

# 5 Strategies to Identify Keywords for White Papers

## *By Dana Zarcone*

B2B white papers are meant to generate sales leads for your business, promote your products or services, create investor interest, or garner your business attention from the press. Ideally, these long-form marketing materials will help you grow and expand your business.

Of course, white papers won't fulfill any of their intended purposes if no one is reading them. That's why it is so important to implement Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies for your white papers — just like you'd do for any other content.

Keywords are the foundation upon which B2B white papers are built. Without strong keyword usage, the entire house of cards collapses. Before you can start implementing keywords into your white paper content, you first need to identify the keywords that will put your article on Google's radar and allow potential leads to find you.

## 5 Creative Ways to Identify Keywords

### 1. Initial Brainstorming

Before you do a deep dive into Google, take a moment to access your most valuable resource: this can be yourself or team up with your client.

For your brainstorming session, sit down with a cup of coffee and a pad of paper and write down every keyword that comes to mind in connection with the business. Aspects to consider include products, services, business segments, or the industry in general. Write down all of the words you can come up with. Don't overthink it — just write them down. Also, writing down synonyms can be useful too.

Ultimately, you should end up with a good solid list of relevant words that you can use throughout the rest of this process.

### 2. Identify Long Tail Keywords

Your initial list from Step 1 is a solid start, but you aren't ready to nail it down just yet. Why? Because these days, stand-alone keywords are not the "end all, be all" of a good Search Engine Optimization strategy. On the contrary. The most effective SEO tactic today is to focus on long tail keyword phrases consisting of four, five, or even six different keywords.

Here's an example: a "head" keyword search is broader and more generic ("acoustic guitar") while a long tail keyword search is more specific and the results are more narrow ("6-string acoustic guitar for beginners"). The conclusion being that the person entering the long tail keyword search phrase is a much more qualified lead than the person doing the broader search.

Someone conducting a search using a head keyword is usually looking for general information about a topic. Conversely, someone who types in a long tail keyword is looking for much more specific, targeted results. In most cases, they are also more likely at the beginning stages of the buying process for a particular product or service. As a result, long tail keyword phrases need to be the cornerstone of your B2B white papers. Use the main head keywords scattered throughout the material to give it a boost.

To start creating your long tail phrases, take a look at your list from Step 1 and think about how you can combine them or flesh them out into more specific phrases. Sometimes it is helpful to draw arrows or lines between different words, or to compile an entirely new list of just long tail keywords. Visualizing this process, and keeping track of your keywords, will ensure that you don't forget anything when it comes time to writing your white paper marketing materials.

### **3. Conduct Competitive Research**

Once you have a rough idea of potential long tail keywords, start looking at what your competitors are doing. Begin with your direct rivals — the companies that tend to compete with your business for B2B sales — and try to find white papers or marketing materials they have produced.

What are they doing with head and long tail keywords? Is it effective? How are their Google rankings? Have they managed to incorporate their keywords and keyword phrases in a natural way that doesn't leave the content feeling choppy, unnatural, or dull? Jot down notes as you go.

Here's where you can start to use Google to validate some of the long tail keyword phrases you came up with in Step 2. Conduct a search using these terms. What sort of search results do those phrases bring up?

Look at the first page of the search results. What companies are listed? How are they approaching their white paper marketing and what other keyword phrases are they using?

This process is a great way for you to turn a partial list of white paper keywords and keyword phrases into a robust one.

### **4. Research Your Target Businesses**

You can also get some real insight into your developing keyword strategy by researching the businesses you wish to target with your B2B marketing materials. In a perfect world, which clients do you want to land with your next B2B white paper? Which businesses, if they called inquiring about your product or service, would cause you to do a happy dance?

Make a list of those target businesses, then head over to their websites to see what kind of buzzwords and keyword phrases they're using. Not all of these keywords are going to apply to your product or service, but they may help you expand your keyword lists with terms and phrases that you know your target businesses are using.

## 5. Identify Content Gaps

Modeling your B2B keyword strategy based on competitors and existing marketing materials is a good place to start, but keep in mind that you don't want your white papers to be carbon copies of what everyone else is doing. Rather, you want to fill content gaps and provide information that customers can't get from your competitors.

Analyzing your competitors' marketing materials is a good way to identify content gaps in your field. Look to see if there are keyword phrases on your list that were nowhere to be found in your competitor's content. If not, don't take that as a sign that those keyword phrases aren't valuable. On the contrary, they might be just the phrases you need to use to carve out your niche on the B2B sales circuit.

Bottom line, there are countless sources out there that can provide you with potential keywords. In general, identifying the best keywords and phrases for your B2B white papers involves a mix of research and intuition.

Once you make a long, robust list, you can prioritize and build out your Editorial Calendar to include amazing white papers that will cause people to stand up and take notice!

Page for page, writing white papers is among the highest-paying projects for copywriters, fetching between \$5,000 and \$8,000 for five to 12 pages of writing on average ... and they don't involve any selling! If you want to learn ONE writing skill that can bring you a lifetime of professional pay and infinitely interesting writing assignments ... you need to check out our new training program [How to Become a Professional White Paper Writer](#) today.

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# 1 Response to "5 Strategies to Identify Keywords for White Papers"

Dana, If one is writing within a specific niche that is familiar, and especially if the writer has some hands-on experience working in some capacity in the chosen niche, I would think that much of this use of the keywords and long tail keywords would come naturally.

*Nora King* – over a year ago

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**American Writers & Artists Institute**

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924