

Strategies for effective multichannel
marketing

Multi-Channel Marketing

How to Use Multi-Channel Marketing
to create Brand Leverage



HubSpot

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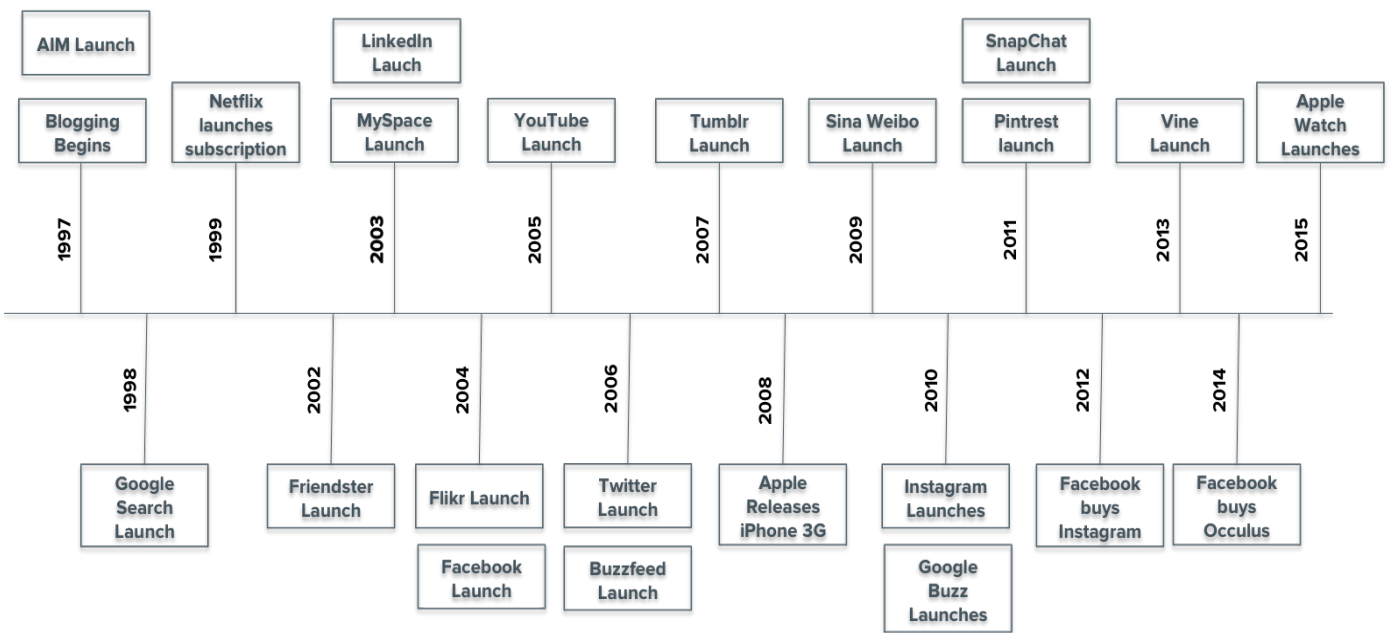
Introduction

The explosion of digital communications has significantly changed how we buy stuff. And by "we," we mean everybody. From teenagers to retirees. From procurement managers to IT committees. Consider this:

- [CEB Marketing Leadership Council](#) reports that B2B customers are 60% through their buyer journey before they contact a sales representative.
- [82% of retail shoppers](#) prefer to research products from multi-channel retailers before buying.
- [90% of our media consumption](#) occurs online.

Digital consumers have an unprecedented amount of company and brand-related user-generated content available to them. The seller is no longer in control.

This is why a nexus between your inbound marketing and multi-channel marketing is so critical: companies must have valuable, relevant content where, when, and how consumers, prospects, and customers are looking for it.



New channels are being created, changed or disappear every year. It's essential to not overly commit to one or miss out on the opportunity to be an early adopter of a new one.

An Overview: Multi Channel Marketing

Multi-channel marketing describes the strategy of reaching out to prospects and customers through a variety of communication platforms – or "channels." In the pre-digital age, a multi-channel marketing effort may have included TV, print and/or radio ads, or perhaps some trade show booths, or speeches.

In our current digital world, the number of online channels companies have to communicate with their market seems to be ever growing. Online users of every generation rank blog posts, images, and comments as their [top three most-consumed content](#).

According to [Pew](#), nearly 75% of online adults regularly use social media. Half use more than one social network, and half use at least four different social media sites. It's no wonder [we spend over six hours a day online](#) — nearly half of which is spent on social media.

How Multi-Channel Marketing Amplifies the Reach and Complexity of Content Marketing

The strategy of content marketing (aka "inbound marketing") is to meet your market where they are and speak to them in the ways they like to communicate. With people active in so many digital channels, companies now have numerous ways to reach them. That's the double-edged sword.

Prospects and customers connect with large companies through a variety of channels. Marketing and other departments publish an assortment of content intended to attract and capture attention. And they are each having separate conversations about their published content in yet still more marketing channels.

Public relations, customer service, sale teams — just to name a few — each have its own Twitter and/or Instagram account, possibly a blog or newsletter, as well as other digital properties. For example, here at HubSpot, we have three separate prospect blogs, directed at marketing, sales, and agencies. These are in addition to our customer blogs, podcast show, and presence on a variety of social media platforms.

With people active in so many digital channels, companies now have numerous ways to reach them. That's the double-edged sword.



When an enterprise takes a scattered, ad hoc approach to managing its multi-channel communications across departments, it introduces the following risks:

- Presenting an inconsistent brand voice and image that confuses, and thus fails to connect, with people.
- Wasting resources by concentrating on channels where your market isn't, or misusing a platform better suited for another function or market segment.
- Frustrating prospects or customers who interact with a department via one platform, and then get communications from another enterprise channel that clearly shows one department has no idea what the other department is doing.
- Focusing on the creation of content across departments and for various channels, rather than promoting dialogue and engagement around it.

The rapid acceleration and potentially short shelf life of new digital channels adds to the puzzle. What new channels are worth using? What's the most effective way to use them? Where do they fit within our current marketing strategy? How do we maintain a cohesive front to our target market on them? It's very easy to feel a sense of creeping futility in trying to keep up with all the changes.

We've broken this eBook into three main sections:

- First, we'll explore the distinction between publishing and dialogue platforms, and their separate purpose and value to inbound marketing.
- Then, we'll dig into the why and how to integrate both marketing strategies in order to realize the full benefits of each. We'll also address head-on the challenges of creating an effective, integrated multi-channel/ inbound marketing strategy across an enterprise company that accommodates decentralized execution and compliance.
- Last, we'll share detailed tips and best practices, based on HubSpot's own research and experience, on how to use some of the most popular and effective channels out there.



Adopting an emerging marketing channel can give you a significant advantage or be a huge waste of time.

It's important to understand how to quickly evaluate emerging marketing channels to see if they are worth pursuing. This ebook will help you understand how to spot new marketing channels that will work for your business.



Mobile is not a channel

Mobile usage has been on a rapid rise since 2008. Now adults spend more than 50% of their time interacting with digital media on a mobile device. In 2014 mobile surpassed desktops for total number of global users.

The implication is clear, always optimize your content and outreach for the mobile consumer.

SPOTLIGHT

Distinguishing Between Publishing and Dialogue Channels

When it comes to its role within content marketing, every platform has a primary purpose: either to publish content to a target market or to provide a forum where people can discuss your content.

Many channels have some overlap of both these functions. For example, YouTube is fundamentally a publishing channel for video content. Yet it provides a robust comment and feedback function if your content inspires it. In contrast, a micro-blogging site like Twitter is all about the promotion and conversation around content. But we also know how one killer Tweet or meme can become the content sparking the conversation.

So while each channel has its own degree of cross-functionality between publishing and dialogue, it's important to know which function each channel performs best and whether it does it well for your market.

To help keep our discussion clear, let's define our terms. Check the next page for a list of terms



Overview of Marketing Channels

Channel Type	Examples
Websites	Includes enterprise site, local branches and department sites or pages, micro-sites for specific products or services, sub-brand sites.
Blogs	Separate blogs based on verticals, market segments, or internal departments and/or sub-brands.
Newsletters	Segmented in very similar ways as blogs.
Email	Not just a newsletter's delivery system, but can provide distinct content through on-boarding sequences, lead nurture and refresher campaigns, and special offers. Also provides a discussion channel for surveys and one-to-one interactions between company personnel and an individual.
Native Advertising / Sponsored Content	Paid media placement of company content on a third party site, commonly an article or blog post.
Brand Journalism	Combination for both form and approach — creating owned media content (e.g. a magazine or podcast), but one that takes a more journalistic approach to the content presented, rather than a overt marketing or sales focus.
Video	Ex: YouTube, Vimeo, Meerkat, Periscope, Snapchat
Audio	Ex: iTunes, Stitcher, SoundCloud
Landing Pages	Single CTA, one-page site for events, content downloads, newsletter signups.
Visual Content	Ex: Tumblr, Instagram, Pinterest



Publishing

A publishing channel holds the content itself. The content itself can take many forms: text, images, videos, podcasts, etc. Different content will also have different purposes — whether to entertain, educate, or inform.

The key is that a ***publishing channel is where the visitor is consuming the content.*** The platform may be owned by the company (e.g. a website), a company account within someone else's platform (e.g. a YouTube channel), or owned entirely by a separate entity, such as placing an article on an independent website or blog.



Dialogue

Dialogue channels' primary function is ***providing the framework where people can discuss published content.*** They also ***serve as a distribution and promotion channel*** for the content not just for the enterprise, where people can share them as part of their ongoing discussions.

That's part of what makes dialogue platforms so valuable! They are the vehicles that prospects, customers, and brand advocates use to distribute your content beyond your company's direct reach.

The dialogue channels are also where the different departments have their direct conversations with individuals, in addition to distributing content to market segments.



Combing the Power of Multi-Channel & Inbound Marketing

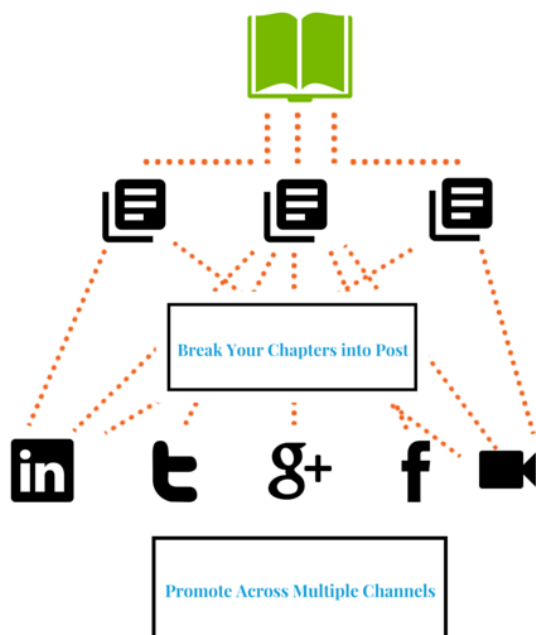
Why Dialogue and Publishing Channels Must Work Together

Earlier we talked about *how* publishing and dialogue channels work together. Here we're taking a closer look at *why they must* work together, or neither channel will be useful.

If your company publishes content that gets no attention, that's called a "monologue." Monologues don't expand brand awareness or attract leads. Plus, any piece of content that nobody heard falling in the woods still used up resources. Creating and publishing boring content is just wasteful

Get the Most out of Your Content

Write an eBook



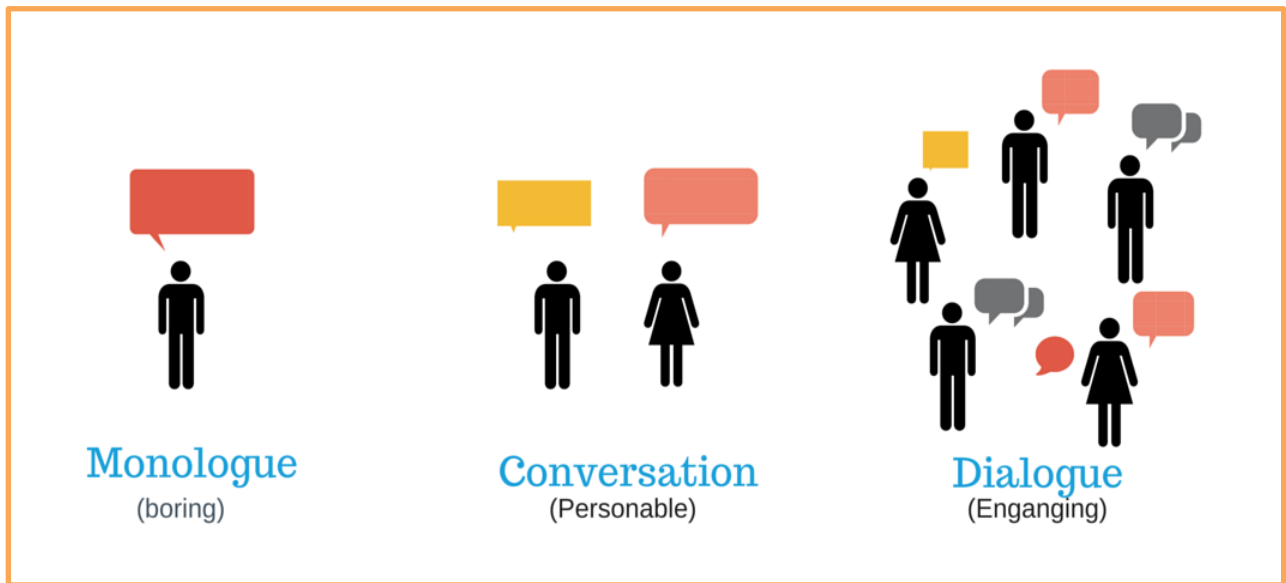
Generating discussion and engagement absolutely requires discussion-worthy content. Content that's relevant, insightful, original, fun – that's what people will talk about. (It doesn't have to be all four of those things all at once, aim for at least two.) And if your content isn't inspiring conversation, people are talking about some other brand's content.

The corollary to making sure that what you publish sparks discussions, is that people can only discuss what they find. Publishing without smart distribution is just as wasteful as publishing boring content. This is why distribution channel selection is critical. Your content needs to be placed and promoted in the right forums where the target market already is.

Unfortunately, companies can no longer rely just on SEO ranking to make sure their content gets noticed. First, there's just too much content being published every day. The exponential growth of online content has made it even more difficult to rank for long-tail keywords. So companies may be creating a lot of content, but they may not be distributing it effectively if they're still relying only on SEO for people to find it.

When you create a piece of content it's important to have a strategy that helps you get the most out of your content

Content Needs Communication



Conversation need to be tracked

It's really great to have a informative and productive conversation with a prospect or new customer over social media but it can be incredibly difficult to track how that conversations helps the bottom line. According to [HubSpot's 2015 State of Inbound Report](#) "Proving the ROI of Marketing Activates" was the biggest challenge regardless of company size. With 67% of respondents reporting that showing ROI lead to an increase in budget it's abundantly clear the importance of tracking the return on your conversations.

When a company distributes its lively, relevant content (because it is discussion-worthy) where its target audience already is — that is the opportunity for the right people to discover the content. It's also the opportunity to strengthen the relationship with someone who's previously consumed your content.

Once the right people are discussing your content, they'll start carrying the ball further downfield to attract new people to your brand and content. Smart distribution of relevant content to the right channels acts as a distribution accelerator when other people start sharing your content for you. So brands need to excel in both their content and their communication to successfully market themselves.

Pulling the Channels Together

Thus ***dialogue channels are where published content gains traction and can return results.*** A blog post has a call-to-action to download an ebook. Great. It's only when that blog post gets Tweeted out, shared on Facebook, and cover image used in the article (with link) posted on Pinterest, do people actually find the post and provide their email so they can download the ebook. Now that's how proper distribution of content earns engagement.

However, this doesn't mean any old mixing of channels will return results. Many will be effective. For example, embedding video in an email can generate comments back on YouTube, as well as shares through other channels. The multiplier effect kicks in, so now the comments and discussion around the content become new content in its own right. User-generated content can promote the brand-created content to enhance different aspects of the key message. So a user-generated meme gets distributed through Instagram and Twitter via hashtags.

Channel-mixing goes bad when delivering conflicting information or messages. If a customer or prospect has expressed a preference through one channel, and they receive contradictory content pushed out to them through another, the brand looks inept. There's also a risk of channels competing with each other for attention, instead of complementing each other. If a brand has multiple blogs to cater to different segments, one blog shouldn't start encroaching with content intended to attract the other segment.

A multi-channel approach can also create conflict among departments and units when it comes time to attribute ROI. Which channel, and its owner, is really the source of a lead, a conversion, or a retention? Is it only one channel? If communications went awry – which channel is to blame?

A multi-channel approach to inbound marketing isn't simply the mix of publishing and distribution channels. It's the mix of all the various publishing and distribution activities happening through the multiple channels of the various departments and units across the enterprise.

Creating a Content & Multi Channel Strategy that Rallies Teams Across the Enterprise

No easy task. Yet a necessary one. When multiple departments operate in each channel, they have to work together to present a cohesive experience because the customer or prospect doesn't care whether a communication is from Customer Service, the PR department, or a field office. For them, it's all from the same source – the brand.

There are three main aspects to address when creating an enterprise-wide strategy:

1. Identifying the core competencies in terms of what channels and content align with your markets and your messages, and where your current competencies are in exploiting those channels.
2. Using the right tools across the enterprise so all departments and units can share and see the same CRM data and digital content assets.
3. Creating an integrated team that develops the necessary processes and standards that apply across the enterprise.

The integrated team is where the brand will develop and manage the enterprise-wide processes and standards used to work out points one (channel selection and core competencies) and two (tools used). As a result, we're going to share more detail on each of those two points in the context of how to go about the third (creating an effective integrated team).

Use an Integrated Team to Maintain Cohesive Cross-Channel Presence

Moving from a siloed approach to creating a consistent multi-channel experience for prospects and customers is going to take time and patience. Depending on your company's current state of affairs, evolving into a smooth, integrated approach may take a year or two. But you'll be learning at each step, which will keep the progress going.

Your integrated team wants to collaborate to set up:

- Shared strategies with shared, clearly defined goals.
- Agreed upon benchmarks by which progress will be measured and agreement as to which metrics signify success. The very process of creating in-house benchmarks may well have to be the team's first priority.
- Common expectations as to which channels will be used, how they will be used, and how new channels will get selected and tested.

Shared Strategies & Goals

A cross-functional team should develop the content topics and message priorities that support stated goals. Different use cases and behavior patterns may have different message priorities, so these are scenarios that the team needs to game play and test out. Provide space for sub-brands and various units to have their distinctive voices within the context of achieving the larger goals.

Benchmarks & Recognizing Success

All channels have a lot of "vanity metrics" attached to them, which can divert attention from assessing whether your campaigns are genuinely successful and which channels matter for you. Using agreed-upon benchmarks and success criteria helps keep all teams disciplined in their efforts to meet the shared goals and comply with the processes and policies set up the by integrated team.

When you start with your core channels, you can then add new ones through testing and comparing results with your established channels.



Managing Executive Across Channels

The integrated team should develop various processes that will help maintain the cohesive presence and ultimately speed up the rate at which new campaigns can be executed:

- Social media and communications guidelines.
- Content development and utilization process and guideline.
- Criteria to determine which new channels to test out, including channels that already exist but are outside your core competency and emerging channels.
- A "change management" process on how to incorporate the lessons learned into existing policies and guidelines, which will inevitably evolve over time.
- Conflict resolution that can address granular, execution issues. For example: if there's a policy limit on the number emails are going out in a time period, does this mean one department's intended email campaign has to be delayed for another?

Having clear benchmarks, success criteria, and execution process and guidelines will actually provide more space and autonomy for departments, units, and sub-brands to experiment. While criteria and policies are set at the enterprise level, everyone can use them to test out their own channels and campaigns.

So where a company may have now have one Twitter account that pushes out confusing content from a follower's perspective – say, a mix of B2B and B2C content to support different product lines, messages from tech support and as well as company announcements. Having clear process and guidelines allows for separate Twitter profiles that can focus on attracting and developing a relationship with its relevant target market.

Creating the Environment for an Integrated Team

Of course, to do all this you need a functioning integrated team that has the support, resources, and tools it needs to achieve these tasks. Some companies have created the role of "customer experience officer" with a mandate to ensure customers get a singular experience throughout an enterprise. This step isn't necessary, but executive support and participation in the integrated team is. As well as representatives from all key stakeholders that publish and distribute content and communications.

Everyone on the integrated team needs to participate in a collaborative way. This doesn't mean there aren't conflicts. Indeed conflict may yield some of the most creative results. It does mean there's a common vision and commitment to the team's purpose. So if that means a daily check-in to respond in real time instead of monthly meetings that can only look backwards, then team members should commit to the daily check-in.

It also requires a comprehensive tool that centralizes prospect, customer, and campaign data so everyone across the enterprise is working from a single source of truth. This includes shared CRM data to improve consistent personalization in response to identified customer preferences, values, and behaviors.

This also includes tools that manage the sharing and utilization of all the digital assets created across the enterprise. High quality content doesn't come cheap, so why waste resources by having departments create duplicative content? Everyone should be able to see and access what digital assets are available to use in their own efforts, as well as manage each piece's utilization so it doesn't get overexposed.

Digital Marketing Channels

The number of social media sites constantly grows. It is impossible for any brand – even the largest enterprises – to use them all. Let alone to use them effectively!

Fortunately, being everywhere isn't necessary. In fact, you may find that your brand drives more and better quality engagement with your content by focusing on fewer channels. Each channel has its own best uses, so it's not helpful trying to make every channel provide all the same content to be consumed in the same manner.

In this section, we're going to take a close look at some of the most popular publication and dialogue channels, including some best practices for each channel regarding how to use them. Use the information in this section as a starting point to guide your decision-making process. The permutations for each channel are too exhaustive to provide a complete picture here.



Is this Channel Right for my Business?

Each enterprise's multi-channel guide should customize its own best practices in context of their own branding and communication strategies. In our channel review, we'll look at key demographics, popular topics, and typical usage patterns. All information you can use when deciding which channels are most relevant for your target markets.

*Your best practices
guide should be
constantly evolving*



When deciding which channels provide value to your brand, you also want to consider what type of engagement occurs where, and what level of engagement is happening. A "how-to" video on YouTube may get a lot of views, while a "how-to" guide may get few downloads. Or maybe not. It's worth re-iterating here that your best practices guide should be constantly evolving as your brand's direct experience with different channels continues to provide new insights.

Another point to keep in mind is that engagement varies greatly based on industry. For example, the real estate industry saw its highest engagement on social media when posting less than once a week. Retail companies saw their highest engagement when posting at least 3 times a week. You can find a host of detailed engagement insights by industry in HubSpot's [2015 Social Media Benchmarks Report](#).

Considering When to Jump on an Emerging Channel

Quickly grabbing the high ground in an emerging channel can position your brand there as an industry leader. Or it can be an incredible waste of resources. There's the rub. Keep two factors in mind when deciding whether to test out an emerging channel, or determining how many resources to invest in it:

- **User alignment:** How well does the user community in the new channel align with your target market? Are people in your target market early adopters of the new channel?
- **Medium alignment:** Are you already producing content that can be easily published in the new channel? If you have a strong YouTube presence, then new video publishing channels like Meerkat or Periscope may be worth some early trials. Select some of your best-performing content and repurpose it to fit the new channel and see what happens.

Publishing Channels

Blogs

Brands with a blog generate more leads, more website traffic, and more backlinks than those that don't. In fact, our research has found that 46% of people read blogs more than once a day, and brands that prioritize blogging are 13 times more likely to show an ROI on their marketing efforts. This is all good [bottom line data](#) that justifies having a blog.

Key tips:

- Segment your blogs to distinct markets or groups, including relevant breakdowns within customer and prospect pools.
- There's a tipping point of content needed on a blog to start seeing results. For example, in our research, we found having between 21-54 blog posts is the trigger range for a 30% increase in traffic.
- Blog posts are renewable content sources that can be repurposed and repackaged in numerous ways. Taking this approach helps maintain control over a presenting a consistent brand message and maximizes the return of resources invested in creating the content.
- Make an enterprise decision whether blogs will have a comments section. They can be great discussion channels. They can also take a lot of resources to manage and maintain consistency, especially when trolls appear. You may choose to direct comments to a different channel, say email or Twitter.

Email Marketing

Email remains, by far, people's favorite way for brands to communicate with them. Don't let anyone tell you email is dead.

Emails and email sequences are also a unique publishing channel within inbound marketing in that it's the one opportunity for companies to push out personalized, customized content directly to individuals. This makes email campaigns perfect vehicles for lead nurturing, lead refreshing, and special promotions.

Key tips:

- Emails triggered by a specific behavior have double the click-through-rates (CTR) to generic emails.
- The optimal number of emails for enterprises to send out each month is 6 - 15. Be sure to deliberately coordinate how many emails get sent to the same address from across the enterprise each month.
- Quality of the email content matters. The average click-to-open rate (CTOR) for U.S. companies is 11.8%. Yet the top 25% of performers have a CTOR of 27.2%. When caught deciding between sending a lot of emails and sending top notch content in fewer emails — opt for fewer emails.

Newsletter

In a lot of ways, newsletters are a subset of email marketing since email is how they're likely being delivered. So a number of best practices that apply to email marketing, like segmenting and managing delivery frequency, apply to sending newsletters.

Key tips:

- The thank-you page after someone subscribes should clearly state how often to expect the newsletter. People can be perfectly happy with a weekly, or even daily, newsletter, if they know that's what they signed up for.
- Content should weigh heavily towards the educational and entertaining, and only minimally to selling. Keep the overt selling to around 10% of newsletter content.
- While there will be many calls-to-action within a single newsletter, prioritize just one of them and make it the most prominent. If the main goal of that newsletter issue is to get readers to fill out a survey, don't let that CTA get lost among requests for social shares or other calls-to-action.

YouTube

Online video accounts for 50% of all mobile traffic. YouTube is the most popular search engine after Google. Over half of Internet users watch an online video every day, and 78% watch online video every week.

Not yet convinced? It's estimated that video will be 79% of all consumer online traffic by 2018. On the B2B side, the share of senior executives watching videos weekly is 75% and growing.

Net, net – everybody is watching online videos.

Key tips:

- The average American watches an hour and 16 minutes of online video content every day — a little over half of which is viewed on a mobile device. That may explain why Americans tend to prefer videos that average 2.8 minutes in length.
- "How to's," explainer videos, and testimonials are all good content.
- Disabling comments and the likes/dislikes counts on videos is bad YouTube etiquette. So be prepared to treat YouTube as a discussion channel as much as a publishing channel.
- YouTube has its own stable of celebrities – the "YouTube famous." Connecting and working with the right YouTube influencers can significantly boost views and engagement.

Pinterest

There are roughly 100 million Pinterest users, 85% of whom are women, and 44% of women on the Internet are on Pinterest. Its most common topics are beauty/style/fashion, home décor, and hobbies.

Its new "Buy" button allows users to purchase items directly within Pinterest, making it more than a clipping service for shoppers to a place where actual shopping occurs.

Key tips:

- Make sure each department's Pinterest page is set up as a business account.
- You can post videos, and use an article pin to pin content from your blogs. Using an article pin pulls in the image, the article headline, and description improving their search and engagement value.
- Watch the content distribution here just as you do on the blogs. Keep around 20% of posts to brand-centric updates. The rest should be fun and/or informative.
- Optimize all the images used in your other publishing channels for Pinterest and include the "Pin It" widget. Pinterest isn't just about attracting people to the company's Pinterest pages, but getting people to pin your brand content on their own pages.

Newsletter

Despite studies showing the existence of "banner blindness," PPC spends are growing. Using PPC remains an effective way to introduce your brand to people not yet engaging with you through your established channels.

Key tips:

- Paid ads within social media are becoming increasingly important. Most social media sites have ads or paid promotion vehicles. If a distribution channel is one of your core competencies, then using their PPC option may ignite some exponential growth there. Taking an opposite perspective, if you've decided to enter a new channel, PPC may be an effective starting point to gain fast traction. Experimentation and testing will tell.
- Mobile PPC is also growing, especially because of its ability to use location as an intent indicator. These are the micro-moments where the right ad at the right time is gold.
- Retargeting is a useful way to quickly test offers and learn more about prospects' and customers' values and behavior.
- Ensure your channel and content policies take into account the relevancy of the keywords you use to promote them in order to maintain a good Quality Score and manage the cost of your clicks.

Dialogue Channels

Our recent [2015 Social Media Benchmarks Report](#) revealed some interesting findings about following size and engagement levels. Namely: while there is some correlation between community size and engagement, it varies wildly by industry. The same was found regarding posting frequency. So a large community or high posting rates don't necessarily translate into a high level of engagement.

Here's a snapshot of some of social media benchmarks we found for enterprises with 201+ employees:

- 20% post on social media at least 10 times a week, but nearly one-third post less than once a week
- The median size of an enterprise's social media following is 85,870; yet nearly 29% have at least 250,000 followers
- Enterprises average 9.28 interactions per post

Two last general notes to keep in mind about these enterprise benchmarks:

- We can't overstate how variable all these statistics are by industry. (Have we mentioned that yet?) Be sure to check out the report to see benchmarks specific to enterprises in your industry.
- The single most influential factor in encouraging high engagement with any post was the quality of its headline.
- All right! Onward to the profiles and tips for a few of the most commonly used distribution channels.



*29% of
Enterprises
have over
250,000
followers*



Facebook

Facebook's growth rate has been flattening, but with nearly 1.5 billion active monthly users, Facebook remains the biggest Big Boy on the block. Nearly 75% of all adult Internet users are on Facebook, with fairly constant levels of representation across educational, income, and living environments.

Some of the most popular content topics and engagement on Facebook revolve around hobbies, company brands, and food. Facebook has been tightening up delivery of organic content, and marketers are increasing their ad spend in Facebook to continue to get new eyes on their content.

It's commonly considered a B2C channel, but [B2B companies](#) can find success there too.

Key tips:

- Use Facebook Insights to see who's engaging with your content and to target your posts to the right people.
- Simple posts tend to get higher engagement: a link with text or a status update.
- Posts of links and simple text get higher engagement than posting an image with a link in the caption.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is almost exclusively a B2B channel. A quarter of adults on the Internet use LinkedIn. Its community is evenly divided between men and women. Nearly a third of Internet users in the 30-49 year-old cohort are on it. It also skews to college-educated and higher income levels.

Twenty-two percent of its users are in LinkedIn daily, and daily usage is trending up. New platforms within LinkedIn, like "Pulse" and its article publisher, provide key spaces to publish thought leadership and brand awareness content. The most popular content topics in LinkedIn revolve around business and industry, technology, and company brands.

Key tips:

- While LinkedIn has business pages, the real engagement happens in posts, status updates, and comments sent out by individuals.
- Therefore, include profile tips and posting practices to employees, especially for those posting and engaging as part of a company strategy, in your social media guidelines.
- Must-do profile tip: Everyone should have a profile headshot, not a vacation or family picture. People want to engage with other people, so if someone couldn't recognize you in person based off your LinkedIn profile picture, it's not the right picture.

Twitter

Nearly a quarter of Internet users are on Twitter, but it also has high levels of dormant profiles. Even so, 38% of Twitter users are on it daily. The community has slightly more men than women, and has low popularity with people over 50 years old. The most common topics discussed are celebrities and gossip, technology, and brands and companies.

It also moves at a very fast pace. This is a channel that offers one of the best opportunities for real-time engagement with individuals (or "conversations" as they were called back in the day). This makes it a particularly useful channel for customer service, tech support, and PR departments.

- Key tips:
- As the life cycle of a single Tweet is short, send it out multiple times. Use different headlines to spark the most engagement and to appeal to multiple market segments.
- Because Twitter moves quickly, it's a channel where people expect to engage in one-on-one conversations with people representing your company and brand. Even though the Tweet is coming from a company profile, closing it with the name of the person actually responding creates a more personal interaction.
- Customer service and public relations should have response plans in place for the inevitable negative feedback.

Instagram

It's a publishing channel for visual content, like Pinterest, but its engagement function makes the discussion around the content equally as important. This user base is very young, with over half of 18-29 year olds on the Internet on Instagram. Its daily usage is also trending up, with 59% of its community visiting each day and more than a third check out their stream several times a day.

Like Pinterest, it also has a B2C focus and popular topics include food/dining, hobbies, and fashion/style/beauty. ***Worth noting: Instagram has 15x the engagement of Facebook.***

Key tips:

- High number of hashtags gets content found by new people and is entirely acceptable Instagram etiquette.
- Since selfies rule the day on Instagram, it's the perfect place to solicit user-generated content.
- It's a great way to personalize the brand by sharing behind-the-scenes content.

Instant Messaging / Live Chat

On these channels, the dialogue is the content, which puts them in an interesting spot. Their primary users are very young, barely anyone over 30 uses them regularly while nearly half of smartphone users aged 18-29 do. Their community is evenly split between men and women.

WhatsApp has 800 million users, placing it behind only Facebook. However, Snapchat is one of the fastest growing social networks and has 400 million snaps each day. Snapchat's auto-delete of content is one of its main attractions. Even its new "Story" feature, which allows users to upload short videos, will only keep a video live for 24 hours. WhatsApp is expected to deliver auto-delete function by spring of 2015.

Key tips:

- These are mobile platforms, so best practices for mobile content apply. Meaning, timely, short content works best.
- Like YouTube, these types of channels have their own collection of "Internet famous" celebrities. Because of the "real time" nature of these channels on mobile platforms, these channel influencers can activate crowds of teenagers and young adults in just hours. So think pop-up events, 4-hour offers – anything time sensitive and exclusive to those "in the know."

Conclusion

Inbound and multi-channel marketing are genuine partners. Inbound marketing is about using extraordinary content to attract prospects where they are instead of interrupting them, and a multi-channel approach is the natural mechanism for meeting them where they are and in the ways they like to communicate.

Of course meeting them where they're at requires being in lots of places, creating the challenge for marketing to maintain a consistent brand message and presence via all these channels. The goal outlined here is to provide a framework where Marketing has a facilitator's role, instead of having to play enforcer or bad cop over multiple departments each handling their own publishing and distribution.

All the tips and advice shared here can be best implemented using these two practices — one practical and one strategic:

Practical: Use a unifying/central tool to share the full context of a person's communication and interaction that occurs with the separate channels and departments. This way, anyone in any specific department has full visibility into that relationship. Its technical requirements also act as a catalyst to:

Clarify roles and responsibilities of the integrated team members across departments
Develop a cohesive strategy and process for execution
Specify goals and metrics that can validate a strategy or help direct needed changes

Strategic: Create less content and prioritize distribution. (A good rule of thumb is 20% content creation, 80% content promotion and distribution.) Create stellar and provocative content, and then invest most of your resources on distributing it and encouraging conversation around it. This relieves the pressure of Marketing having to act as bad cop nixing other department's content. It maximizes the return of each piece of content created by repurposing and repackaging it so it's distribution through any specific channel aligns with that channel's audience.



Creating Structure to be Agile

Once your company has a process for managing a comprehensive multi-channel and content marketing strategy, it can speed up discrete campaigns from idea to execution. The collaboration on message and content also provides the foundation for all departments and people within your enterprise to interact with prospects and customers effectively and quickly.

Having clear guidelines and priorities as to the type of content to publish makes it easy to respond and tweak how to distribute it as new channels appear, or your market starts focusing on different discussion platforms. Remember, the point of multi-channel, inbound marketing is get your content discussed where your market is. When they start moving to new channels, you need to be able to respond swiftly.

Content marketing is a long game and patience will be your friend. Every win and loss for any piece published and distributed via certain channels is data and experience you can use to gain more wins.

Embrace the challenge!



About the Author:

Sam Balter

Corporate Marketing Manager, HubSpot

Heads corporate marketing and outreach at HubSpot. Previously worked as a marketing manager for Waterfall, a mobile messaging and CRM company. Sam writes content for HubSpot and has been published in various industry publications such as Duct Tape Marketer, Mobile Mixed and Mobile Marketing Engine.

HubSpot was founded in 2006 as a result of a simple observation: people have transformed how they live, work, shop, and buy, but businesses have not adapted. This mismatch led Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah to create the vision for the inbound experience and to develop HubSpot's platform to support it. With our powerful, easy to use, integrated set of applications, businesses can attract, engage, and delight customers by delivering inbound experiences that are relevant, helpful, and personalized. HubSpot is, after all, on a mission to make the world more inbound, one business transformation after another.

People have transformed how they consume information, research products and services, make purchasing decisions and share their views and experiences. The customer is more in control than ever — and tunes out traditional sales and marketing messages more than ever. Yet businesses still rely on the same sales and marketing playbook they have used for more than a decade. This mismatch in buyer behavior and company tactics is what led Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah to start HubSpot in 2006 and create the vision for the inbound experience.

“Success is making those who believed in you look brilliant”

-Dharmesh Shah, Co-Founder HubSpot