

into the top of the funnel where leads are generated. If you try to use one for that purpose, you'll likely be disappointed.

If your company is an industry leader that doesn't have to work hard to attract prospects, the background can be an ideal white paper. Smaller vendors, be warned: If your firm has to work hard to attract recognition and if you're seeking to generate as many leads as possible, don't use a background to achieve those goals. You can get much better results from a problem/solution white paper (which I discuss in Chapter 8) or even a numbered list (which I cover in Chapter 7).



## Planning a Background

Publishing any white paper involves three major phases: planning, producing, and promoting. Parts III and IV of this book go into each of these phases in great detail, even breaking them down into a step-by-step plan. This section covers key areas in planning a background, namely the following:

- ✓ Gathering the essential information you need
- ✓ Allocating pages
- ✓ Choosing an appropriate title
- ✓ Setting the right tone

## Gathering essential information

This section is all about the background you need for your background. (I could get all postmodern about that, but I'll restrain myself.) In any case, you need to know five key things to help plan an effective background:

- ✓ Your intended reader(s)
- ✓ The purpose of the background
- ✓ The key features of the offering
- ✓ The key benefits of each feature
- ✓ The call to action at the end

The following sections discuss each of these items in turn. Until you uncover these items and make a plan for your background, don't even think about starting to write. You write during Phase 2 (see Chapter 13) when you actually produce your white paper.