
Bitpipe's

Executive Survey *of* **IT Professionals**

How the industry
obtains, values
and uses vendor
literature

How the industry obtains, values and uses vendor literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify how IT professionals go about accessing high-tech vendor information, and the role this information plays in their purchasing decisions. Information sought included: the respondents' prior experience with vendor white papers and case studies, and reasons for using them; how often they refer to white papers and case studies during the year; how valuable white papers and case studies are in helping them in their jobs; the points in the buying process they typically consult white papers and case studies, and how likely they are to consult them before making a critical buying decision; whether they access white papers and case studies before, or after, making contact with a vendor; how easy/difficult it is to find the white papers and case studies they are interested in; whether white papers and case studies affect their perceptions of vendors as reliable suppliers; whether or not they pass along white papers and case studies to their colleagues—and which ones; and finally, how they value web sites like Bitpipe that provide access to major white paper and case studies on computing, networking, and communications equipment and software.

Methodology

Bitpipe's Executive Survey of IT Professionals was conducted over a three-month period (June – August 2000) using lists contributed by three Bitpipe Partners—ITworld.com, Computerworld, and Tolly Research. The surveys were conducted online and fielded via e-mail solicitation. In addition, offers to take the survey were posted to the participating sponsors' web sites. A Handspring Visor was used as an incentive to increase participation. As of September 1, the closing date of the survey, 2,535 responses had been received.

Executive Summary

The Audience

The respondents to the Bitpipe survey represent a broad cross section of enterprise end user organizations; computer and communications systems manufacturers; carriers/service providers; and consultants/systems integrators.

44% have communications management job functions (CIO, CTO, IS/IT, Network, LAN, Datacom/Telecom, Internet/e-Business management, etc.) and 20% identify themselves as consultants/systems integrators. The remaining respondents consist of corporate managers, networking administrators and engineers, and sales, marketing and purchasing professionals.

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The Findings

The survey qualifies the critical importance of technical vendor literature to the high-tech community. 85% of IT professionals say they use vendor white papers and case studies to help evaluate products and technologies, and 87% of the respondents found them valuable in helping them do their jobs. The majority (55%) found them very or extremely valuable. Only 13% found white papers and case studies somewhat valuable in helping them in their work.

The Role of the White Paper

The significance of white papers and case studies is reflected in the fact that they are referred to throughout various stages of product development. The most common motivations? To get preliminary information about products and vendors (77%). To identify technical features that apply to specific applications (69%). To stay on top of new and emerging markets and technologies (67%). And to compare products as part of the competitive analysis process (55%). Other reasons cited include general interest in IT developments (45%), justifying potential buying decisions (40%), and developing a short list of qualified vendors (30%).

Where are White Papers Viewed?

While white papers and case studies clearly are a crucial source of product, technology and vendor information, they can be difficult to find. Nearly half (47%) say it is hard to locate the technical literature they're interested in, and another 39% claim it's somewhat difficult. Only 14% of those surveyed have no difficulty locating the white papers and case studies they need.

IT professionals are proficient users of the Internet, with 98% saying they use the web to research IT products and services. 71% say they search the web at least once a week, and 50% say they hunt down product information on-line weekly or more than once a week. And they access technical vendor literature from a variety of web-based sources: 89% use Internet search engines to hunt for white papers and case studies, and 85% say they visit IT portal sites. Other places visited include vendor web sites (76%), publication web sites (39%) and association sites (38%).

Early adopters of the Internet were adamant about keeping cyberspace free from matriculation. But according to the survey these barriers are falling as more and more IT professionals turn to the web for information. One in four say that they have no problem registering for a Web site to access its information, and 69% say they register for web sites once they're certain it offers information they need. Only 5% say they never register at web sites.

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How Does an IT Professional Use a White Paper?

White papers and case studies are extremely important when it comes time to purchase products. 79% of the respondents say they are likely to consult them before making critical buying decisions, and nearly half (47%) said they are very likely or extremely likely to do so. 60% indicate they would refer to white papers and case studies at least monthly during the next twelve months. And nearly 3 out of 4 say they'll refer to them at least six times during the coming year.

According to the survey, white papers and case studies are used most often at the front end of the buying process, when critical decisions are being made about technologies, products and services. 62% of IT professionals consult white papers and case studies when developing specifications and standards. 55% use them when establishing the need for new products, and the majority (53%) also refer to them when evaluating/locating potential suppliers. More than one third use them when setting business goals, directions and budgets (38%) and 34% use them when selecting brands. One in four consult white papers and case studies when reviewing prices and availability.

That said, it's not surprising that 70% of the respondents state that knowing a vendor publishes white papers and case studies has a positive effect on their perceptions of that vendor as a supplier. So perhaps one of the most surprising data points in the survey concerns the minimal role that vendors play in getting their marketing literature into the hands of customers and prospects. 90% of those surveyed say they usually access white papers and case studies before making contact with vendors, leaving only one in ten who see this information as a result of being contacted by the vendor directly.

White Paper Pass-along Rates are Tremendous!

White papers and case studies enjoy tremendous exposure throughout high-tech organizations, with 93% of respondents saying they pass them along to others in their company. 85% pass them on to peers at their level of the organization. Two out of three pass them along to their bosses or others higher up in the organization. And nearly half (46%) pass them down to subordinates in their department or division.

A Distribution Network is Key.

Finally, IT professionals say that a service like that supplied by Bitpipe is crucial in helping them do their jobs. 94% say that a single site which provides access to vendor white papers and case studies on computing, networking and communications is a valuable resource. And two out of three say that it's very or extremely valuable in their work.

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The Results of our First

Executive Survey of IT Professionals

are out and we thought you'd like to know a few things about the bread and butter of your business ... your potential customer!

90%

of those surveyed say they usually access white papers and case studies before making contact with vendors, leaving only one in ten who see this information as a result of being contacted by the vendor directly.

94%

of the IT Professionals we surveyed would value and use one web site which provides easy access to vendor white papers and case studies on their favorite topics.

**ALMOST
HALF**

of the IT professionals surveyed said that white papers and case studies were difficult to locate on vendor sites.

In a nutshell —

White Papers dictate IT purchase behavior and just because your white paper is dangling out there on the web doesn't mean it's easy to find!

Your competitor already knows this and is taking advantage of the Bitpipe “wire service” – a distribution network with a monthly reach of over 2,000,000 hot IT technology buyers from leading IT sites such as *Network Computing*, *ITworld*, *COMDEX*, *Computerworld*, and *TechRepublic*. Not only do your competitors enjoy terrific white paper exposure, but they also get the direct benefit of ongoing guerrilla marketing efforts from these partner sites! Let's face it, wouldn't you like your white paper live and searchable on TechRepublic after one of their recent traffic-driving promotions?

Think of us as your personal hot “wire service” which you can use to get your latest product information out to thousands of qualified, targeted IT buyers.

By providing aggregated in-depth content, a proprietary search engine, and an opt-in e-mail alert for our partners to incorporate into their own web sites, users have quick access to literature from vendor companies such as Extreme Networks, and analyst groups like IDC and The Tolly Group!

Maybe you don't NEED thousands of IT professionals reading your product information? Or maybe you're overwhelmed with the sales prospects you've generated from your white paper this month! If that's the case – Congratulations!

If it's not – Read the findings of our first survey, then contact us at es@bitpipe.com or 617-350-7771 to include your company literature on Bitpipe!

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Who We Are ...

Bitpipe inc. (<http://www.bitpipe.com>) is the leading syndicator of professional literature on the Internet. Bitpipe collects, catalogs, and distributes corporate literature to other web sites. For vendors, Bitpipe is like a wire service for professional literature such as white papers and case studies. For portals, Bitpipe provides aggregated in-depth content, a proprietary search engine, and an opt-in e-mail newsletter for portals to incorporate into their own web sites. For users, literature from companies such as Extreme Networks, Inc. (<http://www.extremenetworks.com>), IDC (<http://www.idc.com>), and The Tolly Group (<http://www.tolly.com>) can be found via leading portals such as TechRepublic (<http://researchindex.techrepublic.com>), ITworld.com (<http://whitepapersandreports.itworld.com>), and Computerworld.com (<http://itreports.computerworld.com>). Privately held Bitpipe Inc. was founded in November 1998, and is headquartered in Boston, MA.

How Bitpipe Works

Technology vendors post abstracts of their professional literatures to the Bitpipe web site. Bitpipe indexes this information with its proprietary thesaurus and stores it in a XML database. The emerging XML standard allows Bitpipe to quickly and easily deliver and maintain content on a partner's site by rendering it into the "look and feel" of the partner's existing template.

The content syndication provides vendors valuable placement in front of their target market. Each vendor receives an activity report that provides specifics on how often each one of their documents was viewed during this time, with the precise click-through rate. Bitpipe also features a "Paper Rating" system, for vendors to receive user feedback on their literature, and a "Bizcard" program, where vendors can opt to receive the contact information of prospective customers, who browse and read their white papers.

Who Uses Bitpipe's Partner Web sites

- CIOs and corporate decision-makers at Global 2500 companies.
- IT/IS Managers at fast growing startups.
- Global Network Architects tasked with building wide-area infrastructure.
- IT Professionals at carriers, service providers, and Internet Service Providers (ISPs).
- In-house Programmers and Independent Software Vendors (ISVs).
- System Integrators seeking to fulfill corporate contracts.
- Consultants with a roster of blue-chip clientele.
- System Analysts who are responsible for reviewing and evaluating enterprise technology procedures.
- High-Tech Executives responsible for marketing, operations and other key functional areas of technology organizations.

Next Steps

To find out how to syndicate with Bitpipe, contact us at es@bitpipe.com or 617-350-7771. To see where your professional literature will be distributed when you syndicate with Bitpipe, see our Partners page (<http://www.bitpipe.com/partners/>). To learn more about how users will receive opt-in e-mail whenever you syndicate new material with Bitpipe, see our Newsletters page (<http://www.bitpipe.com/news/newsletters/>).

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