



10 Steps Transportation Companies Must Take to

CREATE AND FOSTER AN INBOUND MARKETING ECOSYSTEM

Buyers are changing the way they buy.

Transportation companies need to adapt or risk falling behind.





“This shift in response to buyer behavior in the 21st Century is so radical that businesses without an Inbound strategy won’t be able to succeed.”

– Dan Tyre, Sales Director, HubSpot

The [transportation and logistics industry](#) is currently in a state of rapid change, and a lot of that change has to do with how customers are buying. That’s why it’s more important than ever to focus on your company’s digital assets.

Waiting to invest in your digital assets during this critical time can cause your company to lose important opportunities to **build brand value, attract talent, create and nurture long-term client relationships and gather important information about your website visitors.**

HubSpot, a top provider of marketing and sales software, reports that purchasers don’t even engage with a salesperson until they are 70% of the way through the evaluation process. With this in mind, transportation and logistics companies everywhere are looking to evolve their organizations, as well as their sales and marketing efforts, in order to meet these customers where they are in the buying cycle at any given point. But how can an industry that’s riddled with complexities communicate and market to the B2B buyer effectively?

The answer: inbound marketing.



THE 4 STAGES OF INBOUND

Before your marketing team begins formulating an inbound marketing strategy, you need to understand the logic behind each distinct inbound stage. Each stage centers around an action companies practicing the inbound methodology must consider and develop a strategic plan for, in order to create a harmonious ecosystem for marketing success.

Your website is the first salesperson prospects encounter, so it needs to act like an extension of your sales team. 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. Once you ensure the elements of inbound marketing are part of your strategy, you will not only increase your conversion rate but you will also increase your bottom line.



STAGE 1 ATTRACT

Strangers Become Visitors



When it comes to inbound marketing, brand awareness is the gateway to turning strangers into website visitors. By creating valuable content that is designed to address the problems and needs of your ideal customers, you not only attract qualified prospects but also build trust and credibility for your business. 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. By generating leads, you’ll set your sales team up for success and ultimately drive revenue for your business.

STAGE 3 CLOSE

Leads Become Customers



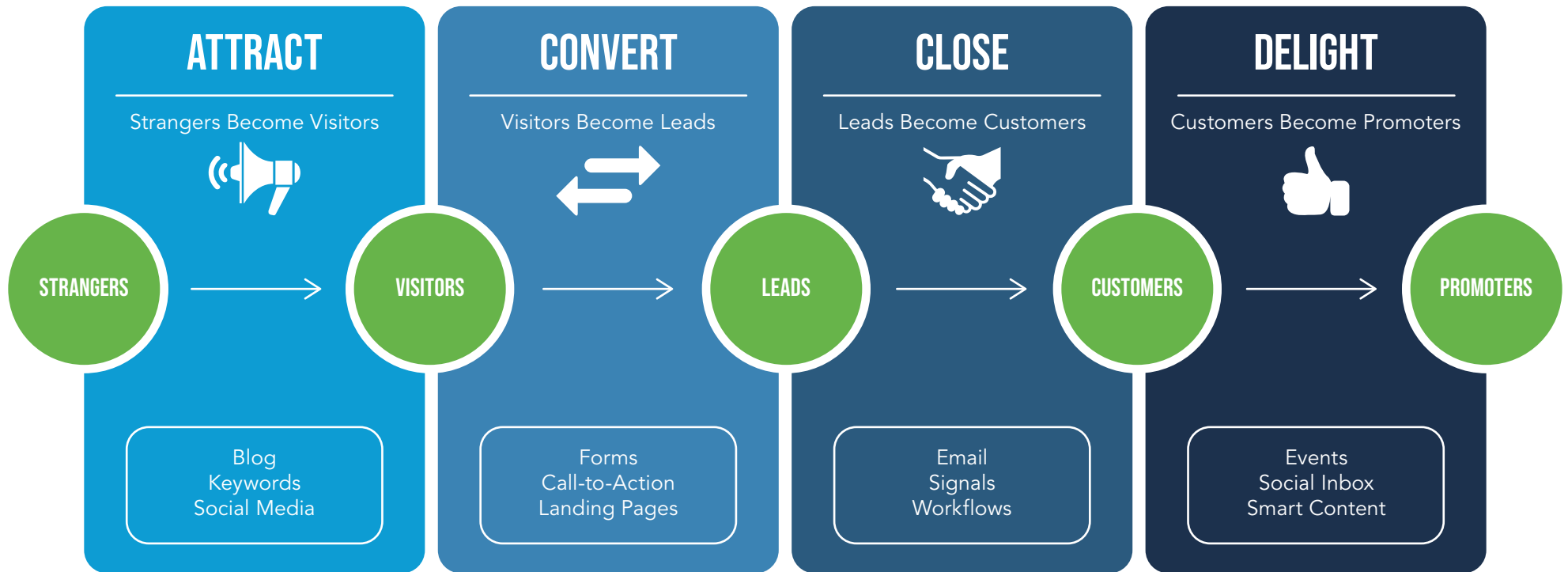
After quality leads are generated, continue to nurture and manage lead relationships using emails, marketing automation software and customer relationship management (CRM) software (more on that later). Continue to provide content that increasingly hones in on a specific challenge or addresses a pain point and pushes buyers closer to the sale of your product or service. This constant, beneficial engagement ultimately improves your company’s relationship with leads, shortens your sales cycle and increases sales opportunities.

STAGE 4 DELIGHT

Customers Become Promoters



Even after converting, your company can continue to provide customers with 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.



To attract new customers and expand upon existing relationships, your company needs to become both sales- and marketing-driven. If you're ready to overcome your industry-specific sales and marketing challenges and drive revenue growth in the most efficient way possible, follow these 10 steps.



STEP ONE

MAKE AN INVESTMENT

When it comes to creating and fostering a successful inbound marketing ecosystem, there is a certain level of investment that all companies need to be aware of and commit themselves to from the start. The investment is not just a financial one, but it's also an investment in the people and tools that will be supporting the ecosystem that's being created. From the President/CEO to the marketing intern who just onboarded last week, it's important that everyone makes a concerted investment of their time, support, know-how and effort to contribute to the ongoing success of any formulated inbound strategy.



STEP TWO

IDENTIFY A VALUE PROPOSITION

Any successful inbound marketing strategy is built upon a strong foundation. Oftentimes, this foundation is centered around the perceived value that a brand believes it brings to the marketplace. As such, you should make an effort to define your value proposition as early on in the process as possible as it makes it easier to connect with target audiences quickly and helps customers place value in what you offer. If you aren't communicating the unique benefits your business brings to the table upfront, prospects won't see what separates you from the noise.

At its base level, a value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered. This proposition should be a clear statement that explains:

- **Your company's relevancy:** How your products or services solve customers' problems or improve their situation.
- **Your company's quantified value:** How you deliver specific benefits.
- **Your company's unique differentiation:** Why your ideal customers should buy from you and not from the competition.

When done correctly, a [value proposition](#) helps to attract and retain customers and create a more positive customer experience.

And customer experience is quickly becoming even more important to C-suite executives at most businesses. In fact, [Walker Information](#), a leader in customer experience consulting, states that, by the end of 2020, customer experience will be a more important brand differentiator than both price and product quality. Further, according to [Capgemini](#), a global leader in consulting and technology services, 80% of consumers are willing to pay more for a better customer experience.

Most, if not all, businesses believe they deliver value via a combination of cost, technology and customer service. By identifying your company's specific mix of these differentiators and conveying that through an inbound marketing approach, you will find out rather quickly whether or not your perceived value proposition is actually your value proposition.

[DOWNLOAD OUR UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION EBOOK](#)

STEP THREE



IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET MARKETS

Understanding who your inbound marketing efforts should be geared toward is a very important step in creating and fostering an inbound marketing ecosystem. Most likely, you and/or your internal marketing team has already defined what markets should be targeted. 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.



STEP FOUR



DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCES/CREATE IDEAL CUSTOMERS

After your company defines its target markets, it's time to focus your attention on the customers within each market. This is done by creating buyer personas, or fictional representations of your ideal customer or prospect that help you understand who your target customer is and how you can best interact with them.

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, creating qualified leads, limit the number of ideal customers you create (ideally, create three to five maximum). Start by writing a short biography for each and listing key demographics and traits.

Pro Tip:

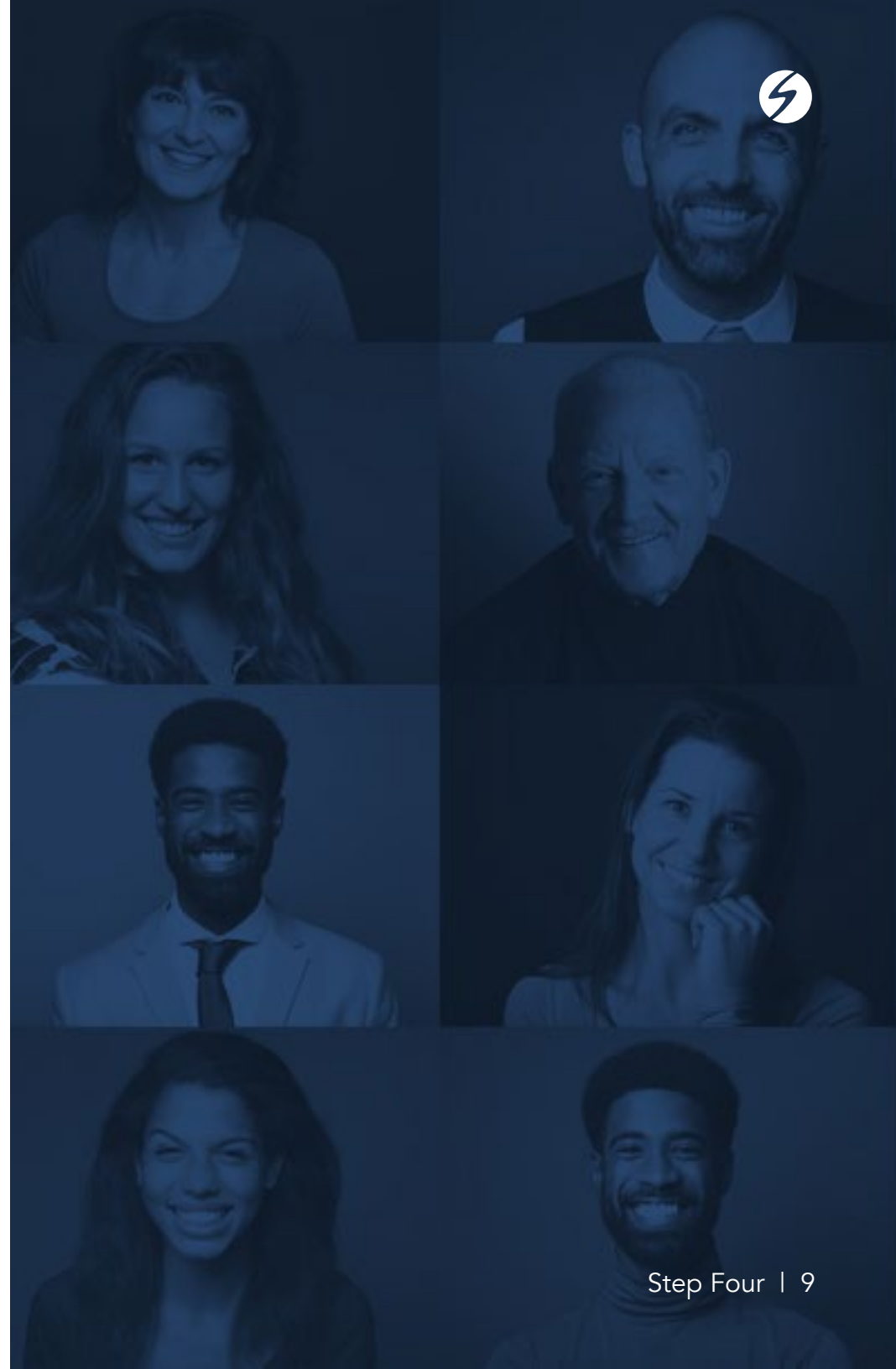
Your marketing team should use top-performing customers to help influence the direction of your ideal customers. They should hold a brainstorming session with key decision-makers to determine which current customers your company can use to influence your go-forward personas.

Continue to build out your ideal customers 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 customer may have and start to think about a short marketing elevator pitch that could effectively resonate with each.

It's important to make these ideal customers detailed and to always go back and update and refine them every so often, but avoid going overboard—you want detail, not over-complication. Know who your customers are, including their specific characteristics, preferences and pain points and communicate that data across your sales, marketing and customer service teams. The information you acquire from your customers will help you produce content that your audience actually cares about, helping to improve your interactions and conversion rates.

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

- What's his or her pain points?
- 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?





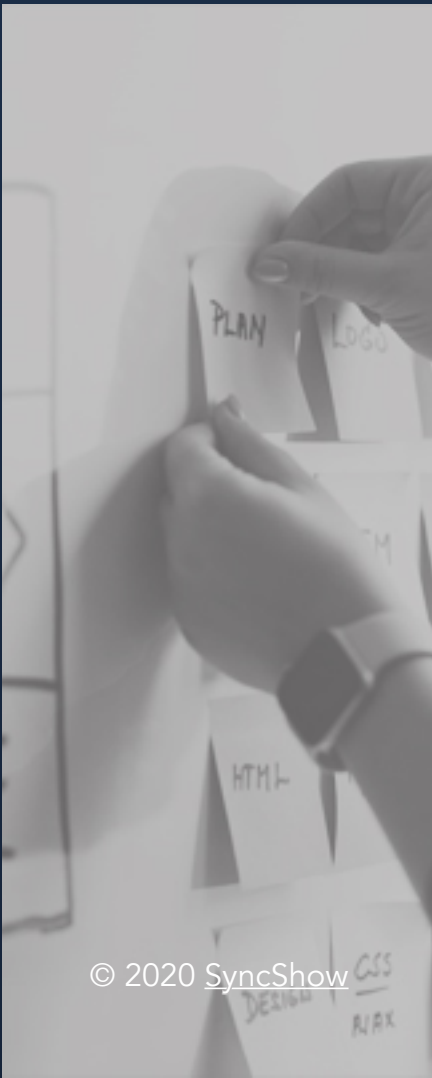
STEP FIVE

BUILD A CONTENT STRATEGY FOR DRIVING TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE, VIA KEYWORD/KEYPHRASE RESEARCH

With your ideal customer profiles built out, your organization now has a clearer vision into the types of people who are likely searching for your products and services. The next step is to try and determine **how** they're searching. As is the case with any other online search, people who are searching the service or product you provide are typing phrases into search engines in hopes of finding helpful information.

If your site is ranking on the first page of Google for your target keywords, you are sure to generate more website traffic which, in turn, will generate more leads for your business. 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 you can provide.

Companies often 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 key phrases 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 transportation company. It's important to note that people often look for companies that are physically located near their company. This is evidenced by the keyword "local trucking companies near me" 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
trucking companies in Michigan	880
local trucking companies near me	590
otr trucking companies	390
local freight companies	170
best trucking companies to drive for	720
flatbed services	320
ltl trucking companies	590
transport and logistics companies	140
ltl shipping rates	260



STEP SIX

IDENTIFY, VET AND DETERMINE TECHNOLOGY, PLATFORM AND TOOLS

No matter how defined your markets, customers and content are, you still need technical platforms and tools in order to convey your marketing message and support a holistic inbound ecosystem. The steps in completing these efforts are as follows:

1. Identify internal resources/subject matter experts
2. Identify platforms and tools
3. Research, report back and discuss
4. Determine final decision
5. Train, empower and support internal resources

By empowering internal subject matter experts to lead the charge on these efforts, not only does it open up the pathways of communications between sales and marketing, but it also creates a sense of accountability in each department that will likely carry over into your marketing efforts.

STEP SEVEN



DEVELOP INTERNAL PROCESSES FOR CONTENT CREATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Your sales and marketing teams should prioritize the findings from the keyword/phrase 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 in searches. It's often helpful to work with someone who understands [search engine optimization](#) (SEO) and a person with expertise in writing for the web. This activity is part art and part science.

A large part of [creating content](#) is determining the content creation, approval and publishing process internally, and training staff to follow this process for current and future content creation efforts. Common steps in a content creation process are as follows:

1. Identify content topic(s), writer(s) and subject matter expert(s)
2. Collaborate and research
3. Produce an initial draft
4. Have key stakeholders review and provide feedback
5. Make revisions based on feedback
6. Have key stakeholders review to verify that their initial feedback was incorporated correctly
7. Publish





Now that your company has created the content that will drive people to your site, you want to strategically post it in places where your customers go to find answers, which you already know thanks to your ideal customer profiles. Common places include LinkedIn, YouTube and industry forums.

Develop a distribution strategy based on your target markets and the customers within them. The goal is to publish this content where the customers 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). Another important aspect of publishing content where your customers are is to engage with them if they respond to the content you've posted. This back and forth can oftentimes be the final push a prospect needs to choose your company.



STEP EIGHT



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. Typically, in the B2B space, asking for first name, last name, email and company name at the very least is standard. This helps better gauge whether or not the person downloading the offer is a qualified lead or not, so lead ownership can be distinguished between your sales and marketing team.

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. It's always a great idea to monitor whether these offers are producing leads—if they're not, change them up.

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

- Your company publishes a blog post titled "Answers to Your Top 10 Questions About Hiring a Trucking Company" that a visitor reads.
- On the same web page, you put a call-to-action (CTA)—or, an on-site direction that informs the visitor to perform a specific action (in this case, download an offer).
- When that CTA is clicked, it leads the visitor to a landing page for a checklist titled "5 Ways Your Transportation Company Can Save You Time & Money."
- Your visitor fills out the online form on the landing page for this "gated" guide.



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 themselves to considering you as a potential solution-provider to their now clearly defined problem.

This visitor clicks on another CTA that leads to the ebook, "Efficiencies Gained Through Hiring ABC Company." This offer is targeted directly at someone looking specifically for a trucking solution, which means they now fall within the consideration stage of the buyer's journey.

Potentially most importantly, you need content offers that speak to a person who is ready to make a decision to purchase. 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.

Pro Tip:

Your blog posts should not be about your company and its products or services. Instead, it should be about the customer's pain points and how you can help them. Many companies fall into the trap of treating their blogs as places to tout their offerings. Readers of blogs typically aren't ready for the hard sell—instead, they're looking for information that helps them identify and name their exact problem. By using your content to address your customer's pain points, you appeal to their needs, making them more likely to convert and in turn giving your sales team the opportunity to close a sale.

STEP NINE



TRACK, NURTURE AND CLOSE YOUR LEADS

Once a prospect has filled out a form on your website—any form, regardless of stage in the buyer's journey—your company 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 push prospects closer to the sale.

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

Once a prospect has filled out a form on your company's website indicating they may be interested in working with you, someone from your sales team should follow up to further investigate their interest. If this lead is a good fit for your product or service, this opportunity changes from a marketing qualified lead (MQL) to a sales qualified lead (SQL). It's now up to your sales team to work their magic and convert this prospect into a customer.





STEP TEN

MEASURE, REPORT, ADJUST & EVOLVE

With any marketing-related efforts, especially inbound, it's vital that these are tracked, reported on and discussed by your sales, marketing and management teams on at least a monthly basis. Some inbound metrics worth paying attention to are:

- Website sessions
- Leads
- Sessions to Lead Conversion Rate (S2LCR)
- MQLs
- Leads to Marketing Qualified Leads Conversion Rate (L2MQLCR)
- SQLs
- Leads to Sales Qualified Leads Conversion Rate (L2SQLCR)

By tracking KPIs and reporting back on them, real-time adjustments to low-performing content can be made in order to better serve a prospect's needs. Additionally, what is working for existing prospects can be repeated over and over in an attempt to replicate success.

The end result is increased sales and marketing efficiency. This translates into your sales team talking to the right leads at the right time and closing the sales that will grow your company.



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 software helps your sales team manage relationships, typically after they have filled out a form on your website indicating they may want to work with you.

CRMs, like marketing automation software, rely on data.

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?
- If your pipeline is large enough to support your growth objectives?

If your company is looking to improve sales results, then you need answers to the questions above. You need those answers in real time, anytime, all the time. Best of all, 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 within hours.



CONCLUSION

Inbound marketing for transportation companies is about providing the right information to the right people at the right time. Doing so demonstrates that your company is not only a viable solution, but the right solution.

Once inbound digital marketing efforts have generated interest and the prospect has identified themselves, your staff's sales process should seamlessly take over.

Today, we're seeing more companies invest in video and social networks (such as Instagram) and messaging applications (such as Facebook Messenger) in an effort to reach customers and prospects where they are online.

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.

The end result? More qualified prospects for your sales teams, which translates into more sales and a greater ROI on your marketing efforts.



ABOUT SYNCSHOW

SyncShow is an integrated digital marketing agency, located just outside of Cleveland, Ohio. As digital marketing thought leaders for the transportation and logistics industry, we're uniquely qualified to help your company overcome industry-specific sales and marketing challenges using one-of-a-kind, proven strategies that drive growth in the most efficient ways possible.

As a HubSpot Platinum Partner, we are equipped with the latest marketing methodologies that will help you target the right buyers with the right marketing campaigns at the right time—greatly improving the number and quality leads your sales team receives.

Our strategies and solutions help companies grow and stay ahead.

[SEE HOW WE CAN HELP](#)

