

NEWSLETTER

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.....

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO

INBOUND

MARKETING

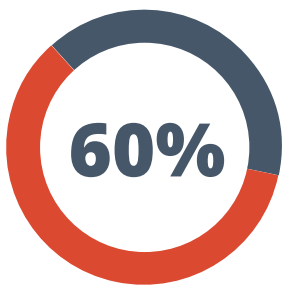
FOR SALES DIRECTORS

.....



INTRODUCTION

For many sales directors the rapidly changing world of digital marketing can be challenging, the old stalwarts of traditional marketing are no longer delivering the results they once did. Audiences have moved online where they have gradually become unresponsive to traditional marketing practices and techniques. A whole new vocabulary, industry and tactical armoury has emerged and the once familiar suite of tools, upon which we once relied, has very quickly become unfamiliar. But as sales directors we still need qualified sales leads for our sales teams.



It is estimated that when someone makes contact with a sales department 60% of them have already made the decision to buy based on their own research.

The behaviour of both prospects and customers that are seeking technology solutions has changed in line with that of the technology marketing landscape. Quite simply, buyers of technology products and services no longer want to be marketed to, they often find the tactics championed by marketing departments to be now intrusive and unwanted, preferring to undertake their own research into prospective suppliers and products. It is estimated that when someone makes contact with a sales department 60% of them have already made the decision to buy based on their own research.

Even online strategies like pay-per-click (PPC) and search engine optimisation (SEO) are not generating leads, and visitor traffic to websites is not converting into the leads that sales teams and businesses need. And, when businesses do generate traffic and leads it is becoming ever more challenging to turn these leads into sales, often because the traffic is from visitors that are not ready to buy.

Many businesses are finding that there is an increasingly complex array of strategies and tactics to learn when it comes to reaching new audiences through new digital techniques. Change is inevitable but in this new age of digital marketing the speed of the change is breathtaking, something not unfamiliar to sales directors in the IT industry, but the multifaceted nature of digital marketing can start to seem very confusing, very quickly.

But, if we sales directors do nothing, the audience that responds to our traditional marketing techniques will continue to shrink, allowing us to be overtaken by competitors who are better able to display an understanding of how our audience is researching and buying our products. Technology companies such as OmCom and SnapEngage are making great gains in leads and sales using effective inbound marketing campaigns.

Inbound marketing may be a term that you have heard a lot about, it is not like traditional marketing methods, the ones that have stood us in good stead for many years, the ones that take our carefully crafted marketing message out to our target market. Instead, it is focused on drawing prospects into an engagement process by answering the common questions they have about our products or services, addressing their pain points and understanding their buying objections.

The sales process has remained almost unchanged, it is just that there is a far more focused digital aspect to how we take our products to market. It's targeted, measurable and tuneable, in fact it is probably the gift most business that undertake any marketing have been waiting for – marketing that can finally deliver measurable ROI with all the levers to manage the variables.

In this guide, we will explain how the principle of inbound marketing can work for technology and IT companies, how it will help your marketing to generate more qualified leads for your sales teams. We would like to demonstrate to you how inbound marketing will leverage your website, making it your biggest marketing asset and the greatest source of market intelligence on prospect and customer behaviour.

We hope that you find this eBook both inspiring and profitable.

CONTENTS OF THIS GUIDE:

- 06 Can you do digital marketing yourself?
- 08 What is inbound marketing?
- 12 Turning visitors into customers
- 16 Integrating seo
- 17 Google ads as a part of inbound marketing
- 18 Attracting prospects with social media
- 19 Choosing an inbound marketing agency
- 21 About us

CAN YOU GENERATE SALES LEADS YOURSELF?

Of course, there is no doubt about it, with a suitably large and well trained marketing team you can undertake your own digital marketing to generate leads. For example, it is possible to invest time and energy into researching SEO best practices, start a Google Adwords campaign and send traffic to your website.

Everything is possible, however, it is highly probable that this is not your core responsibility and you don't have either the time or resources to dedicate to becoming an expert in SEO and then to plan and execute a Pay Per Click campaign yourself. You are being measured on generating sales and revenue. In this rapidly changing sphere of marketing simply keeping up to date with the latest requirements is a considerable challenge in itself.



As for SEO, there is so much advice available, of varying quality and accuracy, it is very difficult to decide which you should heed? Which becomes increasingly confusing when search engines such as Google keep moving the goal posts, not to catch people out, but to make the results more closely match the search request.

Our old standby, that old faithful of measurable tactics, email marketing, has proven to be an excellent way to reach an audience, but if it is executed poorly, all we achieve is having our prospects filter all future email communication as spam, presenting us with an almost irretrievable position. And, by using a poor quality list of prospects, there is a possibility of that our organisations may be designated as spamming and having our IP address blacklisted.

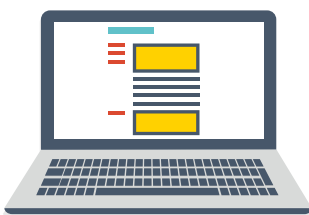
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Another challenge, faced by every business, is the sheer number of tools available that do the same or very similar jobs. It is very easy to find ourselves using five different pieces of software to do different parts of our marketing, all of which require a significant level of expertise to operate effectively. Many of these tools will not be able to communicate with one another, and having a clear defined ROI across the whole piece can be impossible.

However, there is a bigger reason not to try a little SEO here, some PPC there, and maybe some advertising on LinkedIn or Facebook. It really is tantamount to fiddling whilst Rome burns, there is a much greater win to be had, and that is your website. Too often businesses add different layers of tactics to generate traffic and hope that this will solve our lead generation problems.

The problem with this approach is that although we succeed in driving more traffic to our websites, the website is not designed, or built, to convert the traffic into qualified leads. The main reason for this is that we seldom have our sales process in place on the website. Building this process is called building the sales engine, and building this engine should be the first task.

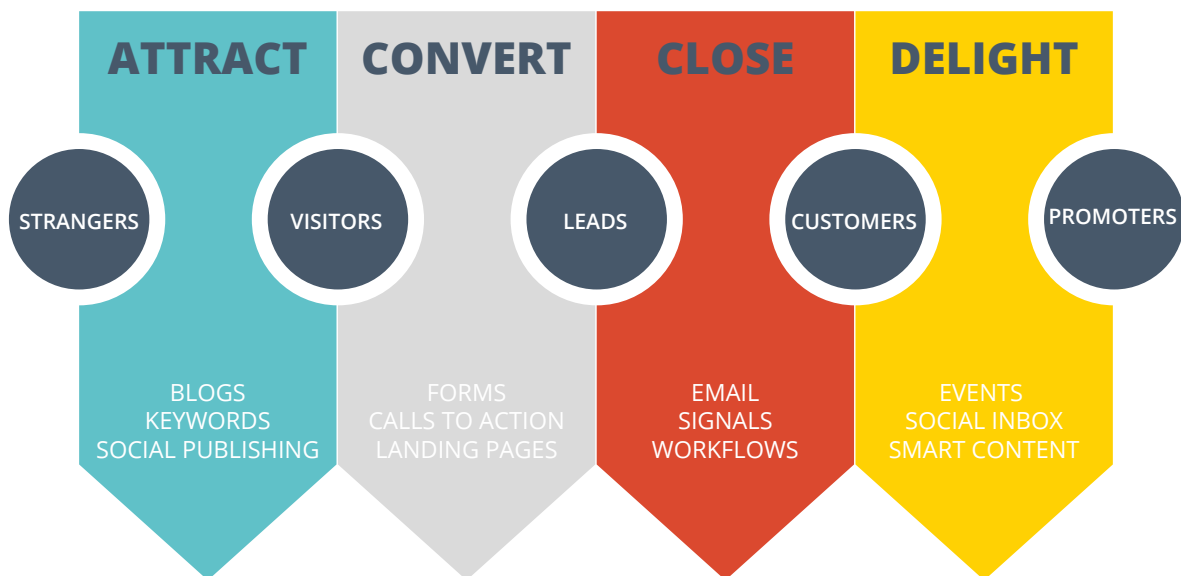


Once we have built the sales engine we can add the fuel by creating content that answers your target market's questions. Until this is done there is little point in increasing traffic to the website.

WHAT IS INBOUND MARKETING?

Before we look at the sales engine, let's put it into context by looking at how it fits into today's bigger digital marketing picture, starting with a definition of inbound marketing. Inbound marketing is all about being helpful and delighting your customers in the same way that your sales team are trained to do likewise. This is done by creating content that connects with your target market at each stage of the buying cycle, increasing the likelihood of them using your products or services.

Inbound Methodology



Firstly, we have to identify to whom you will be talking. One of the best ways to do this is to create what is known as a 'buyer persona'. Most businesses have more than one buyer persona, these are semi-fictional representations of their ideal customers or, a very detailed and personal customer profile. They are not necessarily who you can sell to but more of who we really want to sell to. By defining these personas it makes creating content that will appeal to them more relevant, more engaging and far more effective. The content is delivered through your website, as we mentioned previously, it is the heart of your inbound marketing strategy.



It is estimated that 95% of people who visit a website will leave without buying or making themselves known to the owner of the site.

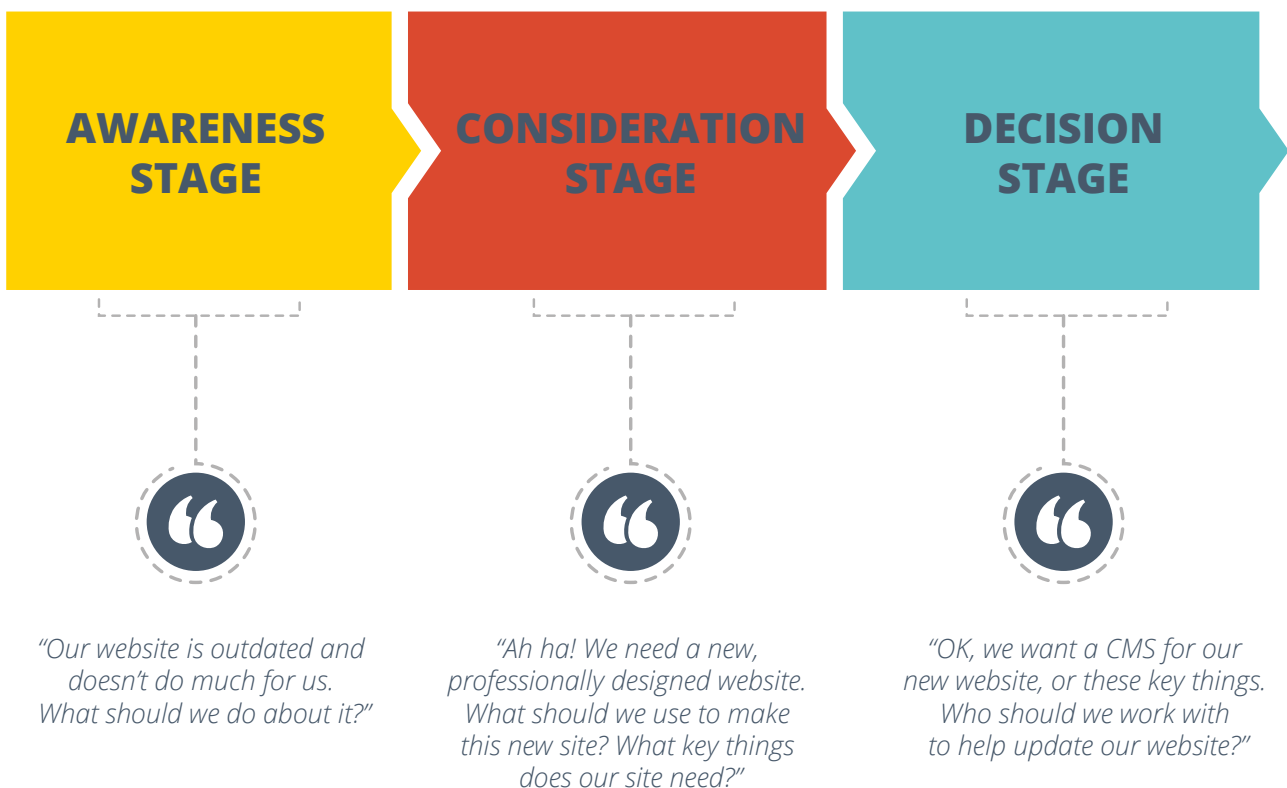
Buyer Journey

It is estimated that 95% of people who visit a website will leave without buying or making themselves known to the owner of the site. The reason that inbound marketing works is that it is based upon providing the right content at the right time for the website visitor, which means that they will spend longer on the website, learn more, engage with the site and become leads. Key to making this work is to identify the three key buying stages and align the content accordingly.

Matching content to the three buying stages

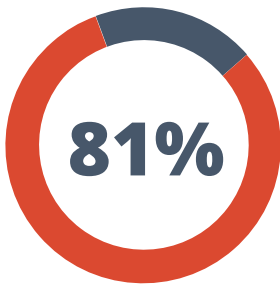
When someone visits your website they are typically in on of three different stages of the buying cycle, and this is why your website needs to tailor its content to help your prospects at each of these three stages.

The buyer journey for a new website



AWARENESS STAGE

Performing Research

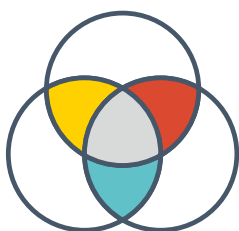


Around 81% of all online purchases begin with a web based search

When your prospects are at this stage it means they are at the beginning of their buying journey. Since the arrival of Google, giving us the power to research anything that we could possibly imagine, more and more people turn to a search engine when researching a product or service. In fact, around 81% of all purchasing decisions start with a search on services such as Google. Prospect and customer behaviour has changed and it continues to do so, they prefer to make decisions based upon their own research and no longer want to be 'told' which is the best product or service to use. This is why it becomes critical for marketers to help them with their research by providing content that matches their research needs. The kind of content may be a blog post that answers the questions and pain points they are encountering at this stage.

CONSIDERATION STAGE

Establishing Buying Criteria



When a prospect has reached this stage they recognise that they need a solution like yours. However, they have not yet decided which company to choose, but by tailoring your content to match the needs and questions they ask at this stage, you will move them closer to you and further down your sales funnel. This is the ideal time to introduce your unique business proposition, as well as offering your prospects case studies, free catalogues, informational ebooks (like this one), podcasts or webinars - whichever best fits your brand, your market and your sales process.



When a prospect reaches this stage, they are ready to buy. It is at this point where you now need to offer value such as free trials, a one-on-one consultation or perhaps a quote. If 98% of visitors could be leaving your website, matching content to their needs at this point you increase the likelihood that they will choose your company over anyone else's. If you have read this far you are probably thinking that this sounds very similar to what you are already doing offline, and you would be correct. The sales process has not changed, all that is happening is that we are moving it into the digital arena.

The next section explains how all of this works together and how inbound marketing attracts visitors and nurtures them into customers.

TURNING VISITORS INTO CUSTOMERS

Now we have covered some of the basics of inbound marketing, we can look at how it all comes together from a prospect visiting your website all the way through to them becoming a customer and, ultimately, a brand promoter.

Building the sales engine

We will look at how you turn visitors into customers, but first we should look at your sales engine. The sales engine is basically the framework of your sales process. It is built around helpful, premium content that your prospects will receive in exchange for some basic information (usually just their name and email address). You will also need to have email marketing in place to nurture your leads, as well as marketing automation to implement it all and to track the all important ROI.

The sales engine is an essential part of inbound marketing because when you add the fuel (blog content, PPC, email marketing, social media, search engine traffic etc.) your website should be structured to turn these visitors into qualified sales leads.

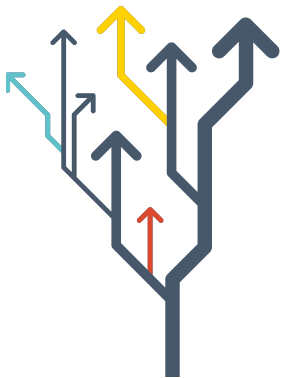
Information Qualified

The first job of inbound is attracting the right kind of visitors to your website, and you do this by creating content that answers the most common questions asked your prospects and customers. To get a better idea of the content you need to be creating, speak to your sales teams and listen to your current customers to see what questions you are already answering every day, this will form the basis of your content ideas. When a visitor arrives at your website, they are a stranger, so the first job of inbound is to turn that stranger into a potential sales lead. However, not every lead is made equal, something that will be familiar to your sales team.





The specific type of content that you would use at this early stage would be your blog content, and your premium top of the funnel content. Once the visitor becomes a lead we call these leads 'information qualified' as they have requested more information but have not yet given permission for you market to them. There will be an appropriate time for you to introduce your unique brand proposition, but this is not it.



Now that the lead is known to you, they can be entered into a workflow, for example assigning a contact to a buyer persona which then determines the content they receive on subsequent visits, in order that you can move them through to the next qualifying stage. You may know this process as lead nurturing. This can be done through a series of timely emails each of which answers one of the most common questions they are likely to ask when they are looking to buy your product. You will probably already know these questions e.g. 'How much does it cost?', 'Does it come with a guarantee?' and 'How long does it take to work?'



By understanding your buyer personas' questions, you can use email marketing to send emails that answer these questions in order to help them through the sales funnel. A buyer persona could be the IT Procurement Director for a large industrial company. In each email there should also be an element of promotion of another offer that introduces your unique brand proposition. This may be a document that talks about what it's like to do business with you and how you solve your customers' problems. Once they have downloaded this middle-of-the-sales-funnel offer, they become a 'marketing qualified' lead as they have now shown interest in you and your services.



Marketing Qualified

Now that the lead is known to you, your lead nurturing workflows can begin. Email marketing will play a large part in moving your information qualified lead into marketing qualified. This is not an opportunity for you to spam your lead with emails as this will cause them to unsubscribe from the process.

The lead still hasn't given you permission to market to them. This is the time to introduce your branded content and introduce your brand proposition. Typically, you will need to send out timely emails, cycle times vary across products and markets, but every five days or so provides a good rule of thumb.

The emails you send need to answer your common sales questions mentioned earlier. What are the three most common questions you get asked? Your sales team will be a rich source of prospect questions. This provides a good opportunity to share information, a link to an article or blog piece that you have written on this subject is ideal. The email would also contain a link to your marketing qualified offer, which would talk about your unique position in your field. You probably be sending around three emails, each of which will answer a different question. In the content that corresponds to these questions, you will include calls-to-actions which promote your marketing qualified offer.

Sales Qualified

The prospect has now shown an interest in your company and has downloaded your marketing qualified content, a good indicator that they are considering you as the company that can help them.

Now they need to be satisfied that you are the right company for the job. This is where usually you begin to encounter the sales objections. Just like the workflow created for the information qualified



leads, you now need to create one for the marketing qualified leads, but this time it is focused on how you can overcome their objections.



One of the best ways to address your prospects' objections is with case studies; find or create a case study that matches and solves their objections so that they feel at ease about their concerns. In effect, show them real-life examples of how you overcame their specific objection and delivered a successful outcome for that client.

Included within your emails and case studies will be calls-to-action for your sales qualified offer. This offer may be a free demonstration, a consultation or a quote. Once the prospect requests this, they are a sales qualified lead and you need to make contact with the prospect and start to build the real, human relationship.

At this stage you may be asking yourself, what happens to the people who do not move through your sales funnel, effectively becoming stuck? What you can do with information qualified leads that are not moving down your funnel, is to send them a monthly email updating them with the new content. Blog updates would be a good place to start and this way you are giving people who may not have been ready to progress another chance to re-engage with you. In the case of the marketing qualified leads, they have shown an interested in your company, this is the time to send out your monthly newsletter to them.

HOW TO INTEGRATE YOUR SEO INTO YOUR INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY



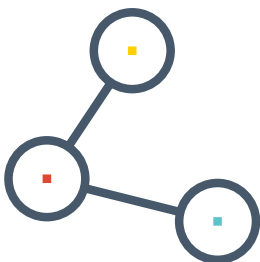
Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a significant part of inbound marketing and it plays a key role in attracting your buyer personas to your website. You may be already undertaking SEO to attract visitors to your website, but are you attracting the right kind and are they converting to leads once they arrive. SEO is very effective but it needs to be highly focused and be part of a much larger strategy.



Create content that Google loves

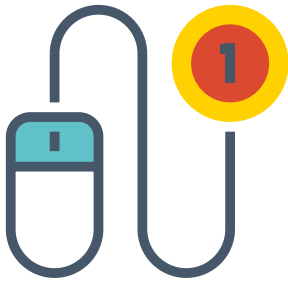
Forget link building to rank well with search engines, you need to have remarkable content. Who decides what remarkable content is? Well, at the end of the day, it is not the search engines that make this decision; it's your customers. Google is looking to serve the best results it can based on the searches people perform and the sites they visit as a result. So, if you create great content that your prospects and customers love, then Google will want to rank it in search results.

There is a little more to it than that, but if you do nothing else in terms of SEO, always create remarkable content. When it comes to keywords, they can be relegated in terms of priority, focus more on topics. What topics are your prospects interested in? Write about them.



There are some advanced SEO changes you can make to your site, but for the most part, as long as you are creating great content regularly and search engines can find it, then you're doing a good job.

HOW TO USE PPC AS PART OF YOUR INBOUND MARKETING



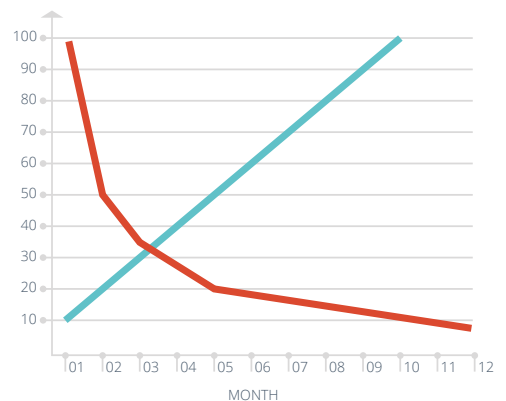
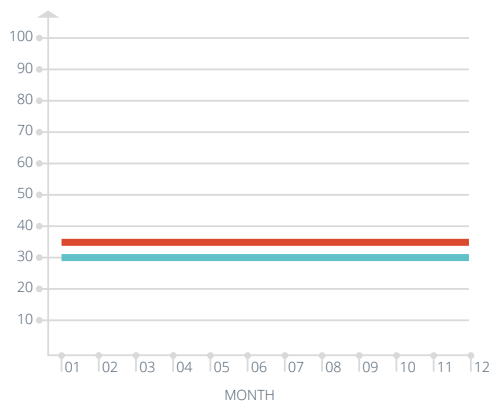
When people think of PPC or Google advertising, a lot of the time they think of ecommerce and direct sales. However, you should be thinking of all the other people who are at the stage of undertaking their research. This can present an opportunity for you to attract your prospects at the three different buying stages. However, the real problem with PPC is in the wrong hands is that it can become very expensive, not always because the PPC isn't working, but because the site to which it is sending traffic does not have a sales engine in place.

If you do not have a sales engine on your website, any traffic that PPC delivers could be wasted. You need to have correct call-to-actions, landing pages and lead nurturing to reap the benefit from PPC. If you are just starting out with inbound marketing it may be better to forget PPC for the moment. Once your sales engine is in place you can think about using PPC to drive traffic (the fuel) to your website. You would be much better leveraging SEO to generate your leads, as shown in the graphs to the right comparing PPC to SEO courtesy of Hubspot.

PAY PER CLICK SEARCH MARKETING (PPC)

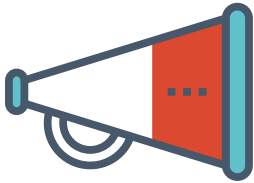
VS

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)



● LEADS ● COST/LEAD

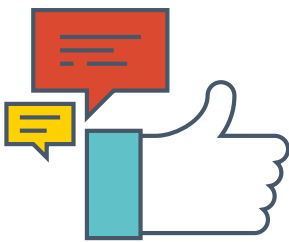
HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN ATTRACT VISITORS TO YOUR WEBSITE



You may be one of the many businesses that already recognises the need for social media activity, but you are not sure why, or how? This is a common challenge many businesses face, but before you spend any time or energy you will need to have your sales engine working.

Create content that is shareable

It all comes back to creating quality, valuable content. Your sales team needs to be fully on board and part of the process for sharing the content on social media. But, and it's a big but, everyone needs careful guidelines as to what to share, reputations can be quickly and significantly damaged by careless use of social media. If you don't create content that resonates with, and is helpful to your buyer personas, then social media will not help you spread your content to the ideal prospects. The reason social media is so effective at reaching new audiences is that when you create great content, something special happens - people start to share your content on social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



You will need to make sure your content is easily shareable, you can do this by adding share buttons to all your emails, blog posts and premium offer content. This makes it easy for people who enjoyed your content to share it with their friends and colleagues.

You should also be sharing your content yourself via social media on a regular basis to increase the size of your audience and gain extra traffic. Avoid overtly sales content; top of the funnel content usually does the best here. Stick with content that is helpful and answers your buyer personas questions.

HOW TO CHOOSE AN INBOUND MARKETING AGENCY

If you decide to use an inbound marketing agency, how do you pick the right one for your business?

Your inbound marketing agency must have these 11 attributes and core values if you are considering partnering with them. Anything an inbound marketing agency does for you, they should already be doing it for themselves – go and check out their own social media output on LinkedIn and Twitter and then follow the links back to their site and join their inbound campaign, you may even want to see if their SEO is as good as it should be.

An inbound marketing agency should:

1

Offer the right services

Hire an agency that delivers the inbound services that matter the most

2

Present a clearly-defined delivery process

Hire an agency with a solid, proven and logical plan of attack

3

Use a goal-oriented sales process

An agency's pitch should be tailored to your businesses specific challenges and goals

4

Maintain a website optimised for inbound

Hire a firm that can cite itself as a case study

5

Present compelling case studies

Hire an agency with compelling examples of their inbound marketing prowess

6

Cite specific areas of focus

Your agency should specialise, not generalise

7

Teach and train your people

Hire an agency that knows how to, and essentially, wants to leverage your team's industry expertise

8

Possess in-house capabilities or trusted partners

Hire an agency that can explain what it does and how

9

Harness strong project management skills

Inbound marketing is a serious production and the agency you hire should want to run the whole show

10

Place an emphasis on measurement

Agencies that measure everything succeed faster

11

Value transparency

Your agency partner should want you to see everything that they see

ABOUT US.

Formed in 1997 Vivid Fish is an eight person team consisting of creative, technical and marketing personnel.

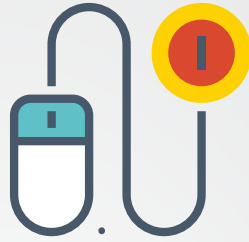
Our staff are undertaking multi-faceted campaigns that deliver quantifiable results on a daily basis. These campaigns are based upon clients' intimate knowledge of their own industry combined with the expertise and enthusiasm of our team, and they deliver a measurable return on investment.



Vivid Fish is a Hubspot partner.

Hubspot is an inbound marketing software platform that helps companies attract visitors, convert and close leads, to create customers. We work as a Hubspot partner because it provides a single platform that both our personnel and customers understand and can use to maximum effect. It allows micro management of campaigns in real time to maximise performance.





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