



The Stages of Inbound Marketing

A Detailed Overview of How
Inbound Marketing Works

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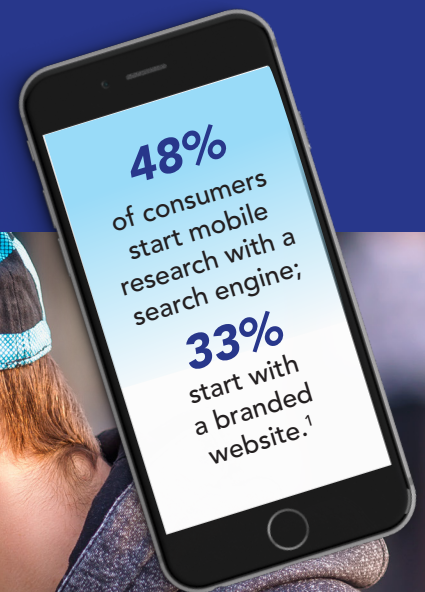
Today's consumer is constantly communicating through technology on a personal level. Therefore, they've come to expect that level of quick and personal correspondence even when it comes to brand interaction. That's why inbound marketing has become so effective in today's world.

Inbound marketing is all about listening first, understanding the consumer's need, and then speaking (in a timely, personalized fashion) to those who are interested. Inbound is structured upon a methodology that focuses on catering

to consumers already interested in your brand's solution (sometimes without even knowing it). This multi-stage methodology works across industries, company size, and audience type, with the focus of generating qualified leads while keeping current customers happy.

This eBook provides an overview of the stages that make up the inbound methodology.

Enjoy!



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IDENTIFY

Before embarking on your inbound marketing journey, you've got to understand your buyers. We mean really understand them. Then you can understand what their purchasing process is.

The Buyer Personas

The best way to understand how to market is to understand to whom you're marketing. Knowing your buyer personas inside and out is absolutely essential to earning leads through the writing and sharing of really delicious content.



Take the time to get to know your customers first. Get to know their demographics, their behavior patterns, their goals and pain points. Understand the motivation behind their actions.

We're not talking about target markets or job titles, we're talking about real people, real purchasers with real needs.

The Buyer's Journey

The digital age has caused a shift in the decision-making process we go through when looking for a solution to a problem. Instead of waiting to hear what our friends think of a service or waiting to receive a pamphlet in



67% of the buyer's journey is now done digitally.²

the mail about a new product, we hop online and perform our own research. (Sometimes information reaches us online before we even know we have a need for it!) This research process, which ends in a purchase, is called the Buyer's Journey.

The Buyer's Journey occurs in three phases. First, the prospect does a little educational research on a specific need they have—this is the Awareness Stage. They then move into the Consideration Stage when they decide to find all available solutions for their need. When prospects understand their solution strategy they are ready to make a purchase decision and therefore enter the Decision Stage.

Do you have any control over this process? You sure do, and it's with inbound marketing. Providing your buyers with valuable, relevant, and remarkable information targeted to prospects in each stage of the Buyer's Journey will empower them to take action to either move further through the Journey or, even better, make a purchase.

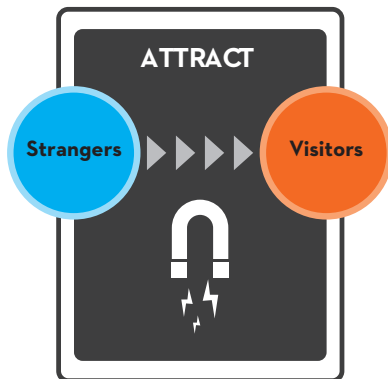
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ATTRACT

The first step in inbound marketing is not only attracting leads, but attracting the right leads, to your website. How do you do that? See below...

Content Marketing & Blogging

Inbound marketing is all about making yourself more accessible so that potential customers can easily find you organically. Blogging is an essential piece in this process—it is the keyword-rich, original, and compelling content that people are searching for; and if you have it, they'll find you.



Create blog content that is unique, educational, and optimized. Before doing so, establish an editorial calendar and publishing process. The key to effective blogging is this: publish content consistently and frequently. This is rarely achieved without a plan.

Strategize with your team on the most effective approach for your company's blog, brainstorm content ideas, and formulate a stellar editorial calendar. Then get to writing [insert hectic newsroom audio here].

Social Media

Picture the Internet as your high school cafeteria: you've got your jocks, your techies, your punks, your debate team, and so on. Each one of those tables is a social media network, with its own distinct group of people with their own interests, distinct way of communicating with each other, and level of frequency of chat.

Where is your clique? Find them and then get in on the conversation. More importantly, get to talking with the crowd instead of at them (rookie mistake). How will you do that? By engaging them with your sweet blogging content.

Social media is great for brand management, but when done correctly, it is even better for lead generation. Did you also know it helps your SEO? Read on...

SEO & Keywords

Listen up, Search Engine Optimization has changed. Yes, keywords and meta descriptions are still important, but that's not all SEO is anymore.

Search engines now consider not only your keywords, meta description, URL, page title, headers, and content, but also how popular you are: how active and popular your social platforms are, how many other sites of authority have inbound links to your site, how often your blog posts and content are being shared, etc.

Plus, SEO now includes paid content distribution, localized search, mobile search, responsive web design, website page loading speed... are you prepared?

Invest your time in researching so you can pull out all of the juicy keywords your site needs in order to land you the top search rankings repeatedly and over time. You need the caliber of SEO that will get you the leads you want most.

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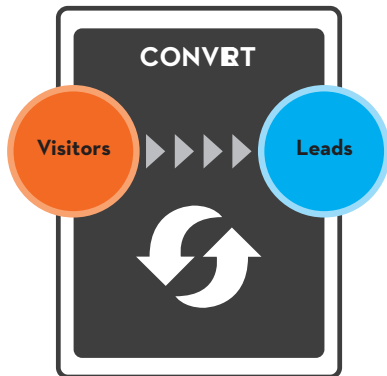
CONVERT

The only thing better than knowing you have prospects visiting your website is knowing who those prospects are.

In order to convert prospects into leads you've got to repeat what you did to get them there in the first place: have something that they want. In fact, have something that they want so much that they're willing to give you their name and email for it.

Content Offer

A content offer is that piece of information that your website visitor is willing to exchange information for: ebook, checklist, demo, webinar, tutorial, free trial, and the list goes on.



Identify what information is valuable to your prospects and turn it into an offer. Have designers then brand and stylize your offer so that it is consistent with your tone, message, and website, making it appealing to the prospect—so appealing, that they'll share it with their colleagues and friends.

Converting a Lead

(Call to Action > Form > Landing Page)

The prospect is given this content offer only after they give you their contact information.

You should strategically place calls to action throughout your website, enticing the visitor to click through to accept an offer. Once they click through, they'll land on your custom-designed landing page that describes your offer. All the visitor needs to do is fill out a form in order to receive the goods.

That form will allow us to capture the prospect's information, converting them into a lead, and storing them in your centralized contact database for your sales team.

Now you're in the driver's seat. Identifying your leads opens the door for segmented emails, marketing automation, and an opportunity for you to close the deal.

79% of marketing leads never convert into sales. Lack of lead nurturing is the common cause of this poor performance.³



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CLOSE

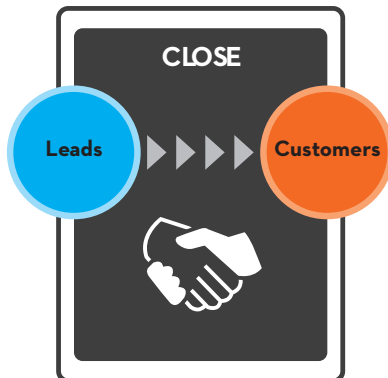
You've converted your lead and now it's time to shake hands and close this deal. But every lead is in a different place in the buyer's journey and has different pain points and goals.

You need to perform data-based predictions to understand what your prospects are looking for and cater to that, nurturing them towards a purchasing decision.

Email Marketing & Segmentation

Email marketing has an ROI of 4,300% (Search Engine Journal). So while you may be using it to communicate with your current clients and consumers, email marketing to prospects is crucial in growing your business.

There are two problems we see companies bumping into when trying to implement email



marketing to prospects: first, getting prospects' email addresses (which inbound does for you in the Convert phase), and second, marketing effectively to them by speaking to their needs.

Segmentation is so imperative you may as well not even email if you don't have these capabilities. A general email that clogs your prospect's inbox is an instant turn off.

Targeted, compelling, and engaging email woos your lead and boosts brand recognition.

The twist? It takes time to understand who your contacts are, and to segment them into appropriate lists. The results of segmentation?

- **69% higher opens**
- **15% higher clicks**
- **10% lower unsubscribes**

*than non-segmented email campaigns. (MailChimp)

Marketing Automation

Segmented email marketing means being in the right inbox; automation is being there at the right time.

Want to let a returning website visitor know that they have items in their cart? Contact a lead after they've visited your "Free Demo" page without filling out the form? Send an email from your sales team if a lead hasn't been contacted in 6 weeks?

Use marketing automation to accomplish nearly any triggered action you can think of. Predict what your lead wants to hear from you and when, and then set up automated workflows that run automatically.

It's like having an online sales team working for you day and night, nurturing leads to the point where your talented team members can take over and close the deal.

CRM & Closed-Loop Marketing

That's where a CRM comes in handy. A CRM tool seamlessly integrates into your inbound contacts data base, allowing your team to keep up on where your leads are in their purchasing decisions, communicate in real-time with your marketing team, and more.

Having your marketing and sales teams on one platform is essential to accurate and efficient closed-loop marketing.

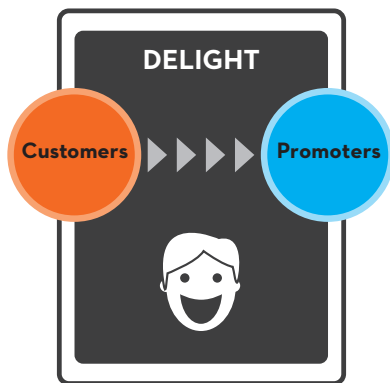
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DELIGHT

It's important to be more than just a lead-generating machine. Ensuring current customers' happiness is of the upmost importance to any business.

Smart Content

Let's look into the future. You know what your consumers have purchased in the past so you can predict what they might need in the future. Smart content allows you to market specific features to specific people on a case-by-case basis.



In other words, if "Consumer Connie" visits your website, our software will detect that she's been a customer of yours for 5 years and uses your Basic product but not yet the Deluxe. When she lands on your blog post about growing her business, she'll be served a call to action that specifically asks her if she'd like to try a Deluxe Demo.

You bet Connie will click it. Why? Personalized calls to action have a 42% higher view-to-submission rate than those that are the same for everyone.

Personalization works, and you should use it as much as possible. Send emails with information that you know the recipient is interested in,



Calls-to-action targeted to the user using smart content performed **42%** better than calls-to-action that were generic.⁴

offer content that is relevant to past purchases, and speak to demographics in their own colloquialisms.

That's called smart content. How delightful?

Social Media

You saw social media in the Attract phase of the inbound marketing process, so it is only appropriate that we bring this full circle. Social media is all about engagement and engagement is key throughout all phases of inbound marketing.

Spend time fluttering throughout the social media atmosphere, listening for questions your brand can answer, consumer comments you can respond to, and conversations you can join. Don't just publish content; spark the engagement by initiating contact with others and igniting interaction.

Delight your current customers by speaking to them like the unique individuals they are, a manner of connecting that goes way farther than mass communication.

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REPORT

“What’s measured is improved.”
— Peter F. Drucker

Analytics are an essential part of every phase of inbound marketing, and it’s important to keep analyzing a campaign’s success throughout its lifecycle. Don’t forget to report on SMART goals to give you a snapshot of your inbound success, too.

Goal Setting

Before you set out on this inbound journey, create SMART goals: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely goals that will ultimately get you the ROI you deserve.



Analytics

Analytics is the key to growth. Here’s what you should be looking at when running and analyzing inbound campaigns:

- **Website traffic sources (organic, social media, email, direct, etc.)**
- **Visits to contact conversion rate**
- **Contact to customer conversion rate**
- **Top performing social media platforms**
- **Top performing campaigns and links**
- **Contact database buyer persona percentages**
- **Competitors rankings**
- **Page by page SEO performance**
- **Email & list segmentation performance**
- **...and yes, more. The list is virtually endless.**

Compiling statistics amongst all of your software and social platforms can be tedious and time-consuming. But it’s important to capture the effectiveness and success of an entire campaign in addition to the individual statistics within it. In doing so, you’ll identify trends while evaluating the success of your SMART goals that will shape your future inbound decisions.

1. Smart Insights, 2015
2. Heuer, Megan. “Three Myths of the ‘67 Percent’ Statistic.” HubSpot. July 3, 2013. Web. May 20, 2016.
3. Vaughan, Pamela. “30 Thought-Provoking Lead Nurturing Stats You Can’t Ignore.” HubSpot. January 18, 2012. Web. May 20, 2016.
4. “What is Smart Content?” HubSpot. March 7, 2016. Web. May 20, 2016.

ABOUT US

Imbue Creative offers you the right blend of experience, expertise, and industry exposure that makes us the perfect partner to support your organization and work as a trusted member of your team. We can bring you tangible results to meet your goals and objectives and improve your overall performance.

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