

HOW TO LEVERAGE INBOUND MARKETING FOR YOUR TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGY



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INTRODUCTION

Talent attraction and acquisition is changing. Companies don't control the pipeline as much as they did in the past. Candidates are in the driving seat. They decide when they want to look for a new job, they do their homework, they make value judgements on brands, much in the same way consumers search for a new restaurant.

Brands that haven't caught up with the evolving landscape of talent acquisition are getting left behind. Candidates are more selective than ever before. They don't need to hear from a brand directly to decide if they are interested in a job. Current and former staff write about companies on social media.

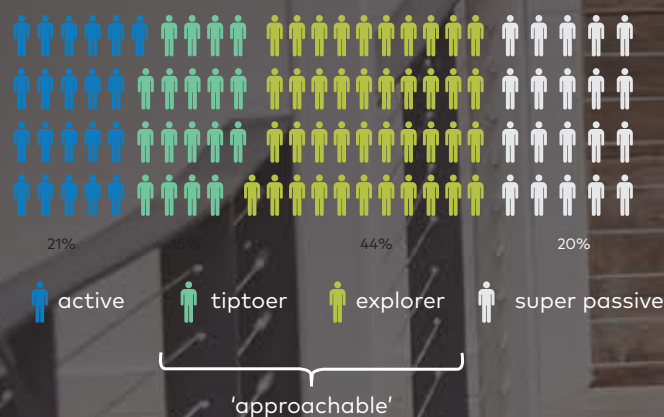
Reputations are created independently from a brand's marketing teams. Businesses need to play a key role in shaping their online reputations, especially when it comes to attracting new talent. Outdated, outbound-centric methods aren't as effective as they were in the past. They are too unpredictable. Too much about throwing darts at a board; instead of creating long-term value, thereby generating a steady stream of new, potential talented candidates. In this guide, we will talk about how to apply working models of inbound marketing to your talent attraction strategy.

1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUTBOUND & INBOUND RECRUITMENT

Outbound recruitment is outdated and not so effective anymore. Potential candidates don't start their search for work on job boards.

According to Jibe, 7 out of 10 job seekers start on Google and social networks, instead of through job boards and careers sections of websites.

It should also be noted that, since only 21% of the global workforce are active job seekers, most outbound activities are only reaching a small part of them and even a smaller percentage of a much larger talent pool. The rest of job seekers, known as "tiptoers" and "explorers" - are approachable, but passive, which means that different strategies and transactional messaging is necessary for approaching them.



Most in-house recruitment teams and recruiters are focused on direct marketing to talent pools, also known as outbound, which is about publishing job adverts, to reach active candidates. And passive talent pools are approached by cold-messaging and cold-calling. Advertising, sending out emails or inmails without much of contextual information are considered as push-based activities.

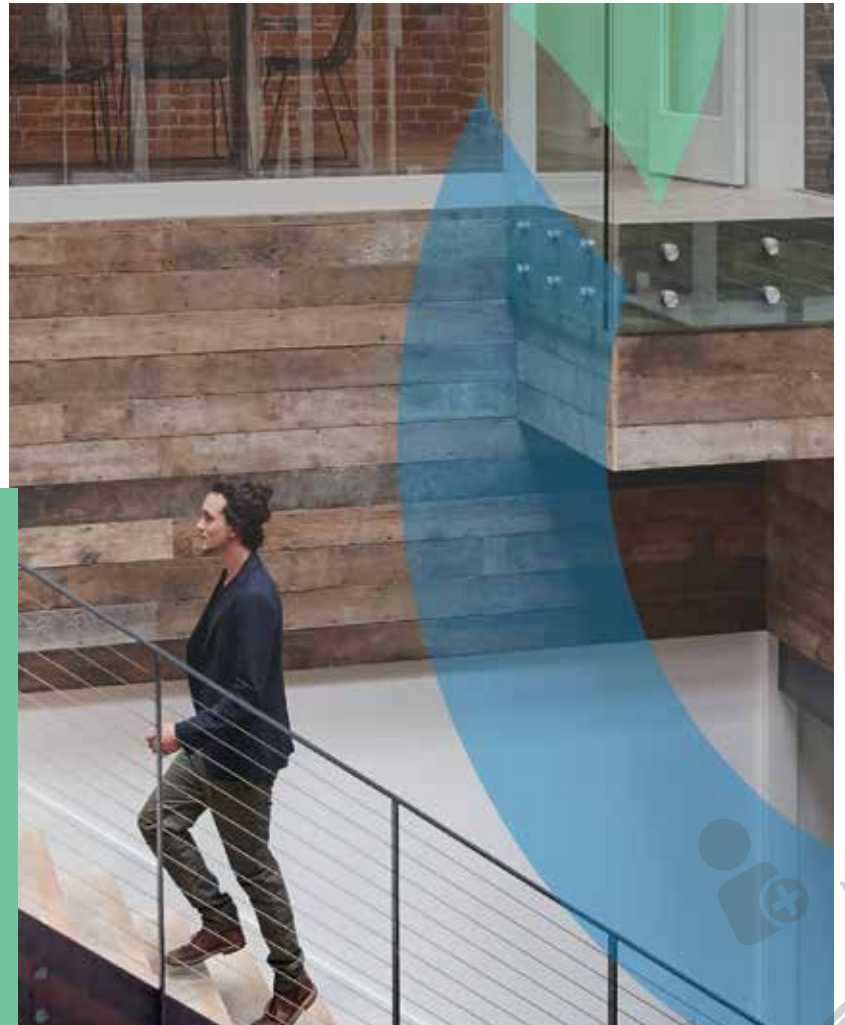
The problem is, there is more "noise" online than ever before. **Between automation and algorithms, it has never been more difficult to gain permission to engage with a passive audience online using traditional methods.** The candidates you want, the talented ones, may not notice your attempts to engage them.

Reaching passive candidates, even through LinkedIn - once a vital part of talent attraction and acquisition - is also getting more difficult, thanks to the amount of noise and numerous other distractions on social media. Brands need to seek permission to attract passive and active candidates, which is only possible through, as Seth Godin, a marketing expert, put it, through **"Permission Marketing"**, which is another way of saying, inbound marketing.

2. WHAT IS INBOUND MARKETING?

Countless articles, books and eBooks, whitepapers, webinars and blogs have been written about inbound marketing. Since 2006, it has been proven to be “the most effective marketing method for doing business online,” according to one of its many advocates, HubSpot. Explained in more detail, this means:

“Inbound marketing is about using marketing to bring potential customers to you, rather than having your marketing efforts fight for their attention. Sharing is caring and inbound marketing is about creating and sharing content with the world. By creating content specifically designed to appeal to your dream customers, inbound attracts qualified prospects to your business and keeps them coming back for more.” - HubSpot.



In comparison, outbound is an expensive numbers game. The right people might see the advert, but at the same time, there's a good chance they will miss or ignore it, especially when **75% aren't actively looking for a new role**. Jobs boards are no longer as effective as they were in the past. The last click attribution model is broken. Recruitment is no longer just a numbers game; you can't keep throwing darts blindly at a board hoping to hit target.

In the next section, we will walk you through how you apply these principles and processes to recruitment, including creating candidate personas and designing the inbound marketing funnel.

3.

WHY IS INBOUND MARKETING BECOMING A NECESSARY PART OF TALENT ACQUISITION?

Over the last few years, Inbound has become more common for recruiters and in-house talent acquisition (TA) teams. Recruitment staff are working with marketing, which is accelerating the adoption of inbound strategies since 3 of 4 marketers now prioritise inbound over outbound.

Inbound cultivates fans and initiates conversations. Inbound turns passive job seekers into active applicants. Inbound has a higher ROI, with companies that have less than \$5 million to spend on marketing four times more likely to use inbound than outbound.

Companies consistently see a higher ROI from inbound, whether they spend less than \$25,000 or more than \$5 million. Inbound is less about guesswork, and more about ensuring a brand is deploying the right marketing at the right time, through channels that reach the right audience.

Applying Inbound to Talent Acquisition

Recruitment campaigns should be ongoing, to attract passive and active candidates; ensuring you have a steady stream of people interested in applying for vacancies when you need to hire new staff. Taking this 'always on' approach to recruitment will ensure you are never short of potential candidates.

Talent Acquisition is shifting to the mindset that candidates - both passive and active - have already adopted consumer thinking to job hunting. Industry practices have been slow to catch up, even when ROI from job advertising have been reducing.

Potential candidates engage with brands before brands attract them. Job searches now start on Google and social networks. Candidates do their homework. Applying inbound marketing principles ensures brands can obtain long-term results from engaging candidates earlier in the decision-making cycle. This way, candidates can receive information that is valuable for them, in the context of their personal and professional lives, thereby aligning their needs with that of a potential new employer.





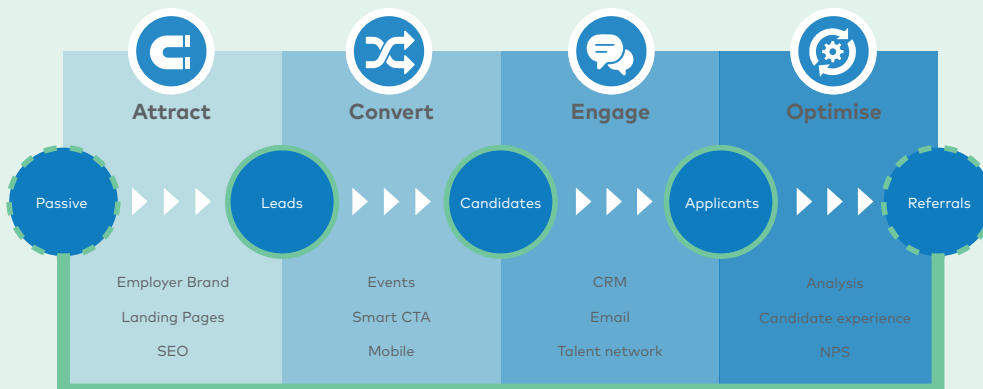
4. THE FOUR STAGES OF INBOUND TALENT ACQUISITION

Before you launch into an inbound marketing campaign, it is important to think about who you want to attract. This involves drilling down on two questions: What are your organisation's talent needs for the next 12 months? Within this, consider the potential turnover of staff in roles that traditionally have low retention rates or other positions that you can anticipate current staff, for any reason, transitioning out of your company.

Next, create **candidate personas**. This follows the same methodology as other marketing professionals use to create 'buyer personas' so that they know who they're creating content around. Learn as much as you can about these potential candidates.

Once you have created buyer personas, focus on creating content around the candidate journey, which can be used in the four different stages of the candidate's journey. Although, marketers are known for giving them different labels: the stages are roughly the same, involving the application of similar strategies, despite the disagreement about the terms used.

Here is what the four stages look like:



ATTRACT



CONVERT



ENGAGE



OPTIMISE

1. ATTRACT



At this stage, employers should seek to inform and educate. Well-known businesses usually have whole teams working on this, but companies of all sizes can dedicate resources to production of such content. Here is where the focus should be on attracting as many potential, high-quality candidates into the top of the funnel as possible.

Create value for potential candidates. Help make their jobs easier, even if they aren't working for you (yet): Give them information that they, in their job role (e.g. a CFO, Engineer, CMO) would find useful, thereby informing and delighting them. In the future, they will keep coming back for more information, turning to your channels as a valuable resources, and source of new ideas and inspiration.

2. CONVERT



This stage is where you should aim to get contact information from potential candidates, in exchange for something of greater value. For example, give them an eBook, or host an event, a private webinar, or site tour. Relatively speaking, you aren't spending a lot on this conversion phase, but they are giving you permission to engage them.

Even if they aren't suitable for a role now, this is the start of an engagement process that could result in them working for you down the road. Surely, when the right calibre of candidate comes your way, this is better than them working for a competitor.

3. ENGAGE



Now you can engage them with more informative marketing; or, invite them to send a CV or come to an open day/interview. This is the stage the previous two are driving towards. Are they excited about a vacancy? Do they want to apply for a job? Have they sent in a speculative application?

Enthusiasm is a great indication that your employer branding and other informative content is having a positive impact. This engagement stage is when a potential candidate becomes an applicant. Now is the time when they will send in an application, fill in an online form or send a CV and covering letter. Ensure you make this as easy as possible, especially with more candidates than ever applying through mobile devices.

4. OPTIMISE



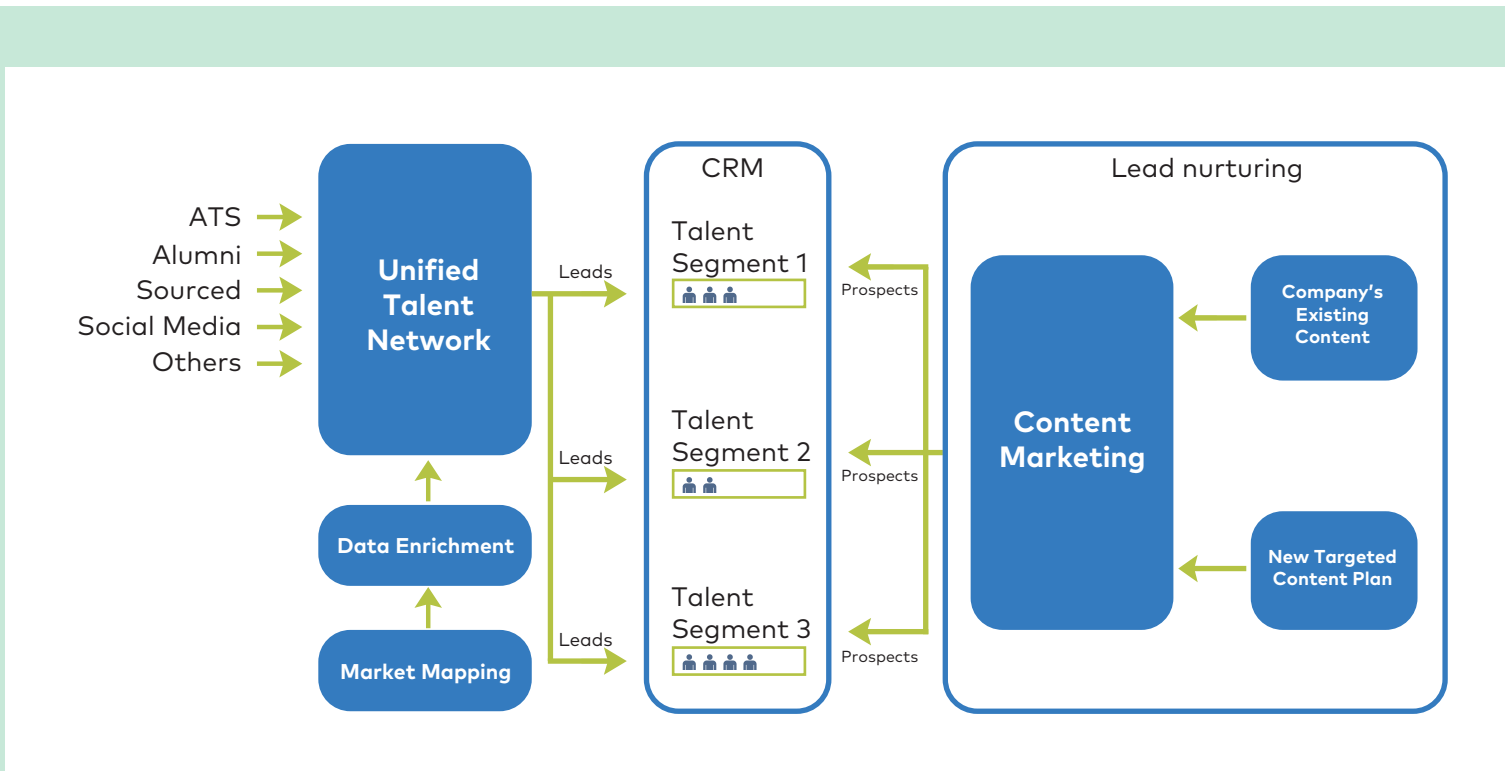
This is where you close the deal. When it comes to recruitment, this is when it is out of the hands of those doing marketing. A candidate will or won't get a job. It is down to the candidate and recruitment or HR staff, who, for this to work, should be part of your team. But it doesn't end at the interview. At this point, if you are recruiting for other roles, and a candidate is sufficiently impressed, they could refer other applicants. This is when you know your inbound marketing is working for talent attraction.

Learn from the first three stages, improve and repeat. Measure every stage, to ensure you know what works and what doesn't. In the next section, we will talk about how you integrate inbound marketing with current outbound strategies.

HOW TO INTEGRATE INBOUND MARKETING INTO THE TALENT PIPELINE

Integrating a new approach, even one that has a proven higher ROI, means finding creative ways to leverage existing resources, deploy internal talent, and, when necessary, work with new vendors who can facilitate this transition to inbound marketing. The most progressive companies already have unified talent networks, which include ATS and social networks data, email databases, alumni networks, data from recruiters, advertising platforms and jobs boards, all held together using candidate relationship management systems (CRM).

When implementing an inbound strategy, it is essential to segment the talent network according to candidate persona's and the organization's talent needs over the next year.



After that, map and timeline the content necessary to drive candidates through the inbound talent attraction funnel. Engagement with this content will enrich existing databases with contextual information (e.g. if a talent prospect has read several articles, downloaded an eBook or registered for a webinar then it's a good indication that they could be receptive to an approach by a recruiter). Inbound can be enriched and supported by outbound - the two aren't necessarily mutually exclusive, but working together, the data will give much greater insight when the right candidate is ready to engage with a company and potentially have an interview.

AMPLIFY CONTENT: INCREASE TOP-OF-THE-FUNNEL TRAFFIC

Consistently producing great content for the marketing funnel is only half of the battle. Next, you need to ensure that you are promoting this content. Distribution is crucial, but often neglected, or misunderstood aspect of content marketing.

For most recruitment and employer branding campaigns, LinkedIn, now owned by Microsoft, is the most natural choice. Although, increasingly, not the best. Even with over 440 million users and a recent sale to Microsoft, there is a constant backlash on the professional social network about how other users are engaging with others on the platform. Where once, professionalism and networking reigned supreme, now users are inundated with the type of content they see across the web and other social networks.

Therefore, it is worth ensuring everything you publish on LinkedIn is professional while educating or informing your audience. **Don't be self-promotional. This rule applies whether you are publishing articles directly via your profile, using LinkedIn Pulse, or publishing links in forums and groups.**



It is also worth considering where to publish beyond LinkedIn. The top three social networks beyond LinkedIn where you are most likely to stumble across candidates, or they will see your content: Facebook, Twitter and Google all have deep-search tools, such as graph search, Followerwonk and Google x-ray search, that make it easy to find people based on keywords and other search terms.

Twitter lists are also a goldmine of data, with designers and developers, for example, often using the same username across multiple social networks. Find a candidate on Twitter and you can usually locate the same person on Behance, GitHub, Pinterest, Instagram, Quora, Reddit and other online communities and forums.

When publishing and broadcasting articles and content, always have quality front of mind. Consider whether the online forums and channels are a good source of the types of candidates you want to attract.

SUMMARY: ATTRACTING TOP TALENT THROUGH INBOUND CONTENT MARKETING

- Candidates are more in control than ever before. They control when they want to look for a new job, and they are increasingly unlikely to engage with a company or apply for a job straight after seeing a job advert.
- Within inbound recruitment workframe, potential candidates go through a four stage process, similar to the 'buyer's journey.' Content marketing needs to mirror this journey, to ensure you are engaging talent and building your employer brand before potential candidates need to make a decision.
- Know your audience. Ensure the content speaks to their career goals, personal values, professional needs and creates a value-driven relationship from day one.
- Inbound and outbound are not mutually exclusive. Working together, the data will give much greater insight when the right candidate is expressing an interest in a company.
- Create awesome content. Brands that deliver this value upfront have a better chance of cutting through the noise and catching the eye of high calibre candidates. Content generates more leads, cheaper - over 31% cheaper - than paid search advertising. People trust content, but only when it adds value (articles aren't 1000 word sales pitches).
- Amplify and measure content marketing efforts. Don't limit yourself to publishing through a few channels: amplify and measure at every stage. Once you can measure how candidates are interacting with content at every stage of the funnel you will know when is the right time to invite them to interview. Your next star hire is out there: Inbound content marketing is how you attract, engage and recruit them.

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