



HOW TO GET THE MOST
FROM YOUR **HubSpot**
INVESTMENT

SPROUTCONTENT 
The Business of Conversation™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HUBSPOT INVESTMENT

- 1 Chapter 1 *Know Your Limitations*
- 2 Chapter 2 *Plan for the Right Resource*
- 3 Chapter 3 *Prepare for Success*
- 4 Chapter 4 *Two Roads Diverge: Agency or In-House*
- 5 About SPROUT Content

INTRODUCTION

HubSpot is a fantastic tool that we trust and believe in. The platform integrates marketing automation, email marketing, customer relationship management, content management, social media management and analytics into a single, easy-to-use package. It's like a deluxe Swiss Army knife ready to go to battle for you, but it isn't a magic wand.

Investing in HubSpot and inbound marketing does not equal an automatic increase in sales and revenue. There's still a lot of hard work to be done to achieve success, which is up to you and how you use the platform. After all, any tool is only as good as how you use it.

To get the most from your investment in HubSpot, you have to have the resources and expertise to use it wisely. You have to work hard to create engaging content. You have to be committed to inbound marketing and able to put resources toward a full time employee or inbound marketing agency.

When you use HubSpot to its fullest potential, you will dance to the groove of dollar signs. On average, our clients achieve a 35% return on their inbound marketing investment. However, the dollar bills won't kick in if you adopt a "get it and forget it" mentality.

1 Know Your Limitations

The fact that you've purchased a HubSpot subscription means you probably "get" inbound marketing, at least on the surface.

You realize that you need to create great content that's optimized for search, you need to get that content out in front of your target audience, and you need to set up a conversion funnel that naturally follows the buyer's journey, helping them make the right decisions all along the way.

But, hopefully you realize there's a lot more to it than just that.

Signing up for an automation tool like HubSpot is an easy first step to "start inbound marketing." Automated marketing platforms, good process and training can definitely help marketers scale inbound marketing beyond what you're likely doing today. The barrier to entry is low and anyone can get a solid inbound marketing education online for little to no cost.

Signing up for an automation tool like HubSpot is an easy first step to "start inbound marketing." But, that does not necessarily translate into knowing what it takes to run an inbound marketing campaign, let alone doing it well.

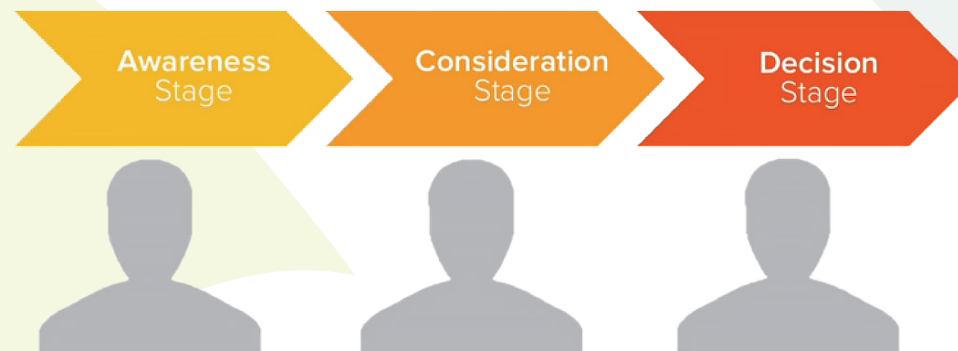
But, that does not necessarily translate into knowing what it takes to run an inbound marketing campaign, let alone doing it well.

Can you answer a resounding “YES!!” to each of these questions?

- Do you know which types of content engage people at certain stages of the buyer’s journey?
- Are you clear on the relationship between landing pages, calls to action and assets?
- Be honest, do you have enough time to blog at least four times a month?
- Are you comfortable creating workflows with multiple moving parts?
- Do you have in-house skills to write quality SEO content?

If the answer to any of the above was, “No, we don’t have that on our team,” you’ll need to fill the gaps to get the most from your investment.

The Buyer’s Journey



A typical inbound marketing strategy makes use of the following:

- SEO Website Content
- Blogging
- Call-to-action Buttons
- Landing Pages
- Lead Generating Forms
- Premium Offers (ebooks, white papers, case studies, etc.)
- Lead Nurturing Campaigns
- Video
- Email Nurturing
- Social Media
- Influencer Marketing



All of these tactics need to be performed together to execute in a way that delivers real value and maximum impact – like increasing visits, leads and sales. In addition to the physical content creation required for these tactics, you'll need design capabilities and process plans, like an editorial calendar for scheduling and managing the content workflow.

2 Plan for the Right Resource

When you're looking at the big picture of doing inbound marketing and making the most of your HubSpot investment, you will need resources to:

- **Generate visits** through a strategic SEO plan.
- **Create premium content** to capitalize on that traffic by building landing pages and online lead generation campaigns.
- **Manage leads** by constructing targeted lead-nurturing campaigns aimed at converting leads into customers.
- **Analyze results** to iterate and improve every step in the process. Digging into the results of your online efforts on a regular basis shows you what is working and what isn't so you can adjust your overall strategy accordingly.

Often, marketing pros that jump into inbound marketing spend some time analyzing marketing automation platforms: looking at the features, weighing the pros and cons, asking questions about integration with current systems, and deciding a budget. Then, they hand over credit card information and expect to get started.

Imagine buying a beautiful, vintage Porsche, jumping in the driver's seat and turning the key, without knowing how to operate a manual-drive vehicle.

They've bought access to a shiny new marketing automation platform to start the company's inbound marketing efforts. They have a full year to use this new tool, create fantastic content, generate leads, show the CEO that inbound marketing is the best investment ever and become the hero to their sales team. But, who is responsible for "turning it on?"

Access to an automation tool is fun and hip and comes with many promises. But there's a lot to the actual use of the machine that goes beyond its sleek exterior. Imagine buying a beautiful, vintage Porsche, jumping in the driver's seat and turning the key, without knowing how to operate a manual-drive vehicle. You can play with the radio, turn the lights on and off and maybe even let it roll out of the driveway.

But then what? Chances are you'll push it back in the driveway and let it sit to "figure out how to drive" it later. This is what happens with many companies who invest in marketing automation platforms. They purchase the vehicle, but don't have a driver to get it on the highway and going at full speed ahead.

There's a better way.

Before investing in the tool, sit down with the key decision makers involved and consider the following pull on your resources:



Time

Time is not on your side when it comes to inbound marketing. With content marketing becoming an increasingly popular (and crowded) space, marketing using inbound methods is becoming increasingly competitive. To see any substantial results, content needs to be published frequently and consistently. Of course, the more active a blog, the more quickly you'll see results like increased traffic to your website, which accelerates the whole inbound marketing program.



HubSpot recommends working in the platform a minimum of 10 hours/week. This time is suggested for setting up campaigns, creating newsletters, scheduling blog posts, monitoring social media, creating workflows, reviewing stats and responding to leads. It doesn't include creating the content needed to use all of these special features.

"Companies typically think that time is the big reason for hiring an agency, but in my experience the skill required to write quality SEO blog content is the biggest factor," said Nick Pandiscio, CEO of Engineered Inbound.

If you're planning to use in-house writers for your blog, results may not come as quickly as you hope. Unless you have a house full of experienced SEO writers, your team will need to get trained and up to speed on best practices, and that takes even more time.

While scheduling a blog post might take 15 minutes, writing one can easily take 1.5 hours. Now you've used nearly 2 hours of time to create one weekly blog post. And that's if you already know how to use the blog scheduling feature.

How to Make the Most From Your Investment:

Consider outsourcing your content development to a content marketing agency. A professional agency already has experienced SEO writers and can help you hit the ground running, driving traffic to your blog much faster. Using in-house writers may save money on paper, but it could end up costing more in terms of lost opportunities 12 months down the road when you are only getting a fraction of the traffic you would have using professional writers.

Skills

As an inbound marketing agency, we average 7.78 hours/week creating content and using HubSpot for each of our clients, which may not sound like enough to justify hiring an in-house employee dedicated to inbound marketing. It also may not sound like enough to justify hiring an inbound marketing agency. That is until you look at the skill set that goes into those hours. That time is filled by a combination of:

- SEO experts
- Professional writers
- Account managers
- Inbound engineers
- HubSpot certified marketers
- Graphic designers
- Content strategists



These attributes are not available as plugins from your marketing automation tool. At the end of the day, the core of inbound marketing still requires living, breathing humans.

"Even for incredibly good writers, it takes a major in thinking to produce blog content that is optimized to pull in a lot of traffic to shift a website," says Nick, "This isn't intuitive and learning how to do it doesn't happen overnight."

How to Make the Most From Your Investment:

One in-house marketer will not have the specialized skill set that an agency will have. "If you don't have someone dedicated to these functions, I would absolutely recommend hiring an agency," said Jeff Cooper, President and CEO of Expo Logic, a leading registration and event management company. "It's a lower risk first-step and will help you define the roles when you are ready to hire a full-time person."



Process

Although HubSpot is an incredibly powerful tool, it can't magically put a process in place for you. It has all the components necessary to develop a smooth process: the editorial calendar, a persona tie-in, a social media publishing scheduler, a workflow management module... but it still requires human beings to create, implement and improve the process over time.

Let's face it, most of the time content production responsibility falls on the laps of employees who already have full time jobs and have been tasked with adding inbound marketing to all their other responsibilities. Someone has to be responsible for keeping all of the moving pieces working together.

HubSpot cannot function as a "set it and forget it" robot.

A reliable, effective process for making the most of HubSpot must include:

- A content manager to assign and schedule content development.
- Content developers to create the content.
- An editor to make sure all content is on brand and applicable to your inbound goals.
- An inbound/SEO expert to effectively put content into the HubSpot platform.
- A social media expert to distribute content and schedule it for posting in various social platforms.
- A content strategist to review analytics and make sure the content is working.
- The flexibility to adjust on the fly and change tactics or strategy based on results.

HubSpot cannot function as a “set it and forget it” robot.

How to Make the Most From Your Investment:

An established agency already has a good sense of what works and what doesn't, offering valuable wisdom from a team of marketers. Agencies perform the same tasks over and over becoming highly specialized in each piece of the marketing puzzle. This specialization creates efficiency in both strategy and tactics. Without this key knowledge, achieving any level of success can be difficult.

Interest and Drive

It's sad to say, but in-house inbound marketing efforts sometimes fade away because everyone loses interest. More often than not, this occurs long before your first year's subscription to HubSpot is finished, leaving you paying for that vintage Porsche while it sits rusting in your garage.

Success in inbound and content marketing requires taking creative risks and continually developing engaging, purposeful content assets. Without that, you'll get steamrolled by the plethora of information and innovation constantly moving the digital space forward.

Most of the in-house talent you have at your disposal likely aren't interested in developing consistently over the long haul. They're probably experts in their field, they're fantastic at their jobs, and they have a real love for the company, product, or service they offer. But, they're not professional inbound marketers. It's a different skill set. And when their interest and drive wanes, the strategy fails.



Inbound marketing agencies, on the other hand, are full of people that love every aspect of the approach. Agencies keep up with trends, ideas and successes across the board from all of their clients, and with other HubSpot agency partners. They play with the latest tools and apps, attend conferences like Partner Day, Content Marketing World and Inbound and have an innate desire to keep learning and experimenting.

Agencies can also take creative risks. They are objective participants in a subjective, personal environment. An agency doesn't get involved in office politics and the daily drama. And they aren't worried (usually) about telling you what you don't want to hear.

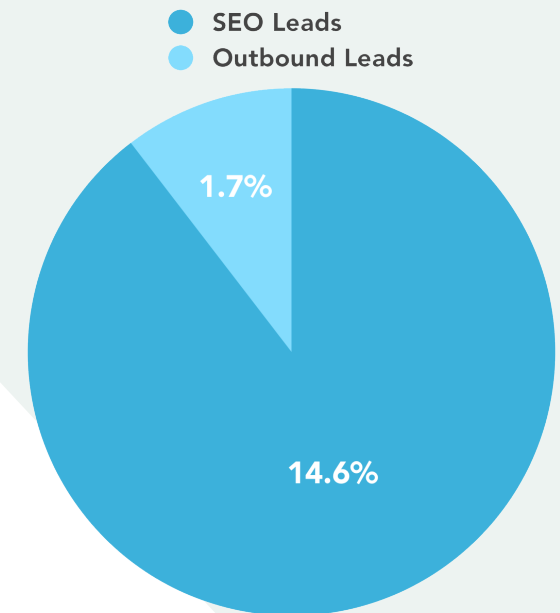
An inbound marketing agency is your experienced driver. It's also your coach and pit crew. With an inbound marketing agency, you have an entire team behind you to get your plan started, help create content, keep your strategy on track and work with you to prove results. You inherit the collective talent and earned knowledge that an agency brings from working with other client partners.



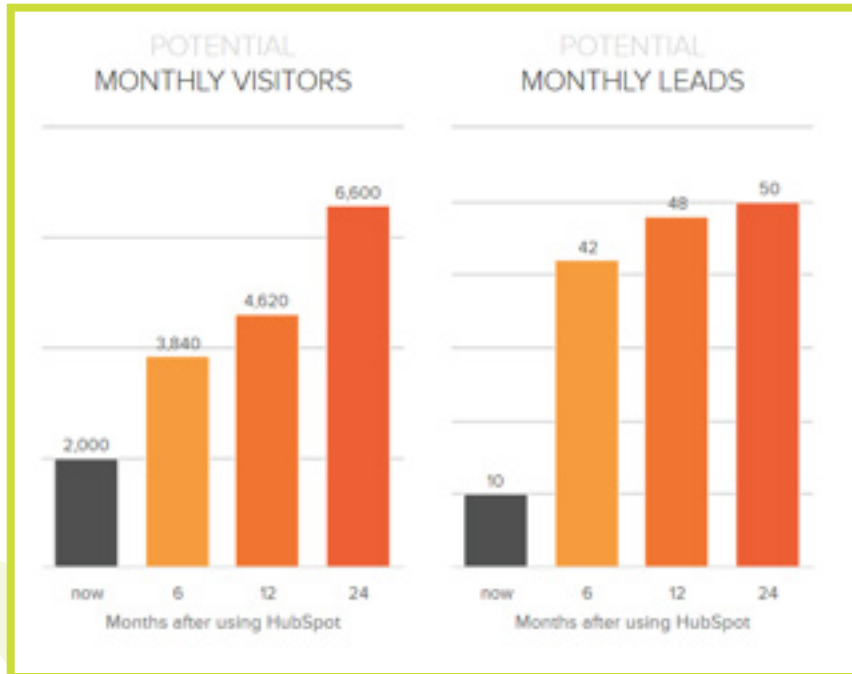
3 Be Prepared for Success

Once HubSpot is implemented and your content machine is revved up and running, all those invested hours should start putting miles between you and your company's former marketing self. Here are some inbound marketing stats to compare your company with:

- SEO leads have a 14.6% close rate, while outbound leads (such as direct mail or print advertising) have a 1.7% close rate. ([Search Engine Journal](#))
- 82% of marketers who blog daily acquired a customer using their blog, as opposed to 57% of marketers who blog monthly -- which, by itself, is still an impressive result. ([HubSpot State of Inbound, 2013](#))
- Content marketing generates 3 times as many leads as traditional outbound marketing, but costs 62% less. ([Demand Metric](#))
- Businesses that use marketing automation to nurture prospects experience a 451% increase in qualified leads. (The Annuitas Group)



If you want an idea of what inbound might do for your company, try using [HubSpot's Inbound Marketing Calculator](#). It's based on an MIT study of real HubSpot customer data. Here's an example:



Monthly Visitors	<input type="text" value="2000"/>	?
Monthly Leads	<input type="text" value="10"/>	?
Monthly Customers	<input type="text" value="1"/>	?
Average Sales Price per Customer	<input type="text" value="5000"/>	?

You're probably wondering can I expect results like these? Our clients have certainly seen similar results or at least similar variations.

But now for some fine print: Like anything worth doing, consistent dedication will be the key to success. And like a weight loss commercial disclaimer (the Shake Weight excepted), results with inbound marketing may vary.

If you're in a crowded market competing against others who already got the inbound memo, expect that results will come—it just may take a little longer. And companies that have longer sales cycles (6 months and beyond) and that sell high ticket solutions also tend not to attain the body they had in their 20s or the results they needed last quarter.

Be patient, grasshopper. Good things come to those who wait...and who are consistent and dedicated and realistic.

One of our clients sells \$1 million IT solutions in a niche vertical with sales cycles nearing a year. They were new to inbound and HubSpot when we partnered. And in the words of the CEO, got "-1 leads a month."



**Be patient, grasshopper.
Good things come to
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dedicated and realistic.**

With six months of inbound, they doubled their traffic, and were pulling in 3 targeted leads a month. By the end of the year, they were averaging 4 leads a month. That wouldn't qualify for an Inc. growth award, but a few months into the New Year, one of those leads turned into a \$1 million sale, more than paying for their investment with our agency and HubSpot. Several more inbound leads are right on the cusp of closing.

Here is a snapshot of their results for the year:

Source	Visits	%	Contacts	%	Customers
Organic Search Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.	3,065	0.7%	22	0.0%	0
Referrals Links on other sites	718	0.3%	2	0.0%	0
Social Media Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn...	546	1.5%	8	0.0%	0
Email Marketing Email links	22	0.0%	0	0.0%	0
Direct Traffic Manually entered URLs	6,362	0.3%	17	5.9%	1
Total	10,713	0.5%	49	2.0%	1

Being prepared for success means you'll likely be making changes in your organization. One change usually involves managing some aspect of the work required to keep up with either content creation or the number of leads generated—i.e. you might need to increase headcount.

"The only reason we hired a salesperson was because of the inbound leads. We became overwhelmed so we hired a second salesperson." Jeff Cooper, CEO of Expo Logic and HubSpot customer.

Also, be ready for trial and error. For example, the internal content creators who said they could keep you flush with blog content may not deliver the consistency you were originally promised. Or maybe the engineer you had great faith in making the complicated—simple—can't get past speaking "techlish," and comes across confusing rather than illuminating.

Sometimes you may find yourself at a fork in the road.



4 Two Roads Diverge: Agency or In-House

HubSpot is an effective tool when placed in the right hands for those who have the right resources. If you don't start to see results within six months of using HubSpot, you're likely missing some crucial elements, typically a combination of execution and content—consistency (right resources) and quality (right hands).

You may also be a long-time HubSpot user but realize that for a number of reasons, your company isn't as effective with inbound as it should be. Maybe you're too close to the business or maybe the competitive environment you're in calls for more digital expertise than your team can muster.

In these instances, your inbound marketing road has diverged.

Do I bring in talented new blood to fill the gaps? Or do I bring in a creative, results-oriented agency from the outside? Both options can be effective, but there's a lot to think about. For more on the topic, [check out SPROUT Content's guide on the pros and cons of hiring in-house vs. hiring an agency.](#)

[Contact SPROUT Content today to find out more about hiring a content marketing agency.](#)





ABOUT SPROUTCONTENT

SPROUT Content helps businesses grow through effective content marketing. We are passionate about helping businesses understand they have an interesting story to tell and helping them tell it to their audience. We believe that strategic, purposeful and interesting content can make a great impact on a business.

We want to help establish every business we work with as a source of valuable information their customers will trust and want to read, subscribe to and share.

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