

Beginner's Guide to Inbound Marketing



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Marketing2Connect

Inbound marketing is now the overwhelming marketing approach of choice for companies and organizations of all sizes, across all industries. This includes B2B, B2C, and even non-profits. With a 60% lower cost per lead, inbound marketing offers a much better ROI than outbound marketing, and it has grown explosively in recent years, as businesses have used it to drive sales and increase their revenue.



By focusing on prospects who are already researching and shopping for products and services, inbound marketing is a departure from traditional outbound marketing, which often casts a wide net in the hope of capturing leads from only a small portion of the total audience who may actually be qualified buyers.

In contrast, inbound marketing not only positions a company so it can be discovered by prospects who are already qualified buyers, but also incorporates key strategies and tactics to capture leads from that audience, convert those leads into successful sales, and use those successes to adjust future efforts and apply best practices.

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The Core Elements of Inbound Marketing

Typical Strategies and Tactics:

- Blogging
- Social media
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Nurturing campaigns
- Content marketing
- Email marketing
- Sales follow up



How it Works: A Step-by-Step Example

To understand how inbound marketing works, it is useful to walk through an example and review each step of the process.

Let us suppose you are an IT products and services company looking to build awareness of your brand, drive traffic to your website, and generate sales leads for a new product. To achieve this, you might post a blog article about your product and how it can be used to increase efficiency and reduce operating costs in certain industries.



Inbound marketing can build awareness of your brand, drive traffic to your website, and generate sales leads for a new product.

The article incorporates keywords that prospective buyers use most frequently when searching for this product and related subject matter online. The piece is also optimized to maximize the ranking of your blog and your article in popular search engines. Or you might invest in sponsoring your post on a social media site, such as LinkedIn, to gain additional exposure to your article with precision targeting to a specific industry and the job titles you wish to reach.

In addition to providing helpful content and expert insights in your blog piece, you offer a detailed guide to the benefits of this technology and how to integrate it. This could be in the form of a webinar or a downloadable PDF.

You include an invitation to download the webinar or PDF in your blog post, and it links to a landing page hosted on your web domain. On your landing page, you provide additional messages to promote the product's benefits and the value of your content. There is also a signup form to access the webinar or PDF.

Once the visitor completes the form, you now have a sales lead with contact information to use for further marketing and sales efforts. This is when nurturing efforts and sales follow-up begin.

Nurturing, Content Marketing, and Sales Conversion

Once you have captured a lead, you may conduct a nurturing campaign and use content marketing, email marketing, and direct sales contact to convert your lead. For example, you may have an auto-responder configured to send an email to your lead, expressing thanks for visiting your site and downloading your content. The email may also mention a few more key reminders of your product's benefits and offer contact information to reach your sales team with questions or to request more information.



A member of your sales team might follow up with an email or phone call within a few days with an offer to answer any questions and provide further assistance. If it takes the form of an email, this too can be automated through a customer relationship management (CRM) system and email marketing solution.

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You might conduct further content marketing by sending an automated email offering a free online product demo or a buyer's guide to the best solutions for your prospect's efficiency and cost reduction needs. If the prospect responds or signs up, or a member of your sales team is able to make contact and provide a consultation, you are, hopefully, well on your way to moving your prospect through your sales funnel and closing the deal.

Since your prospect came to you with an interest in the content and the related product you have to offer, the lead is qualified in a way that cold call prospects or outbound marketing targets are not. This is one of the many reasons why inbound marketing is so much more efficient and cost-effective than traditional outbound marketing.

Indicators of ROI and Campaign Success

Website traffic:

increasing the volume of visits your website or landing pages

Lead conversions:

converting visits to your website or landing page into sales leads

Sales conversions:

converting your sales leads into paying customers

Customer retention:

retaining your customers and converting them from one-time to repeat buyers

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Measuring ROI and Learning Best Practices

One of the additional advantages of inbound marketing is that you can measure results easily. Since inbound marketing relies on online technologies that enable real-time tracking of all your campaigns, you can easily analyze your results, quantify your ROI, and gain important insights about the strategies and tactics that generate the best sales outcomes.



For example, you can analyze and identify the keywords that seem to generate the best results for your campaigns, the best social media channels for generating new leads, and the specific content types and topics that are most helpful in driving or converting sales.

With these lessons learned, you can apply best practices and continuously improve your inbound marketing efforts for added ROI and better sales conversions.

An Outline for Inbound Marketing Success



Define Your Goals, Strategy, Team, and Channels

Define your business goals, outline your strategy, assemble your team, identify your target audience, and choose the right online marketing channels for your objectives. Define the metrics you will use to measure success and ROI, and set the benchmarks and goals for success. You may also need to design or redesign your website and/or blog, set up and optimize your social media accounts, and assign roles and establish policies for your team.



Create Content

Create content for your website, blogs, social media, or other channels you have chosen. Develop a content marketing strategy and plan, brainstorm topics that will engage your target audience, set a publishing schedule, and share your content.



Maximize and Improve SEO, SMO, and Search Marketing

Develop a search marketing strategy and identify the best practices for SEO and social media optimization (SMO).

Research the top keywords and keyword phrases needed to reach your intended audience. Optimize your website, blogs, and other content according to these guidelines and keywords. Track and continuously improve your search engine rankings and results.



Engage the Online Community

Build a social media strategy and engage the online community. Research competitor activities in social media,

the most effective channels, and current online discussions involving your target audience. Create social personas and profiles that reflect your brand. Join in online discussions, share useful and informative content, and recruit followers and drive leads via social media.



Capture and Convert Leads

Develop a lead capture and conversion strategy. Create valuable offers and content, such as discounts, promotions, informative blogs, PDF guides, webinars, videos, and live online events. Create calls to action, landing pages, and lead capture mechanisms for the content you offer. Create nurturing campaigns and define the content marketing, email marketing, and sales follow up designed to nurture and convert your leads.



Analyze Results, Calculate Your ROI and Apply Best Practices

Analyze the results of your online engagement and your inbound marketing to identify ROI, success factors, trends, and useful insights for continuous improvement. Analyze inbound web traffic, traffic sources, links, page ranks, keyword rankings, organic search traffic, and social media metrics. Review the best channels, content, and strategies that drive successful sales conversions. Revise your strategy, adjust tactics, and optimize your efforts for future success.

A Key Consideration: In-House or Outsource?

The core components of inbound marketing and the blueprint for developing a successful program are relatively simple and straightforward to grasp. However, developing an inbound marketing strategy, creating and sharing your content, managing campaigns, and analyzing results requires commitment and resources. Typically, this means having a high-level strategist and experts in inbound marketing, social media marketing, SEO and search marketing, creative copywriting, website development, and graphic design.



For small businesses and organizations with limited sales and marketing resources or uncertainty about their capabilities and expertise in these areas, a key consideration is whether to assemble an internal inbound marketing team or outsource efforts to an agency. If you have the marketing staff,

resources, and expertise to make the internal commitment, then an in-house program may be a perfect fit.

The performance and cost-effectiveness of inbound marketing is a way to drive new sales and growth without making huge investments in internal resources.

However, due to the specialized expertise and unique talents involved, inbound marketing often means you may need a team of several people to develop and execute a successful program. This extra demand on in-house resources is why outsourcing has become an increasingly popular choice among businesses and organizations getting started in inbound marketing or expanding and improving their efforts.

Whether you outsource all of your inbound marketing or you partner with an outside agency to collaborate with your internal team, getting support and expertise from a proven and trusted partner can be invaluable to businesses of all sizes.

The performance and cost-effectiveness of inbound marketing is a way to drive new sales and growth without making huge investments in internal resources, and outsourcing can provide the perfect complement to your own staff or a full-service solution for all your needs. There are even opportunities to experiment with preliminary campaigns and programs to test the waters and decide if inbound marketing is a good fit for your business.

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