

INBOUND MARKETING 101: BRINGING CUSTOMERS TO YOUR BRAND

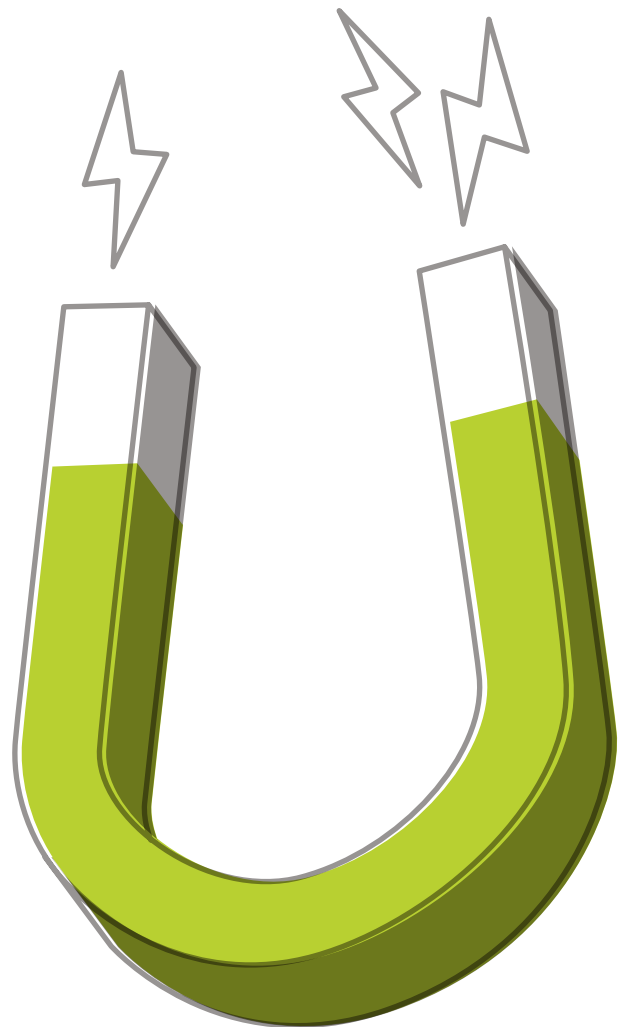


HOW YOU CAN
USE INBOUND
MARKETING
TO ATTRACT
CUSTOMERS AND
INCREASE SALES

WHEN IT COMES to growing your customer base, traditional advertising, as effective as it can be, isn't the only way to go. A concept called inbound marketing could help you attract customers to your brand organically. Think of it as attention you earn—not demand—through content, social media, search optimization and other strategies.

Inbound marketing is an increasingly common piece of many companies' marketing strategies. In a recent survey, three out of four marketers said they prioritize inbound marketing over traditional outbound—or interruption—marketing. The results demonstrate why: Companies report they are three times as likely to see higher ROI from inbound versus outbound marketing.¹

While the method is highly effective, it's far from easy. To be successful at inbound marketing, you need a thoughtful plan that gives people reasons to seek out your brand and ultimately transforms them into customers.



GOALS: FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU WANT

The first step in crafting an inbound marketing plan is deciding what you want to achieve. Your goals will depend on your business. For example, do you want more people to visit your website, fill out a contact form or download a buyer's guide? Choosing your objectives will help you tailor the types of inbound strategies that will work best.



To focus your overall marketing goals, consider the acronym common in many professional circles: SMART. Establish inbound marketing goals that are

STRATEGIC
MEASURABLE
ACHIEVABLE
REALISTIC
TIME-BOUND

With goals that are specific and concrete, you'll be better able to assign tasks, define outcomes and time frames, and shift strategies when necessary. For instance, aiming to generate a certain number of leads from a targeted email or social media strategy within a two-month time period is a more effective, measurable goal than simply "growing the business."

Next, you want to know as much as you can about your audience. Understanding your market and who will most benefit from your product or service is critical to creating an inbound strategy that reaches the right people. Think about the variety of customers you want to attract and create personas, or detailed descriptions, of them that will guide your inbound messaging and efforts.

With input from your sales and customer service staff, your personas should include:

- Basic demographic information
- Their needs and desires
- Their "pain points," or triggers that prompt them to seek out your product
- Insight on where and how they seek information and make purchases



Your marketing team can then draw on these details to create content and campaigns. For example, if one of your personas is a Millennial consumer who spends time on social media, then creating an Instagram account with targeted content would be a key way to reach them. Researching personas may take time, but the result gives you the equivalent of real people to keep in mind as you develop your marketing.

METHODS: FIND INBOUND STRATEGIES THAT MAKE SENSE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Inbound marketing can include several different initiatives. You don't necessarily need to employ them all. Instead, find the mix that fits your business and budget. Here are a few of the basics:

- **CREATE CONTENT.**
According to a survey by the Content Marketing Institute, more than 91% of businesses use some form of content marketing.² You can do this through blogging, posting client case studies, distributing white papers or creating a regular podcast. Your content should be informative, not overtly promotional—you want to engage your customer and develop their loyalty. Customers are less willing to engage with and be faithful to a brand if they sense an interruptive, hard sell.
- **ESTABLISH A SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE.**
More than 90% of businesses use social media content as part of their strategy, with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn as the most common platforms.³ Consider



1. MAKE YOUR CALLS TO ACTION IRRESISTIBLE

Pepper your website and content with calls to action—or CTAs—that denote what you want your potential customers to do. Perhaps your CTA asks visitors to fill out a form or purchase your product.

Here are three ways to make your CTAs more powerful:

1. Keep the design simple and clean. Provide only the important information your customers need. Use appealing colors and images. Define your CTA button clearly.
2. Write engaging copy. Instead of “download white paper,” entice your customers with more interesting offers such as “gain insights to boost your business” or “discover how you can save money.”
3. Provide more than one clickable opportunity. Give visitors more than one CTA button on your web pages and even in email.

promoting your brand and content through channels your customers use, which may vary by business.

- **INITIATE AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN.**
Unlike a more randomized, outbound approach, an inbound email marketing effort entices visitors back. Create an email list and then craft targeted content that provides subscribers with valuable information and additional resources.
- **CULTIVATE INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS.**
These can be leaders in your industry or simply people who have some cachet with your audience through social media. Reaching out to and promoting your site or product among industry leaders can grow your audience.
- **DEVELOP YOUR OWN THOUGHT LEADERS.**
Consider how you can develop your own internal experts. Then promote their advice, work and contributions to your company, customers and the industry on social media and via other channels, such as print or even events.
- **FOCUS ON SEARCH.**
Considering that 43% of consumers say they search online for local businesses at least once per month, you want to make sure your audience finds your brand.⁴ Do this by optimizing your website and content for search. Use the right keywords to make sure visitors can find you in an organic search, and also consider a paid search campaign to further increase the possibility of visitors finding your site. If you're unfamiliar with search optimization techniques, reach outside your company for help.

2. BOOST YOUR SEO WITH THESE TOOLS



A thorough SEO process will help you identify the keywords and terms customers use to search for your business and products. Take advantage of these online tools to help you figure out what search terms are best for you:

- **Keyword Explorer:** Use this to help you find the right keywords to use in your content and on your site.
- **Keywordtool.io:** This tool can also identify the terms people type into Google, thus informing your content creation and site design.
- **BuzzSumo:** This app helps you find out what terms generate social media traffic on any given topic.

If you want a more thorough SEO audit and don't have the time to dedicate to the time-consuming task, consider investing in professional services. An SEO expert can help you understand your own search equity and that of your top competitors, as well as make specific recommendations on how to improve your results.

PROGRESS: EVALUATE YOUR INBOUND EFFORTS

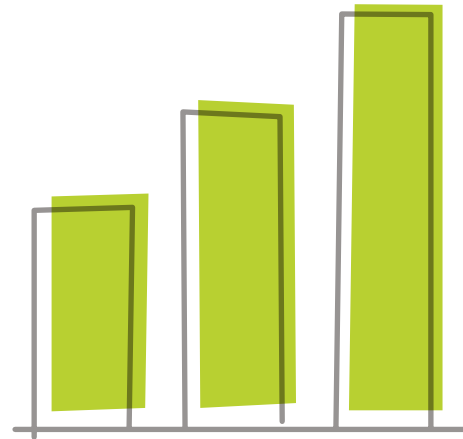
You've launched a plan for inbound marketing; now you want to see results. Did your efforts pay off? Have some methods proven more fruitful than others? Where do you go next?

One word makes the difference: data. Digging into statistics from multiple sources can help you assess whether your marketing initiatives are working, where to put more resources and whether you need to revise your strategy.

There are several tools, ranging in cost from free to hundreds of dollars or more per month, to help you collect and track this data. For example, Google Analytics can give you a deep dive into page views, your website bounce rate, your search success and keyword performance. Explore which tools might be best for your inbound marketing needs and goals.

You also want to determine a time frame within which to measure your performance—week-over-week, say, or month-over-month—as well as the metrics that best pair with your goals. For example, if you're trying to grow your email list, then you'll want to track subscribers, email opens and unsubscribe requests.

Keep in mind that some statistics are simply informative, giving you greater understanding of your website and its traffic. Others serve a more diagnostic purpose, helping you to analyze your strategies and take action. A mix of both often works best.



3. STREAMLINE YOUR PROCESS WITH CRM SYSTEMS

With a solid marketing plan in place, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system can help map out your customer personas, make your marketing more efficient and monitor the effectiveness of your marketing and sales process.

As you shop for a CRM system, consider those that:

- Incorporate all the marketing and sales data you want to track
- Help organize and distribute email marketing campaigns
- Analyze which of your marketing efforts are producing the most leads
- Fit your marketing budget and can grow with your business



CREATE LASTING CUSTOMER CONNECTIONS

Developing a comprehensive inbound marketing plan will equip your business with strategies that reach today's consumers. Inbound marketing curates an audience to build your brand and generate leads, compared to interruptive tactics that cast a wide net, but yield less actionable data and don't nurture a customer base.

Spend the time and resources to create a successful inbound strategy, and your customers will thank you—with their business.

Thank you for taking the time to download this white paper. Find out more about digital marketing strategies by contacting your NJ Advance Media Marketing Solutions Specialist at (800) 501-2100 or email marketing@njadvancemedia.com.

SOURCES:

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