



Slide Charts and Calculators

from Perry Marshall's groundbreaking course, *How to Write a White Paper*
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Slide charts are a very cool tool, and applied correctly, they can get really impressive results. Let me tell you a story.

In the spring of 1998, about 3 months after I started my job at Synergetic, we had a marketing consultant named John Fox of Eaglecross helping us out. I've learned a number of cool things from John, and this one is the biggest "home run" that John ever hit when he was working with us. It was the "fieldbus comparison chart."

Once again, this is a geeky thing that only a few people in certain corners of the world would ever care about – that's true of most things that people will write white papers about, by the way – but the principle applies anywhere.

At the time, our industry was in a massive race to shake out a bunch of competing standards. There were about ten different networking standards that various manufacturers were promoting, and there was a ton of debate and confusion. We had a chart on the web (www.synergetic.com/slidechart.htm) that showed the specs of these various networks, and it was very popular. Lots of other sites linked to it, and it was clear people *wanted* this information.

**Chaos + Disagreement + Debate + Confusion =
A Place Where You Can Raise Your Voice And *Be Heard!***

Synergetic's Unique Selling Proposition was the fact that we had computer cards for all these networks, and one software interface. For product developers, we could simplify this ugly situation, because regardless of "who won" (the winners were not to become obvious for another year or so) we could supply you with a solution.

So for publicity, we cooked up a fieldbus comparison chart which showed all the different networks and what their specs were. At the time all the magazines were writing articles about this stuff, and it was a very hot topic. It was the central debate in the industry.

Keep in mind, nobody really knew who we were. We bought a booth at the national manufacturing trade show, the smallest booth they'd sell us, and we brought a couple thousand of these slide charts and started handing them out.

It was crazy. People loved these things. By the end of the show, five or six vendors – even trade organizations – were handing out our chart at their booth, too. People would look at them and say "Wow, that could come in really handy." Sometimes they'd study this chart for a few minutes and ask questions. Of course it had our phone number and website address too.



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People Took These Things Home – And *Kept* Them In Their Desks!

That, my friend, is the key. Give them something they will *KEEP*. So here's what happened next.

First of all, we got sales simply because this created 'brand recognition' from the person having something with our name on it. Second, distributors who sold related products would call us up and ask us to send 25 or 50 or 100 of them, because they were giving a seminar or something and they wanted to hand them out to their customers. This put us on the map with many of the distributors around the country. Third, all the trade magazines wrote this up and told the world about it. People were calling and asking for them for six months. (Actually we made these things and sent them out with every catalog for about 2 years.)

Finally, we actually had a lady from one company – a Fortune 500 company – call me and ask if she could buy 1,000 of them. I don't know if she even knew they were free. "Hello, I'm calling to ask how much your slide charts cost."

I said, "How many do you want?"

"We're having a sales meeting in about 2 weeks, and we need 1,000 of them, one for each of the reps coming in. How much are they?"

I put the phone on hold and ran into El Presidente's office.

"Mike, a lady wants to buy 1,000 of these. How much do they cost us to make?"

Mike says, "A little less than a buck."

I thought for a minute, and decided that 93 cents sounded good. I picked up the phone.

"93 cents each," I said.

"OK, then I'll write you a Purchase Order for \$930.00 -- is that OK?"

"That'll be fine."

And that's how I sold a case of free advertisements for \$930 to a Fortune 500 company.

If you come up with an information widget that's as relevant to your market, you'll hit a home run like that, too.