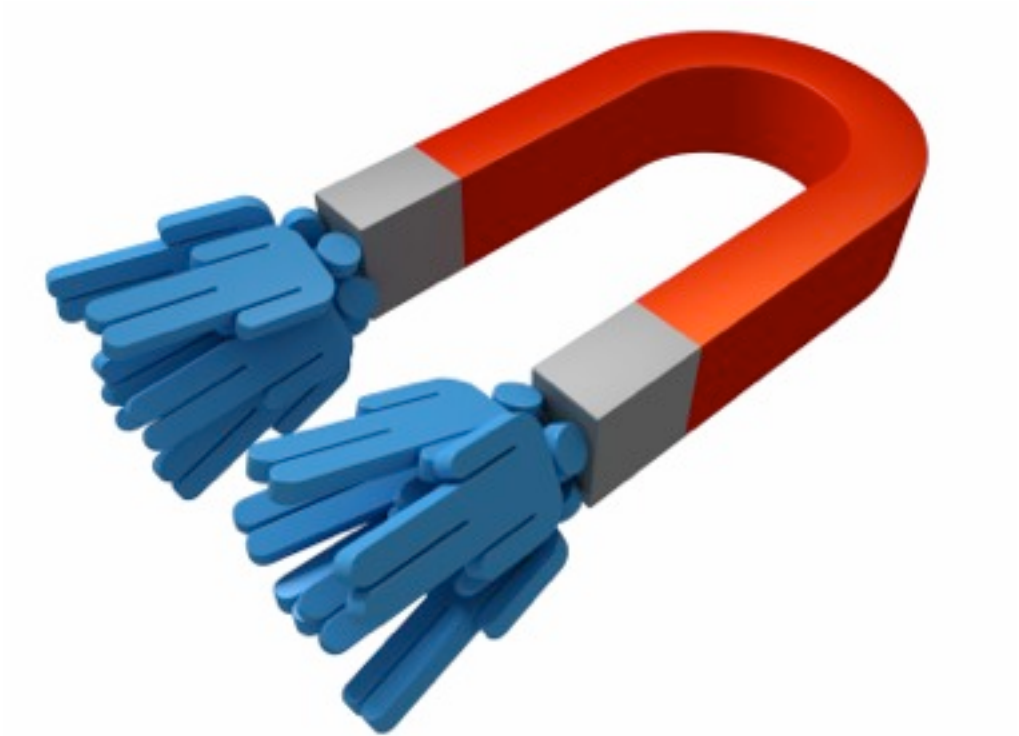


BECOME AN INBOUND MARKETING EXPERT



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HOW TO BECOME AN INBOUND MARKETING EXPERT

Part 1 - Understanding Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing

Most companies spend their marketing budget using a combination of **outbound marketing** techniques, such as direct mail, e-mail blasts, TV, radio and print advertising, and trade shows (or expos), to reach potential buyers. As we've become more adept at filtering out unwanted information, these techniques have become less effective. We don't answer the phone if we don't recognize the number, we don't open unsolicited e-mails, we use DVR or TiVo to skip commercials and most mail is considered "junk mail" and goes right in the garbage without a glance.

And then there is **inbound marketing**. Two key things have happened in the last decade to dramatically change the way people shop and learn: Google and access to a high-speed Internet connection. Think about it. How many searches did you perform last week? One? Ten? Or, if you are like most people – including your customers – hundreds. Here's the thing: You have customers looking for you every day. The question is, "Are you showing up?" so they find you and not your competition.

So how do you become an inbound marketer? How do you make sure you show up? There are three key ways people find information using the Internet: through a search engine like Google, through the blogosphere (more than 100 million of them and growing) and through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit and StumbleUpon, among others.

To be successful and grow your business and revenues, you must match the way you market your products with the way your prospects learn about and shop for your products. And, you do that by generating leads through inbound marketing.

Where do you start? I am going to tell you where NOT to start. **DO NOT START BY REDESIGNING YOUR WEBSITE.** Most websites are nothing more than static brochureware. But rather than spend a lot of money redesigning it and getting caught up in where the logo should go or what colors look better, take what you have and add some simple things that will turn it into an interactive hub for your marketplace. An easy way to do this is to add a blog and RSS feed to it – even make that the home page. Then, add relevant, compelling content that people want to consume. If you aren't sure how to create relevant, compelling content, start reading other blogs. (P.S. I'll give you more ideas for this in the next section)

What worked before in the off-line world is no longer effective. You must learn new skills and become an inbound marketing expert if you want to compete and win today.

The good news is it doesn't require that you have a huge budget, but it does require your participation. Use the next 30 days to evaluate your marketing efforts and notice how much of what you do is outbound marketing vs. inbound marketing.

Part - 2 Developing Really Great Stuff

In the last section, we covered the difference between inbound and outbound marketing and how what once worked in the offline world is no longer effective today. The key points were:

- Shopping Has Changed...Has Your Marketing?
- Your customers use the Internet to shop and gather information.
- Your customers are searching for you every day. Do you show up?

Thanks to the Internet and web-based tools and technologies such as blogs, YouTube videos, Podcasts, Facebook, Twitter and other online platforms, companies have an unprecedented and enormous opportunity to engage with customers and prospects.

By producing great content, you attract customers to you instead of chasing after them. By producing really great stuff, they will share and disseminate your message for you.

So how do you produce really great stuff?

1. Focus on generating amazing content first. Too many companies get caught up in trying to generate more traffic (more fans, more followers) instead of converting the traffic they have by providing them relevant, remarkable content. Of course without traffic, it won't matter how great your content is so first and foremost your customers and prospects must be able to find you!

2. Provide content that solves your customer's problems or pain points. If you don't know what those are, spend some time asking them. Or, talk to your sales and customer service team. They know.

“Remarkable content shares a resource, solves a problem, helps your customers do their jobs better, improves their lives, or makes them smarter, wittier, better-looking, taller, better-networked, cooler, more enlightened, and with better backhands, tighter asses, and cuter kids. In short, it's of high value to your customers, in whatever way resonates best with them.” (Ann Handley, Content Rules)

3. Don't just think of content as the written word. Think variety. Here are some examples of types of content you can create:

- Blog articles – short, informal written thoughts on topics related to your industry.
- White Papers – education oriented papers on a trend or challenge.
- Videos – keep them short, less than 3 minutes.
- Webinars – live or recorded presentations on a hot topic.
- Podcasts – audio interviews with industry experts.
- Webcasts – video shows viewed online.

The great thing about these different types of content is they can be re-purposed multiple ways. A blog post can be a video which then turns into a webcast. A webcast can be turned into three to five short articles combined in an ebook. I bet you have plenty of content in your office or on your computer just dying to get out into the world and be seen by others.

We are living in such an exciting time to be in business. Big budgets and glitzy TV ads no longer win. We pay more attention to companies that tell a compelling story that resonates with their target audience. And the best part, it is a fun and more rewarding way to market and win!

Part 3 - The Numbers Don't Lie

Once you begin experimenting with inbound marketing techniques, you will begin to experience the power that “showing up” and delivering relevant, remarkable content to your visitors can have on your business. In part 3 of this series, I will focus on the importance of monitoring your efforts. By using analytics, you can continually assess and refine your inbound marketing programs.

One of the things I love about digital marketing is the immediate gratification it provides. The Internet is an amazing and responsive marketing testing bed. You can take a great idea and within 24 hours, test that idea using one of the digital tools available to you (i.e. main website, branded landing pages, blog, social media sites, discussion boards, etc.). Each one of these tools has analytics associated with them that you can use to determine if it created the results you wanted (i.e. increase in visitors, more “likes,” sign ups, shares, feedback, etc.).

Companies should review key analytics on a monthly basis, at the very least, and then use that information to drive actions. Here are some tips you can use immediately to begin measuring your efforts:

1. Make sure you have Google Analytics (or at least some analytics package) set up for all your websites, blogs, landing pages, etc. It's free and it's powerful.
2. Understand and review these analytic terms:
 - New vs. returning visitors
 - Time on site
 - Bounce rate
 - Traffic sources
 - Most popular pages
 - Highest exit page
3. Measure your social media using the following:
 - Audience (number of friends, fans, followers).
 - Referrals from social media to your website.
 - Engagement – is your audience participating?
 - Leads/customers – are your social media visitors converting into a business lead or customer?

4. Set up a Google Alert for key phrases or terms for your own company, your competition, your industry.
5. Experiment – use your digital marketing landscape to test an idea, a message, a new offer or a hot topic in your industry right now. Continually analyze the results so you can constantly improve.

It's important to realize that although we are using new terms that didn't exist a decade ago, the underlying principles haven't changed. It's always been about:

1. **Showing up and Getting found.**
2. **Converting visitors Into leads/customers.**
3. **Analyzing results to learn and constantly improve.**

The difference today is that there are new tools available that make it easier and quicker to apply those principles. So what are you waiting for?

BONUS MATERIAL:

I talk a lot about blogging as a “must do” strategy to attract customers as part of your inbound marketing program. I wanted to share this article by my fellow blogger Ivana Taylor about some tips to make sure your blog gets read. Enjoy.

5 Easy Tips For Creating Blog Content That Attracts Customers

It's one thing to keep saying that you should have a blog, but having a blog that actually [attracts customers](#) and builds loyalty means that you have to provide great content. Here are some tips for providing great blog content:

1. **Make a list of the 5 -7 top reader frustrations.** In the same way that our eye is drawn to the crooked picture in an otherwise perfect room, we tend to focus on frustrations and peevs that drive us crazy. Whenever someone mirrors those frustrations, we feel a sense of camaraderie. Use these frustrations and your solutions as the anchor and mission of your blog. You want each article to be a salve against the painful frustrations that your readers are experiencing. Literally make this list and keep it handy use it as a rotating theme for your content.
2. **Identify keywords and phrases from that frustration list.** Recent studies have shown that people aren't exactly looking for solutions first. BEFORE they look for a solution, the search out their problem — looking for ideas and options on what the solution is. For example, “Leaking Roof” is a problem that I will search on hoping to see what options are available to fix it. Is this a quick fix or do I need a roof replacement. Or I might search on a term such as “sales process” because I feel like I have no control over my sales process or I'm not getting consistent results. So all these terms are hot button issues that you can write

about. Your audience is searching for guidance on how to buy. They are more likely to buy from the company that helps them understand and choose.

3. **Answer customer questions.** The easy way to do this is to have a board or Google Document that people can contribute customer questions to so that you can create content that answers them and gives advice. Take a helpful and educational tone in your writing and be open about where the question came from and then simply answer it. Keeping tabs on customer questions will also give you ideas on additional kinds of content such as video.
4. **Recruit contributing experts for each “frustration” your customers have.** Blogging can become a daunting task — but not if you recruit experts in your company or in your industry to be contributing experts. Ask if sales, customer service, technical or engineering folks would be interested in writing out answers to customer questions or writing about events they’ve attended. Also think about writing about events that you’re attending such as trade shows and what you’ll be featuring there. Another win-win strategy is to recruit the experts in your industry to write for your blog. Trust me — they would be honored and happy to do it. It’s a HUGE promotional and marketing opportunity for them and a big help for you and information for your customers.
5. **CEO or president is a regular contributor.** I’ve separated the CEO writing for the blog as a separate tip because it is so very important. You don’t have to be a journalist or the next Tom Clancy to communicate what you’re up to as a company. CEOs miss a HUGE PR opportunity in NOT writing for their blog. You’d be amazed at the CEOs who blog. I mean if the [CEO from GM](#) can find the time to blog — so can YOU.
6. Referrals are still the number one way of getting the best, most profitable customers. And don’t think that just because you’re in a more B2B or industrial market that referrals don’t work — I’m working on a heavily industrial project right now where the most popular way that people choose suppliers is by calling other suppliers and customers and asking who they would recommend.

Your blog is a tremendous promotional and advertising tool — don’t let it go to waste.

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