

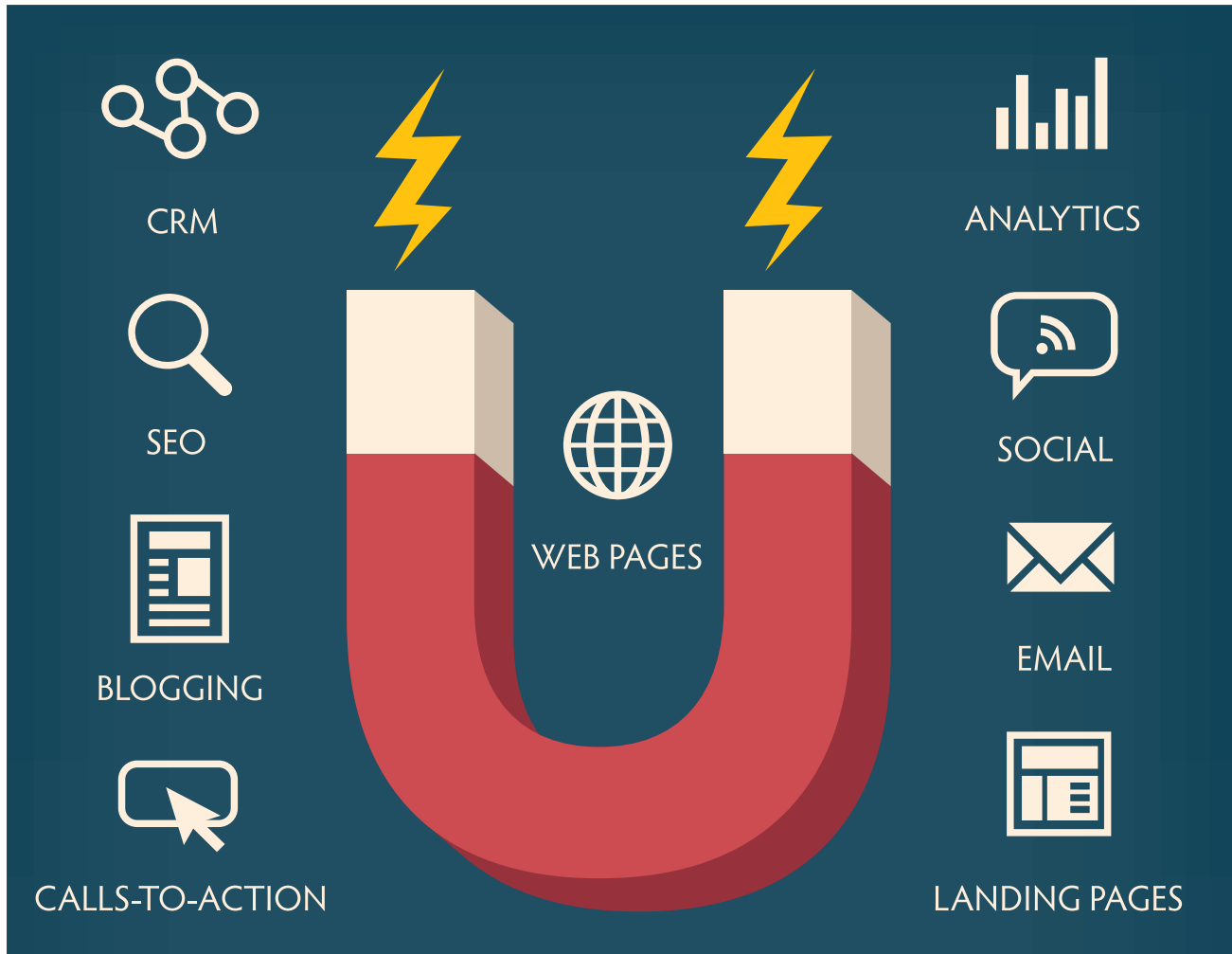
An Introduction to Inbound Marketing



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CHAPTER 1:

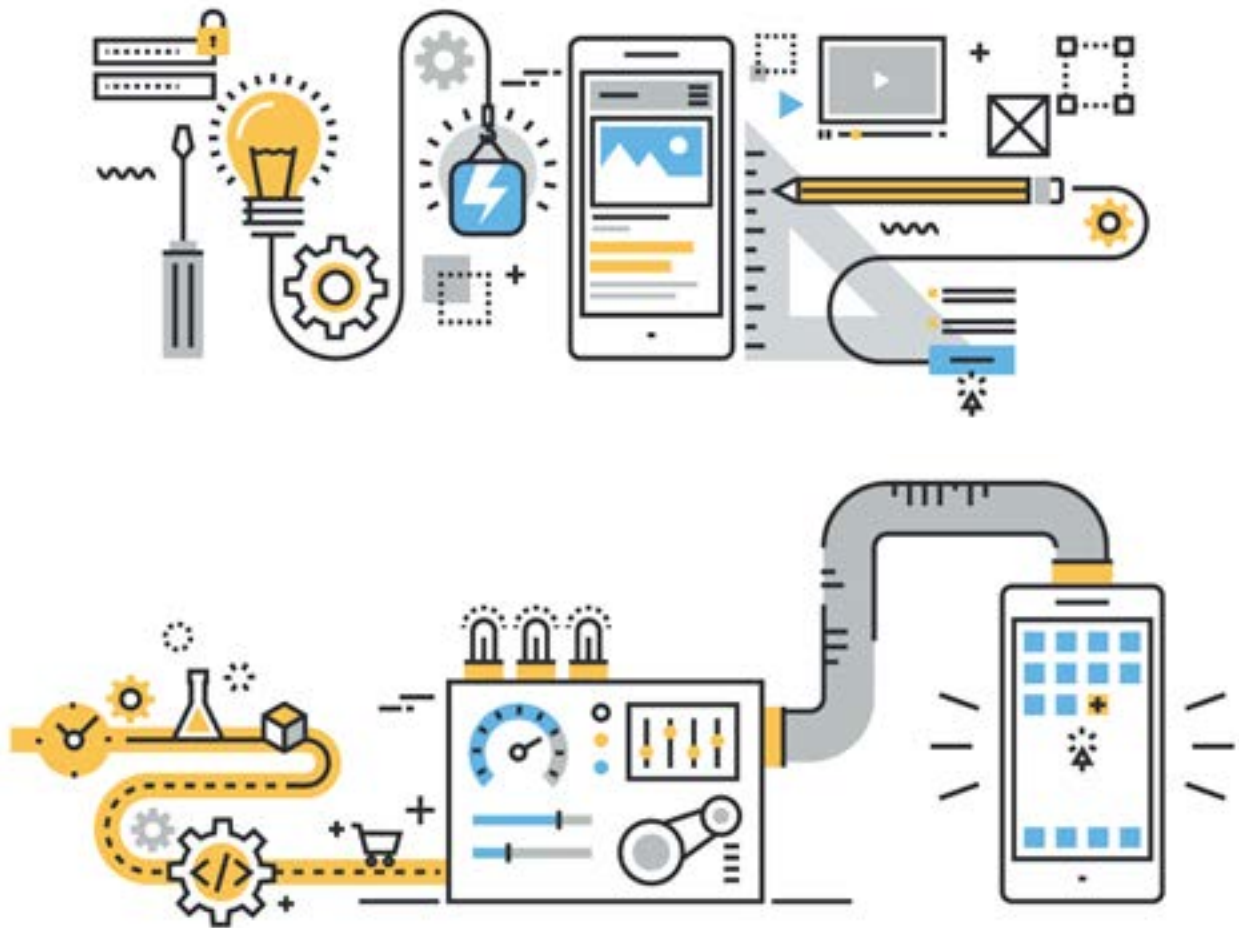
What is Inbound Marketing?

One way to demonstrate inbound marketing, and how it works is by using two objects, a bullhorn and a magnet. Prior to the concept of inbound marketing, advertising was all “outbound” or delivered from a source (bullhorn) and directed in the general direction of whomever would hear or see it, with limited consideration to whether the recipient was likely interested in the product or not. There were occasionally demographic factors put in place, like the readership of a magazine, or the listeners of a radio station, but for the most part, you tossed your message out to the world and hoped your phone would ring or people would visit your shop.

With inbound marketing, you are creating digital content that speaks specifically to the audience or “personas” that you want to reach. This content answers questions, or provides solutions to problems via a query on a search engine. By giving solutions, these interested parties, or qualified leads, end up on your website after clicking on the search query, much like a magnet. This sounds simple, but for inbound marketing to work well, there are many required tasks in order for this “lead generation machine” to achieve the identified goal. A few of these tasks include:

- Detailed persona identification
- Dynamic calls-to-action
- Content creation
- Web development with proper on-page SEO
- Daily social media
- Continual testing and evaluation of data
- Continuous review of your goals

When done right, as we will detail in this ebook, you can expect a significant growth in organic traffic, more lead generation and higher conversion rates. And a better ROI than you’ve ever had.



CHAPTER 2:

Inbound Marketing Components

As mentioned in the introduction, inbound marketing is much like a lead generation machine. Like any other machine, if you remove one part, it often fails to produce the desired result. Such is the case with inbound marketing. You must have all the parts in place and working together for success. In this section we will review these different “parts” or components, and identify a few best practices.

Inbound Marketing Software

An optimally executed inbound strategy requires a little investment in a third party inbound marketing software platform. There are many inbound platforms available today, among the most popular include HubSpot, Marketo, Infusionsoft, Pardot, Act-On and Optify. Each platform has various functionality and options, with pricing ranging from \$300 to \$6,500 per month. You need this software because as you create your content, post on social media, and deliver emails, you need to be able to have a way to collect information as people interact with your contact and are nurtured through the sales “funnel”. These tools often help you interpret the data so you are continually optimizing for success and a better return on your investment. The most important features of an inbound system are providing a content/bloggging platform, SEO tools, email targeting, automation, segmentation and delivery, landing page and form creation, lead scoring and robust reporting delivery.

Persona Creation

Inbound marketing begins and ends with personas, or someone you have identified as the most likely candidate to convert to a customer. You need to know exactly whom it is you want to talk to, provide solutions for, and convert into a customer for your inbound strategy to work successfully. Everything done from this point on is with these personas in mind; this includes content creation, language used for a call-to-action, or which social media channels to use. A great tool to help with the creation of personas is a worksheet allowing you to give a detailed description of each persona, such as their work title, role, challenges, channels of communication and current lead sources. There are a number of worksheet templates available online to help you with persona creation, [here's](#) one we've created that you can download.

Content

They say, “content is king” and that is especially true for a successful inbound marketing effort. Content plays a vital role, if not the most important role, because it’s what your potential customers are seeking for solutions and answers. In addition, because of the current Google algorithms, good content with proper SEO receives higher rankings so your potential customers can find this valuable information. Inbound marketing content comes in many forms, including:

- Website copy
- Blog posts
- Ebooks
- White papers
- E-newsletters
- Infographics
- Videos
- Slideshows
- Worksheets
- Workbooks

Each piece of content should be optimized with keywords and phrases that help rank the element higher when searched. For instance, let’s say one of your personas is a bank owner, and you know one of the challenges of this particular persona is regulatory compliance. So, you write a blog about how to keep up with the escalating regulatory requirements in the banking industry. Within the title and URL of the blog are the words “regulatory requirements” or “banking regulations” you want to use. Whatever keyword or phrase that has the highest search results (which you can find out with different tools, such as [Google Keyword Planner](#)). This will help when the person you want to reach searches using these keywords, and thus finds your content. The same is true for any other content you create.



Social Media

The social media landscape is always evolving, and its importance to lead generation cannot be understated. According to [eBizMBA Rank](#), Facebook continues to be the social media king, with over 1 billion users monthly, followed by YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google Plus, Tumblr, and Instagram. Social media plays a key role with inbound marketing success. You need it to promote content you've created, like a blog or ebook. Social media is a great tool to get a better understanding of your audience, it will help you rank higher in Google searches, and it's a great way to promote and enhance your brand.

The social media channel you focus your effort on should be determined by your personas, and the content you post should be relevant to the channel. For example, LinkedIn is a must use tool for industry specific or business news, Facebook should reflect your services and culture, Twitter is good for just about anything, and use Instagram if your product translates well visually. Always test which posts get the better results on the various platforms. This continuous review and analysis allows you to modify and optimize your strategy.

Offers and Landing Pages

You have created a great new ebook that will help attract your identified personas to your website; now what? The whole idea behind inbound isn't just the attraction, it's the conversion of visitors into leads. Your goal is to get leads into your sales funnel and nurture them to the point where they become a customer. To do that you need to give the visitor an incentive so they will give up personal information (an email address).

Offers are categorized three different ways: top, middle and bottom of the funnel.

A **top of the funnel** offer is used when the lead knows they have an issue or question, but need to be educated more. They don't know if you can provide the answer, but they're willing to give you their name and email in exchange for something that may help them understand. An ebook, whitepaper or a video is a good example of a top of the funnel offer.

Middle of the funnel offers are for leads that are educated on their problem and are now searching for the solution. Good offers for middle of the funnel include webinars, product samples, or case studies.

Finally, the **bottom of the funnel** lead is educated on their problem, they know the solution, and they know you can provide it. The offer associated with a bottom of the funnel lead is usually a free consultation or free trial. This is a sales qualified lead comfortable with you and what you offer. The lead is ready to be converted to a customer.



All offers are introduced to the lead via a call-to-action or CTA. A CTA is strategically placed on a web page or in content, when the lead is ready to move on and be further nurtured in the sales funnel. Using our previous bank owner example, the blog about how to best resolve banking regulations in 2017, there will be a CTA providing an opportunity to download a free ebook. It will go into further detail on best practices for handling banking regulatory requirements (which is something your company does for banks as a service). The banker clicks the CTA, and then is delivered to a landing page and form to fill out. This form asks for his

name and email address, and in exchange, he receives the ebook. Sometime later, typically a few days, he receives an email asking him about the ebook. He is probably also asked if he would like to attend a webinar (middle of the funnel) or perhaps speak with a customer representative (bottom of the funnel). If he clicks on any of these calls to action, he's delivered to another landing page, with a form that asks for more information, and an email is sent to a sales rep to follow up with this lead. Keep in mind, the journey through the sales funnel is rarely this easy. Many times the lead goes back and reads more blogs, maybe downloads another ebook, or perhaps doesn't convert to the bottom of the funnel for 6 months.

What is important to note is that the inbound marketing system when properly executed keeps the lead engaged until ready to buy. This is something a commission driven sales associate won't do. It isn't unusual to see leads in the pipeline for months or years and your system just continually engages them. When they are ready to buy, you are there with an appropriate solution.

Email and Workflows

The challenge for many sales representatives is the follow up and continual contact necessary to follow a lead through to a signed customer. According to [MarketingDonut](#), 80% of sales require 5 follow-up calls after the meeting, and 44% of sales reps give up after 1 follow up. With inbound, the loop is always closed; workflows will continue to nurture the lead with emails until they either convert and are delivered to your CRM, or opt out. Most inbound platforms will provide workflows or automated programs that will make sure the right leads receive emails at the right time. For instance, you may want to set up a workflow to deliver an email automatically to a lead that has turned into a bottom of the funnel lead, but has not yet converted. They then receive monthly emails delivering meaningful content until they convert or opt out. All these emails can and are personalized to the individual recipient.

So to summarize using our inbound components, we can use the Inbound Methodology chart shown below to illustrate how inbound works:



(Image courtesy of HubSpot)

Content is created to attract visitors (your personas) to your website, CTA's, landing pages and forms convert the visitors to leads, the CRM, emails and workflows close the leads into customers, and surveys, smart content and social monitoring delight customers into promoters of your business.

CHAPTER 3:

5 Benefits of Inbound Marketing

If inbound marketing is a new concept to you, you may be wary of a program requiring this much attention. It is important to understand that with commitment and patience you can achieve success. Below are five examples of how the benefits of inbound often outweigh these concerns:

1. Inbound Marketing Generates More Traffic. More Traffic Means More Leads.

Because of the analytical aspects of inbound, you can generate reports telling you exactly how much traffic you achieve, and how many leads are generated from this traffic. In addition, the better SEO optimized content you create, the more traffic and leads you will get. It's that simple. According to [Kapost](#), inbound marketing yields 3 times more leads per dollar than traditional methods, and according to [HubSpot](#), on average, brands that publish 15 blog posts per month convert 1,200 new leads per month.

2. Cost Effective.

The cost per lead for a company using inbound marketing is much less than a similar company using strictly outbound methods. According to [Eloqua](#), the average cost per lead created drops 80% after 5 months of consistent inbound marketing, and according to [Groove Digital Marketing](#), After 12 months 75% of brands report ROI on their inbound programs and 44% report ROI after just 6 months.

3. Builds Brand Awareness.

By consistently distributing valuable content, you are not only educating people on what you do, you also create a firm impression in the minds of your prospects as a trusted industry authority. As people like your content, they will share via social networks, and you will in turn rank higher in searches, thus dramatically increasing your visibility and cementing your reputation as a credible resource.

4. Helps Sales and Marketing Work Together.

Because content creation in inbound relies heavily on the needs of the prospects, the sales department will have a vested interest in how those needs are identified and presented by the marketing department. There is no longer a wall between attracting the client with marketing and delivering to sales. The process is seamless as the leads are nurtured through the inbound process, and then delivered to the sales CRM via marketing automation workflows.

5. The Content You Create Never Goes Away.

With outbound marketing, once the billboard comes down, or the TV ad campaign finishes, it's out of sight, out of mind and you have to start all over with a new campaign. With an inbound campaign, you will continuously attract more traffic because the content created does not go away. There is also a cumulative effect because inbound content will grow exponentially and add value to previous and future content you create.





CHAPTER 4:

Incorporating Inbound Marketing with Outbound

We've talked about the advantages and differences of an inbound marketing approach versus an outbound approach. This does not mean, inbound should replace your outbound marketing efforts. Actually, outbound channels working in conjunction with inbound can deliver superior results when done correctly.

For example, say you write a blog post (inbound) and get some organic traffic from it as a result (inbound). You have a call to action at the close of the blog post to download a gated ebook. Once you have their email address from the landing page, you start to send them email messages from a workflow (outbound). Even if they don't download the ebook, you can advertise to them via retargeting (outbound). As you get more and more information about them and you work to nurture the prospect through your sales funnel, eventually many of prospects will qualify as a warm lead. So, a salesperson calls them (outbound). Once the human-to-human interactions start to build, the close becomes more and more likely. Outbound can also support an inbound campaign with a consistent message and branding, and tools like a bit.ly or QR Code on printed material to drive prospects to the same offer the inbound CTA does. According to an Act-On [***Inbound Marketing Effectiveness Report***](#), 84% of marketers say they need both inbound and outbound marketing. Here's a few of the most common tactics used for both approaches, and how often they are used:

(Image courtesy of Act-On)



CHAPTER 5:

Inbound Reporting and Analytics

The reporting and analytics you can extract from your inbound marketing platform is one of the items that separates inbound from other marketing programs. Beyond the basic traffic information you receive from a Google Analytics report, you are also able to track specific traffic from social media, landing pages, forms, and pages. And, as leads are created from downloading content or requesting consultations, you can determine your conversion rates, how they compare week over week, month over month, year over year. With your inbound platform timeline created for each lead, you will see the history of their journey through the sales funnel. All of this information will help you determine which landing pages get the most conversions, which CTA's have language that receive the most clicks, what emails are most opened, what pages receive the most visits, and which social media channel is delivering the most leads. The reporting opportunities are practically endless and are customizable for your KPI's, goals and expectations. Best of all you will have a written, clearly defined way to calculate your ROI based on leads and customers delivered.

So how should you use inbound reporting? Here are four fundamentals of inbound marketing reporting:

- 1. Goals.** As mentioned before, without stated goals, you will not have anything to measure ROI against. What is it that you and your company specifically need to change? More sales? Higher conversions?
- 2. Website Data Monitoring.** Where are your leads coming from? What pages are they visiting? How is social media affecting traffic? What landing pages are converting the best? By constantly monitoring how leads interact with your website you are able to adjust accordingly. A/B testing is a great way to determine which content on a CTA is working best, and inbound reporting is uniquely qualified to be able to give you this information.
- 3. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).** KPI's are put in place to make sure the strategy you have in place aligns with the goals you establish. For instance, if one of your goals is to increase conversions from visitors to leads from 5% to 8%, then you may want KPI's in place showing not only month over month conversion rates, but which landing pages are converting best, which CTAs are converting best on what pages, or maybe which paid social ads are delivering the most leads. Other examples of KPI's that can be culled from inbound reporting include blog views, mobile traffic, bottom of the funnel leads, cost per lead and unique website visits.
- 4. Actionable Sales Strategies.** The reporting you receive may indicate the need to change your sales strategy. Let's say you focus on some targeted industries such as healthcare, financial services and the auto industry; but your reporting shows a large number of leads are coming from the education sector, and none from the auto industry. This may indicate a needed shift of focus from auto to education, or at least add education to your vertical.

CONCLUSION

There is no product or process that can put you in contact with every possible leads for your business, and then convert these leads to customers. If there were, it would be a very popular product indeed. But with inbound marketing, when done correctly and consistently as outlined in this ebook, you can put the odds in your favor. Inbound marketing provides a platform that allows you to speak directly to your personas by attracting them to your website with engaging and relevant content, nurtures them through the sales funnel with calls to action and offers, and delivers them to your email inbox as a sales qualified lead. The ROI and performance of your inbound campaigns can be quantified with robust reporting, and can be adjusted and improved based on these results.



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