BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO
INBOUND MARKETING

HORTON

Introduction

In the past, the marketing world gravitated toward the idea that businesses needed to go out into the world to evangelize their merits to anybody willing to listen in hopes of converting a few of them into customers. Because of this idea, marketers spent endless time and money fighting with their competitors and clamoring for the attention of consumers. And it was this idea that justified the massive amounts of cold-calls, junk mail, and spam emails that the rest of us found so bothersome up until the early 2000s. But now things have started to shift.

With the rise of the Internet, consumers have more power than ever before, and they are becoming even more powerful, and even more informed as time passes. Businesses that want to build a consumer base can no longer rely on the traditional outbound marketing methodologies of the olden days. Things are changing.

The practical upshot of all this is that going to the consumer no longer works for marketers. Now you need to persuade the consumer to come to you. That's what inbound marketing is all about.

It hasn't taken long for inbound marketing to all but eclipse its predecessor methodologies. Why have marketers been so eager to delve into the world of inbound marketing? Because it works! Here are some pretty mind-blowing inbound statistics for you, straight from HubSpot:

- 84% of small businesses now use inbound marketing
- Inbound leads cost 60% less than outbound leads
- 80% of business decision makers avoid getting their information from advertisements
- Inbound campaigns are 300% more likely yield higher ROIs than outbound campaigns

The list goes on! We'll speak more to the question of "why" later on the eBook, but first we're going to go deeper into what inbound marketing is and how to do it.

What is Inbound Marketing?

The fundamental thinking behind inbound is that companies should aim to connect with their consumers on a deeper, more personal level. Consumers should enjoy being the subject of your marketing efforts. If you can accomplish this, then you become a magnet, attracting consumers to your brand by delivering quality content and an engaging experience.

But how? Well that's what we'll be talking about today. But before we get started, we have to do some homework on exactly who we are marketing *to*.

A Note on Buyer Personas

Before you begin working on any sort of marketing campaign or content, you have to know your audience. Having a solid grasp on who you want to have as customers (and who you don't) will help you target and optimize your content. Efficiency is the name of the game!

Depending on your business, you might develop anywhere from 2 to 20 buyer personas. The quantity is up to you, so long as each persona is based on concrete market research and actual feedback you have received from your customers. You might even consider conducting a series of interviews to gain a better understanding of your target customers. Once you have figured out who you're after, it's time to put inbound marketing into action!

STAGE 1
ATTRACT

Too often, in the marketing world, it is forgotten that consumers are also actual people. Every person has their own set of desires, hopes, fears, and tastes. Everybody is different, and this means that not every single person out there is going to want your products or services. So don't waste your time trying to convince them to buy something they don't want. They might never want it—sorry!

Not all traffic your site gets is good traffic. In an ideal world, the only people that visit your site would be people who are actually interested in your brand. These people would, ideally, share characteristics with the profiles built out in your Buyer Personas. Likewise, the rest of the people out there who aren't interested would stay away, and continue living their lives. So how do we attract high quality visitors?

Content

You attract ideal customers by giving them the content they want. If you can create informative, engaging content that speaks to the needs of your buyer personas, it won't take long for your traffic and KPIs to take a turn for the better. And what form should this content take?

SEO

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the process of increasing the visibility of your website in a search engine's unpaid, or organic, search results. It's true that you can bypass the nitty gritty work involved in SEO by paying your way to the top of the search results, but this is not only expensive and inefficient, it doesn't yield results! According to a recent study by Search Engine Land, approximately 80% of consumers ignore paid advertisements. That means that the quickest way to the top is taking the time to do SEO the right way. And what is the goal of SEO?

Blog

Blogging is a greatway to engage with potential buyers. And if you think that blogging is lame, think again.

"'Content is king' is an often-quoted marketing proverb, and truer words have never been spoken. Nothing increases your visibility, authority, and traffic quite like good content does. And if you ask me, there aren't many better ways to deliver that content than through blogging."

PETER CAMPBELL
Horton Group Content Writer

Discoverability

Your brand has a lot to offer consumers! Your SEO goal is to make it as easy as possible for them to find you. That's why blogging is so great for inbound marketing, but there's still more you can do to put yourself out there. For example, you should be sharing your content across social media platforms. Not only are these sorts of platforms extremely useful, but they also help to humanize your company. This goes a long way towards facilitating meaningful, personal connections between you and prospective customers.

So You've Gotten Your Buyer Persona Onto Your Site—Now What?

STAGE 2
CONVERT

Getting visitors to your website is obviously a critical component of digital marketing success. Getting eyes on your website, social channels, content, and ultimately brand, is the first step to generating revenue for your company. The next step is inspiring engagement and turning that visitor into a lead.

Visitor - A website visitor is any person who has reached your website through organic, referral, or other channels.

- Has viewed at least one page on your website
- Hasn't engaged with your content
- Hasn't offered any personal information

Lead - A lead is a website visitor that has engaged with your website in any way, for example, submitting a form, downloading an eBook, or viewing a gated offer.

- Has submitted a form
- Has downloaded a content offer
- Has subscribed to your blog

One of the main functions of a website is to gather personal information from its visitors in order to create points of contact for the business. There are a variety of ways to go about getting informations submitted voluntarily. The three website assets we'll address here are forms, landing pages, and calls-to-action.

Landing Page
A landing page is a webpage that facilitates the capturing of a visitor's information through the use of a form.

Form
A form is a questionnaire that a website visitor fills out in order to receive some kind of gated benefit.

Calls-To-Action
The image, text, or button that asks the website visitor to take action.

> "In order to have a high performing form you need to have something that's worth filling out a form for, you need to avoid asking for too much information all at once, and you should use technology to your advantage. Using follow up emails to get additional information, and using smart forms to populate with different fields based upon information you already know will guide leads through their buyer's journey."
>
> **REESE HAWKINS**,
> HORTON GROUP INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGIST

A Note on Optimizing Landing Pages
- Be clear about what visitors will receive when they submit a form
- Use engaging content like images, video, and audio to increase interest
- The more valuable the offer, the more fields you can ask to be completed in the form
- Make sure the Call-To-Action image or button stands out on the page
- Make sure you have a thank you page that the lead is directed to after form submission

STAGE 3
CLOSE

Someone submitting a form on your website, or subscribing to your blog, or downloading an offer is the first instance of a website visitor converting. Once a lead is created, inbound methodologies exist to help turn that lead into a customer. A customer, according to inbound, is no different than what a customer is to a grocery store or a movie theatre. A customer is a buyer of goods or services.

Tools to Help Leads Close into Customers

- CRM
- Closed Loop Reporting
- Workflows

- Lead Scoring
- CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management. A CRM will help manage, organize, and analyze company and contact information.

Examples: HubSpot CRM, Salesforce, Zoho

- Closed Loop reporting isn't so much a tool as an organizational commitment. Be sure your marketing & sales teams are communicating about what leads are closing, & where you can improve the sales cycle.
- Workflows allow for automated emails to be pushed to leads over time. By distributing quality content and showing your business's expertise, leads will be more enticed to buy.
- Lead scoring will help you know what leads need more attention than others. It's a way of prioritizing your sales and marketing efforts.

[Click here for a full analysis of Horton Group's internal lead scoring practices.](#)

> "HubSpot's free CRM has changed the way Horton Group treats opportunities. The centralization and organization of information has empowered our Sales team to better meet our leads' needs. Being able to share notes across our organization, whether it's the Project Manager referencing pre-sale goals, or the web designer looking for client preferences, the CRM allows us to close leads at a higher rate and make for happier customers."
>
> **SAMUEL BRADSHAW**
> HORTON GROUP INSIDE SALES AND INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGIST

Workflows Need-To-Know

Properly executing a workflow can save your marketing team hundreds of hours in the long run. Imagine if you had to personally draft and send follow up emails for hundreds of downloads for an eBook your company releases. Marketing automation is a key component of inbound marketing and the Close Stage.

Horton Group has set up workflows that are five or six emails deep which drip content and calls-to-action to leads over a 28 day period. HubSpot allows for if statements to be included in workflows. For example, if someone downloads our eCommerce web design offer called [Design an eCommerce Store That Sells: Expert Insights](#) we can send them a follow up email promoting a different web design offer. Then, depending on if they have downloaded that offer in response to the email, we send different follow up emails.

Being able to have fully automated and customizable control over the messages you're sending potential customers has a huge effect on the value of email marketing campaigns.

STAGE 4
DELIGHT

While closing a new customer is exciting, it's only the start. You need to ride off into the sunset with your customers and continue your relationship with them by engaging with them and delighting them as often as possible. This will result in positive word of mouth, upsell opportunities and the privilege to continue to work with them in the future.

It costs businesses 6-7x more to attract a new customer than to retain an existing one, according to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs. In addition, referrals from delighted customers have a level of credibility that advertising simply can't compete with. That said, delight is not just something for the customer service reps to handle. Delight needs to be a focus at all customer touchpoints. The good folks from HubSpot recommend using the 3 Pillars of Delight to create happy customers.

3 PILLARS OF DELIGHT

Innovation
Never stop working to improve the customer experience, even if just in small incremental steps.

Communication
Establish personal connections with your customers to increase trust in your organization.

Education
Empower your customers to make wise purchasing decisions by educating them on your product or service.

CUSTOMER DELIGHT TACTICS

Customer delight is all about building trust and enhancing the customer experience. There are several tactics you can use to accomplish this. Here are a few of our favorites:

Surveys
Distribute well-developed surveys to help you better understand your buyer personas. Popular survey tools include: SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo and Typeforms.

Social Monitoring
Listen to your customers on social platforms to better understand how your product fits into the context of their day-to-day. Then, interact and respond with helpful recommendations.

Smart Content
Present customers with personalized, relevant content that directly meets their needs. Implementing a successful contextual marketing strategy can take time, but the benefits are worth it.

"Delighting customers is an often neglected opportunity. But when taken seriously, the results can be astronomical. No one likes to be treated like an afterthought. By making it your top priority to serve and solve for customers, you will increase word of mouth and improve your business's bottom line."

JOEY DYE
HORTON GROUP INBOUND MARKETING SPECIALIST

Additional Resources:
Client Delight: How to Boost Loyalty & Happiness
How To Monitor Your Social Media In 10 Minutes A Day

Conclusion

By now, you should have a at least a beginner's knowledge of inbound methodology, but you may have noticed the absence of a seriously important step—analysis. This is because analysis needs to be done at each stage of the inbound marketing methodology. You should constantly be analyzing and improving upon your marketing efforts to improve and achieve greater results. Some tools that can help with this include: Google Analytics, HubSpot, and KissMetrics.

The inbound marketing methodology is the most effective marketing method for doing business online. Rather that using outbound tactics, such as cold calling and buying email lists, inbound marketing focuses on creating quality content to pull your customers in. Inbound marketing is all about creating marketing that people love.

By guiding website visitors through each stage of the inbound process, using the 4 inbound marketing stages of Attract, Convert, Close and Delight, you will be well on your way to generating leads and increasing revenue for your business.

Ready to get started? Contact Horton Group today!

[**Get Started with Inbound Marketing**](#)