

How to create & optimize an effective **CTA**



AN INTRODUCTION TO CLOSED-LOOP MARKETING

Presented by Mark Parent

“Effective marketers should be able to tie every single lead, customer and dollar back to the marketing initiative that created them. This is how marketers can prove their worth, and understand how to more efficiently reach their audience.”

– [Mark Parent](#)

Mark Parent is an inbound marketer and President of Inbound 281 Inc., a best-in-class Metro-Detroit marketing firm delivering marketing technology solutions that increase marketing efficiency and convert prospects into revenue.

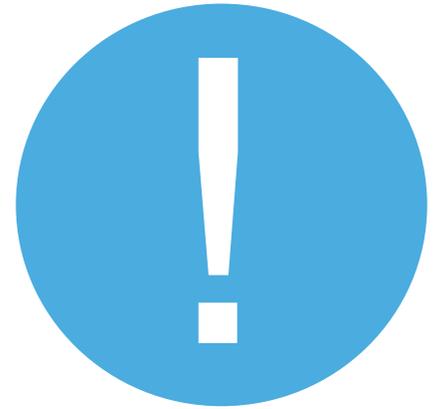
Whether it's strategic planning, marketing R&D, content development (such as this eBook) or producing and planning live events, Parent is deeply committed to providing the strategies and technologies his customers need to solve their business problems and deliver the predictable and repeatable ROI they crave.



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“Learn to survive in the attention economy.”

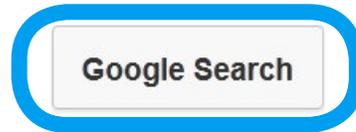


Has it happened to you to go online with the intention of reading a news article and, 30 minutes later, to find yourself watching YouTube videos or looking up an obscure Italian town on Wikipedia? Alright, maybe this wasn't the exact same trajectory of your actions, but you surely know this serendipity I'm referring to.

The world of online content has amplified the human inclination to shift our attention to new and unanticipated directions. One click is all it takes to jump from one topic to another, prompting your mind to roam in a completely different context. And guess what? Everyone--publishers and media outlets, businesses and non-profit organizations, entertainers and bloggers--is competing to get that click.

As a marketer or business owner, you need to learn to survive in this attention economy. Calls-to-action are the tools to make this happen. They have the power to grab people's attention and direct it to new topics. They are everywhere you go.

If you visit Google, you are told to “search.”



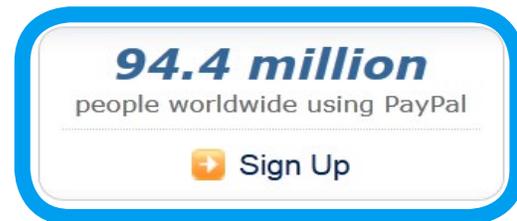
If you go to *The New York Times*' website, it will invite you to “become a digital subscriber.”

If you are new to Twitter, the social network will prompt you to “join today.”



If you land on Inbound 281's homepage, we'll ask you to “request or demo” or start your free trial.

PayPal, one of the world's most visited websites, will tell you that more than 94 million people are using it and that you also should “sign up.”



This ebook highlights the fundamentals of creating and optimizing calls-to-action to help you meet your marketing goals. After reading it, you will not only become a CTA expert, but also learn how to compete for people's most precious resource--their attention.



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WHAT IS A CALL-TO-ACTION AND WHY YOU NEED IT

“Why should I be building calls-to-action?”

A call-to-action (CTA) is an image or text that prompts visitors to take action, such as subscribe to a newsletter, view a webinar or request a product demo. CTAs should direct people to landing pages, where you can collect visitors' contact information in exchange for a valuable marketing offer. In that sense, an effective CTA results in more leads and conversions for your website.

WHAT: Hyperlinked text or button that advertises an offer and takes you to a landing page.

WHY: The goal of a call-to-action is to drive traffic to a landing page.



This path--from a click on a CTA to a landing page--illustrates the much desired process of lead generation. In order to increase visitor-to-lead conversion opportunities, you need to create a lot of calls-to-action, distribute them across your web presence and optimize them.

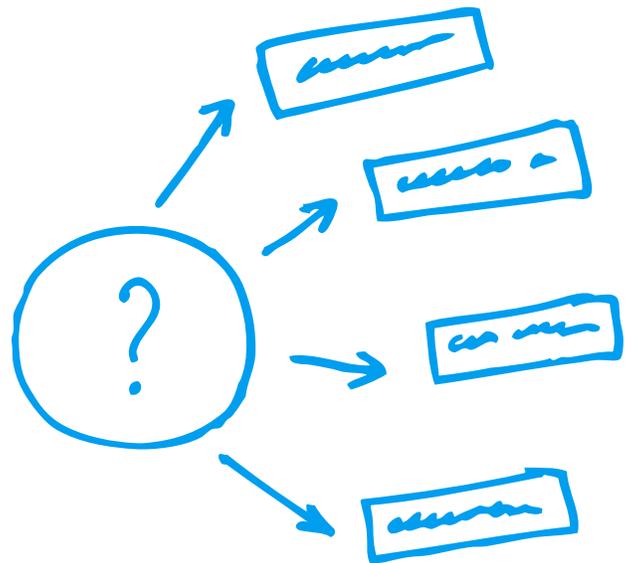
CHAPTER 1

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT CALLS-TO-ACTION

“ How do I decide what CTAs to create? ”

By now you have probably become a firm believer in the value of calls-to-action. They are definitely going to be important triggers for your success with internet marketing. But where do you start? Most importantly, how do you determine what CTAs to create?

You should maintain a mix of CTAs that spans across different stages of the sales cycle. The more CTAs you build, the more opportunities you create to convert visitors into leads. What is more, the sheer quantity of calls-to-action provides you with valuable data around their performance. Collect these insights and optimize your strategies for maximum lead generation. Let's start with the fundamentals!



Create CTAs for Well-Performing Offers

First, look at your analytics and find the offers that have traditionally performed well for your company. One good indicator of your offers' success is the landing page visitor-to-lead conversion rate. It tells you how many of the people who have seen the page decided that it's worth filling out the form to get access to the resources it provides. This metric illustrates both the appeal of your offer and the demand for it. If the historical conversion rate is high, then the chances are it will keep performing well in the future. So pick your top marketing offers and start creating CTAs based on them.

Create CTAs for High-Quality Offers

If you are a company that generates leads, you probably have some differentiation across your marketing offers. Some of them, like whitepapers and videos, are low-commitment, light-touch and highly compelling. Others, like product demonstrates and



sales consultations, require higher commitment and are less compelling. The latter, however, are more tightly related to the bottom of your sales funnel and thus considered more valuable in terms of qualifying prospects

and driving business results. You want to expose people to these types of offers in order to push them down the sales funnel. So pick a few high-quality offers and start creating CTAs based on them.

Create CTAs Based on Behavior

CTAs based on previous behavior are built by taking the information you know about your prospects and making educated guesses about what they want to see next. In this way, you engage them further with your assets and keep them on your website. Most importantly, such education helps to better qualify prospects and turn them into evangelists.

Let's take as an example our webinar offer "How to Make the Inc. 500 List." A visitor has just filled out our form to view this on-demand webinar. On the thank-you page, where we would place the video, we are also featuring a call-to-action, which is relevant to the topic of the webinar. Think about ways in which you can tweak the wording of your CTAs to fit in the context of the offer.

Content

1

Watch the Webinar Below:



2

Call-toAction

Get a Head Start for Future Inc 500 Lists

Sign up for HubSpot's [free 30-day trial](#) and build the success story that could land you on the Inc 500 List.



Create CTAs for Upcoming Campaigns

Another type of CTAs you want to start creating are those related to your upcoming campaigns, such as events and contests. For instance, if your annual conference is coming up in a few months, you should drive traffic to the respective registration page from your other assets (blog, social media, paid ads, etc). Here is one example of how you can use a range of platforms to promote the same event:



In blog posts

across website & in paid media 



social media

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO CREATE A CALL-TO-ACTION

“Could I create my own CTA?”

For the power that calls-to-action have, they are not that difficult to create. The format of CTAs can vary from simple hyperlinked text and screenshots with some text overlay to elegant banners and pop-up overlay. In this section of the ebook, we will take a look at a few different tools and what options they give you for the creation of calls-to-action.



- 1 Creating CTAs with Microsoft Word
- 2 Creating CTAs with PowerPoint
- 3 Creating CTAs with Premade Images
- 4 Outsourcing CTAs from Designers
- 5 Using Inbound 281's CTA Generator

1

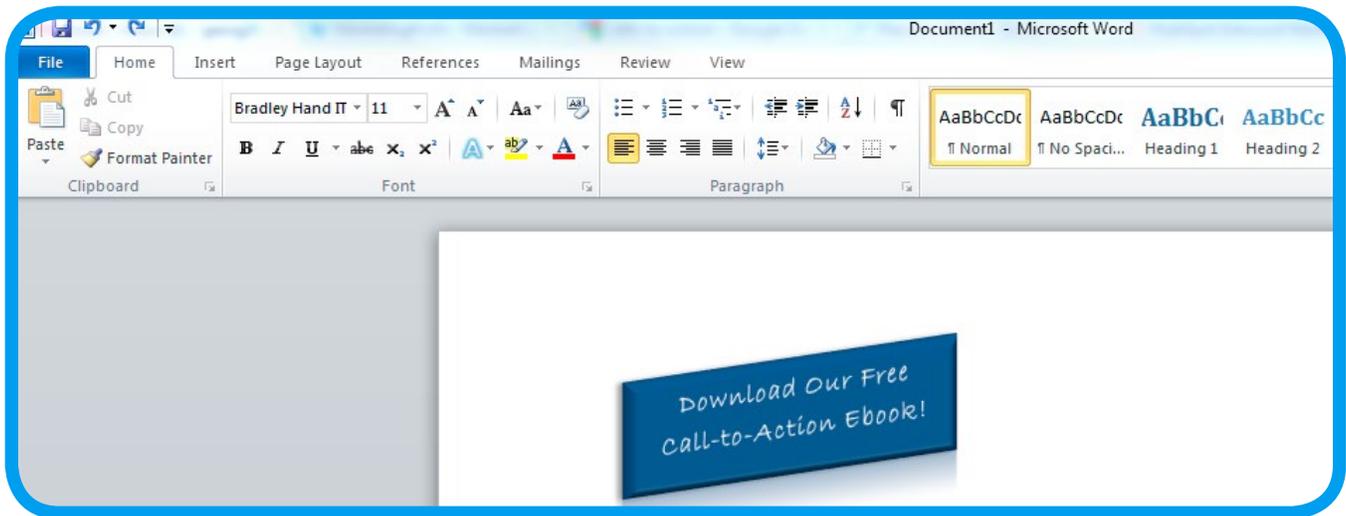
Creating CTAs with Microsoft

You can create simple calls-to-action using Microsoft Word or any other word processing program like Open Office or even Google Docs. You'll need just the basic functionalities of the program to create a 'button.' For our quick tutorial purposes, I will use Microsoft Word 2010 on Windows 7.

Step-by-step Tutorial

Open Microsoft Word and click on "Insert." A toolbox will open right underneath the top navigation and you can select a shape. Then move your cursor to the white space and draw the shape, dragging it up and down or to the left and right to achieve the desired shape size. Right-click on it and select the very last option called "Format Shape." Here you can decide what color and style to assign to your 'button.' You can pick a specific picture or texture fill or add custom color schemes. The more advanced features include adding a shadow, reflection, rotation and 3-D format. Once you are happy with the 'button' you have created, you can add some text within it.

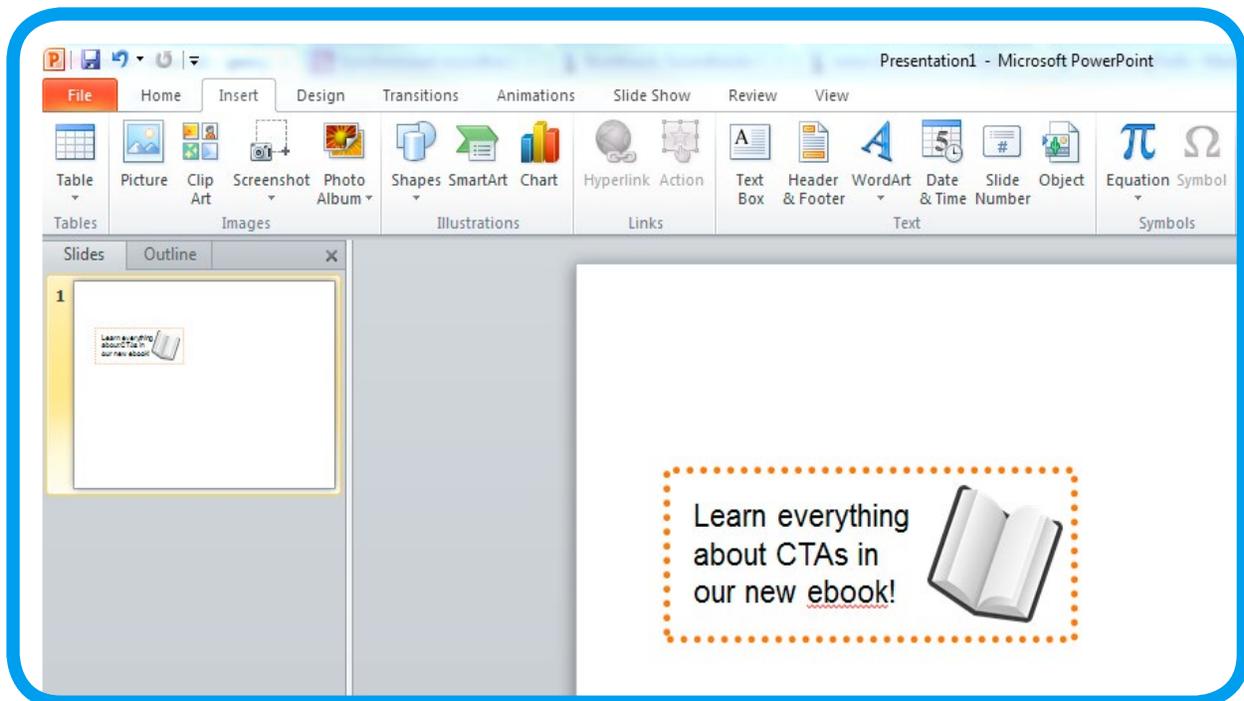
Click within the shape and start typing. You can then highlight the text you have entered and change its font, size and color. Once you are ready to use the 'button' you've created, you can take a screenshot of it and save it as a .jpeg or .png file.



2

Creating CTAs with PowerPoint

Open PowerPoint, click on “Insert” and pick your desired shape. Right-click on the shape, select “Format Shape” and change its properties as you wish. Once you are happy with the shape, go to “Insert” again and pick “Text Box,” placing it somewhere within your shape. Then change the formatting of the text (font, color, size, etc) and consider adding an external image. For instance, the image of a book will be appropriate if you creating a CTA for a whitepaper.



Want to create some really elegant calls-to-action? If you have designer skills (or someone on your team who is a designer), you should try the more advanced image editing programs. Adobe is definitely the expert in this area with its programs Photoshop, Indesign and Illustrator. There are also some other programs such as Aviary that can do image editing (and that you can use at no cost).

3 Creating CTAs with Premade

There are also a bunch of websites that specialize in providing premade buttons. One such resource is designmoo, which offers well-designed calls-to-action under the “button” tag. You can also purchase icons from iStockphoto, a great resource for stock photography and graphics. Just enter the desired keyword and browse through the available images.

While these sites are not necessarily offering calls-to-actions that are created based on optimization best practices, they look professional and can be a good start or source of ideas for your CTA library.



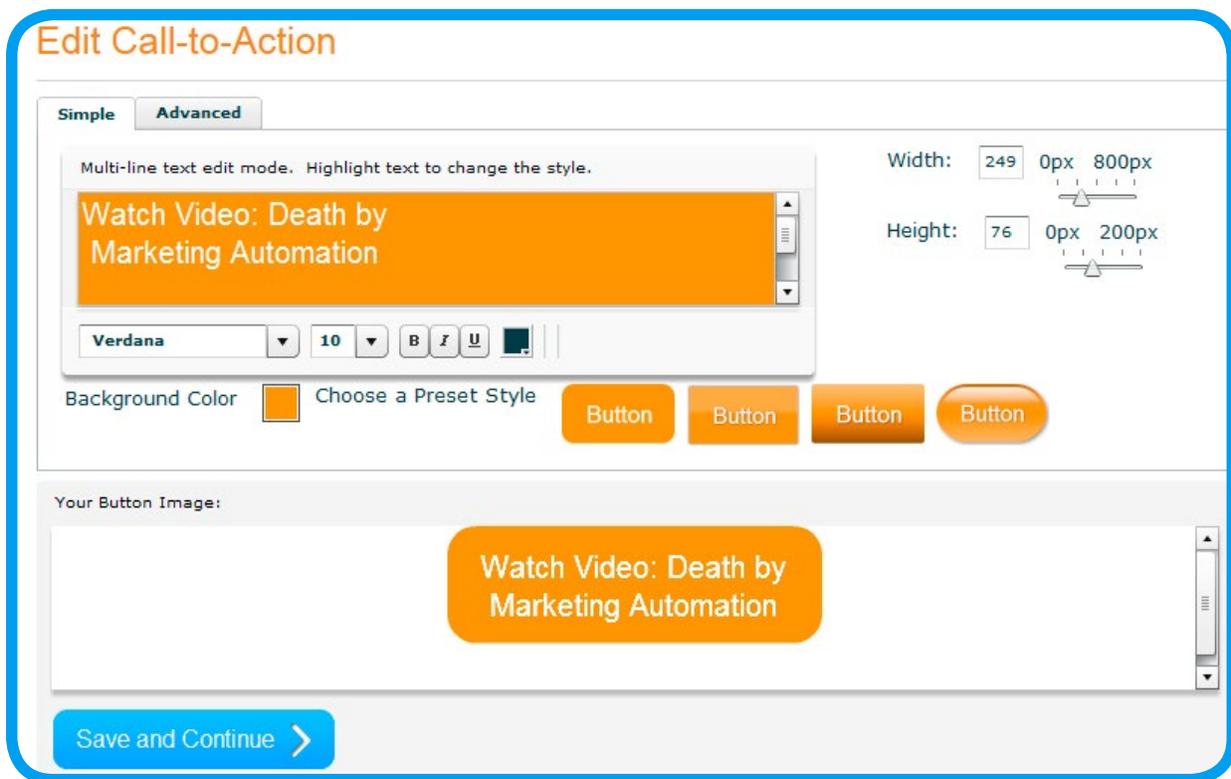
4 Outsourcing CTAs from designers

You can also outsource the creation of your call-to-action. This is a good choice if you don't have the time to customize them yourself or don't have a designer on your team to work on this project. There are a lot of agencies and freelance designers who can do that work for you. For instance, Inbound 281 partners with a bunch of call-to-action providers and you can find a list of them here.

5 Using the CTA Generator

Marketers should be able to quickly create a call-to-action, insert it on the right pages and track its performance. We at Inbound 281 definitely saw the demand for a simple web tool that makes it easy to design buttons and

instantly place them on a page. That is why we built the Call to Action Button Generator, a widget available for free to Inbound 281 customers. Sign up for a free 30-day trial to see how the tool works!



CHAPTER 3

WHERE TO PLACE CALLS-TO-ACTION

“How do I decide where my CTAs belong?”

One of the most critical elements of leveraging the power of calls-to-action is to optimize their placement. Where do you get started? There are so many web pages out there. How do you decide which call-to-action belongs where? In this section we will cover some essential places that you need to be always thinking about:



1 Your Website

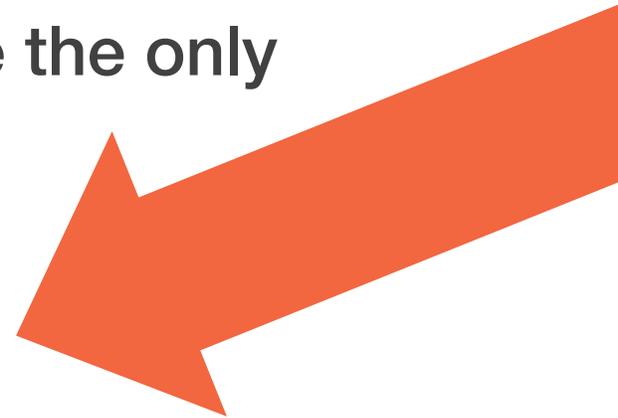
Calls-to-action should be spread across your web pages. Your homepage, which people usually perceive as a very neutral space, should also have a call-to-action. As your most frequently

visited page, your homepage presents a huge opportunity to drive traffic to a specific campaign. In fact, some say your homepage should have at least three or more calls-to-action that will target different personas or types of visitors.

The only place you shouldn't be inserting calls-to-action are your landing pages. On a landing page, people should be able to find out more about your specific offer and convert. In fact, it is a best practice to remove from your landing page distracting elements, such as top and side navigation, information about other resources and, certainly, calls-to-action. They will confuse and distract visitors from completing the form.



Landing pages are the only place where CTAs shouldn't live.



For all other website pages, try to align your CTA with the content of the page as well as the stage of the sales cycle the visitor is likely in if they're visiting that page. So if a visitor is on one of your product pages, they're likely further along in the sales process to be interested in a free product demonstration than if they are visiting your *About Us* page.

Your Product/Service pages, *About Us* page and *Contact Us* page all need to include calls-to-action or the visitor will be deciding on their own what to do next. You need to help them decide what to do next. In fact, every page on your site should help visitors understand what they should do next; therefore include at least one call to action on every page.

② Within Content

Just because someone already converted into a lead by downloading your ebook or registering for your webinar, doesn't mean you can't continue to nurture them with other related content and leveraging more middle-of-the-funnel offers like a free trial or a consultation. Add CTAs for these types of offers within the body and at the end of your ebooks and webinars, too.



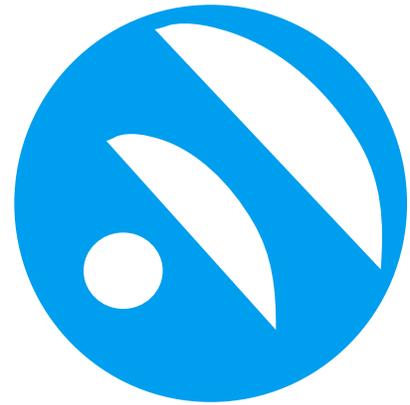
Do you speak at industry conferences and events?

③ In Presentations

Do you speak at industry conferences and events? Depending on the event's particular guidelines, you may be able to include a CTA for an offer directly within your presentation. Especially with the rapid adoption of QR codes, you can easily refer people to a specific page and give them further information about your company. Don't forget to archive your presentation slides to your website or a platform like SlideShare.com to get more muscle out of your content.

4 Your Blog

“Your blog is a great platform for CTA placement.”



Make sure to include CTAs both in the sidebar of your blog as well as on every individual article you publish. In addition to image/button CTAs, you can also include text CTAs within the body of your blog content. At the beginning, middle or end of every blog article, you need to place some sort of call-to-action that will encourage people to either:

- 1 Download some content
- 2 Follow the business on social media
- 3 Subscribe to the blog
- 4 Join your newsletter or blog digest email

When designing your CTAs, make sure it resonates with the content you have introduced in the blog post. For instance, if you write about how Google Instant affects SEO, the call-to-action at the end of the post can be related to search engine optimization.

5 Email Marketing

Every email you send should include a call-to-action. In fact, the subject line itself should serve as a call-to-action. Once recipients open your email, they should see a link in the first one to two sentences of the message, at least one link in the middle and one link at the end. These links can go to the exact same page, thus reinforcing the consistency of your language. In this way, if recipients take action on any link, they have essentially clicked on the call-to-action.

6 In Videos

Include a call-to-action within all videos you produce. It's important to make your CTA simple and include a shortened, easy-to-remember URL. In this way, if someone embedded your video on their website or blog and others viewed it outside the context of YouTube, your CTA would remain intact and still make sense.



In addition, include a CTA in your video's description when you upload it to your YouTube channel or other video sharing site.

7 In Paid Media

Paid media encompasses a range of formats, including banner ads, GroupOn emails and even press releases. An example of that would be Google AdWords: you pay for ads that show up next to specific search results. Every paid search ad should include a call-to-action that is consistent with the landing page the visitor will go to after they click on the paid ad. In this sense optimizing the language and design of your paid ads is the same as crafting CTAs.

8 In Email Signatures

Every little effort helps. Include a CTA in your personal email signature and encourage other employees, especially members of your sales and marketing teams, to do the same. For example, some email signature of Inbound 281 employees encourage people to subscribe to our award-winning blog, check out our customer case studies or grade their website using Website Grader.

9 On Facebook

Facebook offers several opportunities to get your CTA out there: via a custom business page tab, through Facebook Ads and Sponsored Stories, and simply through wall posts on your page. You can also publish Facebook photos that introduce CTAs. For example, you can create an album that tells a compelling story and also invites connections to take some action.





10 Twitter

Consider customizing your Twitter background to include a simple CTA. While Twitter backgrounds aren't clickable, you can place a short URL in your background design. For instance, Inbound 281's Twitter background includes social media links and encourages people to follow us on our other assets, including Facebook and LinkedIn.

Furthermore, you can use your Twitter bio and link as CTA real estate. Most importantly though, leverage your tweets as individual CTAs for your offers. Each of your tweets should include a link. In fact, in his Science of Social Media research, Dan Zarrella discovered that verbs are the part of speech that generate the most shares. Twitter updates that include verbs have a 2% higher shareability than the average tweet.

11 LinkedIn

When giving industry-specific advice on LinkedIn Answers include text CTAs for downloadable content like webinars and ebooks when applicable. You can also go into the DirectAd function and create an ad for your offer. Lastly, don't underestimate the power of LinkedIn Groups- these are engaged communities of people looking to have discussions with fellow industry thought leaders. Make announcements in these discussions about your upcoming events or newly published resources.

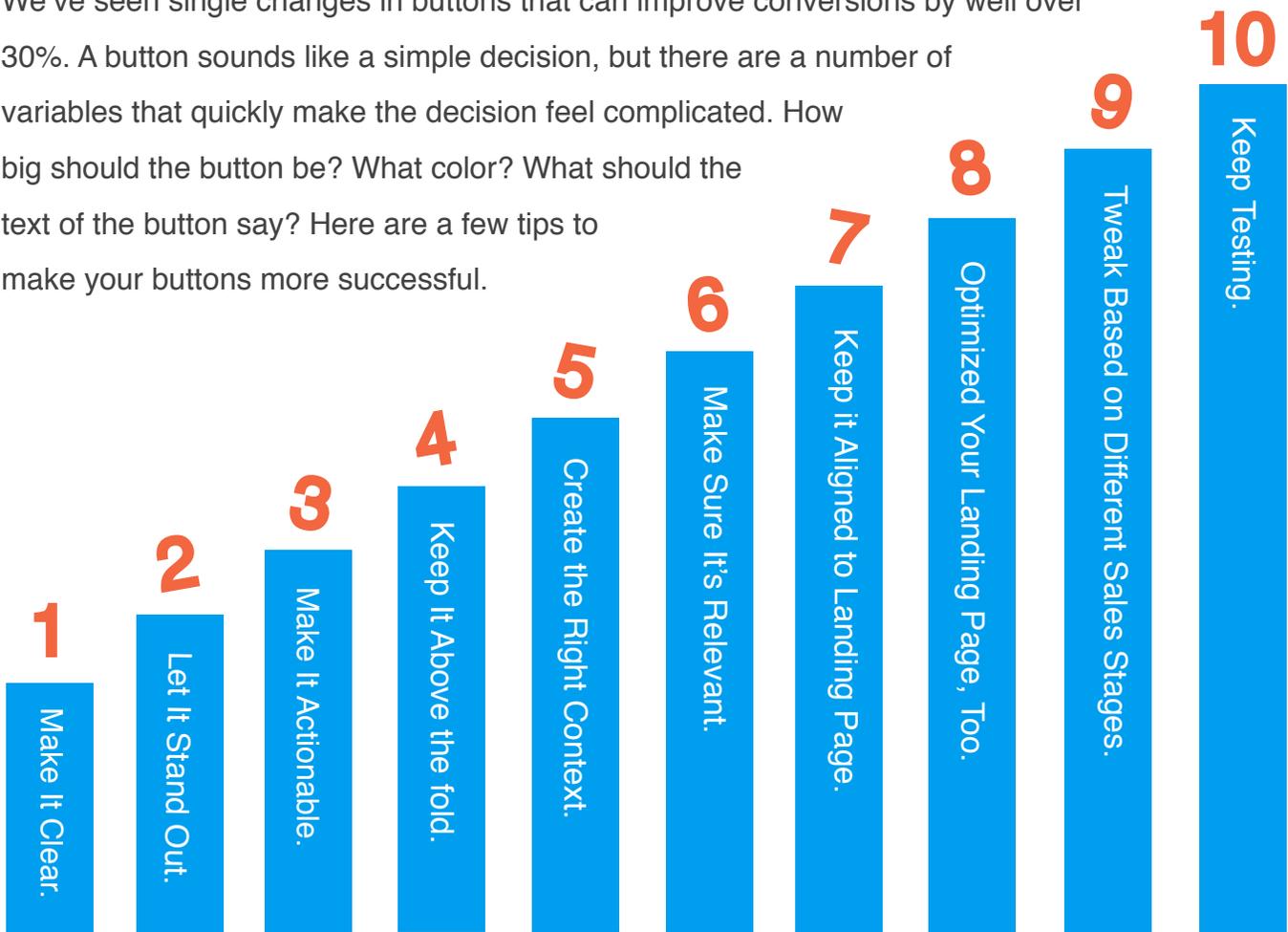


CHAPTER 4

HOW TO OPTIMIZE A CALL-TO-ACTION

“How do I make my CTAs effective?”

In this section we seek to help you create compelling and relevant calls to action. We've seen single changes in buttons that can improve conversions by well over 30%. A button sounds like a simple decision, but there are a number of variables that quickly make the decision feel complicated. How big should the button be? What color? What should the text of the button say? Here are a few tips to make your buttons more successful.



1 Make It Clear What the Offer Is

Your CTA should clearly describe what the offer is. If you're giving away a whitepaper about getting more Twitter followers, you may want to say something like "Download the Free Whitepaper on How to Get More Twitter Followers." It's a best practice to make your call-to-action specific, revealing some details that will encourage visitors to take action.



2 Make It Stand Out

If your CTA blends in with the rest of your page, you won't get much traffic to your landing page. Make it contrast with your website's color scheme so that it stands out on the page. Color matters. Strong, contrasting, colors generally perform better than colors that blend in with the theme of your landing page.

Take this example from Carelogger, who increased their conversions by 34% with a red button instead of a green one. A big button gets noticed. It doesn't have to be huge, but if your button is too small, it can be ignored. We've found that a good button size is around 225px wide and 45px high.

3 Make It Action-Oriented

Begin with an action verb like “download” or “register” that makes it very clear what action visitors will be taking on the subsequent landing page. Your button text should tell people what to expect.

Firefox improved their conversions by 3.6% (over 500 more downloads per test) when they changed their button text from “Try Firefox 3” to “Download Now – Free.” “Download Now,” “Get Started Today,” and “Start Your Free Trial Now” are all good examples of strong calls-to-action. Try out different verbs and see which one resonates with your audience best.

4 Keep It Above the Fold

Make sure your website visitors can see your CTA without having to scroll down the page, another best practice to increase click-through rates. When deciding where to put your button, think about the flow of your page. Does it follow the path of your eye? Does it fit the average browser size? Browsersize from Google Labs is a great tool to find out what portion of your page most visitors can see without scrolling.

5

Craft the CTA Based on Context

The CTA should match the information on the page where it's located. By tweaking your call-to-action to reflect the messaging of its context, you increase the click-through chances of that CTA. For instance, the verbiage of a CTA on your *About Us* page will be different from the verbiage of a CTA located in one of your product pages.

6

Place on the Most Relevant Blog

Place the most relevant CTAs on each of your blog posts. For example, Inbound 281 has created blog posts about Facebook and SEO. On the Facebook blog posts, you'll see a CTA advertising a Facebook whitepaper. On the SEO blog posts, you'll see a CTA advertising a SEO whitepaper.

7 Create Alignment between CTAs and Landing Pages

Testing has proven that the more consistent you can keep your calls-to-action and landing pages, the higher your conversion rate will be. If the language you use on that page is too different from the CTA, it might confuse visitors and result in their leaving the page. The connection between these two lead conversion tools should be seamless.



8 Optimize Your Landing Page, Too

A call-to-action drives traffic to a landing page--so in order to successfully convert this traffic into leads, you'll need to optimize your landing pages. You can do that by experimenting with different page layout, images and form length. There is a range of opportunities for optimizing the conversion rate of your landing pages, which could affect how your calls-to-action perform.

9 Include CTAs for Different Stages of the Buying Cycle

Different offers appeal to different segments of the traffic visiting your site. A whitepaper might appeal to an early sales cycle visitor while a free consultation might appeal to a later sales cycle visitor. In order to capture the maximum amount of traffic hitting your site, you need to cast a wide net. We recommend having at least three CTAs on your homepage: one for early, one for mid, and one for late sales cycle visitors.

10 Keep Testing

You should implement the above-mentioned best practices as you can, but you must test your CTAs to see what will resonate with your audience. Test different messaging, colors, and placement on your pages, and see if you can get more page views on your landing pages. Here we revealed some standard best practices, but it's up to you to see what works best for your business.



Here we revealed some standard best practices. But it's up to you to see what works best for your business.

“How do I write a compelling CTA?”

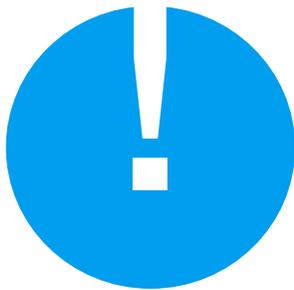
Clarity is the most critical quality of calls-to-action. Make sure your CTAs convey clear messages that are specific and action-oriented. In this section we will review some best practices for crafting your calls-to-action across different places and stages of your sales cycle.

1 Convey Value

Your CTA should answer the question “What in it for me?” Think about the top two or three benefits of your offer and try to list them in order of priority. Then pick the most critical one and shorten it to just a few words. In that way you will highlight the key point of engagement and ensure there is alignment between your ad and the offer.



Such an exercise could result in calls-to-actions along the lines of “Optimize Your CTAs in 10 Minutes/Day” or “Find Out the 13 Secrets to CTA Optimization.” As Copyblogger’s founder Brian Clark advises, “ Never allow readers to question why they are bothering to pay attention.”



Never allow readers to question why they are bothering to pay attention. - Brian Clark, Copyblogger



Create Urgency

Creating urgency is another quality calls-to-action need to adopt. In order to effectively create urgency, you need to answer the questions, “Why should I do this today?” You can create urgency in a few different ways. For instance, you can emphasize seasonality, special discounts or even use adverbs like “now” and “today.” One example of such a call-to-action would be “Join Our Newsletter Today for Access to All Marketing Goodness.”



Make It Personal

Personalization of calls-to-action is tricky, but not impossible. If you know where the visitor currently is and what they are reading, you’re more or less familiar with their preferences and needs. For example, if they are on your *About Us* page, they are looking to find out more information about your company. So the CTA here could point visitors to your *Careers* page with a nice personal touch like “Like our culture? Become part of it.”

4 Testimonials

Testimonials are really effective as calls-to-action because they offer a third-party endorsement and motivate visitors to take the next step and click through to your landing page. A customer quote can often capture all the information a prospective customer needs to know. That is why, currently on Inbound 281's home page we feature testimonials of the success our customers have seen using our software. While testimonials are most frequently used for products with longer sales cycles (like those of B2B companies), B2C companies and nonprofits can also experiment with this tactic.

5 Include Numbers

Another best practice around writing calls-to-action is to include numbers. "When people are on the web, they are looking for specificity," Inbound 281's Social Media Scientist Dan Zarrella said. In this context, data points help you cut through the clutter of vague content online and convey a strong message. If the goal of your call-to-action is to grow your email database, you can invite people to subscribe by informing them of the number of recipients you currently have. If you are promoting an ebook or a whitepaper, you might want to mention its length (number of pages). You can take that concept and start including data around your customer base, industry reports and more. Statistics convey credibility and present you as an industry expert.

6 Turn It into a Bonus

Often times, the goal of your call-to-action is to keep the visitors engaged on your website, jumping from one page to the next. You could do that if you introduce your CTAs as bonus offers or opportunities to get more out of something. For example, if a visitor just downloaded your newsletter, you can send them an email with a call-to-action that is introduced as a special bonus based on your visitor's activity. An example of that would be something along the lines of, "Thanks for downloading our ebook about optimizing calls-to-action. You now have access to our additional resources on website optimization."



7 Make It Newsworthy

If you are feeling especially creative with your calls-to-action, try to piggyback on newsworthy content. Is there something in the news that could pertain to your industry or offers? You could also put a fun or controversial spin on it. Start by setting up Google Alerts for some industry keywords related to your business. Each morning, visit Google News and search for news stories that are related to your expertise.

“Be bold and firm when you present your offer.”

- Brian Clark, Copyblogger

8 Be Confident in Your Language

Be confident when you promise your visitors to help them with their challenges. As Clark advises, “Be bold and firm when you present your offer, and relieve the reader’s risk of acceptance by standing behind what you say.” An example of that topic would be a call-to-action along the lines of “Everything You Need to Know about Calls-to-Action” or “The Only Call-to-Action Guide You Need.”

9 Ask Questions

Another tactic in crafting your calls-to-action is to use a compelling question, followed by a short response. That's a copywriting tip across different marketing aspects--emails, blog posts and landing pages. Questions serve to predict what the visitor might be interested in and pique their interest even more. An example of this tactic would be the call-to-action Inbound 281 used in a slideshow

DO YOU HATE
ADVERTISING, TOO?

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT:
WWW.HUBSPOT.COM/CHARTS

presentation called "10 Things I Hate About Advertising." The last slide introduces the CTA - "Do you have advertising too? Try something different: www.hubspot.com/charts"

10 Be Subtle

Smart and subtle language can also help you get a high click-through rate on your call-to-action. "People like to think that everything they do comes from some logical, un-manipulateable part of their own brain," Dan Zarrella explains. The point here, Dan adds, is that "you should make them want to do it in such a way that it feels like the idea was their own." So experiment with a language that is less commanding and more thought-provoking.



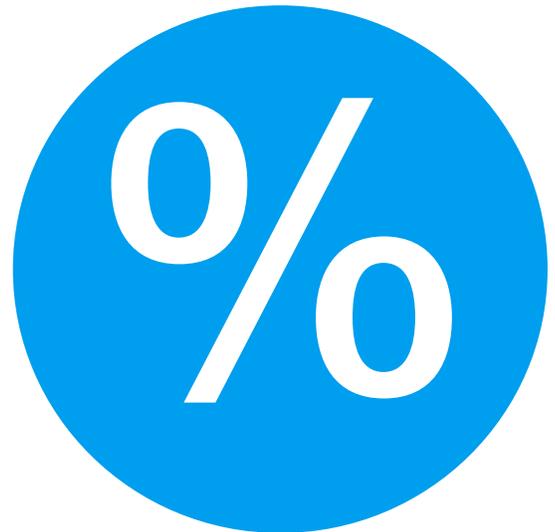
HOW TO MEASURE CALLS-TO-ACTION

“What are the key metrics to track?”

In order to optimize your calls-to-action, you need to monitor their performance and figure out what has to improve. That is why you need to identify some key metrics to track. In this section, we will explore the key success metrics:

1 Click-Through Rate

What matters most in monitoring the performance of your calls-to-action is their click-through rate. In other words, what percentage of the people who have seen the CTA, clicked on it. This is a great metric to track the effectiveness of calls-to-action that are spread across your website, placed in emails, used in social media updates and paid media.



2 Clicks to Submissions

Click-to-submission rate is the next call-to-action metric you should be paying attention to. It reveals the number of visitors who actually filled out your lead capture form. This insight is especially useful if you want to test the same CTA button with two different pages.



Call-to-Action A/B Test Group This group viewed on 5 pages.	Views	Views to Clicks	Clicks	Clicks to Submissions
	1512	4%	66	36%

Above is a screenshot from a call-to-action intelligence that gives us insights on CTA performance.

Different calls-to-action are going to perform in different ways. For instance, the CTAs within your emails will likely have higher visitor-to-lead conversion rate compared to the CTAs in your social media updates. Why is that? It can be due to a range of reasons. Emails provide more context around the offer and they go out to your existing community. Social media updates, on the other hand, provide less context around the offer and reach a broader audience that is not necessarily familiar with your brand.

3 Views-to-Submission Rate

Views-to-submissions is another metric that will provide you with some insights to optimize your calls-to-action. It tells you how many of the people who saw your CTA actually filled out the form on your landing page. In the example below, it is only one percent. So in order to improve that number, one might need to drive more targeted traffic to the page that features the call-to-action.



Create benchmarks for your CTA performance & beat these numbers.



Create benchmarks for the performance of your different CTAs and try to beat those numbers. If your average email click-through rate is 5%, try to improve it by writing more compelling copy, experimenting with different offers and making changes to your email template. Same type of tweaks apply to your other CTAs. For paid ads, tweak the language and redesign the actual “button.” For CTAs embedded in your blog posts, try to create a better alignment between the content and your call-to-action. The list goes on and on.

It's important to keep track of the performance of your calls-to-action and to not lose sight of how they relate to the bigger picture. At the very least, make sure you are always tracking click-through rates and click-to-submission conversions. These metrics will map your way to Internet marketing success.

CHAPTER 6

**WHO IS
DOING IT RIGHT
AND WHO IS
DOING IT WRONG**

Calls-to-Action That Don't Work

There are plenty of examples of bad calls-to-action. Just visit a few media outlets sponsored by ads and you will spot these CTAs all over the place. “A button that reads ‘Leave Your Emails for Updates’ is obsolete in the current business environment, where the focus is on providing value to a visitor at every step and gradually winning their trust,” writes Shreesha Ramdas on MarketingPros. “Unless visitors will get something in return, leaving their email addresses on a company website offers them no value and, hence, fails to make them act.” This is only one bad call-to-action practice you can encounter online. Let’s look at some more examples that will help you avoid common mistakes:

1 Contact Us

One of the oldest calls-to-action out there, *Contact Us* is stale and ineffective. Why would someone contact you? What is in it for them? You need to be specific and imply some type of value.



One way in which you can dramatically improve this CTA is by including more vibrant verbs. For instance you could transform it to “Receive Your Free Consultation.” In that way, your CTA becomes much more specific and value-oriented.

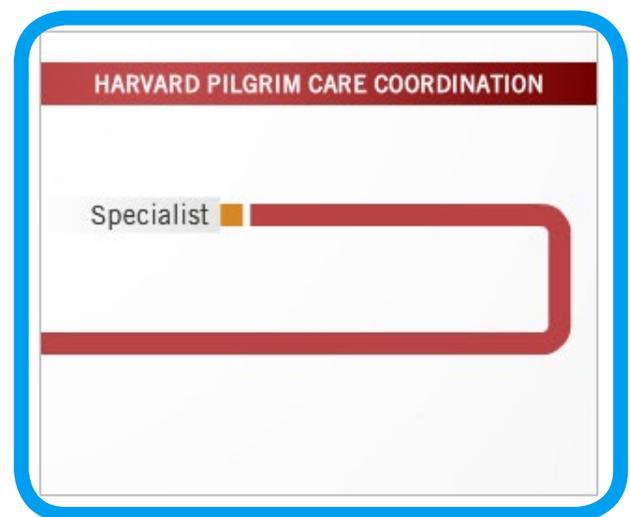
2 Click Here

“Click here” is another call-to-action we encounter almost every where we go online. It’s also another example of a CTA that doesn’t convey any value. In fact, some ESPs flag such wording as spammy and alert you that sending an email that contains this phrase might cause your message to get caught by spam filters.



3 Animated

Have you seen the calls-to-action that change every few seconds, flashing and jumping up and down your page? Aren’t those just horrific? Animated CTAs are busy and can look spammy. Sometimes, they don’t provide enough context around the offer because the words are moving. They can actually be so distracting that people would rather click away than clicking on them.



“The most common mistake around calls-to-action is that they don't take visitors to the right page.”



While here we highlighted some of the most frequently seen examples of bad calls-to-action, the list goes on and on. Since we cannot exhaust all of them in this ebook, let's just create a framework through which you can identify a bad call-to-action and learn to avoid it.

The most common mistake around calls-to-action is that they don't take visitors to the right page. They need to direct traffic to a landing page that, in turn, should convert visitors into leads. If that is not happening, your calls-to-action will never perform well.

The second most frequent mistake we have seen is that calls-to-action and landing pages aren't well aligned. If people clicked on your call-to-action, would they have expected to see what you showed them on the landing page? You shouldn't confuse the visitor because that will prompt them to leave your site immediately. Give them clear directions on what to do next and try not to overwhelm them with information.

Make sure that your calls-to-action and landing pages work well together because even if your click-through rate is skyrocketing, your conversions might still suffer.

Calls-to-Action That Work

Now that we have covered the characteristics of a bad CTA, let's take a look at what makes a good CTA. In the above sections, we already covered some of the key characteristics of a great call-to-action. Here is a quick recap of some of these qualities:

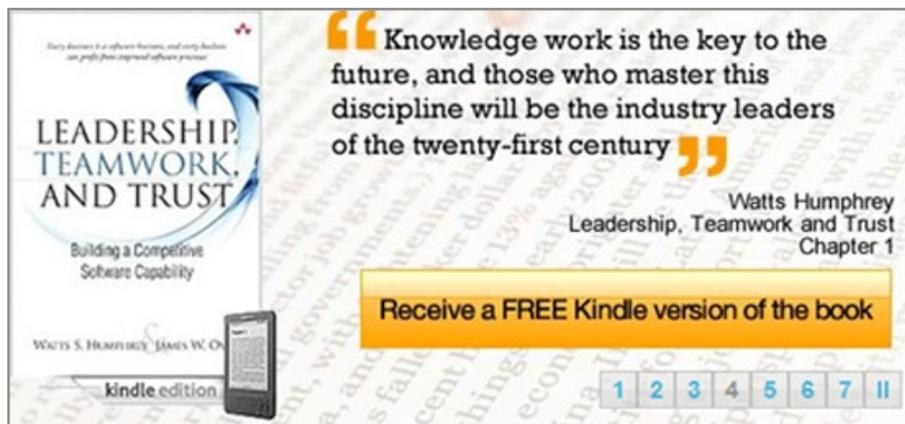
- 1 Make Your CTA Clear, Concise & Specific.
- 2 Create Urgency.
- 3 Place the CTA Above the Fold.
- 4 Make it Engaging & Action-Oriented.
- 5 Include a Relevant Image.
- 6 Align the CTA with Its Landing Page.

Clear, Concise & Specific:

Here is a call-to-action that is clear, concise and specific. It includes an image of the offer, thus setting the right expectations of what the landing page will be all about. It also mentions that the resource is free--an important detail that provides an additional incentive for visitors to click through.



Revealing Insights from the Offer:



The two most interesting features of this CTA is that it's using a compelling image and a quote from the offer that conveys credibility and value.

Seasonal:

Here is another call-to-action that is specific and action-oriented. Notice that here the company isn't necessarily using a full sentence--but keywords.





Emphasizing Benefits:

This call-to-action is following the best practice of including numbers. It's clearly conveying what the benefit will be if the visitor downloads the whitepaper. It's also action-oriented and emphasizing that the offer is free.

Posing a Question:

This CTA is phrased as a question, which is meant to engage the reader immediately and create some urgency. The image also creates a clear connection to the idea of who the CTA is targeting. Lastly, the description is very detailed and includes a number.



Using a Testimonial:

This call-to-action is using a testimonial from a happy customer. Testimonials are a marketing technique meant to instill trust and credibility in the company and its product or service. The actual verbiage in the CTA to the left also creates a sense of urgency by mentioning the word "today."



CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“A call-to-action is just the beginning of someone’s journey with your brand.”



At its core a call-to-action should convey value and prompt visitors to take action.

Interestingly enough, a truly effective call-to-action carries much more meaning than its name implies. When placed in the right context and shared with a targeted audience, it becomes more than hyperlinked text, a button or overlay image. It transforms itself into a valuable piece of information that people can’t afford not to pay attention to. Visitors are tempted to click on it not because it is flashy and animated, but because it gives them a glimpse into something they can benefit from.

An effective call-to-action should provide you with an opportunity to go beyond the transactional act of “clicking” on an offer, and create a relationship with a prospect. It’s just the beginning of someone’s journey with your brand.

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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