

PERKup
your
M A R K E T I N G



An Introduction to Inbound Marketing

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Introduction

Like most businesses, you've probably noticed that traditional ways of marketing your company are not working as well as they used to, and if you're reading this, you're probably looking for new and better ways to market your company.

Has the marketing game changed?

If you're using the same old marketing components that you've always used, I bet you've noticed a change. Are you getting less attention, reduced activity, and lower sales? I thought so.

Is your sales team doing something different?

I can't give you the answer to what your sales team is really doing with their time, but what I can tell you is that they're having to work harder to make every single sale. Competition is tougher than ever, and everyone is out for the same cookie. Cold calling just isn't cutting it.

Regardless of how many rockstars you have on your sales team, the old ways of getting bonafide leads for them are no longer working. It's time for a change.

Traditional Marketing is Tired

Traditional marketing avenues have been highly productive in the past. If used correctly, they can still produce results, but at what cost?

The cost of employees' time, printing, postage, and advertising spots in newspapers, magazines, television, and radio are at an all-time high. Their cost trend is continually increasing, yet their effectiveness trend is rapidly declining.

The decline of their effectiveness is occurring for a number of reasons, but over-saturation is the main culprit. Advertising messages are everywhere, and people are becoming immune to them. Potential customers are starting to resent the very existence of the messages designed to attract them and are creating new ways to avoid these messages.



**I'M TIRED OF THE COLD CALLS,
JUNK MAIL, AND ADVERTISEMENTS!**

NOW I'M TIRED OF YOU!

The old ways of marketing are being blocked out of people's lives one at a time. The national Do-Not-Call List, DVRs, internet radio, and RSS feeds are currently enabling your target market to block your marketing message.

Potential customers block these media, because the messages have no value and are an interruption to their lives. Even if the old methods weren't being blocked, would you really want to keep blasting out self-serving messages with no value?

Using Traditional Outbound Marketing Makes Your Message Easy to Avoid.

Traditional Outbound Marketing Methods					
How Your Customer Avoids Them					

Coffee Break



Stop grinding along with your old marketing plan!

Improving your marketing system will improve your results! Doing nothing will result in... well... nothing.

If you had started this process 6 months ago, you would be in a much better place today.

Perk Up Your Marketing

“Marketing, smarketing...How is this way of marketing different?”

The difference is that if this process is implemented properly, it will bring customers to you... Really!

Hint: This process delivered you to us
in the form of a qualified lead.

The solution we are talking about is Inbound Marketing. Inbound marketing focuses on bringing your target market into your sales funnel. Instead of broadcasting those same-old self-serving messages that are getting blocked, make your company stand out by providing valuable content that actually helps your market solve a problem, make more profit, increase employee retention, etc...



Right now, as you read this, your potential clients are looking for information pertaining to your product, or service. What are they finding?

If you are not developing valuable content and giving people a way to find it, then they are probably finding your competition. If this is the case, then you are behind the curve. The good news is that the process is not difficult, and with a little dedication, it won't be long before you are kicking your competition's ass.

Let's take a look at the process.

Step 1: Define Your Goals

Any successful marketing plan starts with a clear definition of its goals. Without clear and measurable goals, it would be impossible to measure your plan's success.

Be realistic. Set obtainable goals that can be measured. Your goals should be quantitative in nature. Increasing website traffic by 50%, and converting 25% more visitors into leads are examples of specific & measurable goals.

This is not a one and done process. Your goals should be incremental in nature. The last section of this plan (Measure & Adjust) will give you a chance to review your goals and compare them to your actual results. Consistent improvement will give you the opportunity to isolate the best-performing components and develop more of that type of content.



Step 2: Develop a Platform

Inbound marketing is about creating valuable content, attracting visitors to this content through strategic value based messaging, converting visitors into leads, nurturing leads to become customers, and analyzing the results to increase the effectiveness of future efforts.

With this process defined, we can now begin to look at what components should be incorporated to begin the process.

INBOUND MARKETING COMPONENTS



The vast array of tools that could be used in your inbound marketing strategy is quite extensive. Once your goals are clearly defined, it is time to select a starting point for your approach. Remember that this platform will be a work in process. Don't over-commit in the beginning. You can always add to your strategy later. You don't want to get overwhelmed before you start to see real benefits.

Start with a Blog The best place to start is with a blog connected to your company's website. Make sure that you opt for a self-hosted blog solution. Selecting a "free" blog platform that is third-party hosted can be viewed as unprofessional. Additionally, "free" blogs do not offer the same benefits in terms of organic website traffic.

Do This

Not That

 <p>YourCompany.com/blog</p> <p>blog>YourCompany.com</p>	 <p>YourCompany.typepad.com</p> <p>YourCompany.wordpress.com</p>
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Blogs are an excellent way to create and share valuable content. The value-based posts give people a reason to come to your website, and, if properly optimized for search engines, the posts give people a way to find your website (increased traffic).

By actively maintaining a blog, you give yourself and your company an active voice in the online community pertaining to your industry. People searching for information on your industry's topics can find and read your posts. If you have been writing with the goal of creating value, these people will begin to view you, and your company, as an expert resource in your field. Given the choice, people do business with people they know and trust. If they have been receiving value from your posts, they will have a sense of knowing you, and a level of trust for you. People trust experts.

Having a blog on your website will accomplish nothing if there is not valuable content that is actively updated. There's nothing worse than going to a blog and noticing that the last update was a year ago. This is where a little dedication comes in. You don't have to post everyday, or even every week. The important part is that when you post, there is value and that it is provided with some type of routine regularity.

Coffee Break



What are you doing with your Saturday afternoon?

If dedicating 30 minutes every other Saturday to writing could get you more qualified leads, would you take advantage of that?

Become dedicated, or lose to someone that is!

Step 3: Create Content

The success of every inbound marketing campaign will be determined by its content. Content is the new capital of the marketing world. This is why I have placed so much emphasis on VALUABLE content. Junk in, junk out. Gold in, ... you get the idea.



Inbound marketing content can take many forms. Blogs, YouTube videos, SlideShare presentations, podcasts, and e-books are all examples of content, but, for simplicity, we are going to focus on blog content for now.

Many companies and individuals that are not currently active in this medium tend to view writing blog posts as a daunting task. While writing the first one or two articles can be a little like pulling teeth (especially if you have never written before), it quickly becomes second nature. If you really “can’t” write, you can outsource this function to a professional writer.

Start by reading other people’s blogs in your industry. This will give you a good handle on format, tone, and potential topics of interest to your market. Also, make it a habit to read blogs about content creation and blogging.

My personal preference is Copyblogger (www.copyblogger.com), but there are many resources available. Make use of them. This will put you on the path of constant improvement in your writing.

So now you have a blog, and a few pieces of value based content. How will people find your content?

Step 4: Get Your Content Read

Producing valuable content is only half the battle. You can have the best content on the web, but, if no one can find it, it isn't helping you, or them.

Read This



There are two keys to getting your content read:

1. **Optimize** your content so that search engines can easily catalogue it.
2. **Promote** your content in your social media community.

Optimize Your Content Correctly optimized content gives you the best chance of being organically found online. The point of optimizing a post is so that when search engines come to review your content, they understand what they are looking at and can categorize it properly to be found by users searching for this topic.

While, essentially, this process is performed by a machine, never lose sight of the fact that you are writing for humans. Impressing your human audience with great content and gaining links back to your site will always be more beneficial (for long-term search engine ranking) than impressing a machine and gaining a momentary higher rank.

Here are 5 Essential Elements that Brian Clark, founder of Copyblogger points out that will help to optimize blog content for search engines:

1. Title - Keywords that you are hoping that your post will rank for need to be used in the title of your post. The closer they are to the beginning of the title, the better.
2. Meta Description - The meta description is the body of text a person would see when your post comes up in their search results. Be sure you use the keywords in the description as they will be bolded if it was the search term. Make it descriptive of what they will find in your post, and give a compelling reason to click on your link.
3. Content - Keep your content on topic, and centered around the keywords you are hoping to rank for. Short posts usually don't rank as well as more hearty content. Make sure your post is at least 300 words in length.
4. Keyword Use - Use keywords in your post, but don't overuse them. If you are artificially "stuffing" keywords into your content, you may end up hurting your rankings and creating a piece that is less than pleasurable to read.
5. Page Links - Linking to relevant pages and having them link back to you will let the search engines know you are "trustworthy." Do your part by linking to other topic-related content in your posts.



Promote Your Content So now your content is optimized and will be picked up by the search engines, but you're not out of the woods yet. You still need to ensure that your voice will resonate as far and wide as possible.

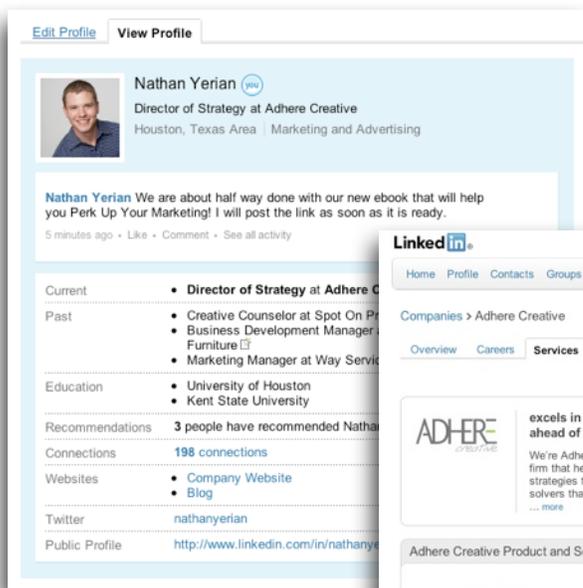
If you haven't started using social media for your business yet, don't fret. There are plenty of businesses in the same seat. That said, IT'S TIME TO GET UP. Social media, if used effectively can spread your message further than you ever thought possible and can get you in front of people you only dream would take your call. OK... stop dreaming. It's time to get to work.

You need to select a manageable starting point. Remember, you can always add more social media components in the future. Get comfortable with one before you add another.

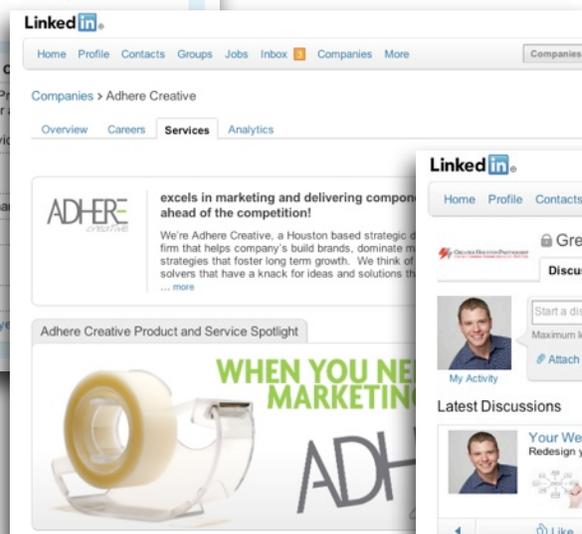
If you are a B2B company, your best bet is to start with LinkedIn. A B2C company may want to start with Facebook or Twitter. For the purposes of this e-book, we are going to focus on B2B, but the core principles apply to B2C as well.

LinkedIn is a solid starting point that allows you to connect with professionals, is easy to learn, and provides multiple relevant areas for you to share your content in a meaningful way. Use your profile, your company's profile, and relevant groups to maximize your influence.

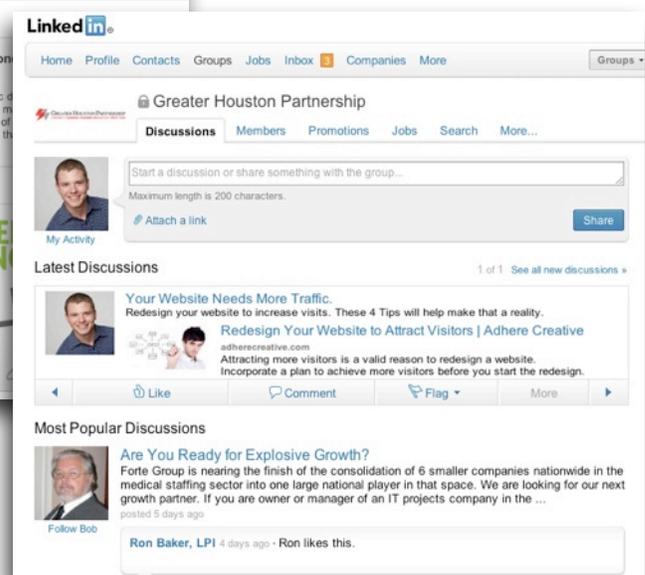
1. Create Your Profile



2. Create Your Company Profile



3. Promote Your Content



Once you begin to get some traction on LinkedIn, branch out (to Twitter and then Facebook would be my recommendation, but your company may benefit in reversing that order). It all depends on the type of content that you are producing, the type of attention you are looking to attract, and your comfort level with the platforms.

Once you are comfortable with one and are seeing returns, incorporate another. The goal is to eventually be using all the social media platforms that have been listed, plus some that have not. By using various platforms, you extend your message's reach and give your audience more options to discover your content and your company.

Step 5: Convert Visitors into Leads



If you have completed the steps above, then you should be noticing some increased traffic to your website. Getting people interested in your content and visiting your site is an accomplishment. Give yourself a pat on the back!

But how are you going to get these interested website visitors into your sales funnel and on their way to becoming customers? Add something to sweeten the deal.

Create More Content They have already proven that they are interested in your content. Why not offer more in-depth content. As I am sure you can guess by now, I am using an e-book to convert web visitors. Webinars, podcasts, and presentations are a few other options as well.

Have you thought of your brilliant piece? It doesn't have to be brilliant, but it does have to provide real benefit to the audience. If the benefit is properly displayed, people will want it.

Now, where to display this benefit...

Build a Landing Page A landing page is the perfect place to display your offer. A landing page is a web page with the sole purpose of converting visitors to participate in your offer. The page can be hosted on your domain (ex: www.yourcompany.com/offer), or a dedicated domain (ex: www.youroffer.com).

The benefits of using a landing page are numerous. Let's look at a couple of the most valuable reasons for a separate landing page to exclusively display your offer.

By keeping the page separate, you create an environment in which the benefits of the offer can take center stage without the distraction of other website elements. Creating a clear offer will increase your conversions. Be sure you include a clear directive that leads to an input form that allows the user to access the content. The more info you require on the form, the less conversions you should expect, so only require the essentials.

A landing page also makes tracking visitors much easier. When you create an offer, you need to know how the visitor came across your page and what actions they took (or didn't take) while on your page. We will get into this a little more in the Measure & Adjust section.

Promote Your Offer Offer created... Check! Landing page perfected... Check! Now, get out there and promote your offer. Use your existing website and the social network you have built to spread the word.

Display your offer on your website with call to action buttons. If you started on LinkedIn, share it on your profile and the group pages you have associated with. Be sure to spell out the reason people should take notice each time you post it. Do the same on Facebook and Twitter if you have incorporated them into your social media mix.

Coffee Break



Who are these people visiting your website?

Had you developed an outbound marketing strategy, these would be the people that might have taken an interest in your message.

Because you used an inbound marketing strategy, you didn't need to find them; they found you and have taken the first step towards a relationship.

Step 6: Nurture Your Leads

Leads need love. You've jumped through a lot of hoops to get these babies. Now what?

The majority of these people are not ready to make a purchasing decision. Jumping on the phone and immediately calling them may be a little forward of you at this point (unless they specifically requested that you contact them). They are probably in the information-gathering stage. But that doesn't mean "do nothing."



Craft an e-mail, or a series of emails that automatically go out to those who register. Be sure these emails are relevant to the offer of interest. You want to give them a chance to review the piece first. Set the e-mails to begin sending a few days after they access the content. This can easily be accomplished with most e-mail clients (Constant Contact, IContact, Mail Chimp, etc.).

Create a chance for further interaction. What is the next step you want them to take? Include this next step as a call to action in your e-mails. Do you want them to call you to set an appointment? Tell them so. Also, make sure your e-mails give them the opportunity to connect with you through social media, your newsletter, and RSS feed. Stay in contact. Continue to be a valuable resource.



It's time to include your sales team. Set up a game plan to reach out to the registrants that have taken no action. This is not a cold call. They know your company, and should have a level of trust built on the value you provided.

Don't call/e-mail with a plan to "sell." You have positioned yourself as a resource that leads with value. Continue on that path.

Have some meaningful and engaging questions that focus on their situation. Something made them interested in your content. Find out what piqued their interest and what challenges you may be able to help them overcome.

Really listen to their answers. Finding the points of value that motivate your target market will allow you to update your future content and become even more relevant.

Step 7: Measure & Adjust

Think of measurement like a thermometer. It allows you to know where you are hot and where you are not. This data will then make it possible to adjust future efforts for greater success.

Measurement is easily achieved online through free resources like Google Analytics. Google Analytics, or whatever analytic software you select, needs to be in place before your efforts begin. This ensures that the complete process is recorded, and is available for analysis.

Where did they come from? Knowing the source of your traffic is a valuable metric. This might tell you where to focus your efforts in the future. It may also tell you what type of content specific groups of people found valuable. Use this knowledge to more accurately target your future content and campaigns.

What did they do? Tracking tools also enable you to see what actions were taken on a website, and how long a person stayed on the site. The actions that are taken on a site will give you some confirmation about what interests your visitors. Time spent on the website can tell you if people are actually reading and considering your content/offer, or if they are just finding the site and immediately leaving.

Test different versions of your content. You can easily set up multiple versions of a landing page to see which performs better. There is a lot of information out there on landing page designs and conversions, but there is nothing more accurate than the specific elements that are working for your site and your visitors. Don't be afraid to try things. You can always change them.

Where did they go? What page are visitors on when they leave your website? This is another vital piece of information to take into account. Did they go to your main website for more information, or did they simply close the landing page and move on? Knowing where your visitors are exiting is almost as valuable as where they came in. Find these exit points (even if they completed a conversion), and adjust the content to provide more information on what your visitors are finding value in.

Conclusion

Your coffee break is over. It's time to put this plan into action and start generating leads.

These are complex topics. They require time, energy, and creativity to really bear fruit (or coffee beans, in this case). You don't have to go out and implement this process by yourself (although some of you could), but I hope it is useful as a basis for building a marketing team or for selecting your marketing partner.

If you agree with the approach that is laid out here, be sure that you are partnering with a company that can make this plan a reality. Good luck brewing a plan for your company's success story!

Notes



*Have a question?
Ask us...We can help!*



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