



# **B2B - Lead Generation with Webinars and White Papers**

**Using webinars and white papers  
successfully in B2B marketing**

with support from  
**GoToWebinar**

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## **Executive Summary**

When marketing complex products, lead generation is gaining increasing ground as a focus of marketing activities in a number of countries, including Germany. White paper and webinar marketing is a growing phenomenon that exists alongside the traditional method of a trade show presence. As a concept, webinars and white papers are quite similar: They both contain high-quality content, available free of charge, and encourage the potential target group to voluntarily provide their contact data.

In deciding the best lead-generation method to use, consideration must be given to the target group that you want to reach and the cost per lead. The maximum permissible cost of a lead is determined primarily by the number of leads needed to close a sale.

### **About the author:**

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## 1. How much do leads cost?

Lead-generation costs are determined by the quality and value of the leads to the sales department. A contact is less helpful than a prospect to sales. A direct sales enquiry is the most valuable of all. Leads can therefore be defined by different stages in the lead process.

**Unqualified lead:** A contact registers, supplying data such as address, company name, telephone number or email address for the client. The user has not expressed an interest in a particular product or service but has simply taken part in one of the company's marketing campaigns.

**Pre-qualified lead:** This is a prospect who submits data as described in the case of the unqualified lead or as part of a telephone marketing initiative but also provides data that allows the company to make contact with this individual and categorise them. The service provider or the company verifies the data (e.g. using a quality-assurance procedure carried out by telephone).

**Qualified lead:** This is a (potential) customer with an enquiry who has submitted the same data as the pre-qualified lead. The customer has a budget, which the service provider or pre-sales team has confirmed in the quality-assurance procedure that has been conducted by phone. The customer expects to be contacted by sales.

And how much does that cost? You can calculate how much a lead can cost using your own sales funnel. Assume that you have bought a software programme that yields a EUR 12,000 gross margin in the first year. Proceed according to the following steps:

1. On average, how many quotations do you need to submit to close a sale?
2. On average, how many presentation appointments do you need to submit a quotation?
3. On average, how many telephone contacts do you need for a presentation appointment?

Assume that one in five quotations leads to a sale and after every second presentation appointment you can submit a concrete quotation. But only one in 10 leads that you call leads to a presentation appointment. You calculate:

$$10 \times 2 \times 5 = 100.$$

So you need more than 100 leads to close a sale. Now divide the price of the software in the first year by the number of leads:

$$12,000,-/100 = 120,-$$

So a lead must not cost more than EUR 119 for you to remain in the black. Or it may cost more if there is a service agreement in place for the software. A cost of between EUR 50 and EUR 150 per lead is usually accounted for in B2B marketing. The cost of qualified leads is proportionately higher — but then you also need fewer leads for a telephone appointment ...



## 2. Decision: White paper, trade show or webinar?

Over the years, three promising lead-generation methods have emerged in the business world:

### Trade shows

This is the traditional option, but it has come under severe pressure in recent years due to high prices and the glut of events taking place as a result of the enormous increase in available space, particularly among German trade show organisers. In the past, it was an absolute disaster to miss the industry's top trade shows, especially for market-leading companies. But in recent years, trade show organisers, particularly those who are active in relatively Internet-savvy segments, have reported the non-attendance of even top companies. As a rule, this non-attendance only impacts negatively on the trade show and has no negative effect on the company declining the invitation. While previously the question might have been "Can they not afford to attend the trade show?" there is now an acceptance that road shows and Internet marketing are simply cheaper and more effective.

## **White paper marketing**

A white paper is a PDF document that addresses a highly specific topic, without using marketing lingo, to capture the interest of potential customers. Instead of promising a prize or a discount as in B2C marketing, the white paper promises added value content. Examples of such documents are checklists, “how it works” articles, case studies and market analyses. Once the user has registered, they can access the document free of charge. The sales employee contacts the person who has accessed the white paper (usually by telephone).

## **Webinars**

A webinar or a live webcast is a seminar that is broadcast live over the Internet. It is an interactive event and facilitates direct communication between the potential advertising customer and its audience. Once again the (high-quality) content is a value proposition. Webinar participants also need to register. The sales employee generally contacts participants after the webinar, initially by email, to send them additional documents; telephone contact is only made then in the second step.

Webinars and white papers have been particularly popular in the IT market in the U.S. for several years. However, white paper marketing has been suffering increasingly:

- Because users learn that high-quality content is also available free of charge on the Internet without registering, they seem to leave their addresses for retrieval on portals that do not require registration.
- Users learn that “If I download a white paper, I have to leave data unnecessarily and a sales guy will call me”, leading to a marked decline in the quality of the contact and consequently the marketer’s interest in the method.

The webinar works differently: it is interactive and the user understands that they need to leave data — after all, it is a real-time event.

The following table may be useful in deciding which is the best lead-generation method to use:

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Cost
Trade show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Direct person-to-person contact</li> <li> High impact for PR and networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> High direct costs (stand, stand construction)</li> <li> High indirect costs (staff, travel costs)</li> <li> Major time commitment</li> <li> Diminishing effectiveness</li> </ul>	High direct and indirect costs (five-figure to seven-figure amounts)
Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> High awareness and assumption of expertise among target audience</li> <li> Impact for PR, Internet and social web</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Comparatively large amount of preparation work</li> </ul>	Depending on the number of leads, EUR 5,000 to EUR 15,000
White paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> High assumption of expertise among target audience</li> <li> Impact for PR and social web</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Decreasing acceptance</li> <li> Increasing marketing effort</li> </ul>	Entry costs in the lower four-figure price bracket, linear cost per lead



### 3. White paper marketing

More and more companies offering complex products and services are discovering white paper marketing as a new sales tool in B2B lead generation. In contrast to the U.S. market, however, companies here in Germany are still making many technical mistakes. These can easily be avoided.

Some online advertising here, a few AdWords there, a presentation or a trade show stand — of the plethora of marketing tools out there, there are really only a few that are suitable for expensive and complex products and services: The target group is too small, extracting salt from the sea is too tedious. Mining it from a salt mine is much more efficient.

Lead generation using white papers — instead of the watering-can effect of mass marketing — is therefore a marketing tool with a future. More and more marketing managers are reallocating their budgets in favour of lead generation to acquire marketing fodder for their sales team. After all, sales needs a lot of new customer potential to generate new revenue. Marketing is required therefore to organise this potential for sales and make customer acquisition easier. Yet dealing with real (purchasing) decision makers is a complicated business. You can easily run the risk of losing really valuable leads — or throwing away their potential.

**Ten factors** that are crucial to the success of white papers have emerged.

### **1. Put together a successful team.**

A white paper campaign is designed to generate leads. To successfully conduct such a campaign, the person responsible for it needs input from a number of departments. While one person must wear several different hats in smaller companies, larger companies have teams to manage the work. This calls for

- A project manager to take responsibility for the project (this is generally the marketing manager),
- A budget manager who pays for the white paper — usually the sales or marketing manager,
- Employees from the Marketing, Communications, Product Marketing, sales, Support and Management Accounting departments.

### **2. Define key performance indicators.**

Key performance indicators can be the:

- Number of white papers downloaded
- Quality of leads generated
- Number of page views
- Number of quotes submitted
- Number of product enquiries
- Number of sales

Ultimately, the success of the white paper campaign must be evaluated according to these KPIs. If it is successful, you will want to repeat the campaign.

### **3. Sales has the last word.**

When it comes to leads, sales has the last word. After all, sales will not sell what it does not want. Many marketing departments make decisions without including their own sales team and consequently without including customers. This results in dissatisfaction among the sales teams. After all, who wants to phone leads that do not seem to be (much less are) high-quality leads? And what salesperson likes to hear from a generated lead, “But I didn’t download anything from your site”?

## 4. Develop a content strategy.

A white paper is not a sales brochure. It includes content that is of interest to the reader (not the company providing the white paper). The content must therefore be as relevant as possible to the intended target group. This means that it is crucial to find a topic that:

- Is very relevant to the target group
- Your company has a high level of expertise in and has been rated as an expert by third parties
- Has a high usage value and can be implemented immediately

The more cutting edge the topic of a white paper, the more cutting edge is the target group that will download it. A white paper entitled “Success on Facebook” will interest many more people than one entitled “Five tips for being successful as a plant construction firm on Facebook”. With the latter, you will attract much fewer people — mainly those who work in the area of mechanical engineering — which is fine if you are offering a solution directed precisely at this target group.

Generate a database at an early stage and populate it with content and ideas that will be popular with customers (e.g. a company wiki, for which sales can provide information).

## 5. Three good themes for a white paper

### 1. “How it works”

Pure usage value. All operations employees love this kind of document: “Ten methods for...”, “The eight greatest risks for...”, “12 ways of ...”. It is also the kind of document that is likely to go viral and generate additional leads.

### 2. An industry success story

Tell a story. An exciting story. Or at least a story about an exciting customer. “Exciting” means: “exciting for the reader”. Not: “exciting for the sales manager”.

### 3. An independent study

Content. Figures. Charts. And: Multiple evaluation. Comparing seven industries or 17 countries? Then prepare seven different white papers and gather your managers for the relevant industries and/or the 17 countries at weekly intervals. Important: Include the detailed analysis in the white paper; send a summary to industry media as a press release. This will also keep the sales manager and PR manager happy.

## **6. Communicate to convert.**

A white paper campaign is a campaign that uses all available marketing resources — email, landing page, SEM/SEA, social media, banners — in order to generate download leads in an initial step, which can then be converted into sales leads. Use all resources.

## **7. Find the right readers.**

White paper campaigns are particularly useful if highly specialised products and their customers are involved. Leads must pay their way, which is why white papers are especially important in the B2B market. You will find the right contacts on the websites of journals, in the address lists of manufacturers, customers and associated service providers, in the specialist forums of business networks such as Xing, but also in the course of normal B2B communication. A partnership with a highly specialised medium can be mutually beneficial: high-quality content and the ideal target group. The combination in white paper marketing is therefore quite often the very first choice.

## **8. Exploit the potential of every customer contact.**

There are several ways of approaching a prospect over the course of the entire communication process. This is because prospects perceive any confirmation mail or link as a service — not as advertising. As online retailers have already discovered, confirmation emails have opening rates of almost 90 percent — in contrast to standard newsletter emails, which have an opening rate of just 10 to 20 percent. Whoever is responsible for the white paper, therefore, must work with sales to establish from the communication with the customer at what point the prospect can be nudged a little further into the sales funnel:

- What happens when a prospect registers? Does he or she receive a confirmation email? Apart from the link to the PDF, does the email contain any other content?
- When are the leads sent from Marketing to sales? What happens then — and when?
- What is the next stage that needs to be reached with the leads? A concrete quotation or an invitation to a webinar, a product presentation, another white paper or a test account?
- Can you track the leads through your CRM system? How long does your sales process normally last? When can you measure how successful your campaign was?
- What happens to the leads that cannot be converted into sales?

## 9. Make or buy?

Depending on the budget and how often you run a white paper campaign, there are different ways of executing the project — conducting it in-house or outsourcing it.

- Cooperate with a channel or technology partner by writing a white paper with them, conducting the study together and sharing the leads.
- Outsource the entire project to an agency or a specialised service provider.
- Buy media services and/or content from a specialist publisher and handle the rest in-house.
- Do the project management in-house and purchase the individual services that you need as required.

## 10. Stumbling blocks in white paper marketing

What goes wrong with white paper marketing:

**Unreasonable expectations:** No, the campaign will not attract the 10 most important purchasing managers from the key companies in your target industry who want to spend a seven-figure sum buying your software in the next three weeks and are just waiting for your call. Even lead marketing is an arduous gold-panning activity. But, at any rate, you no longer need to pan the entire ocean.

**Dubious content strategy:** A white paper is not a sales brochure. The white paper itself does not sell products or services, but rather the strategy behind them.

**Unfulfilled expectations among the target group:** Badly executed publicity measures have wide-ranging implications for all parties (company, lead provider, media platforms and customers). The Internet user has now grown up, his or her expectations have increased. If disappointed, the user will not download any future material from this company, the media platform will be labelled as an unsound lead enabler and the lead agency will be branded incompetent in its choice of media platform. Result: increasing distrust of lead campaigns.

**Scorched earth:** Lead campaigns are often conducted in which a telemarketing team makes it way through a list of numbers for leads that have been generated using hard-won euros, without ever having been told about or trained in the objectives of the campaign. This leads to many leads being lost. Or the sales team does not know where the leads come from.

**No CRM link:** The threat of data chaos looms when leads are telephoned by enthusiastic call centre agents who are supposed to tell customers about the company's products. No effort is made to ascertain at what stage the business customer is at in terms of a purchasing decision, and sometimes a lead is prematurely and incorrectly assessed.



## 4. Webinar marketing

Webinars are the hooks with which marketing and sales managers of complex products go hunting for leads. Unlike white paper campaigns, they are dialogue-focused, require more work in terms of preparation and follow-up but contribute considerably more to the assumption of competence and awareness for the generated leads.

Studies such as those conducted by Begreeted.com show that webinars are successful as a marketing tool to:

- Generate leads (75% of respondents)
- Increase brand awareness (70%)
- Enhance customer loyalty (61%)

- Expand the database (44%)
- Increase traffic to company website (38%)
- Increase offline business (27%)

**Ten factors** that are crucial to the success of webinars have emerged.

### **1. Build an integrated team.**

Lead-generating webinars, as they are typically set up as marketing projects, require input from a number of departments. While one person must wear several different hats in smaller companies, larger companies have teams to manage the work. This calls for

1. A project manager to take responsibility for the webinar
2. A budget manager who pays for the webinar — usually the sales or marketing manager, though it may also be the product manager or the partner management department or key account manager
3. Employees from the marketing, communications, product marketing, sales, support and management accounting departments.

This team defines the objectives of the webinar and subsequently the project schedule. Key performance indicators for a webinar can be:

- Number of leads generated
- Number of white papers downloaded
- Number of registrations
- Number of page views
- Number of quotes submitted
- Number of product enquiries
- Number of sales

Ultimately, the success of the webinar must of course be evaluated according to these KPIs. You will want to host more than one webinar.

## 2. Involve sales.

A webinar is the first step in developing a sales process. Sales must therefore be closely involved in all the planning stages of the webinar. It is particularly important to obtain the necessary information from sales that can be used to approach potential customers in the first place. And at the end, the lead must look like it is suitable for the sales process.

Sales must also ensure that all leads from the webinar can be contacted within three or four days after the webinar. Otherwise the leads go cold and you have to start cold calling again.

## 3. Write a project plan.

Draw up a realistic schedule, in which the marketing measures for the live event must start 5-to-20 days before the actual event. The shorter the preparation time, the less time you have to actually achieve the necessary number of participants. A longer marketing period allows you to experiment with messages and mailings, add other distribution lists or try marketing via social media channels.

It makes sense to schedule the entire project over a period of 9-to-12 weeks, starting with a test of the registration process, approaching speakers and renting a mailing list. Keep in mind the following when planning the budget:

- **Marketing addresses:** Your own or third-party?
- **Speakers:** Your own employees or customers will often speak free of charge — external experts must be paid.
- **Creative:** You will need to design the (email) mailings, the (registration) landing page and, if applicable, the (PowerPoint) presentations shown during the webinar.
- **Webinar platform:** Webinar system providers are not normally too expensive. However, it is important to know in advance what exactly is included in the technology service provider's offering (for example, if it covers the interface to email marketing solutions or to video/audio protocol solutions). Depending on the frequency of the planned webinars, you need to decide whether you should rent a SaaS platform or purchase a software solution. IT must be involved here.
- **Registration:** Most technology providers allow registrations. However, you need to clarify how the registered participants will end up in the in-house CRM system afterwards.
- **Telephone marketing:** Should/must you remind registered participants about the event shortly beforehand? Will an email notification suffice? Will that be done in-house and do you need to delegate this task to a call centre?
- **Project management:** Do you have enough capacity or do you need to bring in external resources?

#### **4. Find the right speakers.**

A webinar is not a commercial. It communicates content that is of interest to the listener (not the company hosting the webinar). No sales are closed at the webinar itself. Pure product presentations or even sales presentations are therefore generally useless for a webinar. Instead, the webinar delivers high-calibre content, which is why people register and participate in it. In a second step, they are moved into the sales funnel. The content must therefore be as relevant as possible to the intended target group — the webinar does not differ from the white paper in this regard. However, it is crucial to find speakers/presenters for the webinar who

- Are known to the target group.
- Are experts on the topic.
- Are credible (and entertaining) speakers who can speak and argue in the rapid “webinar” format.

The webinar must be managed on a minute-by-minute basis, which is why speakers must be able to also follow an outline quickly.

#### **5. Communicate to convert.**

A webinar is a campaign that uses all available marketing resources — email, landing page, SEM/SEA, social media, telephone marketing, banners — in order to generate participation leads in an initial step, which can then be converted into sales leads. Use all resources.

#### **6. High advertising impact is necessary.**

With webinars, it is important that the expiry date of the campaign is inherent. So you only have a reasonable number of weeks in which webinar marketing can be done. A high advertising impact is important, particularly in the 14 days before the actual webinar date.

As is the case with white papers, you will find the right listeners for your webinar initially in your own customer database, then in the customer and prospect databases of your suppliers and partners. Other prospects can be found in the address lists of manufacturers, customers and associated service providers, specialist forums of business networks such as Xing and in the address lists that have performance marketing providers in their portfolio. Webinars are ideally suited for social media marketing.

## **7. Use the webinar for your CRM.**

Whoever is responsible for the webinar, therefore, must work with sales to establish from the communication with the customer at what point the prospect can be nudged a little further into the sales funnel:

- What happens when a prospect registers for the webinar? Does he or she receive one or more confirmation emails? Apart from “thank you”, do the mails contain any other content? How do the reminder emails for the event look?
- When are the leads sent from marketing to sales? What happens then — and when?
- What is the next stage that needs to be reached with the leads? A concrete quotation or a white paper, a product presentation or a download?
- Are participants and non-participants (both are leads) treated differently?
- Will the video recording of the webinar be publicised? And if so: when and how? With or without registration?
- Can you track the leads through your CRM system? How long does your sales process normally last — when can you measure how successful the webinar was? What happens then?
- What happens to the leads that cannot be converted into sales?

## **8. Third-party providers help to make a webinar more valuable.**

The webinar market is increasingly changing. More and more providers are offering services related to this lead generation engine:

Registration should be as simple as possible. Do not ask too many questions. Make sure that your technology service provider can manage with a minimum amount of data.

Offer streaming audio and telephone conference so that as many people as possible can watch the webinar, irrespective of the technical capabilities of their workstation PC.

A recording is useful to have as the webinar can be provided later as a podcast or presentation for those who register online.

Answer questions: whatever participants want to know. If their questions cannot be answered during the webinar, you should email them the answers within 24 hours.

Technical service providers must be able to deliver in real time and provide on-demand content. Their technical platforms should be able to cope with the expected number of participants and handle all the types of media that you require. Discuss data protection, firewalls and standard templates.

## **9. Collaborative webinar or your own flagship project?**

Depending on the budget and on how often you host webinars, you can host it in-house, outsource it or collaborate with others to create a webinar:

- Cooperate with a channel or technology partner by tagging along at one of their webinars and then sharing the leads.
- Outsource the entire project to an agency or a specialised service provider.
- Buy media services and/or content from a specialist publisher and handle the rest in-house.
- Do the project management in-house and purchase the individual services that you need as required.

## **10. Respond correctly to the budget issue.**

The best way to resolve the make-or-buy issue and to come to a decision about it is to specify a price that you are prepared to pay:

1. for a sales lead
2. for an involvement lead that is not a sales lead
3. for a visitor or prospect that is not an involvement lead
4. for the branding effect in your core target group
5. for the PR effect of the webinar, which also communicates your company's expertise to the outside world

Now plan the numbers of different leads, visitors and prospects that you want to attract and add the PR and branding effect to this. This will give you the budget that you can spend.

## About the author

Joachim Graf is a futurologist and the publisher of iBusiness.de, the futurist portal for interactive media. As a publisher, reader, lecturer, keynote speaker and future evangelist he has been engaged for more than 20 years in every segment in which communications and the media converge.



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