

DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE DROPS

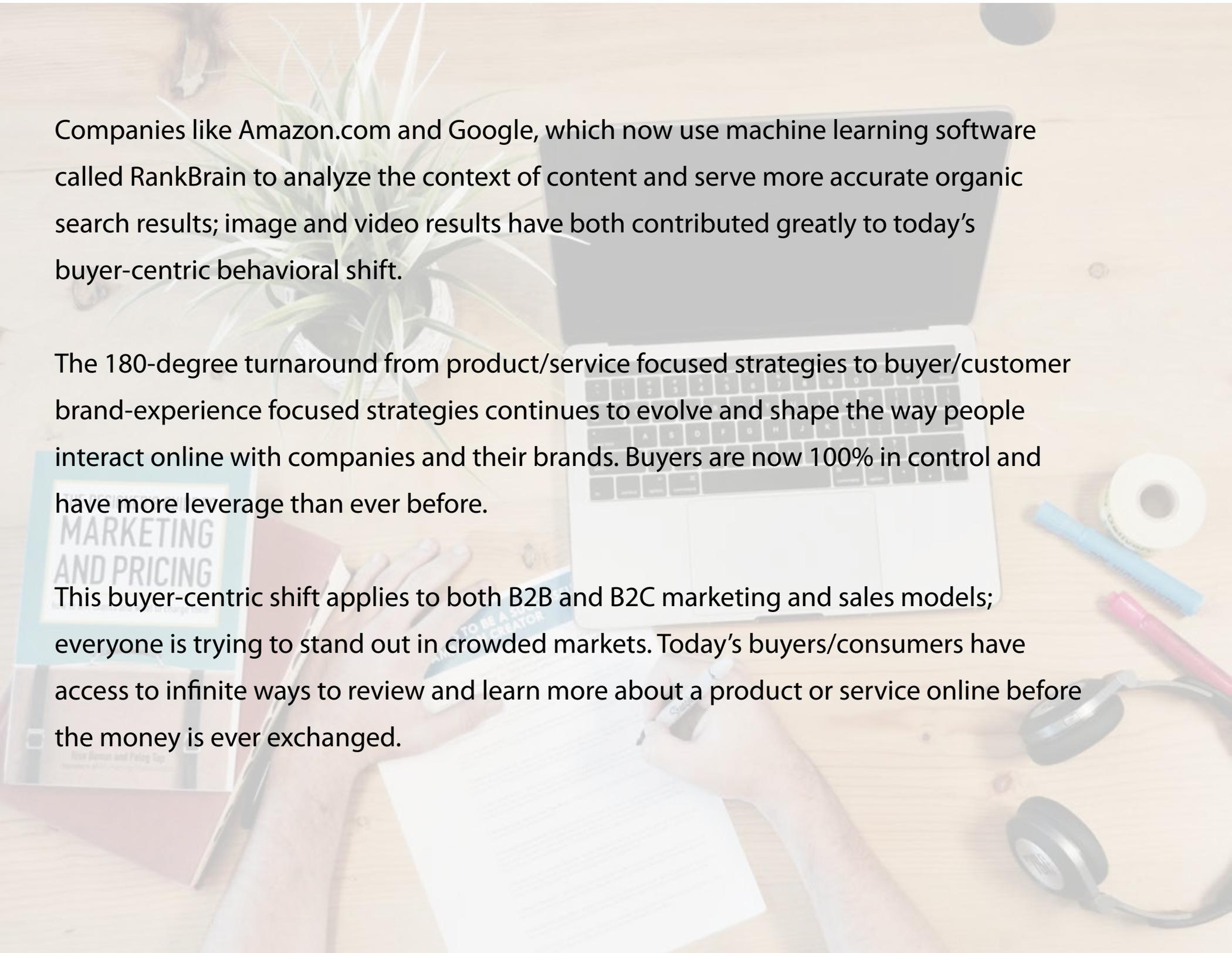
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5 Pillars of Inbound Marketing to Grow your Business Organically & 3x your Sales



If you are like most busy business owners, CMOs and or marketing managers then you know that it's harder than ever to consistently connect with your potential customers. Which in turn will to drive more sales and grow your business.

Over the last decade, with the increase of mobile adoption and the emergence of social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, both buyers and brands have more engaging and real-time ways to connect with each other.

A top-down view of a wooden desk. In the center is a silver laptop. To the left is a potted plant with long, thin green leaves. Below the plant is a book with a blue cover titled 'MARKETING AND PRICING'. To the right of the laptop are several items: a roll of white tape, a blue highlighter, a pink highlighter, and a pair of black headphones. A person's hands are visible at the bottom, one holding a pen over an open notebook.

Companies like Amazon.com and Google, which now use machine learning software called RankBrain to analyze the context of content and serve more accurate organic search results; image and video results have both contributed greatly to today's buyer-centric behavioral shift.

The 180-degree turnaround from product/service focused strategies to buyer/customer brand-experience focused strategies continues to evolve and shape the way people interact online with companies and their brands. Buyers are now 100% in control and have more leverage than ever before.

This buyer-centric shift applies to both B2B and B2C marketing and sales models; everyone is trying to stand out in crowded markets. Today's buyers/consumers have access to infinite ways to review and learn more about a product or service online before the money is ever exchanged.

Then = Funnel
Customers as an afterthought



Now = Flywheel
Customers at the center



A solid inbound digital marketing plan and working with a content strategy partner is the most effective way to help your company become a trusted source to win more business.

The graphic helps illustrate how the change in product-centric to customer-centric model has evolved. As Brian Halligan, Hubspot's co-founder and CEO recently said during his Inbound 2019 keynote, companies like Netflix are winning from incumbents in the space because they are an experience disruptor. These experience disruptors have fundamentally different genetics than the companies that consumers have all grown up supporting. "How they sell is why they win," Halligan repeats.

What is Inbound Marketing?



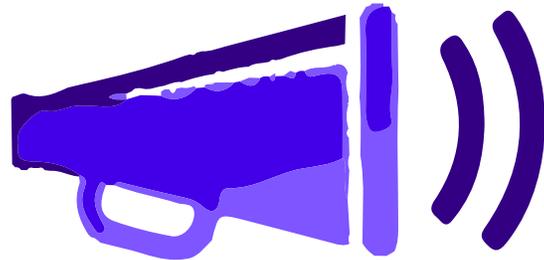
How they sell is why they WIN.

First, let's define inbound marketing to better understand how it differs from traditional outbound marketing. Inbound marketing is about creating valuable experiences that have a positive impact on people and your business. How do you do that? You attract prospects and customers to your website by creating and distributing relevant and helpful content. Once they arrive, you engage with them using conversational tools like email and chat and by promising continued value. And finally, you delight them by continuing to act as an empathetic advisor and expert.

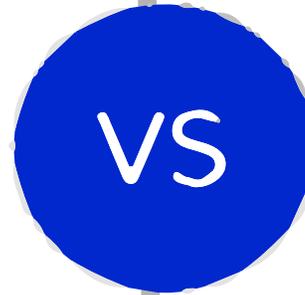
Outbound Marketing vs Inbound Marketing

OUTBOUND

(interruption)



Cold Calling
Cold Emails (SPAM)
Interruptive Ads
Marketer - Centric



INBOUND

(Permission)



SEO
Blogging
Attraction
Customer - Centric

Outbound marketing is a system of interruptive messaging and advertising such as Billboards, TV and Radio Advertising, Direct Mail, and Print Advertising.

With inbound marketing, the goal is to be permission-based so you don't need to fight for your potential customers' attention. By creating and curating content designed to address the problems and needs of your ideal customers, you attract qualified prospects and build trust and credibility for your business.

Here's a quick list of how today's savvy customers can avoid a sales pitch and why traditional or outbound marketing is not effective.

- People can skip TV ads by recording their favorite shows and fast-forwarding through the commercials. With so many online streaming services, television doesn't even acquire that many viewers anymore.
- Digital music and satellite radio make it easy for people to avoid radio advertising. Streaming platforms offer a premium price for endless music without advertising.
- Most people get their news from the Internet. Very few people see print advertising in the newspapers anymore.



- Online banner ads are blocked by ad blockers, and even if they don't get blocked, they have very low visibility due to a symptom called banner blindness.

- Email salesletters mostly wind up in the spam folder or doesn't even get opened.



- 44% of direct mail is never opened, so don't bother wasting those paper and postage fees.

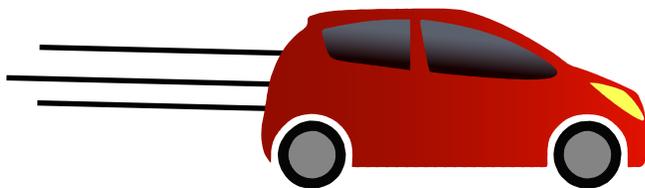
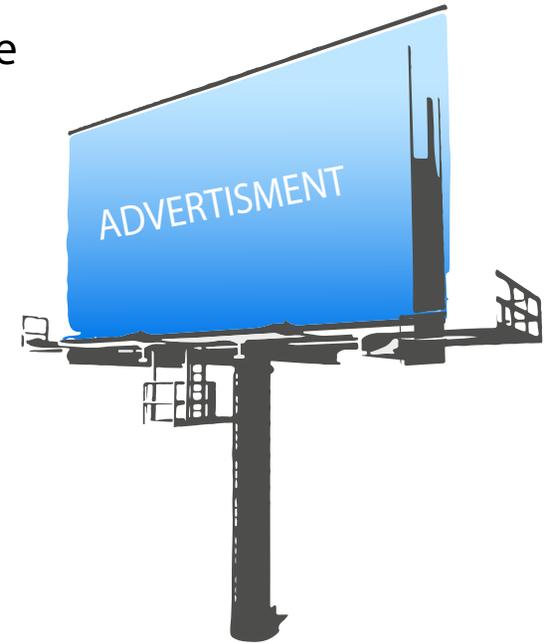
- Do young people even know what the yellow pages are anymore? Nobody is going to flip through hundreds of pages to find your business, product or service when they can simply Google what they are looking for.





- With do-not-call lists, telemarketing is a thing of the past or just plain annoying.

- Outdoor billboards are even less effective. Paying a huge sum of money to display your message to people who are moving at 60 mph and have a primary focus on the road doesn't make sense. Worst still, other brands are fighting for their limited attention at the same time.



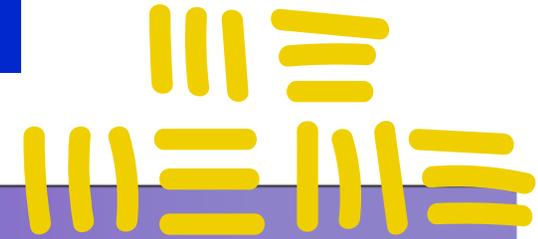
Inbound Marketing
is the opposite of
disruptive and
interruptive
marketing and
messaging.



With inbound marketing, there are five pillars that form the foundation of your inbound marketing framework.

So let's dive into the five pillars to create an inbound marketing strategy that will help get your business on its way to connect with the right customer, at the right time and position your business as a leader in your industry.

Pillar 1: Create a Buyer Persona Journey

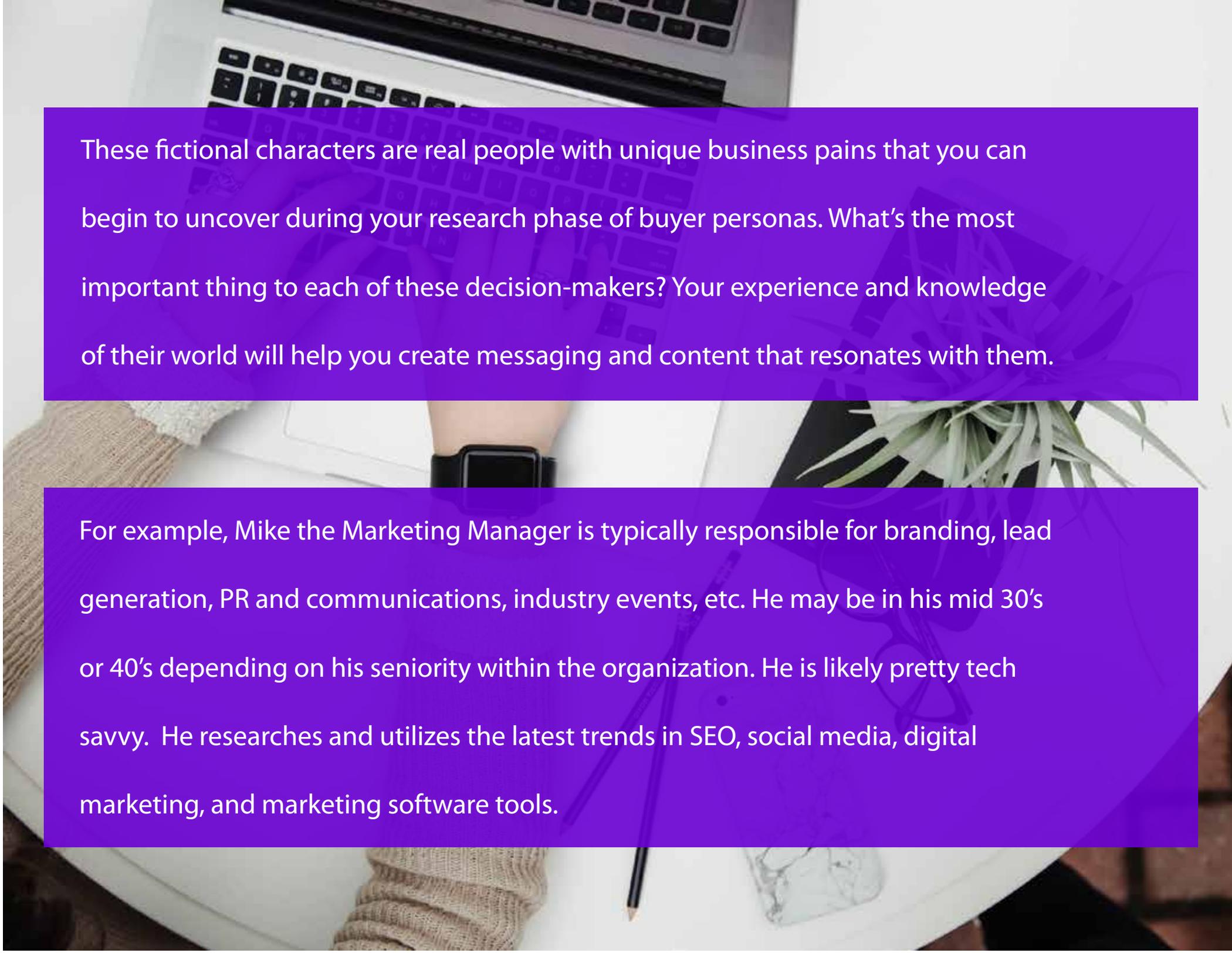


Do you know the profile of your best customer? If you haven't created a buyer persona map or user journey flows then you may not be targeting the best customer with your marketing.

Creating one is a simple process, yet the insight gained through the process is revelatory.

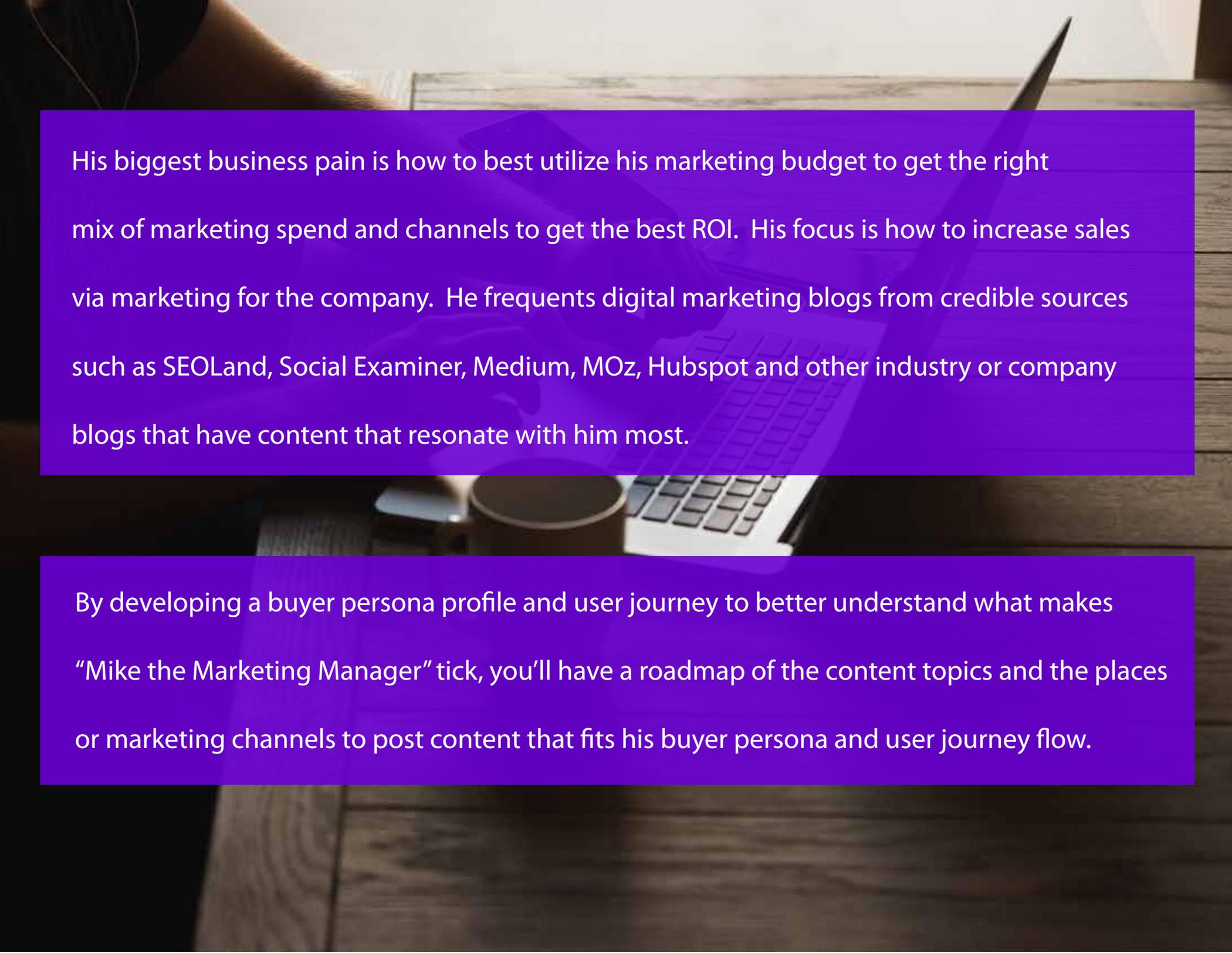
A buyer persona is a fictional depiction of your best customer to help your team identify all you need to know about that person to communicate and market to them effectively. For example, let's say you are targeting CPAs and Accounting companies, you'll create a profile of typical decision-makers at the accounting firm. Molly the Office Manager, Christopher the CEO, Mike the Marketer, and Colleen the CFO, all have different personas and responsibilities within their organization.



A top-down view of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a black smartwatch on their left wrist. On the desk, there is a blue pen, a pair of glasses, and a small potted plant with long, thin leaves. The background is a light-colored desk surface.

These fictional characters are real people with unique business pains that you can begin to uncover during your research phase of buyer personas. What's the most important thing to each of these decision-makers? Your experience and knowledge of their world will help you create messaging and content that resonates with them.

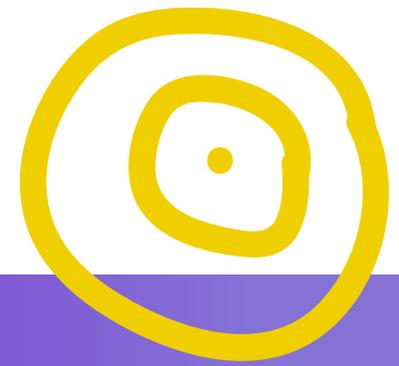
For example, Mike the Marketing Manager is typically responsible for branding, lead generation, PR and communications, industry events, etc. He may be in his mid 30's or 40's depending on his seniority within the organization. He is likely pretty tech savvy. He researches and utilizes the latest trends in SEO, social media, digital marketing, and marketing software tools.

A photograph of a person's hand typing on a laptop keyboard. The laptop is on a wooden desk, and a coffee cup is visible in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple rectangle containing white text.

His biggest business pain is how to best utilize his marketing budget to get the right mix of marketing spend and channels to get the best ROI. His focus is how to increase sales via marketing for the company. He frequents digital marketing blogs from credible sources such as SEOLand, Social Examiner, Medium, MOZ, Hubspot and other industry or company blogs that have content that resonate with him most.

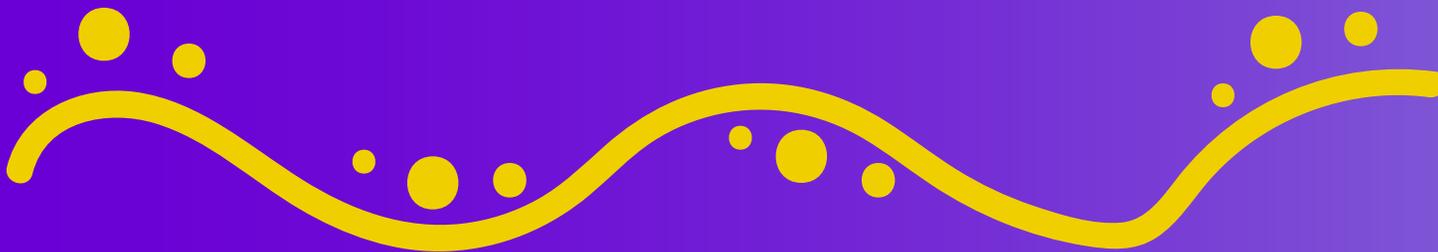
By developing a buyer persona profile and user journey to better understand what makes “Mike the Marketing Manager” tick, you’ll have a roadmap of the content topics and the places or marketing channels to post content that fits his buyer persona and user journey flow.

Pillar 2: Strategy and the Buyer Journey



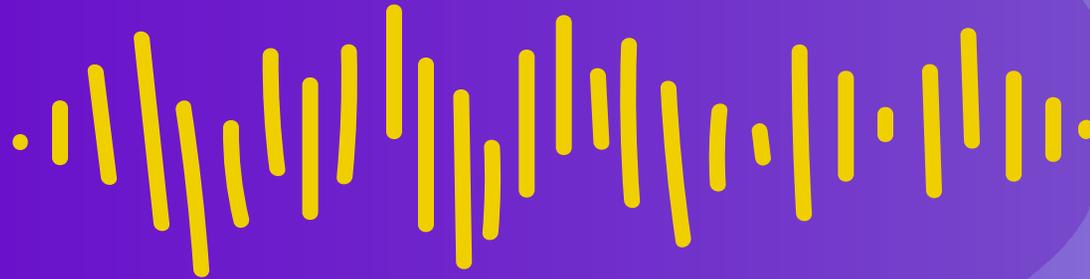
A strategy shift from a push-type messaging (outbound marketing) to a pull-type marketing and sales strategy (inbound marketing) is essential for inbound to work for any organization.

This typically means that from the highest position in your company down to your newest intern, the strategy of creating valuable content for prospective buyers/clients is understood and championed across the organization.

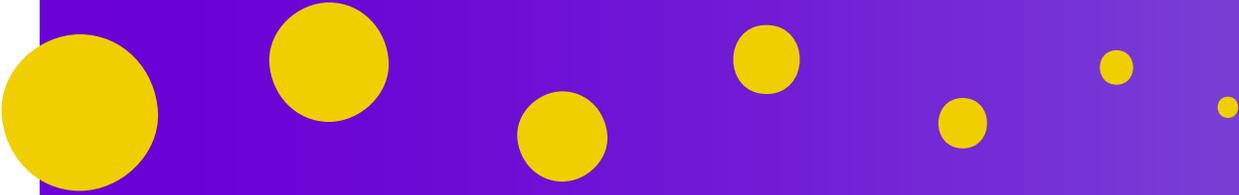




The classic buyer journey funnel has not changed much since the early days of marketing and sales. However, the inbound marketing buyer journey does have a unique approach, which is to timely tie all your content to fit with each step of the buyer's journey.



The buyer journey is closely related to the sales funnel, which can also be divided into three general stages: top-of-funnel (TOFU), middle-of-funnel (MOFU) and bottom-of-funnel (BOFU).

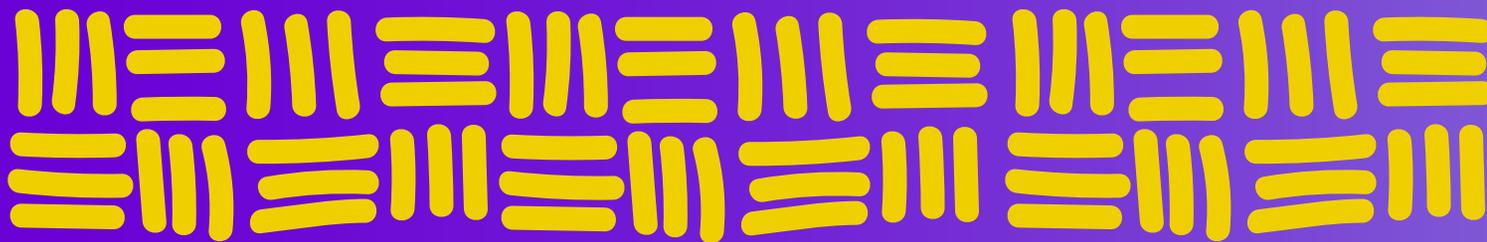


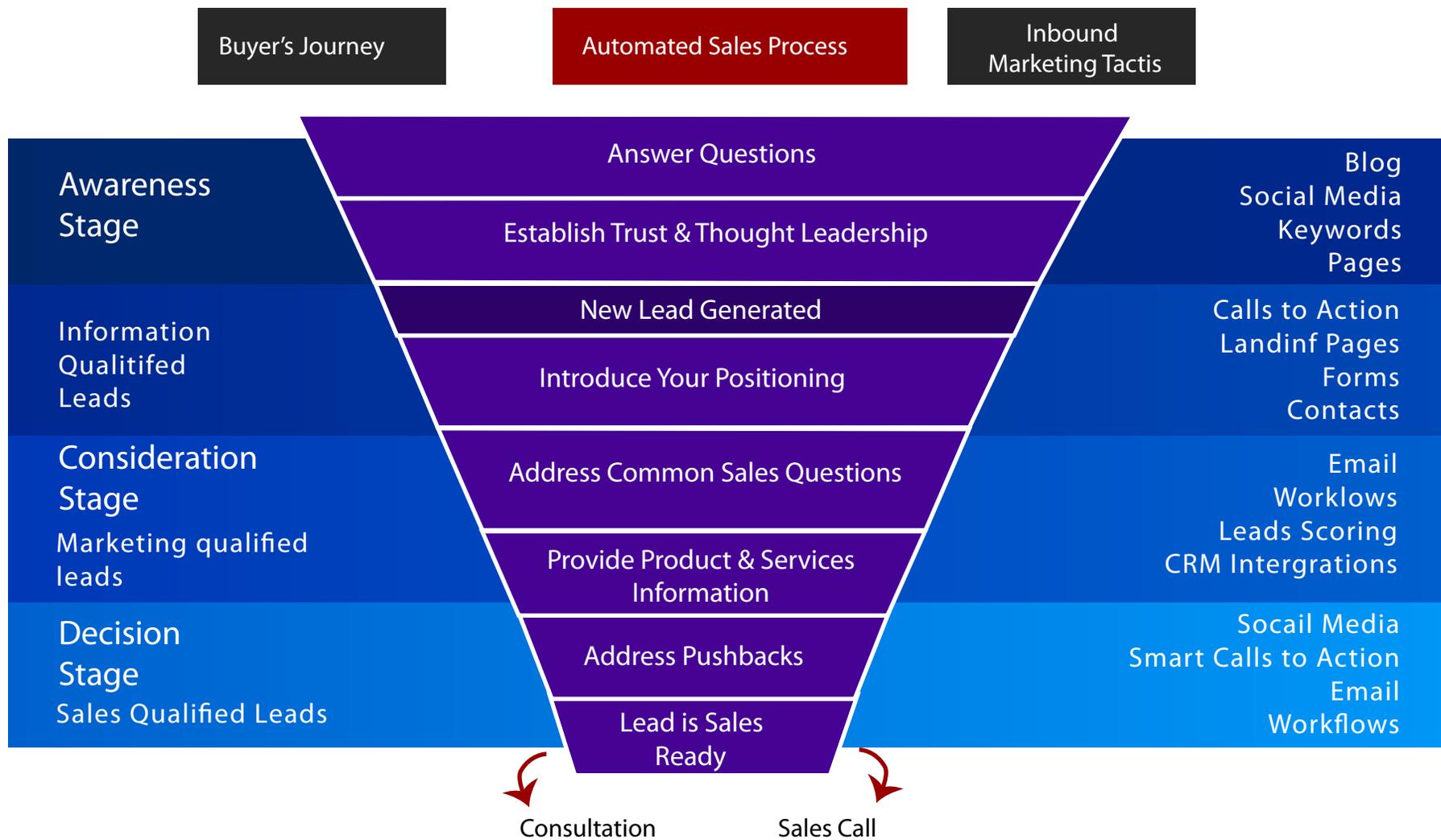


Of course, in reality, the sales funnel is more intricate than this and completely unique to each prospect. However, to implement a strategy that speaks to each stage of the buyer journey, it's useful to work with TOFU, MOFU and BOFU categories. The image below gives a pretty good visual of how each of these sales funnel stages relate to content with an inbound marketing strategy.

A holistic inbound marketing campaign addresses each stage of the buyer journey, with a combination of relevant content assets and premium offers.

At each stage of the buyer journey, you can deliver the right type of offer so that it resonates with the buyer at that stage of his interest level. For example, during the awareness stage or Top-of-Funnel, the typical content offer is a gated content offer, such as an eGuide or video with pro-tips covering an educational topic. For example, you can have your videography team or find a video expert to write up a valuable short tip blog or guide, “3 Video Marketing Tips to Grow Your Social Media.”



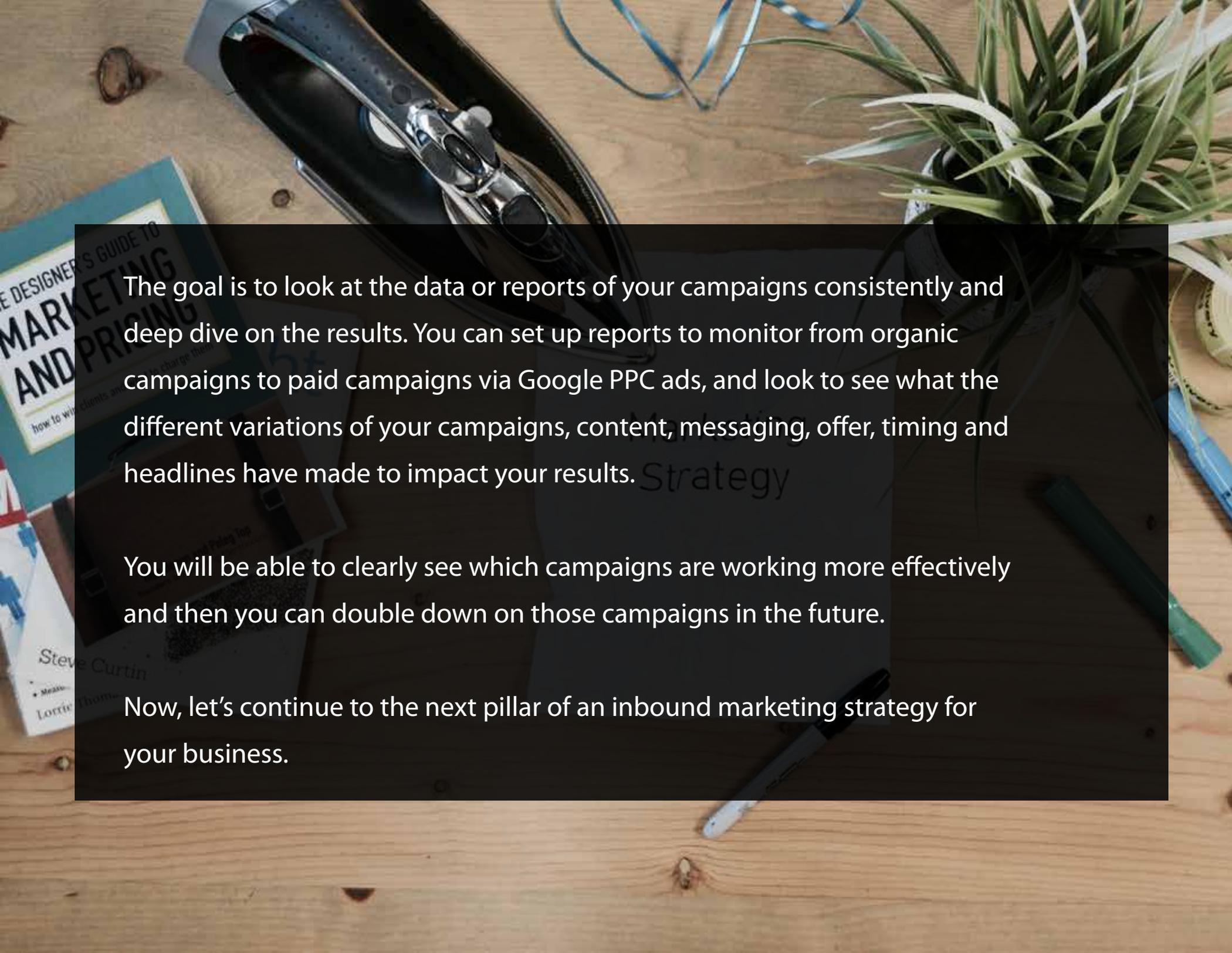


The best way to develop your content assets and strategy is to use the funnel stages and map content that is relevant at each stage. The graphic below, is a good visual tool, to assist with developing and connecting the buyer's journey to the content assets and the inbound marketing tactics.

Pillar 3: Analysis and Improvements

Now that you have a better understanding of what inbound marketing is and its relation to the customer journey and content funnel, your company can begin to analyze, tweak and optimize the strategy.

One method to optimize your campaigns is to implement A/B testing on all campaigns, so you can try email marketing campaigns with different subject lines, magnet landing pages with different headlines or embedded elements, video vs image on landing page, the number of field on gated forms, colors of the CTA (call-to-action) buttons, etc..

A top-down view of a wooden desk. In the upper left, a silver and black pen lies diagonally. To its right is a small potted plant with green and white variegated leaves. In the lower left, a book titled 'THE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO MARKETING AND PRICING' is visible, along with a notebook and a blue highlighter. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

The goal is to look at the data or reports of your campaigns consistently and deep dive on the results. You can set up reports to monitor from organic campaigns to paid campaigns via Google PPC ads, and look to see what the different variations of your campaigns, content, messaging, offer, timing and headlines have made to impact your results.

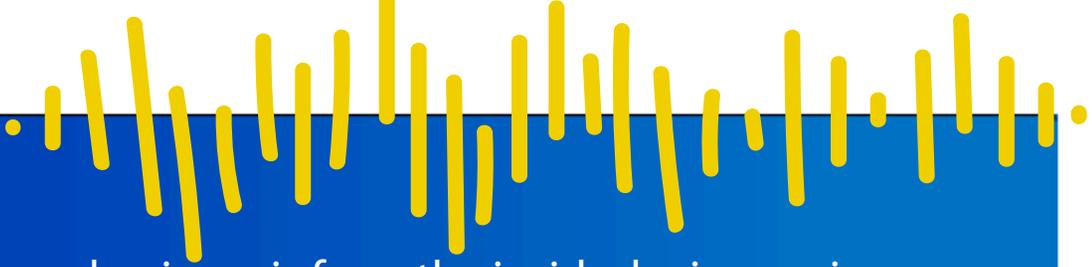
You will be able to clearly see which campaigns are working more effectively and then you can double down on those campaigns in the future.

Now, let's continue to the next pillar of an inbound marketing strategy for your business.

Pillar 4: Maximizing Customer Value

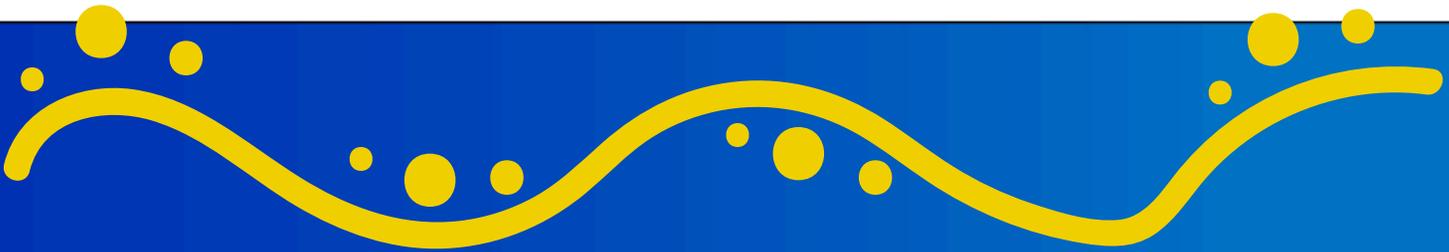
Does your business understand the lifetime value (LTV) of your customers and their referral potential? Inbound marketing can help your business to maximize the value of an existing customer.

Extensive business research on the 80-20 rule, which is that 80% of your sales or revenue comes from 20% of your customer base, implies that your existing customer base is one to maximize for up-sell and cross-sell opportunities, and can be an important referral source.



One of the most effective ways to grow your business is from the inside, by increasing the customer 'share of wallet' and nurturing advocates for your business. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including:

- Streamline the on-boarding experience to drive referrals and reduce customer churn
- Integrate your CRM with your Marketing System to identify opportunities for cross and upselling
- Stay front-of-mind with customer emails (make your emails educational, not sales-y)
- Offer an attractive referral program (white-label program or partner program)



Given that roughly 20% of new sales come from repeat customers, and that it's 5 times less expensive to generate sales from an existing customer than to acquire a new customer, the methods discussed above can help in getting the most from your current customer base.

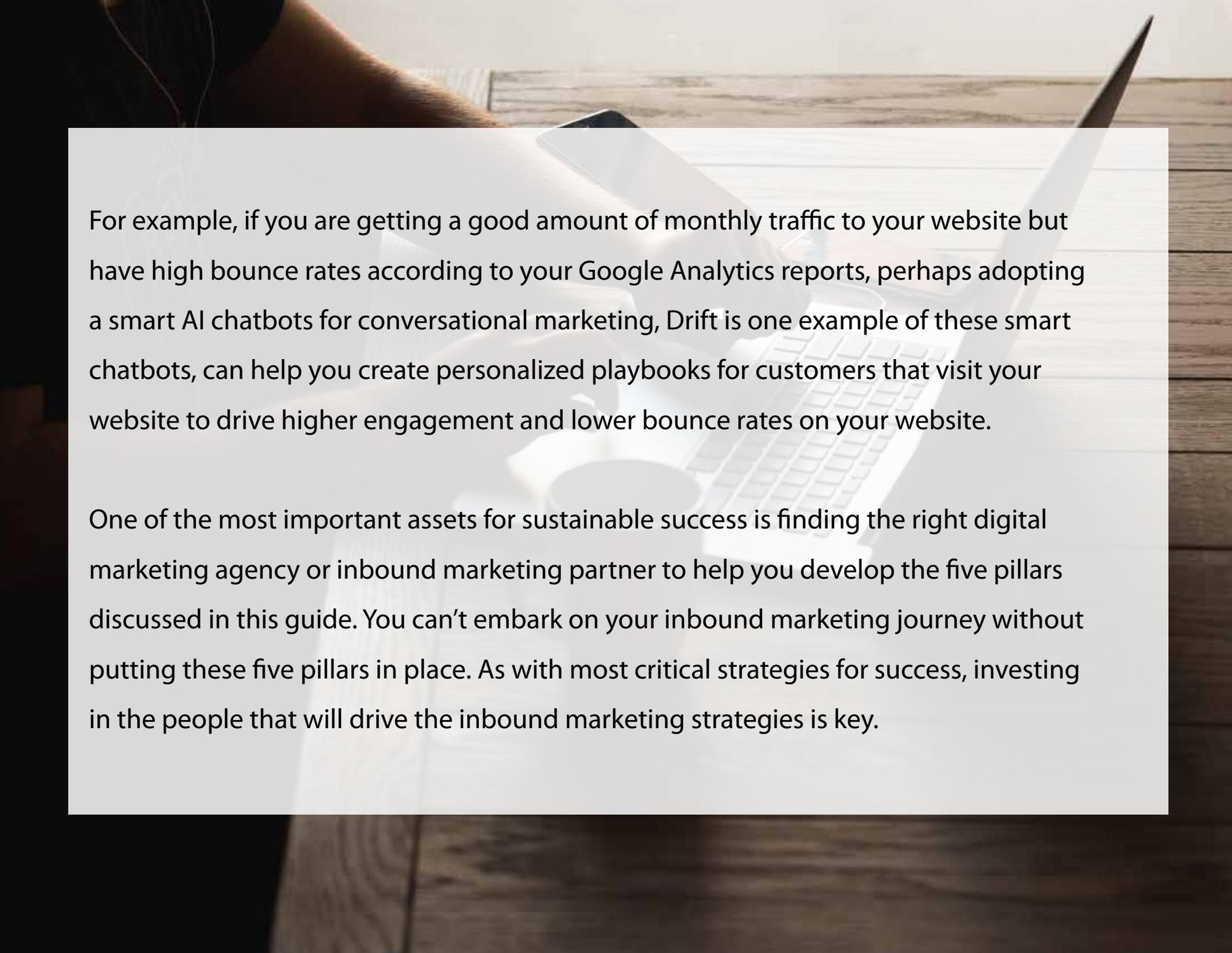


Pillar 5: Sustainable Success

The final pillar of a successful inbound marketing program is a scalable and sustainable system and process design. Inbound marketing is a long-term investment, it's a marathon, not a sprint. Having the right type of tools and systems to sustain and scale an inbound marketing program is key. Some of the assets include a content library of educational materials that speak to your customers, blogs, videos, webinars, eBooks or guides, infographics and more.

In addition to these content assets, you may also have to invest or fine-tune your systems, such as your internal communication tools within your CRM to ensure that you can access and trigger your branded assets to the right customer at the right time of their buyer journey.

Other assets may include adjusting or investing in other marketing stack tech, software that will work with your CRM, your email marketing, social media platforms, etc. to help create a better experience for your customers to drive more engagement and sales.

A person's arm and hand are visible in the upper left corner, resting on a laptop. The laptop is open and sits on a wooden table. The background is a blurred wooden surface. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box.

For example, if you are getting a good amount of monthly traffic to your website but have high bounce rates according to your Google Analytics reports, perhaps adopting a smart AI chatbots for conversational marketing, Drift is one example of these smart chatbots, can help you create personalized playbooks for customers that visit your website to drive higher engagement and lower bounce rates on your website.

One of the most important assets for sustainable success is finding the right digital marketing agency or inbound marketing partner to help you develop the five pillars discussed in this guide. You can't embark on your inbound marketing journey without putting these five pillars in place. As with most critical strategies for success, investing in the people that will drive the inbound marketing strategies is key.

Conclusion

Inbound marketing is a long-term strategy, which uses a pull or magnet like approach to lead generation/nurturing and sales. Its primary objective is to ensure that relevant content reaches customers or is found by customers at any stage of the buyer's journey. Positioning your business as an expert or trusted source in your industry.

These five pillars of inbound marketing success; personas, strategy, and the buyer journey, analysis/improvement, maximizing customer value and sustainable success are guiding principles that should be used to govern your inbound marketing strategy.

To learn more about setting up an inbound marketing strategy for your business, set up a free inbound marketing consultation.