

line up as a subject matter expert (SME) and all the material you need to gather comes from inside the company — most likely from the team that designed and created the product or service in the first place. When you speak to those experts, they'll tell you about what they know best: the features, functions, philosophy, and benefits of the offering they just created. In a short time, they can dish out more source materials, including all sorts of market research, slide decks, product plans, and use cases about that offering, than you can possibly use.

For a background, you won't likely have to do any web searching, compile any external research, or keep track of any footnotes. Of course, you still have to gather the facts you need to present the offering in a compelling way, but your research should be clear and straightforward. That makes a background the easiest of any flavor to research.

Pro: Easy to write

A background can be quite easy to write because it has a simple structure and a tight focus. The structure of a background is pretty straightforward:

- ✓ Here's the offering.
- ✓ Here are the key features.
- ✓ Here's how these features can benefit you.
- ✓ Call us if you want to talk.

You may want to do an entire background about one specific aspect of an offering, such as security, robustness, total cost of ownership, or whatever. In this case, you can arrange the list of features into some sort of logical pattern so that each one builds on what you discuss earlier in the paper.

Or a background can take the opposite approach with a modular structure. With this approach, when you cover four discrete features and their benefits, you don't have to link them all together into a grand design, with each point following logically from the one before; you can just talk about one, another one, the next, and then the last.

With either approach, you should arrange your points in logical order, starting and ending your list with strong, memorable features. If you have one or two less-exciting features, tuck those into the middle to de-emphasize them. Beyond that, there's no trick to writing a background. Just stick to the facts and explain the offering in clear terms.