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Growing Your Architectural Firm  
Through Inbound Marketing

# Growing Your Architectural Firm Through Inbound Marketing

## Introduction

In an RFP-driven sales environment, many architectural and engineering firms do not believe that they can effectively “market” their services other than doing what they have always done. They rely mainly on mutual and returning relationships that have been built-up over time, as well as traditional outbound marketing tactics such as direct mail. Many firms do not always have a proven methodology to integrate their sales and marketing departments in order to stimulate business growth.

In fact, some architectural firms do not have a developed marketing and sales team at all and their marketing team may not include actual architects who can relate to other architects in the way architectural “buyer personas” think.

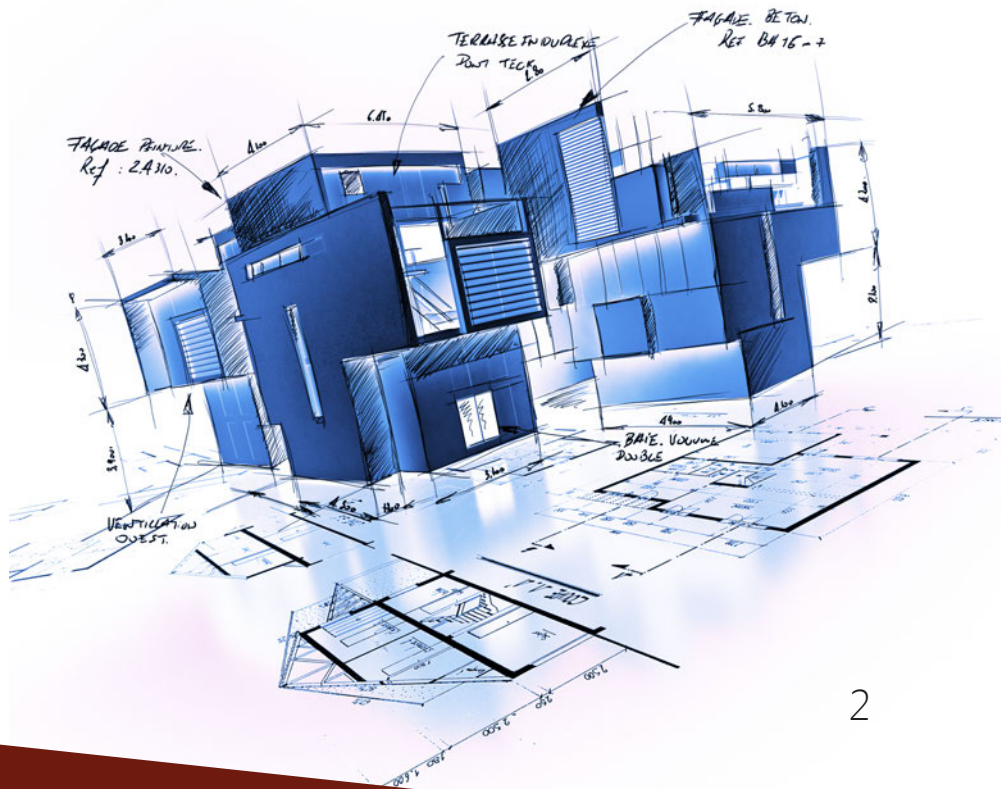
For instance, can the marketing and sales team effectively communicate technical terms and building plan development in a way that an architect would? Conversely, are they able to simplify highly-technical talk in a way that a non-architect can understand and relate?

According to the Google ZMOT study, 84% of buyers engage in online information consumption and education. With the Internet causing overwhelming changes in how people research and compare their options online, architectural and engineering companies need to rethink how they can more effectively market today to grow their businesses.

And the best way to market yourself on the Internet today is through inbound marketing.

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# Your Customer's Buying Cycle is Changing

Before we get into the specifics of inbound marketing though, let's first talk about a customer's buying cycle. It's important to understand the psychology of the customer's buying process, which can be identified through the development of a buyer persona, and how inbound marketing helps you interact with your potential customer at each stage of the buying cycle.

Your ideal customer's buying cycle will probably look something like this:

- **Awareness** - Prospect gets acquainted with your brand or realizes they have a need for your product or service.
- **Research/Education** - Prospect identifies the problem or need in more detail and researches potential solutions, including your product or service.
- **Comparison/Validation** - Prospect examines the options available to them and begins narrowing the list of suppliers.
- **Engagement or Purchase** - Prospect decides who to engage with or buy from.



**TIP:**

*The key is creating and delivering the information that your target market seeks at each of these stages.*







# Understanding Buyer Personas

We've mentioned buyer personas as we've talked about your ideal customer or prospect, so let's take a minute to understand who or what we are talking about.

The buyer persona contains enough detail to support accurate interpretations about your prospect's personal motivations, pain points, personality and overall receptiveness to a sales offer.



**TIP:** *Remember, even though you are selling your architectural services to another business or government entity, you're still working with and selling to actual people. So you need to understand their motivations, pain points and personality.*

- **Personal motivations:**

These include your prospect's career aspirations and other issues only tangentially related to the problem your product or service exists to solve. So how will making a decision to hire your firm affect the buyer's career or how they are professionally perceived within their own company? How can hiring you personally benefit the person to whom you are selling?

- **Pain points:**

Pain points are persona-specific problems that your product or service may be able to solve such as the intense pressure to create a durable, beautiful and efficient design that is within budget and workable within existing conditions. This includes value-to-cost ratios of products and materials, creating a design that is holistic and functioning, and a perfect balance of the Vitruvian scales of solidity, functionality and beauty.

- **Personality and overall receptiveness:**

Each buyer persona's personality defines his or her receptiveness to marketing and sales overtures. For instance, whereas some prospects require a hard sell to convert, others might be turned off by such efforts.

Understanding who is actually making the buying decision will help you format your sales approach or RFP response in a way that will help him or her make a better decision.



# Help Your Leads Continue to Move Through Their Buying Cycle

All leads are not the same. It's important to set up a lead nurturing process to engage them through the research and comparison stages of their buying cycle.

The lead nurturing process helps you better qualify leads and move them through their buying cycle faster. This process also establishes you as the "subject matter expert" on the information you provide, reinforcing your credibility and your company's credibility in the industry.

The lead nurturing process is automated, allowing you to stay engaged with your leads by offering them additional information in various formats such as webinars, testimonials, case studies, or white papers that will ultimately lead them to connect with your sales team.

This allows your sales team to focus only on qualified leads so they can convert more leads to customers. By nurturing these leads through a proven qualification process, your sales team will be interacting with people who are interested in your business and have the authority to purchase your products or services.

In addition, you will want to stay engaged with your customers after they have purchased your products or services through newsletters and articles. This gives you the opportunity to continuously delight your customers. In turn, they may be more likely to provide you with a testimonial, referral and additional sales in the future.





# So What Is Inbound Marketing for Architectural Firms?

Inbound marketing is the integrated function of a marketing methodology that consists of creating and distributing content that your ideal target audience (ideal buyer persona) desires at each stage of their buying cycle. The targeted content is then distributed through various digital marketing channels such as search engines, social media and email.

For example, *an architect firm can use webinars, eBooks, and blogs to provide informative content to its target market on important topics such as:*

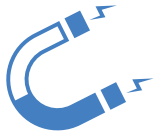
- Updated technological changes of replacing CAD with BIM as your basic design tool
- Best design tactics for sustainable architecture and green building projects
- Fundamentals of renewable energy technology in large-scale architectural designs
- Successfully integrating architectural techniques with solar, geothermal and wind energies





# Inbound Marketing Actions

There are four (4) integrated actions involved in the inbound marketing formula.



1. **ATTRACT:** *The process of attracting* your ideal buyer to your branded website, thereby increasing your number of qualified visitors.



2. **CONVERT:** The function of *converting* a higher number of your visitors to qualified leads, allowing you to nurture them through an information-based sales process.



3. **CLOSE:** The integrated process of *closing* your qualified leads through the lead nurturing process. The result is providing your sales representatives with the best opportunity to increase the number of customers you gain through your inbound marketing process.



4. **DELIGHT:** The result of your formulated Inbound Marketing process *delights* your customers by continuing to engage with them to keep them informed on matters that are relevant and important to them. This helps you increase your number of retained customers, turning them into Fans and Evangelists for your company.





## Goal-Related Process

The inbound marketing methodology efficiency is goal driven and determined by the goals set by you. Once tangible goals are set, you can logically track your progress toward your goals, measuring the success and progress of each of the integrated stages in the inbound marketing formula.

For example, let's say your marketing goal is to increase the quality and quantity of sales leads for your sales team by 50% within the next 12 months.

If we relook at each of the 4 Inbound Marketing Actions previously mentioned, we can use the following content assets in each action to help accomplish your goals:

### Attract

Create, promote and distribute highly-relevant and high-value-based content to attract your ideal target buyer through blog articles and press releases that are optimized for search engines. Then distribute your articles throughout the Internet via search engines, authoritative websites, social networks and newsletters to create significant awareness of your business with links back to the content on your website. This results in an increased number of your ideal prospects visiting your website.



### Convert

Create and promote high-value "content offers" to your ideal prospects through downloads such as guides, how-to's, lists, white papers, reports, case studies, product comparison guides, presentations, etc. These offers should be featured on specific landing pages with call-to-actions (CTAs), forms and thank you pages that trigger a workflow of emails with follow-up offers. The implementation of all these factors will result in an increased number of leads to your website.





## Goal-Related Process Continued...

### Close

Continue to nurture your leads throughout their buying cycle through automated emails that further qualifies your leads and moves them from their consideration stage to their decision-making stage, where they are ready to engage with your sales team or representatives.



The content delivered in this latter stage may include incentives or offers such as product details, trial offers, assessments, consultations or free quotes, designed to encourage your buyer to engage with your sales team.



**TIP:**

**Your effectiveness in applying these integrated tactics for each of these stages will determine how well you meet your goal through increased numbers of visitors, leads, clients and fans.**

Marketing automation technology that includes automated emails, workflows, lead scoring and CRM integration, is what helps you to nurture your leads through the conversion and close process, resulting in an increased number of sales.

Throughout this process you will be able to track who is viewing each piece of content and when it was viewed, allowing your sales team to have significantly more actionable intelligence on your leads. It also provides insights into the effectiveness and the results of your marketing efforts.



### Delight

Continue to engage and serve your customers through monthly newsletters and your social networks with content that is highly relevant for their interests. This is especially beneficial in the engineering, architectural and construction industry since the information provided will be highly educational. The more you provide these functional services to the client, the more fans you will have for your company.

## Additional Benefits of Inbound Marketing

- Increases brand awareness with your ideal target client through inbound channels.
- Demonstrates in-depth knowledge and expertise of complex information through the downloadable content offers that you create and promote.
- Stimulates greater engagement with your ideal prospects and buyers.
- Provides a more effective and efficient method for a lead nurturing process that generates a greater volume of high-quality sales leads for your sales team and representatives.
- Provides a more cost effective method of delivering high-value content and communications with your target buyers.
- Provides more actionable intelligence and insights on your marketing efforts, allowing you to close more sales and increase your marketing ROI.

## Architectural Case Study



  
**1,063**  
New Visitors 

An architecture firm in Los Angeles, CA was not seeing any results from their outbound marketing efforts, word-of-mouth referrals and upsells to existing contacts. Consequently, the architectural firm decided to adopt the HubSpot software and methodology of inbound marketing. As a result, this firm had six times more traffic and leads to their website and business. For example, the company's promoted blogs that were executed with the inbound methodology had an increase of 1,063 visitors in one month.

## Accompanying Statistics on Inbound Marketing

97%

of consumers now use online media when researching products and services in their local area. (*BIA Kelsey*)

90%

of consumers say their buying decisions are influenced by online reviews. (*Dimensional Research*)

5x's more!

Buyers are 5x more dependent on content than they were 5 years ago. (*Nielsen*)

11.4

Buyers engage with 11.4 pieces of information or content prior to making a purchase decision. (*Google ZMOT*)

84%

of buyers engage in online information consumption and education. (*Google ZMOT*)

70%-90%

of the buyers' journey is complete **BEFORE** they contact a sales representative. (*Forrester*)



## Conclusion

Architecture firms continue to innovate within the boundaries of solidity, durability, functionality, efficiency and beauty. Unfortunately, when it comes to marketing, many fall into the mental trap of “doing marketing the way we have always done it.”

Even as they see the shifts in how their buyers are researching and comparing their alternative solutions and service providers online, they feel lost or frustrated on what to do or how to do it effectively.

For example, you have a website and one of your architects manages it on the side. You have created some slides, picture portfolios, brochures and flyers for customer visits. You may have even created a few articles and a video. You have images of projects and designs with a brief description of what you did in each project and you have staff that responds to RFPs.

It's not to say you should stop doing any of this.

However, you have to realize that how your buyers seek information to educate themselves has changed significantly. It has a profound impact on their purchasing decisions.

You are no longer in control of the sales process. The buyer is in control as a result of the Internet, search engines, social media and mobile device connectivity. So it's time to seriously reevaluate your effort and approach to marketing.

Inbound marketing is a proven methodology for successfully marketing your business online today. How well you do it will determine how effectively your company will grow in the future and win against your competitors.

Don't be afraid to investigate how inbound marketing helps you grow your architecture company more effectively. Xcellimark is an award-winning digital marketing agency that is certified in inbound marketing and focuses solely on growing our clients' businesses.



## About Xcellimark

Xcellimark is an award-winning Digital Agency based in Orlando, Florida. Our certified online marketing experts help companies like yours increase your sales opportunities through advanced digital marketing and website marketing strategies.

We have worked across a wide variety of industries and hold advanced certifications in search engine optimization, Google AdWords, social media marketing, online testing, and landing page optimization. With extensive marketing experience dating back to 1980, Xcellimark harnesses the power of the Internet to help promote your business.



Selected as a "Leading Provider of Web Design for Eastern United States".



Top 5 Digital Media companies in Central Florida by the Orlando Business Journal.



Awarded "Best in Search" every month for Link Building by TopSEOs, an Independent Authority on Search Vendors.



Advanced certification in Google AdWords as a Qualified Google Advertising Company.



Certified Gold Partner in the world's #1 integrated website content management, marketing automation and CRM software.



Featured in 5-minute television segment on national broadcast "Today in America" with Terry Bradshaw for Online Image expertise.

## About Xcellimark Continued ...



Certified Advanced Landing Page Optimization Specialists and Online Testing Specialists.



Longtime Members of SeoPROS, a leading national SEO Consultants directory with very stringent criteria to be a member.



Members in good standing with the Better Business Bureau's Reliability Program.

### Other Accomplishments & Awards:

- Top 10 Advertising Agencies in Central Florida by the Orlando Business Journal.
- Orlando Business Journal's Golden 100.



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