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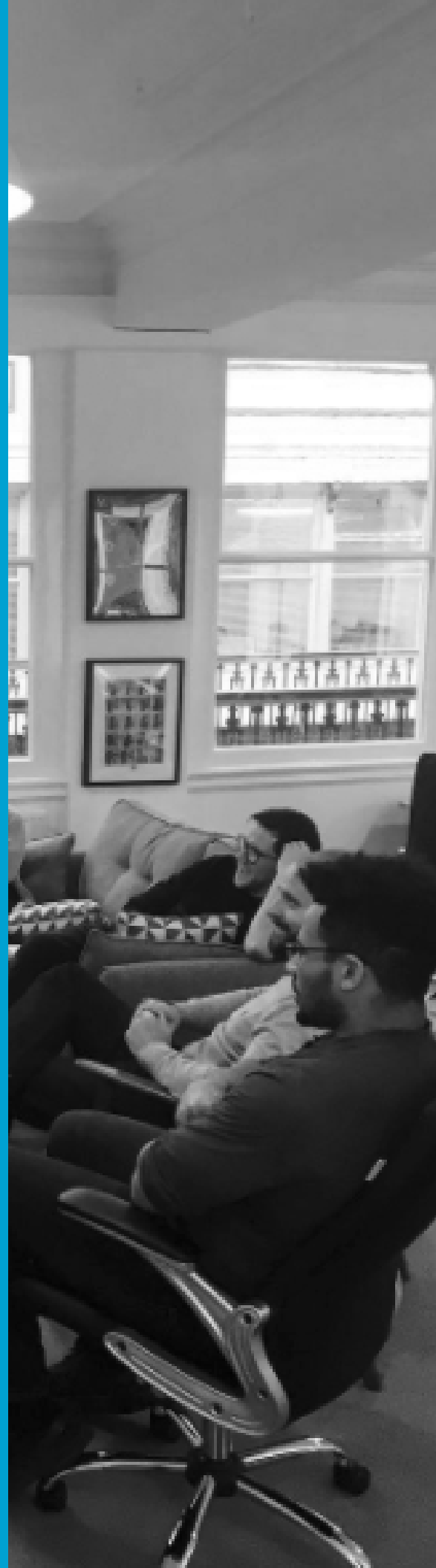
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Your guide to
working with an
inbound
marketing agency

This guide will give you some core advice to sort out your campaigns and streamline your sales processes.

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About Six & Flow

Six & Flow is a Growth Agency based in Manchester. We work with brands and companies, from local to global, helping grow businesses through brand awareness and customer acquisition.

by Richard Wood

Why Six & Flow?

Creating digital strategy and managing delivery, we consider ourselves a performance-led growth agency, which works to achieve a clear return on investment for our clients. Delivering across current and emerging digital channels, we see ourselves in partnership with our clients, rather than just a service provider.

We pride ourselves on being playful, creative and commercial in our approach, strategically providing growth for your business.

We help our clients identify who their customer base is, how they acquire them and how they nurture them on to increased value. We work with clients to achieve clear goals across both UK and global markets.

As an agency, our goal is to help our clients increase their customer base across current, new and emerging markets. We help them launch products, events, services and brands through creative lead generation and playful brand awareness.

Nurturing and nudging your ideal persona with inbound marketing

When it comes to [inbound marketing](#), personas are an absolutely vital part of the creative process. They help you to visualise and identify markets most suitable to the success of your business and its growth trajectory.

There's an excellent interview on Forbes with Scott Levine of Kern, though, who points out that personas aren't set in stone. Like the people you want to target, personas are [constantly growing and evolving](#) with their respective audiences.

Outlining and reaching out to personas can be difficult enough for businesses to do. It can be one of the most time-consuming parts of the inbound marketing process.

If you need to follow trends which interest your market (and even stay ahead of them) you risk overcomplicating your marketing strategy and pushing potential leads away.

There's also little more cringeworthy than seeing a band [trying too hard to be cool](#) with its audience; it's one of the quickest ways to turn them off.

So, how do you create personas and identify an audience of new potential leads, and well as discover their trends and nurture that audience as time goes by?

The first step is not to overcomplicate things

John Murphy, also known in the advertising world as the 'Brandfather,' recently said that even though there are more communication channels than ever and branding is everywhere, branding is [as simple as it's ever been](#).

To that end, simply communicating on social media, researching with polls and surveys and interacting with people interested in your market on a one-to-one basis is the best way to outline and build initial general personas when laying your inbound foundations.

If you're serious about persona marketing, creative content marketing will be key to everything you do. Again though, for brands new to inbound marketing, this can come across as a bit confusing. What is content marketing, and how can both it and social media work together to attract new audiences and pull existing customers away from established brands?

Simple. Creative content can be anything designed to attract attention; from blogs to news articles, infographics to original graphics and artwork, emails, videos, podcasts and many other methods.

Content marketing is beyond an advertising trend too, with 75% of companies set to [increase their investment in content marketing](#) and 53% of B2B marketers saying they see greater success when they employ content marketing as part of their outreach services.

The future of content marketing also looks bright with more brands shifting to native advertising and newer technological advances seeing [the growth of live video and AI](#), brands can cultivate some serious audience engagement and interaction if they focus their efforts on a creative inbound marketing strategy.

Nurturing potential leads with content can be a long game, but a highly rewarding one as you enhance your brand's reputation and build trust with potential customers through a creative inbound marketing philosophy.

'Creative' is in the eye of the beholder though, and it pays to know the types of content your market is interested in and influenced by, as well as the places

they spend their time on the internet such as the social platforms they visit.

Research by Zendesk for instance suggests that 88% of buyers make purchasing decisions [based on customer reviews](#) while including a video in an email lead can potentially increase click-through rates by an astonishing 300% according to [a report by Forrester](#).

Again though, it's dependent on the direction you want to take your brand and what you consider success. While 80% of PPC leads will be [happy to watch a video](#), that doesn't mean that you should abandon blog posts or strong graphic design elements on your landing pages.

This is where further research of your personas and building them out is essential to further growth. Creative content shouldn't just be there to entertain people and tickle their fancy. It can also be a way to gauge consumer trends, collect essential customer data, generate product interest and build relationships with the people who matter to you most.

Content marketing is a strong ally when defining your market and visualising the personas most important to you, but initially attracting those potential leads and nurturing them also needs a combination of other channels to maximise your content's reach.

Working with an inbound marketing agency to make use of its social marketing and targeting expertise complemented with marketing automation services can also increase your chances of building a stronger rapport with your market as well as improving the quality of your leads.

Putting some budget into biddable media programmes like paid search and social media targeting allows you to reach out to your personas them in incredibly refined and creative ways. Facebook's new dynamic ads allow businesses to [target personas' web activity](#), for instance.

That allows brands to put themselves directly in front of the people they want to speak to and attract almost instantly, letting you direct them to specific areas on your website with your products and services.

That can help you to potentially see an immediate sales spike, but for true

long-term business growth, directing your personas to places on your site with creative content and encouraging them to interact with you and providing them with incentives to submit their data is the key to nurturing and building strong relationships with people who tell your friends and family you exist.

Automating that system with a creative inbound marketing strategy also allows you to ethically and transparently collect the right types of data from your target market helping you to better refine your audience, gauge its movements and evolve with it as its tastes change.

Creative content marketing complemented with a strong social strategy, data collection, marketing automation and other proven inbound services can cultivate new markets and nurture leads, turning them into brand ambassadors committed to growing alongside your company.

Want to know more about how a creative, bespoke inbound strategy can be essential to growing your company and attracting new audiences? [Contact Six & Flow today to find out more](#). We're an inbound marketing agency in Manchester with a passion for delighting new clients.

What is marketing automation?

by Richard Wood

You've probably heard the term marketing automation before. You may even be using it within your campaigns. Whether it's on your radar or not, it's changing the way we market, sell to and win customers.

In its most basic description, marketing automation is a software or technology that automates jobs or tasks that are repetitive, often tiresome or even formulaic in their approach. Wikipedia describes it as:

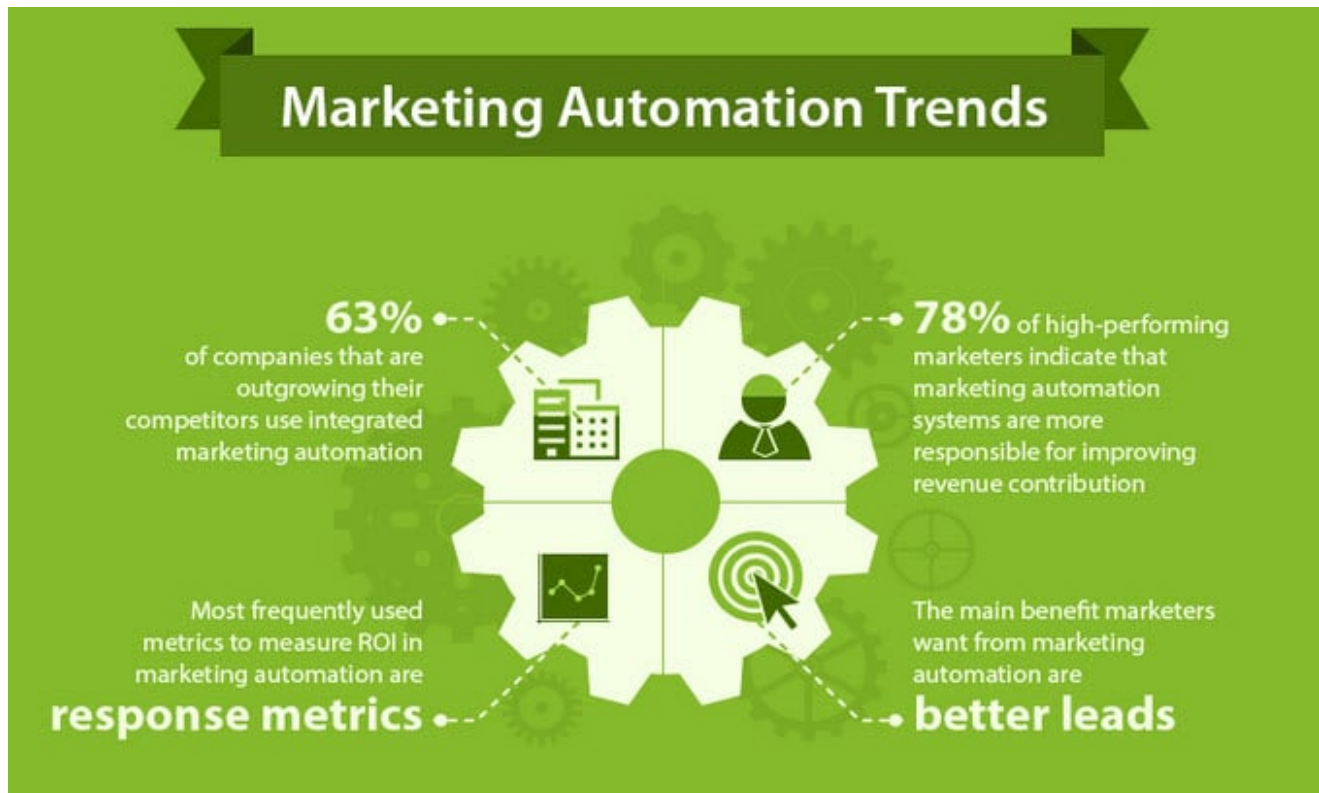
"Marketing automation refers to software platforms and technologies designed for marketing departments and organisations to more effectively market on multiple channels online (such as email, social media, websites, etc.) and automate repetitive tasks."

But it's a bit more than that.

Marketing automation allows you to track and mould how a potential buyer interacts with your brand, by collating clicks, visits, opens and actions so you can then deliver marketing messages tailored to a their [buying persona](#) without interrupting them. At its core, marketing automation aims to set a consumer on a path to purchase (or action) based on their previous actions.

According to Marketing Tech Blog, content marketing is set to become more and more reliant on marketing automation as we move through to 2016 and

beyond. It allows marketers and brands alike to tailor, perfect and become a hell of a lot more efficient at identifying and connecting with prospects. This allows us to move resources away from hollow web traffic unlikely to convert, while focusing on those with a much higher propensity to purchase from your business. Marketing automation helps increase lead quality which ultimately effects your sales.



See the full infographic at [Position2](#)

The purpose of marketing automation is to help improve a customer's online experience with your brand, products and services, rather than interrupting (or spamming...) a brokered-in list of names to hit with direct (e)mailing. By building content and workflows relevant to your potential customers, you can work them through a narrative. This helps you bring in the right traffic and targetrelevant audiences, rather than stacking your analytics with spikes in empty (non-converting) traffic. Inbound, not outbound.

Amazon is used by as an example of how to properly use marketing automation and why it is effective at generating inbound leads for your business.

Amazon uses what's known as a predictive algorithm. It takes your name when

you log in to their service and stores it; this algorithm then monitors what you're looking at and what you purchase. It then uses this information to show you other products that you might want to buy.

I'm sure you're thinking now about other companies who use marketing in this way; eBay and ASOS for instance.

However, Twitter has started doing something similar with the 'while you were away' feature. It collates a bunch of Tweets you've missed and presents the ones it thinks you may find most interesting. This isn't done at random. Twitter is making an educated guess based on your past behaviour and what it thinks you may like to see. Twitter's goal here? To increase your engagement levels.

Inbound marketing automation, which focuses on understanding and preempting who your customer is and what their needs and wants are, is arguably the most powerful form of marketing automation. This is the one that consistently delivers the data you need to improve and evolve your marketing channels.

So, what is a good marketing automation tool? First, you need to work out what you need it to do. Again, econsultancy.com puts this into rather concise words.

You need it to:

Save you time
Integrate to your CRM
Collect and utilise data
Manage multiple channels
Personalise to the user
Increase your sales leads
Improve the quality of your leads (contact rates and sales)

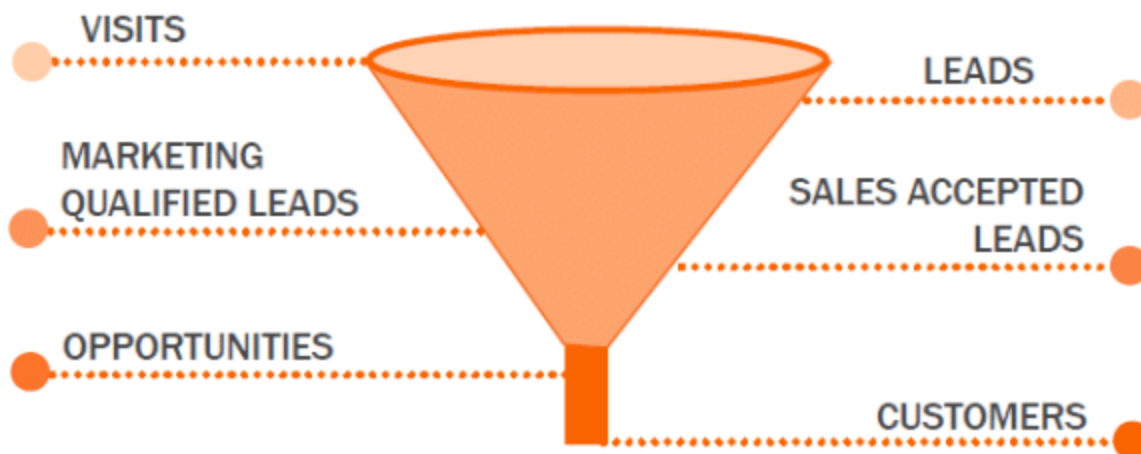
There are loads of potential marketing tools worth looking at. As a gold HubSpot partner agency, we highly recommend . However, other options are out there.

Marketing automation, in the eyes of HubSpot, stretches to "automation beyond email." This means automation not just in your outbound messaging, but equally in the on-sight messaging and pathways presented to the consumer.

HubSpot focuses its automation around what your marketing goals are and works to help you achieve them.

What makes HubSpot different (and arguably better) than other marketing

automation software (again, we are slightly biased here as we're a HubSpot partner) is that it is a full-funnel marketing platform. It affects your buyer's journey from beginning to end. From the top of the funnel, through to the bottom. TOFU, MOFU, BOFU.



What's this? Sending mailers or targeting messages to the same people over and over again isn't effective, but automation allows you to adapt, generating new leads and grow your customers.

This is just a short glimpse into what marketing automation could do for your business. It is the best way to hit your target audience and consumers with information you think they'll like, without clogging up their email accounts with information they may be likely to overlook. By implementing marketing automation, you improve the customer experience and free up time for things like strategy.

How an inbound marketing agency can fill in your knowledge blind spots

by Richard Wood

Working with an [inbound marketing](#) agency can lay the right foundations for an expert campaign. Having access to experts in your knowledge blind spots can save precious marketing budget, destress your frazzled team and free up your time to focus on core business activities. And yet...

"I know my market better than anyone because I am my market."

"There's nothing you can tell me about my industry, I've been in it for decades."

"That probably won't work, I can't see them liking that..."

We luckily haven't heard those sentences yet at Six & Flow, but we have heard utterings like them at some stages of our career and from friends working across the industry.

It's essential to point out, too, that these aren't necessarily bad or unwelcome phrases. Some people are more set in their ways than others, and once they see the benefits of a new approach and how it can help grow their business, they more often than not embrace change.

A good agency will work with clients, not against them

What about those voices above that believe so strongly that they're the embodiment of their industry, though, and are too staunch to change?

They're great, and nothing beats the knowledge that an experienced hand can offer. At the same time, though, times and trends can change and the closer somebody is to an industry, the harder it can be for them to see and notice.

We call this a 'knowledge blind spot'. Everyone has one, and sometimes the only way to fill in that knowledge gap is to have somebody point it out to us.

Nobody's perfect. Total omnipotence is impossible and absolutely everybody will have a knowledge blind spot in some regard when it comes to their industry, their market, their product or the way they're marketing themselves.

Thanks to the internet though, everybody has an opinion and they're not shy about sharing it. That's not a bad thing, of course, as people can share the wealth of their experience and attract new audiences and markets to work with on a personal level.

At the same time, the increasing noise is making it harder to pick up on and focus on voices that are truly worth listening to.

How Pepsi's blind spots made it lose its fizz

You'll have probably heard the negative reaction surrounding Pepsi recently and their portrayal of a protest led by Kendall Jenner. Again, everyone has their opinion on it, and there's a lot of noise to sift through online.

Only, there's an excellent piece on Campaign written by David Kolbusz of Droga5 who points out most of the noise and objections are [coming from within the advertising industry](#).

"The ad was only a couple notes off the cynical, opportunistic dross that agencies frequently churn out and celebrate these days. We've become addicted to doing "good" in the world at the expense of all else," he says.

"We've crawled so far up our own arses that when Saturday Night Live does a gleeful parody of what we've become ("Hard cut, Cheetos" – look it up if you haven't seen it already) we can't even step outside ourselves and see that they've got a point."

His point is that many modern advertisers, in a desperate bid to point out what's wrong with the ad, are doing so by looking inward at the industry and not from the point of view of the millennial soft drink consumer who the ad was aimed at.

That makes even more sense when you learn that Pepsi was using its new in-house agency to create the ad because it was sick of working with third-party agencies and wanted to reduce costs. That created a blind spot of being [too product-wary in its ad](#), and not having enough research and awareness of the market it was trying to reach out to.

United we fall

The United Airlines incident recently highlights other blind spots that may seem painfully obvious to most, but can somehow still go over the heads of the most important people at a company.

The removal of a passenger from an overbooked flight was awful to see played out over social media, but the immediate Twitter response by United and the insistence that the aggressive, physical team 'got every backing' from those in charge was an unmitigated PR disaster.

It looks even worse when, after the passenger himself appeared to be blamed despite the evidence, the chief executive makes a reversal after two days and says he's concerned about the situation, most notably as [the company's share price started to tumble](#).

Away from marketing, it's just a terrible example of poor practice and how not to handle a situation. There are obviously company-wide policies that need looking at at United Airlines; PR being one of them.

Before the incident though, it's probably highly likely that the CEO and others in charge of running the airline would feel like they had no blind spots with the company performing relatively well.

An inbound marketing agency can help you see the light

Two very public and visible problems from companies in working in different industries, but lessons that everybody can learn when it comes to blind spots.

Things happen that you may not expect, that's a certainty in life. Shifting your focus to a strong, bespoke inbound marketing strategy can not only lessen the impact if things go wrong, but provide a long-term marketing platform for your company growth across a number of channels that you may or may not have experience in.

That's why working with a knowledgeable, personable inbound marketing agency can be the difference between success and failure as they take an express interest in working alongside you to give your advice and the benefits of their digital marketing experience.

Take social media for example. A lot of companies feel that, because they have access to Facebook and Twitter, they can handle their brand's social presence and become an expert in a short space of time.

Nothing wrong with that at all, and keeping things in-house may be the best way for you to handle how you present yourself to the world. As United Airlines shows though, you may have a split second to manage a crisis in a very visible way if something goes wrong.

Social media alone won't help your company grow, either. Effective social

media marketing needs some budget to make best use of intricate targeting options on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

A bespoke inbound marketing strategy lets you spend time elsewhere

Social media also needs a mixture of creative content and well-researched persona targeting methods to reach the right audience and reduce costs per lead.

You may be great at managing your brand's social accounts, but can you produce content at a regular rate? Can that content also be used within a search campaign, and can you complement your social spend with biddable paid search methods to truly accelerate your growth?

The beauty of inbound is that there are a lot of disciplines that can be mixed and matched to achieve almost instant success, and very few people are masters of each craft. It takes a close agency of talented workers in each discipline for real success.

Laying the right foundations with a knowledgeable, bespoke inbound marketing agency can not only put a long-term growth plan into action, but give you access to experts in your knowledge blind spots such as PPC, public relations, social targeting, market research and other effective marketing techniques.

Not only can that save you money from your overall marketing budget, but also give you the time to focus on the areas of your business where you're strongest, allowing you to put the benefits of your experience into the places that matter most for growth.

Strengthen any potential weaknesses in your company and fill in those knowledge blind spots by creating a strong, bespoke inbound marketing strategy with Six & Flow.



Get In Touch

Want to speak with Six & Flow about how you can improve your marketing?

Just click the link to book in a call with our team

or visit sixandflow.com

[Schedule A Call](#)