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Hudson Fusion

Long-Haul Business Growth

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Everybody wants more business. Whether you're trying to stay afloat or trying to maintain growth, you can't do it if you don't work to grow your client base.

We're always hearing from business owners that they aren't sure how to begin or sustain growth. They're running low on new customers, and aren't sure how to develop more. They've eaten through all their leads, and wrung every last drop out of their referral network - and they can't figure out how to expand it.

Everybody wants more business.

In most cases, this is because they aren't using the internet to market their services effectively. While online marketing is about more than having a website, far too many businesses stop there. They'll take a few minutes to register their domain name and put up an "about me" page, and then hope the business comes pouring in. They may even pick a tactic or two to focus on, like pay-per-click or Facebook promotions. But even when a business owner has taken the time to develop a beautiful, well-designed site, that's simply never going to be enough.

The internet is bustling with media channels. From YouTube to Twitter to Facebook, from banner advertisements to blog platforms, from the Huffington Post to the Daily Beast, the internet is literally made of information - and it's all there for you to take advantage of.

And while you may worry that your industry isn't "sexy" enough for an effective marketing campaign, the truth is that **the people you want to sell to have fully-developed digital lives. They are everywhere, and they're looking for you.**

If you have customers, it means you have a market that's ready to hear your message. You just have to find a way to get it to them. And while you may not be able to afford a Super Bowl ad, the good news is that you don't need one. You just need to make yourself easy for them to find.

The people you want to sell to have fully-developed digital lives. They are everywhere, and they're looking for you.

Inbound marketing does exactly that.

So what's inbound marketing?

Outbound marketing is what you probably think of when you think of advertising. Outbound marketing is disruptive and annoying. It's about getting in the way, putting itself in between your prospect and something they want, and demanding their attention so that they hear the message.

But more often than not, they have no *interest* in hearing the message. It's not relevant to their lives. People are resentful of the interruption; they mute the TV, install ad-blocker software, whatever it takes to get this stuff away from them.

But inbound marketing doesn't work like that.

Inbound marketing is all about *permission and availability*. It's about making yourself easy to find when your ideal customers are looking for your products and services.

You can break down inbound marketing into four stages.

1. *Attract* strangers
2. *Convert* to leads
3. *Close* customers
4. *Delight* customers to make them into brand promoters

The **attract** stage is about getting found by the people you want to do business with. The **convert** stage is about turning them into leads – and then nurturing those leads all the way to the **close at the point of sale**. Lastly, the **delight** stage is how you keep them coming back, turning a customer into a repeat customer, who is both more likely to buy in larger amounts and who will refer new customers to you.

This ebook focuses on stage one: **attracting your ideal customers**.

This stage is about finding leads, not closing the sale; you can't close unless they're already sold on *you*. So don't worry about selling yet. Because once you've built up a relationship between your brand and your ideal customers, you won't need to sell at all. They'll come to you ready to buy.

So, who are your ideal customers? I don't just mean your target demographics; what sort of real person do you want to be doing business with? Because in order to be easy to find, you have to know who you *want* to find you.

This doesn't require buckets of demographic research, either. Just a little thought.

Buyer Personas

The first step to building an inbound marketing plan is to develop what we call buyer personas. Your buyer personas are your ideal customers distilled into fictitious characters. That allows you to think specifically about what motivates them to buy and determine how to position your services to best reach them.

It's not as intensive as market research; mostly it's a matter of sitting down and making educated guesses based on your own experience; what do your clients do? What are they like? Do they tend to be older men? Middle-aged women? Young, brash professionals?

Different kinds of people respond to different kinds of messaging in different ways. A 20-something startup owner isn't going to have the same mindset as a banker in her mid-fifties.

You should start by putting together three or four personas that each represent a broad swathe of your customer base.

This will help you get a handle on what sort of content they want to engage with – and how they want to engage with it. If your ideal customers simply don't tend to be Twitter users, well, spending a ton of time on Twitter isn't going to be the best use of your marketing resources, and you need to know that in advance.

There's no correct format; you're just working out in general terms who your customers are, what their pain points are, and what sort of content is likely to engage them. And once you have those down, you can get to work building a website and developing content that's designed to attract those people to you.


The **Attract** Stage has two major components:

1. Identifying who your ideal customers are
2. Developing great content that they'll want to read and share

Different kinds of people respond to different kinds of messaging in different ways.

Think through these questions:

- Do they make purchasing decisions?
- What sort of people do they tend to be? Demographics like age group and income level matter.
- What are the problems they're trying to solve?
- Where do they get their information?
- Are they email or phone people?
- Do they take their work home with them?
- What reasons might they have not to purchase?



Try and go into some detail, putting real thought into who they are and how they operate, and think about the sorts of things they might google, too; that'll help dictate your SEO strategy later.

We've included a worksheet to help you get started with buyer personas.

Website Content

Now let's switch gears for a moment to talk about your website. Your website *really* is your most important marketing tool. And that goes far beyond simply having an attractive online business card. Your website should be a *destination* for the people you want to do business with and for the resources you provide. These ideal customers are out there, every day, googling for information relevant to their lives. Whether or not they're out there looking to make a *purchase*, you want them to come to visit your website.

And you do that by turning it into something profoundly more than an online business card. You turn it into a *resource*.

Now, this may seem counterintuitive. Why should you devote time and money to developing a website that's not built to encourage sales? After all - if they're already looking for your products & services, wouldn't all they really need be your email address?

The goal here isn't about making the sale now.

The goal here isn't about making the sale *now*. It's about laying a foundation that will increase your website visitors, turn them into prospects, build up your list of qualified leads, and ultimately enlarge your potential pool for *future* sales. **Inbound marketing is a long game** - but it's one that generates increased sales when you fully commit.

That foundation consists of filling your website with high quality content that's relevant to your personas' lives - and answers their questions. **When it comes to your industry, you want it to be the *first place they think of*; if they have a question about anything relevant to *who you are and what you do*, you want them coming to you *first*.** Because you aren't just a service provider, retailer, or supplier; you're an expert.

And building up a reputation for expertise means giving away your knowledge.


Lots of people balk at the idea of giving *anything* away, but think of it like this: it's an investment in your brand, and by putting your expertise, your experience, your knowledge base at your customers' disposal, you're building their investment in you.

The more they engage with your content, the more likely they are to buy - and to recommend you to their friends and colleagues, precisely the people you want to be doing business with. **Brand ambassadors are absolutely the best marketing tool you can have.**

By building up a resource hub full of expertly-written articles that interest your ideal customers, you're telling them that helping them out is as important to you as making the sale. That builds an enormous amount of trust. And when you have their trust, they're more likely to make the purchase when they *do* need what you're selling. Because they know you. Because they like you. And because, ultimately, they *trust you*.

After all, you've been their partner. And creating partnerships that benefit both client and vendor is what inbound marketing is all about.

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And your content can go far beyond web copy. You'll want to include blogs, ebooks, whitepapers, webinars, podcasts – anything you think your customers would be interested in reading in whatever form you think would make it easier for them to engage with.

The point of inbound marketing is to make the sale in the end. But sales today are customer-driven rather than driven by the business. Nobody is out there waiting for a salesman to call them. Instead they're actively doing research. Customers are out there looking for a solution when they need one, and they want a solution they can trust.

This is what inbound marketing does. It builds *relationships* of trust and gives prospects a reason to buy from you. It makes them think of you *first*.

And there is no more valuable marketing tool than *that*.

SEO

SEO has changed a ton in the last few years. It used to be enough to jam-pack your webpage with as many keywords as you could, leading to weird content that read like it was packaged by a robot.

But it doesn't work like that anymore, and if you do that, you're going to suffer in search rankings. What Google likes – and what will make your website easier to find – is simply well-written, human-generated content. They focus in relevance with remarkably human accuracy, and backlinks and organic sharing increases how relevant Google thinks your webpage is.

SEO has changed a ton in the last few years.

What you *can* do is look at highly-competitive keywords to help direct your content. If you find out that “trains to Peru” is a particularly valuable search term, you don't force it into a page as often as possible, but you build a webpage *around* that search term. You include it in the metadata to make sure Google knows what it's looking at at a glance, but otherwise you simply write content around that term. The relevant long-tail search terms will naturally make their way into the content, and further drive the page's relevance without sounding robotic.

So what keywords should you use?

The first thing to do is sit down with a pencil and paper and brainstorm. What search terms do you think people are using when they're looking for websites like yours? What search terms would you *prefer* people to use? Think of everything from the most boring searches to the weirdest ones you can. You want to build a wide range of terms to research and you honestly never know what will bear fruit.

The thing is to get specific. It might sound awesome to rank for “shirts,” but how useful would it be if your company only makes novelty Hawaiian shirts? Most people who google “shirts” wouldn't have any interest in your product, so you would have wasted a ton of time and money building up your results – just to be seen by millions of uninterested searchers. So get specific. “Novelty shirts” would be great. “Novelty Hawaiian shirts” would be, too. “Novelty Hawaiian shirts with pictures of Elvis size m” would be fantastic. Those are people with a clear goal and who you can reasonably suspect of being close to purchasing.

By focusing on locating and developing content around and featuring these long-tail keywords, you're capturing something like 70% of all relevant searches. These highly commercial and highly targeted searches will lead right to you.

Anatomy of an Inbound Campaign

So here's the nuts and bolts of what an inbound campaign actually looks like.

Let's take some time and break down how inbound marketing works on a practical, day-to-day level by looking at the anatomy of a basic inbound campaign, diving into what each element does and how it fits into the bigger picture.

The basic pieces of any inbound marketing strategy are the *content offer*, *traffic drivers*, *landing pages*, *forms*, and *nurturing emails*. There's some variation in these areas, but that's your big picture. That's your establishing shot. They go in roughly that order, and everything is oriented toward building a progression that culminates in prospects giving you their contact information.

Your content offer can be anything of value you're willing to give away in exchange for that information. This can be an ebook, a webinar, a checklist, how-to instructions, a report, a tipsheet, a worksheet – anything. If you think your ideal clients might *want* it, you have an interest in putting it together. And what's more, these help cement your reputation as a leader in the field.

Traffic drivers do exactly what their name suggests: they drive traffic to your landing page. This is frequently a direct email – but those only engage people whose contact information you already have. You can drive traffic whose information you *don't* have via social media, blogs, or even some paid advertising; PPC campaigns are actually a great way to generate contact lists. In any event, a traffic driver has to clearly communicate the benefit of the offer and the problems it solves in a concrete way.

Landing pages are the centerpiece of your entire inbound campaign. These short pages have exactly one goal: getting people onto your contact list, allowing you to spend time nurturing them toward the final sale. When you're putting together a landing page, you need to make sure you clearly communicate what the prospect is supposed to accomplish on this page *and* that it's easy for them to do it.

Your landing page titles always need to be totally focused on the outcome of the page. If they're signing up for a consultation, your title and header should say something like "Free Consultation: Bedbug Removal" – I see that header, and I know exactly what the point of this page is.

Nobody wants their time wasted, and you've already gotten them this far. You want to make it feel like filling out that form is *inevitable*. And you do that with clear, actionable language that communicates at every stage the expected action and the expected outcome.

And make sure your landing pages include visuals that support the page goal; visuals immediately make the page more interesting, and people are less likely to glaze their eyes over an image as opposed to a wall of text. Images immediately attract the eye to the headline, and then direct them down.

You can communicate so much in just a few seconds if you design your page right!

Focus on:

- What you're offering
- Why it matters
- How to get it

Keep your pages short and punchy, and include bulleted lists wherever possible; they're easy to digest, and people will be immediately drawn there. Bullet the benefits – *why* they should fill out this form, what they'll get, why it's awesome.

You can communicate so much in just a few seconds if you design your page right!

Forms are the most pivotal piece of the inbound lead generation strategy; without a form, all you've got are visitors, and no way to follow up.

Everything I said about clarity in landing pages applies to forms, too. Form titles need to be super clear. Tell me what's going to happen when I fill out this form. Don't be clever. Don't be cutesy. Be *clear*. "Sign Up for Your Free Bedbug Removal Consultation." It's not fancy – but I know exactly what to expect.

What that does is *encourage people to fill out the form*. You reconnect with their pain point, offer them a solution to their problems, and strengthen their sense of need. Then you drive it home with the right button; avoid using "submit;" instead, make the button more relevant and applicable to what they're getting: "Get Your Bedbug Removal Consultation," or "Let's Talk about Bedbug Removal."

You don't want to ask for a ton of information; generally speaking, all you need is a first name, a last name, and an email address. Once you've got that – they're in. Then you can nurture them into a sale.

Ongoing Email Lead Nurturing

Nurturing can be done in lots of ways, but the most common – and usually the most effective – is email. Email marketing, especially email nurturing, can sometimes feel complicated. But it doesn't need to be if you know a few basic principles.

Emails have a few jobs on the *nurturing* path.

- They remind the lead that your company exists
- They invite them to engage further
- They continue to provide them with quality, useful content
- They work to pull them further down the sales funnel, moving them from consideration to decision

You just have to make sure you're talking to them the right way. And that means knowing how they read.

Let me put this as simply as I can: People aren't reading your emails.

Sorry.

At best, most people are skimming them. On the internet, people scan more than they read, especially when they aren't convinced something has any value. So you want to write for that reader.


You need to write in an **inverted triangle we call the "greased chute."** Put the most valuable content at the top, and the least valuable content on the bottom. That means the first thing they see should connect with them.

After that, you make it easy to get down the chute. Bold the important stuff. Include bulleted lists, just like in the landing pages. Communicate what **matters** in such a way that the people just scanning the email can easily pick out the main points – and make a decision to engage – without having to invest a lot of time.

It can be hard to write like this, but it's easy for people to *read*.

Put the most valuable content at the top, and the least valuable content on the bottom.





The key thing to remember as you send out marketing emails is that you can't ever assume your audience has read *anything* you've sent them. You're better off assuming every email is be their first. And always make sure that every email you send *matters* to the *lead*. If there's no benefit to the lead, they won't read it and won't take action, and that doesn't get you *anywhere*.

Nurturing is all about consistently *demonstrating* your value by *being* valuable.

It's simple. Drive traffic to a landing page, convince them to fill out a form, and then they're in the system. But the key is to always make it worth their time by providing entertaining, useful content that keeps them coming back for more.

Keep in mind that these inbound tactics are not the entire picture. They're part of a larger marketing strategy. But when it's done correctly and consistently, inbound efforts provide sales-qualified leads to you or your sales team.

About Hudson Fusion

Hudson Fusion is an innovative agency at the cutting edge of digital marketing. Our unique, hybrid methodology combines the best of inbound marketing with the best of traditional advertising and PR.

We deliver results-oriented custom plans tailor made to achieve your business goals. Our one-of-a-kind approach is focused on getting to know your business, understanding your market, and doing everything we can to make sure you're moving toward your goals.

From website design to social media strategy to staging trade shows, Hudson Fusion is your dedicated agency partner.

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