SaaS Marketing Strategies:

# Getting Quick Wins and Building for Long-Term Victory
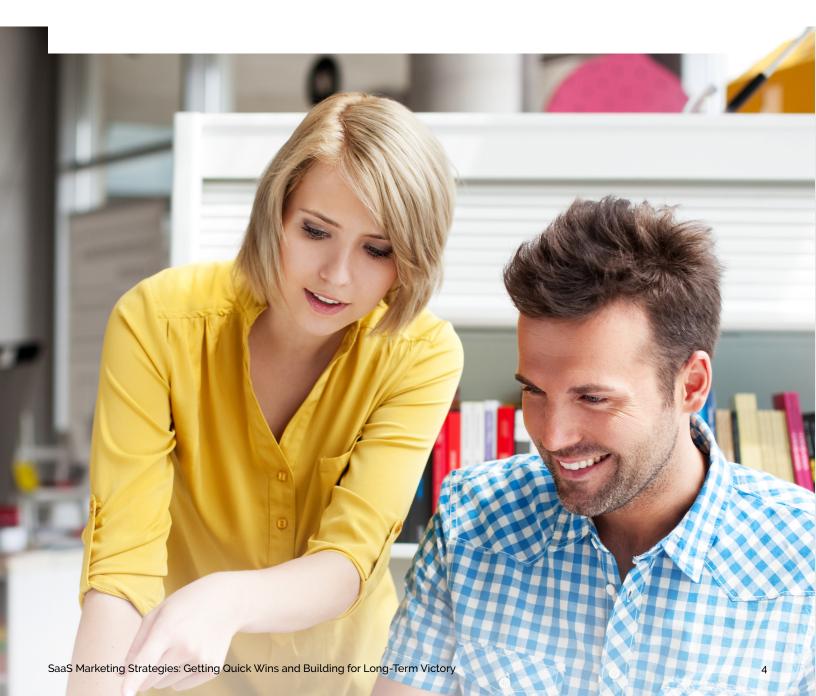
**SmartBug.**

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# Introduction

It's not secret that the software-as-a-service (SaaS) industry is experiencing unprecedented growth. Just look at the numbers: According to Gartner, Inc., the SaaS market is projected to have grown 16.5 percent in 2016 to a total of $204 billion, up from $175 billion in 2015.[1]

Gartner goes on to report that "subtle changes to demand patterns mean that SaaS vendors' product strategists need to change their go-to market approaches or risk missing out on the burgeoning opportunity."

This increased opportunity also means that the marketplace is incredibly crowded. SaaS vendors need to be smart about their marketing strategies in order to stand out and see results—and they need to do it all in efficient and cost-effective ways.

For SaaS companies, mastering marketing isn't optional—it could make or break the success of the business. Consider the following:

**44%** According to the SaaS Inside Sales Report from The Bridge Group, on average, 44 percent of respondents' pipeline is generated by marketing.[2]

**90%** Ninety percent of startups fail, due to a variety of reasons. In an analysis of 101 startup postmortems, 14 percent of respondents said their failure was, in part, due to "poor marketing."[3]

What can you do to set your SaaS up for long-term success and quick wins? This e-book will delve into metrics you should be measuring, along with sharing *quick wins and long-haul strategies* that you can start implementing today.

**QUICK WINS:**

Short-term strategies that will deliver traffic and low-cost acquisition.

**LONG-HAUL STRATEGIES:**

Long-term strategies for lead nurturing and maximizing continued value.
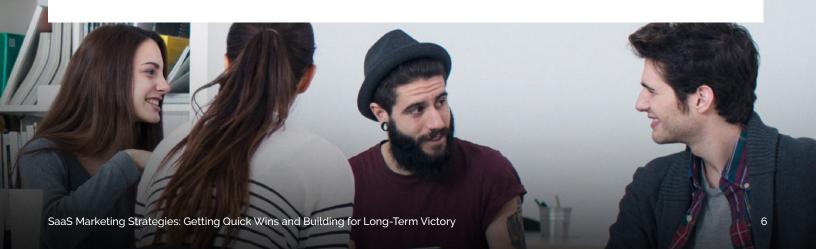
# Development of KPIs

Before rolling out any sort of marketing strategy, whether it's short-term or for the long haul, it's critically important to establish key performance indicators (KPIs).

KPIs help you track the success of your business. And while most SaaS organizations are familiar with KPIs for their business, marketing KPIs are often overlooked. Marketing KPIs dig deeper in order to track the success of your marketing efforts.

It's important to note that it's easy to become numbers-obsessed, especially with access to all kinds of data. Before you know it, you could be reporting on 20 to 30 KPIs and losing sight of what's truly important.

Develop a marketing dashboard that can help you easily track your company's most important KPIs. Common tools for KPI dashboards include HubSpot, Salesforce, and Google Analytics.

Below are several essential marketing KPIs that you should be tracking:

## Unique Visitors

**What is it?** It's important to track unique visitors versus just reporting on traffic. The metric of unique visits shows the number of individuals visiting your website during a certain time period. You'll likely be looking at this number on a weekly basis and reporting on it on a monthly basis. Seeing growth in unique visitors will indicate that your site is accessible and that the content is resonating with your target audience. You'll also be able to see how these visitors are arriving at your site— whether it's via organic search, social media, referrals, email, direct traffic, or your paid media efforts.

**How to measure unique visitors:** Google Analytics, a free tool, is one of the best ways to track unique visitors. Within the tool, you have the ability to refine by date and compare time periods.

The metric of unique visits shows the number of individuals visiting your website during a certain time period.
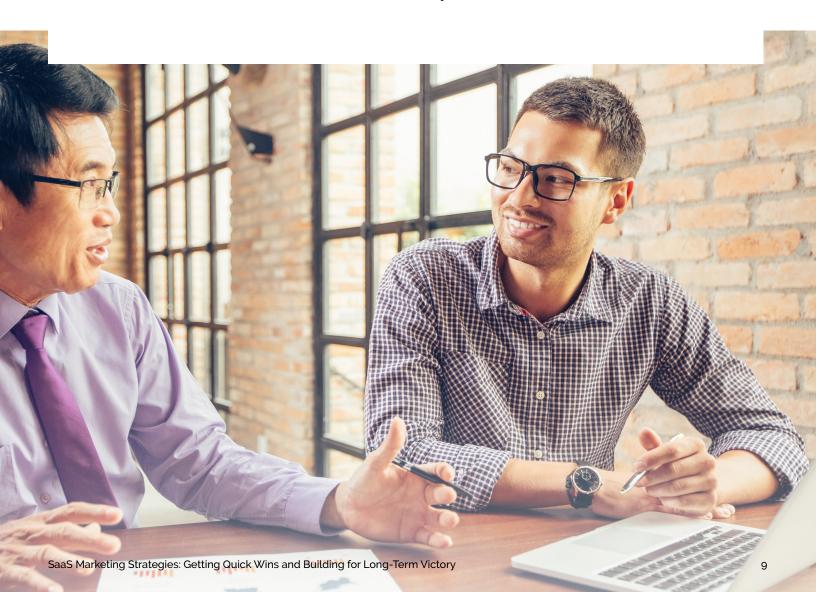
# Leads

**What is it?** "Leads" is a pretty broad term, so you'll want to break this down into several subcategories: leads, marketing qualified leads (MQLs), and sales qualified leads (SQLs). Work with your sales team in order to establish definitions of all three, as what makes an MQL as opposed to what makes an SQL is different for every business. As a starting point, you can use these definitions:

■ A **lead** is typically very top-of-the-funnel. It's someone who is just starting to do his or her research. He or she realizes that he or she has a problem, but he or she probably doesn't know how to solve it just yet. He or she has probably only filled out one form on your website.

■ An **MQL** is a lead who has taken additional steps to further qualify him- or herself as a potential customer and, on paper, looks like an ideal prospect. For example, he or she may have taken a number of actions like downloading two or more e-books and visiting your website a certain number of times.

■ An **SQL** has qualified him- or herself even more than an MQL. It's highly likely that this lead falls into what you have deemed an ideal sales candidate based on more detailed profile information and/or user behavior on your website. He or she is past the initial research stage, and he or she is likely evaluating vendors. An important distinction between an SQL and an MQL is that an SQL is someone whom the sales team has accepted as worthy of a direct sales follow-up.

# How to Measure Leads

A closed-loop marketing automation tool like HubSpot, Marketo, or Pardot ([download our e-book](#) comparing these three solutions) is the best way to measure leads—especially when you'll be breaking them down into subcategories like leads, MQLs, and SQLs.

Within your marketing automation tool, you can set criteria that automatically set an individual as a lead, MQL, or SQL based on actions that he or she has taken on your website.

# Lead-To-Customer Rate

**What is it?** The ultimate goal of your marketing efforts should be to drive customers. Lead-to-customer rate will show how well you're generating sales-ready leads, as well as improvements (or declines) over time.

**How to measure lead-to-customer rate:** Take your total number of customers for the month and divide it by the total number of leads. Then, multiply that number by 100 in order to get the percentage. For example, five customers in a month with 500 leads would equal a one percent lead-to-customer rate.

# Churn

**What is it?** Churn shows how much business you're losing within a certain time period. While churn is a natural part of any business, a high churn rate could indicate that your business is in trouble. That being said, it's one of the most essential metrics for any SaaS company to track. Most companies report churn in terms of revenue or customers.

**How to measure churn:** Google Analytics, a free tool, is one of the best ways to track unique visitors. Within the tool, you have the ability to refine by date and compare time periods.

# Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)

**What is it?** Customer lifetime value (CLV) is the average amount of money that your customers pay during their engagement with your company. This metric can give a clear indication as to whether or not you have a sound strategy for business growth. It also shows investors the value of your company.

Simply put: With a CLV calculation, you're learning, in essence, what your average customer is worth to your company.

**How to measure CLV:** This one's a bit more complicated, so bear with us. First, you'll need to calculate your average customer lifetime. In order to do this, divide the number 1 by the customer churn rate. For example, let's say your monthly churn rate is one percent. Your average customer lifetime would be 1/0.01 = 100 months.

Now that you know your average customer lifetime, you need to multiply it by your average revenue per account (ARPA) over a given time period. In order to find ARPA, divide your total revenue by your total number of customers. For example, if your company brought in $100,000 in revenue last month off of 100 customers, that would be $1,000 in revenue per account.

Finally, this brings us to CLV. You'll now need to multiply customer lifetime, which in our example is 100 months, by your ARPA ($1,000). That brings us to 100 x $1,000, or $100,000 CLV.

# Essential KPIs

### Unique Visitors
The number of individuals visiting your website during a certain time period.

### Leads
Someone who is just starting to do his or her research at the very top of the funnel.

### Lead-to-Customer Rate
Shows how well you're generating sales-ready leads, as well as improvements over time.

### Churn
Shows how much business you're losing within a certain time period.

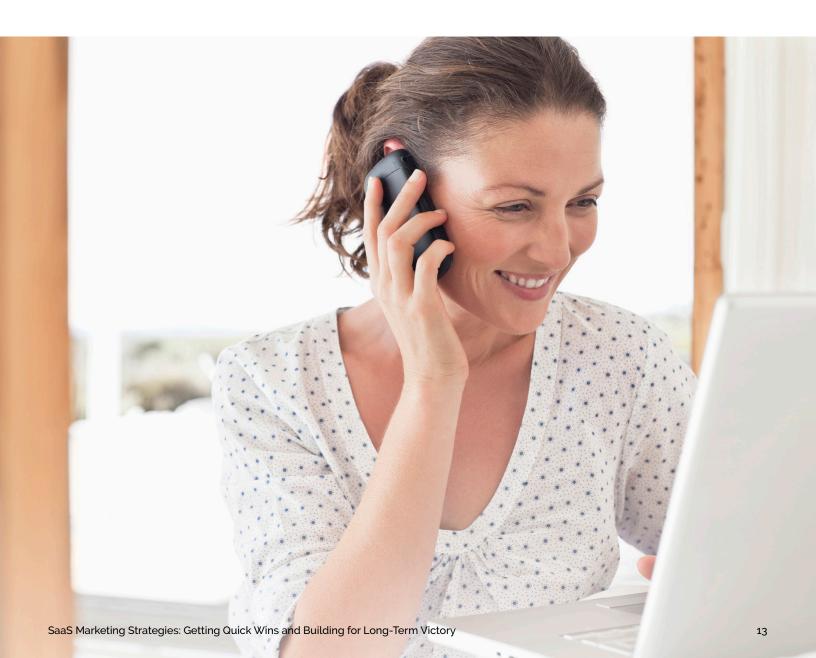## Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)
The average amount of money that your customers pay during their engagement with your company.

## Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)
Shows how much it costs to acquire a customer.

## CLV-to-CAC Ratio
In one, single metric, shows the lifetime value of your customers and the amount you spend to acquire them.

# Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)

**What is it?** Customer acquisition cost (CAC) shows how much it costs to acquire a customer. This metric, combined with CLV, helps a SaaS company ensure its business model is viable.

**How to measure CAC:** In order to calculate CAC, you'll need to divide your total sales and marketing spending (including personnel costs) by the number of new customers you add during a given time. For example, let's say you spent $100,000 in sales and marketing last month and added 100 customers. Your CAC would be $1,000.

# CLV-to-CAC Ratio

**What is it?** The CLV-to-CAC ratio shows the lifetime value of your customers and the amount you spend to acquire them in one, single metric. SaaS companies can use this number in order to measure the health of marketing programs so that they can invest in programs that work well or pivot when campaigns aren't working well.

**How to measure the CLV-to-CAC ratio:** Best practice states that a healthy business should have a CLV three times greater than its CAC. Simply compare your already calculated CLV to your CAC in order to get your ratio.

**Now that we've established your marketing KPIs, let's jump into actionable quick wins and long-haul strategies.**
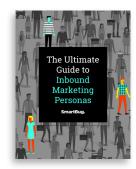
# Build Your Brand

SaaS companies are typically startups, so building a name and establishing your brand in the marketplace are essential missions. As HubSpot puts it: "A brand is one of the most valuable assets of a business, and it needs to be carefully crafted to ensure it properly and authentically represents the business."[5]

While the term "branding" can stir up visions of large advertising agencies and even bigger product names, there are modern-day tactics that you can start implementing today, whether you're a SaaS provider just starting out or a more established name.

## Building Your Foundation

Before you embark on building your brand, you need to understand and develop your personas. It's important to point out that buyer personas (whom you'll be targeting in your marketing efforts) are different from user personas (who use your product on a day-to-day basis).



Download "The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas" for a framework on how to get started.

**Download Now**

# Long-Term Goal

Once you've established your buyer personas, it's essential that your product is addressing the pain points of your target customers. From there, you can begin creating and distributing content that establishes your brand as a trusted resource in the market.

**There are several brands that you can look to for inspiration:**



**HubSpot:** From educational blog posts on its website to guest posting on others to speaking engagements to an annual, education-focused inbound marketing conference, HubSpot has established its brand as the go-to resource for all things inbound marketing. An important thing to note, though, is that it is truly focused on creating content for the target personas. Its content doesn't just stop at inbound marketing. It educates its audience on a wide range of topics that affect them, the readers.



**Starbucks:** Starbucks's branding strategy is all about what it calls "the moment of connection." From the barista knowing your preferred drink to the cozy feel of each and every Starbucks to the release of the Pumpkin Spice Latte every fall, consumers have come to expect a certain experience every time they step into a Starbucks.

**Southwest Airlines:** Southwest isn't afraid to deviate from what's considered "normal" in its industry. Tim Calkins, clinical professor of marketing at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, said, "Southwest has always been a very independent brand that's quick to break the norms of the airline industry. From the seating assignments to the fact that it doesn't list in many of the big online reservation systems, it has always prided itself on being very different."[6] That differentiation has worked incredibly well for the Southwest brand. Other airlines have tried—and failed—to replicate its low-cost yet efficient travel model.

Once you've established your buyer personas, it's essential that your product is addressing the pain points of your target customers.

Building a brand takes time and effort, but the dividends definitely pay off—you'll be able to attract talent, drive sales, and establish your company as a trusted leader in the market.

**QUICK WIN**

# Social Media Strategy

You can accelerate your brand-building efforts through social media—both earned and paid. You'll want to first establish where your customers are spending their time online.

Once you've established where they're spending their time, engage in conversation. Approach social media conversations like you would a networking happy hour. You wouldn't walk in and immediately try to sell your product, would you? Engage in conversation where it makes the most sense and build trust. Consistent social media engagement will build brand recognition and drive traffic back to your website.

Likewise, paid social media efforts can amplify your message and ensure that your target persona is seeing it. Like earned social media efforts, consistent engagement will build brand recognition and drive traffic back to your website.

**Here Are Some Helpful Resources To Get Your SaaS Company Started On Social Media**

Social Media Strategy For Small Businesses [e-book]

Social Media Marketing: Feeds, Growth and Reporting [e-book]

Why Quality Over Quantity is Key in Social Media [Blog]

**QUICK WIN**

# Co-Brand Premium Content with Reputable Companies

There's no better way to establish yourself as a trusted brand than to partner with a well-known brand. Before you invest in the partnership, ensure that the brand you're partnering with has a similar target persona.

By releasing a co-branded premium piece, like a white paper, you're aligning yourself with a trusted company. Your target persona will assume that you're a reputable brand, because the established, trusted company wouldn't compromise its reputation to partner with you. You're also tapping into its audience. This presents PR opportunities, lead generation opportunities, and more.

For a great example of powerful co-branding, take a look at [Death Wish Coffee's Super Bowl ad](#). The small business won a contest, sponsored by Intuit QuickBooks, and the prize was a 30-second Super Bowl ad. The result? Following the airing of the commercial, Death Wish was selling 20 times more than usual, and brand awareness has skyrocketed. It's also opened the door for further distribution opportunities.

# Define Your Sales Process

Once your brand has been built, and you know whom you plan on selling your software to, you need to figure out how you can actually make the sale. As with all other chapters in this e-book, we have separated this Sales section into three chapters: "Laying the Foundation Through an Empowered Sales Team," "Your Long-Term Goal: Defining Your Sales Process," and "Your Quick Win: Develop a Sales and Marketing SLA."

## Laying the Foundation Through an Empowered Sales Team

Inbound marketing came about due to a change in how people were buying. Rather than rely on companies' sales teams' words, consumers began taking the initiative to do their own research, to determine exactly which solutions they felt would best alleviate their problems *before* speaking to a salesperson. Now that consumers buy differently, sales teams have to be able to sell in parallel.

The greatest difference between traditional salespeople and inbound salespeople comes from their approaches to making the sale.

Traditional sales teams tend to be sales-centric, focusing less on the specific needs of the buyer. In decades past, companies' sales teams tended to focus on the products and services they sold, insisting that their products or services were best, end of story. Inbound salespeople, on the other hand, want to be sure they are selling the *right* product or service to the *right* prospect at the *right* time.

**Inbound marketing came about due to a change in how people were buying.**

# Your Long-Term Goal: Defining Your Sales Process

Despite being critical to the success of your company, a sales process, in theory, is quite simple. At its most basic, a sales process is a repeatable set of steps that your sales team executes with a prospect as said prospect moves through the buyer's journey from the awareness stage to the point of sale. Sounds simple, right?

It can be. Developing and implementing a sales process in its most basic form can be a simple process, as you'll read further on. But if you're wondering why you should even spend time on such a simple deliverable, consider this: According to a report published by CSO Insights[8], sales organizations that adopt and implement a defined sales process where sales-rep adoption is actively managed and changes to the process are made proactively, enjoy a win rate of 55.2 percent, 15 percent higher than those that don't.

**Other benefits of adopting a sales process include:**

- A concrete understanding of the prospect's situation in the buyer's journey

- Increased scalability

- Increased efficiency

- Improved forecasting

# Creating Your Sales Process

Your sales process should include every single, repeatable step that your sales team takes as it moves a prospect from his or her early stages of awareness until it converts that contact into a customer.

According to HubSpot's Inbound Sales Methodology[9], your sales process should include steps within the following four stages:

**1** **Identify:** Take note of prospects who are more aware of your service and potentially more actively trying to reach a solution.

**2** **Connect:** Connect with these prospects through various online media; this is an opportunity for your sales team to position itself as a group of helpful, reputable experts.

**3** **Explore:** When a contact transitions into exploration mode, work with him or her in order to define his or her optimal solution.

**4** **Advise:** As the expert in your field, customize your presentation and solution in order to truly align with your contact's buyer's journey and timeline.

However, although your sales team can easily start to lay this framework together, expanding and finalizing your company's sales process is a long-term goal. As with many repeatable processes, it takes time in order to finesse and finalize it. Your sales process is no different.

## Visibly Put Your Sales Process into Action

Your sales process will never be complete. Rather, much like other strategic sections of your business, it should be a living, breathing plan that may need to change based on best practices or may need to adapt to external market changes. The key is to understand exactly which processes best set your business's sales team up for making a sale and to reflect these specific, repeatable practices within your sales process.

Once these processes are more or less finalized, your company must be sure that these stages of your sales process are visible to not only your sales team but (at a minimum) your marketing and executive teams as well. This can be accomplished through the implementation of a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

**QUICK WIN**
## Develop a Sales and Marketing SLA

Compared to the time required in order to develop and perfect your company's sales process, setting up a service-level agreement (SLA) can take you no time at all. Now, while you won't directly see the sales rolling in once you set this up, you will be able to visibly set both your marketing and sales departments up for success.

The steps for creating your sales and marketing SLA are as follows:

**1** **Define your personas:** As your company has already developed its buyer personas, these formal definitions will help your marketing team understand exactly whom it should be trying to attract. As we already mentioned, be sure that both teams understand the difference between who is buying your software and who is using your software.

**2** **Define your leads:** Upon understanding whom you are trying to attract, you need to define the difference between a lead, MQL, and SQL. Keep in mind that an MQL is an attractive lead that is not yet ready for contact with sales, but an SQL is. Understanding the difference between these types of leads will allow both teams to understand who is responsible for each.

**3** **Set goals:** Goals should be set in order to hold both teams accountable. Examples are the number of SQLs that a marketing team should deliver or the percentage of SQLs delivered that a sales team should make contact with. Keep in mind that all goals should be both relevant and feasible.

**4** **Define the handoff:** From marketing to sales, and from sales to specific reps, you must define ahead of time which leads will be passed from one team to another and how this handoff will occur.

**5** **Implement a lead management system:** While this section may need to be updated more than other sections of the SLA, it is also one of the most critical. This section should establish what happens to leads once they're obtained. Will they be enrolled in a six-point workflow before being passed to sales? Should sales reach out to them once every three days for two weeks? When should leads be discarded? As leads move through the inner departments of your company, be sure that these changes are reflected within the CRM discussed previously in this chapter.

**6** **Assess the SLA:** As the SLA creates the framework for how leads are carried throughout your company, you will easily be able to see where issues are. See which sections work and which might need a bit *more* work.

**7** **Standardize the SLA:** Just like your sales process, which should work hand-in-hand with the efforts of your marketing team, your SLA needs to be repeatable.
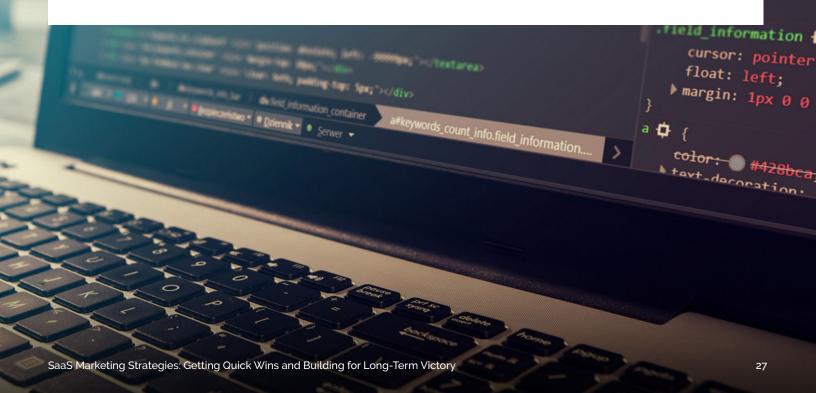
# Develop and Optimize Your Website

After you've identified KPIs for your marketing strategy and set performance goals that are aligned with your sales staff, the next step is to optimize your website into a lead-generating machine, a key component in reaching the marketing and sales goals set in your organization.

## Foundation

Your website is the biggest marketing asset you have. Why? Because the majority of consumers use the web in order to research new products and services. Whether you're pulling in traffic through engaging marketing content or being found organically through search engine results, your website is the hub that connects your target personas' problems to your products or solutions.

While the goal of a SaaS company website is to drive traffic toward trial offers or demos of the product, a few challenges stand in the way.
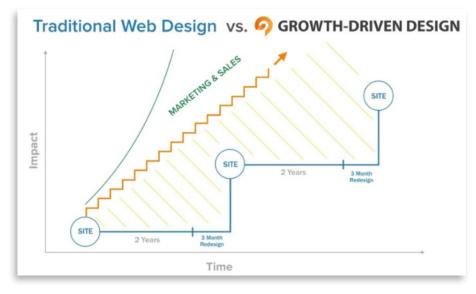
First, not every prospect who visits your site will be ready for a trial offer. Some visitors will want to read more about your product before trying it out. Some visitors will want to see more in terms of features, pricing models, and product reviews. And if you're bringing in traffic through educational content, those visitors will likely want to read through that content before showing any interest in your product at all.

Another challenge is that once a visitor lands on your website, you have a limited window of time before he or she moves on to another site or something else completely. And because this window can be a matter of seconds, it's important to have a clear, intuitive path laid out for each of the previously mentioned scenarios that guides visitors toward the next logical step—whether that's toward additional content, product information, product videos, product demos, or the end goal that is a trial offer.

A third challenge is the traditional approach to web development. Because the website's ability to generate leads is key to helping your sales and marketing teams grow your business, it's important to put a good amount of thought into its layout and development. The site needs to be attractive, highly usable, engaging, and optimized for conversion. And if that's not the case, you could be faced with a costly website rebuild project that requires a considerable up-front investment.

# Growth-Driven Design (GDD)

Growth-driven design is an agile approach to web development that focuses on quantitative research data as several design phases or iterations take place over time. In other words, you start by developing a launchpad website, keeping it as concise as possible, and focusing on the key elements and value adds of your product and service. You do this to get it up and running more quickly so you can begin iterative testing. Then you align your development and testing efforts to organizational goals. These tests could include page layout, copy, microcopy, form fields, form length, emails, and calls to action (CTAs) or could even include SEO or paid search engine marketing (SEM). The idea is to find the highest-performing variations and maximize the website's impact as you continue to build it over time.



Traditional Web Design vs. Growth-Driven Design[11]

Building the foundation of your website using growth-driven design (GDD) principles can be more cost-effective, because your website's budget can be allocated over months—instead of one lump sum—and because you're optimizing the website in order to achieve key performance goals as you go.

Check out our latest e-book, What is Growth-Driven Design?, for more information about GDD, the cost benefits of taking a lean approach, and how to get started.

# Long-Term Goal

In addition to having a high-performing website that converts visitors into trials—and ultimately into customers—the long-term goal for your website is to have a mechanism in place for capturing and nurturing leads who aren't ready to buy just yet. When the website is a finely tuned lead-generation machine, your cost per lead and cost per acquisition are much lower.

Ensure that your website is well-designed—both aesthetically and functionally. Your website should be more than visually appealing. It should be optimized for conversions. That is, it should be structured in a way that gives visitors easy access to the information they're looking for—whether it's educational content, product information, or a demo request—and guides them to taking the next step toward becoming a customer.

> Ensure that your website is well-designed—both aesthetically and functionally. Your website should be more than visually appealing. It should be optimized for conversions.

**QUICK WIN**

# Create Conversion Opportunities

While it's recommended to have conversion opportunities for each stage of the buyer's journey, it's critical that you start with basic conversion opportunities such as blog subscription, requesting a demo, and speaking to sales. These CTAs ensure that your visitors have a next step to take after visiting your site—whether they're a unique, first-time visitor or a lead who's still working his or her way through the marketing funnel.

**QUICK WIN**

# Hypothesize, Test, and Adjust

Use the website performance data in order to identify opportunities for improvement and hypothesize about your audience. Where are visitors converting the most? Based on your marketing goals, where do you need people to convert more? Consider what adjustments you can make in order to continuously improve performance over time. In each test, look for things you can learn about your visitors.

Here are a few recommended tools to get started:

- **Marketing Automation Platform:** A marketing automation platform like HubSpot, Marketo, or Pardot will help when it comes to analyzing the performance of landing pages, blog articles, CTAs, email, and social media.

- **Google Analytics:** This "freemium" web analytics service from Google allows you to analyze website visitor behavior, such as how visitors navigate throughout the site, how much time visitors spend on each page, and where visitors are coming from.

- **Hotjar:** Hotjar is a heatmapping tool that lets you see your website visitors' clicks, taps, and mouse movements so that you can quickly identify what's working and not working on a page.
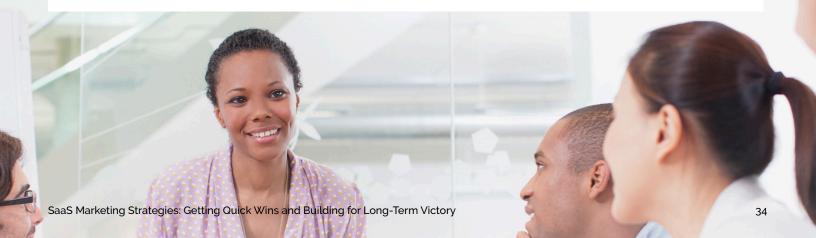
# Drive Traffic to Your Website

If your website is a finely tuned lead-generation machine, website traffic is the fuel. After all, your website can't convert prospects into leads if prospects aren't visiting the website in the first place. Let's look at a few methods for getting website traffic.

## Foundation

Understanding your website's traffic is a foundational step toward developing a long-term traffic strategy. Think back to your brand. Remember: As a long-term goal, you want to create amazing, helpful content that establishes your brand as a trusted resource in the market. This is where your content and personas (and the inbound methodology) really come into play. By fully understanding your personas' pain points, addressing the personas' problems with a solid message and educational content, and using several channels to interact and engage with your audience, you can effectively drive traffic back to your website, educate visitors on potential solutions, and then show them why your product is the best.

Here are a few website traffic sources to consider:

- **Organic Traffic:** Website visitors who come from a search engine such as Google or Bing. This is the type of traffic that marketers love the most, because it's low-cost and continues to grow over time when you implement inbound marketing. By writing your content around targeted keywords that your personas are searching, you can drive them back to your website from search engine results.

- **Referral Traffic:** Website visitors who come from other websites (except search engines). This includes social media sites, other blogs, and third-party review sites. When your content is insightful and interesting, people want to share it. And in many cases, when customers have had a good experience with your product, they like to share as well.

- **Email Traffic:** Website visitors who come from your email marketing efforts. Email marketing helps you work leads through the marketing funnel when you can send the right message at the right time. Marketing automation platforms can make this process easier by helping you segment leads based on where they are in the buyer's journey and ensure they receive the message that resonates with them the most.

- **Paid Traffic:** Website visitors who come from paid online advertising. Paid advertising can be an effective way to drive traffic when you want a boost that you're not getting from the other channels.

- **Direct Traffic:** Website visitors who come directly to your site without coming from a referring website. One of the most common sources of visits to your website, direct traffic often comes from visitors who saw your URL and entered it directly into their browser. Direct traffic is often the result of high brand awareness, tradeshows, and offline advertisement.

## Long-Term Goal

The long-term goal for driving traffic to your website should be to have an effective plan for content creation and a well-rounded, multi-channel strategy for promoting that content. Through continuous optimization and improvement over time, you'll identify the channels and messages that bring in and convert the most qualified traffic—helping you allocate your marketing budget in the most cost-effective way.

**QUICK WIN**
# Identify Keyword Opportunities

Keyword research tools like [Moz](), [Google AdWords Keyword Planner,]() and [HubSpot's Keywords Tool]() can help you identify keyword opportunities that give you the best chance of driving organic traffic. Again, consider your personas and what pain points they might be seeking to alleviate when they turn to search engines. The topics they're searching for (that relate to your product or service) have the potential to be targeted keywords.

**QUICK WIN**
# Plan Out Your Content

As mentioned earlier, it's ideal to have content for each persona in each stage of the buyer's journey. That's a lot of content! Start with high-impact offers that will resonate the most with your primary persona and build out a calendar of content that you can work through over time. If you already have content out there, identify what's performing well and consider similar topics.

> Start with high-impact offers that will resonate the most with your primary persona.

QUICK WIN
# Promote Content on Social Media

Think back to your social media strategy. By starting interesting and insightful conversations on social media around your site's content, you engage your audience and drive it back to your website—and directly into your marketing funnel. Consider the content you already have. What questions can you ask your audience to get a conversation started around that topic? Identify the channels that your personas are using and start posting. Remember to make it thought-provoking and interesting.

QUICK WIN
# Paid Search and Paid Social

With optimized keywords, you can target a general audience based on what it's searching for (which is great), but you can't zero in on your prospects. In other words, you're only targeting those who searched for that particular keyword—which, depending on the keyword, could be any number of people outside of your ideal audience. Paid search and social strategies can add granularity such as geographic, demographic, and other criteria that help you target a more specific audience and drive that traffic back to your site. The downside is that it costs money, but you don't have to spend millions of dollars to see a result. In fact, many paid search strategies are very affordable. Start with a small budget and use it to promote content that has already shown success via inbound marketing efforts to give it an extra boost with a more targeted audience.

# Showcase Your Products and Services

So you've identified your audience, attracted it to your website through promotion and educational content, and if your visitors came in at the top of the funnel, you've nurtured them with content until they're ready to compare solutions. Now it's time to let your product shine!

## Foundation

A product trial is your opportunity to show the customer special features and how he or she can get the most out of the tool. As with your website and marketing strategies, trial offers should be optimized over time for optimal results. Consider factors that go into someone deciding whether or not to start a trial. How easy is it for them to get started? How long will the trial last? What message will entice them to sign up? Use the same testing methods for GDD and inbound marketing in order to make data-driven decisions on how to improve.

Here are a few considerations when testing product trials:

- **CTAs:** Are CTAs clear before, during, and after the product trial process? Are they enticing? If CTAs aren't clear, attention-getting, and enticing, leads might be dropping off simply because they don't know what steps to take next.

- **Credit Card Requirements:** Do fewer people sign up for a trial when you require credit card information than when you don't require it? You may find that people are more likely to sign up if there's less of a commitment.

- **Immediate Access:** Can they get started right away? If a lead is on your website and ready for a free trial, he or she expects access right away. If your process requires him or her to speak with sales first, you may be missing out on more opportunities.

- **Trial Length:** Would a 30-day trial get more leads to sign up than a 10-day trial? Some leads may not think your trial length is long enough for them to get a good look at your product—and, therefore, it isn't worth signing up for.

## Long-Term Goal

The long-term goal for showcasing your products and services is to make it as enticing and as intuitive as possible to start a free trial—or at least to see a live demo. When your audience can see the product in action and realize the benefits firsthand, they will be more likely to speak with sales and feel better about their purchase decision.

**QUICK WIN**

## Create an Effective Demo/Trial Offer

Give your audience the ability to try your solution out or at least see it in action in a product demo. Over time, you can determine which factors your audience cares about most and look for ways to improve their experience in a way that results in more product upgrades.
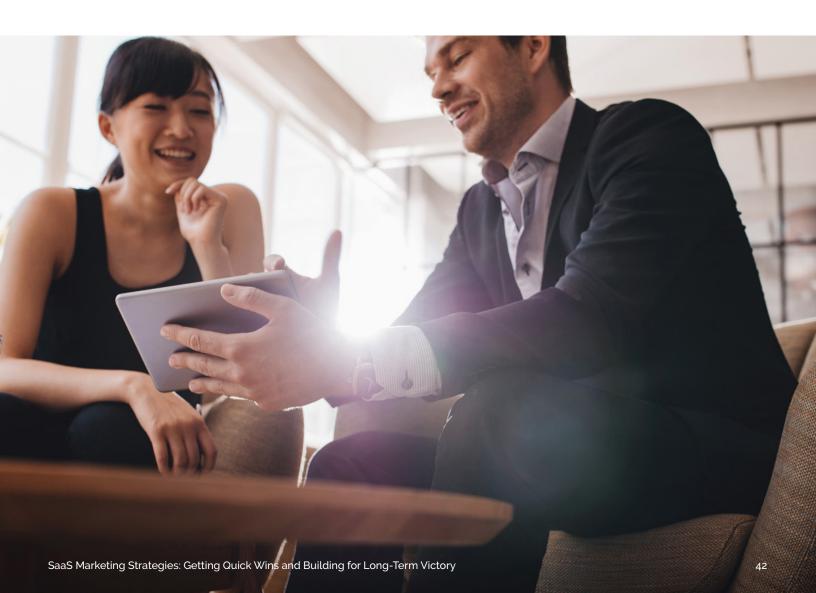
When your audience can see the product in action and realize the benefits firsthand, they will be more likely to speak with sales and feel better about their purchase decision.

**QUICK WIN**

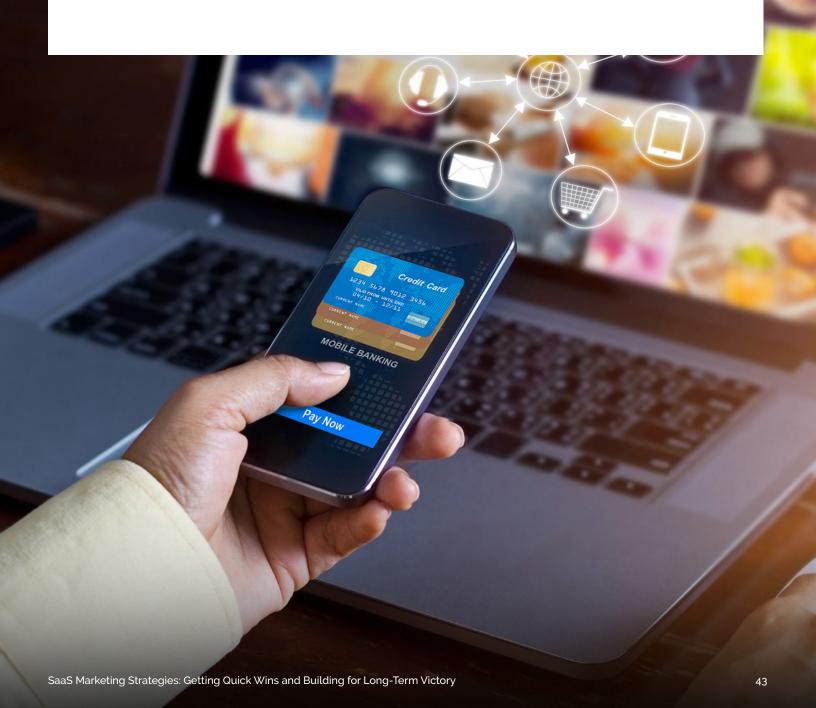# Leverage Review and Testimonials

Customer testimonials and product reviews have a heavy impact on prospects when it comes to evaluating your products and services. When the time is right, there's no better way to showcase your product's effectiveness than to demonstrate how it has helped others. Add some testimonials throughout your website—especially on your product pages—and include testimonials and case studies in bottom-of-the-funnel emails and offers when you're trying to convert MQLs into SQLs.
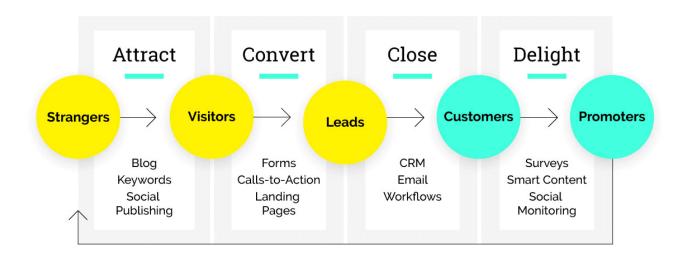
# Don't Forget Your Existing Customers

You've done everything right so far. You've developed your personas and your target customers, you've built a website that showcases your customers, and you've even closed some deals. But what about those existing customers? What happened to them?

# Laying the Foundation: Your Customers Are Your Best Assets

Like we said, it's not surprising that very little is happening once your contacts become customers. In fact, most people don't engage in any sort of customer delight or even customer engagement strategy. But let's take a look at HubSpot's inbound methodology:
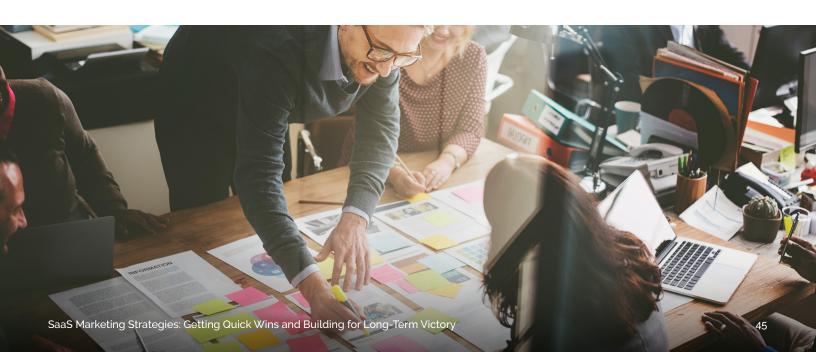


There's an entire stage of the inbound methodology specifically focused on delighting customers so that they become promoters of your brand. In fact, as it is anywhere from four to 10 times more expensive to acquire new customers than it is to keep a current one, it's really no wonder why they should still merit your company's attention and efforts.

# Your Long-Term Goal: Implement a Customer Advocacy Program

Are those small steps enough to encourage them to become an advocate? It's possible. But before we move any further, we should look at exactly what becoming a customer advocate means.

## What Is a Customer Advocacy Program?

As customer advocacy programs do different things for different companies, they vary greatly across both companies and industries. These programs can do many things: They can eliminate problems that your customers are having, enlightening many of your company's teams. They can provide suggestions on how to improve your software to be more user-friendly. And ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, they can satisfy your customers to the extent that they will refer your company to their colleagues and increase your revenue.

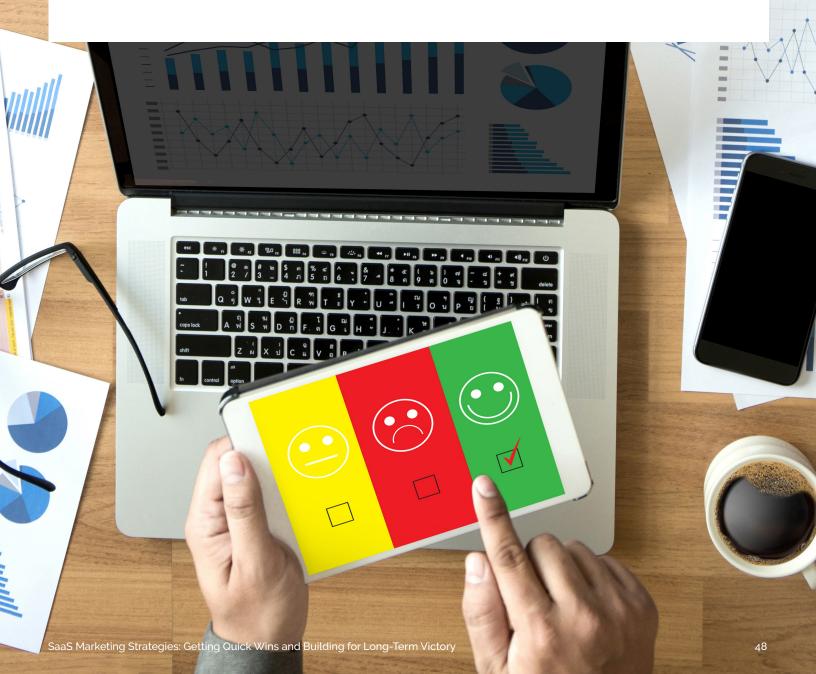Be sure that your customer advocacy program focuses on these five pieces:

**1** **Set aside internal support:** While this program will encompass aspects from both your marketing and sales activities, this cannot be just another marketing or sales activity. Such a program will require its own dedicated resources, and those resources include a manager who can liaise between your customer advocates and your own company.

**2** **Select your advocates:** While your program should certainly be open to all of your customers, you might not want to put an equal level of effort in engaging each of your customers to enter this program. Think of this almost like another qualification process. Which of your customers are most ideal? Who represents the ideal brands? Who is the most well-known? Who has had the best experiences with your company and thus has the best stories to tell? Once you have a plan of attack, begin your recruitment efforts.

**3** **Focus on your relationships:** This stage of the methodology is called "delight" for a reason. Your existing customers have the power to bring in some of the most profitable prospects that your sales team could hope for; provide them with experiences that delight them and resonate with them.

**4** **Embrace a feeling of community:**  This program should be something that all of your customers can identify with. Provide a platform for communication—not only among your customers but within your organization as well. You want your customers to feel that their voices are heard. Incentivize them. Create shared experiences. Above all, you want this advocacy program to be the final touch on your overall experience, something so positive that your customers are certain to refer you.

**5** **Continue to involve them:** Be sure that this program allows for continuous involvement. As your sales team will continue to bring in new customers, you want to continue to grow and expand your customer advocacy program.

While your customer advocacy program will not solve the same problems that your software will, it should certainly be seen as a soft benefit of doing business with you. The exclusivity of this program, along with the inclusivity that this community offers, will offer further opportunities to delight your customers, providing another reason for them to refer you to their colleagues and peers in the industry.

# Long-Term Goal (But with Short-Term Possibilities): Keep Customers Happy

As mentioned, developing and launching a customer advocacy program is no small feat and cannot be accomplished overnight. However, that's not to say that there is no way to focus more on customer satisfaction within the short term. It all comes down to communicating with your existing customers by offering both dedicated support and simple ways of getting in touch with you.

## Short-Term: Facilitate Communication Through World-Class Support

Unlike simple software, purchasing and using SaaS takes into account the entire user experience, meaning that closing a customer is not as simple as just selling licenses and letting your customers be. Your team should aim to be a resource for customers, using your expertise of the software to constantly offer suggestions, best practices, and resources that will help customers find more value in your software.

Luckily, there are quite a few ways that your team can communicate with your customers, primarily over email, the phone, or even the increasingly common live chat feature. While email communications tend to be more one-sided, both phone calls and live chat features allow your customers to feel as though they have a dedicated support system at the touch of a button. Whether the team is truly dedicated or not, the perception that you have a team invested in their success and happiness will speak volumes as to how much their business matters to you.
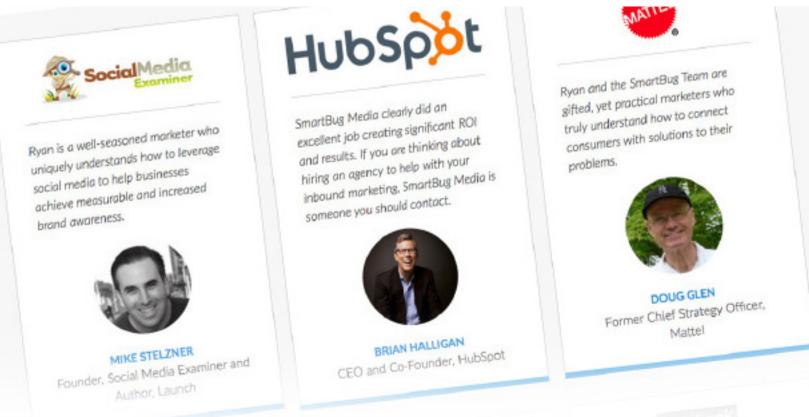
And as loyal customers are worth up to 10 times as much as their first purchase, according to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, investing in the happiness and satisfaction of your customers is a valuable expenditure.

## Long-Term: Showcase Customer Happiness

We already know that customer opinions, be they positive or negative, carry a lot of weight and can greatly influence a prospect in the consideration or decision stages. However, if you have a lot of customers singing your praises, why make your prospects find that information for themselves?

There are two primary ways that you can leverage your customer loyalty and happiness: Add testimonials to your website and develop a brand ambassador program.



Ryan is a well-seasoned marketer who uniquely understands how to leverage social media to help businesses achieve measurable and increased brand awareness.

**MIKE STELZNER**
Founder, Social Media Examiner and Author, Launch

SmartBug Media clearly did an excellent job creating significant ROI and results. If you are thinking about hiring an agency to help with your inbound marketing, SmartBug Media is someone you should contact.

**BRIAN HALLIGAN**
CEO and Co-Founder, HubSpot

Ryan and the SmartBug Team are gifted, yet practical marketers who truly understand how to connect consumers with solutions to their problems.

**DOUG GLEN**
Former Chief Strategy Officer, Mattel

# Add Customer Testimonials to Your Website

Say you have 100 customers all saying wonderful things about your company. Do you paste all of their words all over your website? Not a chance. Follow these four steps in order to ensure your business gets the most ROI out of showcasing customer testimonials:

**1** **Think big:** If your website has 10 pages, and you'd like one or two different testimonials to be on each page, how do you choose which customers you'd like to feature? Assuming all customers provided testimonials of equally positive weight, you want to showcase the customers whose brands are most recognizable. After all, reputation matters.

**2** **Think relevance:** While reputation matters, so does relevance. As you decide which testimonials you'd like to place where, think about which of your personas will be viewing certain pages. Can they identify with the company giving the testimonial? Are both organizations solving similar problems or facing similar challenges? Think about testimonial selection in the same way as other inbound marketing or selling practices; you want to present as personalized an experience as possible. Make your testimonials resonate.

**3** **Focus on variety:** The testimonials showcased on your website should follow website best practices. You want them to be dynamic. Sure, there is value to having written testimonials across all pages of your website. But there is also value to imagery and video content. The same is true with your testimonials. In order to keep them from appearing redundant, vary how they appear. Use videos or images where they make sense.

**4** **Make them visible:** Again, though you want the testimonials that you showcase on your website to contribute to an overall relevant user experience, you want to be sure they aren't missed. You shouldn't spam your website visitors, but don't hesitate to showcase a customer testimonial on more than one page, so long as each page is relevant to the topic of the testimonial.

# Develop a Brand Ambassador Program

While there are different degrees of formalized brand ambassador programs, they all center on the core principle of leveraging the voices of your brand evangelists. Think about it. You create great content, and you promote it. But unless your team is joining a different LinkedIn group every day or constantly growing its network (a full-time job in and of itself), you end up promoting your content in the same place, day after day.

That's where your brand ambassadors come in. As your users most likely span different networks from those of your team, allow your users to promote your content for you. Heck, encourage them to do so. Chances are that your users know other prospective users, so not only will your content or brand end up in front of an increasingly expansive audience, but it will be placed there by customers who think the world of you.

There are a few different ways that you can set this brand ambassador program into motion:

- **Ask your top customers:** Like asking for referrals, you'd be surprised how often these opportunities are missed simply because they are not initiated. Some of your top customers might be more than willing to either distribute your content in person or share your content online. It never hurts to ask.

- **Create an open enrollment platform:** Maybe someone isn't a top user, but he or she feels strongly about your brand. Consider creating a CTA and landing page allowing contacts to self-enroll into your brand ambassador program.

- **Utilize social monitoring:** Both HubSpot and other social media tools such as [Hootsuite](#) allow you to monitor social media users who mention specific words or phrases. You never know who is talking about you or what they are saying. But through social monitoring you can be aware of, and interact with, people talking about your brand or service. Leverage the good.

The value of customer testimonials and a brand ambassador program is twofold: They encourage you to monitor your customers' levels of satisfaction, and they allow you to leverage your customers' happiness. After all, in today's review-based marketplace, an organic, honest, and positive review carries quite a bit of merit.

# Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in this e-book, all strategies provided are separated into distinct categories: quick wins and long-haul strategies.

**QUICK WIN`S:**

Short-term strategies that will deliver traffic and low-cost acquisition.

**LONG-HAUL STRATEGIES:**

Long-term strategies for lead nurturing and maximizing continued value.

But there's a bit more to it than that: Developing, implementing, and executing these long-term strategies cannot be done without first executing the quick wins, and these quick wins cannot be executed without first laying the foundations. After all, these foundations are not simply tasks that can be checked off of a list; they require a shift in mentality and attitude. If the organization cannot shift its typical marketing and sales activities to be in accordance with how people actually buy, these strategies—both short- and long-term—will be moot.

That's because these strategies align with the inbound buyer's journey, the prospective buyer's actions from contact with a brand or company until the purchase. Within the inbound marketing model, this journey often starts with a website visit—thus, the outlined quick-win focus on growing your company's traffic. Whether it be through optimizing your site for organic traffic, creating relevant content that your target customers are searching for (and will provide information to obtain), the depiction of positive interactions with your customers, or even understanding how to communicate with your website visitors through messaging and marketing and sales alignment, all of these quick wins serve to draw, grow, and satisfy your website visitors. The outlined long-term goals, however, all focus on nurturing these visitors and leads, helping your company convert them, ultimately, to customers.

Within the inbound marketing model, this journey often starts with a website visit.

The world of SaaS moves quickly. And while that rapid innovation does present companies such as yours with a great amount of opportunity and flexibility, it means your marketing strategies must be flexible as well.

Ensure that your long-term marketing strategies align with your business's goals, but utilize short-term quick wins that will not only bring you results, but allow you to react quickly to shifts in the market and the changing requirements of your prospects.

It's completely understandable if you're not sure where to go from here. Let us help: Start by ensuring that your company understands the premise of inbound marketing and how it aligns with the ways your customers are selecting SaaS solutions. Once that's been accomplished, develop your quick wins and then your long-term strategies, just to be sure that these align with your company's own internal goals. SmartBug Media understands that the development and execution of these strategies certainly aren't as simple as written here. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions about aspects of this quick-win, long-term approach or if you're interested in support with its implementation.

# About SmartBug

SmartBug Media is one of a handful of HubSpot Diamond partners in the world and is the highest-rated agency in the history of the HubSpot ecosystem. We also boast the highest ROI documented from any HubSpot partner—3,558% and 14,500% ROI on a six-month and three-year campaign, respectively. At Inbound 2015, SmartBug Media was the most recognized agency, having won or been named a finalist in nine awards.

SmartBug Media is one of first HubSpot partners to implement growth-driven design and was an inaugural member of the HubSpot COS Advisory Board. For more than seven years, SmartBug Media has been helping businesses increase sales leads, close more customers, and enhance the reach of their brands. From building comprehensive online marketing programs to designing new websites, driving leads through social media or sales enablement, we're an extension of your marketing team that delivers.

**For a free inbound marketing or web design consultation, or to learn more, visit www.smartbugmedia.com or call 949-236-6448.**

# Have a question? Curious how we can help grow your business?

**Let's Talk**

## SmartBug.

www.smartbugmedia.com

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