



8 STEPS MANUFACTURERS MUST TAKE TO

# MAKE THEIR MARKETING **INBOUND**

BUYERS HAVE CHANGED.  
MANUFACTURERS NEED TO ADAPT.





## ABOUT SYNCSHOW

SyncShow is a digital marketing agency focused on growing small to middle market B2B manufacturers and the network of special services companies that support them. Located just outside of Cleveland, Ohio, the agency's geographical location in a manufacturing hotbed has a lot to do with its niche focus and overall commitment to the industry.



## INTRODUCTION

Manufacturers everywhere are looking to evolve their organization as their aging salesforce is replaced by the younger generation. Manufacturers also report that their target audience is evolving because millennials are playing a larger role in the purchasing and engineering process.

**Let's face it, millennial buyers are different.**

But it turns out that most prospective industrial buyers today are changing the way they buy. They want to conduct their research both online and with industry peers. They identify their problem, find a solution and look for appropriate vendors—all without engaging directly with companies.

HubSpot reports that purchasers don't even engage with a salesperson until they are **70%** of the way through the evaluation process.

**So, what's a manufacturer to do?**

Read on.



## WHY YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS MUST BECOME INBOUND

We'll get right to the point. If you're a manufacturer and you want to attract today's buyer, you need to change how you market.

- First, you need to **identify the buyers you want to attract.**
- Then, you need to figure out what essential information (i.e., content) will **help these buyers solve their most common challenges and ease their pain points.**
- Finally, you need to **build a strategy** that is designed to present the **right information at the right time.**

This is the essence of inbound, a fairly new approach to marketing that's the exact opposite of traditional outbound marketing efforts (i.e., email blasts to purchased lists; cold calling; and radio, print or television ads). **Outbound efforts cast the same marketing message to anyone and everyone** who will listen in the hopes of attracting leads.

Outbound marketing is a bit like casting a net randomly into the ocean in the hopes of catching fish, whereas inbound is more like casting that same net into a small pond you've created—that the tastiest fish have jumped into because they want to be there.

With inbound, your website acts as a centralized marketing hub that all of your inbound efforts revolve around. As such, it should provide targeted information to clearly identified prospects as they move through their buying processes (in inbound, these are referred to as "buyer's journeys").

**The goal is to create a beneficial relationship well before the sale of your product or service.**

The entire methodology is end user-centric and ensures visitors, prospects—and even existing customers—are consistently getting helpful information when they need it.



## THE 4 STAGES OF INBOUND

Before you can start to figure out how to make your marketing efforts inbound, you need to understand the logic behind each distinct inbound stage. Each stage centers around an action companies practicing the inbound methodology must take.

**Stage 1:** Attract

**Stage 2:** Convert

**Stage 3:** Close

**Stage 4:** Delight



## STAGE 1 ATTRACT

Strangers Become Visitors



Start by driving traffic to your website using blog posts, keywords (or relevant phrases and terms your ideal buyers search for online) and social media messages that attract the right types of strangers to your website.

## STAGE 2 CONVERT

Visitors Become Leads



Give your site visitors opportunities to become leads—entice them with the information they need to solve their problems. This information should largely be “gated,” or accessible to them only if they provide their contact information via an online form.

## STAGE 3 CLOSE

Leads Become Customers



Continue to nurture and manage lead relationships using emails, marketing automation software and Custom Relationship Management (CRM) software (more on that later). Continue to provide content that increasingly hones in on a specific challenge or pain point and pushes buyers closer to the sale of your product or service.

## STAGE 4 DELIGHT

Customers Become Promoters



Even after converted, you can continue to provide customers information that helps them do their jobs better or alleviates other pain points. Continue to wow them and you’ll have a promoter on your hands that will help you gain future business.

## NOW YOU KNOW THE BASICS.

You’re ready for the 8 steps you need to make your marketing inbound marketing.



# STEP ONE

## IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET MARKETS

If you have an internal marketing team, it's likely you already have this step completed—congrats! You have a great start.

If you haven't identified your target markets, no need to panic—although we do recommend leaning on a digital marketing partner who specializes in inbound marketing to help you strategically arrive at them.

A team of trained inbound marketing professionals will help you define your ideal customer in terms of:

- Company size
- Industry
- Type of product or service need

It's also helpful to **prioritize these target markets** based on your existing relationships, market penetration, revenue potential and fit for your product or service.

### TO HELP BRING THE ENTIRE PROCESS TO LIFE, WE'RE GOING TO FOLLOW A FICTITIOUS INJECTION MOLDING COMPANY—

we're calling **ABC Company**—as it starts to make its outbound marketing efforts inbound. ABC Company specializes in large-run injection molding projects for the consumer goods, automotive and electronics industries. Historically, the company's best clients have come to them with prototype projects which then turn into recurring manufacturing jobs with large distributions.





# STEP TWO

## TIP:

Use your top current customers to help influence the direction of your buyer personas. Hold a brainstorming session with key decision-makers to determine which current customers you can use to influence your go-forward personas.

## DEFINE YOUR BUYER PERSONAS

Buyer personas are fictional representations of your ideal customer. **Identify and define who these people are, their interests, where they look for information, the problems they have and how you can meet their needs.** And because you want your inbound marketing efforts to be highly targeted, limit the number of buyer personas you create (ideally, create three to five maximum).

Start by writing a short biography for each, listing key demographics and traits. Continue to build out your personas by listing important background information (such as education), personality identifiers, goals/objectives and common pain points. If you want to take it a step further, you could spell out any objections each persona may have and start to think about a short marketing elevator pitch that could effectively resonate with each.

**It's important to make these buyer personas detailed and to always go back and update and refine them every so often, but avoid going overboard—you want detail, not overcomplication.**

To get things moving, you may want to start off with fairly simple personas, which can be arrived at by asking the **important questions** like:

- What's his or her exact industry?
- Where does this person consume information online?
- What sales and marketing events do they attend?
- What LinkedIn groups are they a part of?
- What are their most common daily challenges?

**Michael, 46**  
VP of Sales and Marketing

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."  
- Peter Dinklage

**Biography**  
Michael works as a VP of Sales and Marketing at a manufacturing company where he leads pipeline growth for the \$45mm business. He is responsible for increasing lead quality and expanding market share by taking business from his competitors. He is looking for data to make smart decisions to launch their new products.

**Demographics**

- Male, 46
- \$155,000 (salary + annual bonus potential)
- Married with 2 children (17, 20)

**Traits**

- Tech Savvy
- Marketing Savvy
- Seniority
- Visually Driven
- Data Driven
- Risk Tolerance
- Ambition

SyncShow





**ABC Company** knows that it typically starts the sales process with a design engineer, operations manager or a procurement professional. It has found that each of these personas has different needs when evaluating a potential plastics injection molding partner.



The **design engineer** is looking for technical capabilities as well as intellectual partnership on product development.



The **operations manager** is most concerned with ABC Company's ability to deliver a quality product within a timeline that fits the overall manufacturing schedule.



Finally, the **procurement professional** is most interested in ABC Company's ability to deliver a low-cost or cost-effective product with agreeable payment terms.

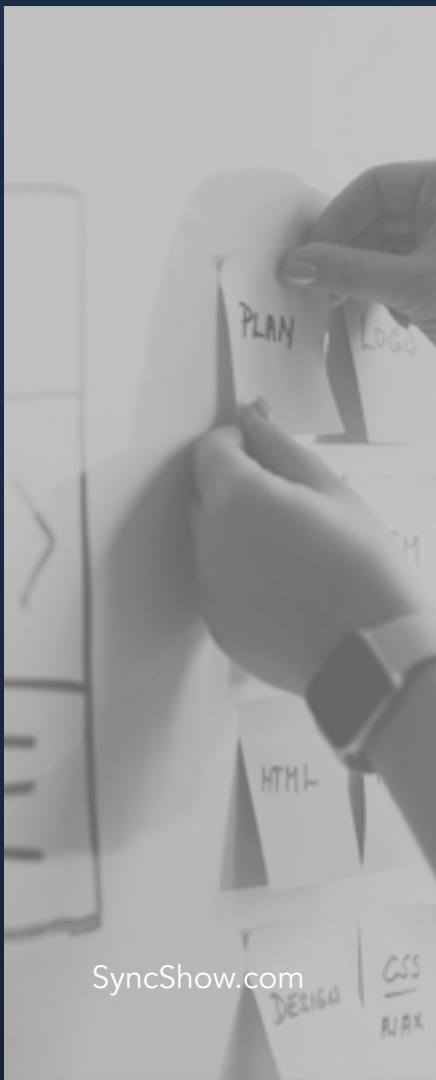
# STEP THREE



## CONDUCT KEYWORD RESEARCH

As is the case with any other online search, people who are searching for the service or product you provide are typing phrases into search engines in hopes of finding helpful information. In order to find out what your ideal buyers are searching, use a research tool that identifies the different words and phrases people use when looking for a solution that applies to one of your products or services.

Often companies use their own vernacular or acronyms to define their products. Use this research to learn the language that your prospect uses when searching for solutions. **These keywords are an important part of making search engines work for your website.**





**ABC Company** is going to use words and phrases that target people searching for a vendor in the injection molding space. It's important to note that manufacturers often look for companies that are physically located near their manufacturing plant. This is evidenced by the keyword "plastic manufacturers in california" in the example search (note that SEO "keywords" can also be detailed phrases; this type of highly specific keyword is called a "long-tail keyword").

Keyword	Search Volume
plastics injection molding companies	20
plastic injection molding company	110
plastic injection manufacturer	10
plastic manufacturers in california	30
rapid injection molding	90
injection molding company	90
plastic mold injection companies	30
mold injection companies	30
injection mold companies	30

# STEP FOUR



## BUILD A CONTENT STRATEGY FOR DRIVING TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

Prioritize the findings from the keyword research to develop content for (or rewrite content already on) your website. The words you use on your website need to match the phrases that people are using when they search online so that your website pages are readily found during search engine searches. It's often helpful to work with someone who understands search engine optimization and a person with expertise in writing for the web. This activity is part art and part science.

You also need to develop content to serve as a means of attracting people to your website. This content should be posted on social media, industry websites, online forums and in other online locations that are not your own website. This same content can also be emailed out to current prospect lists.

***Prioritize the findings from the keyword research to develop content for your website.***





As **ABC Company** works to drive visitors to its website, it needs to note that these visitors will be in one of the three different stages of the buyer's journey—or the process that each buyer goes through prior to purchasing a product or service—Awareness, Consideration and Decision. **ABC Company should also be mindful of the fact that different content formats are better suited for different buyer's journey stages.**



**For example**, blog posts and infographics are great for the Awareness stage because they're effective at making people aware of subject matter at a high level before they know what their exact problem is. Knowing this, ABC Company decides to promote its new blog post "Answers to Your Top 10 Questions About Injection Molding" on social media. The post will broadly appeal to visitors looking for an injection molding partner, regardless of their pain point.



# STEP FIVE

## BUILD A DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY THAT DELIVERS THIS CONTENT TO THE RIGHT PLACE

Now that you've created the content that will drive people to your site, you want to strategically post it in places where your personas go to find answers, which you already know thanks to your buyer personas. Common places include LinkedIn, YouTube, industry forums, etc.

Develop a distribution strategy based on your target markets and the personas within them. **The goal is to publish this content where the personas will see it and have it link back to your website.** This is how you drive better traffic to your site (i.e., traffic from people researching the solutions you offer).

**ABC Company** knows that the design engineers for medical devices share ideas in the LinkedIn group Med Device Engineer. **Joining this group and sharing relevant content is an example of one distribution strategy for reaching design engineers in their target vertical.**

For the design engineer in the automotive vertical, ABC Company may join SAE International and submit a whitepaper on a technical solution and/or present at an industry event. In this example, SAE International represents an opportunity to share content online and offline, thus **extending the value of the piece of content.**





# STEP SIX

## DEVELOP CONTENT OFFERS ON YOUR WEBSITE

Once you've driven people to your website, you need to continue to provide valuable content pieces that people can only access if they provide their contact information, such as their name and email address. These are called content offers.

**Your content offers should be developed to address the specific needs of your ideal buyers.** Keep in mind that many of these prospective buyers are still either defining their problem or are aware of their problem but still looking at all possible solutions. These buyers are still in the Awareness stage of the buyer's journey, which is also referred to as being in the **"top of the funnel."** It's always a great idea to monitor whether top-of-the-funnel offers are producing leads—if they're not, change them up.



This is how a visitor could become a lead on your site:

1. You write a blog post titled “Answers to Your Top 10 Questions about Metal Stamping” that a visitor reads.
2. On the same web page, you put a call-to-action (CTA)—or, an on-site direction that tells the visitor to perform a specific action (in this case, download an offer).
3. When that CTA is clicked, it leads the visitor to a landing page for a checklist titled “5 Ways Your Metal Stamping Supplier Can Make You Look Great.”
4. Your visitor fills out the online form on the landing page for this “gated,” top-of-the-funnel checklist.

**That visitor just became a lead.**





**You also need content offers that connect with buyers who are further along in the buyer's journey and actively researching or considering your specific service or product.**

Using the same scenario above, you may have a visitor who reads the same blog post and goes from merely educating herself to considering you as a potential solution-provider to her now clearly defined problem.

This visitor clicks on another CTA that leads to the ebook "Efficiencies Gained Through Short-Run Stamping." This offer is targeted directly at someone looking specifically for a short-run stamping solution, which means they now fall within the consideration stage of the buyer's journey, also called the **"middle of the funnel."**

Potentially most important, you need content offers that speak to a person who is ready to make a decision to purchase—falling in line with the other naming conventions, this stage is also called the **"bottom of the funnel,"** and is also considered the decision stage of the buyer's journey. Offers in this stage could be anything from "Request a Consultation" to a download of specific product literature. Simply put, these prospects are ready to become customers and know exactly what they want.

**Tip:**

Your blog posts shouldn't be about your company and its offerings. Too many companies fall into the trap of treating their blog as a place to tout their offerings. Blog readers typically aren't ready for the hard sell—instead they're looking for information that helps them identify and name their exact problem.



In an effort to generate website traffic, **ABC Company** already promoted its blog post “Answers to your top 10 Questions about Injection Molding” on social media. Since it wants those website visitors to turn into leads, it places a CTA next to the blog post on its site telling visitors to download the checklist “Top Considerations When Choosing an Injection Molding Partner.” Once clicked on, the CTA drives visitors to a landing page for the checklist, which will only be accessible if a visitor fills out his or her name and email address.

The checklist is still a very high-level piece of content that falls within the Awareness stage of the buyer’s journey, but ABC Company knows that interactive formats, such as checklists and quizzes, are even better than blog posts at creating interest in a brand and its service or product offerings—and **content offers need to be compelling and valuable in order for visitors to provide ABC Company their personal information.**

However, the company needs to make sure it doesn’t get in the habit of creating content just to create content. Each piece of content, whether it’s simply a blog post or an in-depth whitepaper or a beautifully designed infographic, must have a specific purpose, target a specific buyer persona or group of buyer personas and align with a specific stage of the buyer’s journey.

# STEP SEVEN



## CONTINUE TO NURTURE YOUR LEADS

Once a prospect has filled out a form on your website—any form, regardless of the buyer's journey stage—you should continue to engage that lead using marketing automation software to create automated email campaigns (aka drip campaigns). This is a great way to continue to move prospects further down the funnel, from top to bottom.

You can also use this software to score and see which of your marketing efforts are working (and, essentially, run all of your inbound marketing efforts behind the scenes).



**ABC Company** develops drip campaigns for each of the three industry verticals (consumer goods, automotive and electronics) to continue to demonstrate its expertise and industry leadership to prospects. The drip campaigns feature case studies from the specific industries as well as research papers and industry trends. The company times these based on the knowledge of its sales cycle, which typically takes between six and nine months from first contact to initial project.

# STEP EIGHT



## TURN “MARKETING QUALIFIED” LEADS INTO “SALES QUALIFIED” LEADS

Once a prospect has filled out a form for a bottom-of-the-funnel offer on your website, someone from your sales team should follow up to further investigate the prospects’ interest. If this lead is a good fit for your product or service, this opportunity changes from a marketing qualified lead to a sales qualified lead. It’s now up to your sales team to work their magic and convert this prospect into a customer.



## Marketing Automation Software's Necessary Counterpart – CRM

In simplest terms, marketing automation software helps your marketing team nurture and build relationships with leads and CRM (customer relationship management) software helps your sales team manage relationships, typically after they have filled out a form for an on-site bottom-of-the-funnel offer (remember, these are the prospects who know what they want and are ready for your sales team).

CRMs, like marketing automation software, rely on data.

**Data is where the gold is.**

After all, having **strong sales data is critical in today's complex sales and buying environment.** Do you know:

- All of the companies your reps are talking to?
- Whom they are talking to at these companies?
- What stage of the buying process they are in?
- The size of the deal?
- The size of your sales pipeline?
- Whether your pipeline is large enough to support your growth objectives?

If you're looking to improve your sales results, then you need answers to the questions above. **You need those answers in real time, anytime, all the time.** A CRM doesn't have to be complex or cost prohibitive. In fact, CRM software, such as HubSpot CRM, is completely free and so easy to use you can be up and running in hours.



**ABC Company** sold using a direct salesforce for decades. As business continued to change throughout the 21st century, the company realized it needed to **work smarter throughout its sales process by supporting salespeople with knowledge and technology.** By implementing an inbound marketing process, ABC Company gave its salespeople a better method to identify prospects and stay in front of them in a more time-efficient way. **ABC Company views the inbound process as its inside salesperson.** The process augments the efforts of its outside salespeople.



## CONCLUSION

**Inbound marketing for manufactures is about providing the right information to the right people at the right time.** doing so demonstrates that your company is a viable solution to their need and generates interest.

think of the inbound marketing solution as being a new inside marketing and sales team (not one that replaces the ones you already have, but one that adds to what you already do). once inbound digital marketing efforts have generated interest and the prospect has identified himself, your staff's sales process should seamlessly take over.

**This new marketing process engages with prospects once they're ready to have a conversation.** It offers an efficient system that utilizes the best aspects of people and digital tools to speak to all generations.



## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO MAKE YOUR MARKETING INBOUND?

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