



The Simplifier's Guide to **Successful Inbound Marketing**



From 'Why Inbound Marketing?'
to 'Keeping the Momentum Going'

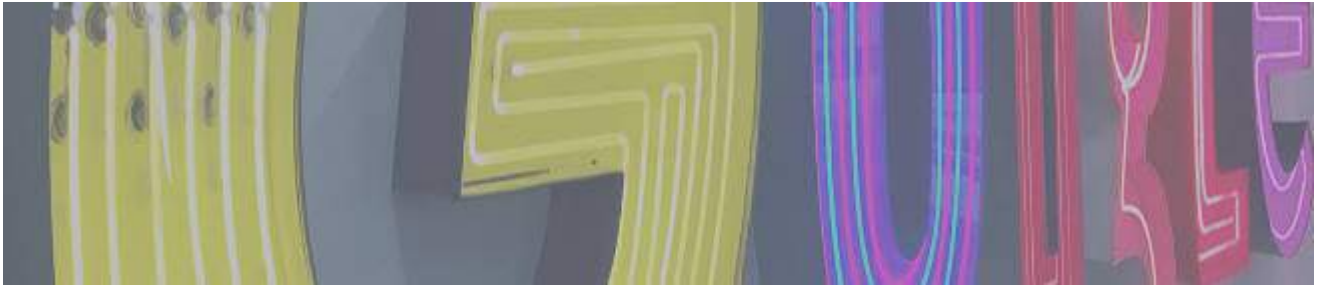


Welcome to the Simplifier's Guide to Successful Inbound Marketing!



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Chapter 1: Why Inbound Marketing?

How has online changed what you do?

Think of all of the things you do on your desktop, laptop, tablet and smart phone... Could you survive without those tools and the access they offer you to information? Same goes for your customers. They use they tools, when it's convenient to them - whether in the middle of the night, from a different time zone or in your town. Luckily, your website - the digital equivalent of your office, store or showroom - is available 24/7. And if it's fully in sync with your business, it will support and educate your prospects when they begin their due diligence.

The Internet has changed every aspect of the purchase process whether B2B or B2C. We start online and easily complete 75% of our fact finding and decision making before even reaching out to speak or interact with a business representative. Your customers do the same. If they don't come across you online in a search engine such as Google, you don't exist in their world.

All of that marketing and advertising that used to be successful for you - e.g., print or TV advertising, mailings to purchased lists, billboards, cold calls, Yellow Pages - have not only gotten more expensive, they don't help much with searches that start online at a search engine.

That's where inbound marketing comes in. It acknowledges that prospects start the purchase process online, finding meaning through search and exploratory research.

How does Inbound Marketing differ from Traditional Outbound Marketing?

At the very heart of inbound marketing is drawing visitors to your website by virtue of remarkable content. In other words, being a magnet, rather than an interruptive nuisance that visitors run away from.

Inbound marketing forces you to think intensely about your potential visitors. It gets you to focus on creating web content that is specific to distinct buyer personas, while being aware of the keyword search terms that resonate with them, and figuring out how to offer them valued information relevant to their stage of the buying cycle.

When you do so and create for visitors truly relevant content, they stay longer on your site, they come back for more and - most important - willingly offer up contact information in exchange for your valuable content offer. In other words, they become a lead. Once they do, you have the opportunity to nurture the relationship with them by offering additional useful bits of information sent directly to them via email.

Finally, every step of the way offers data you can analyze for additional insight and improve on what you do.

This type of thinking goes against creating splashy outbound giveaway campaigns that might draw 100s or 1000s of visitors. Once the promotion over, though, they quickly leave never to return. Inbound marketing is for the long haul, for businesses serious about long term and profitable relationships.



The Inbound Methodology: Focus On Your Customer's Journey

Going inbound makes you think about the entire journey your customer takes when doing business with you. When you consider the steps prospects take to become customers, you become aware of their questions and concerns and how to anticipate them with your content. That's how to delight customers for life!

The inbound methodology - visually represented in the graphic below - highlights the life stages of customers as they begin their buying journey, become visitors to your website, leads for your business, customers and then promoters who help you start the process over.

Rather than interrupt and irritate prospective customers, inbound marketing focuses on **attracting, converting, closing** and **delighting**.

- **Attract** through remarkable content on your website and blog, while making sure your content has been optimized so it is easy to find online via web search, and deliberately focusing on keywords that make sense for your business and your visitors. That's how you get found online. Don't forget to promote your content via social networks

- **Convert** visitors into leads through educational, relevant and valued content offers. The forms you use with your offers enable you to learn progressively more about your visitors so you can better answer their questions and qualify them as potential customers.
- **Close** leads into customers by nurturing the relationship over time with email workflows that deliver relevant content which matches your leads' purchase process. This develops credibility and trustworthiness - making for happier customers!
- **Delight** customers so they become promoters of your business because you and your business are transparently and intensely focused on your customers (personas) and committed to their success.

Throughout the inbound marketing process, you analyze your marketing activities on an ongoing basis to understand what works and what doesn't so you can continuously improve.

HubSpot represents the Inbound Marketing methodology with this visual:



What's Different About Inbound? Think SMART Goals, Online Data and Analysis, And Your Customers

Inbound marketing is disciplined and data driven. It encourages you to be deliberate and thoughtful about what you intend so you can measure results and evaluate success.

SMART Goals, Online Data and Analysis

An essential tool is the setting of SMART goals. SMART stands for goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-specific.

If you need to generate \$X in revenue for your business by a certain date, you'll start to consider the different website marketing levers you have available to increase traffic,

generate leads and convert prospects and put a plan together for delivering on that goal. You'll look not only at web traffic and web sources, but also conversion rates and the quality of that traffic.

From there, you can decide whether you need to generate more quality blog content, better offers, convincing lead nurturing emails and/or better follow up, and which A/B tests to run. Think of yourself as in a constant state of continuous improvement to deliver better experiences for your customers.

Never Forget About Your Customers!

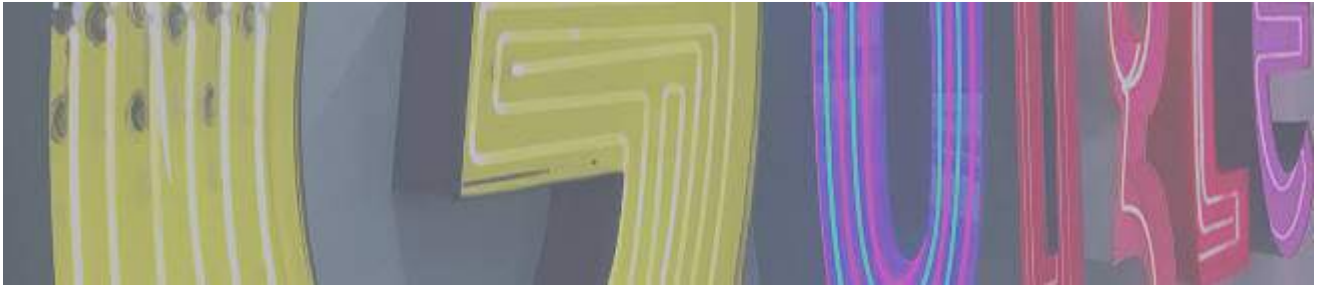
Ultimately, inbound marketing is about creating marketing that customers love. The only way that can happen is if you focus intensely on your customers - what makes them unique, why they buy from you, how your solutions can help them, what their buyer journey is, what words they use to describe their issues, what their questions and concerns are.

Be your customers' champion. Ensure everyone in your organization understands your core customer personas and how you provide them with value. Without customers, your business has no reason for being.

Want to Attract Traffic to Your Website? Stay Focused. Work Hard & Smart.

Ultimately, embracing inbound means that you stay focused on your business goals. The inbound methodology provides you with a framework for harnessing digital tools for your business so you can evaluate and test how they deliver on your SMART goals. So, even if you go down a rabbit hole chasing pretty pictures on Facebook or Pinterest, you'll find yourself stepping back and asking yourself how you can apply what you've observed to your own social content or how to improve it.

Getting found online is not a quick fix. It's an ongoing process, a marathon of sorts. It involves frequent and consistent content, keyword research, content optimization and analysis. The more you stay focused, work hard and stay smart, the more you'll enjoy the journey. So will your customers.



Chapter 2: What Do You Need to Do Inbound Marketing?

To do inbound marketing, you need:

- A content machine
- A business blog
- A means for capturing lead email addresses for further nurturing
- A contacts database
- An email resource
- A way to share content on social networks
- Analytics

Let's explore each one.

A content machine

Critical to your business is having a content machine you control.

A content machine starts with your company website, and - ideally - includes a blog. That's your business' digital printing press or publishing platform. We'll discuss blogging separately in this chapter.

The company website has evolved considerably over the years. Whereas it used to be more of a static brochure that you could forget about once published, it is now more of a living entity and the digital 24/7 equivalent of your sales/marketing organization and your physical location. It's available when your prospective customers want to learn about you, not when you have business hours.

As a living entity, you need to actively manage it. To do so, you must have control of it. That means that you:

- Own your domain name or URL (e.g., I own the domain name simplemarketingnow.com)
- Have access to the content and can easily modify it through a user-friendly content management system that doesn't require you to know how to code

- Own the content on your website, including the images

When you actively manage your website, you keep it fresh and free of digital cobwebs. You make sure the content is up-to-date, and ensure that each page has been optimized for searchers and search engines. Each page should have its own unique title and meta description (that's what shows up in search results) and include plenty of content that educates about your company and the solutions you provide. More specifically,

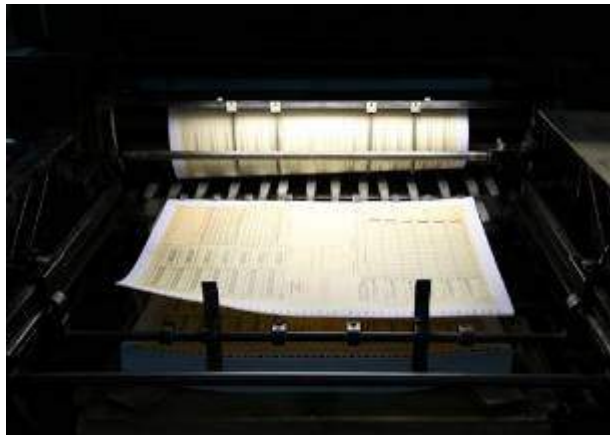
- Titles and meta descriptions should be succinct. Think of them as helpful snippets that offer up tantalizing clues about your business to prospective customers. They should relate to the content found on that web page. You have a set number of characters for each:

Page title: 70 characters

Meta description: 150 characters

- Include keywords or search terms relevant to your visitors.
- Place your most important search term at the beginning of your title and description.

Tip - Make a habit of 'walking' through your site, as if it were a physical location. Pay attention to what's there. Is it accurate or out-of-date? Do you notice any strange content that makes no sense for your customers or business? Is anything broken?



...With a business blog

Your content machine should include a business blog.

Why? Because a business blog is the equivalent of a printing press for your business. Every time you publish an article, you create a new page associated with your website and you send a signal to search engines that your site is active with fresh content. Each article allows you to develop a topic related to your business and of interest to your prospects. Furthermore, a business blog allows you to:

1. **Educate your prospects.** Educating is far more powerful, more trustworthy and more relevant to website visitors than pure selling or even traditional marketing content. Education means that you can anticipate the questions customers may have and that you understand who they are.
2. **Answer commonly asked questions** so you only have to respond once. You can then easily refer to the response with a link in follow up communications. This can be particularly valuable for customer service and sales associates who are frequently responsible for answering customer questions.
3. **Build out FAQs.** Let's say the FAQ section on your website includes a list of commonly asked questions with short answers. You can take each FAQ and turn it into an in-depth article with pictures, diagrams and videos. You can then add a link to your blog article in the FAQs so visitors can get more information about the topics they are researching. If you have no FAQs on your site, this is your opportunity to start developing that section.
4. **Hyper focus on a keyword topic and/or longtail keyword relevant to your business and of interest to your prospects.** Go in-depth, be unique and thorough, add valuable resources and make the blog article truly remarkable in addressing the topic. The beauty is that it will generate traffic to your business consistently over time.
5. **Repurpose blog content into an ebook offer** to help your business generate email leads or into a pillar page such as this one.
6. **Show your passion for your business and category.** Passion is contagious; it differentiates you. It's human, and people like to do business with humans.
7. **Demonstrate trustworthiness** by virtue of publishing regularly (i.e., at least once per week) and consistently over time (because this is how you do business). Combine that with passion and the willingness to interact with readers via comments or email exchanges, and you create a powerful testament to the character of your business.
8. **Significantly increase the number of opportunities your business has for appearing in search results** because each blog article you publish is a separate page on your website that can be indexed by search engines.
9. **Attract organic traffic to your site.** These are new visitors who are finding you because of your content and not because they are searching directly for your business and your company name. In so doing, you are expanding the circle of awareness and opportunity for your business.
10. **Be more conversational** than on your website pages.

11. **Link to relevant content found deeper within your site.** That way, you introduce visitors to the products and solutions available on your site.
12. **Attract links from other online sources** because your content is highly educational and informative. These links are desirable when they come from reputable sources; they indicate that your content has authority and is worth directing traffic to.
13. **Have legitimate material to share on social networks.** And, if your content is truly remarkable, your social network will willingly help share and promote it.
14. **Be a thought-leader in your industry.**
15. **Embed videos or slide presentations in blog articles.** You create a content hub for your business that associates can use in day-to-day business interactions and in follow-up emails.
16. **Share articles in email newsletters.** This gives you a broader message to share, one other than 'buy now' and means that you are relevant across all phases of the buying process.
17. **Promote a content offer at the end of each article,** thereby converting visitors into leads.
18. **Bring to life your company mission statement,** expressing what you believe in, what makes you different, and what your business is about.
19. **Highlight those who help make your business a success** - customers, suppliers, associates, related businesses. When you make others shine, they have reason to go out of their way to help you shine.
20. **Test out marketing campaigns.**

With all those benefits, though, comes responsibility.

- Commit to publishing regularly and consistently over time. Aim for a minimum of one new article per week.
- Generating blog momentum takes time and commitment - not too different from investing; the sooner you start, the sooner you see results. Plan on a minimum of 24 to 50 articles before you can expect to see traffic build up.
- As part of your content strategy, you'll want to develop really deep content on a topic (think 1000+ words) to stand out.



A means for capturing lead email addresses for further nurturing

As your valuable 24/7 digital sales & marketing assistant, your website needs to perform as a business asset. In other words, it needs to help you collect contact information - and especially email addresses - so you can follow up with prospective customers.

For those who are ready to do business with you, you'll want a contact us form where a visitor can include detailed pertinent information for immediate follow up.

However, not everyone coming to your website is ready to buy and you don't want to turn those people away. Those people are doing their due diligence. By the time a potential customer actually reaches out to a person in your organization, 70% of the decision-making process will already have taken place. So you need your website to be that silent resource working on your behalf educating and also capturing lead email addresses for further nurturing.

To do that, you need tools:

- A way of capturing contact information on a form and delivering an offer
- A compelling content offer
- A way of keeping track of the email addresses you've gathered (see contacts database)

How to Capture Contact Information?

At a bare minimum, you can use an email signup form. Ideally, though, you have a means of delivering a content offer in exchange for the email address, and asking questions to help you qualify the prospect. Here are two options.

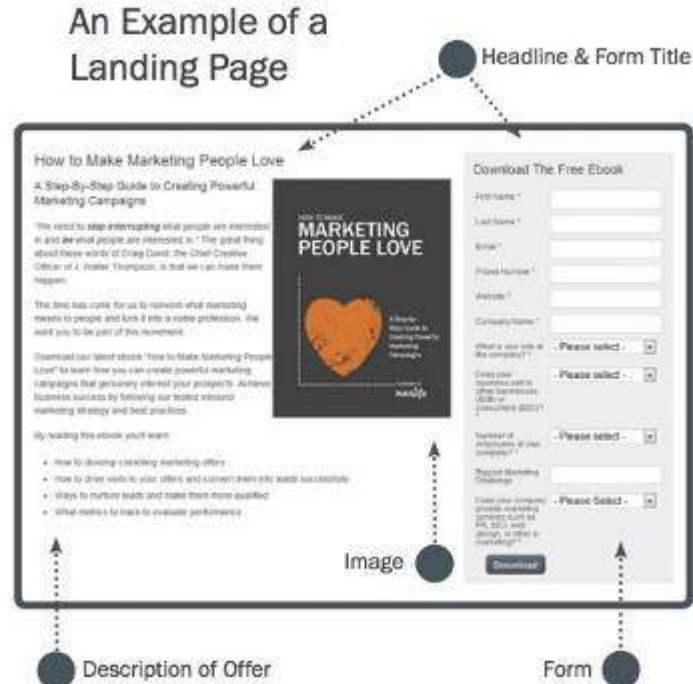
A Popup Leadflow Offer Form



This tool is simple yet effective especially when combined with behavior on the page (i.e., it appears after your visitor spends time exploring). You can include a visual of the offer, as well as a compelling headline and space to explain how the offer delivers value. When the visitor clicks, one to four form fields appear where you can ask for an email address and some additional information.

Once the form completed, the visitor can access the offer via a link on a 'thank you' message.

A Landing Page with a Form



A landing page is a web page deliberately created to help you convert visitors to your site into leads because it provides you with the means for capturing an email address. A formal landing page includes several elements:

- A page completely focused on the offer. Even website navigation gets removed so as not to distract from the offer.
- A compelling headline and space to explain how the offer delivers sufficient value that a visitor would agree to leave an email address and other information. Include bullets to detail benefits.
- An image showing what the offer looks like.
- A form for capturing an email address, and as relevant more information (name, company name, persona qualification question, business questions...)
- A means for delivering the offer - aka the 'thank you' page

The 'thank you' page completes the landing page experience. It's a separate web page that appears after you complete the form and click on the Download button. It delivers the offer you are promising and restores navigation to the rest of your website.

The benefit to this more formal experience (compared to the popup leadflow thank you message) is two-fold:

- You can measure the success of your landing page via Google Analytics and other marketing software analytics.
- You seamlessly guide your lead to take next steps on your website to learn more or download another offer.

What makes for a compelling offer?

An offer can be an ebook, a checklist, a bundle of delicious and relevant information consisting of links and downloads.

The offer must be of interest to your ideal customer (aka persona) and relate to the stage of the buying cycle s/he is in. Generally, when a prospect is at the early stages (e.g., awareness), the offer will be more educational and relate to research on options available. Further down the buying journey (e.g., interest and decision), the offer will be more focused on buying criteria and the decision-making process.



Contacts database

A contacts database is the digital equivalent of a Rolodex where you can easily search to find specific contacts, track notes and information about a contact and - ideally - monitor the contact's behavior on your website. For example, has that person downloaded an offer, read your emails, visited your website multiple times.

Another name for a contacts database is a CRM - a customer relationship management tool.

The popup tool described above integrates with a powerful free CRM as well as an email tool such as MailChimp. The landing page tool above integrates with a marketing contacts database as well as a CRM. Both are from HubSpot and include:

- **Database** for collecting and storing data on contacts, companies, deals, and tasks. Automatically creates company records, associates contacts, de-duplicates leads, and takes care of all the little details your team shouldn't be distracted by. It's easy to sort based on properties you use in the marketing process, or add new ones so conversion forms can help the sales process (see below).
- **Timeline** to organize every email, call, note, even website visits into one simple, intuitive view.
- **Email** so you can easily log emails to your contacts as well as send them right from any contact's record.
- **Phone Integration** - Make calls with one click in your CRM system. Easily and automatically log notes and recordings of your calls.

The benefit of a contacts database is that it allows you to keep track, organize and methodically manage the leads that your business generates.



An Email Resource

Email is powerful, especially if you use it responsibly and with permission. Don't let anyone tell you that it's obsolete. It's not.

Email marketing allows you to develop a direct connection and an ongoing relationship with potential customers. It enables you to demonstrate intense respect for your customers so that they welcome and treasure your messages.

It starts when you obtain an email address and permission to communicate using the tools described above. Then, you can begin the lead nurturing process via a sequence of email messages sent manually or via automated email workflows.

During lead nurturing, you get to learn more about your lead - including where s/he is in the buying process - and your lead learns more about you, your organization and the solutions you provide. You can expose your lead to your thought leadership, examples of your problem solving and start providing information and education about problems your lead may be facing. You can also direct or guide your lead to specific parts of your website and to additional offers. Lead nurturing plays an important role in converting an interested and qualified lead into a customer.

However, you need to craft messages that your recipients will welcome.

- Respect recipient's time. It has to be awesome.
- Respect their job. Don't clutter inbox.
- Respect their inbox
- Respect the permission they gave you. Email is a contract between you and the recipient.

Chances are that your contacts database does not consist of a homogenous group of people and will react poorly to receiving the same message across the board. So spend time thinking about your email list; can you segment it into like groups to whom you can send a targeted and relevant email?

Your email resource needs to integrate with your contacts database either as an integral part of it (e.g., via HubSpot) or through API integrations with tools such as MailChimp. You do not want to use Outlook or Gmail for your emails. Instead, you want a tool that allows you to send out professional emails and tracks results (e.g., opens, clicks, unsubscribes, etc.).



A way to share content on social networks (i.e., social integration)

Whether your blog content management system auto-publishes to your top social networks, or you manually update your networks when you have new contents or updates to share, it's important to plan ahead and develop a system for consistently sharing content on social networks.

- You can post directly to networks.
- You can use a tool such as Hootsuite which allows you to manage multiple accounts and profiles [Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.] while also having a multitude of search filters. That plus analytics and a fabulous scheduler...
- You might have that functionality in your automated marketing software system as HubSpot has.

Don't overlook social networks. They can help you amplify your messages, plus chances are that you'll be surprised by the vibrant communities you may become part of.

Analytics

Analytics matter. They help you evaluate progress against your SMART goals and tell you whether you're generating results that can benefit your business. If you don't have website analytics installed on your site, you need to do so. At the very least ensure Google Analytics is in place. Ideally, your marketing automation software will also provide you with data.

(If you aren't sure if you have Google Analytics installed or not, there's an easy way to check. Go to your website and right click; select 'view source' which will open up a new

page where you'll notice lots of code. Click {control} F (or {command} F on a Mac) and type in "Google." If it's installed, you'll find it highlighted.)

- To begin with, develop a baseline. See how much traffic you have, how long it stays on your site and how many pages it explores on your site.
- Discover whether your traffic is coming directly to your site (and knows you already), whether it's coming from search (and doesn't know much about you) and whether other sites are sending traffic your way. If you're doing Adwords (or Pay-Per-Click), you'll see how that traffic compares to your other traffic sources.
- Learn where geographically your traffic is coming from, and whether visitors are at a desktop, a tablet or a mobile device. That matters if your website isn't responsive (i.e., it doesn't adapt to the type of device your visitors are using to explore your website).
- Find out which pages on your site attract the most traffic and which offers convert.
- Set up goals to learn whether the actions you want visitors to take are the ones they actually take. For example, sign up for a newsletter, download an offer and make it to your thank you page, visit more than 10 pages on your site, spend 5 minutes or more or complete an ecommerce transaction.

The paradox of digital marketing is that it delivers data. Lots of data. The challenge is making meaning from the data so your business can benefit.

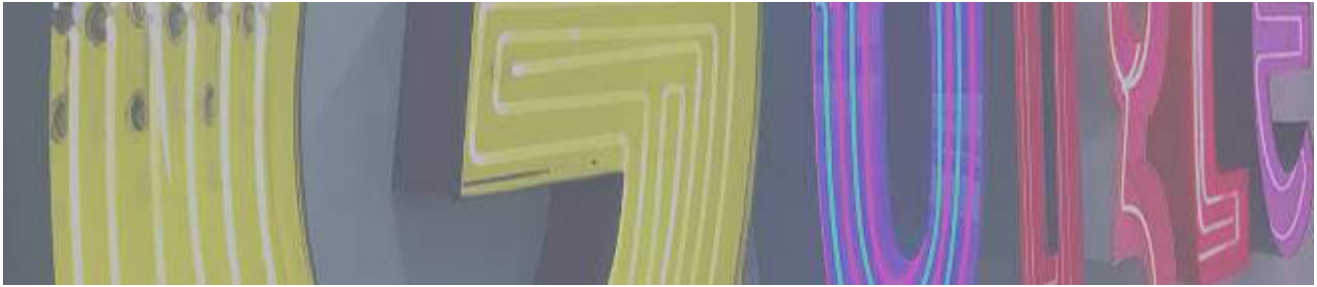
To that end, be consistently rigorous about reviewing your analytical data on a regular basis. At a minimum on a monthly basis. You'll find it valuable to use the information as a basis for actions.

Look at your new offers and blog content to determine what resonates.

Determine how to test timing and types of content to share on social networks.

Be sure, too, to compare your online analytical data to your business dynamics. If your website is the digital equivalent of your business/office, it needs to support your sales and marketing programs.

If it isn't, you may be missing opportunities.



Chapter 3: How to Get Started with Inbound Marketing

You've identified the tools you need for inbound marketing. How do you get started? In this chapter, we'll discuss next steps. More specifically,

- Conduct an inbound marketing assessment
- Identify your keyword topics
- Identify and understand your customer personas, their problems and their lifecycle stages
- Develop your content calendar
- Review so you can plan your upcoming content strategy



Conduct an inbound marketing assessment

Assess where you are. Conduct an audit of your online and offline content.

Review how well your website is performing from an organic search perspective. Which are your top pages and blog articles? Which keywords matter most to your business?

Have you identified distinct personas for your business? How does one differ from the other? How does each progress through the buying cycle?

What questions do your personas/prospects have about the solutions you provide? Have you integrated those questions and words into your content (i.e., into your keywords.) and matched that content to your buyers' purchase process?

How are you currently attracting visitors to your business and website? Think about in-person activities as well as what you do online. Do you use a blog? Have you developed ebooks and offers that prospects have told you are helpful? Which professional and social

networks do you find most valuable? Do you have Calls-to-Action (CTAs) throughout your website and on blog articles?

How are you converting prospects into customers? How do you communicate with prospects and customers over time? Have you created lead nurturing workflows? Do you use marketing automation? Do you send out regular email newsletters?

How do you delight customers? How do you maintain customer relationships? What role do social networks play and how involved are you?

What role does your website play in educating prospects? How do you update web content and how frequently?

What tools do you have available to analyze, optimize and stay focused on what's important to your business online? Are you examining your site's analytics, email marketing stats, blog stats, keyword progress and other data programmatically to determine how well all of these help you convert visitors into leads and customers? Do you regularly conduct A/B tests?

What content tools do you already have available? When you explore how you currently interact with customers, you'll most probably discover a treasure trove of material - much of which may be sitting in file cabinets. With inbound marketing, you can put those content assets to use online so your website truly functions as a silent sales and marketing assistant, available 24/7 at the convenience of your prospective customers, educating them and guiding them until they are ready to become your customer. Inbound Marketing helps you build trust as you generate leads.



Identify your keyword topics

In the digital world, keyword topics are critical. They define our business, the solutions we offer and our relevance to potential customers. They unlock meaning!

Keywords affect our ability to get found online. The right ones can be elusive, especially if the solution offered represents a problem prospects may not realize they have, let alone search for on an ongoing basis.

Once identified, keywords become a beacon for conversation, website content, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles and blog updates. They become measurable and the basis for ongoing improvement. Keywords bring meaning to digital and social marketing.

And, yet, keywords and keyword topics can be confusing.

1. **Keywords can be single words or multiple words** [i.e., phrases] that relate to a core word. Pick 3 to 5 words/phrases that capture what your business or product/service is about.
2. **Pick your focus keywords based on relevance to your business and customers and difficulty.** Realize that words with huge search volume results are hard to rank for, whereas ones with small search volume are much easier. Also realize that general, generic terms [i.e., single words such as 'book'] aren't necessarily relevant to your business and customers.
3. Keywords can help you get found online when you **thoughtfully and deliberately focus on one topic per web page** [this includes blog articles]. You can include variations related to your one keyword. I think of that primary keyword as my thesis or core topic for a web page.
4. Be sure to **include that core keyword in your web page's meta description and page title - in position #1 - and in your content.** Your entire page should be about the keyword topic you have chosen to focus on, making sense of it and the value you offer to your visitors. In other words, write for people! [Note: 'meta' data can be viewed by right-clicking on your browser page and selecting 'view page source'.]
5. Although no longer an element of the Google search algorithm, **including meta keywords forces you to think about and identify the keywords you intend to focus on** for that web page. That in turn puts you in a better position to create content focused on the core thought/keyword of the page in a way that makes sense to readers and visitors. [An excellent guide is *Google's Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide*.]
6. **Don't forget to add <alt> tags that include your keyword to photos and images.** Be thinking, too, of keywords in your headers and anchor text [i.e., the text you use for a link - don't use 'click here' when you can have more descriptive and keyword rich text].
7. **Keywords require that you understand the value you offer customers, that you listen to the terms they use.** Always ask: how did you find me? What words did you use to search for me? Be aware of the stages of the purchase process and the words prospects use as a result. Don't forget regional differences affecting how visitors search.

Identify and understand your customer personas, their problems and their lifecycle stages

Customer personas and their problems

Developing a buyer persona is good business. It's also a valuable exercise for everyone in your organization to participate in.

It's a valuable process for a business, particularly for an effective inbound marketing strategy, to create content that resonates with prospective business customers, and for guiding your social media marketing engagement. Personas are semi-fictional representations of customers that you create for your business based on understanding (and researching) different groupings of customers and detailing their roles, pain points, professional interests and questions. Ideally, you name them and associate a picture of a person with them so you readily visualize them as legitimate entities as you develop marketing materials and make business decisions.

1. Start by listening intensely to customers. Listen through in-person interviews, casual interactions, via your sales and customer service representatives as well as through written communications and online comments. Review analytics data, too. Look for clues to help guide what problems prospective customers want to find solutions for. Learn more about who they are and how they make decisions. You're looking to find pockets of commonality.
2. Use what you've learned to build a picture of your customers. Detail relevant demographics. Find photos that represent who your customer is. Describe what role she might hold at an organization. Document what pains your prospect faces; find out what she's trying to solve and what she values, as well as how your product or service fits into her life. List specific questions which that persona asks.

3. Name your prospect. A name creates a short cut that you can use internally to focus your organization on a specific persona very quickly. BuildDirect refers to Bob the Builder; HubSpot to Marketer Mary and Enterprise Erin - among others.
4. Deliberately focus content and marketing materials with your prospect in mind so you can tailor that message and create Email Marketing Customers Welcome because you show them respect!

Once you have developed your buyer personas and tested them out, you may be ready to fine tune them with more data from your analytics.

Your customer's purchase process

Do you think much about your buyer's purchase process aka their buying cycle? It's sometimes referred to as the sales funnel, too. What's important to realize is that: Not every visitor to your website is ready to buy from you. Neither is every person entering your store, showroom or office. Just because someone isn't ready to buy doesn't mean that you shouldn't connect and start to build a relationship.

The best way to start building a relationship is by offering information that educates a prospect. Once educated, a prospect can appreciate the evidence of your expertise. The job isn't over when your prospect makes a purchase.

You can address your buyer's purchase process with your website content, your blog content and your content offers.

- **Top of the funnel content educates**

At the very top of the funnel, once a prospect has become aware of a need and has established interest, consider articles and blog posts about industry trends, product neutral information. Focus on how to *educate*. Can you create a check list, a white paper, a buyers' guide to help him/her make sense of the category and the options available? This content focuses on the Where, What, When, Why and How related to the problems that prospects are trying to solve.

- **Mid-funnel content helps prospects understand options**

Mid-funnel is when you can offer content that helps prospects understand the different options and solutions available to their issues. Not only can you compare options, address industry trends, methodology, and strategic insights, but you can also *highlight your expertise*: webinars demonstrating successes, free trials, demonstrations, case studies... In the process, you help your prospects get closer to the bottom of the funnel and decision-making. Here, you want to highlight that you offer more perspective than just a project.

- **Bottom of the funnel content supports decision-making**

At your prospect progresses toward the bottom of the funnel, you may want to offer *evidence of your competence* to help your prospect become a customer. For example, specific product or service comparisons, customer stories, evidence of your credibility and strong reputation, product sheets, one-on-one consultations, and eventually pricing for a specific solution. Focus on building trust since ultimately people want to buy from people they can trust.

Listen carefully to current prospects and customers - online and in real life. You'll notice differences in how they refer to your product or service depending on which stage of the buyer purchase process they find themselves, and also depending on which buyer persona is interacting with your organization.



Develop your content calendar

Creating online content is work. You need to keep it fresh. You need to put some thought into it. If you're publishing a blog, you need to strategize and plan so you have content ready to publish regularly and consistently.

Realize that your digital content is the most powerful means a business has for connecting with customers. It's more permanent than a magazine advertisement. It works 24/7 on your behalf. It supports your offline activities. It increases your efficiency by enabling you to capture commonly asked questions and share answers and resources that prospects can access when they aren't ready or willing to speak with you.

The best way to be successful is to manage the process, keep a content calendar and hold regular content strategy sessions to discuss:

- Blog article topics
- Website pages to develop further and/or update, as well as new sections to add
- New content offers (plan on introducing approximately one per quarter)
- Lead nurturing sequences
- Deep pillar content
- Social content

- Other content to support sales and marketing programs (e.g., trade shows, webinars, demos, etc.)
- Content contributors

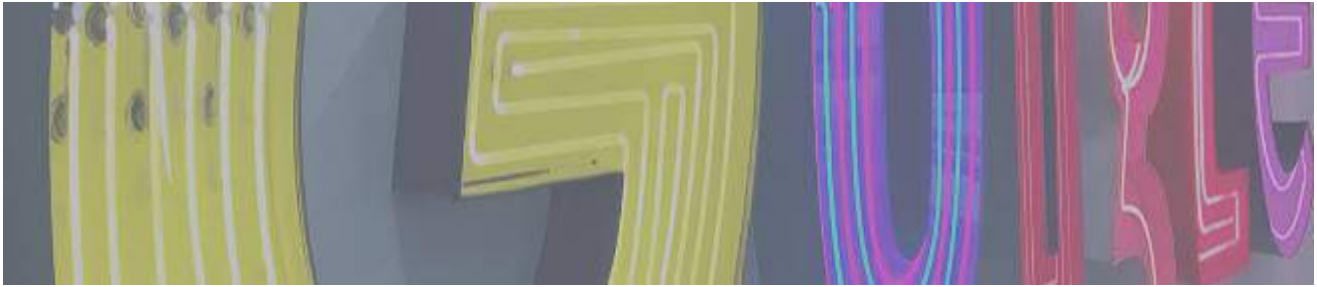
Review so you can plan your upcoming content strategy

Content strategy planning works best when you review how your previous content has performed.

What worked well? What generated the leads you were hoping for? How well qualified are sales leads? Do you need to nurture contacts longer? Do you need more or different offers?

Did you run some A/B tests? How did those perform? What did you learn?

Always for reviewing and asking questions so you can build off of what you've learned and deliver even better results for your business. It's an on-going, iterative process.



Chapter 4: Common Inbound Marketing Mistakes to Avoid

In this section, let's explore some common mistakes associated with inbound marketing. Now, mistakes may be too strong a word. Because if you aren't encountering some of these situations, you may not be sufficiently inboundy in your marketing, or you may be focusing in one direction at the expense of another, or you've successfully addressed one goal and are ready to tackle the next one.

Consider this then a checklist to review every so often so you can confirm that you're addressing the big inbound marketing picture for your business. I've organized it in the following categories (have you noticed the theme?):

- Attracting traffic with your inbound content
- Converting traffic into leads
- Closing leads into customers
- Embracing data-driven marketing decisions

Are You Attracting Enough Traffic with Your Inbound Content?

Successful inbound marketing depends on regularly producing content to attract traffic to your site. To that end, check that you are:

1. Publishing consistently on your blog. Develop a schedule and stick to it.
2. Publishing articles that are not too short, of high quality and of interest to your buyer personas. Do your homework; figure out the keyword topics of relevance that you can rank for and develop the best quality long form content you can that your prospects will appreciate.
3. Including images, headers, subheaders, bullets and white space to make your content easy to scan and consume, even on mobile devices.
4. Including a Call-to-action in your blog posts; adding links to relevant articles and content deeper in your site.

5. Doing your SEO homework. I.e., taking care of the basics on your site. Create unique and concise descriptions about your business for each web page and blog article; focus on keywords or topics that are meaningful, rather than generic. Instead of 'case studies,' talk about 'inbound marketing case studies.'
6. Regularly reviewing your website for freshness.
7. Remembering that not everyone coming to your site is ready to buy! Develop interesting offers for the different stages of your persona's buying cycle. Be aware of how each talks about the problems you can help them with.
8. Be curious about who visits your site, what those people do on your site, what content they prefer and what questions they ask you. If you discover they represent the wrong traffic for your business, do something about that.
9. Use data from your site to ensure that your website is working hard on behalf of your business. If you're getting a lot of traffic and none of it is converting, develop a better offer. If you aren't generating enough traffic, review whether you need to develop deeper content, increase your publishing frequency or both. Track your goals and use that data to improve your results.
10. Checking yourself and your important search terms on Google every so often. See what comes up; see what is relevant to you. Think how you might incorporate more relevant keywords and topics so you have a chance to get found online. Remember that our own company name and products aren't ideal terms to focus on for organic keywords. Typically, people searching on those terms know you already. Ideally, you want to connect with customers who don't yet know about you, who are still figuring out what kinds of solutions are possible.
11. Confirming that your content strategy includes social media and that you regularly share your content (and interact, too!).

Are You Converting Enough Traffic into Leads?

Successful inbound marketing depends on regularly converting that traffic into leads. You do so with content offers that interested prospects can sign up for. To that end, check that you are:

1. Creating a frictionless path between Call-to-Action buttons, landing pages and offers. Friction generates a sense of unease or lack of trust in what you offer. Make sure that the words used in the link or the call-to-action button relate to those used in the landing page title and copy. Make it easy.
2. Clear, concise and upfront in your value proposition, and also consistent. Make sure your creative supports the goal of the page. If you aren't sure, conduct an A/B test.

3. Short and sweet and to the point in your landing page. Be compelling in your page header. Use bullets to highlight benefits and stay focused on your goal: to convince your prospect to download your offer.
4. Supporting the purpose of your landing page: to convince your visitor that your offer is worth completing a form and sharing an email address and possibly other information. That means that the page includes no navigation, no menu options which might offer distractions and an alternate path through your site which bypasses the offer.
5. Sure that regardless your visitor's digital environment - desktop, tablet or mobile - your landing page can be easily accessed.
6. Deliberate about the information requested on your landing page form. Evaluate your offer and determine which is the best form to combine it with. Form fields help you qualify leads. Generally, the fewer the fields the greater the number of form completions and the less qualified the entries.
7. Customizing your form submission button to say something other than "submit." Go for buttons that say 'click here to download' at a minimum or are even more descriptive. Your prospects will appreciate it!
8. Optimizing Your Landing Page. You probably want your landing page to get found in search results so make sure you have a descriptive page title, a meta description that is relevant not to mention copy that is keyword rich and meaningful to other similar prospects.
9. Comfortable that you have enough relevant offers based on your personas' buying stages to create compelling campaigns and nurturing email sequences.

Are You Closing Leads into Customers?

With successful inbound marketing, you expect to close qualified leads into customers. To that end, check that you are:

1. Qualifying your prospects.
2. Aware what makes for a sales qualified lead. Work with your sales team to understand which are critical characteristics that marketing needs to be considering and addressing to ensure that a prospect is marketing qualified. Do you need different blog content? Do you need new or different offers? Do you need to ask additional questions on your forms?
3. Regularly communicating with your contacts. It's important that they be hearing from you regularly and consistently over time via monthly emails and/or nurturing email workflow campaigns.

4. Reviewing your contacts database and/or CRM to ensure that the quality is good. Regularly purge invalid emails; requalify inactive ones. Use lists to segment your database into like groups to make for more relevant communications.
5. Comfortable with the SMART goals you've set for closing customers - and have enough traffic and leads to convert in your pipeline.
6. Coordinating with sales so they are reaching out to qualified leads for a conversation.
7. Encouraging sales to make use of marketing intelligence that shows how leads interact with your website and your content.



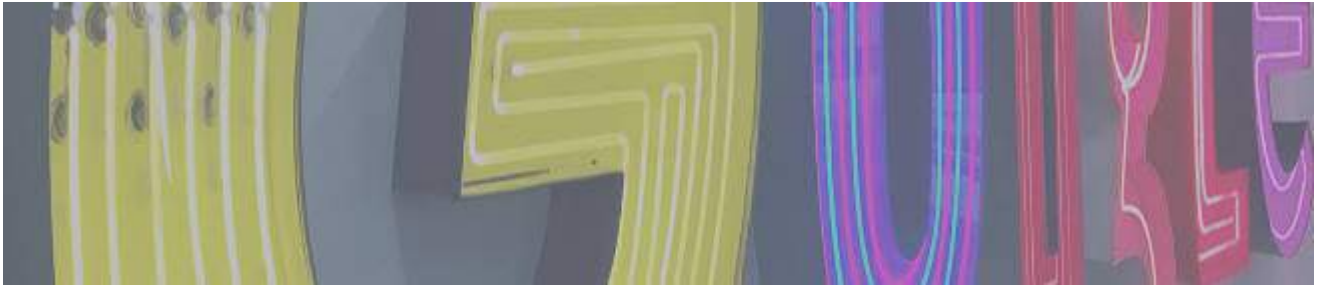
Are You Embracing Data Driven Marketing Decisions?

Successful inbound marketing is data-driven and practical. If it doesn't benefit your business, you need to rethink your strategy and your priorities.

"If you are running an inbound marketing program and not tracking ROI, you are doing your company – and your career – a disservice because inbound marketers who measure ROI are more than 12 times more likely to be generating a greater as opposed to lower year-over-year return."

To that end, check that you are:

1. Identifying ahead of time expectations for your investments (e.g., visits to your website, download of an offer, time spent on site, increased engagement, ecommerce sales, etc) so you have a better chance of achieving some of your goals. This also helps with prioritizing.
2. Regularly Testing to determine what you might improve. This includes emails, landing pages, Paid Search ads, blog article titles, types of offers, etc.
3. Never getting too comfortable. Stay humble and curious so you can always learn and improve.



Chapter 5: Feeding the Content Machine

By now, you realize that great content matters intensely for your website and business blog, and publishing regularly and consistently over time is a priority. As easy as that is to say, feeding the content machine can feel overwhelming once the routine sets in if you don't have a process in place. So let's talk about how to keep the content momentum and magic going.

In this section, we'll cover:

- Your content mission statement
- Regular content strategy sessions

Develop a Content or Blog Mission Statement to Stay Focused

As with any editorial or content-based mission statement process, you'll want to start with your audience. In other words, the "Who."

Then, explore "How" you plan to reach the "Who."

Identify the "What's In It" for the "Who" and you.

Finally, be sure to understand the "Where" of your competitive environment.

Who are you trying to reach with your content?

The most critical part of your purpose is understand who you are trying to reach with your business content. When you do, you generate traffic which can then lead to subscribers, leads and even prospective customers.

How will you reach your audience?

When you consider the 'how' of your blog, you are thinking about the content itself, in other words the voice of your blog, your content topic buckets and the different formats of the article, as well as the business blogging process that helps you stay on track and on schedule.

Blog Voice

Will your blog be casual or formal? Will you be open to questions and comments or only state facts? Will you use first person, second person or third-person only? Will you focus on educating? On entertaining? On being scientific?

Determine what's right for your audience and your business. You may have several depending on who contributes to your blog.

Content Topic Buckets

Identify broad topics buckets that relate to your business and you are expert in, and that are of interest to your audience. Don't go crazy and try to be all things to all people!

If you need inspiration, think how your favorite magazines organize themselves and notice their common topic buckets. If there are similar ones in a same space, look at how one differentiates itself from the other. For example, Fast Company is one of many business-focused publications. It differs by focusing on creativity and innovation.

Article Formats

What formats will your content take? Certain topic buckets may naturally fall into a specific format. For example, a topic focused on 'voices of the industry' might consist only of blog interviews. Another might be about explaining difficult industry concepts with lots of visuals or video, such as Rand Fishkin's Whiteboard Friday series.

It's a good idea to have several formats you're comfortable with for your blog for variety and interest.

The Business Blogging Process: have a content calendar

A business blog is particularly effective at generating traffic by virtue of regular and consistent publishing. That means having a schedule and sticking to it, just as a daily newspaper, a weekly digest or monthly publication does.

Winging it goes so far. You want to avoid burnout. Best, then, to have a content calendar whereby you identify ahead of time topics to cover, specific articles to develop and due dates for delivery.

Remember to amplify each article once it is live through distribution to social media outlets, as well as in your own email and other business communication tools.

My Blog's Purpose Focuses On:

WHO is my audience?
HOW will I reach my Who?
WHAT's In It for my Who & me?
WHERE is my competition?

What's in it for your audience? What you want from them?

Your audience has plenty of other options besides reading your blog article. What benefits will they gain from your content? How will you help them?

Since you're doing this for your business, you have to think about what you want from them... Yes, you'd like them to read your content. But, what else?

- Is it to engage with your content through comments?
- What about subscribing to your blog?
- Do you want readers to download a content offer?
- Are you trying to build relationships (and links) with influencers in your industry?

If what you offer them is of sufficient value, you may receive what you want from them. Where is your competition?

When you're getting started with a blog, it can be overwhelming to think about who else is out there writing competitive content. At the same time, it's both humbling and grounding to do research on the keywords and topics that you intend to focus on.

- What if your most important concept makes sense when you are speaking one-on-one with someone, but doesn't translate in a Google search?
- What if there's nothing new to say about your topics?
- What if your competitors are already there?

None of this means you shouldn't launch your business blog. It will affect, though, affect your purpose.

So, research your keywords and topics. Find out who else is writing about them and how authoritative their sites are. Get creative about how to make your content more relevant to your audience and your site more authoritative about your subject matter.

Schedule Regular Content Strategy Sessions

During these regular content strategy sessions, you can review what is generating success, what isn't, and what your next business content priorities are. Then, brainstorm your next content ideas:

- Review keyword topic opportunities based on what you currently do/don't rank for
- Does existing content need refreshing?
- Explore topics using Google suggest or Google Adwords keyword planner
- Do you have the right offers to associate with specific articles based on topics, your target persona for the topic and stage of the buying cycle?
- New specific questions that prospective customers ask
- What visual assets will you need? If you hold a product knowledge session, be sure to record it, take photos, observe reactions, etc.
- What topics are trending in your industry?
- Can you find relevant topics based on social media, Quora or LinkedIn Groups?
- Do you have enough information to write 1000+ words on the topic?
- Would a blog interview series with thought leaders in your space work?

You may want to create a formal process for tracking ideas, due dates, assets needed (including offers) and project owners. Options include an Excel spreadsheet, project trackers such as Smartsheets, Teamwork, Asana and many others.

Have fun with these sessions and be open to possibilities.



Chapter 6: How Paid Fits In

As important as it is to use your website and blog content to attract traffic organically to your site, it's worth considering paid search and paid social.

Paid Search for Inbound Marketing Insights

Paid Search - aka PPC, pay-per-click, using Google Adwords or even Bing - can be valuable for testing out keywords and ideas, how well an offer converts on your site, for example, as well as to jump start traffic to your website. The same holds for paid social ads and promotions, especially since as social networks become profitable, they tend to diminish organic visibility in favor of paid.

For paid social search, you'll want to consider the networks most relevant to your personas - whether that's LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram or others.

The beauty, though, of both paid search and paid social is that you can drill down geographically as well as demographically and obtain valuable marketing insights.

17 Best Practices for Paid Search

From an inbound marketing perspective, relying entirely on paid traffic to your website doesn't make sense long term. Much better to focus those resources on publishing blog articles and developing deeper content offers (say a guide or an ebook), and using paid programs strategically to strengthen those efforts.

If you are considering paid search for your business, here are 17 tips for getting started.

1. Identify a goal for doing paid search and social. Is this a short term test? Are you looking to generate paid customers? Determine why so you can track how successful paid search and social are for your business.
2. Take care of all of the website basics that you can from an organic perspective. That means taking care of website copy, tags, meta data, and content.
3. Research your competition. Use the Google Adwords search tool to explore ideas. Check out your competitors' websites. Do searches on Google in incognito mode on

terms relevant to you and see who comes up in results, including paid results. Observe how competitors position themselves in their ads, how far up in results they appear and whether they also appear organically in results. Do the same on social networks.

These next tips focus on paid search.

4. Pick relevant keywords (and variations) to focus on in your paid search campaign. Be as narrow and specific as possible. As you did when exploring organic search terms for your website and blog, focus on keywords relevant to your business and to customers seeking solutions to problems you can help them with.
5. Be specific with the keywords you bid on. If you aren't, you'll wind up paying lots of money to attract unqualified or irrelevant traffic. For example, rather than bid on "case studies" which is generic, opt for "inbound marketing case studies" if inbound marketing is your area of focus and you intend to promote inbound marketing case studies on paid search which will attract prospects looking for inbound marketing case studies.
6. Create a Google Adwords account (you'll need a gmail account just as with Google Analytics; you can even link up your Google Analytics account). Create a campaign; within your campaign, create an Ad group. Identify the keywords to bid on and create an ad (consider creating a second variation so you can test which one does better). Note that ads have word count limits and other constraints (e.g., no all caps).
7. Focus entirely on the Search Network rather than the Display Network (i.e., showing up in blog and other website ad listings), especially when you get started with paid search. If you do advertise on the Display Network, create a separate campaign as the dynamics are radically different.
8. Start with a low budget (\$5-10/day for example) so you can experiment, establish a baseline for bids and traffic and be able to understand what the results of your paid search campaign mean. Once you get a feel for the dynamics for your campaign, you can consider increasing your budget as long as you *stay focused on the goals of your paid search campaign*.
9. Consider organizing paid search campaigns around your products, services and offerings. Within one campaign, you can create several ad groups which each relate to a common category. If you sell fishing products, create a campaign around fishing rods and distinct ad groups around kids fishing rods vs. deep sea fishing rods.
10. Experiment with your ads on an ongoing basis until you find the right combination of benefits which result in higher clicks and conversions. Consider focusing on more than low price in ads and rather on what other value your business offers.
11. Think through the entire paid search experience for your visitors. Be specific in terms of where you send people once they click on your ad. Rather than send them to your

home page, send them to a page which specifically speaks to the fishing rods you are promoting (and make sure that page is fully optimized with relevant content.) Use a tracking URL for your destination. The more specific your ad, keywords and destination web page (aka landing page) for paid search, the higher the click through rate and the conversion rate will be if you've done a good job addressing your target customer's needs.

12. Include your principal keyword in your paid search ads. Also include it in your destination URL. Make sure the page you send people to includes that keyword. BTW you are better off bidding on a few keywords in each ad group rather than a long laundry list of terms which may not convert well.
13. Begin with *exact match* or *phrase match* keywords for paid search. As you gather more data, you can go broader; generally, the broader the match, the greater the volume and the less qualified the traffic. Your experimentation will provide you with valuable perspective on your sweet paid search spot.
14. Remember what paid search is about: qualified conversions not masses of expensive irrelevant clicks. You want to successfully entice a significant number of relevant and qualified searchers to click on your ad and complete a conversion on your site. That can be a sale, an offer download or a visit to a specific and critical web page. It's important to identify those conversions ahead of time so you can assess how successful your paid search investment is.

For paid social, focus on:

15. Testing visuals - photos and videos - and ad formats to determine which is best for your audience and your message depending on the specific social network.
16. Fine-tuning your audience parameters. You can select based on gender, age range, geographic location, interests and/or job positions depending on which network you focus on.

And, for any kind of paid program:

17. Regularly review, analyze and make course corrections on your paid campaigns. Evaluate them against your organic search results. Be sure to look at your own website analytics to determine how effective the results are. If your paid efforts aren't delivering worthwhile conversions, review your campaigns and assumptions. Consider halting the campaign until you figure out a solution.



Chapter 7: Trends in Inbound Content

As with all things digital, inbound content continues to evolve to take into account:

- Search engine algorithm changes focused on delivering the most relevant search results
- Whether on a mobile device or a desktop
- Despite an explosion in content of all sorts (e.g., blog posts, videos, images, social updates, etc.)
- Even though people still only have 24 hours in a day

You need to stay on top of those trends so you can adapt them to your business as part of your ongoing content strategy.

Ultimately, you want to consistently ensure that your content delivers the best possible overall experience to the right people (aka your personas) in such a way that the search engines recognize that your content truly is ideal for those searchers. In other words, you need to make both people and search engines happy.

How is content evolving online?

Content is evolving in three significant ways:

- Content is getting longer.
- Content strategy techniques are becoming more critical.
- Don't forget to keep your content fresh and evergreen.

Longer content is the new norm

Remember that search engines like Google want to deliver the best possible results and those best quality and most relevant results tend to be long form and exhaustive. After all, it's a lot easier to fake an answer in 300 words than it is in 3000.

Whereas 300 words were considered a minimum for a web page just a few years ago, that is now closer to 800 words and ideally longer. In fact, 1,200 to 2,000-word blog articles were once considered "long-form." That has increased to 3,000 to 10,000 words especially when combined with specific techniques to develop that stands out from the competition.

Since you want to get found by your prospects, you must ensure your inbound content shows up in search results.

New content strategy techniques to embrace

Creating the right content for your business isn't just a matter of publishing a weekly 1000-word article about sweetness and apple pie. Your content needs to relate to your business and deliver results. That's why you developed a content mission statement, and spent time understanding your personas and each's stage of the buyer journey (see Chapter 5).

Next, you need to get technical with your content strategy. The most effective approach is through cornerstone or pillar content.

Both terms communicate the role this content plays for your business: it's structural and represents what your overall content focuses on. You will ideally identify several of these structural elements to focus on. Each individual cornerstone or pillar represents a distinct topic relevant to your business.

Let's explore content pillars in more detail.



What is a content pillar?

Given the structural nature of this content, you can probably imagine how strong a content pillar needs to be. Essentially, it's a long, exhaustive article or web page focused on one specific topic or theme. This page, for example, represents a content pillar focused on successful inbound marketing.

In terms of the format, you'll notice a table of contents to organize the content, the importance of headers and subheaders to help guide the reader through the information as well as visuals and other media to add interest.

It also features offers:

- A pdf of this entire page, since it's often easier to read this much content in a pdf than it is via a webpage.
- A checklist

The content pillar can easily be converted into shorter and smaller pieces of content such as blog posts, social media updates, infographics, videos, emails, Slideshares and more - all with links back to your pillar - to further promote it and attract prospects.

How to develop cornerstone or pillar content?

It all starts with your keyword research. Identify 4 to 10 broad topics of relevance to your business. Around each of these topics, create a cluster of related longer tail topics. As you develop each subtopic into a distinct piece of web content, link back to the core topic.

Here's a visual.



That core topic should be a broad term that is between 2-4 words in length, is industry specific, educational and supports your product or service. Ideally, it is educational so it relates to the awareness-stage of your prospect. Be sure to perform several Google searches on the term to determine what already exists.

Then, make a list of as many sub topics as possible that bring value to your core topic. If you haven't already created content relating to that subtopic, add it to your content calendar. Each subtopic needs to link back to the core topic.

In many ways, the pillar content page resembles a modified landing page since it includes an offer and conversion form. For each content pillar, make sure to:

- Include the core topic in your page title
- Include it in the pillar page URL
- Unlike traditional landing pages, this page includes top navigation
- Refer to the core topic in the H1 tag which is the most prominent heading tag on the page.
- Define the core topic if applicable immediately under the H1
- Include conversion-focused landing page elements (for example, bullets)
- Feature an anchor-linked table of contents for easy navigation
- Be sure to add images with the core topic referenced in the alt text tags
- Use H2 tags for section headers
- Refer to the core topic throughout the page
- Link internally to relevant resources
- And link externally as relevant.
- Don't forget to include a back to the top button

Finally, you want to ensure that people can easily find your content pillar resources on your website. Be sure to include them as relevant to your:

- Top navigation
- On your home page in a dedicated section with a CTA ideally near the top of page

Other interesting content techniques

You'll find other interesting content techniques worth exploring. For example, there's the skyscraper technique. With the skyscraper technique, you want to:

- Identify link-worthy content. Something that is so interesting and relevant to your prospects, that they will surely link to yours.
- Once you've identified that content, you make it even better than it was. Add to it; make it more complete.
- Then, reach out to others to help you amplify your content. For example, those you highlight in your article. Those who might be interested in the content.

Ultimately, you're trying to create the best content possible about a specific topic.

Keeping your content fresh and evergreen

Perhaps the most critical trend to pay attention to is also the most unglamorous one: ensuring that your content remains fresh and evergreen. Add to your content calendar and strategies sessions time to review already published content - webpages, blog articles, marketing automation emails and content offers - to ensure that they're up-to-date.

Periodically updating blog articles means that you can unpublish and republish those articles with the latest information, adding to the relevance of your content.

Here's how to think of this process:

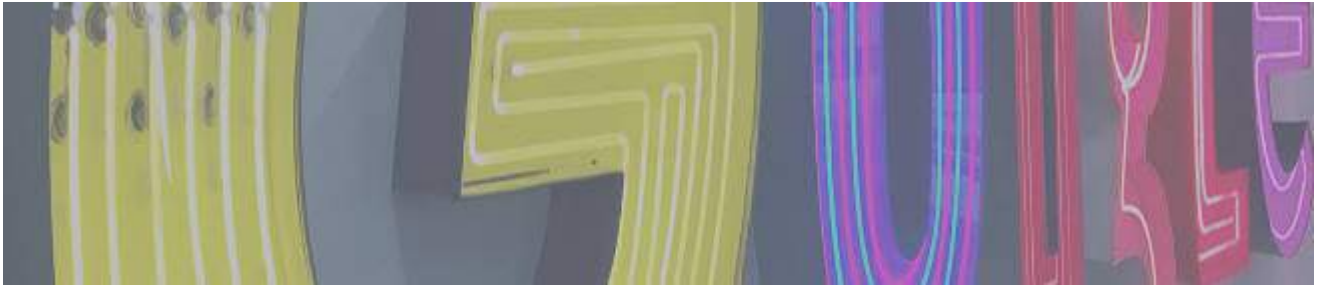
"Your content pillar is always under construction. Maintenance, updates, and additions are needed to keep it performing at a high level."

As you review your content, also make a point of checking for broken links, new resources, broken images and also image files that are too large. Compelling content includes a variety of visual formats, some of which can take up a long of bandwidth if not managed properly.

Be sure to check how your content looks on mobile as well as desktop. Mobile access has grown considerably. However, desktop access still matters for different reasons. Try to understand the differences so you can ensure the relevance of your content.

The more relevant and useful your website content is, the more it supports your business.

The more compelling your storytelling, the more powerful your inbound content and the more successful your business will be.



Chapter 8: Analysis and Results

Successful inbound marketing assumes that you regularly analyze results so you can make adjustments and improvements on an ongoing basis.

Ensure you have analytics installed

You must have available a tool for measuring your website performance and the performance on your marketing activities such as email, lead generation and blogging.

Be sure to integrate email with your analytics account and any other tools you use.

You may also have access to an all-in-one marketing automation solution such as HubSpot.

What insights can you gain from analytics?

Ultimately, you're looking for patterns.

To begin with, develop a baseline. Understand and track how much traffic you have, how long it stays on your site, how many pages it explores on your site, and which pages generate conversions. Compare it to past months and past years. Your business may have seasonal patterns. Understand them.

- What traffic comes directly to your site (and knows you already)
- What traffic comes from search (and doesn't know much about you)
- What sites refer traffic to your site?
- If you're doing Adwords (or Pay-Per-Click), how does that traffic compare to your other traffic sources?
- For each channel, determine which generates the most and best leads.

Learn where geographically your traffic is coming from, and whether visitors are at a desktop, a tablet or a mobile device. That matters if your website isn't responsive (i.e., it doesn't adapt to the type of device your visitors are using to explore your website) and if you'd like to offer certain categories of traffic a different experience (e.g., a different language for traffic coming from a different geography).

Inbound insights from your analytics

When you embrace analytics for your website, you begin to think of all of your online marketing activities and how they should integrate with one another to truly deliver on your SMART goals. For example, if you send out a regular email, how does that affect traffic to your site? Can it increase activity in a way that benefits your business?

Get into the habit of regularly running tests so you can learn how one type of headline works compared to another or one PPC ad versus another. Depending on the tools you use, you might run formal A/B tests, conduct surveys for insights to apply, experiment with different list segments and personalization or even try different visual tools. Experiments encourage you to ask questions and learn from the answers.

Interpreting the results

As you get started with inbound marketing, your first priority will be to start blogging regularly, to develop offers so you can convert visitors to leads and to develop nurturing sequences so those leads can eventually become customers.

Once you have several months of data, you can further prioritize. For example,

- If your site attracts fewer than 3,000 visitors per month, you'll want to focus on attracting more visitors by publishing more content on your blog.
- If your visitor to lead conversion rate is less than 1.5% per month, you'll want to focus on conversion, with more offers.
- If -depending on the nature of your business- you have few if any sales or consultations, you'll focus on the decision stage of your business.

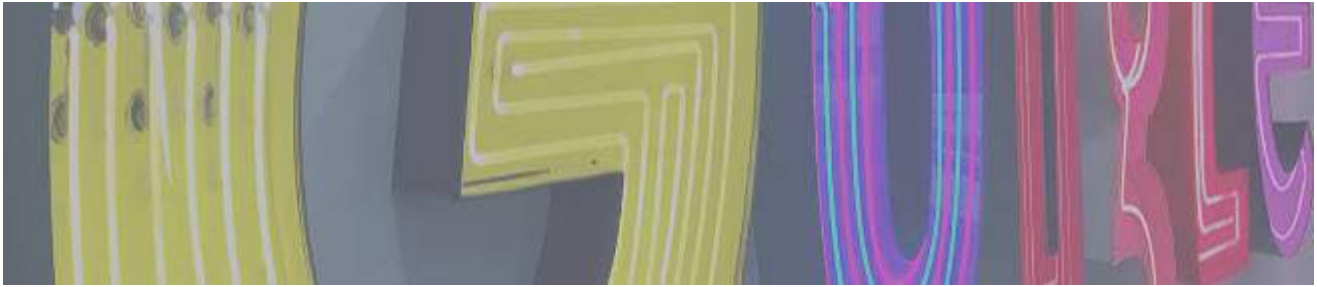
As you get into the detail behind your lead generation and conversion processes, you'll discover that:

- Awareness stage offers have the highest conversion rates
- Conversion stage offer conversion rates will be lower than awareness stage.
- Decision stage offers have the lowest rates yet.

Understanding the dynamics of your business will allow you to focus on the right levers so you can make sustainable improvements.

What's next?

Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Every month.



Chapter 9: Keeping the Momentum Going

Successful inbound marketing is more like a marathon than a sprint. You need to keep the momentum going for the long run. For that reason, it's important not to burn out. The more your entire organization embraces the inbound methodology, the easier you'll find keeping that momentum going.

- The most effective marketing needs to work hand-in-hand with sales so leads become properly qualified, and content helps close business.
- All customer-facing associates in a business can become sources of content based simply on the questions customers regularly ask them.

Technology can be helpful when you connect your marketing analytics with your sales and CRM (customer relationship management) systems, creating a closed loop ecosystem with data both groups can own.

And, keeping your organization up-to-speed on your website, blog and content offers combined with overall results on a regular basis through internal email newsletters not only encourages awareness, but also invites creativity.

The more relevant your marketing is to your business, the more contagious the commitment to quality and relevance to your customers.

Inbound marketing forces you to think about the entire journey your customer takes when doing business with you. When you consider the steps prospects take to become customers, you become aware of their questions and concerns and how to anticipate them with your content.

That's how to delight customers for life!

Thanks for reading!

About Simple Marketing Now LLC:

Simple Marketing Now, an inbound marketing strategy consultancy, helps organizations get found online using content marketing and social media.

Simple Marketing Now publishes the *Content Talks Business Blog*, issues the *Social Flooring Index* which monitors the social state of home, tile and design and writes *Flooring The Consumer* about exploring the customer experience in-store and online.

Simple Marketing Now is a **certified HubSpot Partner**.

For more information, visit <https://www.SimpleMarketingNow.com>.

About Christine B. Whittemore:



Christine B. Whittemore is Chief Simplifier of **Simple Marketing Now LLC** and has been immersed in content and social media marketing since June 2006 when she launched her first blog, *Flooring The Consumer*.

Whittemore was been a columnist for Hearst's *Floor Covering Weekly*, about the customer retail experience.

She contributes to Floor Covering News about social media marketing, content marketing and inbound marketing, as well as to MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute.

A frequent speaker on the topic of customer experience and marketing with social media at industry events, she has presented on the topic of *Social Media for Lead Generation* at the MarketingProfs B2B Forum, *Content Curation: Making Meaning Out of Chaos* at Info360 and *A Social Media Listening Strategy to Build & Protect Your Brand* during the DigitalSummit FocusOn: Social virtual event.

Christine served on the Columbia Business School's Alumni Club of New York Board of Directors, the Kinnelon Public Library Board of Trustees and as a member of the Surfaces Education Advisory Council.

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