

Inbound Marketing Best Practices to **INCREASE SAAS SALES**



Delivering the best results with inbound. This eBook was made to help SaaS companies boost their visits, leads and customers

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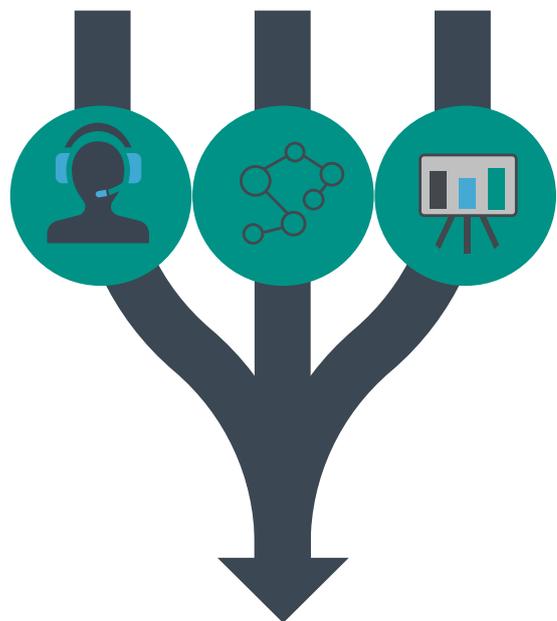
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Inbound Marketing and SaaS

For the past decade, people of all ages and all walks of life use the Internet for online purchases, researching products and even getting customer service via social media networks. According to research by Forrester Consulting, 93+ percent of respondents use at least one search channel to discover, consider or engage with a product. So, if you want to increase the sales of your SaaS company and build a reputable brand, then you should have a strong web presence by investing in your inbound marketing strategy.

According to WPForms, 55% of qualified leads rely on word of mouth, 46% - on customer references and 38% - on articles. They don't reach for newspapers, don't watch ads on TV, rather they turn to the web or people who have already created an experience with that brand to find what they need.

HubSpot, an industry leading inbound marketing and sales automation platform, explains: *“A business needs a website which should be a destination that a customer would want to visit”*. Besides the website, SaaS companies must also have engaging and high-quality content, optimized landing pages, informative social media channels and should always be reachable online.



Here are some reasons why inbound marketing is so important for your SaaS company:

It's more affordable than traditional marketing: To implement inbound marketing you need to have a deep understanding of what your target

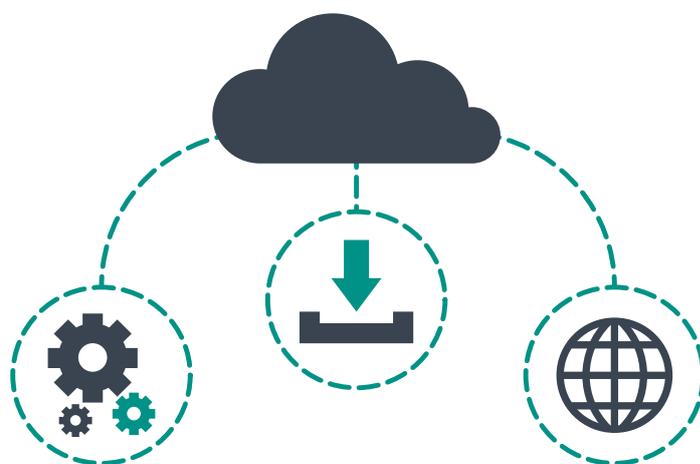
audience really wants, what are the challenges and problems that they face every day. If you understand their psychology, it means that your time can effectively be invested in producing content that will truly benefit your prospects. Inbound marketing strategies make the average cost per lead much lower than traditional outbound strategies.

“Inbound Marketing is about truly understanding your audience: the more you know about it, the better your strategy will be.”

It generates more leads: The more targeted and contextual content you provide on your website and social media networks, the more leads you are going to generate. For example, you can easily convert one idea into different inbound marketing formats and support them with CTAs and landing pages in order to get more leads.

No more cold calling: Let’s admit it, it’s really annoying for everyone to receive cold calls. No one ever wants to be pushed to buy a product or service without knowing what it is about. Just because there is no second chance to make the first impression, with inbound marketing

you need to create engaging content that people would read whenever they want. Then, when you make a phone call or write an email, people will already know what you are talking about and will already have their opinion about your service.



Let people find you: Nowadays search engines, especially Google, are considered to be a major part of inbound marketing. Statistics for the period between March 2018 and March 2019 show that 92.46% of the search engine market share worldwide belongs to Google (StatCounter). Ranking on the first page of Google is crucial for the success of companies, especially SaaS.



If you are not showing up on Google, it means you won't be found by your target audience. To be on the first pages, the first thing you need to do is creating high level and valuable content. The more quality your content has, the higher ranking you will get, which will, in turn, generate more traffic to your website.

It builds more trust: This is a century of net-savvy buyers who have access to unlimited information and endless offers. If you constantly share useful knowledge, communicate with your audience via social media, website chat or emails, don't you become a trustworthy brand? The article you post on your company blog, the message you send via email are pieces of content that show you make efforts, you care, you create.

Dan Lok, a Chinese-Canadian entrepreneur, educator, and author mentions 3 T's why digital marketing has destroyed traditional marketing. The superiority is in targeting, tracking and tweaking opportunities.

You can't control who will see your banner ad, but with online marketing, you can choose variables starting from age to demographics (Buyer persona). You are able to track their actions (Analytics) and make desirable adjustments instantly to your online ad for higher ROI (A/B testing).

This whole process picks up the pace and becomes much more fruitful with inbound marketing methodology.

SaaS Inbound Marketing Best Practices to Increase Sales



Content Marketing: Having original and high-quality content for all the stages of the buyer's journey is the most important aspect of an inbound marketing campaign for SaaS companies. The reason is that educational content can humanize your company and engage customers. However, valuable content does not necessarily mean

that you need to have thousands of blog posts and social media posts.

The truth is that even if you write strong and killer blog posts, you may have low conversion rates if your content is not answering your audience's needs and problems. To increase sales of your SaaS company, first of all, you need to do fundamental research, understand all the challenges and problems your target audience faces and develop content respectively. Here are some powerful tactics that will help you write high quality content that your audience will love.

Get to know your customers: Customers are far more than just faceless demographics. To create powerful content, you need to examine your customers and analyze their behavior thoroughly. Customer service notes, comments, complaints can be a great source of information for your content marketing team. To draw their attention and make them remember your company, you need to get inside your customer's head and speak out of their heart. Find those problems that you can respond with your software and develop content on that specific area



According to **Invesp**, creating effective buyer personas for your SaaS company can result in more than 230% increase in conversions. So, understanding your customers is the first and the most important thing to do in your content creation process.

Do keyword research: There are many ways to optimize websites for search and new ways are being developed continuously. However, one thing that stays consistent for inbound marketers is keyword research. To help you with this here is a great keyword research process to implement.

Step 1: *Decide on topics you would like to write*

Before doing keyword research, first of all, you need to think of some topics you would like to focus based on the purpose of your SaaS company. Try to come up with 5-10 topics which you think are important for your business, which you will use later in order to determine the right keywords. You can use BuzzSumo to find which subjects are discussed widely and are in demand, what people would like to read about.

Step 2: *Identify keywords for topics*

Now, that you have already thought of some topics, it's the right time to identify some keywords that will reflect your topics. For example, if you selected a topic "data analysis" for your software company, then these are the main keywords you should use: data analytics, statistical analysis, analyzing data. If you use Google Keyword Planner for keyword research, be sure to include those keywords that have low or medium competition and high average monthly searches.

Step 3: *Use a mix of head terms and long tail keywords*

If you are not sure what is the difference between these two things, let me explain. Head terms are those keywords that are more general and shorter. They may be three words or less in length, are more popular and competitive. Conversely, long tail keywords are much longer and include more than three words.

In your keyword research process, it's important to make sure that you

have both head terms and long tail keywords because it will enhance your strategy with both long- term goals and short-term wins.

Step 4: *Identify keywords your competitors are ranking for*

It's really important to analyze which keywords your competitors use most of all. It can be a great chance for you to understand which ones are worth using and on which platforms you should concentrate much of your efforts. If both of you use the same keywords, all you need to do is to improve your ranking for those keywords. However, make sure not to ignore the ones that your competitors don't use. This can be a great chance for a company to become an expert on those topics.

Create killer headlines: If you stop and think for a moment, what is the first thing your target audience sees? Of course, the headline.

When you see an article that has an irrelevant and spammy headline, would you ever read it? Probably not. So, when creating content, don't forget that the headline is one of the most important parts and it is your chance to make a positive impression on people. Here is how you can create killer headlines:



Track your headlines: To create effective headlines, you need to brainstorm a lot and run multiple A/B tests. For instance, one way of testing out your headline is trying various titles for the same content. When you track which articles were opened, you will get a better understanding of which headline performed better and resonates more with your audience.

Create relevant headlines to your audience: Surely you won't know which type of headlines to create when you don't know who your audience is and what they are looking for. Are they interested in how-to guides, free trials or discounts? Once you have an understanding of their needs, it will become

much easier for you to create headlines that will be of interest to them.

Remember that your headline is your first impression. Thus, creating a killer headline-clear, concise and targeted, is crucial in attracting your audience. Here are some examples of headline structures you can consider. Headlines that are interrogative sentences: Who (else) wants to (do sth) ...? Looking for (sth) ...? Have you ever thought of (sth) ...? Will you (your) ...? Why to (do sth) ...?

“On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar”. (David Ogilvy)

Optimize your content: If you think that after creating content with the right keywords and effective headline, there is nothing else left to do, you are wrong! Now it's time to optimize your content before publishing. That requires knowledge about SEO.

To get solid SEO, you need to have a concise meta description, subheaders including keywords, links to internal pages (to keep visitors longer), outbound links and images (with ALT text, which is a word or phrase inserted in an HTML document to tell users the meaning of the image).



Adding other visual media like videos, infographics or slideshows is very important for several reasons. First of all, you need to have as much variety in your content as possible, since different people prefer different formats.

Secondly, plain text is boring and you should interact with your users as much as you can.

Thirdly, the variety of content proves that you know what you are talking about and people start trusting your SaaS company. Finally, using different kinds of visual media will attract more people and will, as a result, increase engagement and shares of your posts.

Content, in essence, is your brand. Interest in your company will depend on what you post and how you respond to your customers' needs. The trick is to create knowledgeable, informative content based on what your target audience is searching for.



Social Media Marketing

Differentiating inbound marketing content from competitors means that SaaS companies should know exactly what their target audience wants and work on delivering relevant high-quality content. The competition for audience's attention grows every single day. Fortunately, there are places where customers engage and talk about their experiences, desires, problems, and complaints. Keeping eyes open will help SaaS companies understand what they are doing right and what aspects need improvement.

Nowadays, SaaS companies prefer social media marketing to other marketing channels, because it's much easier to increase sales, brand's reach and expand the professional network on social media channels like Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Learn more about why SaaS companies need social media marketing by reading:



5 Reasons Why SaaS Companies Should Have a Social Media Marketing Strategy

How to Do Your SaaS Social Media Marketing Correctly



Here are four things you should do on social media platforms to build presence, and, as a result, increase sales:

Post Consistently: One of the golden rules in social media marketing is being consistent. Don't publish content and disappear for days and weeks. Make sure to be available to your audience. That

means you need to regularly make posts and participate in conversations with your buyer personas. If you disappear for weeks, your followers won't hesitate to replace you with your competitor.

To make sure that you post regularly, you should have a posting plan. For example, by using tools like **HootSuite**, **Buffer** or **SproutSocial**, you can schedule social media posts and determine which post should go to which platform at what time of the day. In addition, if you want to have an editorial calendar for your social media, then **HubSpot** is the right solution here. Also, discover which days or hours are more effective for posting content on a particular channel.

Provide quick answers: We are talking about answering messages and comments as soon as possible. Facebook, for example, may show on your business page something like this: 50% response rate, 10 mins response time. What does it mean? You respond to 50% of messages received and you do it on average 10 minutes later after receiving. 10 mins are ok, but 50% is definitely not! It is a sign that you don't take Facebook seriously, don't care about your customers and are not ready to provide quality support via this channel. Your support team should go the extra mile and strive for getting "Very responsive to messages" badge from Facebook. So let your statistics tell positive things about your SaaS company.

If you have unanswered messages, it affects not only that one visitor who has been "ignored", but your Facebook statistics as well. In a negative way.

Be an expert in your industry:

Make sure to post content which will make you be perceived as an expert in that field. For example, if you are a SaaS company that offers CRM software for companies, try to provide information based on what you know in that field.



Offer tips and insights, for example on how to use CRM for better results, what to avoid when using CRM systems, how to set criteria for choosing the most suitable system for your company, what makes your services unique and other such topics.



Post different types of content:

Use every form of content to share in your social media networks such as videos, photos, articles, infographics, quotes or a mix of these. Of course, it is important to share content that was created by you, such as blog posts, commercials of your services, but it is also important to share other

content, as well. For instance, by sharing the content of another expert in your field and by giving them credit, you will get the chance to pick up followers from them.

Follow the 80/20 rule: According to this rule, 80 percent of the content you share should be informational and not promotional. In the first steps of your social media marketing strategy, you can even shift this ratio to 95/5. The reason is that no one will start following you if you consistently post promotional content. First of all, you should attract followers by providing them with informational content that will solve their problems. Later, when you have enough followers, you can start sharing some promotional content as well.



Stories play a part: What features do great storytellers possess? They know how people feel about something, how they perceive their problems, what they emphasize. Storytellers create heroes and situations that are remembered easily. They give meaning, entertain, teach. Storytellers do the same in business, awakening emotions and paving the way for the next ... purchase! No raw facts, tell something memorable with your content.

The strongest feelings you can communicate to your audience, are suspense, empathy, and happiness. So add at least one of these elements to your piece of content.

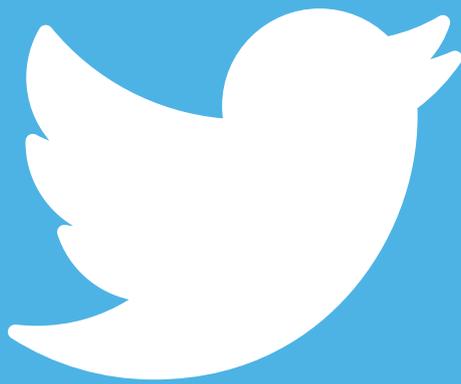
Social Media Channels SaaS Companies Should Use

*This is a question that interests many SaaS company owners:
which social media channels are necessary,
which ones can bring value and increase their sales.
Here are the most important ones you should not miss out:*



Our list starts with Facebook and you know why? Because it is the biggest social media channel with 2.23 billion monthly active users (as of 2019). And it's understandable why 93 percent of social media marketers run ads on Facebook. Another statistics is that there are 80 million business pages on Facebook (as of 2018). In a nutshell, it is a top platform for both B2B and B2C businesses.

Facebook can be considered as the “social home” for your business. Here your customers can leave messages for you, browse through your services and photos, chat with you online and so on. This is the best and the cheapest way you can offer customer service. With so many targeted potential customers, you **MUST** have a business page, but creating it is not enough. You should update it regularly with engaging content. This platform requires human and financial resources, but if done right, the benefits to your SaaS company can be noticed soon. You can make your brand popular on Facebook with user-generated content and relevant hashtags as well.



Twitter is another place where you can provide excellent customer service, as this is where most of your customers will express their opinions about your company and services. Just gain some popularity with a Twitter account and see how viral and powerful it can be for your company.

The number of active Twitter users is more than 320 million. Just be alert not to get lost in the sea of 5787 tweets posted every second.



It has 500 million members and 61 million of them are senior level influencers. Note that LinkedIn is a more serious platform than Facebook and Twitter. This means that you should approach it more seriously and assume that users of LinkedIn will demand more professional and high-quality content.

One of the best features in LinkedIn that is too important for SaaS companies is “LinkedIn Groups”, which is a great chance for professionals in the same industry to share some content, find answers, post and view jobs, make contracts and so on. For example, if your SaaS company offers CRM systems, then you can meet and interact with other CRM providers on LinkedIn.



Youtube is becoming more and more popular as it adds more features and improves opportunities.

Youtube can serve as an ideal platform for lead generation (live stream with relevant links inserted in the description), email marketing customer base (the list of your subscribers), interacting with your audience (via comments), making additional revenue via running ads on your videos (Youtube Partner Program) and, of course, moving forward your content marketing strategy (videos, including screencasts, screenshots are pieces of content).

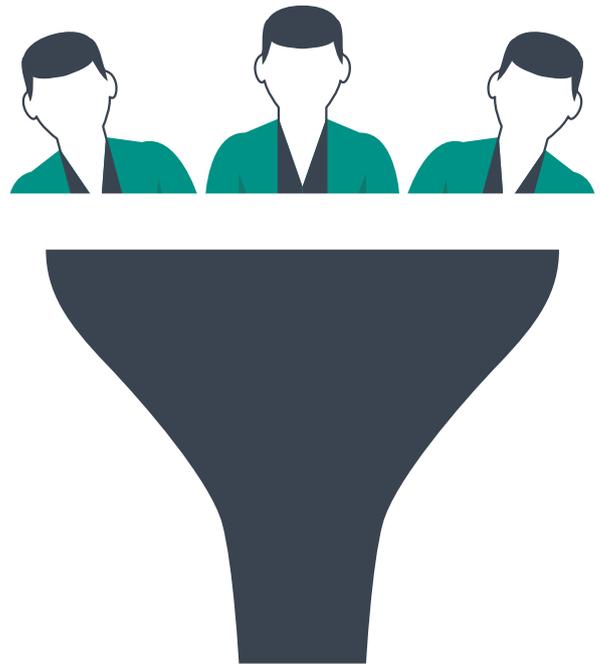
How to highlight the features of your software on Youtube? Nothing can describe your software characteristics better than a video as it helps explain all the details and steps in the clearest way.

No matter what kind of software your SaaS company provides, how old your company is and what you actually do, these platforms can be great for your business if you use them in the right way.

Lead Generation

It may be surprising, may be just sad, but 80 to 90 percent of your website visitors are only doing research. And only a part of them is willing to talk to a sales rep. Not all people are eager to provide their email address for a 100-page eBook they will not read. So, what to do? Here are the most important 4 components of a successful lead generation strategy for your SaaS company.

Lead Capture: The probability that half of your visitors won't visit your website again is high if you don't capture their information at the right time. A working email address is the best thing marketers can ask from visitors, but people usually avoid providing such information. Now, buttons like "sign up here" are the same as "click for getting spam" for many visitors, that's why nowadays marketers need to find new ways of obtaining this information.



Nicholas Kusmich, who is a marketing consultant and Facebook ads specialist, thinks that there are two golden rules to use when you want to get visitors' information:

- **Give before you ask for something**
- **All steps of your marketing strategy should provide value to visitors**

Taking into account these 2 rules, marketers should break the walls that potential buyers put up by using new and mutually beneficial methods for acquiring information. For example, in "give before you ask for something" method you can use lead magnets, such as client success stories for capturing the lead.



Lead Magnets: Successful client lifecycle is all about converting visitors into leads. But can you imagine how many visitors are there who visit your website once, disappear and never visit it again? To make sure that the number of such visitor decreases, you can use lead magnets. These are tools, which provide value for your visitors in exchange for their contact information. SaaS companies can use lead magnets like email opt-ins,

subscriptions, educational content offers in order to catch interest among visitors. The goal of using these tools is to get permission from visitors to follow up.

Here are some lead magnets you may use:

- **eBooks and guides**
- **Free trials**
- **Webinars**
- **Bonus tips**
- **Training materials**
- **Cheat sheets**
- **Interviews with experts**

These free tools will be beneficial for two reasons: first, you can get visitors' contact information, and second, you can have the chance to promote your

software with the help of educational eBooks, webinars or free trials. As mentioned, free trials are used by many SaaS companies as lead magnets. However, though they work for some companies, they don't really work for others. So why free trials don't work for some SaaS companies?

Free trials that don't have the purpose of converting leads into paying customers are not worthy. Moreover, you need to have a plan for those people who tried but didn't buy. You should continuously implement marketing campaigns for them. Secondly, free trials can cost you money because with a free trial, you extend the sales cycle by the length of the free trial.



The main reason why people don't buy your software after using the free trial is that during the trial period, they couldn't see the full benefit of your software. If you offer software which needs to be fully integrated during 6 months, buyers won't see much value in a 30-day period.

Landing Pages: The next step in converting your visitors into leads is creating landing pages. Landing pages are those that people land on after clicking on an ad or other promotional links. Good landing pages target a specific audience, for example, traffic from email campaigns for promoting an eBook, or people who click on a pay-per-click ad promoting your webinar.

Here are the main components that every successful landing page should have:

Design: Your design should meet three simple requirements: functionality (it's not just images and colors), simplicity (it's easy to use) and aesthetics (it develops taste). From a technical point of view, be sure your design doesn't reduce page loading speed and will provide the same experience on mobile devices.

Headline: The headline is the first thing people see when they come to your landing page, it's the first impression they get about your services. A good landing page usually contains the offer as clearly as possible and answers a very important question: "What will visitors get by converting on this page?"

Body Copy: The copy on a landing page should clearly show what your offer looks like and give a full understanding to your visitors. To make it more attractive and understandable, make sure to use bullet points for demonstrating clear takeaways. Also, make sure to keep the text as simple and short as possible.

Keywords: To get found easily, the main keywords of your offer should be included in the page title, headlines and, of course, in the text. This will give you the chance to optimize your landing page for search engines.



Social sharing buttons: Adding these buttons to your landing page will give visitors the chance to share the page with their friends and followers on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, which, in turn, will extend the reach of your landing page beyond your own network of followers and fans.



Hidden navigation: To minimize distractions, reduce friction, decrease the bounce rate of your landing page and increase the chances that visitors will stay on your page and will convert, you need to hide top navigation bars on your landing page.

Lead capturing/conversion form:

This is the most crucial part of your landing page because it's where page visitors submit their information in exchange with your offer. By doing so, they become converted from visitors to leads.



Image: Landing pages that include images are more effective because besides writing what people will get from your offer, when you put an image it gives them a tangible idea of what they will really get. In addition, those landing pages which include images are proved to be more attractive.

Lead Scoring: Lead scoring is a crucial part of marketing automation software which helps SaaS companies prioritize leads based on their level of engagement with the inbound marketing content provided. This information can help you understand in which stage leads are, which are the ones who need more nurturing and which are the ones already ready to buy. If you set it up correctly, you will also get the chance to understand what are your leads most interested in.

Though it's surprising, about 80% of SaaS companies haven't established a lead scoring strategy. Lead scoring is a great opportunity to get real-time feedback from your leads' actions. It will identify the hottest leads and let your company communicate with them more confidently, taking into account the fact that these leads are already interested in your software.

During the lead nurturing process, sometimes marketers send leads directly to sales without taking into account in which stage of the buying cycle the lead is. Sending every lead who completed the form on your landing page to the sales team can be a waste of time and resources.

According to Brian Carroll, only 5-15 percent of leads are sales-ready from the beginning. That means that your sales team may be wasting time talking to someone who is not ready to buy your services yet. While many marketers hand off leads too soon, there are also the ones who hand them off too late.



While it would be fantastic if there was a formula to help you determine when a lead is ready to proceed to the next level, every SaaS company should develop its own formula. Distinguishing a marketing qualified lead (MQL) from a sales qualified lead (SQL) is crucial for effective lead generation process.

The most important factor that differentiates MQLs from SQLs is their performance on your website. Even though the exact differentiation varies from business to business, we can simply say that SQLs are ready to buy your product or use your service, while MQLs are interested in your brand but need more time, more education and follow-ups to convert into a sales opportunity.

Here are some general characteristics to take into account, for example:

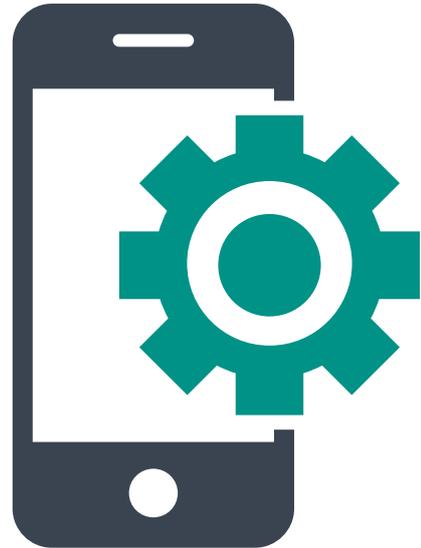
- **Lead's stage in the buying cycle**
- **Lead's conversion count based on the number of times they fill the form**
- **First time visitor vs repeat visitor**
- **Lead's source (are leads from Facebook more likely to become customers than leads from organic search?)**

Email Marketing

A new report shows that every \$ a company spends on email marketing brings 44\$ in return (The Deep End). Achieving this is not a piece of cake, but is real and even close if your SaaS company is aware of tips that are both necessary and sufficient.

Here are some tips you need to take into account to generate more leads and increase sales.

Optimize for mobile users: Those SaaS companies that don't optimize email for mobile users are going to face a huge problem. About 75% of smartphone owners are likely to delete the emails if they are not mobile optimized and display poorly. Make sure to offer a great mobile experience right from the beginning.



Provide relevant data: Analyze the data you send to your target audience to make sure that it is not something “general” and irrelevant. To send more targeted content, you can use data points like gender and location or check social media networks to find geo-targeting features with status updates. However, make sure not to include the main content both in your email

and on your social media networks. People look for different information in each of those channels.

Use compelling subject lines: The first thing people notice is your email's subject line. It's the first impression, so it's crucial to think of a headline that will provide value for your target audience. A good subject line should:

- Contain no more than 50 characters
- Give readers direction on what they should expect when they open the email

- Create a sense of urgency to make people open it
- Avoid including overused words, like “most”, “free”, “best” and so on.
- Use different styles of subject lines for different email marketing campaigns

“Receive an eBook after using our demo!” is one of the best examples you can use as a SaaS company.

P.S. Putting “P.S.” at the end of your main text can draw attention, so don’t hesitate to include your CTA in this part.

Personalize emails: Visitors of your website, mobile subscribers, people who have connected with you on social media networks will appreciate your messages if they are more personalized. For example, try to include personalized and unique recommendations based on a user’s browsing behavior on your website.

If they stayed for a long time on your ‘service’ page, provide more

information about your services or if they look at your ‘price’ page, introduce your price packages. Adding personalized recommendations is proven to increase sales conversion rates by about 15-25 percent and improve click-through rates by 25-35 percent.

One more key point is that you should not forget about personalization tokens. All the email service providers have that feature that allows to include the contact’s name in the body.



Tie emails with landing pages: Your emails and landing pages should be connected with each other. They should have similar headline, text and overall content. The look and feel of both should match each other as well. To see which emails and landing pages give much information and value to your target audience and which ones perform the best, use some tracking tools, such as **Sidekick, MailTrack, LeadPages.**

Conduct some tests: To make sure your email is attractive, informative and eye catchy, try to perform some tests. For example, send a copy of the email to your friend or colleague and see whether they can quickly understand what is the main purpose and call-to-action of your email. If they can guess it in less than 5 seconds, then you are in the right way. If no, then there is a lot to work on.

Successful SaaS companies implement all these 4 practices to increase their sales. They succeed because they believe in what they are doing, hire great people and focus on customer happiness, which in turn drives both sales and profitability. Inbound marketing requires a lot of hard work, complete team participation, time and effort. It's not something like advertising where you can see results after a short period of time. There are many challenges for SaaS companies, such as understanding how to get started with inbound marketing

strategy, content marketing, social media marketing in order to attract users and turn them into brand advocates. However, in the long term, your marketing will build up momentum and you will soon start getting a huge number of website visitors, sales leads and sales revenues.





If you don't have enough time to focus on inbound marketing and you are not sure how you should start implementing inbound marketing campaigns for your SaaS business, then hiring an inbound marketing agency like Increded can be **a great investment for your company.**

In mathematics, the probability that something will happen is defined

with numbers between 0 and 1 (0 means it will definitely not happen and 1 means it will definitely happen). If you have decided on working with Increded, your SaaS company growth equals 1.



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