Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound
A Guide to Effective Inbound Marketing

There’s a new, yet not so new way to market your business these days, and it’s a term called “Inbound Marketing.” Inbound marketing may be something you have heard of, but do not quite understand fully. Or, you’ve heard enough about its value and importance to know you should be implementing it in your own marketing efforts. This overview will help take the mystery out of Inbound marketing and explain why it’s so vital to the growth and success of your business.

What is Inbound Marketing?
Inbound marketing is a marketing method developed in the past two decades since commercial activities exploded on the Internet. This marketing method uses various techniques to attract qualified traffic to your website, enticing those visitors to become leads, and eventually, engaging those leads to become paying customers.

Let’s look at each stage of this process to get a deeper understanding of how each one works in inbound marketing:

- **Attract Qualified Website Traffic** - What attracts people to your website is not your pretty graphics. It is the quality of your brand story and professional content, blog posts, social media channels, and effective search engine optimization (SEO) you have in place. This is a targeted method that brings people to you instead of you hunting them down. If you tried to do this with traditional marketing, you would blast out a message to people who had no interest in hopes of getting maybe 2 out of every 100 people to visit your website.

- **Entice Traffic to Become Leads** - Once you have people at your website, the next step is to inspire them to provide their lead information. You do this with incentives like videos, webinars, ebooks, and white papers. The catch is that for them to get those incentives, they have to give their contact information. You will see lots of highly qualified leads coming into your sales pipeline. Your “contact us” page might as well go into the archives.

- **Turn Leads into Paying Customers** - Turning leads into sales is the most important step in any marketing strategy. Inbound marketing uses automation to collect contact information from your leads. The automation also segments them into targeted categories and does the first follow-up with emails. You need a comprehensive lead nurturing plan and a branded email marketing strategy in place. These techniques can help you close 50 percent or more of the leads you get.

Okay, that is what it is. But, why do they call it “inbound” marketing? This type of marketing brings people into the pipeline with internal messages delivered via quality content and voluntary email membership. In contrast traditional, or outbound, marketing pushes the message out.
Inbound Marketing Breaks through the Limitations of Traditional Marketing

Traditional (Outbound) marketing uses the concept of blasting out a message to the largest audience possible. You see that in TV and radio advertising, cold calling, telemarketing efforts, and campaigns sent to purchased email lists. These methods were the only options available for decades. These marketing options were expensive, time consuming and not analytically trackable but new technological advancements have proven to be more effective. Surprisingly, many companies still use these methods for most of their marketing.

But times have changed. Today's consumer is savvy and informed. People no longer pay much attention to unwanted marketing messages. They get up during TV commercials. They change channels when the radio commercials come on. They filter out telemarketing calls with caller ID. They ignore pop-ups and banner ads. However, this has not reduced the demand for products or services but has changed the way people look for them. Inbound marketing takes advantage of these changes.

Traditional marketing hopes to get a two to five percent response rate. That is no longer acceptable. You can now achieve a higher response rate at a faster velocity with even minimal inbound marketing.

Why choose inbound marketing over traditional?
- Generate more traffic to your website
- Get highly qualified leads from your traffic
- Convert qualified leads to paying customers much easier
- Lower marketing costs by up to 60 percent or more
- Save time and money
- Increase profits and sustainable growth

Statistics That Prove the Power of Inbound Marketing

Traffic
- 92.3% of customers have experienced an increase in traffic.
- 29.8% of customers reported an increase of more than 100% of traffic.
- 85.0% of customers that saw a traffic increase noted that it began within 7 months or less, with 64.8% of customers seeing an increase within 4 months.

Leads
- 92.7% of customers have experienced an increase in leads.
- 38.4% of customers reported an increase of more than 100% in their leads.
- 83.9% of customers who saw an increase in leads noticed it within 7 months, with 65.2% of customers seeing an increase within 4 months.
Sales
- 49.2% of customers experienced a higher lead-to-sales conversion rate, with 29.4% of customers noticing a “Slightly Higher Rate (1-25%)” of conversion. (Respondents said that leads converted to sales 1-25% faster.)
- 9.7% of customers who saw an increase in actual sales noticed it within 7 months.

An MIT Sloan MBA student completed independent research into the ROI of Inbound Marketing. January 2013.

Your Inbound Marketing Program
When putting together an effective inbound marketing program, marketers put essential components in place to run campaigns that return results.

Creating a Marketing Strategy
Your marketing strategy provides a map on what you want to accomplish:

- Marketing goals
- Current marketing challenges
- Comprehensive profiles of target customers (who they are, what they buy, etc.)
- Budget
- Method for measuring Return on Investment (ROI)

This is an investment in the growth and future of your business. It is important that you view inbound marketing as an investment, not an expense. Each marketing dollar spent is designed to bring a return on your investment. (Example: Not uncommon results can be for every $100 you spend, you receive a return of 300% to 1000% or more.)

Develop Your Website
Your website is the center of your marketing efforts, working for your business 24/7 near and far. Your website by intention is a lead generating machine. Keep these things in mind when developing your website:

- Make sure your website is clear. A visitor should know what you do within seconds of seeing the first page.
- Make your website easy to navigate. A visitor should have no problems finding more information.
- Be sure to use SEO practices throughout your website.
- Make your website mobile and tablet friendly. This is no longer optional with the explosion of tablet and smartphone use.
According to a study done by Google in September 2012:

- When people visited a mobile-friendly site, 74% of people say they’re more likely to return to that site in the future.

- 67% of mobile users say that when they visit a mobile-friendly site, they’re more likely to buy a site’s product or service.

How to Attract Relevant Traffic to Your Website

You have a website in place, ready for people to visit. How do your target market customers find you?

- **Create an Interesting Blog** - Blogging is a must for every company. With regular blog posts, your website becomes more attractive to search engines, giving people a reason to visit the first time and to come back for more. One study showed businesses that have an active blog get over 50 percent more traffic than those that do not. It is a way to open lines of communication for your visitors to comment on your posts, build a relationship to you and your brand, and learn more about your visitors who comment on your posts. The blogging strategy allows you to guide the interests of your potential customers, capture the feel of the marketplace mindset and to educate.

- **Optimize Your Entire Website with SEO** - When you create any item on your website, be it content, a blog post or an article, keep search engine optimization (SEO) in mind. SEO uses various techniques to make your website more attractive to the search engine bots. That increases your ranks in the search engines and makes you more attractive to people searching for a company like yours.

- **Engage Your Audience with Social Media Marketing** - Equally important is your social media marketing strategy. This is another powerful tool that allows you to engage in a dialogue with your visitors, customers, and fans. You can share helpful information, special offers, and insider information to increase awareness of your company and brand. It offers an easy way for your followers to share the items you share with them. Additionally, social media marketing can widen your audience exponentially.

Entice Traffic to Become Leads

You have traffic coming to your website. The next piece to successful inbound marketing is converting those visitors to leads who may want to buy your product or service. Are you thinking “Yes, but how do you do that?”

- **Develop Incentives** - You will find very few people willing to just give you their name and email addresses without something in exchange. Remember, you are asking them to take the time to give you, at the minimum, their name and contact info. You need to offer something special they can...
only access in exchange for their contact information. It can be eBooks, white papers, webinars, educational courses, special discounts, infographics, or anything else that would grab your target market’s attention. Other options could be a repeating incentive like a newsletter, email updates or tip column.

- **Landing Pages** - A landing page is the place where you have people come to fill out a form with their personal information. This landing page showcases your offer and helps to convert that visitor into a lead.

- **Calls-to Action (CTAs)** - When people come to your website, you need to draw their attention to the incentives you offer. You can offer a link to entice a visitor to a landing page. It can take the form of an image or text. You are directing people to do something with these links so they are known as calls-to-action, or CTAs.

### Converting Leads to Paying Customers

Now that you have people visiting your website and willingly becoming leads, the next step is nurturing those leads until they are willing to become paying customers. This is lead nurturing and conversion.

- **Managing Leads** - Before you can nurture or convert your leads, you need to manage them. You need a database of this lead information so you can leverage it. If you are using marketing software or contact management software, the process can done automatically which is efficient and saves you time and resources. Otherwise you will be managing the lead information manually which can become time consuming and costly, and require a dedicated employee to manage.

- **Segmenting Your Leads** - Segmenting your lead list allows you to focus your marketing message on a smaller audience. The simplest segmentation is leads versus customers. However, you can segment based on any number of things like on the role a person plays in their company, in whether they have an interest in widget X or Y, or on their geographic location, education, business category, etc. It comes down to what makes sense in your particular situation for your specific business.

- **Nurturing Your Leads** - Once someone becomes a lead, you need to draw them further down the sales funnel. You do this with a lead nurturing plan. You can use email communications to build trust, generate interest, and keep the customer aware of your company’s brand story and promise, as well as your products or services. This keeps you in mind for when they are ready to make a purchase.

- **Using Email Marketing** - Any inbound marketing campaign uses email marketing quite extensively. Using integrated marketing software allows you to take advantage of technology and get the most value out of your leads.

### Measure and Track Everything

Once you have all the pieces for inbound marketing in place on your website and in your email marketing, you need to track how well you are doing. How do you do this?
Closed Loop Reporting on Marketing Efforts - This process measures the effectiveness of a particular advertisement or campaign. You track which campaigns or advertisements caused visitors to take action. This allows you to tweak campaigns or get rid of those that are not working.

Analyzing Your Website - A comprehensive analytics tool is invaluable. It will tell you who is visiting your website, which pages get the most traffic, and other data that allows you to fine-tune your website and marketing efforts. You can make measured changes to improve your website traffic numbers along with your lead generation and conversion efforts. This is real-time tracking, which eliminates the guesswork and wasted marketing dollars and time.

Tracking the Competition - While you need to focus on your website, you also need to keep an eye on your competition. See what they are doing. Find an experienced business intelligence analyst to learn what is trending and how to stay a step ahead of your competition.

What to Expect from Inbound Marketing

One thing you must realize is that effective inbound marketing takes time. The search engines follow their own schedules for scanning your website. When they find you, they will keep coming back to see if you made any updates. That will gradually increase your ranking. As you move up in the ranks, you will start to see the traffic numbers picking up on your website. This can take a while, but the results are well worth it.

Here are a few things to remember:

- Stay positive and persistent. You will get to those goals with a bit of time. You have a good strategy in place and it will work.
- Remember you are building a relationship here. You need to create quality content and keep the lines of communication open. That will generate interested leads and increase consumer loyalty and customer retention.
- Be ready to change. Technology is advancing. Inbound marketing continues to develop. You need to stay on top of your marketing and make adjustments as needed.
- Give it Time. Patience will pay off.

Do You Need an Inbound Marketing Agency?

In order to answer that question, answer these first:

Do you have the time and resources to immerse yourself or an employee into the intricacies of inbound marketing?
Can you write well enough to generate blog posts two or three times a week?
Can you come up with new ideas for your blog posts regularly?
Do you have the tools at hand to handle lead generation and website analysis?
Do you know how to integrate social media effectively into your marketing efforts?
Do you have time to update your social media channels daily?

If you answered no to all or most of these questions, you need a marketing agency at your side.

Free yourself of constantly worrying about your marketing efforts. An agency can handle the mechanics of getting your campaign on track and moving forward. Once you see the benefits of having an agency handling the detail work, you will realize the value you get. Remember the only thing more expensive than working with a professional agency is working with an amateur, or trying to do it yourself.

What Does It Cost to Engage an Inbound Marketing Partner?

The answer is that it depends on what you need and what you want to get out of it. Typically, the cost can range from $500 to $15,000 per month. It is an investment in your long-term success. Your Inbound Marketing Partner will guide you in determining how much to invest based on your budget and as the results continue to increase when to invest more money to continue to capture a greater percent of the marketplace.

The best thing about inbound marketing is the time and money you invest up front keeps on giving a long time after that. Your blog posts will attract people tomorrow, next month, and next year. Your incentives are useful for current marketing and future marketing. Even if you have to tweak and update your website and incentives, the foundation is already there to build on.

What to Do Next

When you are ready to begin your company’s inbound marketing journey, contact us here at the P3 Agency. We have the experience, expertise and business intelligence you need to make your marketing an extraordinary success.