

# INBOUND MARKETING

FOR HIGHER  
EDUCATION **101**

YOUR  
STUDY GUIDE



CREATIVE  
COMMUNICATION  
ASSOCIATES

+

HubSpot

The background image shows two women in an office environment. One woman with long dark hair is looking at a computer monitor, while another woman with curly hair and a blue fur collar is pointing at the screen. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a professional or educational setting.

## INTRODUCTION

Everyone who works in enrollment, marketing, alumni relations, or development in higher education has one thing in common. **You always need someone to take action.** Whether that's getting admitted students to matriculate, alumni to fund a capital campaign, or parents to make that campus visit with their child, getting your audience to make a move is always top of mind.

So if you're reading this, **you're probably curious about inbound marketing.** Maybe you know a little about it, or perhaps you may as well be sitting in one of your university's foreign language classes thinking, "Um, is this accounting?" Either way, this ebook is for you.

If inbound marketing could be bottled up, we'd sell it in the vitamin aisle. That's because it encompasses a whole lot of components that are good for your institution's health, and it's something you'll want to apply regularly and often. But we know **you are extremely busy** and just need to know what you *need* to know.

So this ebook does exactly that: it tells you about **what inbound marketing is and how it applies to your job**—as clearly and briefly as possible.



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# WHAT IS INBOUND MARKETING?

Inbound marketing is a marketing strategy that involves the creation and distribution of relevant content that your audience will find valuable, and is employed with specific goals in mind.

In other words, instead of selling a product, service, or, in your instance, a college or university education through traditional advertising methods that you push out to a target audience, you produce and publish a range of content that people want to find—because it provides real value to them and meets their immediate needs.

Your audience wouldn't find it intrusive or pushy. They'd actually seek it out, or if they happened upon it online, they'd likely stay to read or watch it. That is, if it's good content. (More on that later.)



# WHAT CONTENT LOOKS LIKE

Content comes in all shapes and sizes.  
Some examples include...



Online  
newsletters



Social media  
posts



Surveys



Webinars



Videos



Emails



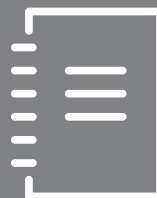
Infographics



Whitepapers



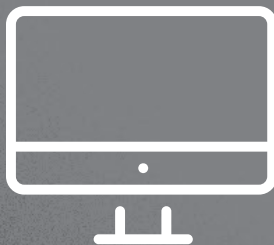
Blog posts



Guides



Ebooks



Microsites



Lists



Memes

# WHERE YOUR AUDIENCE MIGHT FIND YOUR CONTENT

It depends on the distribution and promotion plan, but your content could potentially be found...



# WHY IS INBOUND MARKETING VALUABLE?

Good content is relevant, timely, tailored to a specific audience, professionally written and designed, and strategically distributed; it's available when and where your target audience is looking for it. The messaging is convincing, the tone is enticing, and there's a clear call-to-action. All of that makes good content. And when you have good content, people will often take action to get it (for example, give you their email address). In this way, inbound marketing can be used to drive brand awareness, lead (prospect) generation, engagement, and loyalty.

## FACT:

Seven in 10 consumers say they prefer to learn about a company through a collection of articles rather than in an ad. (Source: *The Custom Content Council*)

**IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION WORLD, MORE SPECIFICALLY, INBOUND MARKETING CAN HELP...**

-  **PROMOTE** your brand
-  **ATTRACT STUDENTS** who are a better fit for your institution
-  **DRIVE REQUESTS** for more information
-  **INCREASE** applications
-  **HIGHLIGHT** new programs
-  **IMPROVE** yield
-  **REV UP** donor dollars
-  **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** with alumni, guidance counselors, prelaw advisors, and others
-  **RECRUIT** better faculty
-  **BOOST** website visits
-  **OPTIMIZE** organic search results

And at a time when ROI is king, digital content can be measured (with the right tools), shared, easily repurposed, and easily updated. That's why inbound marketing is valuable.

## NEXT

We'll take a look at how, exactly, all of this works—from start to finish.



# HOW DOES INBOUND MARKETING WORK?

As an example, let's say your goal is to generate inquiries from three audiences: high school juniors, seniors, and their parents. To do this, you need to collect their contact information so that you can email them tailored messages about your institution to encourage further inquiry and movement through the enrollment funnel.

So how do you collect their contact information? With a content marketing strategy. One idea would be to develop a downloadable piece of helpful, engaging content that your audiences are looking for this time of year...like a checklist of essential SAT preparation tips, for example. Once written and designed, the checklist could be promoted through your website, advertisements, guidance counselors, and so on. Then here's what might happen.



This is just one example of how inbound marketing could work. If your goal is to engage your alumni, you might want to consider utilizing LinkedIn and linking to thoughtful whitepapers related to their industry. Or say you work in development; a series of webinars about how contributing to your school benefits others might attract attention. The possibilities are endless.



# 5 REASONS

## WHY INBOUND MARKETING IS EFFECTIVE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Now you know what it is, what it looks like, and how it works. So on to the most important question you're likely wondering about: Why should higher education marketers consider an inbound marketing strategy?

# 68%

The number of respondents to a Zinch survey who noted that they used social media to research schools

# 1

### **YOUR AUDIENCES ARE DIGITAL NATIVES.**

It's where they research, engage, and spend several hours a day. This means you

have constant opportunities to offer content at the exact time they're looking for it.

# 2

### **YOUR AUDIENCES HAVE OBVIOUS NEEDS.**

Unlike retailers or B2B companies that have to work hard to find out what

their customers really want, you're lucky. High school students (and undergraduates interested in graduate school) are all thinking about the same thing: what's next for them. Alumni want to feel good about their alma mater. Faculty want to work somewhere that feels right to them, and parents want to feel confident their students will be safe, well educated, and ultimately land a job. Why does this all matter? Because their needs are so clear, creating valuable, engaging content is much easier than you might think.

# 3

### **COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ALREADY PRODUCE A LOT OF CONTENT, SO THIS ISN'T**

**A HUGE SHIFT.** It's all about positioning that content and using it at the right time, in the right place. For example: Does your website have a collection of alumni profiles? Reshape them into Q&As that distill advice for prospective students, funnel them into your admissions blog, and promote them on your social streams.

# 4

### **YOU HAVE SO MANY STORIES TO TELL.**

Every institution has a constant stream of news, events, and advice to offer, and touching stories to tell. It's the nature of

an institution that is constantly evolving. And while direct mail and print pieces are still useful methods for attaining certain marketing goals, producing digital content is the only realistic and sustainable way to tell your ever-changing stories and keep them fresh.

# 5

### **INBOUND MARKETING IS GREEN AND COST EFFECTIVE.**

Always being encouraged to adopt initiatives that

will offset your institution's carbon footprint? Producing digital content requires no paper trail. It's eco-friendly and efficient. And, whether you're producing the content in-house or outsourcing it to a marketing agency, inbound marketing can be cost effective. For example, once you've got a killer landing page offering a download, you can clone it for other downloads in the future.

All that said, traditional marketing needn't be nixed altogether. Instead, consider combining outbound marketing with inbound. CCA calls it "push and pull marketing"—and it works.

# WHY YOU SHOULD COMBINE TRADITIONAL OUTBOUND STRATEGIES WITH INBOUND MARKETING

If you're thinking, "What about all the other advertising and marketing strategies we rely on?" Keep them! There are aspects of the student search and yield process today that will remain relevant, but coupling these strategies with content and conversion tactics will drive measurable results.

## FOR EXAMPLE...



### TRADITIONAL MEDIA BUYS

You still need to build institutional awareness, but now you can harness that awareness you're creating by actively engaging and then converting your audience on your website. That way, you're better able to analyze, optimize, and refine your campaigns.



### PRINT MATERIALS

They still have credibility and play a key role in enrollment, alumni relations, and development campaigns, but amplify their impact with calls-to-action and nurturing streams to better segment your data and offer your target audience exactly what they're looking for.



### OUTREACH EMAILS

Email is still an effective tactic in student recruitment, but now you can go a few steps further by offering personalized, relevant content of interest to each segment of your audience.



# WRAP-UP: HOW INBOUND MARKETING CAN HELP YOU

There are countless reasons to plan an inbound marketing strategy, and hopefully, we've helped you understand a little more about how it works. As a wrap-up, here are a few examples of what it could actually accomplish.

## IF YOU WORK IN ENROLLMENT

Inbound marketing has been proven to help capture top-of-the-funnel researchers and convert organic search engine traffic to prospects and inquiries.

## IF YOU WORK IN DEVELOPMENT

Content can be used as a key conversion point in capital campaigns, and to build engagement with donors and other partners.

## IF YOU NEED TO SHOWCASE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Content around unique academic programs, faculty speaking engagements, groundbreaking surveys, and other accomplishments can position your staff as thought leaders in their industry.

## IF YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IS ALUMNI

Interesting content can keep alumni engaged, connected, and feeling good enough about their alma mater that they are willing to be active participants in meeting key objectives.

## IF YOU NEED BETTER PROSPECTS

With inbound marketing, you can segment, target, convert, and nurture prospects throughout the enrollment funnel—keeping them more engaged than if you were to send blanket “spray-and-pray” messages to them.

## READY TO GET STARTED?

Use our checklist on the next page to kick off your inbound marketing plan.

# HOW TO GET STARTED

(ONCE YOU HAVE A CLEAR GOAL)

- **FORMALIZE A PLAN** for segmenting your target audience, and consider developing personas for each segment.
- **BRAINSTORM AND RESEARCH** what kind of content they would be most interested in consuming around the time of your expected launch date.
- **FIND OUT WHERE** they consume their content the most.
- **TAKE INVENTORY** of all the content you already have, noting which material could be repurposed to be focused more on your audience's wants than your selling points.
- **CREATE A STRATEGIC PLAN** for employing inbound marketing: what components do you want to start with; what resources do you have to work with?
- **DEVELOP AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR** or communications sequencing map for the year, so you have an idea of when your materials will go live and how they'll work in conjunction with each other.
- **DEVISE A PLAN FOR DISTRIBUTION AND PROMOTION:** where will you publish your content, and how will you get the word out?



# ABOUT CCA

**We're brand strategists.**  
**We're media planners. We're creative experts.** We're savvy marketing veterans and wunderkinds. **We're class clowns and teachers' pets.** We're world travelers and homebodies. **We're on campus every day, every week.** We're marathon runners, gentleman farmers, fly fishers, and Highland pipers. We're looking for a way to recycle our Keurig pods. **We're pastry Tuesdays and beer Fridays. We're exclusively Higher Education.**

# WE'RE CCA.

[ccanewyork.com](http://ccanewyork.com)

# TRANSFORM YOUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION WITH INBOUND MARKETING

HubSpot can help.



Bring your marketing together into a powerful, integrated system.



Drive interest from prospective students, generating more inquiries for your institution.



Nurture prospective students from inquiry all the way through to application.

**TALK TO US TODAY**



# Let's Talk

THANK YOU FOR READING  
OUR EBOOK WITH HUBSPOT.

If you'd like to learn more about inbound marketing, or if you're interested in partnering with CCA on a inbound marketing strategy, get in touch with anyone on our digital team.

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