

The Essential Guide to Industrial Marketing: The Inbound Way

*Originally created in 2015. Updated and still relevant
in August 2023 ... more than ever.*



"Still advertising your industrial products and services like you did in the 1980s? How's that working for you? Tom Repp gives you an overview of a new way to succeed in the new world of search engines, mobile communications, and social networks."

David Meerman Scott, bestselling author of 10 books including The New Rules of Marketing and PR

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Introduction

Whether you call it content marketing or inbound marketing, industrial marketing is undergoing dramatic disruption. Some call it a marketing revolution.

The early reports of content marketing success, in my mind, make content marketing or inbound marketing a no-brainer. (From now on, I will simply call it inbound marketing.)

Why has inbound marketing been such a success?

The fact is, Google has trained us to work smarter and smarter buyers rule the day.

Google's disruptive technologies have practically trained your buyers, overnight, to find answers quickly, on their own. Rather than being interrupted by sales calls, cold calls, direct mail, e-mail spam and aggressive trade show hosts, buyers want answers on their own terms...especially younger buyers.

“Your organization is becoming hyperlinked. Whether you like it or not. It’s bottom up; it’s unstoppable.”

David Weinberger Author, Everything is Miscellaneous



For the industrial companies that have embraced inbound marketing, their e-books, white papers, product spec sheets, and opt-in e-mails have been there to greet their buyers with the information they need...on their own terms.

This online interaction with targeted, helpful content has created a top-of-mind relationship with industrial buyers that extends your industrial brand, generates leads and produces sales.

Why else would you be interested in inbound marketing?

Then why hasn't industrial marketing embraced inbound marketing?

First, it is human nature.

It is difficult to give up what has worked well in the past. It is hard work to change strategies. We are all overworked as it is.

Second, creating helpful, quality content for lead generation is a foreign skill set for almost every industrial marketer. I work with hundreds of industrial business owners. I am not aware of any of the owners or their staffs that have the skills to take advantage of the gift that has landed right at their loading dock...**the web and search.**

Clearly, industrial marketing needs to change.

Again, human nature tells us that change is often easier when you take small, positive, measurable steps to validate your new way of thinking. I hope that some of the ideas in this e-book will allow you to embrace some small, positive steps towards better marketing...inbound marketing. Read the whole book or a section/topic that resonates with your specific interest.

For business, our internet love affair was a gift from the gods.

Gary Vaynerchuk Author, The Thank You Economy

I am not here to poo-poo traditional marketing tactics. Many traditional industrial marketing tactics still work. Even cold calling can work, with a new twist discussed later in Section 6.

This e-book will highlight strategies and tactics that can leverage the success of inbound marketing with some of the traditional channels that have worked well for our industrial marketing friends in the past.



1

First...Know Thy Brand

When people think of your brand, what comes to mind?

In most markets today, there is little difference between products in purely functional terms. Sure, you feel your product stands head and shoulders above the rest. But chances are, the customer thinks they're all pretty much the same. So what tips the scale?

Effective branding.

What customers think and feel about a brand often determines why one is chosen over another. With that in mind, when someone thinks of your brand, what instantly comes to mind?

Is there a clear, meaningful image that addresses a real need? Does your brand elicit good feelings, no feelings, or even worse...confusion?

If your brand doesn't have a differentiating perception in the marketplace, if it is seen doing pretty much the same thing as every other product in the category, you'll soon get lost in the shuffle.

Particularly in the age of Google, a strong brand is more important than ever. Your customers are shopping online (probably even as you read this), without you even knowing it. Compared to your top two or three competitors, how do you stand? Will your brand be the one that's remembered, that's chosen for the next step in the selection process?

If you feel your brand isn't doing what it could be, now is the time to take a good, hard look at it. And decide what needs to be done next.

A brand isn't what your company makes. It's what makes your company different.

It's not about you. It's about them.

For starters, a brand isn't your logo. Or graphic identity. Or slogan. It's what customers think and feel about your product. It's what they say about it when you're not around.

In other words, a brand isn't what you say it is. It's what your customer says it is. And what they say is based on intangible attributes. For example, all automobiles are made of steel, glass and rubber. Yet Volvo means safety; BMW, performance; Mercedes, luxury; Chevrolet, all-American; Tesla, electric.

When customers hear your company's name, you want a picture to immediately appear in their mind's eye of what you stand for and what makes your product the right one for them.

A well-defined brand results in increased sales in the short term, and brand loyalty for the long term. It also provides focus and a benchmark for employees and internal communications.

Without a brand strategy, you will be lucky to ever hit your marketing target.

A brand strategy is a big first step in outshining the competition.

Have you really, seriously gotten down to brass tacks and defined exactly what your customers want and need? (Quality, service and price don't count. Those aren't points of differentiation, they're points of entry.)

What is it that makes your company best qualified to solve your customers' problems and sooth their pain points? What makes your brand stand out front and center? Guess what? Guesswork won't work.

Creating branding statements out of thin air leaves the customer with nothing to grasp but, well, air. Developing a meaningful brand strategy takes commitment. And a plan.

Identifying that special something that instantly connects with customers means preconceived notions can't be allowed in the room. Are you and your team too close to the situation to see it clearly? It's hard to see the forest for the trees when you're a tree.

That's where a professional branding firm can help (we just happen to know one). It can guide you through the maze to develop a brand statement that will get noticed. And get results.

To be an effective industrial inbound marketer...your brand must come first.

So, what are you waiting for?

Buyers' Persona

As with any marketing effort, it helps to understand who your customer really is. Often I ask industrial business owners and industrial marketers if they really know their customer. They look at me as if I am crazy. "Of course, I know who my customer is."

However, when I dig deeper by asking, "What keeps your customers up at night?", "What does your customer value most?", "What are your customers' most sensitive pain points?" or "Where do they go to get information about your products?" they almost freeze.

Knowing what makes your customer "tick" is a critical component of any inbound marketing effort. Of course, it helps with traditional marketing as well.

Google has trained your buyers to be more discerning about their product and information searches. The content you produce must closely align with their interests.

In the inbound marketing world, we call this the buyers' persona. Developing an accurate profile of your most important buyer allows your inbound strategy to resonate with your web visitors. This concept has always been fundamental for any marketing effort and is even more critical for inbound marketing. I cannot tell you how many times I refer to a customer's buyer persona when developing a blog post topic or an idea for a premium e-book.

Material Manager Mike

- Professional Degree, Supply Chain Management
- Age 26-40
- Highly Organized
- 3-5 years upwardly mobile within company
- Salary: \$60-\$125K

Goals:

- Zero down time
- Seamless daily production
- Save company money
- Always looking to improve career

Challenges:

- Inventory errors
- Anticipate quality issues
- Finding other resources that save money
- Wears too many hats



Here is an example from a recent engagement.

For a successful CNC prototype shop in Michigan, we developed a premium e-book focused on Project Engineer Eddie. We stressed the CNC shop's unique capabilities, "Tips for Choosing a Prototyping Machine Shop." For another client we emphasized cost-saving logistics service to a CFO by writing a blog post and white paper titled, "Changing Class "C" Components Suppliers Shouldn't be a Hassle." The content focused on a major pain point for a CFO, the hassle of switching suppliers.

Now, repurpose your fresh content designed specifically for your buyer personas and use as sales brochures, trade show materials, trade journal ads, etc. This is a classic example of how Google has trained us to be better traditional marketers along with our newfound inbound skills.

This also highlights a key benefit of inbound marketing. The content originally developed and deployed on your website stays on the web until you take it down. I recently received notification that content I created over 18 months ago was downloaded by a previous visitor to our website.

Sort of like your best salesperson making calls 24/7 while you are on the beach in the Bahamas.

The Buyer's Journey

Your content must also align with the classic procurement cycle. In the inbound marketing world we call this the buyer's journey.

Is your web visitor simply in the **awareness stage**?

Let us say that your web visitor has a challenge and is researching a solution. At this stage, he is vendor neutral and probably not aware of your company's name. Content created properly with the right keyword and SEO elements is presented to him via a search engine. Alternatively, your buyer may be a member of a LinkedIn industry group and received a weekly notification with a subject title that knocks him upside the head. This is a top-of-the-funnel (TOFU) buyer in the **awareness stage**.

OK, your buyer now knows the name of your company and you have gained, at least for the moment, top-of-mind awareness.

Your prospect is now in the **consideration stage**.

Your prospect knows your company; knows you have expertise after reading some of your top-of-the-funnel materials. Your prospect is now in a different stage of the buyer's journey, and needs different content such as comparison white papers, expert guides, live interactions, podcasts and videos. Now, supply your buyer with middle-of-the-funnel content (MOFU) relevant to the **consideration stage**.

Now, here is where the rubber meets the road, the **decision stage**. This is where you turn content into cash.

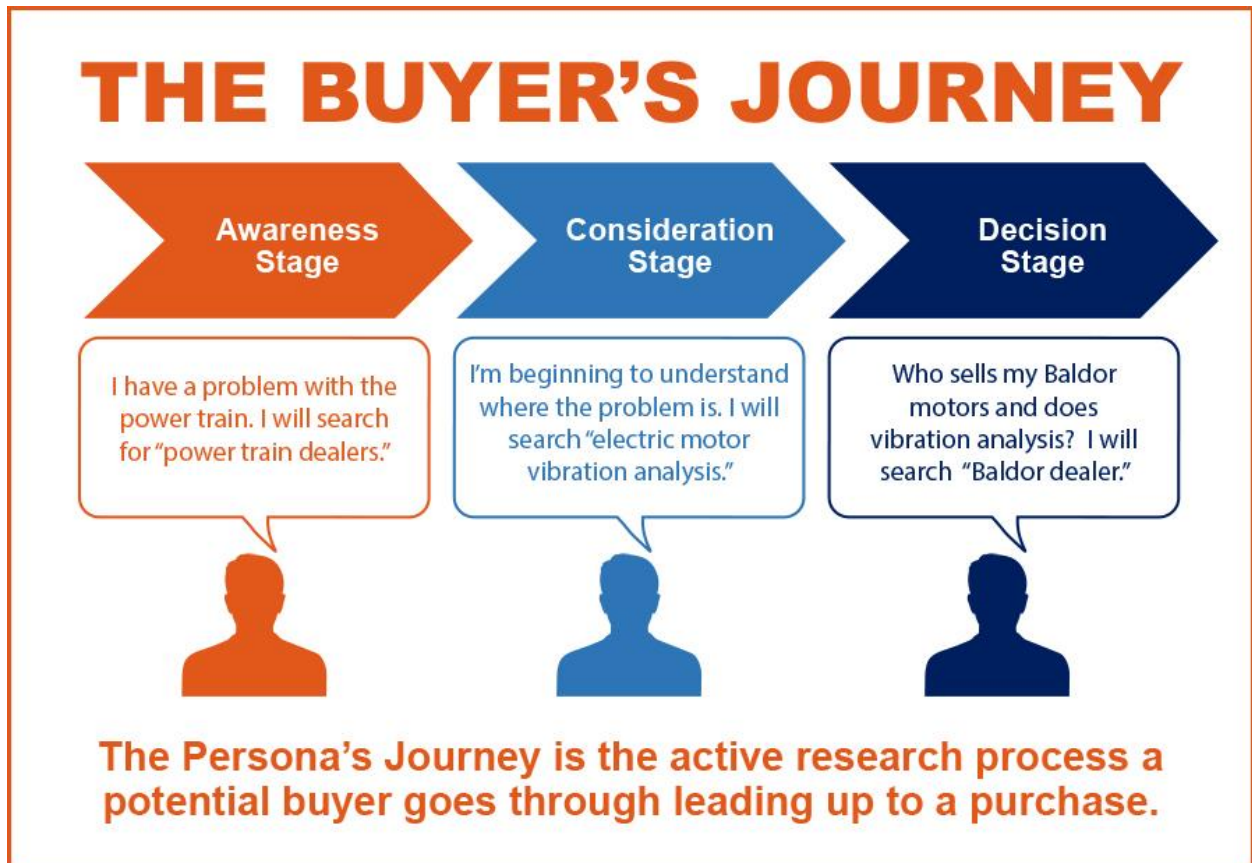
At this stage of the journey, there is increasing pressure to solve this prospect's problem. This specific challenge is costing the buyer's company big time. Now a decision needs to be made. The prospect comes back to your web site for content to validate initial gut feelings and possibly gather some more content for justification. Now your prospect needs product specification, vendor comparisons, case studies and live demos. This is bottom-of-the-funnel content (BOFU) provided at **the decision stage**.

“People shop & learn in a whole new way compared to just a few years ago, so marketers need to adapt or risk extinction.”

Brian Halligan, CEO & Co-founder, HubSpot

As you see, because of Google and their demand for improved content, you have been gently (Well, maybe not gently) nudged into creating better content that resonates with your prospects and customers. Not a skill left to the traditional industrial marketer.

Leverage your improved content and weave it into traditional marketing channels with the advantage of an improved awareness for your customers' needs and personal journey.



In a digital world, it is tempting to think handshakes, personal relationships and events like trade shows are outdated. Nothing could be farther from the truth for the industrial marketer.

As I wrote on my blog in June 2014, [I believe handshakes and personal relationships are more important than ever](#), but inbound marketing can have an amazing effect on lead generation and the ultimate face-to-face meeting.

It hit me like a buyer calling me with the largest order ever. The President of a company I have known for years introduced me to his marketing staff. As I was reaching for a couple business cards, 2 out of 3 said, "Oh, we don't need your card, we have read your blog and your LinkedIn profile and you are plugged into our CRM system already."

Wham...paradigm shift.

This same dynamic can happen at your industrial trade shows. In my blog post about [Indium Corporation](#), I reference a company that is leveraging multiple blogs, a form of inbound marketing, to enhance their trade show presence.

Indium established itself as the go-to, top-of-mind, experts in the global solder industry.

By leveraging 100 different blogs from 15 different contributors, Indium's engineers and sales staff greet prospects and customers **BEFORE** they get to the trade show floor.

"Now, because Indium is so active with blogs, engineers seek Indium personnel by name at the trade shows. At trade shows, and or even in person at a customer's site, a relationship has already been built due to the expertise established on the blogs." says [Anita Brown, Marketing Communications Manager at Indium](#).

"No matter what, the very first piece of social media real estate I would start is a blog."

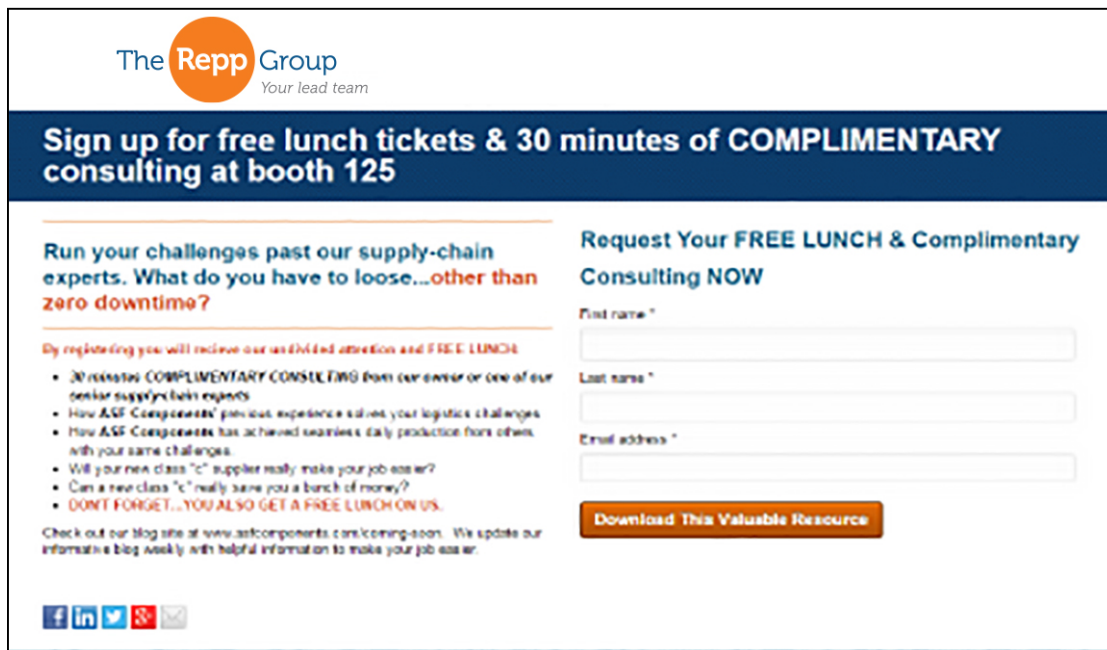
Chris Brogan, Founder, New Media Labs.

HubSpot, the leader in inbound marketing and marketing automation software, published an e-book titled [Reinvent Your Event Marketing for Higher ROI](#). This valuable e-book can get your creative juices flowing when planning your next trade show or any marketing event. This e-book walks you through the process of planning, executing and measuring your next trade show by leveraging the content you deploy on the web.

For example, create a unique call-to-action (CTA) on the front page of your website, specific to an upcoming trade show. The CTA can provide an offer for a lunch ticket on the exhibit floor, or a T-shirt with your new logo. Offer something that makes your company stand-out from your competitors. The CTAs should be everywhere, on your exhibit signs and all your other giveaways. Integrate a strong CTA into everything you do at the trade show that prompts visitors to take action.

The CTA then leads right to a tradeshow-specific landing page on your website that spells out further details of your offer and allows the prospect to give you something in return, his name and e-mail address. On the landing page, you can also have links to specific blog posts, offering answers to typical questions you know you will get at your company's booth. This further reinforces your top-of-mind awareness, demonstrating industry expertise. Google also rewards you with improved PageRank.

Another example: Make sure your handouts are website-friendly. Include a QR code on your handout leading the prospect to a specific landing page on your web site where the prospect can gather more information on a form. Include a hashtag specific to the tradeshow to encourage feedback while at the trade show (#yourcompany-nameoftradeshow).



Example of a typical landing page for a trade show promotion

If you need more details and more ideas, you can download [Reinvent Your Event Marketing for Higher ROI](#)

Implementing many of these ideas, all a result of a focus on inbound marketing, will have a positive effect on your entire sales group.

The handshake is still the most critical element of the trade show, but having the right content that greets the attendee before they even get to your booth gives your sales group instant creditability, thanks to inbound marketing.



4

Do Direct Mail Campaigns Still Work?

Another tenant of inbound marketing...do not interrupt your customer with marketing that annoys them...especially the engineering crowd.

Instead, create marketing your prospects love and represents your brand theme. Content that is well timed and helpful.

Many of my industrial customers are still fond of direct mail. So, I asked myself, "Where does direct mail fit into an inbound marketing strategy?"

What works best, direct mail or email? Which channel annoys them the least? Which channel offers the most positive ROI?

So I did my research, and found a study in Harvard Business Review (January 2013) that was very instructive and wrote a blog post reviewing the study; [Direct Mail vs. E-Mail for Industrial Marketers. What Works Best?](#) (The study is a little old, but still relevant for the industrial market.)

If you do the math, the e-mail marketing effort brought in \$2,600 for each \$1 invested. The direct mail campaign rendered only \$27 for each \$1 invested. Clearly, this is only one study. However, this study instructs the industrial marketer to take e-mail marketing seriously versus often-used direct mail efforts.

Another tenant of inbound marketing is to have an offer and call-to-action (CTA) at the end of your e-mail.

Chapter Two: The New Rules of Sales & Service: "Authentic storytelling sets the tone. People want authenticity, not spin..." "Content is the link between companies and customers. Companies must drive people into the purchasing process with great content..." "The buyer is now in charge of the sales process, and wants to buy on his or her own personal timetable..." "Even if you have the simplest company and respond effectively to emails, you're ahead of 90 percent of your competition."

Chapter Four: Close the Gap between Sales and Marketing: "Closing the gap between marketing and sales means the marketing staff needs to be the buyer expert, not just the product expert."

Chapter Six: The Ideal: Agile Sales: "I find it fascinating that many sales directors I've met go online regularly to purchase expensive products without talking to a salesperson—a set of golf clubs, for instance—but tell me their market is different and insist the salespeople they manage use the cold-calling, hard-sell approach to sales that they learned in the 1980s..." "It's amazing that vice presidents of sales go to the mailroom and systematically throw all the junk mail into the recycle bin without reading it and a moment later march down the hall and insist that the marketing department create a direct mail campaign." (I actually witnessed this very event a few weeks ago.)

Chapter Six: Big Data Plus Real-Time Technology Drive Sales: "In the emerging real-time business environment, where public discourse is no longer dictated by the mass media, size is no longer a decisive advantage. Speed and agility win."

Chapter Six: Social Selling & Your Customer Relationship Management: "A salesperson's personal brand plus their network equals their professional net worth."

Chapter Ten: Hiring for Social Success: "The old model of a successful salesperson was somebody who was very diligent at dialing for dollars. That person had to be tenacious and able to tolerate many people saying "no" (some with rudeness). With the new approaches of consultative selling, agile sales, and real-time engagement, sales managers need to look for a new set of skills when hiring salespeople."

Deliver your own blow to the status quo. Get Scott's book now and begin your own journey.

Changing the status quo is difficult. [A good place to start is A Beginner's Guide to Industrial Content Marketing.](#)
DOWNLOAD NOW

Maybe you are ready to raise your hand and say, "Help". Click the graphic below for a COMPLIMENTARY 30 minute consultation.

Request a **FREE** 30-min consultation!



We deployed an e-mail newsletter that promoted a blog post that I wrote concerning a book review by David Meerman Scott, trusted thought-leader for inbound marketing. At the end of the blog post there are two CTAs. One for middle-of-the-funnel buyer and one for bottom-of-the-funnel buyers.

A final tenant of in-bound marketing is never purchase e-mail lists. **EARN** your recipients' respect and trust by offering remarkable content so they opt-in to your e-mail list. Now, when they receive a digital newsletter, it resonates rather than landing in the spam folder.

5

Industry Trade Journals: Where Do They Fit?

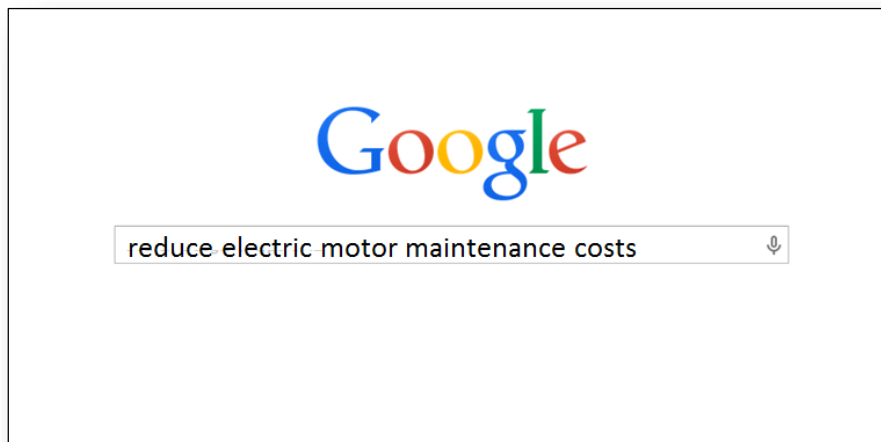
I still believe in traditional ads in trade journals. Having effective ads in targeted trade journals is still a staple of most industrial marketers. There is plenty of market research demonstrating traditional advertising is still one of the best ways to generate leads and drive traffic to your website.

However, let's work a little smarter using inbound marketing.

Imagine you are a typical industrial supplier.

Your electric motor supply business has just released a new “systems approach” for electric motor maintenance to differentiate from other suppliers. You design a campaign to improve your customers' experience and save customers substantial amounts of money. Your new approach features powerful software to help reduce maintenance costs on your plant floor by utilizing predictive maintenance.

You purchase a simple quarter page ad that simply features the recognizable Google search bar with the following copy in the search field, “reduce electric motor maintenance costs”



Planning ahead, you previously wrote an article on your website's blog with the title “*6 Ways to Reduce Electric Motor Maintenance Costs on the Plant Floor*”.

If you format your blog post properly, even if a web user misspells or rearranges the words in the ad copy, the trade journal reader will land directly on your blog post when they search in Google.

When the reader lands on the blog post, they find valuable information with subtle references to a “systems approach” and saving money. At the end of the blog post, there is a call-to-action, “**Find more ways to lower your motor maintenance costs. DOWNLOAD NOW, *Lower Motor Maintenance Costs with a Systems Approach***”, with a link to one of your premium e-books.

Not only have you driven more traffic to your website (improving brand visibility with search engines) using traditional advertising, but you also have an opportunity to capture a lead and extend your company's brand and top-of-mind awareness.

Oh, by the way, if you use a marketing automation platform such as HubSpot you will also be able to measure the effectiveness of your trade journal ads. Inbound marketing allows you to insert custom URL tracking codes to easily measure which trade publications generate the most traffic.

“Don't find customers for your products: find products for your customers.”

Seth Godin, Best-selling author

All of your traditional ads should push prospects towards specific landing pages on your website with a form to gather data with an offer. Your traditional marketing efforts are now measured in a way that was not previously possible.

You can also use vanity URLs (i.e. www.a-systems-approach.com) and tracking phone numbers for specific ads. Now you know what works and what does not work. Measure. Adjust.

You could feature a billboard in the industrial neighborhoods of major cities with the screen shot of Google, pointing to the same blog post.

It is just smart marketing with an inbound approach.

6

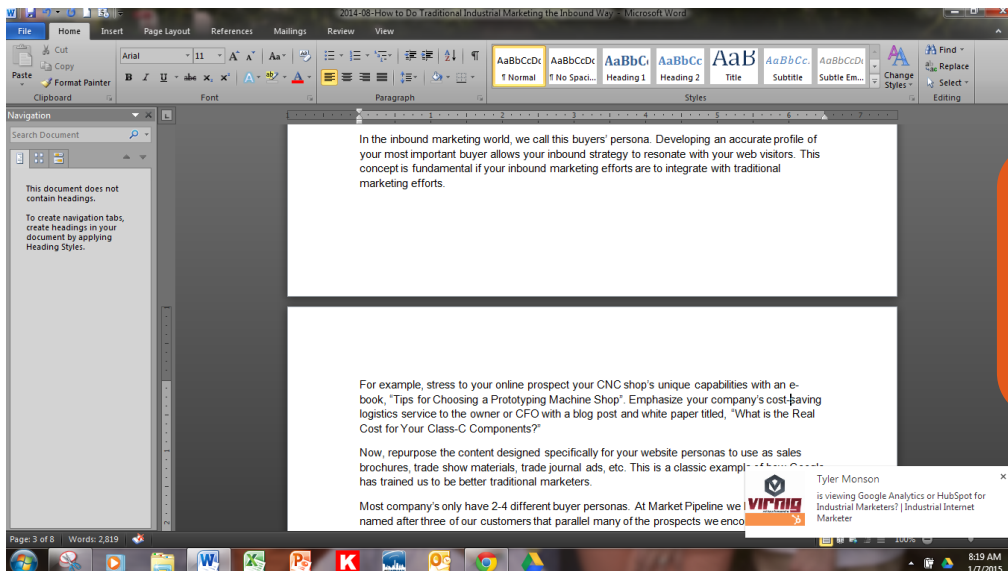
Inbound Transforms Cold Calls to Warm Calls

May dialing-for-dollars rest in peace.

I have been in sales and marketing much of my career. I have done dialing-for-dollars and I hated it. I hated chasing prospects. Many times, they hated me chasing them.

Now let's turn the tables.

I was working diligently on a blog post in Microsoft Word a few weeks ago. At the bottom right of my laptop screen, a notification pops up. A previous visitor to our web site received an e-mail I sent earlier in the morning promoting my most recent blog post. A marketing manager from a company that manufactures industrial products clicked on the link in the body of the e-mail to my blog post. The marketing manager was reading my blog post and the notification told me exactly what interested him.



A few moments later, another notification pops up on my laptop. Now, the owner of the company has downloaded an e-book and visited my blog. I could tell because the new prospect had the same name as the manufacturing company.

Can you imagine my euphoria when I realized a prospect was chasing me, instead of the other way around?

I could actually visualize the marketing manager (I knew his age and title because his LinkedIn profile was automatically "pumped" into the prospect's contact record in HubSpot's CRM) running down the hall and mentioning the content that he had just discovered on the web. I further visualized the marketing person doing his best to gather "evidence" that would support an aggressive inbound marketing campaign to the owner.

"Boss...you gotta see this stuff."

Now, instead bothering prospects on the phone that have no interest in what I am selling, I had the advantage of context. I knew exactly what both the marketing manager and the business owner were interested in.

I called them right away and got the appointment.

Now, instead of just another sales guy, I have a little more respect and might even be considered a valued consultant. Once I actually met with the prospect, it was not about the sale, but about providing value to their manufacturing company.

“Traditional methods of sales prospecting are grossly inefficient.”

Jill Konrath Author, Snap Selling

By using inbound marketing, my role changed from sales to consultant.

Inbound marketing and technology can do the same for your company. However, your sales culture must change with the technology that empowers your sales group. I wrote a blog post about four new skills now required by outside sales.

[4 New Skills Required...The Sales Shift for Industrial Sales & Marketing](#)

Cold calls are now warm calls...just another way that inbound marketing and a much smarter buyer has forced your sales process to change.



7

No Spam, Just Opt-In E-Mail Marketing

Well, isn't e-mail marketing traditional or outbound marketing? Not anymore.

When was the last time you opened a spam e-mail? On the other hand, have you opened a well-titled e-mail that interested you from a trusted source?

Exactly.

By deploying e-mail marketing to those prospects that have already demonstrated specific intent, you are separating your outbound or traditional marketing from all the crap that is sent out by the cockroaches that make a living deploying spam.

Does your marketing effort and your company's brand really want to be lumped in with this crowd?

When an industrial buyer says, "Hey, I know who you are, I trust you and I am interested in your subject," your company's brand and top-of-mind awareness is extended. In a very inexpensive way.

Using opt in e-mail marketing is only half of the argument for inbound marketing. The traditional way of using e-mail marketing was to purchase a huge list and then send out untargeted spam to the whole list.

Don't be a cockroach.

With today's inbound movement and marketing automation, it is possible to send targeted e-mail to recipients that have not only opted in, but also demonstrated specific interests. Using list segmentation, it is easy to organize lists into smaller segments in a variety of ways: by niched industry, by buyer persona, by buyers' journey, by demographics, job title...on & on.

Dream big, then dream "segments."

With marketing automation, you can also personalize your e-mail marketing. For example, the latest study by Litmus and HubSpot, based on 800 million sent e-mails, found that including first names in your e-mails will increase your click through rates by 6-7%.

"Great content is the best sales tool in the world."

Marcus Sheridan - Author, The Sales Lion Blog at Impact Plus & content marketing evangelist



Marketing automation allows you to automate much of the "lead nurturing" process by delivering highly personalized content to the right person at just the right time.

Now, does any of this sound like traditional industrial marketing to you? Thanks to the advent of the web, marketing automation and the concept of inbound marketing, we are blessed with the tools that enhance our more traditional industrial marketing efforts.

8

Paid Online Advertising, The Inbound Way

This may sound like a contradiction, but stay with me for a moment.

I have said for years to my industrial customers, “Develop your own online strategy and don’t worry about paid advertising or PPC (pay-per-click, such as Google AdWords).” I have always felt that industrial marketers, because of the low saturation rate of their industry’s content, enjoy significant opportunities to rank very high in organic search. In 2023, that still holds true.

In other words, if you were trying to rank high on the search engine return page for a typical consumer item, the competition would be fierce (and expensive) because there would be so many other websites competing for placement. How do you think Google got so profitable?

When an industrial supplier of “customized pneumatic manifolds” wants to rank high on the Google return page, it’s not a problem. So I have always recommended industrial marketers focus on quality SEO and forget about paid advertising.

Now, that equation has changed.

Now Google tells us, if we are to compete on the search engine return page (SERP), we must develop content that demonstrates our expertise in our industry. Do not think that you can simply produce a bunch of content such as blog posts, e-books, spec sheets, etc. and expect Google to recognize you.

Bad content will not stick.

Your content must resonate with your audience and it must “convert”. Google is watching. Google knows if your content resonates with your prospects and customers by the number of clicks and downloads. No BS allowed.

“For business, our internet love affair was a gift from the gods.”

Gary Vaynerchuk Author, The Thank You Economy

It is obvious there is a significant gap in skills for the typical industrial marketer. Most industrial marketers are not comfortable producing quality, helpful content for their audience.

If your industrial company lacks the skills to generate great content, then online paid advertising might make sense for the meantime. When I speak about online paid advertising most would think of Google AdWords where you pay for top position using a bidding system. The higher the bid, the closer to the top of the SERP (search engine return page) your industrial keywords will be. Generally, because of the low content saturation rate, bidding for placement is much less aggressive than many consumer products and therefore might be a good strategy.

But only temporarily. Go long.

Don’t just think short term using paid search. Think long term when it comes to your web marketing strategy. As we recommended in Section One, pump up your industrial brand before you do anything.

[Build strong brand visibility based on great content and great SEO first ... then fill in the gaps with PPC.](#)

Then, once you do fire up your content creation machine, your content will have critical consistency. Before I work with any industrial company that wants to start down the inbound marketing path, I require they take a close look at their company and create [A Branding Road Map](#).

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, almost half the engineering workforce will retire in the next few years. The technical professionals that take their place have entirely different purchasing habits and your online strategy and content better greet them with the content they demand. A fresh, strong brand theme will act as a “content multiplier”.

There are many other paid online advertising opportunities for industrial marketers. For example, you can now purchase ads on LinkedIn, twitter (now "X"), Instagram, etc. At this writing, I fail to see the ROI in this channel to market, but clearly, it is something you need to watch. If nothing else, a little action on social media will help your Google PageRank compared to the competitors. Also, LinkedIn’s Sponsored Content looks promising for industrial marketers that are active in their industry groups.

The problem I have with social media is basic human nature. Market research tells us that most of the time people simply go on social media to waste time. They are bored. However, the industrial buyer goes on the web with a mission. Your buyer needs answers and resources ...now. Your buyer goes to search first ... and your branded sales materials better be there to greet them.

If you are going to pay for online advertising, I recommend investing your money where your audience hangs out most, industrial directories such as ThomasNet.com and GlobalSpec.

The next chapter continues this theme and demonstrates how to get the most out of traditional marketing and the digital version of Thomas’ “green books” (Do you remember those?) using inbound concepts.



Industrial directories can work, but from my point of view, when you pay big time to be in an industrial directory you always forfeit the right to be creative and build a brand theme that differentiates your business.

With that said, online industrial directories can fit nicely into an inbound strategy. GlobalSpec's white paper titled, [Content Marketing for Industrial Marketers](#), freely admits "content marketing is an essential piece of your company's strategy." I have many customers that benefit from campaigns in both ThomasNet and GlobalSpec.

If you set up your campaigns properly within the industrial directories they can, potentially, provide much needed authoritative links to enhance your SEO efforts. This can provide additional weighing for the SERPs (search engine results page) over your industry competitors.

With the advent of content and inbound marketing, and then marketing automation, you can easily measure the directories that provide the most leads and revenue. True, directories such as ThomasNet, GlobalSpec, etc., all have their own reporting capabilities. However, with marketing automation such as HubSpot, you can easily compare which channels produce the most leads and revenue on one dashboard; ThomasNet, GlobalSpec, your e-mail campaigns, product spec sheets, SEO, white papers, e-books, videos, etc.

Measure & adjust. Measure & adjust

If you give inbound marketing the credit it deserves, an inbound campaign will produce superior results over the long term for two critical reasons. First, your customers now demand quality content. Second, an online directory has trouble building your company's brand theme as previously discussed.



For this section, I depart from the norm to demonstrate a key tenant of inbound marketing.

I am using a blog post I wrote on 12/09/2013 about marketing automation. If you are running down the road towards inbound marketing, you undoubtedly are looking at marketing automation to deploy & measure all that great content you will produce. Indeed, it is a long road and you need good business reasons to do so. Rather than running through a boring review of marketing automation, my blog post gives you tangible benefits and why you should start this journey.

Inserting this blog post, first written 10 years ago, gives you a real example of an additional benefit of inbound marketing. That is, the ability to repurpose content into different formats that continue to benefit your marketing effort.

The nine business reasons I highlighted 10 years ago are just as relevant today as they were in December of 2013.

Here is the link to my blog post:

[Is Marketing Automation Worth It? 9 Business Reasons Why Industrial Marketers Must Embrace It](#)

For your convenience here is the body of the blog post:

Few deny that marketing automation can provide measurable benefits for all types of businesses. Marketing automation still has a low adaptation rate among industrial marketers. Industrial marketers are still hesitant to stick their toe in the water. My experience and research tells me that the ones that have adapted marketing automation have, almost universally, under-utilized the software and resulting benefits.

I would like to briefly examine why that is and identify real business reasons why marketing automation just makes sense for industrial marketers.

I digress, but I think it is important that you understand how I came to be so passionate about marketing automation and content marketing for our industrial customers. For me, this video sums it up perfectly:

[You Oughta To Know Inbound Marketing](#)

At the very heart of marketing automation is...you guessed it. CONTENT.

And therein lies the challenge for industrial marketers. Many industrial marketers have never thought about publishing a helpful e-book online.

Another foreign, yet critical, element of content creation is a strong brand message. Many industrial marketers have never approached the subject of brand development. Yet in the age of Google, a strong brand is more important than ever. A strong brand levels the playing field with your larger competitors.

I would never invest in marketing automation unless you can overcome these two significant cultural challenges:

- Developing a culture from within that produces relentless, quality content that attracts visitors to your web site.

- If you feel your brand isn't doing what it should, now is the time to take a good hard look at it. In my opinion, the best place to start is by asking "WHY. I wrote a post earlier: [Your Industrial Brand! WHY?](#) from Simon Sinek.

BUT...before the critical elements above, and before you even start considering marketing automation there must be the most important element of all: **EVANGELISM!**

Merriam-Webster defines evangelism as "crusading zeal." I have found that there is no substitute for success with marketing automation (or life!) than an individual that has "crusading zeal" for developing content that can be deployed on a good marketing automation platform.

I have done a ton of research and I have personally used LoopFuse Marketing Automation and also Manticore (which was later bought by Sales Engine International).

I finally selected HubSpot after two years of research and practice. So my 9 business reasons are based on my experience with HubSpot. This is not meant to an endorsement for HubSpot. There are many other platforms that provide the same 9 benefits.

(If you want to do the research here is one of the best reviews of marketing automation software from Marcus Sheridan, a fellow "evangelist": [Marketo vs. Eloqua vs. Pardot](#))

I believe in marketing automation for industrial marketers for the following reasons...**If the two conditions above are met first.**

Can you relate to these business reasons?

1. "I can't keep up with technology.": There is no way industrial marketers can keep up with the pace of technology as it relates to the web. The best marketing automation companies are well-funded, and market leaders. This fact alone helps minimize a significant amount of risk for industrial marketers that tend to be a bit behind the web-marketing curve.
2. "There is just too much information thrown at me.": I no longer pay a lot of attention to the thousands of potential information outlets on the web. In my case, I simply follow HubSpot's lead. If HubSpot says I have to pay attention to Instagram, LinkedIn, AI ...whatever ... so be it. I make my own judgments, but this alone has saved me hundreds of hours.
3. "How do I decide on an effective web strategy?": Most marketing automation is at the forefront of unique & creative web strategies. In my case, if I see something that might be applicable to my industrial customers, I can call my Internet Marketing Consultant at HubSpot to find out more and discuss pros & cons. HubSpot truly has been a "Partner" for me.
4. "Where can I learn about all the new opportunities?": HubSpot Academy has been fantastic. I truly feel like I have the inside track on just about everything that might affect my customers' web strategies. I believe HubSpot's Academy has given me an MBA in web marketing.
5. "How can I measure ROI on my marketing?": It takes some doing to get all the "moving parts" set up on a website, but once you do then it is relatively easy to figure out what is working and what needs adjustment. Once these "moving parts" are set up I now have the valuable luxury of staying in the creative mode, a critical element of good content marketing.
6. "How can I minimize my marketing risks?": Although I briefly mentioned this in one of the points above, it deserves its own bullet point. It is that important. With the pace of technology, this is a big deal. Certainly, there is risk in anything, but with HubSpot as a marketing partner my risk and my customer's risk is minimized.

7. "Gen X & Y: How do I appeal to the younger buyers?": There is no doubt that the Gen X & Y are driving much of the innovation on the web. Working with all the Gen X & Y'ers at HubSpot keeps me connected to this very sharp talent pool. On the customer side, I have several industrial supply companies in Michigan where the offspring of current owners are taking over ... many Gen X & Yers.
8. "How do I find the time to do all this?": Don't get me wrong, it takes a lot of time & commitment to master marketing automation and content marketing. However, in the overall scheme, marketing automation allows me to do more with less. I have interviewed many marketing automation users and many confirm this point.
9. "This web-marketing stuff still scares the heck out of me.": I can tell you from knowing hundreds of industrial supply owners and manufacturing owners there is tremendous trepidation when it comes to leveraging the web using new tactics such as market automation and content marketing. As I mentioned above, skill sets like creative writing, creative branding, and creative journalism are completely foreign to many industrial marketers. Yet, the payoff can be a significant competitive advantage for the industrial marketer that masters the web as a channel to market. The good news is that many industrial marketers have these skill sets in house, they just need to be nurtured into a content publishing machine. One of my favorite quotes: "*Remember the best thing about the new rules of marketing is that your competitors probably don't know about them,*" David Meerman Scott, *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*. This holds true especially for the industrial market.

This is a marathon...not a sprint.

Let us assume that most industrial marketers use CRM (Customer Resource Management) software. All of my customers use something we can lump into “traditional” CRM. Some are still using Microsoft’s Outlook as a contact manager. Very few use a cloud-based CRM at this time.

As I became more involved in inbound marketing, it was apparent that the basic functionality and interface had to change. The buyer has changed, but the CRMs had not. At least, not when I created this ebook.(2015)

I am now using HubSpot’s new CRM that closes the loop on all the marketing activities that I have highlighted in this document. Every single one.

Most CRMs are server-based and incapable of gathering all your prospects’ “bread crumbs” on the web. Many CRMs, such as Salesforce, have been designed for sales management and not for feet on the street. The Salesforce platform is not particularly user-friendly. It functions much better for sales managers.

In a nutshell, most CRMs are not designed for your modern industrial buyer.

According to many industrial studies, including well-respected GlobalSpec, 60-70 percent of the industrial buyer’s discovery is complete before they raise their hand and say, “Help”. Your salespeople need to be armed with information that gives them insight and context before they ever meet with a prospect. Traditional CRMs do not bring that kind of context to the CRM table.

I am not here to review HubSpot’s newly deployed CRM module. There are many websites on the web that do that well. www.g2.com is a great place to start if you want to research CRMs.

Switching to HubSpot’s new CRM was a no-brainer for me. As a HubSpot Agency Partner, HubSpot’s CRM module was free. The beta version lacked some of the features that I liked in Salesforce, but HubSpot has been rapidly rolling out updates and now the application is more robust and is ideal for me. We are currently rolling out HubSpot’s CRM module for two of our industrial customers.

What I do want to do is make you aware of the changes that will be coming to your CRM platform in the future and the impact that inbound marketing has had on the CRM world.

CRMs in the future will be able to tell you where your prospects have been on the web. You will want to know what e-books they downloaded before you call. You will want to know which blog posts they read, and when. You will want to know their profile on LinkedIn, without looking it up. You will want to know how active they are on other social media such as twitter (No "X"). You would even like to know by e-mail or text the moment your prospect lands on critical content on your web site. Most importantly, you will want an accurate profile of the company before a sales call. Traditional CRMs cannot easily provide critical, web-based intelligence. New, cloud-based CRMs will.

Please do not rush out and switch from Salesforce or any other CRM. If they serve your needs, then stick with them.

However, if your current CRM is underutilized or you do not have one, you need to know what is going on with the integration for marketing automation platforms and CRMs. There are many great marketing automation platforms on the web. The best ones will have CRM modules that offer your sales group a tremendous competitive advantage and offer great intelligence before your star sales person makes that warm call.

We have all heard the John Wanamaker quote, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don’t know which half.” I consider this a traditional marketing dilemma for any business.

Let’s face it, most industrial marketers make decisions on their experience and “gut” feelings. Let alone have an opportunity to gage success or failure in their marketing efforts.

The advent of content marketing and inbound marketing has rocked Wanamaker’s world. The meteoric rise of content deployed in the web and the algorithms that manage search engines, social media and e-mail marketing will continue to improve. All this data is capable of offering the industrial marketer a dashboard view of the half that is wasted and the half that performs.

I like to call it *inbound performance marketing*.

For those industrial companies that want to be the top-of-mind leaders in their niche, this data is crucial. Marketing automation platforms such as HubSpot and others offer this competitive advantage. Primarily because your competitors will still be in the dark if they stick to traditional industrial marketing.

"Remember the best thing about the new rules of marketing is that your competitors probably don't know about them"

David Meerman Scott, Author, The New Rules of Marketing and PR & The New Rules of Sales & Service.

Making marketing decisions by your industrial gut is no longer an option. With the convergence of data and dashboards (i.e. marketing automation), there is no excuse for the industrial marketer to be in the dark.

Take advantage of what the web has given you and create marketing your audience loves and extends your company’s brand.

Want to know more, give Tom a call at 269-375-0349 or visit my website & blog at www.thereppgroup.com.



"The time is now for industrial & B2B marketers to understand what must be done to remain competitive. In 5 years, it will be far too late."

Jared Fabac, Author, *The Industrial (Marketing) Revolution*



"Inbound Marketing is global. I find it fascinating that what was once a controversial idea evangelized by a handful of us way back in 2007 has spread to smart marketers everywhere who want to grow their business now. In the past few years as I delivered my keynotes around the world, I have met inbound marketers ... in places like Egypt, Bulgaria, India, the UK, Poland, Panama, and Bahrain. Heck, if a small eco-resort in Western Belize called the Lodge at Chaa Creek can secure top search engine results and grow their business quickly through inbound marketing, there's no longer any excuses for inbound marketing adoption for you or your business. But no matter where I am and no matter whom I am speaking with, the biggest barrier is the four-letter word that begins with 'F' -- FEAR. Don't let your fear of something new hold you back."

David Meerman Scott, Author, *The New Rules of Marketing and PR & The New Rules of Sales and Service.*

For more information call Tom Repp at 269-375-0349 or become a blog subscriber to [The Lead Story](#).

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