



Inbound Marketing for manufacturers:
How it increases sales



Inbound Marketing for manufacturers: How it increases sales

- ➔ Inbound marketing is 3x more likely to give higher ROI than outbound
- ➔ Inbound marketing improves web enquiry conversion rates by a factor of 6
- ➔ Inbound achieves higher ROI than outbound regardless of total marketing spend¹

With so many statistics and proof points that inbound marketing really does work, it's no wonder that it's the marketing strategy of choice.

What exactly is inbound marketing, why does it work, how can you use it and what can you do to measure success? This document will guide you through the inbound marketing process and explain how to apply it to your business.

¹ Source - HubSpot



What is inbound marketing?

Inbound marketing is a process of attracting customers to your business; of drawing them inwards towards you because you are seen as one of the influential players in your sector offering a wealth of insight, knowledge and experience.

Your web site naturally forms the heart of this process, with your on- and off-line channels feeding prospective customers back into the centre.

The goals of inbound marketing are essentially threefold:

- To build awareness of your business and position it as an authority
- To engage and nurture prospective customers
- To drive demand.

In order for your audience to want to make contact with you, you need to earn their trust and respect. To do this, you need to help them, not sell to them. Let them conduct their research, don't interrupt them with adverts or phone calls; instead, deliver helpful, meaningful content, which adds value to their experience or guides them towards a solution that is relevant to their need, challenge or pain points.

This content needs to be mapped to the customer journey, from awareness to the point of purchase, and be available in the right place, at the right time and in a format that each prospect can easily access.

Once you've attracted individuals to your brand, you need to follow a clear process that converts and then retains them as customer. An inbound marketing campaign will work through the following processes in a clear manner.

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY



1 – Talking to prospects

Content Content Content! Create the content and share it in the right place and the right time via blogs, social media, website, forums and email, all backed up with keyword searches and SEO. In short, put it where your prospects are and at a time when they are most likely to be receptive. Blogs and videos lead the way in terms of content. Research shows that companies who published more than 16 blog posts per month enjoyed around 4.5x more leads than those that published less than 4². Video footage on social media generates 1,200% more shares than text and images combined, which gives this media hero status in terms of engagement³.

2 – Making them visitors

Interested in your brand, these strangers now become visitors as your content drives them to your website, a landing page or to email or call you. This is typically when data capture takes place via a form on the landing page.

3 – Managing leads

Now you've captured their data, you can begin to treat them as a marketing qualified lead (MQL) and really start to converse with them via email, phone calls or re-marketed adverts. This process can become extremely sophisticated using marketing automation technology, such as HubSpot; this allows a lead to be nurtured using an intelligent and automated procedure to deliver customised content and messages to individual prospects, dependent on their actions.

4 – Gaining a customer

Via step 3 you understand your lead and their wants and desires. You know what is of interest to them and you tailor the messages accordingly until the moment arrives to initiate a sales conversation, at which point they have become a sales qualified lead (SQL). Although the heavy lifting now need to be done by the sales team, there is still a place to continue nurturing the prospect until – and after – they have been converted to a customer.

5 – Turning them into advocates

You've gained a customer, now your product or service and customer experience needs to be such that your customers become your best marketing tool and spread the word. Although this can be difficult to achieve in the B2B space, there are opportunities to run surveys and monitoring programs to understand the customer's user experience and make changes where necessary, or to partner with them in case studies or sales events.

6 – Analyse, reflect, amend and repeat

Successful inbound marketing campaigns make maximum use of the wealth of data that is available via marketing automation platforms and social media and web analytics. This makes it possible to understand which messaging worked, which content performed best, in which channel, and at what time. It is the possible to adapt accordingly or to test multiple variables to deliver the optimum campaign; an ongoing process.

² Source - HubSpot 2015 Data

³ Source - SmallBizTrends

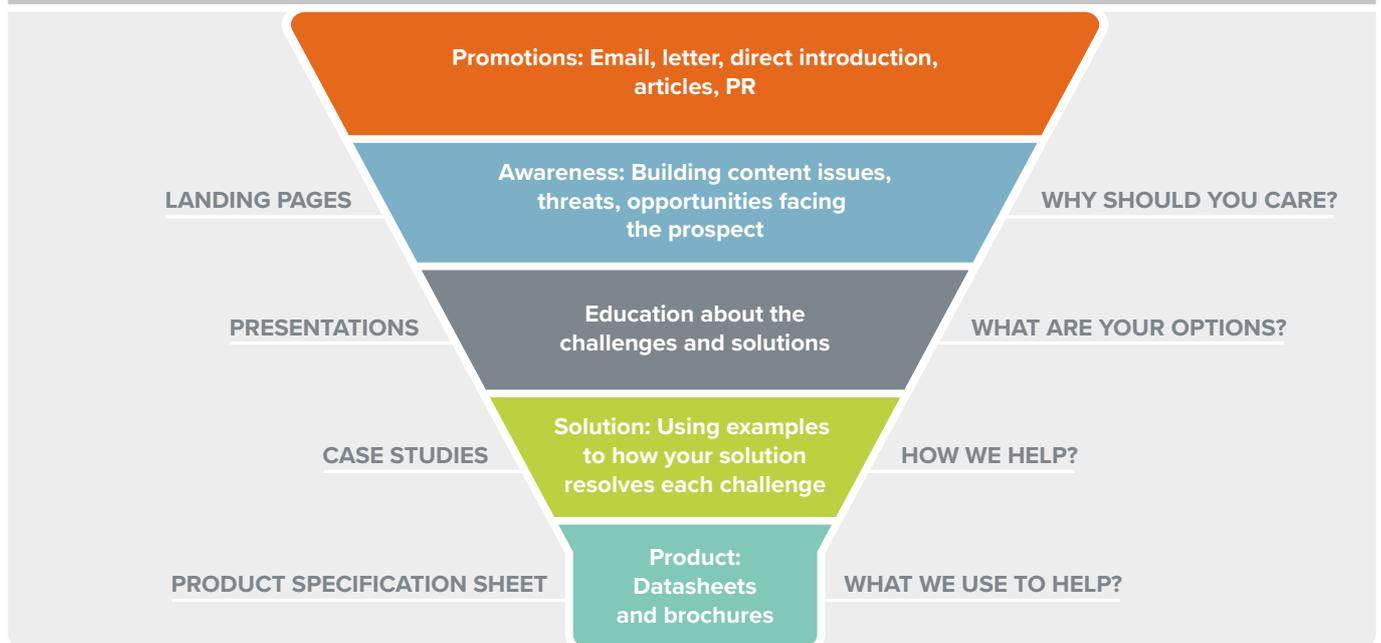


Why is inbound marketing so powerful?

In a world where we receive an estimated 3,500 marketing messages per day, we have become adept at screening out those in which we're not interested, or those that simply aren't in the right place at the right time.

A study by The Guardian used technology called Eye Contact to capture everything a user sees on a typical day. The Guardian team wore goggles for four hours and travelled through London. Once analysed, the data highlighted both the extent to which individuals are bombarded by commercial images and how adept most of us have become at screening out advertising messages. The results showed that 99% of adverts make little or no impact. In fact, in 90 minutes, one user saw 250 adverts from over 100 brands in 70 different formats. They were only able to recall 1 brand unprompted.

CONTENT MAP (B2B SOLUTION SELLING)



Content and context!

So why are traditional methods no longer working effectively? In our opinion, it comes down to content and context.

Traditional marketing is based on generic messages where one size fits all and is delivered to everyone irrelevant of time, location and preferred methods of communication. It's also interruptive. This is a key issue; research by Hubspot showed that 94% of us skip TV ads, 91% unsubscribe from sales emails and 27% of direct mail is unopened. The content is generic and the context is most likely untimely.

Inbound marketing on the other hand utilises compelling content and publishes this in the right place and at the right time, allowing prospects to find it and encouraging them to explore further. It's important to recognise that in the B2B space customers don't buy a product or service because they want to; they invest because they have a need, a challenge to overcome, or a problem to solve. So content has to be insightful, engaging and, where possible, immersive.



An individual or a team?

In addition to all of this, a purchasing decision within a company actually involves 6.8 different people according to CEB / Gartner.

Their research suggests that the number of people involved in B2B purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 two years ago to 6.8 today, and these stakeholders come from a lengthening roster of roles, functions, and geographies. Creating your marketing message that is relevant to one person might work in the consumer world, but in B2B situations, where a team is actually making the decision, it doesn't. Instead, marketing messages need to be matched both to the needs of each job function and, as importantly, to the personality of the enterprise. Campaigns need to consider the whole company, its ethos and attributes. Treating the purchaser as a team of people, all with one shared goal but with different commercial or technical drivers, is more likely to result in a sale than continuing to market to a single individual or function.

Research also suggests that customers will travel at least 57% of the way along the customer journey before they consider communicating with a sales representative; they will carry out most of their research online from the security of their office desk.

Unlike outbound or traditional marketing, inbound marketing makes it much easier to connect with all 6.8 people or functions. The power behind inbound marketing is in the combination of all the strategic elements, creating awareness in more than one place, at different times and for multiple target audiences.

³ Source - Gartner



How do I develop an effective strategy?

Insight is key!

Understanding your audience should be your first step; who are they and what are their challenges, needs and pain points?

Initial research should give you insights into your target audience's behaviour, where and when they are online and how they prefer to be reached? Where do they look for their information and how are they viewing the data; on mobile or laptop for example.

It's important to understand the potential pain points your audience might be experiencing and tailor your content to provide them with solutions. Content should be relevant and insightful; although inbound marketing is not about direct selling it is important to involve the sales team in this process, as they invariably have the customer insight that drives compelling content.

Research the top key words that are being used in search and make sure you use them in your content. Use these terms as hashtags as this will help with google rankings.

The PESO Model

The PESO model is a great starting place to ensure you're covering all the different media channels available to you.

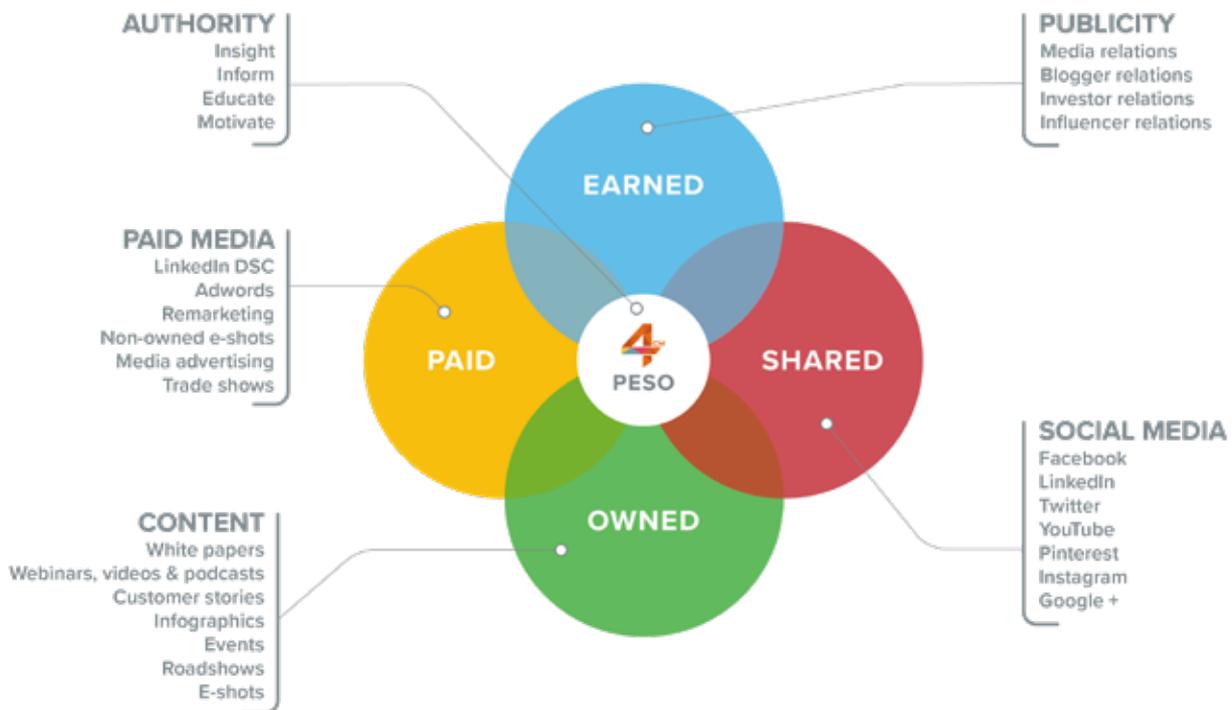
PESO stands for paid, earned, shared and owned.

Paid – this can involve a variety of activities of which digital advertising is the most common. Paying for your content to appear in places where you know your customers are going to be should provide guaranteed exposure. You'll know how many times your advert has been displayed, how many clicks and interactions it has generated, and the cost. This process scores highly on predictability, but can also be high in cost, yet low in trust values.

Earned – essentially getting your content covered / published in a third-party on- and off-line media; typically, this will be trade and technical media but can also include industry blogs and partner/distributor web sites. The third party provides authority and your content is therefore more credible to the target audience. Trust is high, cost is relatively low, but there is no guarantee of coverage.

Shared – when individuals share your content. Primarily on social media sites, this type of media has a high element of trust as colleagues/business contacts are sharing and therefore recommending your product or service. Cost is minimal, which makes this a great tool; however, there is no control or guarantee over how often this takes place. Combining this tactic with, for example, LinkedIn DSC advertising can be an extremely effective method of generating MQLs.

Owned – as the name suggests, this is everything you own and have control over. Your website or mobile app, emails, podcasts, event etc. The trust element can be variable, while cost is low and guarantee of message is obviously high.





What tools and channels do I need to use?

Marketing automation

A good marketing automation tool such as HubSpot will help you manage your prospect and customer database and enable you to deliver automated and customised emails and social media posts to different people at different stages of the customer journey, dependent on their actions to date. This type of software becomes your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, which tracks every action and its impact. Fully transparent, it provides the ultimate in analytics to further develop and improve your future campaigns.



Analytics

The use of Google Analytics will show you key information about the performance of your website. You can see where traffic is coming from, what actions visitors take once landing on your site, which pages they visit, where they leave and how long they spend there.

Social Media PPC and AdWords

Running a Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign on social media can instantly drive traffic to your site. The adverts are delivered to relevant and interested audiences, with the use of high value content as a hook producing strong click-through rates.

Google AdWords provide another tool for increasing visitors to your website. Understanding key words and the most important ones is crucial in order to maximise return on investment. Bidding on the most searched keywords is fundamental to the success of the campaign. Understanding how much to bid can become a mine-field and is dependent on the value of the projected sale.

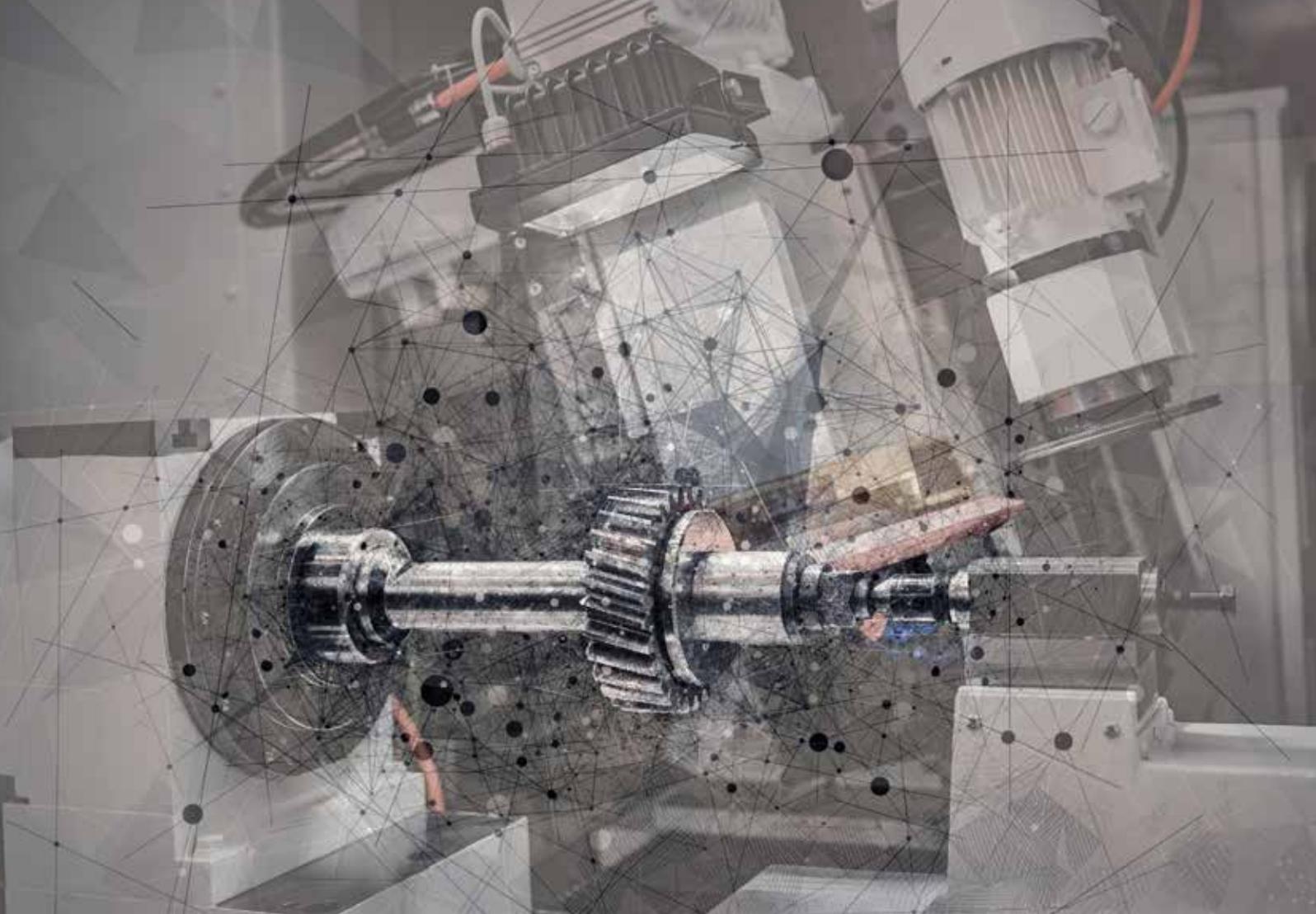
SEO

Search Engine Optimisation for your website is critical if you are to rank highly for key search terms. Maintaining a body of up-to-date, relevant and authoritative content is a key part of this process. Again, understanding the keyword selection process is paramount. Building these words into the right places and the optimum number of times within your website will help with rankings.

Creative and copywriting

Creating a personality for your brand, which resonates with your target audience enables you to create the compelling content that is so important to inbound marketing. Attention-grabbing writing and images are essential to the success of any campaign.

When creating your campaign, remember, content is key; only create high value materials, which your audience will want. Delivering this content in the right context is equally important, so know when your customers are online and where they're active. Once you've attracted them, nurture them, automate your marketing so they are reminded of your brand and once they're customers, deliver an amazing service so that they become advocates of your brand.



For advice, insight and a results driven approach to your PR and marketing communications please get in touch.

Milton Keynes Challenge House Sherwood Drive Bletchley Milton Keynes MK3 6DP
T +44 (0)1908 533253

Manchester Emerson Business Centre Regent House Heaton Lane Stockport Cheshire SK4 1BS
T +44 (0)161 4011880

E info@4cm.co.uk | W 4cm.co.uk