

Inbound Marketing How To Guide



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INTRODUCTION

TO THE INBOUND MARKETING METHODOLOGY

Although it's been around for quite some time, many businesses still don't really understand how inbound marketing works. They like the idea of it -- after all, any kind of marketing is intended to bring in more customers, which is music to every business owner's ears. But is there really a methodology that can be followed, i.e. a step-by-step process that can increase your conversion and retention rate? Luckily, the answer is yes.

If you're expecting a 50-step list, you can rest easy. The Inbound Marketing Methodology consists of a mere four -- yes, four! -- basic steps that will take customers through a series of transformations as they start out as complete strangers to your business and wind up as customers and possibly even promoters.

Step #1: Attract

When you first start out, the majority of people you'll be trying to lure into your business are strangers. Although you may have been taught to fear strangers, these are the people who you want to pull in. Your job is to attract them to your business by any means necessary. With the digital age of inbound marketing, this includes the use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, blogs, etc. to promote your company. It also means that you will want to learn how to utilize specific keywords to help increase your exposure.

Step #2: Convert

Once these strangers have found their way to your website, they become visitors. Now that they've made their way to your website, it's time to go in for the kill. To begin the conversion of these visitors into actual customers, you must utilize good calls-to-action, i.e. clicking on a button or link that will allow them to learn more, download a free product, etc. Each call-to-action must then take the visitor to a precise landing page, where you supply what was promised, have the visitor fill out a form for more information, etc. And finally, this is the part of the process where you will want to be gathering a list of the contacts (visitors to your site) for future use.

Step #3: Close

If the visitors have gotten this far, you're in good shape. These people have been transformed into leads, and you now have a great chance to close the sale. This takes a bit more savvy, and is often the area where businesses tend to lose customers. Lead scoring, which allows you to track what the customer is doing on your site will tell you if the person is a good prospect and how much energy you should expend to go after them. If a solid lead leaves your website, it's a good idea to follow up with marketing e-mails focused on content relative to the lead. Concurrently, you will want to determine which efforts are bringing in these leads, which is where CRM (Customer Relationship Management) comes into play.

Step #4: Delight

This is the step where your hard work has finally paid off and those people who were once strangers have been fully converted into customers. You're not done yet, though. This is your opportunity to delight the customer after the sale, which will keep them coming back for more. There are numerous ways to do this, between using social media for customer service options, utilizing smart calls-to-action to focus promotions based on that customer's buying trends, and automated marketing to introduce new products and features that the customer may be interested in. If you are successful, these customers will then become promoters of your business, which will bring in even more revenue.



AUDIENCES EVERYWHERE ARE TOUGH. THEY DON'T HAVE TIME TO BE BORED OR BROW BEATEN BY ORTHODOX, OLD-FASHIONED ADVERTISING. WE NEED TO STOP INTERRUPTING WHAT PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN & BE WHAT PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN.

**- CRAIG DAVIS, CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
J. WALTER THOMPSON (WORLD'S 4TH LARGEST AD AGENCY)**

STEP 1

IT'S TIME TO ATTRACT

This first step involves attracting traffic to your website and, concurrently, your business. It's important that we break down this step's mystique a bit further, which we've done with these following tips:

Create Killer Content

In order to begin your company's inbound marketing campaign, you must first create an online presence with the tools that are made available to you. Much of the work has already been done for you. Your company doesn't need to develop new tools; they're already out there waiting to be utilized. These tools include building a website, signing up for social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, and creating a variety of content that by way of whitepapers, videos, webinars, case studies, etc.

Get an Organic High

Search Engine Optimization is a big part of bringing people to your website, Facebook page, Twitter feed, etc. When utilized properly, your website will place at a higher point in various search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, and several others. Some companies help this along by paying sites like Google for the advertising opportunity, but your goal should be to do this organically, at least in the long-term. A continuous blog that utilizes specific keywords is a great way to do this, as further evidenced below.

Blog Until You Can't Blog No More

The art of blogging was originally done for personal benefit. It provided everyday persons with an outlet to write about whatever interested them, turning the Internet into their own personal soapbox. Companies quickly caught on and a new form of advertising was born. The secret to successful blogging is consistency. The more you post a blog, preferably one that's embedded into your site, the faster online traffic will build. We suggest at least twice a week, although five times a week will help you grow more quickly.

FACT:

THE INTERNET HAS FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED THE WAY PEOPLE FIND, DISCOVER, SHARE, SHOP, & CONNECT.

Use Social Media Like a 12-Year-Old Girl

No offense to 12-Year-Old Girls. They're actually quite lovely. But they're also addicted to social media, and we can definitely learn something from them. The trick to using social media successfully is to keep hammering away at it. And just when you think you can't possibly hit it any harder, give it a couple more quick jabs to keep things flowing.

Start PPCing

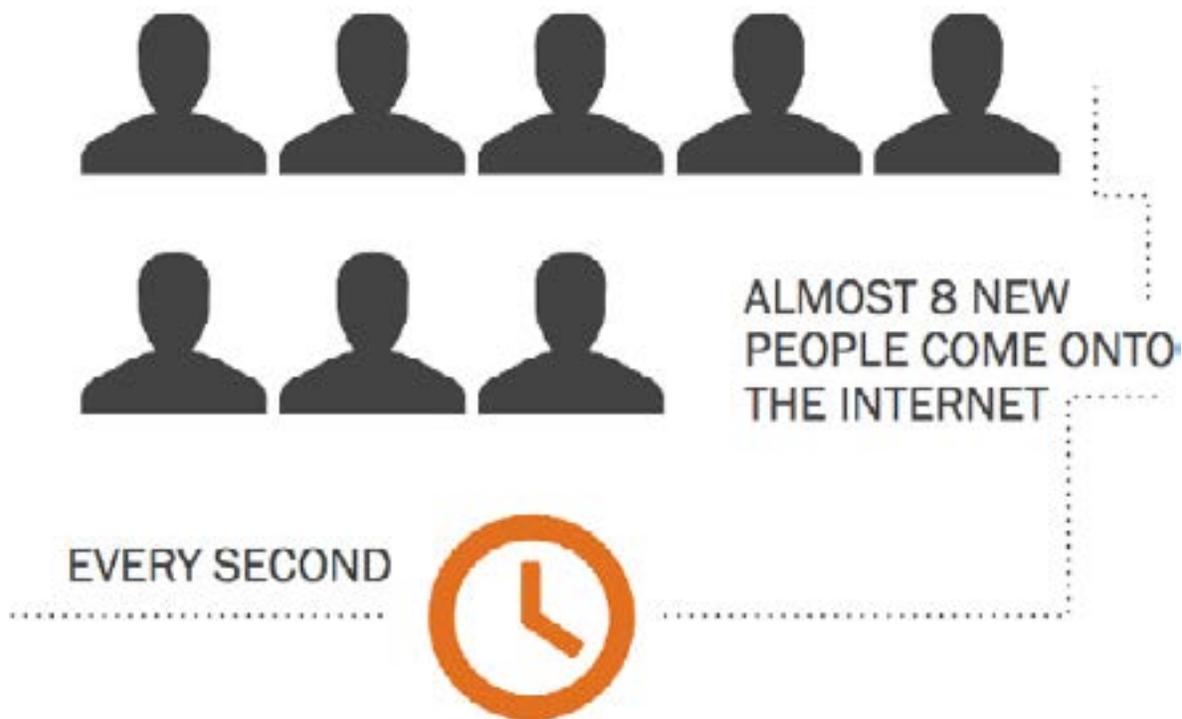
As previously mentioned, you can actually pay for placement on search engines to get traffic coming to your website. Examples of this include Google Adwords and a number of social media advertising opportunities. Pay-Per-Click has proven to be an effective way to give companies a well-needed kick start. If you have it in your budget to take a bit of a shortcut, go for it.

Kill It with E-mail

Despite what some people would have you believe, e-mail marketing is far from dead. Sending out e-mails to potential and current customers is a great way to stay connected. Yes, people do open the majority of e-mails they receive as long as you don't start it with something like "Hello. I being the king of Nigeria country." Simply make your e-mail "pop" and they'll be putty in your hands. Plus, sending mass e-mails costs very little.

Stay Savvy

Above all, you should integrate your offline and online marketing efforts with a heap of savviness. If you are planning to create a direct mail piece, be sure that your website address is on there, and maybe even your Facebook and Twitter addresses. When sending e-mails, be sure to use an electronic signature that includes links to everything that's connected to the marketing campaign.



STEP 2

CONVERT TRAFFIC TO LEADS

In step one, we detailed a number of strategies that you can use to attract potential customers by way of e-mail, social media, and similar techniques. But now that they've begun to pour onto your website in droves, what the heck do you do with them? You already know that you must turn these visitors into leads, but what techniques should you utilize?

Create Awesome Calls-to-Action

Your company's success can be made or broken by the quality of your calls-to-action (or CTAs). Let's face it -- people have short attention spans. Even as you read this, your mind is starting to wander as you think about your spouse or your dog or what you want to eat for lunch. That's why sometimes we might suddenly start talking about nonsensical things like dancing chicken nuggets or that monster in your closet. See ... we got your attention, didn't we?

The same is true when creating CTAs for your website. Your goal is to get your visitors' attention so that they'll stick around. Contact forms are old school, uninviting, and definitely not exciting. So forget about them. Instead, give a visitor something to do. For example, to learn more about what your company is all about, they need to click a button. Or, for visual stimulation, post a video that tells more about you or your product (and make sure the video is fun). Another great call-to-action is a free product that a visitor can download. Guide your visitors through the sales funnel and don't forget to conduct A/B testing to determine what works best for your website.

Landing Pages Are Your Seductress

No, seduction isn't a bad word. It's actually a fantastic business concept. Attracting a potential customer is one thing; seducing them to really love both your website and whatever product or service you offer is quite another. If you succeed in seducing visitors once they've reached your website, you could very well have a customer for life.

For our purposes, seduction is done by creating exciting landing pages for every link on your main page and even deeper into your site. Have you ever clicked on a link that sounded exciting, only to be taken to a very bland new page or -- egads! -- a 404 Error page? Frustrating, isn't it? Don't cheat your potential customers. Don't lure them in with a great marketing campaign and attractive homepage only to send them to an uninteresting mishmash of bad design and lack of ingenuity. For each landing page, ask yourself one simple question -- if this was the first page you'd ever seen of your website, would you be impressed enough to stick around?

Your Forms Must Make Sense

One final note. The forms on each of your landing pages must make sense. They need to be aligned with the type of offer it is, whether it's at the top, middle, or bottom of the sales funnel you've created. This is a mistake that many websites make when they're first learning the process, and this misstep can lead to disaster.

They'll ask for too much information from the visitor up front and all sense of seduction suddenly ends as the visitor leaves the website entirely, never to return. If you insist on collecting information right away, limit it to name, e-mail address, and company name, if applicable. You can get more information later, once they've gone further down the sales funnel.

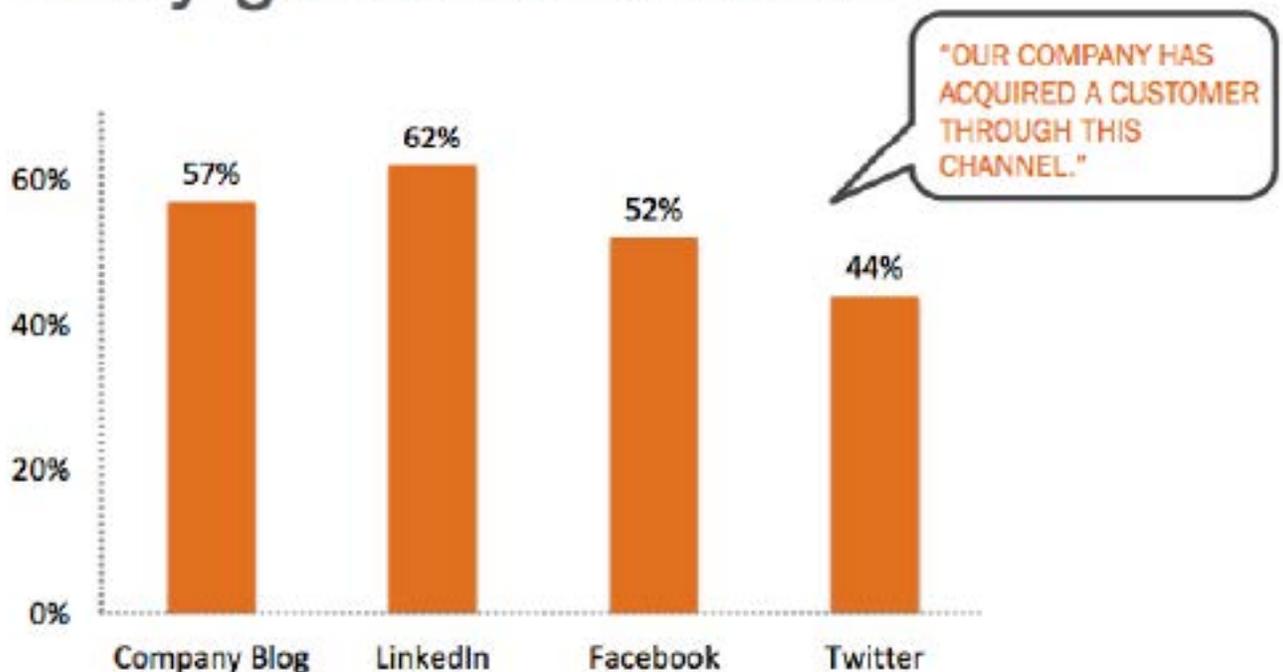
Conversion of potential customers can be a real minefield. But with some well-designed plans, you'll close the deal in no time.

FACT:

COMPANIES WITH 30 OR MORE LANDING PAGES GENERATE 7X MORE LEADS THAN THOSE WITH FEWER THAN 10. THOSE WITH OVER 40 LANDING PAGES GOT 12X MORE LEADS.

(HUBSPOT)

Inbound marketing tactics don't just generate leads. They generate **revenue**.



SOURCE: STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, HUBSPOT, MARCH 2012

STEP 3

CLOSE THOSE SALES

This is when you take the leads that you've developed through your marketing efforts and close the sale. Unfortunately, this is where many companies drop the ball. Although you've worked diligently to attract potential customers and turn them into leads, closing the sale is often the hardest part of the process. That being said, if you follow through and learn a few nuances of the process, your success is almost guaranteed.

Nurture Your Leads Like a Loving Mother

Obviously, not every person who visits your website and searches through your various pages will immediately turn into a customer. Very often, you will need to guide them as if they're your own children, to further press upon them that your service or product is something they need or, at the very least, something they should want. If you can do this successfully, you'll be rewarded with brand new customers who may even tell their friends about you.

This part of the process is conducted by sending out marketing e-mails to further your connection with the leads you've collected. Each marketing e-mail should feature a dynamic presentation that grabs their attention and highlights what you have to offer. It is essential that you make the message clear, use well-designed visuals as needed, and shape it to match the buyer's persona. Very few people like reading extensive sales pitches or advertisements, so you must also avoid being long-winded. Get in, give them your message, and get out of Dodge!

FACT:

NURTURED LEADS MAKE 47% LARGER PURCHASES THAN NON-NURTURED LEADS.

(SOURCE: THE ANNUITAS GROUP)

Lead Scoring to Success

So many people in the world are up in arms over how much we're being tracked at all times, especially for marketing purposes. Write about something on your Facebook page and pop-up ads about that very subject will begin to appear. For savvy business owners, though, tracking what a visitor does on your website -- a process called lead scoring -- is essential for success. Lead scoring can be very effective, but it's also time-consuming. If you don't have a lot of leads, you should concentrate your efforts on gathering leads instead.

For those who have plenty of leads to work with, it's important that you know how these visitors are using your website. You can track how they arrived at your site, which pages they visited, how much time they spent on each page, the number of links they clicked, and a whole slew of other information. All of this is used to determine if they are a good prospect for utilizing your services or products and how much time and energy you should use to lure them back to your website. When a lead is determined to be a solid prospect, you should always follow up with marketing content that relates to the person's activity and online profile, if available.

A Little Integration for a Big Payoff

In order for your sales department to successfully close as many leads as possible, it's imperative that you integrate everything that you've learned from your online marketing efforts and customer insights into your Customer Relationship Management. This will allow your sales team to have easy access to helpful items like downloads, pages viewed, e-mails opened, social media engagement, and much more. This allows them to compose marketing e-mails that have a much higher chance at closing the sale.

Closing the sale is the part of the marketing process where a business truly proves its mettle. Of course, in some ways, closing the sale is only the beginning of a much more exciting adventure, which we'll cover in our fourth and final blog on the subject. Until then, enjoy what you've learned so far!

59%

of B2B marketers say
email is the most
effective channel in
generating revenue.



SOURCE: BTOB MAGAZINE, MARCH 2012

STEP 4

DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS

The time has arrived for the fourth -- and final -- step in the Inbound Marketing Methodology. We've already learned how to attract visitors to your website, convert them into leads, and close the sale. Now the work is all done and you can sit back and relax, right? Wrong!

Now it's time for possibly the most important step of all. This is where you'll delight the customers that have already proven themselves to be interested in your products or services. This is your chance to turn your first-time customer into one who will hopefully not only frequent your website for themselves, but will promote your site for others. So, without further adieu, let's take a look at a few elements that are needed at this stage of the methodology:

Don't Fumble the Ball

If you want your new customer to return to your website, it is imperative that you deliver excellent customer service once an order for products or services has been placed. Customers can be very fickle. No matter how much they enjoy your website or what you have to offer, if they believe that you don't care enough for their business to provide them with the same level of service even after the sale, then you can forget about them coming back. And they may even cancel their existing order.

Deliver on Promises or Suffer the Consequences

Trusting a company online for the first time can be a risky prospect. When a customer is confident enough to provide their personal and financial information to you over the Internet, the last thing you want is to neglect the promises that were made. This will put a bad taste in their mouth. So if you make a promise, stick to it. If you have any problems with delivery, inform the customer right away and attempt to make amends.

Social Media For the Win

Not only is social media a great tool to use in order to find customers and draw them to your website, it can be used by your own customers to do your job for you by promoting your business. If a person is happy with the service you delivered, they're more likely to discuss it with their friends on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. A single post can then be shared and reach further into the virtual ether than you can imagine. The same is true with a bad experience, so make sure you always put your best foot forward.

Knowledge is Power

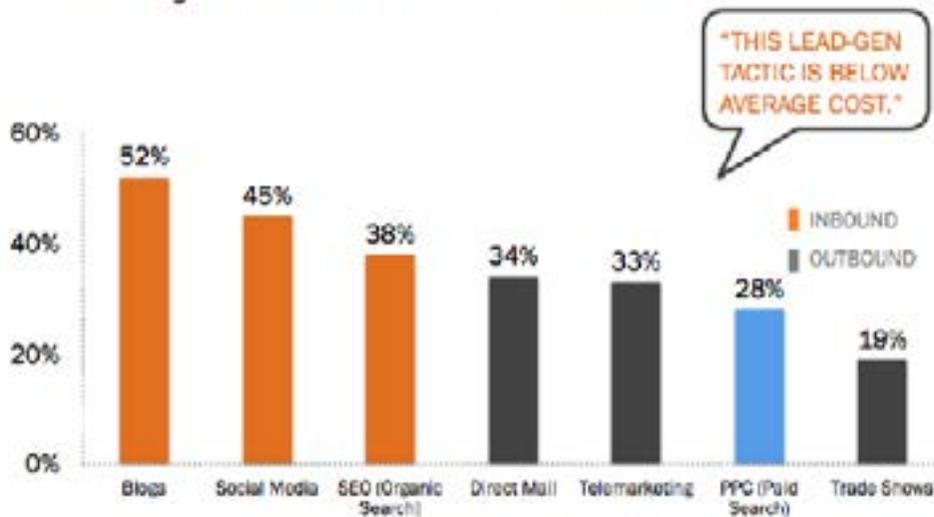
Now that you're more aware of what your customer desires, you can use this knowledge to construct personalized e-mails that are more likely to illicit a response in the future. If your business is financial, you can send out something to talk about putting your money into an investment around tax time. If your company sells online products, holidays are a great time to advertise using what you know about your customers. You get the idea.

K-I-T to W-I-N

If you want to win with your customers and ensure that they return to your website, it's essential that you keep in touch with them. Don't let them forget about you. We don't mean to send e-mails every hour. Simply devise an e-mail strategy that will allow you to stay in their minds. Even if a specific e-mail doesn't result in an immediate response, you'll always be in the back of their minds.

With this fourth and final step in the Inbound Marketing Methodology, you now have all the tools needed to not only find new customers, but to keep them around for the long haul. So what are you waiting for? Go get 'em!

Inbound marketing channels **cost less** than any outbound channel.



SOURCE: STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING, HUBSPOT, MARCH 2012

READY TO GET STARTED?

WE CAN HELP YOU EACH AND EVERY STEP ON OF THE WAY.
CONTACT US FOR PRICING AND HOW TO GET STARTED.

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