thought leadership article on their own website or on partner and industry sites. One created a webinar to summarise the content.

This points to a missed opportunity for many healthcare companies to share their insights more effectively and make more of the hard work that's gone into creating the white paper in the first place.

A white paper can be remixed into...



Questions to consider

- Is your goal to generate leads or communicate your message as far as possible? This will help you determine whether gating or ungating is the best approach.
- How can you 'remix' your white paper into other content formats to get more eyes on it?

How can your healthcare organisation use white papers to drive visibility, leads and sales?

Sharing your insights, building brand awareness and creating a connection with a particular community take a lot more than a single marketing channel. Clearly, there are more questions we could ask about how each of these 50 healthcare companies used white papers to support their overall marketing strategy and what the impact was. But what we can see is that white papers remain a go-to marketing tool in the healthcare sector.

The analysis reveals patterns and trends in how companies approach white papers, offering reassurance and inspiration to those embarking on their own white paper project.

Let's recap the 5 key takeaways to help you get ahead in your planning:

1. Be clear about your purpose and audience
2. Choose the right format to convey your message
3. Strike a balance between stories and statistics
4. Don't forget about design
5. Consider ungating your white paper



With so much content and information vying for audiences' attention, a thoughtful and considered white paper can help your organisation stand out. Investing time to plan will ensure your project runs smoothly and hits the spot with readers.

THE COPY PRESCRIPTION

Looking for help to plan and write your next healthcare white paper?

The Copy Prescription works with healthcare organisations around the world to produce white papers that share research, establish industry authority, attract funding, and support the sales process for innovative products and devices.

Founder and specialist healthcare copywriter Louise Shanahan will help you get clear on your message so you can communicate your ground-breaking work with confidence and ease. You'll get a clear roadmap to take your white paper from idea to implementation.



To discuss your white paper project, email:

louise@thecopyprescription

Or for more details, visit:

thecopyprescription.com/whitepapers



Annex A: Industry lists used to select healthcare companies with white papers

Top 100 Healthcare Technology Companies of 2022
(The Healthcare Technology Report, 2022)

Fortune 500 top 25 healthcare companies
(Beckers Hospital Review, 2023)

2022 MedTech Big 100
(Medical Design and Outsourcing, 2022)

World Top Healthcare Companies in Europe Companies List by Market Cap
(value.today, 2023)

Top 10 Mid Medical Companies in Europe in 2021 by Revenue
(Global Data, 2021)

Top 10 Mid Medical Companies in the US in 2021 by Revenue
(Global Data, 2021)

Top 10 Mid-size Pharma Companies (mainly specialty) in Europe in 2021 by Revenue
(Global Data, 2021)

Top 10 HealthTech companies in the UK
(Beauhurst, 2023)

Top 10 Medtech Companies in the UK
(Beauhurst, 2023)

Top 100 medical and healthcare start-ups in UK
(Medical Startups, 2023)

Annex B: 50 healthcare companies selected for white paper analysis

- Abbott Diagnostics
- Ascom
- Augmedix
- Avalon Healthcare Solutions
- Big Health
- Boston Scientific
- Cellink Life Sciences
- Certara
- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust with Oxehealth
- CSL Vifor with Vintura
- CVS Health
- Dispatch Health
- Edwards Lifesciences
- Elekta
- ExactCare Pharmacy, CarepathRx
- Gilead Sciences
- GRAIL with Reuters Events
- Hallmark Health Care Solutions
- Hologic
- Ipsen
- LeanTaas
- Lifebit
- Lumeon with Frost & Sullivan
- Masimo
- McKesson Canada
- Medacta International
- MedGenome
- Meditab
- Medtronic APAC
- Novartis with the Asia Pacific Patient Innovation Summit
- Oviva
- Owlstone Medical
- Oxford Nanopore Technologies
- Pfizer CentreOne
- Qiagen Bioinformatics
- Quidel Ortho
- Roche
- Seven Bridges Genomics (now Velsera)
- Siemens Healthineers
- Sino Biological
- Sophia Genetics
- Stryker
- Techspert
- Telstar
- Telus Health
- Tempus
- Togetherall
- Veradigm
- Xoran Technologies
- Zynex