

LEARNING MADE EASY



Inbound Marketing

for
dummies
A Wiley Brand



Learn the theory behind
inbound marketing

Perform an inbound
marketing assessment

Develop a strategic inbound
marketing plan

GETTING STARTED SERIES

DUMMIES CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding inbound marketing as a philosophy and as a marketing system
- » Attracting customers using inbound marketing
- » Getting started: Introducing the three-step inbound marketing process
- » Diving deeper into diagnosis
- » Developing a clear strategic plan
- » Applying effective solutions

Attract Lifelong Customers with Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing uses digital assets in a combined effort to engage, attract, and convert customers by giving them content that is both helpful and valuable. The philosophy behind this approach is based on a customer-centric model that builds a lasting relationship with your customers beyond the initial point of contact or first sale.

Understanding Inbound as a Philosophy and as a Marketing System

Inbound marketing is a holistic, fully integrated approach to building your business based on the law of attraction, or the belief that “like attracts like.” Inbound marketing is both a business philosophy and a business practice.

Inbound as a philosophy

Inbound marketing is a paradigm shift from the belief and practice of interruptive “push” marketing methods to a philosophy of attractive “pull” marketing. Beyond creative campaigns and stunning design, a truly attractive inbound marketing campaign dives deeper into the customer’s needs, providing the prospect with beneficial information to gain trust rather than sleek advertising purely aimed at attracting attention.



TIP

Building brand trust results in brand loyalty, meaning people will come back to your products time and time again, while the relationships built through disruptive methods are often fleeting.

Here are some traits of the inbound methodology:

- » Your company innovates based on satisfying unfulfilled consumer needs
- » Your customer relationship extends beyond the transactional
- » Your company connects with customers at multiple levels at multiple points in time
- » Your focus is beyond making the first sale, extending to creating a customer for life
- » You encourage customer interaction, listen to feedback, and respond accordingly

Inbound marketing creates shared connections between consumer and company based on mutually beneficial connective points. The most successful companies create value beyond the product or service they’re selling to enhance a consumer’s lifestyle.

Attracting Customers Using Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing works for the very reason that traditional marketing doesn’t. Inbound marketing meets a previously undiscovered or unfulfilled need: creating meaningful conversations based on individual actions. This two-way messaging is attractive to individual consumers who wish to engage on their terms and based on their perceived needs.

Traditional marketing, by definition, is a one-way message from brand to consumer, relying on massive message broadcasting that's not conducive to developing meaningful, personalized consumer relationships.

TABLE 1-1

Traditional Marketing vs. Inbound Marketing

Traditional marketing	Inbound marketing
Product-centric	Customer-centric
"Push" messaging	"Pull" messaging
Interruptive	Attractive
One-way communication	Two-way conversation
Transactional	Relationship-based
Defined start and finish	Ongoing loop
Linear	Multi-faceted
Static	Dynamic
Brand power	Consumer power

At its most basic level, inbound marketing consists of:

- » Attracting potential customers to your brand
- » Nurturing those prospects, on their terms, within a structurally planned dynamic environment (often your website) that facilitates action
- » Converting those visitors into leads and, in turn, leads into customers through mutual exchange of valuable data (content for customer data) via a systematic process
- » Reconverting prior customers into loyal, lifelong customers

Inbound marketing as a system of attraction and conversion

In practice, inbound marketing is a connected system of online customer attraction and conversion. When a stranger becomes a lead, a lead becomes a customer, and that customer lives and advocates your brand ... that is the flawless execution

of inbound marketing. This powerful conversion process is why more and more organizations are practicing inbound marketing. Of companies that practice inbound marketing, 93 percent see an increase in lead generation.

Your desired conversion action may certainly be a purchase, but it also may be any derived engagement, including:

- » Donations
- » Reviews
- » Shares or Likes on Facebook
- » Retweets on Twitter
- » Downloads
- » Demos
- » Free trials
- » Webinars
- » Newsletters

Attracting interest with inbound marketing

The first tenet of inbound marketing is attraction through search engine marketing (SEM). SEM consists of various methods of attracting people to your website. The various forms of SEM that attract include:

- » Pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns
- » Online paid display advertising
- » Paid listings
- » Search retargeting and remarketing
- » Search engine optimization (SEO) to be found in organic rankings
- » Content marketing
- » Social media campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and so on
- » Email marketing

Effective inbound processes systematically track visitor and customer onsite behaviors. Ideally, you'll be able to deliver the information your prospects and customers want when they want it determined by the following guidelines:

- » The customer's location in the Purchase Funnel/Buyer's Journey/Lifestyle Loop
- » The buyer profile/persona with whom you're attempting to create a conversation
- » The product/service/conversion you're encouraging the customer to seek and buy



TIP

For more information on the buyer's journey and building a buyer's profile, check out our free guide *"Building a Buyer's Profile."*

Getting Started: Introducing the Three-Step Inbound Process

Knowing the problem you're trying to solve may sound like common sense, but how many times have you begun marketing initiatives before fully understanding the business problem at hand? You can frame and define your situation first using this three-step process:

1. Diagnose the business problem.
2. Prescribe strategic marketing solutions.
3. Apply marketing solutions to solve business problem.

Diagnosing with a baseline assessment/audit

Diagnosing your current marketing situation will help you see where your organization is as opposed to where you want to be. Unless you are a panicked marketer or an irresponsible marketer, or unless you just like to leave you or your clients' success up to the whims of Lady Luck, performing a marketing diagnostic is the best starting point.

Prescribing business solutions through strategy

Strategy is a written prescription. Effective inbound marketers start with a strategic assessment (diagnosis) and a formal, written strategic document. This strategic document is your inbound strategy prescription. The best inbound strategies:

- » Define your current state with highly defined metrics
- » Identify your organization's desired end business results
- » Define future success, usually in dollars
- » Perform a SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- » Include SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-bound
- » Use keyword research to uncover consumer needs
- » Connect your current state to your desired future state with a series of well-planned marketing initiatives
- » Outline a prioritized set of initiatives to most efficiently reach goals and objectives
- » Include a content strategy
- » Assign ownership and accountability
- » Define meaningful metrics by which your success will be gauged

Applying solutions with inbound initiatives

Remember, the inbound marketer needs to solve customer problems as well as business problems, not merely marketing problems.

This is where the marketing expertise of yourself, your team, and your professional marketing partners converge. Knowing your organization's strengths and weaknesses and knowing when to ask for help is as important as the inbound marketing initiatives themselves.

Diving Deeper into Diagnosis

Now that you understand the three-step inbound process, let's take a closer look at each step.

First you will want to diagnose your inbound marketing efforts. In doing so you'll be able to see digital marketing opportunities more clearly and know where to focus your efforts. Through diagnosis you'll ultimately have a document from which you can formulate better inbound and digital marketing strategies.

Performing an Inbound Marketing Assessment

An inbound marketing assessment (IMA), sometimes called a *digital marketing audit*, is a well-written, comprehensive overview document that measures your current digital marketing performance versus key performance indicators (KPIs) and your digital marketing goals. These KPIs include metrics such as your attraction factor (your ability to be found online), your ability to engage with your website visitors, connecting your content with your website visitors, and onsite structure facilitating Visitors to Leads conversions.

When performed properly, an IMA identifies gaps between where you are and where you wish to be.

Here's what you need to assess:

- » Your website's technical performance
- » Your attraction factors from paid search advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), and social media
- » Your website's mobile capability and functionality
- » Your onsite conversion factors like conversion forms or call-to-action (CTA) buttons
- » Your website's unique visits as it correlates with onsite lead conversions
- » Your website visitor engagement in terms of time on site and depth of navigation
- » Your content classified by content type and function
- » Your lead-generation numbers as they correlate with converted customers
- » Your customer purchase paths
- » Your remarketing and retargeting efforts



DO YOU BELIEVE IN G.O.S.T.S?

G.O.S.T. was developed by Rich Horwath, author of *Deep Dive* and *Elevate*, and here's how he describes the acronym:

Goals: What you're generally trying to achieve.

Objectives: Specifically what you're trying to achieve.

Strategy: How you're going to achieve your goals.

Tactics: Specifically how you're going to achieve your objectives.

An IMA identifies past marketing tactics that didn't directly correlate to any marketing success. It also uncovers digital marketing initiative omissions that may have hurt your past performance. Performing an IMA is the map for your marketing plan and serves as the basis for your strategic marketing plan document.

Developing a Clear Strategic Plan

At the most basic level, there are five steps to creating an effective inbound marketing strategy. They are:

- » Set goals and objectives
- » Establish your inbound analytic metrics
- » Develop your attraction and conversion plans
- » Formulate your opportunity analysis
- » Create content strategy

Setting goals and objectives based on your baseline assessment

Establish high-level goals and measurable objectives for your inbound marketing. You do this by balancing your company revenue and profit needs with your target customers' needs.

You may already understand the customer types your business attracts. Formalize those customers into groups, segmenting them by demographics, lifestyle, title/position, and shared purchasing habits. These groups are commonly called “customer personas,” or the broader term “profiles.” If you don’t set goals and objectives in the beginning, you’ll have no way of measuring success.

Establishing inbound analytics

What’s your current customer worth in dollars and cents? What’s your average sales transaction? What percentage of your business is repeat business?

Know the answers to these questions before you begin by looking at Google Analytics because prospects and customers create these numbers—and success comes from satisfying customers.



TIP

When you visit your website, interact with it as if you’re the prospect. Note possible navigation, conversion, and sales barriers to achieving your ideal onsite conversion (sale, demo, trial, sign-up, and so on). Look for user-flow dead ends. Only when you’ve gotten a sense of these dead ends should you look at your numbers.

Developing your attraction and conversion plan

Create customer attraction for your products through search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) best practices outside of your website. By understanding your prospects’ needs and their place in the purchase path, you can use these tactics to direct prospects to the appropriate content on your website based on the words used in their search queries.

Of course, this requires you to create onsite content that fulfills the need of your prospects at their points of entry to your website. Interesting blog content attracts prospects and facilitates their ease of entry to your website. A well-designed online tool that promises to uniquely solve a prospect’s problem (such as a mortgage calculator or a how-to video) is a valuable offering that engages visitors. Gating content by requiring customer form completion begins the conversion process.

Once visitors find and land on your site, it’s time to engage. A Call-to-Action (CTA) map delivers your website content in a manner that appears fluid and intuitive to visitors. Ideally your website CTA Map provides a frictionless path to conversion.

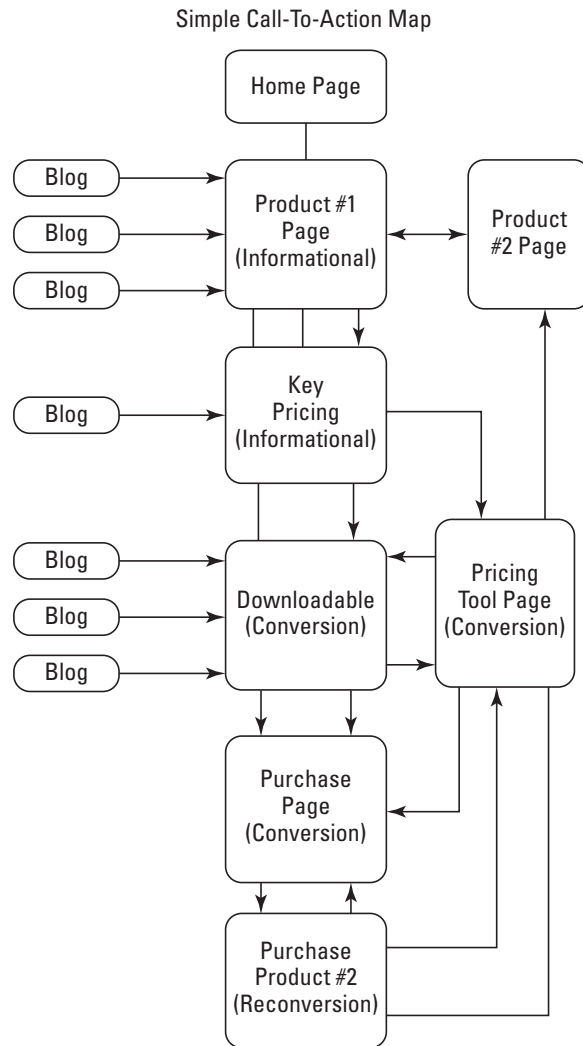


FIGURE 1:
A CTA map.

A conversion is defined as the meaningful exchange of valuable information between a prospective customer and your company. This could be a customer email address in exchange for an ebook or a customer's credit card number in exchange for a product purchase. The ultimate conversion for a business is usually considered a sale.

Business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) conversion paths look much different. The B2C purchase path is usually quicker due to relatively low-cost purchase prices that can be made online. Many B2B purchase paths are much longer, especially those that are high-dollar purchases.

Formulating your opportunity analysis

Once you've developed your attraction and conversion plan, it's important to make sure potential customers can easily move through the journey you've created, engaging with content, interacting with sales, and ultimately purchasing and becoming an advocate for your product.

In order to identify any breakdowns or barriers in this process, it helps to perform an opportunity analysis. Use the data you collected in your inbound marketing assessment to help identify any potential gaps in performance. The best way to fine-tune your customer's journey is to identify and fill the gaps that are preventing prospects from moving through the process and, in turn, you from achieving your goals and objectives.

Creating content strategy

Content strategy is your plan for the sum of your online content marketing efforts. Because content fuels the inbound marketing machine, a content strategy is imperative. Two major components are:

- » **Connective content:** This is written and visual content that is created and delivered in a manner that is relevant, timely, and contextual to your buyer persona needs at any given place in the purchase path
- » **Call-to-Action Maps:** This is a conversion-based map designed to create a frictionless Buyer's Journey from initial consumer contact through first customer contract (purchase)

Content strategy delivers relevant answers to prospects' questions. CTA Maps make it easy for visitors to convert.

Your content strategy should include an inventory of your current content to identify connective gaps and opportunities. You can create a thorough content strategy by:

- » Taking inventory of all your content
- » Classifying your content by form (written, video, infographic, and so on)

- » Assigning your content to key points along the consumer purchase path (Educational content during the research phase, Engagement content during the shopping phase, Encouragement content during the purchase phase, and Embracing content for current customer reengagement)
- » Assigning your content to a product pyramid/purchase path so that you're connecting people with your products, creating relevancy, and increasing content engagement
- » Prioritizing content needs by inbound campaign importance
- » Looking for gaps at key conversion points, especially for the most important inbound campaigns

Applying Effective Solutions

Once you've defined a strategic plan, it's time to prescribe solutions through this strategy to implement your company's inbound marketing.

The strategy is simply a map connecting your current status with your future objectives, and you create your inbound map based on the Customer Conversion Chain that links the purchaser with your product.

Map your plan as follows:

1. Understand your company's stated goals and objectives.
2. Assess the competitive landscape looking at competitors' websites, their content, and the keywords they're using to attract and convert customers.
3. Identify your target purchasing profiles and associate an average unit sale and average dollar sale with each profile.
4. Use historical data to determine for each profile the average length from first contact to first contract and the percentage of repeat purchases.
5. Examine your visitor and conversion data and apply those metrics to the Customer Conversion Chain model.
6. Outline your attraction and conversion plan, taking into consideration the different inputs that will affect your metrics.
7. Form a business outcome hypothesis based on your anticipated conversion rate and defined in dollars and cents. Then choose the most efficient method to market based on whether increased attraction or increased conversions have a greater positive impact on your ROI.

8. Build your creative assets.
9. Implement your inbound campaign.
10. Measure your campaign against success metrics and adjust accordingly.

Remapping success along the way

You've formed a conversion hypothesis. You've implemented your inbound campaign. Now it's time to plug in your actual numbers and compare them to your original hypothesis.

No one ever said your inbound hypothesis was written in stone. Sometimes you'll rock out and other times you'll fall flat. Access your data on a regular basis and tweak your digital initiatives along the way.

Likewise as you discover small successes in one campaign, you can apply similar tactics to another campaign, raising your overall marketing success.

You can often leverage the success you've had with one inbound product campaign by applying it to another product campaign. You may be able to:

- » Identify successful engagement content for one product funnel and create similar content for other purchase paths, thereby increasing your data collection and ensuring your conversion rate
- » Successfully convert forms and buttons to apply to additional campaigns
- » Identify blog posts that attract higher visitor volume and create similar topics
- » Replicate high-conversion landing pages and apply them in additional inbound campaigns
- » Measure attraction sources and test the highest converting sources in other campaigns
- » Create side-portal entryways (any pages, other than the website's home page, that help consumers get the information they're seeking more quickly)
- » Build tools for one campaign similar to those that have a proven high-engagement factor

Eventually you'll replicate successes by modeling premium customers, examining those customers' path to purchase, and facilitating that path to a sale by attracting more of the same type of customers into that proven path. In other words, you create messaging attractive to people similar to your current customers and use what you've learned from those customers to streamline the path to purchase.

To get more tips on how you can expand your marketing efforts, visit [*dummies.biz*](http://dummies.biz) and check out our ***Getting Started marketing series***. This series includes ebooks highlighting the basics behind several popular marketing methods and a guide to help you bring these tactics together into an integrated marketing campaign.

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