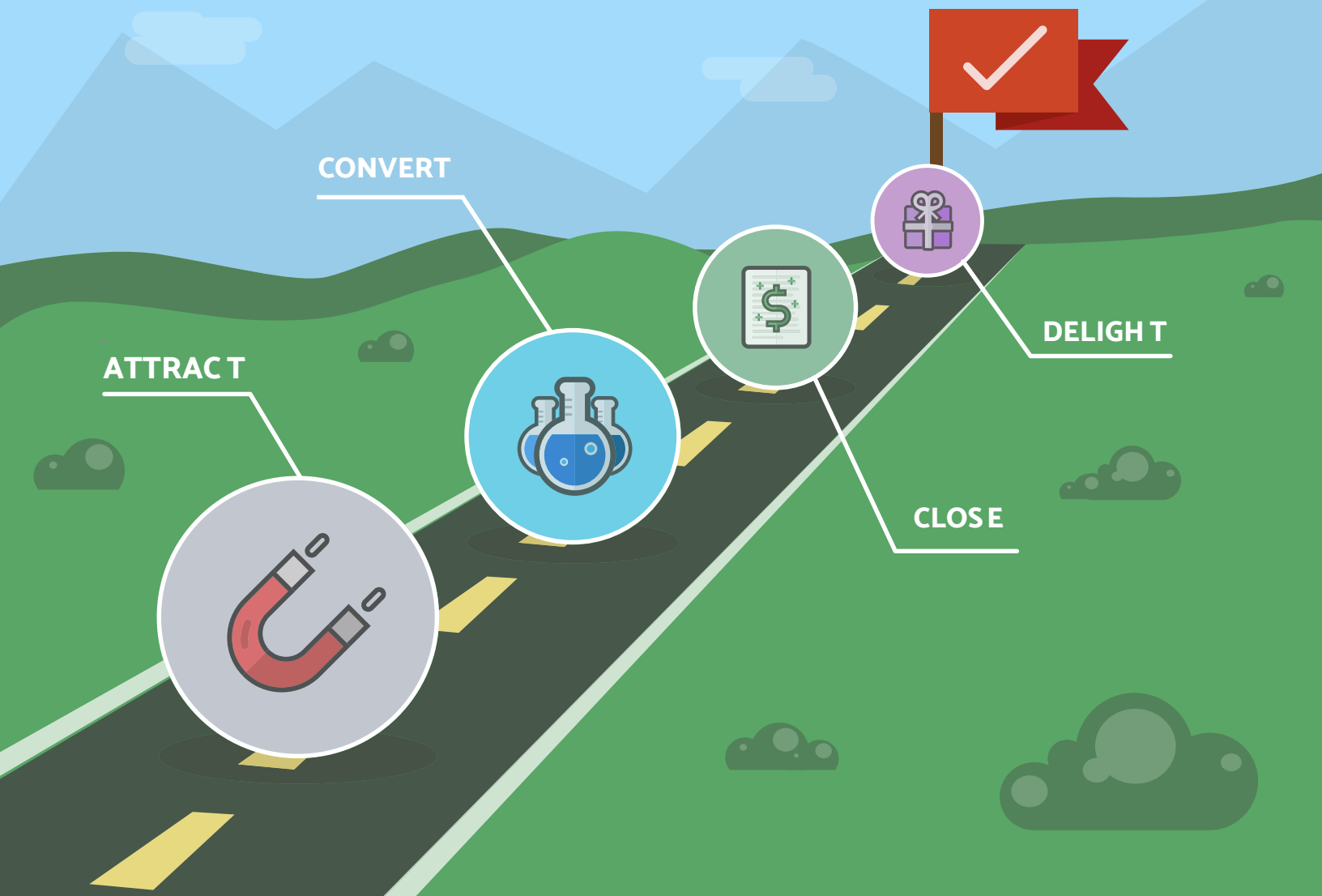


The Beginners Guide *to* Inbound Marketing

Everything you need to know about inbound marketing, all in one easy-to-follow, quick read.



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As Content Marketing Manager, Ramona approaches Marketing not only as a profession, but as a creative outlet. She has a passion for all things artistic and she strives to create content that is educational, yet quirky and entertaining as well.

Ramona has a B.S. in Marketing from the UCONN School of Business and is also a frequent contributor to HubSpot blog. Outside of IMPACT, she is a movie and pop culture buff and fierce advocate of free hugs.

Design by Christine Austin, [@ItsChristine_A](#)

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So you want to be an Inbound Marketer?

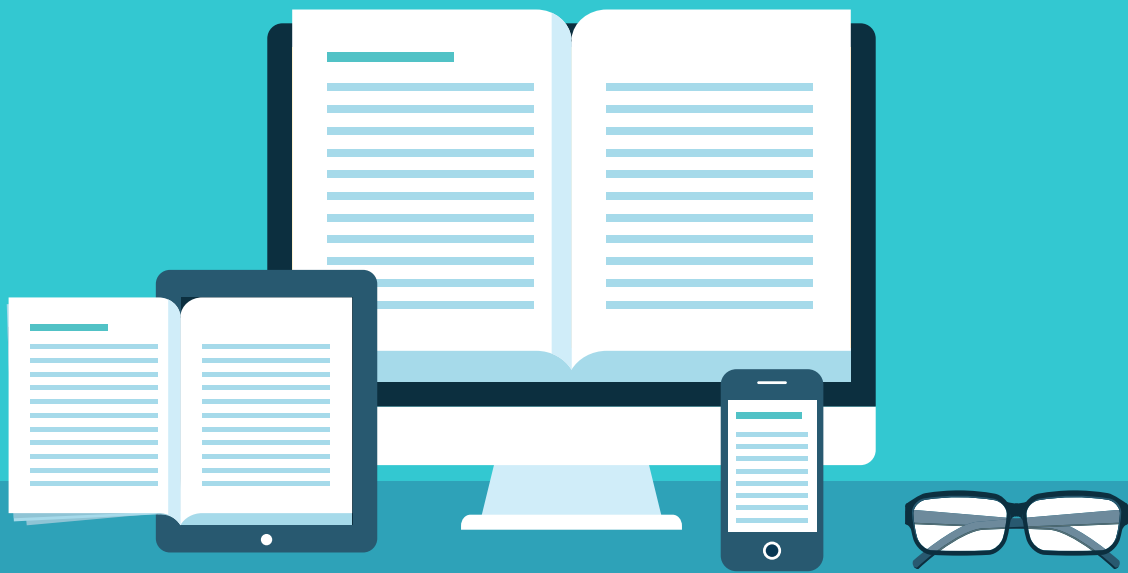
The Beginner's Guide to Inbound Marketing was updated in 2016 to reflect the content of "The Inbound Marketing Process Made Easy," an IMPACT original offer that better represents the current approach to the Inbound Methodology.

Businesses are 3x more likely to [see a higher ROI](#) from inbound marketing than outbound, but I'm not going to lie to you -- that doesn't happen overnight.

Inbound marketing is a dramatic departure from the traditional outbound approaches most of us grew up with and that many universities are still teaching.

It has much less to do with press releases, trade shows, and commercials and all the more to do with new mediums like social media, blogging and content creation, email marketing, and web design, among other things.

Inbound marketing is a long-term commitment that takes time to understand and truly master, but in this guide, I'm going to give a **simple ten-step crash course** to help you learn and implement the methodology in as little as 90 days.

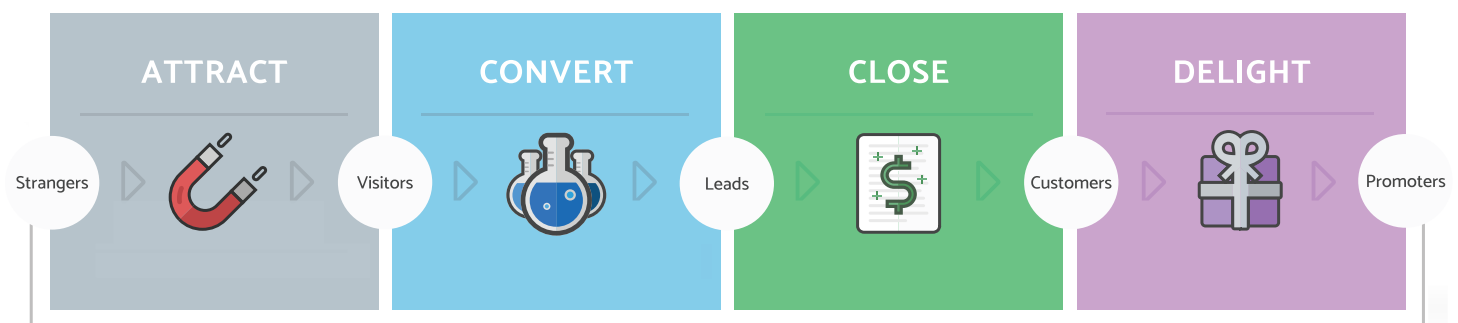


STEP 1

Get Educated on Inbound

Inbound marketing is an intuitive, holistic methodology, but with so many different facets, it does take time to learn everything.

Before you even think about starting to develop an inbound strategy, take advantage of the thousands of free resources available online to study the methodology from the ground up.



How to Learn the Inbound Methodology

With thousands upon thousands of resources available online, which ones actually deserve your attention? Though I can't say I've seen read every inbound marketing resource there is, I have read quite a few. Here's what I would recommend:

1 Get the HubSpot Inbound Certification (it's free!)

Made up of 12 classes (a total of 4.5 hours of video), the HubSpot Inbound Marketing Course is quite possibly the most comprehensive introduction to the inbound methodology that money can buy -- but get this, it's actually free.

Available absolutely free to the general public (aka you don't have to be a HubSpot user), the Inbound Marketing Course covers SEO, blogging, landing pages, lead nurturing, conversion analysis, and reporting and teaches you how all of these pieces come together to form a modern marketing strategy.

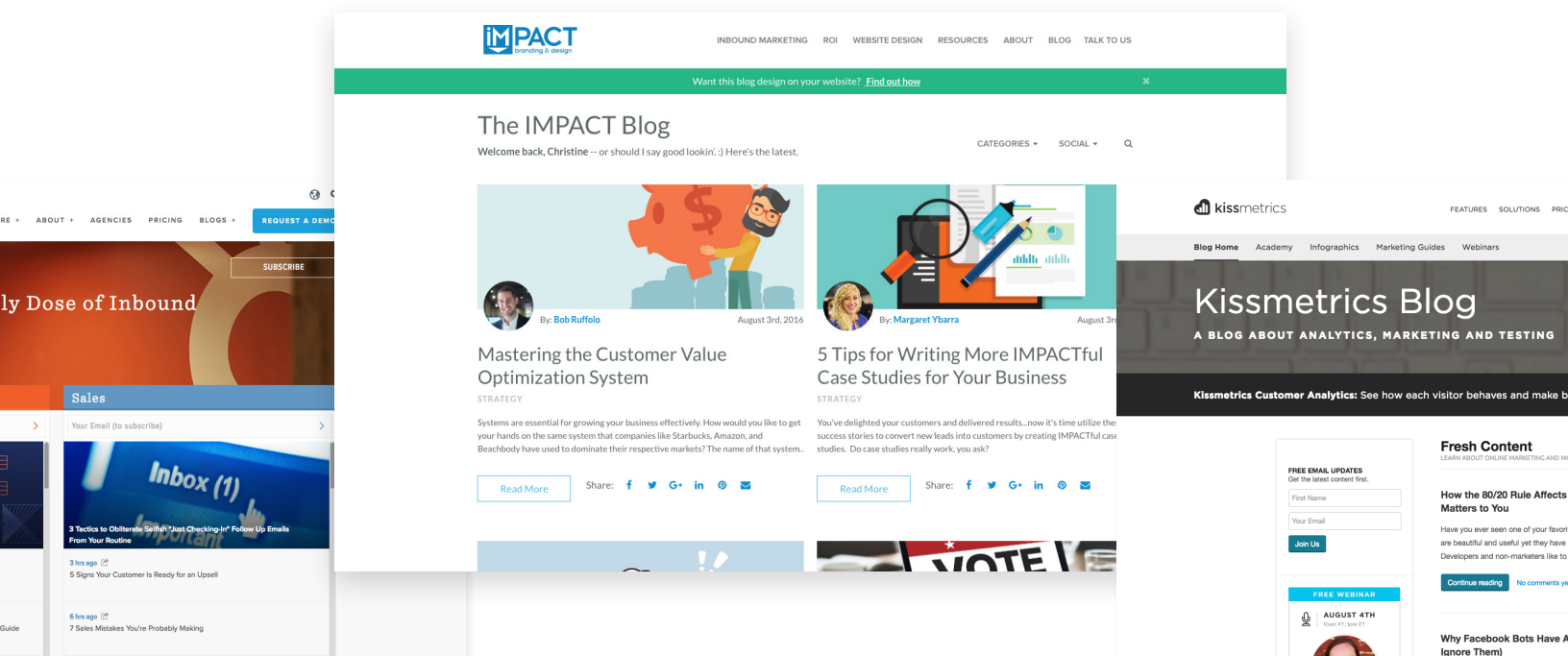


Your certification is valid 13 months and after you pass the online exam, you'll receive a personalized certification and badge to use on your website, email signature, or social media profile.

2 Subscribe to (and Actually Read) Industry Blogs

Blogs are the most convenient and up to date resources for learning new inbound marketing strategies and staying on top of changes in the industry. If they aren't already, here are just a few that you should add to your list:

- [IMPACT](#) (We're biased yes; but our 18,000+ subscribers can't be wrong!)
- [HubSpot](#)
- [KissMetrics](#)
- [Unbounce](#)
- [Neil Patel](#)
- [CopyHackers](#)
- [Social Media Examiner](#)





STEP 2

Build Your Inbound Team

Far too often in the agency world, we encounter organizations that take a very passive approach to inbound marketing.

Perhaps they're just doing it because they feel like they "have to" or because "everyone else is doing it." They create a Facebook page, set up a blog; overall, they half-heartedly piece together all of the tools only to do nothing with them. This kind of unmotivated execution just won't cut it.

Inbound marketing is a "go-all-in" strategy.

To do it right, you need to form a team that is dedicated to its planning and execution for the long-term. It requires specific sets of skills and understanding of both communication, analytics, and the digital world.

At a minimum, your inbound team should consist of a: marketing strategist, content copywriter, design, web developer, and marketing coordinator.

Let's dig a little deeper into each of their roles.



Marketing Strategist:

Like the title suggests, your strategist is in charge of planning and overseeing the overall execution of your inbound marketing strategy. They're usually the team member managing projects and team members and monitoring the results. It is also their job to take the data and insights learned from your campaigns and develop new strategies.



Content Writer:

Inbound marketing relies heavily on content creation. Whether it's your website copy, a landing page, a blog, email, or eBook, it is your content copywriter's job to ensure that all of these pieces effectively communicate to your target personas (which we'll get into in Step 4) and help drive action. In order to achieve this, your content copywriter needs to be fully versed in your business, offerings, culture/voice, and persona.



Designer:

Your inbound marketing designer's job is to take the copywriter's content and plan/create visuals that aid in the delivery of the message. This includes but is not limited to website designs, eBooks, infographics, and social media graphics. Your designer must be fully-versed in the client's goals, audience, and branding to ensure that their designs are in-line with all three.



Web Developer:

Your web developer's job is to take the designer's work and, with your goals and audience in mind, implement them onto your website. Depending on the complexity, they'll be in charge of monitoring and updating your website as well as working with your designer and team overall to determine the most technically effective way to execute your strategies.



Marketing Coordinator:

Last, but most definitely not least, your marketing coordinator is largely in charge of implementing your strategy. Their responsibilities may include, but are not limited to blog optimization, keyword and buyer persona research, and social media publishing.

What if I can't hire?

Now, I know adding five members to your team isn't easy on your budget or your HR department.

If it doesn't seem doable right now, consider training some existing team members in the methodology or partnering with an agency.

Working with a well-known, trusted inbound marketing agency (like IMPACT) will help you easily fill all of these seats with skilled, experienced professionals for a fraction of the cost and hassle.



STEP 3

Assess Your Current Marketing

You can't know how far you have to go if you don't know where you're starting. That's why step 3 in our crash course is so important.



Before starting any new marketing program, take into account your current performance. It's critical that you take time to reflect on your current marketing efforts and environment and objectively evaluate how they are doing.

Ask yourself:

- What are we doing now?
- How is it performing?
- What marketing assets do we currently have? (i.e. website, online content, printed content, videos, presentations, testimonials, etc.)
- What is our budget?
- What is going on in our industry or environment that may affect what we're doing? (i.e. threats, opportunities, legislation, etc.)

If you're already investing in digital marketing or have a web presence, you will also want to ask yourself:

- What does your website traffic look like? Where is it coming from?
- What are your most popular pages?
- What keywords are you ranking for? (or could rank for?)
- How are your website conversion rates?
- What does your current social media presence look like?
- What does your contact database look like?
- How is your email marketing performing?

Based on your answers to these questions and the results of your current initiatives, you'll be able to better determine what should (and possibly needs to) be done with your marketing moving forward.



STEP 4

Define Your Marketing Goals

Now that you know where you stand, where do you want to be? What are you trying to achieve? What are you trying to get your customers to do?

Use your answers to these questions to help you define your marketing goals. Overall, these goals should be two things: SMART and aligned with your business goals.

SMART

1. SMART

SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely and ideally, if your marketing goals is all of these things, you should have no trouble achieving them.

In the excerpt below, Carly Stec, former IMPACT team member and current managing editor at HubSpot, [explains each point in more depth:](#)

“S(pecific)

When setting inbound marketing goals you want to ensure that you avoid any and all ambiguity. A helpful rule of thumb to consider when developing specific goals is to ask yourself the following 5 questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

M(easurable)

It is important to establish a logical unit in which you will use to quantify your results (i.e. views, leads, percentage, etc.) If you can't, consider using milestone actions or increased efficiency levels to keep track of where you started, where you are now, and where you need to be.

A(ttainable)

Attainable goals are all about striking a comfortable middle ground between a stretch and a safety. You want to be sure that you have the resources, authority, and time to carry out the task according to plan.

2. Aligned with Your Business Goals

In most situations, the goal of marketing is to drum up interest and sales for your business. In other words, marketing really exists to help you achieve certain overarching organizational goals. *After all, why market if there's nothing to be sold?*

With this in mind, make sure that the marketing goals you set are reflective of your overall business goals.



For example, if your business wants to increase its revenue by \$1 million, how many customers need to close? How many leads does that mean you have to generate? And based on this number of leads, about how much traffic do you need to attract?

Take a look at your general business goals and use these to work backwards to help set those for your marketing team. [This article can help.](#)



STEP 5

Clearly Define Buyer Personas & Journeys

In addition to *why* you're selling (your goals from step 4), you need to know who you're selling to.

Before you can convince them to fill out a form, let alone make a purchase, you need to understand where they are coming from, not only professionally or financially, but as a human being. What are their motivations and why do they need your product?

To understand this, first ask yourself [what does a qualified lead look like for your sales team](#). Who is your target audience? Who is actually buying from you?

Take that information and make it human. [Develop a detailed buyer persona](#) that tells you, amongst other things:

- What are their demographics?
- What is their role? (in their company, family, community, etc.)
- What are their desired gains?
- What pains or problems are you helping them solve?
- What is their story?



You'll also need to research and document [their buyer's journey](#), explaining:

- How they become **aware** of products like yours?
- How do they **compare** and consider products like yours?
- How do they **decide** to buy?

Once completed, this persona will help you fully visualize the audience that you are trying to attract with each piece of your marketing. With it, you'll be better equipped to position your product and content in the way it will be best received.

[In this article from HubSpot](#), you'll find a detailed breakdown of everything you need to know about researching your buyer personas. After you've gathered this information, [use our Pocket Buyer Persona Kit](#) to document them in a way that is concise and easy to update.



STEP 6

Build Your Marketing Game Plan

With your goals and personas in mind, you can now start putting together your inbound marketing strategy.

There are several tools and tactics in the inbound marketing toolbox (i.e. landing pages, content creation, social media, etc.).

Based on your personas, which ones should you be implementing? And how?

[Your Marketing Game Plan](#) should outline the answers to all of these questions as well as what tools and resources will be needed to do so. It should include (but not be limited to) your: content strategy, conversion paths, and technology.

Content Strategy

Your content strategy is overall breakdown of your content creation plan and the messages that you should be delivering through it.

- It should answer the questions:
- What is your value proposition?
- What keywords are your personas searching?
- How often will you blog?
- What kind of content do you need to create to help your buyer through their journey?
- What social media networks should you be active on?

Conversion Paths

In general, this is your **lead generation strategy**.

It's an outline of how you will allow people to convert or become a lead and opt into marketing communication with you.

What will they be exchanging their contact information for and how will they be able to do this on your site?

The what comes back to your offers.

Some of the most common offers for businesses include a blog subscription or consultation, but in inbound marketing it expands to more elaborate content offers focused mainly on educating and delivering expertise on your industry or area of business.

Look at your core offer (your main product and service) and think about what kind of content (whether it be a guide, video, course, etc.) you can create around it that people who are entirely new to your brand will want to convert on. What will attract them to becoming a lead? This is your “[lead magnet](#).”

After people have entered your database as a lead, you’ll need to create additional **premium content offers** that cater to each stage of their buyer’s journey and help guide naturally towards being ready to make a purchase.

Once you outline what these offers should include, you can begin planning how they will convert and receive them on your website. This process includes, but is not limited to:

- Calls-to-Action
- Landing Pages
- Forms
- Emails

When it comes to implementing these tools, consider pulling in your designer and developer to discuss the best ways to incorporate them on to your website.

Technology

Inbound marketing is a digital strategy so technology is a given. In this portion of your game plan, you need to outline what sort of software and tools you need to execute your tactics as well as the costs associated with them.

Some of the most common technology costs that come with inbound marketing include:

- **Marketing Automation Software** (i.e. HubSpot or Marketo)
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software** (i.e. Salesforce or the HubSpot CRM)
- **Content Management System (CMS)** (i.e. WordPress, the HubSpot Website Platform, Squarespace.)



STEP 7

Build Your Launchpad Website

An effective website is the hub of all your inbound marketing and lead generation efforts.

It needs to be built around your marketing game plan and reflect your goals, but like them, your website must also be dynamic, capable and ready to change with your audience and industry.

With something so important to your marketing efforts, it can easily take months, if not longer, to launch a finished product, but in inbound, time is of the essence.

To get up and running with the methodology and start collecting data as soon as possible, [begin with a launchpad website](#).

A **launchpad website** is a basic design with just key pages, information, and conversion points that can be published quickly and start gathering real-world interaction data that can then be used to improve and build upon the initial design.

(Note: This approach to web design is called [Growth-Driven Design](#) and it's the methodology we use here at IMPACT.)

Now, while your launchpad website is only a starting point, you must still be strategic and offer your audience a positive experience.

Like your finished product, it needs to be the following at launch:

- **Professionally Designed** (to appeal to your buyer personas and align with your brand)
- **Easy to Navigate**
- **Fully Search Engine Optimized**
- **Mobile Responsive** (for all major devices that your personas use)
- **Cross-Browser Tested** (to offer the same experience to all users)
- **Optimized for Lead Generation**
 - Has Strategically Placed CTAs, Forms, etc.
 - Landing Pages
- **Ready for Content Creation** (Has a blog or Resources Page)

Once you go live, make sure that you are tracking your website and user's activity on it with tools like [HubSpot](#), [Google Analytics](#), [Optimizely](#), or [Hotjar](#).

After your initial launch, data from these sites will help you make more informed and effective decisions on how to improve both your website's design for both conversions and experience.



STEP 8

Publish Content

Now that you've got your website up and running, you need to put your content strategy into action!

Whether on your own website or on others, content creation is essential to establishing yourself as a thought leader in your industry and getting found by your target audience in search engines and online in general.

Depending on your content strategy, your publishing habits may resemble the following:

Blogging

At IMPACT, we recommend that new bloggers publish an article at least twice a week for the first 3 months. From here, you should be able to benchmark your performance and make changes based on how audiences reacted.

Social Media

Social media networks are a great place to share your content and drive traffic back to your website, but it shouldn't be all about you.

Follow [the 80-20 Rule](#)! According to this, 80% of your social media publishing should be dedicated to sharing, while the remaining 20% can be self-promotional.

Aside from your content, your social media publishing should also include interesting or useful content from others in your industry, and engaging your audience through polls, debates, contests, etc.

Premium Content (to Generate Leads!)

Gated, premium content is your organization's best opportunity to generate leads.

Creating a variety of premium content (i.e. calculators, eBooks/Guides, Toolkits, Slide decks, Templates, Videos, etc.) and gating it behind a form, is a highly effective way of showcasing your expertise and value to buyers in exchange for their contact information.

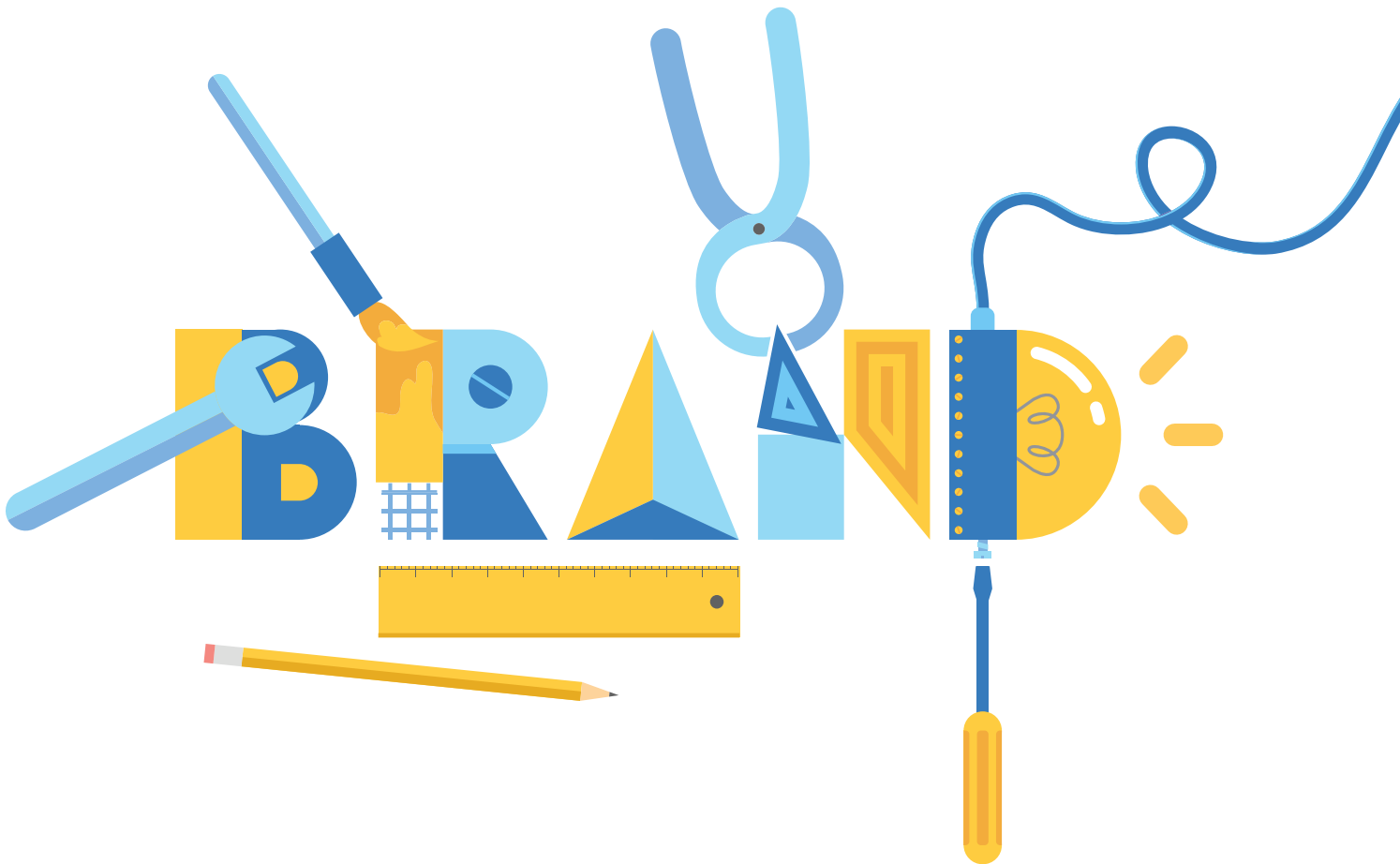
Premium content is also crucial to nurturing leads towards making a purchase [when aligned with your persona's buyer's](#) journey and your sales funnel.

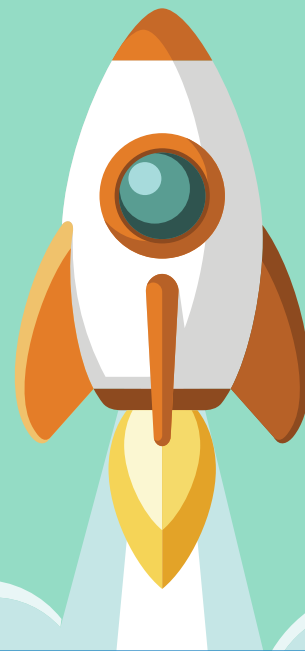
External Content Creation

(i.e. Guest blogging, Guest podcasting, webinars, etc.)

Don't focus on your creating content for your organization alone. Reach out to other companies and [publications that are popular in your industry](#) and consider guest blogging, appearing on a podcast, or co-hosting a webinar.

Though people will not be consuming the content directly on your website, these external platforms present valuable opportunities to build awareness for your brand, expand your reach, and capitalize on your partner's reputation.





STEP 9

Promote Your Content

Once your content has been published, you need to make sure that people are actually reading it.

While ideally, your content will organically bring people to your website through search engines or direct traffic, sometimes it needs a helping hand. That's where promotion comes in.

There are a variety of ways to promote your content or its landing pages, but here are four that we have found most effective.

Social Media

As mentioned in step 8, social media is a very useful tool for sharing links to your content and driving people back to your website, but it doesn't stop there.

Make sure that people can easily share your content on their own social media profiles by including share links on all of your blog pages and landing pages. Every share your content receives is another opportunity for your brand to be found by a new audience.

Industry Forums and Communities

Does your industry have active online communities, forums, or chatrooms? Are there any that your buyer personas frequent? Share your content there!

Posting links to your blog articles, offers, landing pages, etc. in relevant communities will help you get exposed to new, interested audiences who may, not only enjoy your content, but your product or service as well. [Try searching through subreddits](#) to get started.

You can also consider answering questions on [Quora](#) with relevant content from your website.

Email Marketing

In inbound marketing, an email address is like currency. It's one of the most valuable things you can have and that's even more so true when it comes to promoting your content.

People in your contact database have already expressed interest in your content, so don't be afraid to share things that are relevant to their interests or pain points.

Don't spam, of course -- but if you have an eBook or infographic, perhaps a new report, consider sending a dedicated email about it to your subscribers or contacts.

PPC/Paid Advertising

While inbound marketing is built primarily on low (or sometimes even no) cost mediums and tools, [paid search and/or ads on social media can give you a significant leg up](#) on the competition when you're first starting out.

Search authority takes time to accumulate. [Paid search ads like Google AdWords](#), however, help you bid on the top position for your desired keywords without waiting for your pages to get indexed.

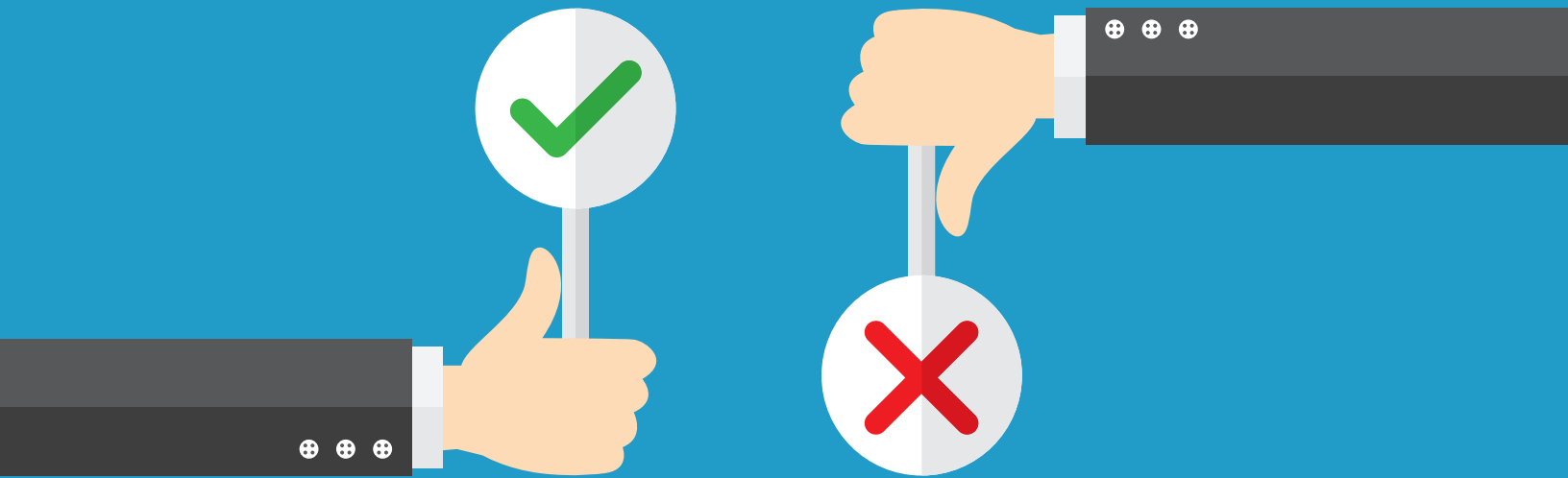
Similarly, paid ads/updates on social media ([particularly on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter](#)) can help you combat tricky algorithms to get in front of your target audience.

Either option can help you reach qualified people, build awareness of your brand, and drive traffic to your website, but only when done strategically.

Paid search and social ads need to be well-targeted and keyword-focused to be effective.

Check out these resources to help:

- [5 Things You Need to Know About Paid Ads and Inbound Marketing](#)
- [Which Social Media Network Should My Business Advertise On?](#)
- [Pay-Per-Click Basics: Starting an Optimized Google AdWords Campaign](#)



STEP 10

Step 10: Evaluate Progress, Report, & Test!

What's working in your inbound marketing? What isn't? Take the time to track various marketing metrics (i.e. website traffic, conversion rates, click rates, etc.) to gauge your performance and develop reports to see where things could (and should) be better.

Tools like [HubSpot](#), [UserTesting](#), [Hotjar](#), [Google Analytics](#) can help you gather and analyze your data. Then, based on what you find, make improvements!

Use HubSpot or [Optimizely](#) to A/B test different variations of your copy, design, and more to see which versions will deliver the best results and help drive you towards your goals.

Next Steps.

Now, did you get all that? I know this process may seem complicated and intricate right now, but once you've been using the inbound marketing methodology and its strategies for a few months, it will become second nature.

Think your organization needs help implementing this process? *IMPACT* wants to help.

Schedule a time to [talk to us](#) about your business and it's goals, and we'll help you uncover your next step towards success.

TALK TO US

