

THE B2B

Guide to Inbound Marketing





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Overview

Though B2B consumers continue to indicate a preference for inbound marketing over more traditional marketing methods, some B2B companies have been somewhat slower than others to adopt inbound methodologies. According to HubSpot's "2015 State of Inbound," that reluctance is gradually fading away as inbound has become the marketing approach of choice for 76 percent of B2B companies today.

This eBook will explore why more and more B2B companies are joining the inbound marketing ranks, and how inbound methodologies have evolved to become more useful in B2B marketing strategies. Additionally, this book will examine how companies can harness the power of inbound marketing across multiple digital channels and reap demonstrable positive ROI for their inbound marketing campaigns.

Inbound marketing by the numbers

If you have your doubts about embracing inbound marketing as a fundamental part of your B2B strategy, consider these telling statistics compiled by HubSpot, the undisputed leader in inbound strategy:

- According to Social Media B2B, companies that have a blog generate 67 percent more leads per month than those who do not.
- 93 percent of B2B marketers use content marketing, according to Content Marketing Institute.



INBOUND MARKETING

- According to Search Engine Journal, inbound leads cost 60 percent less than outbound ones.
- According to Content Marketing Institute, 80 percent of business decision-makers prefer to get company information in a series of articles, versus in an advertisement.
- According to HubSpot's "2015 State of Inbound" report, inbound marketing has a 76 percent likelihood of being the marketing approach of choice for B2B companies.

These are just a few of the statistics that make B2B marketers sit up and take notice of inbound as a preferred marketing strategy.



The past, present & future of inbound



For most of history, marketing generally has taken a blunt force trauma approach to grabbing the attention of the consumer. B2B marketing has been no different. From billboards to slick Super Bowl ads, traditional marketing has held sway for a long time.

However, more traditional methods of marketing have lost their luster in recent years. Consumers of all kinds have discovered that it is more fun to be in the driver's seat with regard to marketing, versus submitting themselves to disruptive advertising as passive recipients.



Inbound 281's "The Past, Present, and Future of Inbound Marketing" describes the shift away from traditional marketing, stating:

"Inbound marketing first surfaced around 2003. Customers were ignoring email blasts, paying more attention to blogs, and ignoring traditional outbound advertising measures. A new solution emerged from the data: personalized approaches that used consumer permission to drive engagement.

Inbound remained largely an abstract idea, however, until HubSpot came on the scene in 2006. The company gave this fresh idea a name and created an infrastructure around it. This single event contributed to a landslide of changes in the ways people interacted with companies online.

Social media emerged as one of the most powerful ways to connect consumers with businesses. Google changed its algorithm with the infamous Panda, devaluing millions of web pages that were deemed less-than-useful and changing the ideals surrounding custom content. Mobile technology came to the forefront and e-commerce began to gain on its offline-shopping counterpart."



An increasingly digital-savvy and personalization-craving wave of B2B customers wants to receive relevant information how and when it is convenient for them. Inbound marketing, then, is about subtly attracting leads to your products and services by providing consistently-relevant, high-quality information that educates and attracts your audience, using all appropriate digital platforms to do so.

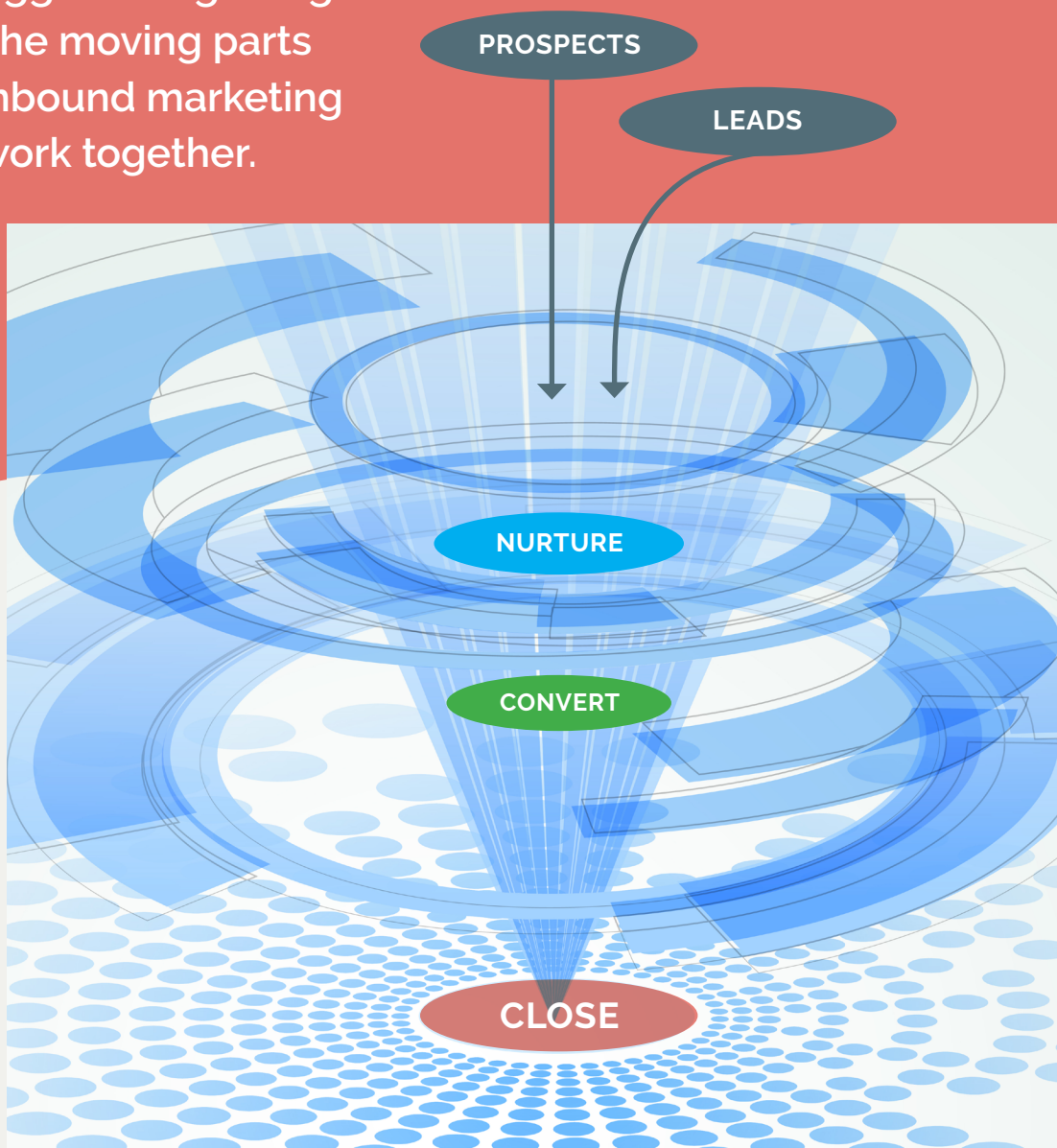
B2B marketers are busy with inbound methodologies, using such strategies as blogging, social media, free content downloads (e.g., ebooks and whitepapers), high-quality videos, and serial podcasts to get their brand message into the minds of their audience and keep it there.

As for the future of inbound marketing, Inbound 281 predicts that inbound will continue to evolve in lockstep with evolving consumer interaction via advancing technology. As more data and smarter marketing analytics inform inbound strategy in the future, it is a safe bet that inbound marketing is the best way for businesses to survive and thrive online.



Though inbound is widely valued as the way to most effectively market your products and services today and is projected to gain even more ground in the future, some B2B marketers struggle with getting all the moving parts of inbound marketing to work together.

Build a conversion experience with strong inbound marketing skills



A ccording to MarketingProf's B2B Inbound Marketing: Top Tactics, Goals, and Challenges ...

...only 27 percent of B2B leaders say their inbound efforts are very successful in helping to achieve important objectives, while 66 percent feel they are somewhat successful. A full 46 percent of B2B marketers feel that this is due to lack of an effective strategy.

Considering the multi-faceted nature of inbound marketing campaigns, it is wise to take a step back and consider how to build a conversion experience from the ground floor, so to speak. This process follows four main objectives: attract, convert, close, and delight your audience. Every campaign, every piece of content, and every marketing tactic your business develops should focus on guiding potential customers through this process.

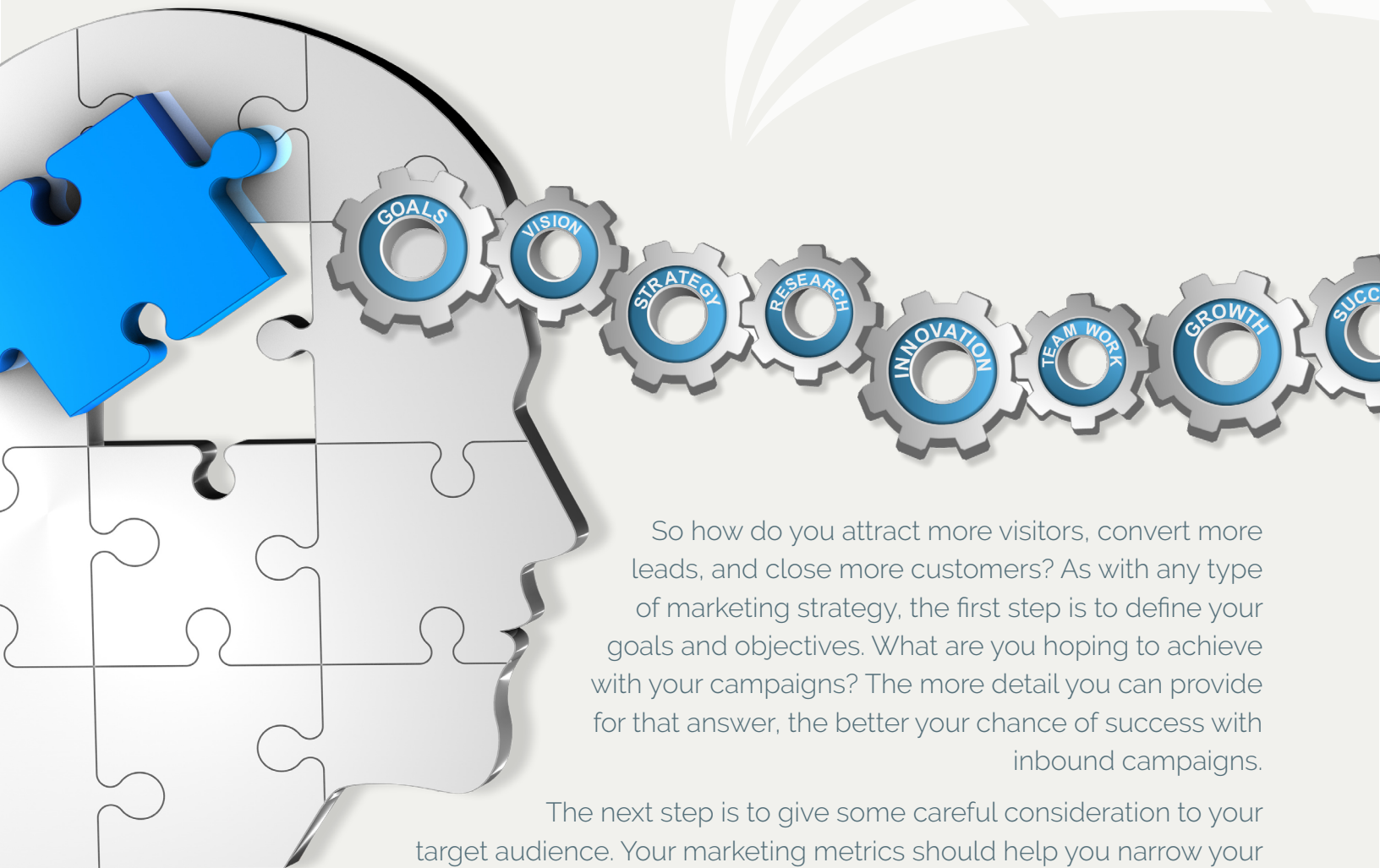
Want to attract, convert, close, and delight your audience? Inbound marketing incorporates the following themes to help brands accomplish lead generation and customer conversion goals:

- Content creation and distribution
- Lifecycle marketing
- Personalization of your marketing message
- A multi-channel approach
- Marketing automation and integration

Inbound 281's The 3 E's Of Effective Inbound Marketing notes that inbound marketing boils down to three essential points. You must:

- Engage your prospects with content that inspires an emotional response.
- Educate your audience with accurate, actionable information.
- Enrich your customers' lives by providing a steady stream of valuable content over the entire customer lifecycle.

Tools, tactics & strategies needed for success



So how do you attract more visitors, convert more leads, and close more customers? As with any type of marketing strategy, the first step is to define your goals and objectives. What are you hoping to achieve with your campaigns? The more detail you can provide for that answer, the better your chance of success with inbound campaigns.

The next step is to give some careful consideration to your target audience. Your marketing metrics should help you narrow your focus to your core audience. Creating a mental (and maybe even physical) image of your ideal customer will help you craft one or more buyer personas.

You can learn all about buyer personas and how to use them effectively in the Inbound 281 article ["Buyer Personas: What Are They and Why Does Your Business Need Them?"](#)



Once you've clearly identified your target audience, it's time to focus on mastering the following tools, tactics, and strategies to help deliver effective inbound marketing campaigns:

A responsive, growth-driven website design:

A foundational tool of your marketing strategy is your website. After all, your website is often the first place of interaction with your leads. For the modern buyer's journey, a responsive website (one that looks as great on a mobile device as it does on a desktop) is non-negotiable.

Growth-driven design allows you to tweak your website at regular intervals in response to customer behaviors. This means that a website using growth-driven design provides a consistently more visitor-centric user experience, which in turn leads to more conversions.



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A stellar content strategy

HubSpot's "[How Content Marketing Impacts Your Bottom Line](#)" states:

“For any brand to be successful, it needs to find an established voice. Content marketing is a great way to help your brand distinguish its voice in a highly competitive market, especially with on-site content like a blog. Keep in mind that both visitors and search engines expect content that adds value, so if you deliver, you can expect returning visitors to increase and search engines to index your pages higher -- both huge in terms of driving your bottom line.”

Social media marketing tools

Effective social media marketing is integral to your success as a B2B inbound marketer. HubSpot's "[How to Design an Inbound Campaign that Converts Leads](#)" gives this advice:

“When trying to attract strangers, it is important to be on the platforms where they are spending their time. So invest time into understanding what platforms your leads are using to connect with friends, family and work colleagues, then make sure you are present on these networks ... Make sure that when you are engaging on social networks, you are posting a variety of different content. Use pictures, videos, blog posts, infographics, slideshares, articles, and links to websites to interact with followers. This variety of content will do a great job of keeping your audience engaged, as they will never know what is coming next.”

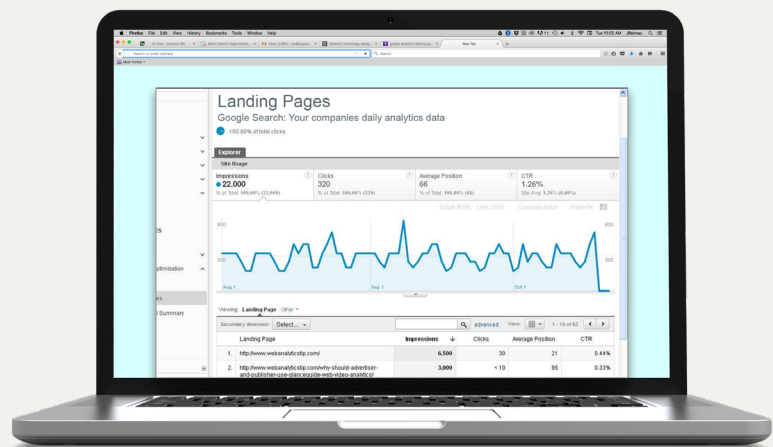
If you are unsure about where to start with social media marketing, Inbound 281's "[Which Social Media Outlets Should I Use for My Marketing?!](#)" discusses four major social media platforms and how they can be used for inbound marketing purposes.

High-conversion landing pages:

In many cases, a lead is won or lost on your landing pages. Ensure that your landing pages are the conversion machines they need to be by following these steps outlined in Inbound 281's

"4 Ways to Transform Your Landing Pages for More Impact:"

- Add a larger-than-life image.
- Start with video.
- Pare down and simplify your information and CTA.
- Provide more information if your message and audience warrants it.

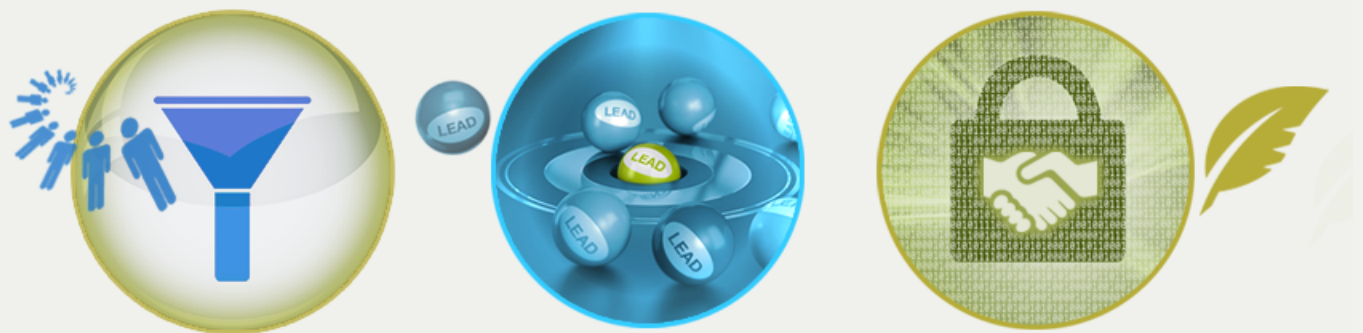


In addition to these foundational pieces in your inbound marketing arsenal, there are some other tools that can help you get a handle on inbound. For instance, HubSpot's platform helps you plan campaigns, measure the results, and streamline your processes. Likewise, Google Analytics gives you accurate, up-to-date information about how your campaigns are working so that you can make adjustments and refinements as needed. And utilizing the social media management dashboard Hootsuite helps you to more effectively consolidate and oversee your social media efforts.

There is an extensive list of tools, tactics, and strategies that can help you get the most from your website's design and content, your landing pages, and your social media marketing efforts. Knowing what to use and when to use it can be confusing at first, so working with an agency that specializes in inbound marketing is a smart start.



Lead nurturing with inbound



As you begin to see more leads generated from your inbound marketing methods, it will become increasingly important that you develop lead nurturing strategies to move your prospective customers easily through the sales funnel toward conversion.

Lead nurturing is a progressive process. It involves providing relevant content at each stage of the customer journey. For instance, in the beginning stages of the customer journey, lead nurturing involves heightening customer awareness by providing product overviews, presenting potential solutions to customer pain points, and directing new leads toward the consideration phase.



During the consideration phase, product comparisons, how-to-videos, and similar content can help leads narrow down their field of choices and separate you from the competition.

At each stage of the customer journey, lead nurturing becomes more and more targeted. The goal of lead nurturing is not to re-invent the wheel with each customer interaction, but to build a relationship through the conversion process and beyond.

Marketing and sales integration

A strong inbound marketing strategy involves aligning the objectives and workflows of marketing and sales in a more customer-centric model. Companies with a clearly-defined service level agreement between marketing and sales are often more productive than their misaligned counterparts.



Forbes' "Overcoming the Marketing-Sales Turf War:
Six Strategies to Integration" counsels:

"When trying to attract strangers, it is important to be on the platforms where they are spending their time. So invest time into understanding what platforms your leads are using to connect with friends, family and work colleagues, then make sure you are present on these networks ... Make sure that when you are engaging on social networks, you are posting a variety of different content. Use pictures, videos, blog posts, infographics, slideshares, articles, and links to websites to interact with followers. This variety of content will do a great job of keeping your audience engaged, as they will never know what is coming next."



Because each part of an inbound marketing campaign is measurable, defining the typical steps in the buyer's journey is possible. Armed with this information, you can assign marketing and sales responsibilities based on the specific behaviors of your customers at every interval, ensuring that leads handed off to sales are qualified through proper lead scoring.

In turn, sales metrics can inform future marketing campaigns, thus creating a united focus on customer-centric marketing between the two departments.



The value of marketing automation

The multi-channel approach inherent in inbound marketing makes it the perfect marketing form to benefit from automation. Inbound 281's "[5 Benefits of Marketing Automation for Your Business](#)" lists several advantages provided by marketing automation, including:

- Improved workflows
- Better lead scoring capability
- Quicker response time and better personalization of your marketing message
- Better lead nurturing
- Improved measurement and monitoring



Some of the tasks generally associated with marketing automation include: contact management, lead scoring, A/B testing, email marketing, performance measurement and reporting. Typically speaking, automating some or all of these tasks improves the ROI for your inbound efforts.

Mass media integration

Most B2B marketers find that their great marketing campaigns involve integrating both inbound methodologies and more traditional marketing strategies. Integrated marketing delivers a consistent, seamless, multi-dimensional brand experience

Integrated marketing has more impact than either traditional or inbound methods alone. The goal of mass media integration is to deliver your brand message consistently via any marketing platform used, whether it is your website, social media messaging, television spots, or printed media. Delivering this immersive experience to your customers strengthens your brand message and drives conversions.



How to measure success with inbound

One of the core principles of inbound marketing is that constant measurement and analysis of marketing data informs future strategy. While there are a myriad of key performance indicators (KPI) that can be measure, here are some of the more important ones to review:



Leads gained: Measuring inbound marketing success begins with finding out how many leads are generated by different campaigns. One key metric here is click through rates. The CTR is the measure of how many people in your audience clicked on your links in proportion to the number of total recipients of that campaign. This helps you see which channel and which campaigns are generating the most interest with your target audience.

Lead conversion rate: This metric tells you how many of your leads are following through after clicking on your links and actually performing the set of actions you want them to. Your conversion rate is your total conversions divided by your total leads.



Customers gained: Of course, you want your audience to do more than simply click on your links and fill out a form. Another KPI that must be measured is how many of the leads in your sales funnel actually become customers.

Revenue gained: This is the marketing metric that is most important to your CFO. The success of your campaigns must be measured in terms of actual revenue generated.

Cost of leads generated: Your cost per lead is the amount you spend to gain new prospects. Cost per lead is measured by dividing the total cost of generating leads by the total leads you acquire.

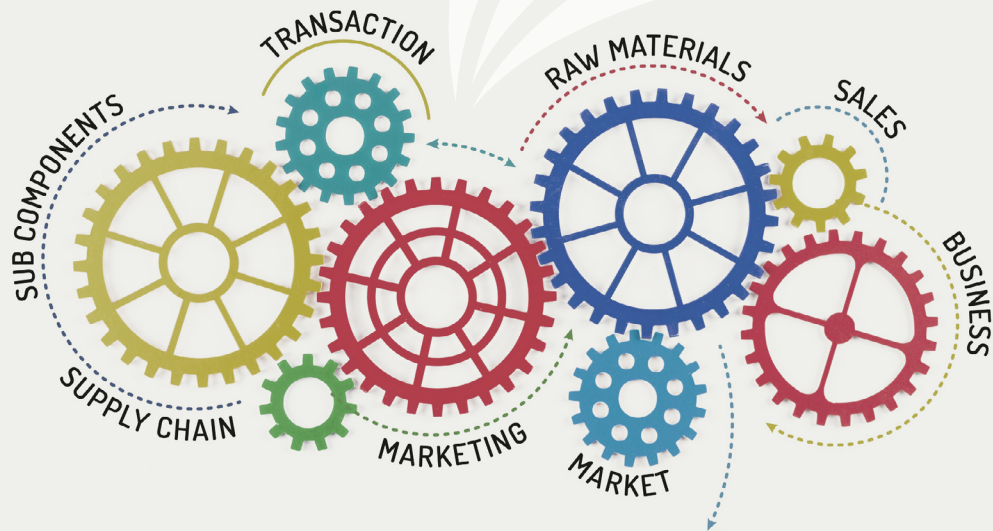
Response time: Also known as time to customer conversion, this metric lets you know how quickly your campaigns are doing their magic. In other words, it allows you to see how fast a particular consumer segment will respond and take action towards conversion for a particular lead generation campaign. This metric helps you to identify high-performing campaigns and make adjustments where needed.



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKET



Finding the solution that fits



As this guide has illustrated, inbound marketing is a multi-layered marketing approach. Marketing across multiple digital channels, coordinating those digital efforts with mass media integration, and using marketing automation to facilitate the process can be a difficult paradigm shift for B2B marketers who are comfortable with more traditional marketing approaches.

However, inbound marketing plans aren't one-size-fits-all. A successful plan requires careful selection and close analysis of diverse inbound tactics. Does your brand have a trove of content that supports each stage of the buyer's process? If not you may need to start with a strategy to create more focused content.

Once you've got the content, you will want to plan how you will support it with social media, email marketing, automation and even pay-per-click advertising. And all along the way, you'll want to make sure you have the appropriate measurement tools in place.

Hiring a digital marketing agency is one option that can help you identify the solutions and strategies that will best help your business thrive. Agencies have the knowledge – as well as team members with specific areas of expertise – to most effectively manage all the moving parts of an inbound marketing campaign. With a knowledgeable agency partner, your marketing can start driving conversions and reaping a positive ROI sooner than you expect.



About Inbound 281

WHO WE ARE

We are a digital marketing agency dedicated to helping our clients navigate the digital landscape, connect more meaningfully to their customers, and inspire their audience with purposeful content. We do this by leveraging inbound marketing and web design strategies for business, corporate, and enterprise marketers.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to use our inbound approach to develop leading-edge digital marketing plans, perceptive strategies, and valuable solutions to help you engage your customers with more two-way conversations and personal interactions to support revenue generation.

READY FOR A CONVERSATION?

If you are interested in a comprehensive plan that combines website design, email marketing, social media marketing, content development, and automation – or if you'd just like to learn more about how an inbound marketing plan can complement your established branding and communications strategies to meet your organization's unique needs, reach out and have a conversation with us.

TALK TO US



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