



INBOUND MARKETING

manifesto

Get More Traffic, Leads and Sales Online

NEIL BROWN



INBOUND
MARKETING
TODAY

BLOG + PODCAST

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Introduction: The Case for Inbound Marketing

My first job out of college was working for a local newspaper in 1997.

It's amazing how much the Internet has changed since then; it was a much different place.

Many (but certainly not all) companies had websites, but they were static and more like brochures.

Social media wasn't around, and neither was Google.

Local newspapers, television and radio stations were still the primary sources for news, sports and community events.

Companies still relied on traditional "outbound" marketing. Running ads in the newspaper, using the yellow pages, and radio and television were the norm and worked well for sales. Cold calling was still in effect.

The companies with the largest advertising budgets commanded market share, and consumers still relied on salespeople early in the buying process.



Neil Brown
Founder + Host

But suddenly, things started changing.

As the Internet matured, companies developed more robust websites that included blogs and content management systems – making it easier to publish information and to interact with customers.

Google was born and quickly evolved to become the number one source for consumers to access a world of information with a few clicks of a button.

Facebook was founded—initially just for college students, but quickly opening to the general public. Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn would soon follow suit, opening up a new world of instant communication and expanded connections to people around the world.

Blogging software like Blogger and WordPress developed and individuals began publishing and sharing their information and advice with the world.

Traditional marketing methods became annoying and interruptive to everyday consumers, who were becoming fed up with these strategies.

New music technology such as Napster, iTunes and Pandora stole listenership from radio stations.

iPods meant you could carry around thousands of songs in your pocket and listen to them whenever and wherever you wanted, making radio an inconvenience at best.

Traditional marketing methods became annoying and interruptive to everyday consumers, who were becoming fed up with these strategies.

DVRs and digital cable enabled consumers to skip commercials and to watch shows on their own schedule.

The Do Not Call List was established to combat the annoyance of

telemarketing calls around the clock. Google quickly took the place of the Yellow Pages.

In short, the power shifted.

The power that was long held by companies with the largest advertising budgets was now in the hands of scrappy startups that embraced the Internet and social media.

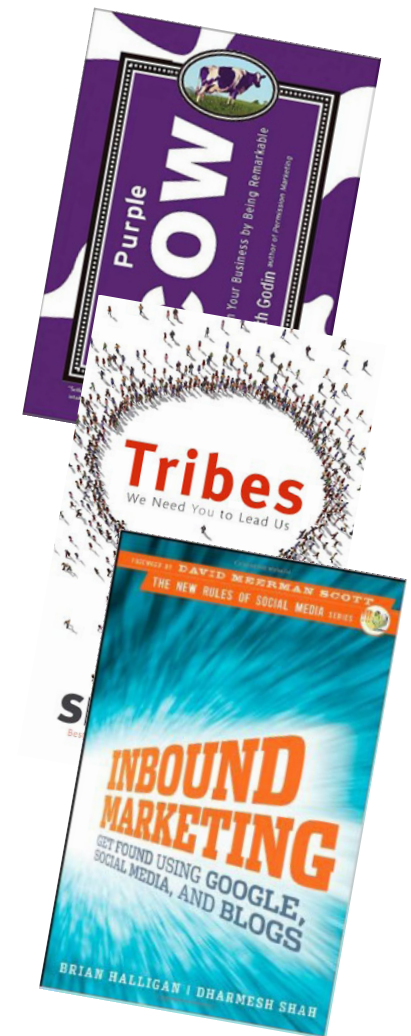
Consumers no longer had to rely on a company's sales department for information about products. Instead, they could easily research information online and find reviews from other consumers.

In 2007, authors such as Seth Godin and David Meerman Scott started publishing books discussing this shift in power and the changing marketing landscape. The paradigm began to garner more attention.

Then in 2009, former MIT students Darmesh Shah and Brian Halligan (the founders of HubSpot) wrote a book called "Inbound Marketing: Getting Found Using Google, Social Media and Blogs."

The term 'inbound marketing' was coined. Not out of theory or speculation, but out of studying this fundamental shift about how people consume information and make buying decisions.

Fast forward to 2015, and it seems that everyone and their grandma is now on social media and carries smartphones in their pockets. "New" social media channels such as Pinterest, Instagram and Houzz have exploded in popularity.



Today, companies who don't embrace inbound marketing are at risk of being overtaken by their digitally-savvy competitors. But with the rapid change of the marketing landscape, how do these companies keep up? How do they engage with today's consumers? How do they ensure that they don't go the way of the dinosaurs?

###

That's why I've started the **Inbound Marketing Today** podcast and blog – to help today's CEOs and marketing directors understand and implement a successful inbound marketing strategy. I want to help cut through the clutter around the topic and present what works in an easy-to-understand manner.

The Inbound Marketing Manifesto is a foundation that will help you understand the basic principles and tactics of inbound marketing. Like a blueprint for a new house, it can serve as your roadmap for constructing a successful strategy.

Ready to start on your path to a remarkable inbound marketing strategy?

OK, let's get into it!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil Brown" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

– Neil Brown

Founder + Host of Inbound Marketing Today

*“Market unto others as
you would have them
market unto you.”*



Darmesh Shah,
Co-founder of HubSpot

Chapter 1: The Inbound Marketing Methodology

Since 2006, inbound marketing has been the most effective method for doing business online.

However, don't be fooled into thinking that just because you're "on social media" or you "send email blasts" that you're actually doing inbound marketing. There is a methodology that must be clearly understood and implemented for your marketing efforts to be effective.

This inbound methodology can be divided into four basic marketing stages: Attract, Convert, Close and Delight.



1- Attract

Your first step in a successful inbound marketing strategy is attracting the right potential customers. These people are the ones most likely to become leads and, ultimately, great customers and promoters.

The first step in attracting the right people is figuring out who your ideal customers are and then, from their characteristics, creating buyer personas.

Think of your best customers (we want to get really specific here): what are their goals, challenges and common pain points? What are their demographics – age, sex, location and income? What are their personal interests? These are the questions that will help you construct your buyer personas. Go so far as to even give them a fictional name and create a profile sheet with their details and a stock photo (and maybe an account on a dating website, yeah?)

Next, you'll want to create different buyer personas for each of your target segments.

Using these personas, you'll want to implement all of your inbound marketing tools to attract these personas to your website. These are a few of the most important tools in attracting the right visitors to your site:



Your website is really the core of your entire inbound marketing strategy.

- **The Website:** Your website is really the core of your entire inbound marketing strategy. Ensure you're putting your best face forward! A well-designed and intuitive site can make the difference between a site visitor staying to learn more, or leaving to look at a competitor's website. In addition to the look and feel, the website content should speak to your ideal customers.

- **Blogging:** Blogging is critical to inbound marketing. It's arguably the single best way to attract new visitors to your website and a great place to produce content specific to your customers' wants and needs. Blog posts help educate your potential customers about your industry, providing them with valuable content and answering their questions. Blogging positions your company as a leader in your industry and a trustworthy source of information.
- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** Most customers begin their buying process online—usually searching Google for answers to their questions. They read and consume more content than ever before, so you need to ensure that your website is optimized for the questions and keywords that your potential customers are searching for. Otherwise, it's easy to get lost in a sea of competitor websites.
- **Social Media:** Your potential customers are most definitely on social media, so you'll need to establish your company on the social networks where your ideal customers spend their time. Promote and share information from your website and blog—as well as content from other sources that your customers would find valuable. Interact and engage with your prospects (after all, it is social media) to get them interested by asking them questions or even encouraging them to share content with you. Social media is a great way to put a human face on your brand.

Blogging is arguably the single best way to attract new visitors to your website and a great place to produce content addressing your customers' wants and needs.

2- Convert

Attracting the right visitors to your website is the first step, but there's still work to be done. In order to convert these visitors into leads, you'll need to gather some information from them— usually the basics are a name and email address—in order to provide them with additional value on behalf of your company.

This works like an exchange: in order to get that information in the first place, you should provide something of value in return. In that way, you are earning those details. You can earn them by offering content like ebooks, checklists or webinars—whatever would be of enough interest to your visitors for them to give you their contact information in order to download.

In order to get contact info from website visitors, you should provide something of value in return. In that way, you are earning those details.

Some of the most important tools marketers use to convert visitors to leads include:

- **Calls-to-Action:** Calls-to-Action (or CTAs) are graphics and buttons that briefly explain your valuable content offers and take visitors to a landing page you've created for the offer. Use action statements such as "Download Your Free Ebook" or "Register for Our Webinar" so that visitors know what they're getting. Including visuals such as a 3-D mockup of your ebook cover gets the point across even better. You should offer more than one CTA to appeal to visitors who are interested in different topics or are at different stages of the buyer's journey.
- **Landing Pages:** As I mentioned, your CTAs should lead people to a dedicated landing page you've created for your offer. Landing pages

should expand upon what your offer entails, such as key points your visitor will learn from your ebook or webinar. The details should be convincing enough that the visitor will gladly register or download your offer. Landing pages shouldn't contain any element that could distract the visitor before taking action—so make sure to remove things like your navigation menu from their sight.

- **Forms:** Naturally, you'll need a form on your landing page to capture your visitor's name and email. In addition, you can ask for other key details like "what best describes you" which will help you match them to one of your buyer personas. The key is to ask only what you need to know at this stage while keeping the form as short as possible.
- **Contact Database:** You'll need a system that collects and manages contacts who have filled out your forms. With the right marketing software, you can segment your contacts into different lists and send relevant follow up content that your contacts are interested in based upon the various lists.

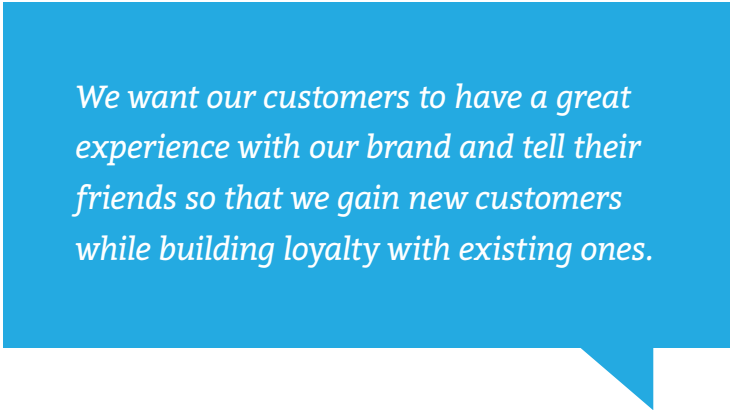
People come to your website at different stages in their buyer's journey—some are just looking for more information while some are ready to do business.

3- Close

Now that we've attracted the right visitors and converted some of those visitors into leads, the next step is to convert some of those leads into customers. This is referred to as our close stage. Not every contact will become a customer, and those who become customers may not do so right away. People are at different stages in their buyer's journey—some are just looking for more information while some are ready to do business.

Here are some of the tools we use to "nurture" or follow up with these contacts:

- **Email:** After a visitor has filled out a form to receive your offer, you can send a series of emails that provide additional useful and relevant content. These additional touch points help to build trust with your leads and educate them further until they are ready to buy.
- **Marketing Automation:** Marketing automation tools exist to automate much of the email follow up process. You can pre-write and schedule these emails to automatically go out to your leads at set intervals so that you're consistent. Some of the emails can have their own calls-to-action, such as "Request an Estimate" or "Receive a Free Evaluation" to encourage leads to become customers.
- **Customer Relationship Manager (CRM):** CRM tools help your organize and track all of the details of your leads, such as their contact info, what offers they downloaded and what pages of your website they visited. You can use this informative data to help determine how and when to engage with your contacts.



We want our customers to have a great experience with our brand and tell their friends so that we gain new customers while building loyalty with existing ones.

4- Delight

In the inbound marketing methodology, we want to go beyond just getting the sale. We want our customers to have a great experience with our brand and tell their peers about their experience so that we gain new customers while building loyalty with the ones we already have.

Some tools you can use to delight your customers include:

- **Smart Calls-to-Action:** When customers return to our website, does it make sense to show them the same calls-to-action they have already downloaded? With the right marketing software, you can present users with different offers when they visit your site, such as ones for other products or services you provide.
- **Smart Content:** In addition to smart CTAs, you can present users with content that is tailored to their interests and challenges. This personalized content can be a powerful way to engage with your customers who appreciate the fact that you notice and respond to their needs.
- **Social Monitoring:** Customers and prospects want to be acknowledged and listened to. When they ask a question or mention your brand on social media, there should be someone on the other end responding to them. With the right tools, you can monitor and engage with your audience which sets you apart from the competition.
- **Surveys:** One of the best ways to figure out what your customers want is simply to ask them! Use feedback and surveys to ensure that you're meeting their needs and to gather information on other challenges they may be facing.

This is the basic overview of the inbound marketing methodology. Not too complicated, right? Implementing this methodology has changed companies' futures, and it can change yours too if you are ready to take the next step.

In the next chapters, we're going to dive into some of the nuts and bolts of how to put an inbound marketing strategy in place so that you'll have all of the materials you need to build your own strategy.

“Selling to people who actually want to hear from you is more effective than interrupting strangers who don’t.”



Seth Godin,
Author and Speaker

Chapter 2:

Knowing Your Prospects: Creating Buyer Personas

In the attract stage, we discussed how important it is to really get to know our ideal customer so we can ensure we're attracting the right prospects.

Most companies have an idea of who their prospects are, but we want to take that a step further and get as detailed as possible with our most important tool:

Buyer Personas

A buyer persona is a detailed description of your customer based on market research and real data about the customers you already have.

The best things to include when putting together a description are customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations and goals. The more details, the better.

By clearly understanding the person behind your buyer persona, you'll know what problems and challenges they face as well as their interests and hobbies. It will help you determine how and where to

By clearly understanding the person behind your buyer persona, you'll know what problems and challenges they face. It will help you determine how and where to attract them and how to communicate what you can do for them.

attract them and how to communicate what you can do for them.

To help your business relate to these buyer personas, give them a fictional name and photo, such as “Manufacturer Marty” or “Homeowner Harry.” The purpose of this is to really visualize your buyer personas so that you can tailor your marketing as if you are talking directly to a person.

This is where many businesses fail— they can’t communicate directly to real people. They can only spit out corporate, jargony marketing-speak.

When you look at your existing customers and market data, you’ll likely come up with a few different buyer personas. Create a different persona for each segment.

Here is an example of one of our very own buyer personas at my agency, Brown Creative Group:

Marketing Mary

- **Role:** Marketing Director for a \$5 million manufacturing company
- **Personal:** Marketing Mary is 28 years old with a degree in Marketing and has worked at the company for five years. She is tech-savvy, an avid blog reader, and loves to keep up with the latest trends in social media and online marketing.
- **Goals:** Marketing Mary is charged with generating qualified leads for the sales team, increasing website traffic, social media following and email subscribers. She also coordinates seminars and trade show events, as well as some outbound marketing such as ads in trade magazines and direct mail campaigns.
- **Challenges:** Marketing Mary struggles with not having enough time and resources to accomplish everything she wants to implement. She focuses on individual marketing tactics but really lacks a comprehensive inbound strategy.



Because we have a very clear picture of who Marketing Mary is, we can really personalize content such as blog posts and ebooks that speak directly to Mary’s goals and challenges.

Buyer Persona Worksheet

Now it's your turn: here is a template you can use to create your buyer personas.

1. Give this fictional person and name and attach a photo

2. What is their demographic information?

3. What is their job title and responsibilities?

4. What does a typical day look like for them?

5. What are their biggest challenges and pain points?

6. What are their goals?

7. Where do they go for information online?

8. What are their most common objections to your product or service?

Create a buyer persona for each segment of customer you target. Refer back to this as you are planning content.

*“Marketers need to
build digital relationships
and reputation before
closing a sale.”*



Chris Brogan,
Author and Speaker

Chapter 3: The Buyers Journey

Now that you have your buyer personas clearly defined, let's talk about the research process a typical buyer goes through leading up to a purchase — the buyer's journey.

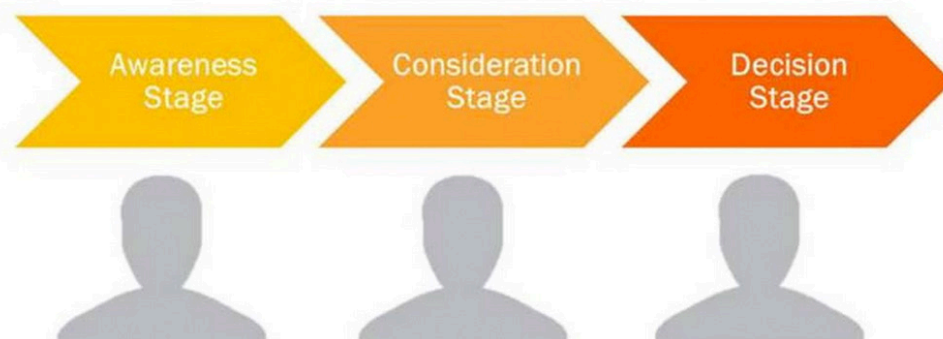
Visitors that are attracted through your marketing will come to your site at different stages in their decision process.

Understanding these stages will help you communicate with and create content for your prospects at each stage.

We can divide the buyer's journey into three stages:

- **Awareness**
- **Consideration**
- **Decision**

THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



1- Awareness Stage

In the awareness stage, a prospect is searching for answers to their questions and solutions to their problems.

For example, let's make our prospect a homeowner who has a leaky basement.

They're aware of the problem and are doing educational research to more clearly understand, frame and give a name to their problem. Based upon their problem, these are probably the kind of searches they would be doing in a search engine:

- What to do about standing water in my basement
- How to prevent my basement walls from leaking
- How to safely remove mold in my basement

Visitors that are attracted through your marketing will come to your site at different stages in their decision process. Understanding these stages will help you communicate with and create content for your prospects at each stage.

2- Consideration Stage

Now that the prospect has a better understanding of the problems, they start exploring their various options.

- Is this something I can solve myself or is this a job for a pro?
- Should we excavate the soil and apply waterproofing to the outside walls?
- Can the mold be removed with bleach?
- Do we need a drainage system to capture and remove the excess water?

At this stage, they're committed to researching and understanding all of the available approaches and methods that could solve the problem.

3- Decision Stage

In this stage, the prospect researches local companies who could fix their problem.

- Basement waterproofing Charlotte
- Mold remediation service Charlotte

The prospect evaluates these companies by looking through their websites, reading online reviews, watching videos and/or viewing their social media channels.

They begin narrowing down and evaluating which company seems the most trustworthy and can best solve their issue. At this stage the prospect is ready to talk to companies and get price estimates.

That's the buyer's journey in a nutshell.

Now imagine you had content for each of the three stages.

Someone in the awareness stage would likely have stumbled across blog posts you've written about leaky basement issues. Maybe they downloaded a checklist of how to identify the source of a leaky basement.

Someone in the consideration stage would likely have read about various options you've outlined on your website that were available to fix a leaking

57% of a prospect's decision is complete before their first contact with a supplier. Some studies have even put this number as high as 90%!

basement. Maybe they downloaded an ebook that discussed which options are appropriate in different situations.

Someone in the decision stage would have likely read about what makes your company unique, who is on your team, and testimonials left by happy customers. Maybe they filled out a contact form to get a free basement consultation.

What makes understanding the buyer's journey and developing content for each stage so important?

57% of a prospect's decision is complete before their first contact with a supplier (Source: Sales Leadership Council)

Some studies have even put this number as high as 90%!

You want to be a part of this journey so that you are a part of your prospect's decision. By having the content your consumers need, you are increasing your chances of closing a lead into a customer.

“In today’s information age of marketing and Web 2.0, a company’s website is the key to their entire business.”



Marcus Sheridan,
Marketer and Speaker

Chapter 4: Your Website as the Hub of Your Inbound Marketing

Imagine the hub of a wagon wheel with spokes leading out from the hub to the outside rim.

That hub is your website.

Around the outside rim are inbound marketing tactics such as blogging, social media, email marketing and SEO.

All points lead back to your website. As we've said before, your website is your most important online asset, and it's critical that this asset is optimized to its fullest, or it can have an adverse affect on your marketing efforts.

Stanford University did a study called "Stanford Guidelines for Web Credibility" where they identified 10 guidelines for building the credibility of a website:



1. Make it easy to verify the accuracy of information on the site
2. Show that there's a real organization behind your site
3. Highlight expertise in your organization and in the services you provide
4. Show that honestly and trustworthy people stand behind your site
5. Make it easy to contact you
6. Design your site so it looks professional
7. Make your site easy to use
8. Update your website's content often
9. Use restraint with any third party promotional offers (ads)
10. Avoid errors of all types

Using our inbound marketing tactics, we can fulfill every guideline on this list and establish the credibility of your website in no time.

Design

The first objective should be a well-designed website that conveys a great first impression to your visitors.

Visitors to your site will make a snap judgement as to the credibility of your company, in large part, based on your website. According to researchers at Carleton University, visitors can make impressions of your website in just 50 milliseconds, or 0.05 seconds!

Unless the first impression is favorable, visitors can leave your site before they even have a chance to learn what makes your company different. Clearly, design is important to the “face” of your website, so work to put your best face forward!

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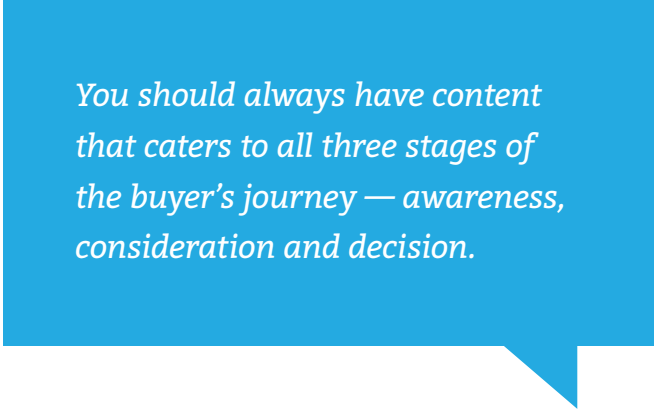
Content

The content of your site should speak directly to your buyer personas and the issues and challenges they face, and you should always have content that caters to all three of the buyer's journey stages.

Resist the temptation to use industry jargon, unless you're a B2B company targeting a highly technical industry. For general consumers, keep the language conversational but professional.

Your website should clearly convey who you are, what you do, how you do it and who you do it for.

How many times have you visited a company's website and left without really knowing what they actually do? We don't want that for your website. Clarity and communication are key in content!



You should always have content that caters to all three stages of the buyer's journey — awareness, consideration and decision.

Calls-to-Action

Your website should be a lead-generating machine. It should be clear what action(s) you want your visitors to take so that there's as little confusion as possible during the buyer's journey.

Present your calls-to-action in highly visible locations. Two effective locations are typically near the top right of the sidebar and at the end of your content.

Every blog post should have a call-to-action at the end, leading readers to take your offer in order to learn more information.

You should place different calls-to-action on appropriate product or services pages so they are relevant to the content of those pages. Don't use the same call-to-action on every page!

Responsive Design

Your website should be responsive, which is a web design industry term for how your website automatically optimizes for different mobile and tablet screen sizes.

More users than ever will view your website on their smartphone or tablets, so if your site isn't responsive, users will quickly get irritated and leave your site. Not to mention, Google recently introduced "mobile friendliness" as one of the factors they use to determine where your website will rank in their search results, so if you want to be seen, make sure you are responsive.



Mobile digital media time in the U.S. is now higher at 51% compared to desktop (42%).

If you don't know whether your current site is mobile-friendly or not, Google has a handy tool where you can find out:

[Google's Mobile Friendly Test Tool](#)

If your current site doesn't pass the test, it's time to reach out to a web designer or agency and have it redesigned to be mobile-friendly.

Analytics

Every website should have some form of analytics that tell you how many people visit your site, what pages they view, how long they spend on your site and how they found your site (among many others). This information can be used to help you to continue improving your website and targeting your buyer personas more effectively.

Website analytics can be used to help improve your website and target your buyer personas more effectively.

Google Analytics is free and easy to sign up for. You may need the help of a web designer or agency to add your tracking code but, once installed, you'll quickly start gathering valuable statistics on your site visitors.

A more robust tool like HubSpot will provide much more detailed insight into your visitors and present it in a way that is easy to understand as a business owner (a.k.a sans the tech talk).

Blog

We'll talk about the process of blogging in more detail later, but your website should definitely contain a blog to draw customers in through relevant content.

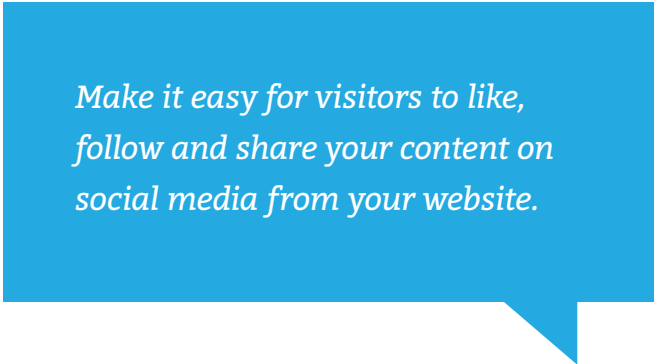
Your blog should be integrated into the website itself, not on another platform with a different website address (if you keep everything in one place, it is more easily found by visitors). Website content management systems (CMS) like WordPress are good tools to make it easy to manage your entire site, including your blog, so consider using a CMS to keep yourself organized.

Host your website on a reliable server that loads your website quickly and provides features such as regular backups and extra layers of security to prevent malicious hackers from gaining access. Your visitors will also be happy that they don't have to wait ages for the website to load.

Social Media Sharing

Your website should contain links to your company's social media channels, making it easy for visitors to find and "like" or "follow" you on sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Pinterest.

Include social media sharing buttons, especially on your blog, to make it easy for visitors to share your content to their fans and followers.



Make it easy for visitors to like, follow and share your content on social media from your website.

Social media also gives you an opportunity to interact with your customers and prospects on a more personal basis. Like we said before, social media allows you to put a human face to your company, so make sure that you're listening to and addressing consumers' needs. This way, they are more likely to become fans and promoters.

“Great marketers are matchmakers. We find ways to get offers people love in front of the people most likely to love them.”



April Dunford,
Startup Marketer and Speaker

Chapter 5:

Creating Lead Magnets

Lead magnets are offers or incentives that you provide on your website in exchange for a visitor submitting their name and email address. Lead magnets are the reason you need calls-to-action!

They're a cornerstone of inbound marketing because they help you convert anonymous website visitors into leads that you can continue to market to long after they have left your site.

A website without a lead magnet is like showing up with flowers and a smile on the night of prom, but not actually asking your date to go.

Lead magnets are your tool to convert anonymous website visitors into leads that you can continue to market to long after they have left your site.

Your lead magnet is the “ask.”

You shouldn't expect a visitor to provide their contact details without offering something of value in return.

Having a general contact form and an email signup form is great, but it's just not enough to entice most visitors to take action.

Lead magnets come in many forms and formats — an ebook, a series of

emails, a promotional coupon or even a webinar. Choose the lead magnets that are the most relevant for your company and start enticing your visitors!

To help get your creative juices going, here are 15 ideas for lead magnets you could use:

1. An ebook in PDF format that provides helpful and relevant information. This is probably the most common lead magnet used in inbound marketing.
2. An email “course” full of helpful tips that is automatically delivered over the span of several days.
3. A pre-recorded video on a topic of interest to your audience (not a commercial! You are not promoting yourself here).
4. A checklist that will help your audience ensure they’ve covered all the steps or gathered all the information around a topic.
5. A calendar that includes helpful dates related to your topic, such as a gardening and planting to-do list, etc.
6. A free consultation or evaluation, especially if you provide a professional service.
7. A discount coupon, especially for retail, restaurant and service businesses.
8. A free trial of your software or service.
9. A webinar, whether it’s live or recorded.
10. An online assessment tool, such as a tool that analyzes your website or assesses your situation through a series of questions.
11. A template that can help your audience stay on track, such as an Excel budget spreadsheet or an editorial calendar.
12. An entry into a contest or sweepstakes can encourage a lot of response while building your email list.
13. A free ticket(s) to an event related to your industry (or something really cool).
14. A free sample of your product (if that applies to your business).
15. A resource list that you’ve compiled of the best sources on a topic related to your business.

The More the Merrier

There's really no limit to how many lead magnets you could have. Different visitors will resonate with different topics. You can start with one and add more over time.

A good rule of thumb is to have your best and most universal lead magnet on your home page—displayed in a nicely designed call-to-action graphic which leads to a landing page (be sure it stands out from the rest of your site and clearly communicates what the offer is and the benefit to the visitor)

You can create separate lead magnets for different services and place them on your relevant web pages.

In addition, lead magnets should be placed at the end of related blog posts which will encourage readers to download.

With the right tools, you can measure which lead magnets convert better than others and even split test different versions to see what's working and what isn't, and from there improve your results.



You can create separate lead magnets and place them on relevant web pages and at the end of related blog posts.

*“These days, people
want to learn before they
buy, be educated instead
of pitched.”*



Brian Clark,
CopyBlogger

Chapter 6:

Blogging for Business

Why Blog?

Blogging is one of the most versatile and effective inbound marketing tools in existence.

Blogging is a way to create relevant content which allows you to cast a wider net into the web world in order to drive more traffic to your site. Every blog article you publish is another page that will be indexed by Google. If you blog just once a week, after one year you'll have 52 more pages that can lead visitors to your website.

Every blog article you publish is another page that will be indexed by Google, thus another page that can lead visitors to your website.

Studies show that the bulk of a website's traffic comes from "long-tail" keywords. These are the phrases that people search for in Google in order to find relevant results. Keywords, especially long-tail keywords, are your best friend because they are how you become ranked in search engines. Blog articles are the best way to rank for these long tail keywords.

In addition, consistent blogging positions your company as a thought leader

in your industry. People are much more likely to share content that provides relevant information to their network on social media, which means other potential customers will see it.

Blogging also plays a key role in generating leads. By providing a relevant call-to-action at the end of each blog post, you give readers an easy opportunity to download your offer and, thus, become a lead.

What to Blog About?

Some companies have a hard time figuring out what they should blog about.

A great starting point is to meet with your sales team, along with other key people in your company, to brainstorm the most common questions they are asked by consumers. Each of these questions can be the start of a blog post.

Marcus Sheridan, founder of the Sales Lion, advocates a philosophy of “they ask, you answer.” Write blog posts that address prospects’ questions, challenges and pain points.

A great place to start is brainstorm the most common questions your team is asked by prospects and customers. Each of those questions can be the start of a blog post.

For example, in Sheridan’s pool business, Riverside Pools, he was often asked about the price of a new fiberglass pool and how fiberglass pools compared to concrete pools. So he developed blog content that addressed these topics. The blog posts drove a tremendous amount of search traffic to his website and he was able to directly trace new pool sales back to his blog content.

Browse industry websites and magazines for content ideas, and set up alerts to monitor what people are talking about on social media as it relates to your industry.

Blogging Best Practices

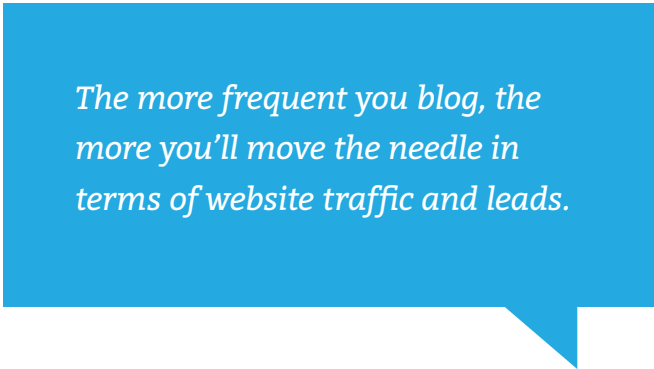
One of the biggest keys to effective blogging is to not be self-promotional in your posts. Your blog posts should provide helpful, unbiased content.

Enlist several key members of your team to contribute to the blog. This will help provide a wider range of perspective as well as increase the amount of posts you're able to publish.

A good rule of thumb is to blog a minimum of once a week. But if you can, aim for at least 3 times a week, if not daily! The more frequent you blog, the more you'll move the needle in terms of website traffic and leads.

A good blog post should be anywhere from 600-1500 words. Studies have shown that longer posts tend to rank higher in the search engines.

Include visuals in every blog post. You can find images from free stock photo websites or purchase stock photos for a reasonable fee. Just be sure you have the rights to use any image you post so you don't expose the company to copyright violations. This means steer clear of using an image you grabbed off Google Images.



The more frequent you blog, the more you'll move the needle in terms of website traffic and leads.

As I mentioned earlier, be sure to include a call-to-action for a relevant lead magnet at the end of every blog post to help convert readers into leads. Don't forget to promote your blog posts on social media. Remember, you can promote older posts again, especially on sites like Twitter.

*“It’s not just about
consuming content, but
sharing it, passing it on,
and adding to it.”*



Arianna Huffington,
Huffington Post

Chapter 7:

Social Media for Business

Using social media for business has several key benefits.

Managed correctly, social media can humanize your brand by helping to build trust and engagement with your audience. Remember that today's buyers have an aversion to a 'faceless' company that only publishes 'corporate speak.' Have fun with social media and use it to show some personality.

Social media can also greatly increase your reach. When you publish relevant and helpful content, your fans and followers are more likely to share it to their networks. In turn, the people in those networks can share it with their networks. The 'viral' nature of social media can lead many people back to your company that you would have never been able to reach otherwise.

Managed correctly, social media can humanize your brand by helping build trust and engagement with your audience.

Social media is also a powerful customer service tool. Today's consumers are often more likely to ask a question or voice a complaint through your social media channels rather than calling a customer service line. Be sure you have the resources in place to monitor and respond to every single

question or complaint in a timely manner.

Studies have shown that people expect a quick response, typically within an hour, but the quicker the better. It shows there is a person on the 'other line' who cares and is listening.

Embracing complaints on social media is important. No company is perfect, and by admitting the fact that you made a mistake or dropped the ball (and then showing how you're going to correct it), you'll prove your trustworthiness as a company.

What social media channels make sense for my business?

Starting out with a few 'mainstream' social media channels is typically recommended: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are your basics. The key is to find where your audience 'hangs out' online and build a presence there.

By focusing on a few key channels, you allow yourself to devote time and attention to building up your follower base and promoting relevant and engaging content.

By focusing on a few key channels, you allow yourself to devote time and attention to building up your follower base and promoting relevant and engaging content.

If your brand and content is highly visual in nature, include Pinterest and Instagram in your list of beneficial social media channels. In addition, there are more 'niche' social media sites that are useful if you are in a specialized industry. Houzz is a social media site designed for builders, remodelers and interior designers.

And even though YouTube may not technically be a social media channel,

it can be a powerful way to drive traffic and provide content that you can share on other social media channels. It's up to you to decide what's best for your company.

How to build a follower base

When you're first starting out, social media can be a lonely place! You need to build your network of fans and followers to get the ball rolling.

In order to do this, you'll need to take different approaches on each social media site. For example, with Facebook, you may want to start by inviting your existing connections to 'like' your company page and encourage other employees to do the same. You can also run Facebook 'like' campaigns to expand your reach and encourage others in your target demographic to connect with your page.

In order to build your network of fans and follows, you'll need to take different approaches on each social media site.

With Twitter, you can start by following others in your industry and target demographic. Many will reciprocate by following you back. As you continue to follow others and post great shareable content, your network of followers should continue to grow. Like Facebook, you can also run paid campaigns on Twitter to expand your reach even further.

You should start to see a pattern here: for social media success, make it a consistent practice of your company to follow others while creating and sharing great content, then throw in a mix of paid campaigns. Some channels will grow faster than others, but continue to follow this strategy and you will successfully build up your follower base over time.

What should I post on social media and how often?

This is a common question, and while there are no 'right or wrong' answers, here are some guidelines that should help:

Promote your own content, especially blog posts. You also occasionally want to promote links to your offers, like ebooks or webinars. But listen, if you stopped there, you would only be having a one-sided conversation. Remember that social media is designed to be, well, social!

Share links to third party content that your audience would find beneficial. There are lots of industry blogs and resources that you can share and your followers will appreciate you being a resource of 'curating' interesting and helpful content.

Share posts and tweets from your followers. As you become known for sharing others' content, many of your followers will, in turn, begin to share yours as well.

Pose questions to your audience to help encourage dialogue on social media. People appreciate giving feedback and engaging with brands online.

Thank people on social media. Publicly responding to people who have shared your content or mentioned your brand in a positive manner goes a long way in humanizing your brand.

A good rule of thumb is to only post your own content no more than 1/4 of the time so that you have a good balance and don't overwhelm people with self-promotional content.

In short, there a myriad of things you can post and share on social media. A good rule of thumb is to only post your own content no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time so that you have a good balance and don't overwhelm people with self-promotional content.

In terms of frequency, you want to be active on social media every day. For Facebook, posting once or twice a day is sufficient. Any more and your posts may become intrusive by continually filling up your fan's Facebook feed. With Twitter, though, you can post more often, maybe 4-6 times a day due to the shorter attention span that each post receives.

Pay attention to the habits of other companies on each social media channel. Chances are if you think that they are posting too frequently, others think the same way. By observing and responding to the actions of others, you can get a good feel for how often you should post.

“Email has an ability many channels don’t: creating valuable, personal touches – at scale.”



David Newman,
Speaker and Author

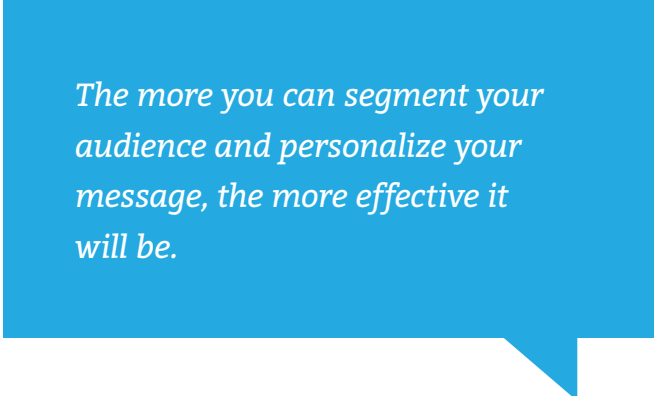
Chapter 8:

Email Marketing

As part of your inbound marketing strategy, you should build up an email list and regularly communicate with your email subscribers.

Emails play a key role in turning your prospects into customers.

The 'old way' of doing email marketing was to send one message to your entire list, which is referred to as an email 'blast.' On some occasions this may still be appropriate, but the smarter (and more effective) approach is to segment your list into smaller categories and email highly relevant topics to each segment.



The more you can segment your audience and personalize your message, the more effective it will be.

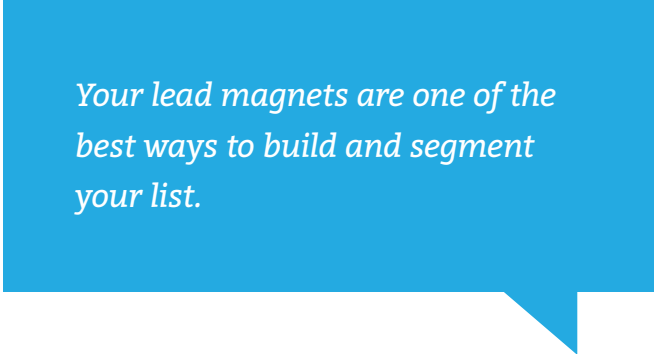
If you think about it, it makes sense: not everyone should get the same message. Some people on your email list are only interested in certain topics or services, so the more you can personalize your message, the more effective it will be.

Building and segmenting your list

Your lead magnets are one of the best ways to build and segment your list, because typically each of your lead magnets refer to a specific subject. It's easy to set up a separate form and email database for each one so that when people download each offer, they are automatically added to the appropriate email list.

At this point, you can now tailor a series of follow up emails related to that subject. Another option is to ask specific questions in your lead magnet forms and segment your subscribers based upon their answers.

Here's an example: you can ask what role a prospect holds in their company and organize them into lists based upon that position. That way, you send a series of emails to CEOs that are separate from the ones you would send to Operations Directors. Now, thanks to your segmented lists, everyone is getting content that is relevant to them.



Your lead magnets are one of the best ways to build and segment your list.

Another example of how you can segment your email list is to ask how many employees the company has and send a separate series of emails to, say, companies with 1-25 employees and a separate series to companies with 500-1000 employees (because different-sized companies have different challenges).

Think about what makes sense for your business. It could be that you ask a question about their interests, experience, income or other metric in order to segment emails.

In addition to website visitors, you can use paid ads to drive traffic to your lead magnets. Facebook ads, Twitter ads and Google Adwords are great ways

to generate more leads and build your email list.

Depending on your business, you can also create a promotion or contest to help build your email list.

What email tools should I use?

You'll want to use a dedicated email newsletter service to both collect email addresses and send out your email messages.

MailChimp and Constant Contact are both good tools that will allow you to create separate email lists and send automated follow up emails. These tools also allow to you track opens, clicks, shares and other metrics.

Use a dedicated email marketing tool, such as MailChimp, Constant Contact or HubSpot to manage your marketing emails.

HubSpot is one of the best tools to use for emails due to how it integrates your contact database with all of its other features, allowing you to perform really advanced automated marketing. We'll discuss this more in the 'marketing automation' section.

You can still use one-to-one emails through your email application of choice: Outlook, Windows Live Mail, Apple Mail or Gmail. However, to be really successful, you'll want your marketing emails to be managed through a dedicated tool like the ones mentioned above.

Email content ideas

What types of content should I send through email?

In addition to follow-up emails related to each of your lead magnet topics,

here are several ideas for content that you could use for ongoing emails to your lists:

- Links to and excerpts from your recent blog posts
- Links to and excerpts from other web sites or blogs that your readers might find useful or interesting
- An exclusive tip of the week/month
- Links to your company's social media accounts
- News and announcements about what's going on in your business or organization
- Special offers, discounts and coupons
- Employee profiles (to put a human face on your business or organization)
- Customer profiles
- Customer testimonials
- Invitations for readers to review your products or services on your web site or a third-party site like Google+ or Yelp
- Reader-submitted photos of your products being used
- A contest
- Upcoming events
- A tutorial or lesson your readers would find useful
- Q&A style interview with a key employee in your organization
- Inspiring, compelling stories about customers of yours who are doing great things
- A funny video produced by your employees
- Holiday greetings
- An invitation to a seminar or webinar
- Sneak peeks and previews of new products or services

In short, use emails to provide relevant and engaging information that will help build trust and allow your readers to get to know your company and the people behind it.

“Trust is the #1 SEO ranking factor. Earn trust from your visitors through providing great content and search engines will follow suit.”



Matt McGee,
Search Engine Land

Chapter 9: Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

In today's digital world, being found on Google (and other search engines) is more important than ever to driving your website traffic.

When someone does a search, Google determines the most relevant websites based on the user's search terms. How do they decide where your website ranks? Through their advanced algorithm which analyzes over 200 different factors per website!

In the early days of Google, people could easily manipulate where their website ranked by "stuffing" their websites with keywords. Those days are long gone and, in fact, can get your website penalized today.

Using Google's free keyword tool, you can get an estimate of how many times a month a keyword is searched for, as well as generate ideas for new keywords you may not have considered.

Start with keyword research

Before we get into how to properly optimize your website for search, you should begin by researching what keyword phrases you want to target.

Use Google's free keyword tool to help generate ideas for keyword phrases for your website and see how many searches Google estimates each phrase will

result in. (You'll need to create a free Google Adwords account to access the tool.)

For example, if you sell custom built furniture, you can plug that phrase into Google's keyword tool and you'll likely see related keywords, such as:

- custom built cabinets
- custom wood furniture
- custom furniture maker
- handmade furniture
- unfinished furniture
- custom made furniture

Look at the average monthly searches and competition level for each. I recommend choosing 3-5 primary keyword phrases to start with. You can always add more later.

Google's algorithm is like a computer program that can only "see" your website by sorting through thousands of lines of code and analyzing over 200 different factors. Onsite optimization helps ensure Google clearly understands what your site is about and determine what related search phrases would be most relevant for users.

Onsite Optimization

Now that you have chosen your keywords, it's time to optimize your website. There are two aspects to SEO: onsite and offsite optimization.

Onsite optimization involves placing your keywords in specific places on your site such as:

- page titles
- headings (h1, h2, etc)
- body text
- image 'alt' tags
- navigation
- internal links
- page URLs

If you're not technically savvy, your web designer or agency can help you implement your keywords where they should go.

In addition, each page of your website should have its own meta description. This is the short paragraph that appears in Google's search results. The meta description doesn't factor into rankings, but rather are for the people searching to better understand what the website page is about before they click the link. A well-written description will increase the chances that someone will click your search result.

Create a free Google Webmaster Tools account and verify your website. This usually involves placing a small snippet of code, or uploading a file. Again, if you're not sure how to do this, your web designer can help.

Once you've verified your website, create an XML sitemap and enter the filepath in Google Webmaster Tools. If your website is built with WordPress, there are free plugins that will create your XML sitemap for you.

By doing these steps, you've essentially told Google that your website exists and helped them to properly index and categorize it, which creates an important foundation for SEO.

Google analyzes every third-party website that links to your website and uses that data to build context around what your site is about and how credible your site is.

Offsite Optimization

Now that your website is properly optimized "onsite," it's time to move into offsite optimization, otherwise known as link building.

Google analyzes every third-party website that links to your website and uses that data to build context around what your site is about and how credible your site is.

There are many different types of links you can create. Here are a few lists to get you started.

- [Vertical Response's Top 20 Places Your Business Needs to be Listed Online](#)
- [HubSpot's Ultimate List of 50 Local Business Directories](#)

With most of these, you can create a free account and fill out your company's listing, including contact information, and choose the appropriate categories for your business. There's no need to upgrade to a paid listing for any of these.

In addition to these sites, look for directories and other sites where you can get listed. For example, make sure you're listed on the website of any association you belong to such as the Chamber of Commerce or industry associations.

Volunteer or sign up to write articles on blogs and websites related to your industry. Most won't allow you to link to your website in the article itself, but should allow you to include a short author's bio at the end where you can include a link to your site.

Write and submit press releases about your company—new hires, expansion into new markets, new products, etc.

Get creative! There are lots of places online where you can get links to your website. Over time, these will greatly help where your website ranks in search engines.

“PPC could be considered a channel within inbound marketing as there is no channel other than PPC that can give you reach, scale, control and consistent results like paid search.”



Brad Geddes,
Founder of Certified Knowledge

Chapter 10:

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads

In addition to using inbound marketing to produce organic website traffic, PPC (pay-per-click) ads can be a useful source for bringing attention to your company.

What exactly are PPC ads? It's simple.

Search engines like Google offer “paid search” to companies looking to rank high for a keyword search. If you pay to rank for certain keywords, your ad will show up in the designated ad section of the results page when a customer searches those keywords in the search box.

PPC is an excellent way to supplement inbound marketing to help get more immediate results in the short term and target specific demographics.

If a consumer clicks on your site, you pay a fee. That is a PPC ad.

The fact of the matter is that even if you can get your website into the paid ad space on a search engine, only 30% of consumers are likely to click on those paid links.

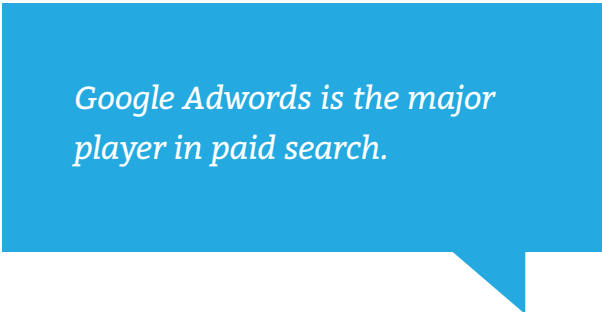
So what's the point of investing in PPC ads, then?

Paid search and PPC ads are an excellent option if your company isn't ranking well with organic search alone, but they can also be used to maximize the visibility of your company through various keyword searches. Even if you are doing well with organic searches, there are always more keywords to rank for, so why not try to increase your rankings across the board?

However, just like it's important to optimize your website and social media platforms, you need to optimize your ads as well. This is because search engines like Google use a quality score as part of their method in determining which links are ranked where, to make sure that users are receiving relevant results. So, be sure to pick relevant keywords for your ad.

Google Adwords

Google Adwords is your best friend when it comes to PPC ads and paid search. One thing you can use it for is to find new keywords for your campaign.



Google Adwords is the major player in paid search.

This application will generate a Search Terms report which shows you all of the keywords for which your ad has been displayed. This report also contains information about how well each of those keywords performed, which makes it easier for you to decide whether or not you'd like to use those keywords in your campaign.

There are three elements to a paid search campaign, and those are keywords, ads and landing pages.

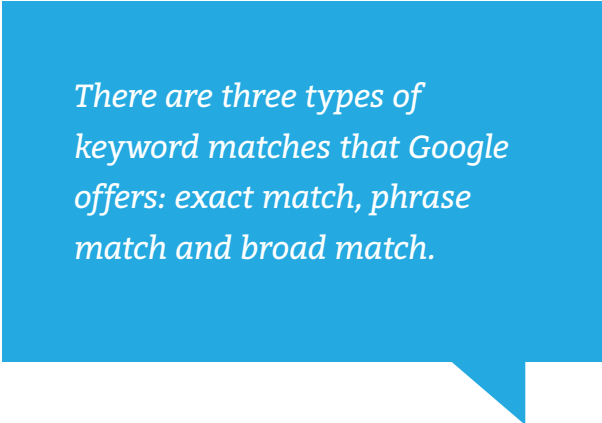
Keywords are important because when you give them to Google, the search engine will display your ads on the results page for those keywords. There are three types of keyword matches that Google offers: exact match, phrase

match and broad match.

If you set certain keywords to be an exact match, your ad will only come up in a results page when the user types in that exact keyword. If you set “red car” as an exact match, only people who looked up “red car” would be taken to your page. If they typed anything else, like “big red car,” then your ad would not show up.

If your keyword is set to phrase match, it will show your ad if the consumer’s search term contains the same order of keywords, but it can also contain additional words. In this case, if you set “red car” to phrase match, someone who searched “big red car” would be able to see your ad on the results page.

Broad match is the easiest way to get your ad in a search results page, but is not necessarily the most effective. If you set “red car” to broad match, anyone who searched something with the words “red” and/or “car” will be led to a results page with your ad displayed. Your rank will be based on how relevant your keywords are to the user’s particular search.



There are three types of keyword matches that Google offers: exact match, phrase match and broad match.

It is up to you to pick and choose wisely which keywords you want and what kind of match you want them to be. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

From there, you need to design a relevant and attractive ad (it needs to be relevant to get the prime paid spot, and attractive to entice consumers to click).

After your ad has been clicked on, the consumer is taken to your landing pages, which are meant to convert the consumer into a lead, whether

that means they fill out a form to receive a checklist or ebook or even to download an offer.

These three elements must be optimized in order for your PPC ads to be effective.

Paid social media ads

Paid social media ads can also be an extremely effective way to drive users to your website. Unlike paid ads in search engines, paid social media ads have taken themselves to the next level in terms of enticing customers.

According to AdRoll, Facebook native ads (the ones that appear in a user's actual newsfeed) are clicked on 49 times more often than the typical banner ads that show up in the right sidebar.

Curious about how to construct your ads in order to make them appealing to users? Look to the things you already post on social media. Whatever messages you send out that seem popular with your followers (and perform well when looked at analytically) are probably the kinds of messages you want to use for your ads.



Paid social media ads are an extremely effective way to drive users to your website.

Just like everything else related to inbound marketing, your ads can be targeted to consumers specific to elements like geographical regions, job titles, gender and anything else you could think of.

Just make sure you are keeping your content fresh. While you can rotate the same message through several different specialized groups, repetition does not work very well on social media if your content isn't relevant.

“Stop trying to sell with marketing. Instead, use marketing to help customers buy.”



Mac McIntosh,
Acquire B2b

Chapter 11:

Marketing Automation

In the simplest of terms, marketing automation is software that automates your marketing for you. This means actions that are typically manual, like sending out emails, posting on social media and posting content, become automated. You still write all of the content yourself (maintaining authenticity is a must), but you can schedule it to go out ahead of time so you don't have to worry about it.

Marketing automation is most important in the convert and close stages of the inbound methodology, because it can more effectively assist you in nurturing your leads into customers and continue to delight them long after their initial interaction with the company.

However, many companies make the mistake of implementing marketing automation into their inbound marketing strategy before they are ready. If you are thinking about marketing automation and the benefits it could bring to your business, first decide if you are ready by answering the questions below:

- Do you have a steady flow of new and qualified leads?


Marketing automation can effectively assist you in nurturing your leads into customers and continue to delight them long after their initial interaction with the company.

- Do your salespeople find themselves overwhelmed with the number of leads you pass to them?
- Have your sales team and marketing team communicated about improving efficiency between each other?
- Is your content strategy effective? Is it mapped to your ideal customer's buyer journey?
- Is your lead nurturing strategy already successful?

If you answered “yes” to most of these questions, then marketing automation could be a great move for you and your company. Not only does it make your workday more efficient, but it helps you to grow your leads by making sure they are receiving personalized content in order to ensure their satisfaction and, hopefully, their business.

Now that you know whether or not you're ready for marketing automation, here's a list detailing what marketing automation can do for your company:

1. Adds personalized and compelling content based upon an individual user's website patterns.
2. Categorizes customers and prospects by common behaviors, interests, and demographic details to make segmenting customers easy.
3. Develops optimal marketing patterns by testing different variables like email send times, subject headings, and ideas for personalization.
4. Creates a comprehensive, cross-platform user experience. Makes sure that every touch point is carefully planned for optimal conversion optimization.



Marketing automation allows you to send personalized content to your different leads.

Sounds great, right? From here, you'll have to decide what kind of marketing automation software is right for your company's needs.

Marketing automation tools

The beauty of marketing automation tools is that certain platforms cater to certain types of businesses: there are some meant for larger companies, some meant for smaller companies, some that manage every aspect of your marketing strategy and some that only manage certain elements. The best choice for you depends on what you want from a marketing automation tool.

I like HubSpot in particular because they offer an all-in-one inbound marketing platform that includes marketing automation. If you're looking for a quick and dirty guide to several of the marketing automation platforms available, [Woopra's 7 Best Marketing Automation Tools](#) blog is a good place to start.



HubSpot is one of the leading marketing automation tools.

*“Inbound marketing
strategy provides clarity,
and clarity drives action.”*



Viktor Nagorny,
Inbound Method

Chapter 12: Implementing Your Inbound Strategy

Now that you know what you need to implement an inbound marketing strategy, you have to decide how you're going to go about bringing it to life.

The first step is creating a team, the members of which will take care of each aspect of the inbound strategy we've discussed. However, you're going to have to make the choice between building an internal team or hiring a professional marketing agency.

Should you hire an internal team or hire a marketing agency? It depends on your company and its needs.

Again, it really depends on your company and its needs.

For larger companies, a combination of both in-house and external marketing members is a good solution. However, every company is different, so let's discuss the pros and cons of each option.

We're going to assume someone at your company is already the point person for marketing. This could be a marketing director or vice-president of marketing.

Building an internal team

Here are some benefits of building out an internal team:

- You have more control over staffing and management
- An in-house team can pitch in on other tasks if needed
- Your staff is more familiar with your company culture and initiatives

Yet, there are some potential cons to running an in-house department:

- Increased time and strong leadership needed to effectively manage a marketing team
- Ongoing training to ensure the team learns new skills and stays current
- Increased expenses of salaries, benefits, taxes, equipment and software
- Inefficiency of a typical employee's workday (chatting, meetings, email, internet)
- Internal stress often between internal marketing and sales teams

Hiring a marketing agency

So now let's dive into the benefits of partnering with a marketing agency.

- Access to a wider variety of specialized skill sets. This could include web designers, developers, content writers, social media marketers and SEO experts.
- Increased efficiency from an agency's established systems and processes
- Benefit of an agency's experience working with other clients in your industry
- Use of vendors that an agency has already established relationships with. This could include photographers, videographers, printers and software companies.

Agencies offer a wider variety of specialized skill sets, increased efficiency and industry experience.

- Fresh perspective and creativity that comes from an outside agency
- Greater accountability for results and return on investment

Also in most cases an employee is going to follow directions whether it's always best for the company or not. But a good marketing agency is accountable for ROI. They should not be afraid to "push back" on things they know could be detrimental to your marketing strategy.

A good marketing agency should also free up more time for you to focus on other aspects of running your business.

Comparing costs

Let's take a look at the costs of hiring an internal marketing team vs. hiring a marketing agency.

Again, we'll assume the company has a marketing director or VP, so to build a well-rounded team, you'll need to hire:

- A web & Graphic Designer: \$65,243
- A developer/Programmer: \$107,024
- A content Writer: \$76,494
- A social Media Marketer: \$111,465
- An SEO and PPC Consultant: \$94,665

Evaluate the costs of building out a well-rounded team as compared to hiring an agency.

We used average salary numbers according to CareerBuilder.com, but depending on your location these figures could be higher or lower

Remember that with benefits, taxes and other expenses, employees can cost up to 30% more than their salary. Most inbound marketing agencies price website design separate from monthly inbound marketing retainers.

Websites can vary in cost depending on many factors, but a general range

to expect would be anywhere from \$5,000-\$15,000. For inbound marketing, most agencies present a couple of different packages which vary in cost. A general range to expect would be \$3,000-\$7,500 per month.

Again, these are just general ranges. Your company may have specific web design and marketing needs that could cause the investment to be greater.

As a web design and inbound marketing agency, it's no surprise that we recommend partnering with an agency as the better and more cost-effective solution.

Marketing has changed and companies have shifted to hiring specialists to achieve the best results. A good marketing agency works as an extension of a company's marketing team, offering strategy, support and execution to help achieve solid growth, so consider hiring an outside agency to optimize your inbound marketing strategy.

How to Develop an Editorial Calendar

Once a marketing strategy is set in place, consistency becomes extremely important in maintaining your company's brand. A good content calendar shows more than just when content needs to be published. It will show:

- A list of content that should be published based upon your specific content strategy
- The people responsible for creating and publishing said content
- A timeline of when each piece of content should be created, proofread, approved, and published

A content marketing editorial calendar gives you and your team a framework for being deliberate an intentional about how you are reaching and building trust with your audience..

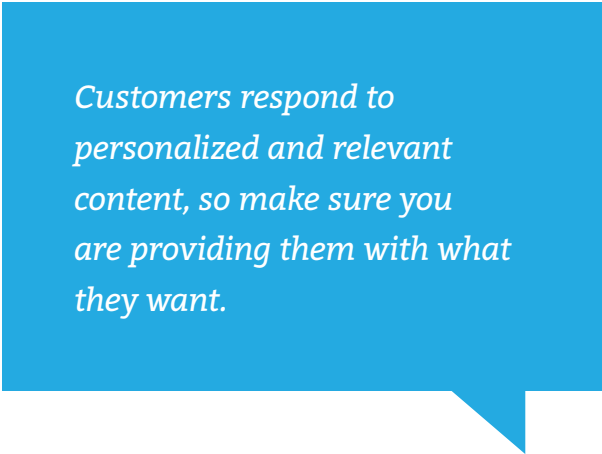
- A next step, a.k.a a call-to-action. You'll need to use a call-to-action in order to give your leads a chance to further interact with your brand
- A list of channels that deliver your content. It's best to create a multiple channel strategy when producing content to maintain consistency.

A content marketing editorial calendar gives you and your team a framework for being deliberate and intentional about how you are reaching and building trust with your audience. It is both a strategic marketing tool and a place where you can keep your team organized

While having an editorial calendar is beneficial, managing it properly is essential to increasing your reach. There are a few basic steps as to how you can manage an editorial calendar to get the most out of it.

Know how it will improve your marketing

You have to know what you want your editorial calendar to do for your company. Do you want to grow your traffic? Drive sales? Decide what your goals are and then build your editorial calendar around these goals.



Customers respond to personalized and relevant content, so make sure you are providing them with what they want.

Understand who you are talking to

Knowing your audience is integral to a successful editorial calendar. Customers respond to personalized and relevant content, so make sure you are providing them with what they want. Build your buyer personas to have an idea of your ideal customers, and then make sure your entire team knows as well (consistency is key).

Decide who will participate (take an inventory of your team)

Figuring out what each of your team members will be contributing to the end product is important. Making sure that everyone has certain tasks ensures that goals will be met, skills will be optimized, and no one will be

too overloaded with work.

What will your content look like?

Deciding your content topics and themes is a must, you'll also need to decide what kind of content you're going to post. Blogs are basic, and extremely useful in terms of creating content to reach consumers and position your company as a trustworthy source of information. Blogs also give you the opportunity to experiment with other kinds of content like videos and images. Pick what works for your company and go from there.

How often will you post?

Figuring out how often you post also determines how far ahead you must plan on your editorial calendar. The more content the better, so plan to have at the minimum at least two posts a week.

How will you plan?

Deciding on how you're going to plan your content is extremely important, because all of your team members need to be on the same page in order to ensure that your content is consistent and relevant. Plan on meeting with your team every week, month, quarter, etc. to assign tasks and evaluate progress.

Plan on meeting with your team every week, month or quarter to assign tasks and evaluate progress.

Inbound marketing campaigns

You now have all of the tools to build an inbound marketing strategy. Your first step is starting a campaign. Here is a checklist to make sure that you're on track:

- **Identify your campaign audience**

Figure out who your ideal customers are, build a buyer persona, and get crackin!

- **Set your goals + benchmarks**
Having SMART goals ensures that you'll have tangible results to share at the end of your campaign
- **Create your offer(s) + landing pages**
Make sure you optimize your page for SEO, and have a clear value proposition and call to action for the customer
- **Plan + build your automation + nurturing flows**
Your campaign isn't over once you've gotten a visitor to the landing page. Make sure you plan and build your follow up emails and campaigns to nurture leads down the tunnel
- **Kick off your campaign with targeted email**
A targeted email to a segmented list in your database is an awesome way to engage with your existing leads
- **Write a blog post**
Use your blog post as an opportunity to provide important and relevant information to leads and customers, and be sure to include a call-to-action for your campaign!
- **Share it on social media**
What better way to spread your campaign than on social media? When you post to your channels, the people who love your company will be able to see what you're doing and respond. If you use paid ads, then you can target your campaign so that the most relevant consumers are seeing your offers
- **Add in long-tail keywords**
You can't forget to optimize your campaign, otherwise you won't rank very high in Google's search results when a consumer is looking for something that you provide. Remember that you're aiming for high volume and low competition keywords!

- **Consider paid search and other channels**

Even if your company's campaigns do very well, it's always worth it to consider paid search so that you can rank high for multiple long-tail keywords and to make sure that your information is being seen by relevant consumers.

- **Track your URLs**

Figuring out who your visitors are and what sites they're coming from help you to understand better what kind of people are finding your site relevant, which makes it easier for you to figure out exactly who your prime market is.

- **Report on your results**

If you want to reach goals, you'll always have to stop and evaluate your efforts. What are you doing right? What are you doing wrong? Adjust and see your results skyrocket.

*“Tell a story. Make it true.
Make it compelling. And
make it relevant.”*



Rand Fishkin,
Moz.com

Chapter 13:

Bottom Line

If you can implement marketing automation into your inbound strategy correctly, you can expect a great ROI. What ROI can I expect? How long until I see results?

Here are some statistics taken from Pardot about how marketing automation can improve a business in multiple ways:

- 77% of companies that use marketing automation increase revenue and marketing/sales effectiveness
- 65% gain more insight (transparency into marketing and sales activities)
- 58% measure performance and understand marketing ROI and other reporting

If you can implement marketing automation into your inbound strategy correctly, you can expect a great return on investment.

Marketing automation can be extremely beneficial in helping your company's sales and marketing teams come together over common goals, performance visibility, accurate credit, and measurement:

- Companies that use automation have a 53 percent higher conversion

rate from marketing response to marketing qualified lead

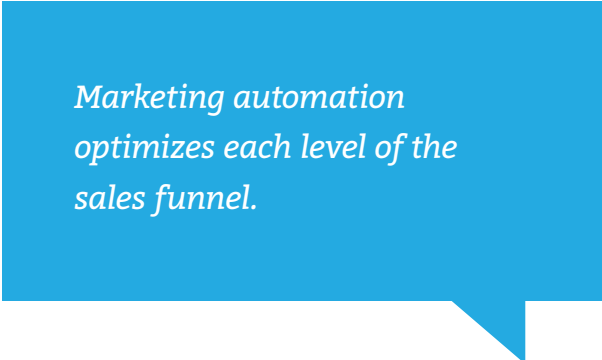
- Companies that use automation have a 9.3 percent higher sales quota achievement rate
- Automation allows for tracking and reporting which helps each department to understand each other's performance
- Closed business is automatically attributed to the correct campaign or sales rep so there is no question about who has done what
- Automation can accurately measure ROI, campaign performance, funnel velocity, and other elements to gain an unprecedented view of marketing and sales performance

Marketing automation optimizes each level of the sales funnel. It can also identify the highest quality leads with automatic lead scoring and grading automation. This way, your company can focus on the best leads automatically, bringing the best opportunities to your business. In general, automation users lose fewer leads and enjoy higher conversion rates than non users.

When it comes to nurturing your leads, marketing automation can help to bring the right message to the right person at the right time with segmentation options and the use of dynamic content so that your content feels personal and relevant to your customer.

- Companies that nurture leads have 50% more sales ready leads at 33% lower cost
- Companies that nurture leads have 20% increase in sales opportunities

Marketing Automation can be the greatest choice you make for your company's inbound marketing strategy. Just make sure your company is ready.



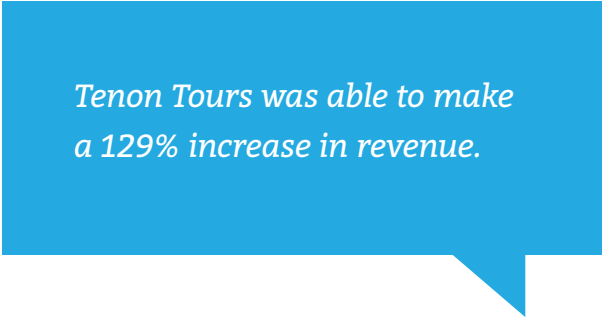
Marketing automation optimizes each level of the sales funnel.

Inbound marketing case studies

Now that you're aware of what marketing automation can do for you company, we've provided some case studies of companies who use or have partnered with Hubspot in order to give you some real world examples of just how powerful this tool is (case studies taken from HubSpot).

Tenon Tours, a Boston-based travel company, couldn't track the ROI of any of their marketing efforts. They were spending money on things like PPC ads and their cost-per-conversion was too high for their business model. With HubSpot's inbound marketing strategy, they were able to make a 129% increase in revenue.

Before using HubSpot's inbound marketing method, Tenon Tours was spending time and money on paid marketing in order to drive traffic to their website. The big problem was that they didn't really know who was coming to their site, where they were coming from, or what they needed. Their sales and marketing team were using Excel sheets to manage their leads, which was time consuming and didn't provide enough data.



Tenon Tours was able to make a 129% increase in revenue.

After signing on with HubSpot, Tenon Tours first focused on producing content that their target audience would be interested in and picking keywords that would rank high in Google. From these efforts they were able to increase their site visitors by 54%. They also began creating calls-to-action that helped them increase their conversion rate average.

HubSpot's Analytics tool has perhaps been the most helpful of all for Tenon Tours, as it has given them the opportunity to track all of their campaign efforts and see which channels were the greatest source of leads and

customers. Managing director Katie Fleming was actually able to allocate for a paid marketing budget in 2013, but thanks to their success with the inbound methodology, they were getting so many organic leads that they didn't have to dip into their paid budget.

Here's what Katie Fleming has to say about using HubSpot: "You'll learn a lot, especially if you have no knowledge of inbound marketing. It will help keep you up to date on current marketing trends so you don't get left behind."

Care.com, the world's largest online marketplace for finding and managing family care, was doing well after their launch in 2007, but they wanted to jumpstart their B2B offerings. The sales team was having trouble selling effectively because they couldn't see how prospects were engaging with them outside of the phone.

Before using HubSpot's marketing platform, the marketing team couldn't scale because it was using different tools that didn't talk to each other.

The marketing team lacked the tools to scale the business so that workplace solutions and small business offerings would become a bigger part of the company.

The sales team was set up with Sidekick Notifications. It gave them real-time alerts telling them when, where and how prospects were engaging with them - by opening emails, visiting the website, and more. In less than six months, the team was being more agile and effective.

Before using HubSpot's marketing platform, the marketing team couldn't scale because it was using different tools that didn't talk to each other. Elizabeth, the Director of Marketing, says, "It was a very manual process to thread together a marketing campaign. Measuring was time-consuming

since you had to grab data sets from different systems. But now with HubSpot's software, it can all be integrated and seamless for the team to use."

Elizabeth also sees the benefits of having sales and marketing on the same platform. "It's so important to have synergies between sales and marketing because they're so reliant on each other. Having a strong relationship is vital to any B2B entity. And it gets easier when you're using one system like HubSpot's."

It's pretty clear that marketing automation can do some amazing things for companies, so why not get in on the action?