

The Definitive Guide to

TEACHING YOURSELF INBOUND MARKETING







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Chapter One INBOUND MARKETING: The Who. The How. The Playbook.

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What IS Inbound Marketing Anyway?

Simply put, it's a way to attract customers with online content that addresses their specific needs and establishes your company as a trustworthy and credible one they want to do business with. Let's take a closer look, and start thinking about how to teach the concept to your organization.

Instead of buying ads, email lists or cold calling, inbound marketing focuses on creating informational content that pulls people toward your website. There, visitors can learn more about what you sell on their own accord. If you're doing inbound right, you're also offering them solutions to their problems and building trust. Eventually, when they're ready, you'll be the first company they call.

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Why Is Inbound Marketing So Important?

According to <u>HubSpot</u>, B2B marketers that blog generate 67% more leads per month than those that don't. In the B2B manufacturing world, more companies are investing in inbound marketing than ever before. The Content Marketing Institute's latest trends report <u>states</u> that companies spend nearly 30% of their total marketing budget on content marketing alone. So, if you don't get on board, your company will be left behind.

Today's consumers are techno-savvy. They're also doing much of their research and initial supplier vetting online before they ever pick up the phone, email or send an RFQ. You need to reach your customers in a new way, and inbound marketing is a tool that enables your organization to get found online.

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What Can You Do About It?

Many small to medium-sized manufacturers have small to non-existent sales and marketing departments. Companies need help creating and executing digital marketing plans. Fortunately, there are tools and partners to help you structure your plans, execute them flawlessly and measure the all important return-on-investment.

As a <u>HubSpot</u> Silver Partner, we help our clients navigate what can be uncharted territory. We chose HubSpot because it's more than just a new marketing tool. Think of it first as a philosophy: **The Why**. Think of it, too, as a methodology: **The How**. And lastly, think of it as a tool set: **The Playbook.**

Chapter Two What's The Big Hype?

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Why is Everyone Talking About Inbound Marketing?

Basically it comes down to this: Consumers buy differently today than they did even 10 years ago. Before the full adoption of the internet, buyers typically didn't have access to the amount of information they have at their fingertips today. Their journey from initial contact to sale was linear and predictable, and marketing strategies focused mainly on interruptive methods like cold calling, advertising and direct mail.

Today, it's a different story altogether. While the methods mentioned above are still viable and important, especially in the industrial space, today's buyers are well informed. The glut of information can be overwhelming, but by doing inbound marketing right and focusing on freely sharing information, your company will rise to the top of the search window. The buyer journey is no longer a straight line. It's fluid and random, and if a potential buyer doesn't see your company name often enough, it won't be "top of mind.".

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To understand what to do, it's important to look at why this changed occurred. First, the number of media channels exploded, each one evolving into its own advertising medium. Second, consumers became skeptical about brands. With no checks on over promising and under delivering, lawsuits increased and regulation followed suit. Lastly, technology advancements like spam filters, broadband IT and no call lists spelled trouble for businesses employing traditional marketing techniques. Companies had to change the way they put their message out, and it became clear that permission was quickly becoming more effective than interruption. Don't be mistaken. Interruptive techniques are still the gold standard in many instances, but inbound marketing presents a new method to reach customers who don't even know they need you.

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So, Where Do You Begin?

Start by integrating these five pillars of the inbound methodology. The content you publish needs to align with your customer's interests and address their pain points. You are taking them on a journey to eventually land on your company when they are ready to buy.

 Content Creation - This first step can sometimes be the hardest for many manufacturers. The thought of freely sharing information can make engineers cringe with worry about giving away trade secrets. Setting your company up as a trusted adviser who can answer buyers' questions will pay far greater dividends than staying home from the party.

2. Lifecycle Marketing - Buyers have different needs as they interact with your company. Companies need to alter marketing techniques for each stage of interaction. Starting with ebooks, white papers and case studies, you can quickly acquaint potential customers with your expertise. As they move through their individual journey, you can advance them through the sales funnel with different types of content.

3. Personalization and Context - Each time a potential buyer interacts with your company, you're getting to know them better, too. With personalization, your message becomes more compelling and addresses their specific needs. This builds trust, and increases the chances that a buyer will trust you with their future business.



4. Multi-channel Presence - Inbound marketing is specifically designed to be multi-channel. Multi-channel refers to the different marketing platforms like email, social media, website and blogs through which buyers seek information. Finding where your potential customers get their information will help you reach them more effectively.

5. Integration - Use marketing automation tools, like <u>HubSpot</u>, to help analyze and optimize content that works and which channel is most effective. Your company's marketing will be like a well-oiled machine, allowing you to focus on publishing the right content in the right place at the right time.

Once buyers recognize you as a trusted company, you can earn permission to market to them, hopefully convert them into customers, and delight to the point they become your brand champions. Doing inbound right, you can outsmart your competition, not outspend them. More importantly, you will drive new revenue growth.

Chapter Three A Method To The Madness



You have an understanding of what inbound marketing is, and you maybe even understand why you need to ramp up your efforts to attract new buyers. Now let's delve a little deeper into how to put this philosophy in action using marketing automation.



There's a Method To The Inbound Madness

Using proven techniques, you take your prospects on a journey through the sales funnel (see image). The idea is that contacts start as virtual strangers and eventually become customers and promoters of your business and products. Through carefully planned and executed tactics unique to your company and your prospects, you engage a multichannel marketing approach to ultimately drive people to your company.

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The Who, What, When and How

The **Who** refers to your prospects. The **What** is the change in their relationship with your company. The **How** is the delivery of content that appeals to your prospects at each stage of their journey. Knowing and understanding this process is absolutely key to creating a plan that will deliver new business.

Start with the **STRANGERS**. You want to attract people to your company. Do this by creating content that's valuable and easy for them to find. A great place to start is with a company blog and social media presence. Getting into the right conversation with the right people starts with understanding who your prospects are and where they get their information. With a particular focus on their problems, you can create meaningful interaction by proposing solutions. Focus your content here, and you'll be off to a good start.



Next, make them **VISITORS**. If you've been successful in attracting prospects, these strangers will become visitors to your site. You'll need to make sure your website is up to snuff (I'll explore how to evaluate your company's page later this summer). Website content needs to be readable, engaging and grab a visitor's attention. If visitors aren't satisfied with what they see on your homepage, it isn't likely they'll stay very long.

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Converting your website visitors into **LEADS** is your next challenge. You need to up your game by writing content so compelling that these visitors are willing to give you their name and email address to get it. Typically this is done via ebooks, videos or company white papers. This is where some companies stop dead in their tracks. Overwhelmed with taking the time to create this marketing collateral, many small businesses simply give up. It's important to remember that the time and money invested in a good ebook or white paper has the potential to generate far more in revenue later on.

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Now that you have their contact information, it's time to close and turn those leads into actual **CUSTOMERS**. Engaging with leads requires targeted, automated nurturing. By understanding more about your prospects' needs, you then use email and social media interaction to deliver valuable information directly to them. The relationship grows, the trust builds, and when these leads are ready to buy, your company will already be on their mind.

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Ideally, your new customers will be so happy with your product that they will become **PROMOTERS** of your business. This is where many companies get off track. They forget that marketing doesn't stop after the sale. Build on the trust your customers have in your company with carefully selected content, meaningful social media interaction and satisfaction/promoter surveys. Not only will you have a happy customer willing to give referrals, but you create opportunities to upsell them different products and services.

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There are many tools you can use to attract prospects to your company and convert them to customers. Following these steps and techniques, you'll get content in front of your prospects and nurture them to become your customers when they're ready to buy. With inbound, you need to know when to act and when to hold back. This playbook will help you know when to apply certain techniques.



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Start With Content

You have to start somewhere. Attracting complete strangers and turning them into website visitors takes a special skill. Through blogging, social media activity, keyword optimization and the creation of engaging web pages, manufacturers can ease their way into the conversation. Start by slowly introducing yourself to these virtual strangers using the following tools:

- Blogging may sound like something only hip, new companies or individuals are doing, but numbers from <u>HubSpot</u> indicate that companies that blog generate 125% more leads than ones who don't. You also need to understand what your ideal buyers are searching for. Pick keywords and build your content and conversations around understanding and solving their problems.
- Social Media is a way to share blogs, company news or other content of interest to your audience. You can also comment on or "like" content from clients, partners or even competitors. Social media isn't just for teenagers. Being active on sites like LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter puts a human face on your brand and allows you to engage with your prospects and other companies they may do business with.
- Keyword Optimization is a way to ensure you are writing about the topics your prospects are looking for. If your content matches your keywords, you have a better chance of getting found online.
- Compelling Web Pages are integral to success. Your prospects won't stay long if you fail to draw them in with readable content they want to see. It's important to review your key web pages regularly to ensure that you're selling what your prospects are looking for.



Next Step: Converting Website Visitors to Leads

So, you got them to visit your website. Now you need to convert them into actual leads. There are many tools that can help you accomplish this. If you don't have actionable ways for your visitors to interact with you, you won't generate leads. Make it easy for them to submit contact information using the following:

- Calls-to-Action are simply enticing buttons visitors use to take action, like "Download a Whitepaper" or "Sign Up for our Newsletter." Using action words like read, learn, join, get, find, etc. will pique your visitor's interest and compel them to convert.
- Landing Pages are web pages, usually with forms, where a visitor "lands" after clicking a call-to-action. These, too, must engage your visitors, so be sure you have solid content. Keep it simple and use video or images to add credence to your offer. Give a brief glimpse into the content using bulleted lists (search engines love those).
- Forms are a very necessary part of this process since it's how a prospect submits information you can then use to start a conversation. It's best to only ask the minimum amount of information so your visitor doesn't feel burdened. Follow up right away with a response, such as an automated thank you message or email. Marketing automation helps to make this seamless and notifies you when you have a new contact to nurture.



The Final Steps: Turning Leads Into Customers

Now you have contact information and you can nurture these leads until they become your customers. It may take a lot of nurturing before a prospect is ready to become a customer. Start by deploying a series of emails focused on helpful and relevant content. With each meaningful interaction, including the following, you're courting your leads with your knowledge and expertise:

- Lead Scoring allows you to move your leads through the sales funnel by assigning different scores or grades to a prospect. These pertain to their place in your sales funnel and define the next steps you'll use to keep them moving.
- Email in this phase is far more nuanced and greatly depends on how your first reached them. Tailoring and personalizing your message each and every time will ensure a prospect stays interested.
- Automated Workflows make email, nurturing and other touches a lot easier to manage. Pre-defined triggers deliver the messages your leads need to hear when they need to hear them.
- **CRM Integration** is the fastest way to move your leads through the funnel while giving you a visual that helps you hone messaging at each step. Getting to know your potential customer in a systematic way helps you keep tabs on them.

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It Doesn't Stop There

Marketing doesn't stop after the sale. It takes diligence to turn your customers into repeat customers or even promoters. Use these inbound tools, including personalized messaging to keep your customers engaged. Surveys and feedback forms coupled with relevant social media interactions and regular company communications will help keep you top of mind for future projects or when someone asks your customer for a recommendation.

Now that you know the lingo and the processes to take your prospects from stranger to best customer, it's time to get started. Let us show you how a marketing automation tool like HubSpot can help you deliver the right message to the right people at the right time.

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