

Writing Assignment #4

The White Paper

Summary of the Assignment:

- **Task:** In this paper, you will write a document that provides information that an audience can use to inform a decision. We have read various white papers in the class this semester. White papers can be any one of the following types:
 - technical papers
 - business benefit papers
 - advocacy papers
 - hybrid technical/business papers

The CANRIGHT document that is provided in the class in LEO describes all four of these types of white papers.

- **Length:** 2000-3000 words
- **Graphics:** at least three graphics, two of which have to be original
- **Format in Citing and Listing Sources:** APA
- **Number and of Sources:** at least five sources, at least one of which has to be obtained through OneSearch

Brief Description of the White Paper:

In preparing for this assignment, you will want to review the following video:

[“White Papers: An Introduction to the Genre and Its Expectations,”](#) from the Purdue OWL

In addition, please review sample white papers in our class, especially any samples that were written by students.

You might have taken WRTG 394 at UMUC. In WRTG 394, the final paper is a research-based business report. This assignment is different from the research-based business report in WRTG 394.

In this paper for WRTG 393, you are providing background research to an audience to help the audience make a decision on a topic. In WRTG 394, the paper is written to a specific decision-maker about a specific problem in your workplace or community and recommends a specific course of action. The audience and approach for the white paper in WRTG 393 is usually different from those for the research-based business report in WRTG 394.

You may take any of the following approaches:

- a white paper to an internal audience – written to individuals within an organization you work for or are a part of. The white paper might inform them about a trend in the field and/or to solve a problem in the organization.
- a white paper to an external audience – written to individuals in a particular industry or field of study, but not an organization you are a part of. The white paper could address a problem you are attempting to solve in the organization or to inform an external audience about a relevant trend.
- a white paper promoting a new product or service to potential customers. This is an example of a white paper to an external audience, but it features different rhetorical considerations than the typical white paper written to an external audience does.

All three options are discussed in the Purdue OWL video mentioned above. In addition, the video from Mak Pandit mentioned above provides excellent insight into how these approaches would work.

Sample White Papers from Previous WRTG 393 Students:

In our class in LEO, if you select **Content**, you will see a section labelled **sample papers for WRTG 393**.

If you select that section, you will see some sample white papers written by previous students in WRTG 393.

Strategies to Consider for the White Paper:

Please follow these guidelines:

- have a focused topic. Please see the sample white papers from previous students for examples of how previous topics have been developed for this paper.
- write to an identified audience
 - if your white paper is to an internal audience, it might have a fairly narrow audience. For example, if you work in a hair salon and write a white paper promoting a new billing system for your salon, the audience will probably be the owner and manager of the hair salon.
 - if your white paper is to an external audience, it could have a broad audience or a narrow audience. For example, if you do not work for a hair salon and you write a white paper promoting a new billing system for hair salons, the audience will probably be the various hair salons in your neighborhood.
 - if your white paper is to promote a product or service to potential customers, it could have a fairly broad audience. For example, a white paper promoting a new taxi service in your neighborhood has, theoretically, all residents in the neighborhood as a potential audience.
- integrate thorough research
- make sure that you do not directly tell the audience what action it should take. Rather, offer *background information* that the audience can use to make a decision. The Purdue OWL video mentions this principle. This is one reason the video refers to the white paper as a *backgrounder report*.

How to Organize the White Paper:

Please include the following sections in your white paper:

- *Executive Summary*
- *Introduction*
- *Previous Approaches*
- *New Findings*
- *Conclusion*
- *References*

In the **Executive Summary**, summarize your research and your purpose. The executive summary should be a stand-alone document. It should be written in such a way that a busy executive could read the executive summary and know exactly what the paper is about without reading the rest of the paper.

In the **Introduction**, you lay the groundwork for your readers for the details that will be introduced in the white paper. If you need to define any terms, you will do so here. You might share an anecdote or illustration to describe why this topic is important.

In the **Previous Approaches** section, you will describe the approaches or strategies that have been previously used or are currently used on the topic. For example, if your white paper is being written to advertise a new taxi service in your area, you might review what transportation services are provided now. You could show the challenges or problems that the current services involve. In this section of the white paper, your use of sources will be very important. You should integrate research to show that the problems you have identified exist.

In the **New Findings** section, you present perhaps the most important information in the paper. In this section, you will describe the findings of your research and relate these findings to the purpose of your report. You will not only provide data and research, but you will also explain the data and research and why it is relevant to your report's topic.

For example, if your white paper is being written to advertise a new taxi service in your area, you might review what transportation services are provided now and show why the new taxi service fills a need that the current set of transportation services does not fill or solves a problem that the current set of transportation services does not solve. You will provide data and evidence for why the new taxi service has promise in solving the problems you have identified.

In this section of the white paper, your use of sources will be very important as well. You should integrate research to show that the problems you have identified will be solved by your new approach.

In the **Conclusion** section, you review what your research shows in light of the previous approaches used. You will not tell the audience what steps to take next. However, you will summarize what your findings articulate.

In the **References**, you will list your sources that you cited in the paper. You will list them in APA format. Please note that the lectures on white papers that you have viewed and examples of white papers you may have read may not have used APA format. You will be using APA format in this assignment.

You are required to have at least five sources for your paper. In addition, at least one of them is to have been acquired through UMUC Library OneSearch.

Primary sources will be very beneficial for the paper. For example, if your white paper is being written to advertise a new taxi service in your area, you might interview some local residents about the problems they have with the current transportation services in the area. The information in such interviews would be persuasive research to integrate into your white paper.

Length of the Paper:

Your white paper should be 2000-3000 words in length. Again, you are required to use at least five sources, with at least one of them being acquired through UMUC Library OneSearch.

Graphics:

Your white paper should incorporate at least three graphics. Graphic can include tables, charts, or graphs showing some research findings. They can also be images that are relevant to the topic of the white paper.

At least two of the graphics must be original. Original graphics can include photos taken by you or tables, charts, or graphs developed by you

To see examples of graphics used in white papers, see the Purdue OWL video, "White Papers: An Introduction to the Genre and Its Expectations," at the 3:27 mark, at the 5:29 mark, at the 6:58 mark, at the 7:01 mark, at the 7:11 mark, at the 7:43 mark, and at the 7:58 mark.

Due Date:

Your instructor will notify you of the due date. You will write a first draft, your instructor will comment on the first draft, and you will submit a second draft using the comments as your guide.