

How to Put a Powerful *Call To Action* in Your White Paper

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Here's a powerful piece of intelligence I've dispensed to customers at least a dozen times in the last couple of months: When the next step in your sales process is something "soft" (like a phone call or request for more information) rather than something "hard" (like filling out an order form) then the "soft" event needs to be defined clearly, in black and white terms – spelled out with simple instructions.

What's the essential difference between a white paper and a sales letter? Just a couple things, really: 1) the call to action is almost always soft instead of hard; and 2) in a sales letter, education takes a back seat to persuasion, whereas in a white paper education is a very high priority.

The biggest mistake I see in white papers is a vague call to action. The least effective thing you can say is "For more information, call (000)000-0000 or email info@xxxxxxxx.com." That is **weak**. It is a **big mistake**. Here's what to say instead, as I put it to one customer:

At the end, you need to offer them something. Some kind of response mechanism or consultation or some way of following through with you. You should present this as though it were going to be sold, even if it's free - what it is and what it isn't, what will happen and what will not. How long it will take and what they can expect. If you take a look at my Services application form, I do this for a paid consultation:

http://www.perrymarshall.com/services/psm_services_application.pdf

The point I'm making here is that you structure this the same way whether it's paid or free. You have to sell even what you give away free.

This call to action needs to be the next incremental step in your sales process. One discrete step forward, not two or three steps mashed into one; not a vague invitation to 'give us a call' or 'contact us to discuss...' – No, something very concrete and clearly defined.

So a management consultant might say this at the end of his white paper:

What To Do Next

Hudson Management Advisors has developed a "30 Minute Small Business Management Tune-Up" which we conduct over the telephone with you and your top staff members. Here is what we accomplish together in this fast-paced, zero-nonsense session:

- Difficult employees: One or two bad ones can tank your company. But a borderline problem can be quickly and easily corrected – so long as you know what critical misstep *not* to take. We'll walk you through our three-step process (which takes

literally about six minutes) and show you exactly how to carry this out in no more than 1-2 weeks. This will immediately enhance your effectiveness as an executive, and earn you greater respect from your subordinates.

- Cash Flow Problems: Lying awake at night worried about maxxing out that line of credit? We've helped hundreds of clients clear this hurdle with three specific cash flow strategies. We'll give you a script for negotiating with your banker that one client used last November to increase his line of credit by \$100,000.
- Cost Cutting without Amputation: You're all too familiar with how easily costs can balloon out of control, and how painful cuts can be. We'll show you four key areas that you can cut back 50-60% - yet so painlessly, most people in your company won't even notice.

The 30 Minute Small Business Management Tune-Up is conducted by the principal of our company, Dr. Robert Hudson, who has worked with more than 200 corporations including Exxon Mobile, Cars.com and Credit Suisse First Boston. Please be assured that this consultation will not be a thinly disguised sales presentation; it will consist of the best intelligence Mr. Hudson can supply in a thirty minute time span. There is no charge for this call, but please be advised that the call must be strictly limited to 30 minutes.

This consult will typically take place within 1-2 weeks of your call. To secure a time for this consultation, please call Mary Baker at (000)000-0000 x214 or email mary.baker@hudsonmanagement.com and she will advise you regarding available time slots. She will also provide you with a pre-consultation questionnaire that will prepare both you and us to get maximum value in the shortest amount of time.

This is the right way to end a white paper!

(Feel free to rip that off, substituting your product and your lingo for Hudson's.)

The white paper is, as I like to say, your manifesto on how a problem should be solved; it **presents** the problem, **agitates** the reader's emotions about that problem, **defines** your approach to solving this problem, and then smoothly **leads them to call you** and engage in person. You've quelled the reader's apprehensions about being sold and positioned yourself as a barely-within-reach, world-class expert. Using Mary as your gatekeeper reinforces this.

We have positioned this in such a way that Mr. Hudson's time is highly valued, that the call abruptly ends after 30 minutes (if the customer wants more, he has to pay for it and is probably willing to do so), and if we suddenly decided to charge \$200 for this consultation instead of giving it away free, it would require hardly any changes to the copy do so.

Win Through Intimidation, With a Simple Clipboard

And finally, don't overlook that "pre-consultation questionnaire" – which is a corporate version of "the medical doctor's clipboard." See, when you go to the doctor's

office, before you get to talk to the doc, the nurse gives you a clipboard with a bunch of forms to fill out – *then* you get to see the doc.

He reads your clipboard and asks you probing questions. He intimidates you. That clipboard is a tool of authority. (Some would label it an instrument of oppression, but I digress...) Not only has your customer been coaxed into calling you for a consultation while all the other consultants are still badgering him, the pre-consultation questionnaire he got from Mary Baker (the nurse) is getting all his dirty laundry out on the table. He's got to tell you about the hernia operation 10 years ago, the discolored stools and the sudden 20-pound weight gain. So even though you've helped him solve the three problems you promised to solve, you've drug out ten more problems that are still un-solved.

And that's why this customer needs you, right? To cure his dysfunction? Look, if he doesn't hire you, he's going to languish in the mire of his problems, lost in an endless cycle of employee headaches, cash flow issues and skyrocketing costs. His website will come up *404: Page Not Found* and he'll go mad from the insipid droning of his dreary, desolate life.

He *needs* you. You're doing him a huge favor by offering this consultation at the end of your white paper.

So remember this: *The entire purpose of your white paper is to get that person to schedule this consultation.*

Make sure that's clear in your mind when as you write. Your intent will come through loud and clear.