FOREWORD BY DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT

THE NEW RULES OF SOCIAL MEDIA SERIES

INBOUND MARKETING

GET FOUND USING GOOGLE, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND BLOGS

BRIAN HALLIGAN | DHARMESH SHAH

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INBOUND MARKETING

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BRIAN HALLIGAN AND DHARMESH SHAH

WILEY

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Foreword

We're living a revolution!

We're living a revolution in the way people communicate. How did a relatively unknown, young, single-term black senator with funny ears and a funnier name get elected President of the United States? Simple: He and his team understood the revolution and harnessed the power of the Web to communicate effectively with the masses. They built an online following of tens of millions and raised half a billion dollars, much of it from small donations on the Web.

We're living a revolution in the way people find products and choose companies to do business with. These days, practically everyone turns to the Web first when researching anything from what's the best baby stroller to buy to which corporate accounting firm to hire for your business. We start at Google or another search engine and we tap our online network of friends, family members, and colleagues via e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, Facebook, and Twitter.

We're living a revolution where the companies that attract our attention are not the ones with big budgets and glitzy TV ads. Now we pay attention to the ones with great Web content, like Zappos, a shoe retailer that's quickly grown into a billion-dollar business.

Clearly, a great Web presence is critical for any business. Inbound marketing is at the forefront of the revolution.

And with revolution comes liberation!

We're liberated from the tyranny of marketing effectiveness being determined by the size of our wallets. Today, anyone with a story to tell can command an audience—and customers—on the Web. Your potential customers are looking for products and services like yours right now, today, this minute.

We're liberated from the tyranny of having to interrupt people's daily lives to try to market to them. Rather than grasping for buyers' attention with expensive ad campaigns, now we can publish engaging and useful information on the Web and deliver it exactly when people are interested. People land on our virtual doorstep. This is a dream come true!

We're liberated from the tyranny of always relying on mainstream media to get our information into the marketplace. Now we can tell our story directly. And the best part is that, when you tell the story well, you'll get found by people who are eager to do business with you.

Inbound marketing is about getting found online, through search engines and on sites like Facebook and YouTube and Twitter—sites that hundreds of millions of people use to find answers each day.

Oh, and one more thing: Now marketing is fun! When was the last time you got excited about buying yet another contact list of people you could interrupt? Never, right? Inbound marketing is fun, and with it comes a more rewarding way to live.

But as in every revolution, the rules have changed. If you're like me and you've grown up with a traditional marketing education that focused on the "four P's," then you've got to unlearn what you have learned. If you have an MBA, or you've trained on the job, then you've got to unlearn what you have learned. You need to forget what worked in the

past, in the off-line world, before the revolution. You need to pick up some new skills.

Fortunately, we've got Brian and Dharmesh to show us the way. These guys are marketing visionaries who have helped millions of people get found online. Really. Today millions of people are being found more often than they used to be because of Brian and Dharmesh's incredibly popular tools and pioneering ideas, like HubSpot Website Grader. And now they've collected all their years of experience into this book.

In these pages, you'll find marketing strategy and wisdom. But even more importantly, you'll find hundreds of practical and accessible ideas, tools, and techniques that you can apply to your business right now. *Inbound Marketing* is written by experts steeped in the realities of successful marketing, not academics who talk up the latest theory.

The great thing about inbound marketing is that anyone can do it. Including you. *Especially* you. It doesn't require a lot of money, but it does require an investment of your time and creativity.

What are you waiting for?

Continue reading to join the revolution, become liberated, have fun, and get found by your customers!

—David Meerman Scott
Bestselling author of
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www.WebInkNow.com
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Introduction

We met at MIT where we were both graduate students trying to learn as much as we could about business, entrepreneurship, and innovation. It was at MIT where we learned we had a mutual interest in marketing and the power of the Internet. After graduating in 2005, Brian went into venture capital while Dharmesh stayed on for another year at MIT to work on his graduate thesis.

During Brian's first year out of MIT, he spent a lot of time with venture-backed startup companies helping them think through how to grow their businesses. He watched the marketing departments at these startups use what were "tried-and-true" marketing techniques that he had seen work throughout his career; techniques such as trade shows, telemarketing, e-mail blasting and advertising. He noticed that these methods were no longer getting through to customers who seemed to be getting better-and-better at ignoring these marketing "interruptions."

While all this was going on, Dharmesh was still at MIT working on his graduate thesis. As part of his thesis work, he started a blog called OnStartups.com. He spent 3-4 hours a week writing the blog in between classes at MIT—and ironically, he developed far more interest and traffic in OnStartups.com than most of the venture-backed startups that Brian was working with. Rather than interrupt people with advertisements or e-mails, Dharmesh was figuring out ways to pull in people from Google, other blogs and social media sites. With many late nights and experimentation, he figured out how to "get found" by thousands of people on the Web.

It was clear to us that something had dramatically changed. The way people shopped and learned was not controlled by businesses with big advertising budgets. Consumers were in control.

We started describing the way companies were traditionally marketing as "outbound marketing" and the way Dharmesh marketed OnStartups.com as "inbound marketing." Our conclusion was that interruption-based, outbound marketing techniques were fundamentally broken and in order to successfully break through the noise and connect to people, companies needed to rethink the way they marketed from the bottom-up. In other words, they had to ensure their customers could find them using inbound marketing.

It is a fantastic time to be a marketer or a business owner today. For the last 50 years, companies such as Procter & Gamble, IBM, and Coca-Cola used huge amounts of money to efficiently interrupt their way into businesses and consumer's wallets using outbound marketing techniques. The outbound marketing era is over. The next 50 years will be the era of inbound marketing.

In 2006, a block away from our classrooms at MIT, we started HubSpot. HubSpot is an inbound marketing software company that helps businesses take advantage of the inbound marketing revolution. We use our own company as a petri dish in which we experiment with these new marketing ideas. The techniques have worked remarkably well for us. We have thousands of customers and have managed to get found by millions of people through Google, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and the blogosphere. The lessons we have learned in building HubSpot and helping thousands of our customers are let loose in this book—where we share them with you.

We wrote this book with a very practical mindset. We wanted to do more than just tell you about the why of inbound marketing—the strategy. We also wanted to share with you the how—the tactics. We wanted to take our collective experience with thousands of companies, including our own, and turn it into something that you can use to get found.

We hope you enjoy the book and are able to use it to dramatically grow your organization.

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INBOUND MARKETING

PART ONE

Inbound Marketing

What gets us into trouble is not what we don't know.
It's what we know for sure that just ain't so.

—Mark Twain

CHAPTER 1

Shopping Has Changed . . . Has Your Marketing?

The fundamental task of marketers is to spread the word about their products and services in order to get people to buy them. To accomplish this task, marketers use a combination of outbound techniques including e-mail blasts, telemarketing, direct mail, TV, radio, and print advertising, and trade shows (or expos) in order to reach their potential buyers. The problem with these traditional marketing techniques is that they have become less effective at spreading the word as people get better at blocking out these interruptions.

Ten years ago, buying a large e-mail list of "targeted names" and sending newsletters and offers to addresses on this list worked well. Internet users now routinely employ spam filters, and the National Canned Spam Act limits a marketer's ability to send "unsolicited messages" to people with whom the company does not have a relationship. According to the research firm MarketingSherpa, the average open rate for an e-mail blast has gone down from 39 percent in 2004 to 22 percent in 2008.

Ten years ago, hiring your own internal sales force or contracting with an external telemarketing firm worked

well. More recently, Caller ID has become a standard feature on home, work, and cell phones, and increasing numbers of people are signing up for the national Do Not Call Registry. A well-trained telesales rep can go a full day without having a decent conversation with a prospect.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIRECT MAIL AND JUNK MAIL

DIRECT MAIL IS WHAT YOU SEND AS A MARKETER. JUNK MAIL IS WHAT YOU RECEIVE AS A CONSUMER.

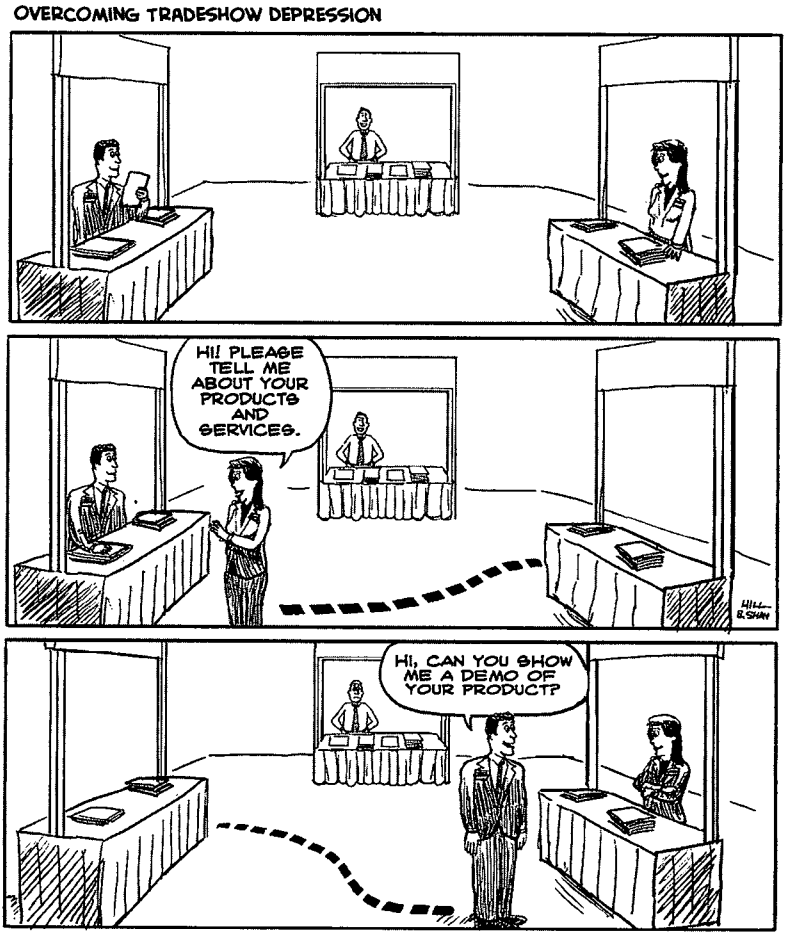
Ten years ago, sending a piece of direct mail to a large list of people was an effective way to get business—just ask the credit card companies—because people looked forward to opening their mail. Mailboxes are full of junk mixed in with a few bills, so people pay less attention to them.

Ten years ago, spending tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on a TV advertisement was a guaranteed way to reach a large audience. More recently, people use TiVo/DVRs to skip advertisements, and in addition the plethora of available TV channels and the rise of great video content online, make choice the advertiser's enemy.

Ten years ago, radio ads were heard by people in their cars, homes, and workplaces. Today, the emergence of XM/Sirius radio has dramatically lowered advertising's reach, and

the emergence of the iPod and iTunes has dramatically lowered the amount of radio people listen to at home and at work.

Ten years ago, a trade show was a surefire way for businesses to reach a business audience. Today, many trade shows have either gone out of business or have seen a significant decline in attendees due to people preferring to not spend money on flights, hotel costs, etc. Many people visiting trade shows now are job seekers and other vendors.



Ten years ago, the trade publication was subscribed to and carefully read by most of your marketplace. Today, trade publications have been losing subscribers and laying off staff. These highly-qualified people are now starting blogs—some of which have become more popular than the trade publication.

The bottom line is that people are sick and tired of being interrupted with traditional outbound marketing messages and have become quite adept at blocking marketers out!

Who Moved My Customers?

People shop and learn in a whole new way compared to just a few years ago, so marketers need to adapt or risk extinction. People now use the Internet to shop and gather information, but where on the Internet do they go—and how do they use the Internet for these activities? We can break the Internet down into three main areas.

People primarily shop and gather information through search engines, such as Google. The average information seeker conducts dozens of searches per day—and, rather than listen to a sales rep, read a spam message, watch a TV ad, or fly to a trade show, most people find it easier to sit at their desks and find the information online through Google. In order to take advantage of this new reality, marketers need to change the way they think about marketing—from the ground up.

Another place people use to gather information is the blogosphere and its over 100 million blogs (as of this writing). Virtually every industry and consumer niche you can think of has a cadre of online pontificators, many of whom are quite good. Your target audience is no longer reading the trade publication, and instead is searching Google and

subscribing to blogs written by the folks who used to write for the trade rag.

The third place people learn/shop is in the social mediasphere—the name for the collection of social "media" sites such as Twitter, Facebook, StumbleUpon, LinkedIn, Digg, Reddit, YouTube and others. These sites started as niche techie sites, but are becoming mainstream.

To be successful and grow your business and revenues, you must match the way you market your products with the way your prospects learn about and shop for your products. And you do that by generating leads through inbound marketing.

Inbound in Action: Barack Obama for President

Regardless of your political views, you can apply the marketing principles Barack Obama used in his 2008 presidential campaign—a brilliant example of how to effectively use inbound marketing to beat bigger, better-funded rivals.

In the run up to 2008, Barack Obama was a little-known first-term senator from Illinois up against a well-known, well-funded Hillary Clinton machine. Early in the race, Obama realized that using the same outbound marketing rules that Hillary would likely use would put him on the same playing field—*but the field would be slanted her way.*

Because he initially had less funding, Obama couldn't compete with Hillary and her e-mail blasts, telemarketing, direct mail campaigns, and TV and radio advertising. Instead of playing by the old rules, he made different rules altogether—many of which relied heavily on inbound marketing. "The aim of our online campaign," says Chris Hughes,

co-founder of Facebook and Obama's Internet Strategist, "was to help individuals understand the values of Barack Obama and of our campaign and then to make it as easy as possible for them to actively engage with the campaign's work. We tried to open as many direct channels of communication as possible—using e-mail, text messages, online networks—and then equip them with the tools to spread the campaign's message using networking technology such as My.BarackObama.com and Facebook."

The strategy worked. Americans were able to connect with Obama via his blog, Facebook page (5,800,000 supporters and counting), Twitter (450,000 followers and counting), LinkedIn (13,000 members and counting), and YouTube (21,000,000 views and counting), among other social networks and web sites. The rest, as they say, is history.

Eric Frenchman, John McCain's online consultant and Chief Internet Strategist for the online political agency Connell Donatelli, Inc., commented on the candidates' use of social media throughout the presidential campaign. (His comments were compiled by Jon Clements who writes the *PR Media Blog* found at http://pr-media-blog.co.uk.) Keynoting the Future of Digital Marketing event in London, June 2009, Frenchman called search marketing "the great equalizer" and the "one place where you can compete or even beat your competition with less money." He also noted Obama's ability to use Facebook effectively: creating "register to vote" widgets helped him amass over three millions Facebook followers versus McCain's 610,000. Frenchman also made a point that to us is a key to using social media effectively—rather than use Twitter to engage in conversations with people, McCain used it as a "one-way communication vehicle." In other words, he

wasn't listening to his constituents but instead was talking "at" them.

Whether you agree or disagree with the candidates is now moot. The moral of the Obama campaign is this: inbound marketing, if done right, is a very effective way to reach your prospective customers. How to do inbound marketing right is what you'll learn in this book.

To Do

1. Keep reading this book for "how to" advice.
2. Visit www.barackobama.com and look around.
3. Get fired up to take your market by storm.
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

(We left these blank for you to write in other "to do's" that come to mind.)

CHAPTER 2

Is Your Web Site a Marketing Hub?

The history of the company web site began with the paper brochure that was handed out at trade shows and stuffed into envelopes for mailing to unsuspecting prospects. When the Internet came into play, this same brochure was handed to a Web designer who turned it into a beautiful web site. This made sense at the time: brochures were static, the Web was new and mostly static, and companies had spent lots of money to have these brochures designed. However, having a "brochureware" web site is where the trouble starts for many businesses today.

Megaphone Versus Hub

If your web site is like many of the web sites we see, it is a one-to-many broadcast tool—think *megaphone*. We find that people visit these types of sites once, click around, and never return. Why? Because nothing on these sites—which are filled with sales-oriented messages—compel them to stay.

The Web was originally built to be a collaboration platform by Tim Berners-Lee in the 1980s and while it took a couple of decades to get there, the Web is now truly

collaborative. Instead of broadcasting to their users with a megaphone, the top-ranked sites today have created communities where like-minded people can connect with each other. In order to take full advantage of this collaborative power, you must rethink your web site. Instead of "megaphone," think, "hub."

What we want you to do is to change the mode of your web site from a one-way sales message to a collaborative, living, breathing hub for your marketplace.

It's Not What You Say—It's What Others Say About You

If your company is like most others, you put all your Web energy *on* your site. Seventy-five percent of your focus should be on what is happening *off* your web site concerning your brand, your industry, and your competitors. Your focus should include creating communities outside of your site for people to connect with you and your products and others within the community. Ultimately, this "outside" focus will drive people back to your site. The model in Figure 2.1 is of the Web—each dot is a web site. You want your web site to be a large dot that's connected to many other web sites—in other words, a hub.

In effect, you want your web site to be more like New York City than Wellesley, Massachusetts. NYC has several major highways running through it, three major airports, a huge bus depot, two major train stations, and so on. Wellesley has one highway passing through it, no airport, no bus depot, and no train station. The highways, trains, buses and airplanes to your site are the search engines, links from other sites, and thousands of mentions of your company in the

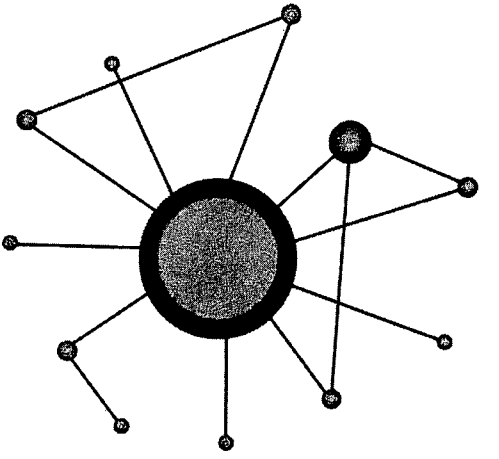


Figure 2.1 Internet Model

social mediasphere. All of this is what turns your web site into a magnetic hub for your industry that pulls people in.

Does Your Web Site Have a Pulse?

Over time, many people will become regular readers of your web site and subscribe to it. These readers won't visit your site directly to read the content, but will consume your content through a feed reader or RSS reader. RSS (which stands for "really simple syndication") is a technology that allows content to be published and pushed to those users that are subscribed to a feed. RSS makes it very convenient for your readers to automatically know when you have created new content on your site without having to constantly revisit to see if there have been updates.

RSS-enabling your site changes the dynamic of your site from a static brochureware site that someone visits once to a site that's living and breathing. Every time you post something new, your RSS subscribers get that update automatically and are pulled back onto your site. (Figure 2.2 shows an RSS symbol.)

Figure 2.2 RSS Symbol

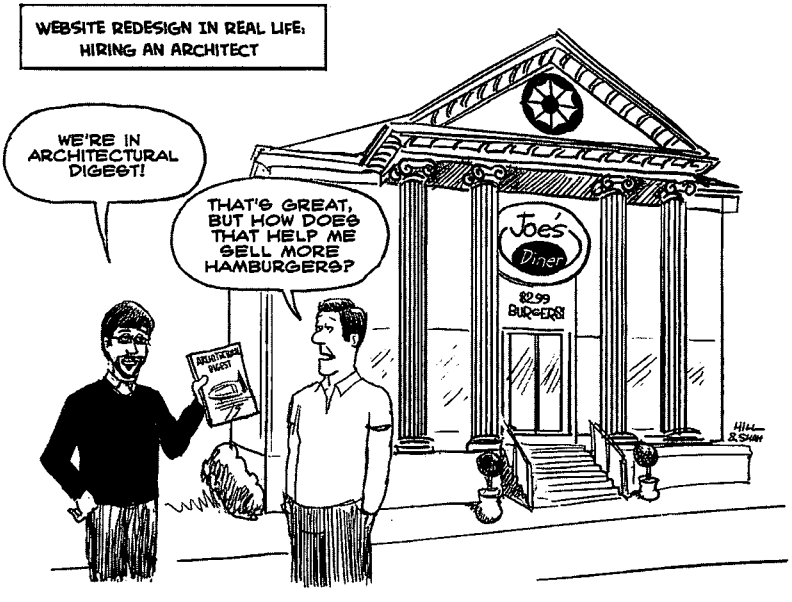
The same goes for e-mail. Not everyone is up to speed yet on RSS, so you should give site visitors the ability to subscribe to your site or sections of your site via e-mail. In the same way as RSS, this keeps your prospective and current customers in touch with your web site—and by extension, you and your company—a totally different paradigm from an online brochure.

As we will discuss in later chapters, you want to distribute your site's content to social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, where it can spread to new, interested audiences more virally. If you do this properly, people will consume your Web content while using these applications, not just on your web site.

Your Mother's Impressed, But . . .

If your company is like most others, you are currently in the process of or thinking about redesigning your web site. Here is the typical process we see. For the first month or two after the redesign is complete, you LOVE your new site and can't stop looking at it. It looks fantastic and your mother is very

pleased! Around three months or so later, you start to nit-pick about certain things—the menus are not quite as cool as XYZ Company's for example. By about six months after the new design, those nit-picks are now starting to really bug you, the background image looks a little dated, and the font choice isn't feeling right anymore. By the time nine months has passed, you start thinking that if you have to look at your site for one more second, you will throw up because you are so sick of that new design. The problem is, you spent a lot of money and the design process took six months, so you don't want to go through all of *that* again—budgets, delays, consensus building, and other matters to address. Then about a year after the new design, something really great happens: You get a new Marketing VP who has the brilliant idea to rebrand the company with new colors, new logo, tweaked value proposition (verticals this time) and while we are at it, let's get rid of that tired web site. Great news—you can start over! Rinse—repeat.



The reality is that most web sites *look* perfectly fine. The colors are fine, the menus are fine, the logo is fine, the pictures are fine, and so on. You personally do not like the look of your web site because you look at it so often. Your visitors, on the other hand, think your web site looks just fine and are not particularly interested in your site's colors or the type of menus used. Your visitors are looking for something interesting they can read and learn about—which is why it makes sense to focus on getting people to consume Web content through other means such as e-mail, RSS, and social media sites.

Save the thousands of dollars and countless hours you were going to spend on the re*design* of your site and do three things. First, add something collaborative to your site like a blog (which is easy to update on a regular basis). Second, start creating lots of compelling content people will want to consume (see following chapters on how to do this). Third, start focusing where the real action is: Google, industry blogs, and social media sites.

Table 2.1 is a summary of the way we want you to start rethinking the current concept of your web site.

Table 2.1 Rethinking Your Web Site

	Your Web Site	Inbound Marketing Hub
Interaction	1 to Many	Many to Many
Content	On your domain only	Syndicated across web
Focus	Your web site	The rest of the Internet
Consume	Through browser	Browser & RSS
Links	Hundreds	Tens of Thousands
Facebook Page	n/a	Thousands of fans
Twitter Account	n/a	Thousands of followers
LinkedIn Group	n/a	Thousands of subscribers

Tracking Your Progress

Before you begin making the changes we outline in the remainder of this book, take some time to measure where you currently stand in order to track your progress and results as you implement changes.

The first thing you should measure is the number of subscribers you have. By subscribers, we mean people who subscribe to your RSS feed and e-mail list. Also include the number of people who are following you on social media sites including fans of your Facebook page, followers of your LinkedIn Group or Twitter feed, and the number of Diggs or Delicious bookmarks you have. If you do not have any subscribers, fans, or followers, don't worry, we will discuss how to get them in a later chapter. The more people following/subscribing to you, the broader your reach across your marketplace. This is exceptionally important, particularly in the case where you have some new product innovations that you want to tell your marketplace about or get feedback on.

In addition, you should be measuring the number of links back to your web site from other web sites and the number of organic keywords that are producing traffic to your site on Google. You can get this information from Web analytics software and online tools that measure inbound links, such as website.grader.com.

The combination of your reach through blog subscribers, social media followers, links into your site, and traffic producing keywords is the size of your city. You want to make it as easy as possible for people who may be your prospective customers to find your company online. In other words, you want to move from the Wellesley, Massachusetts model to the New York City model.

Inbound in Action: 37Signals

Based in Chicago, 37Signals builds project management tools, such as the popular Basecamp product, that companies can use to better manage projects. In their early days, the company started the *Signal vs. Noise* blog—and because they wrote compelling content about their industry, readers spread their articles via e-mail and virally through the social mediasphere, and they were often linked to by other bloggers. Due to this viral activity, 37Signal's blog articles appeared often in Google's search results. Ultimately, the company's blog became among the top 0.1 percent of blogs on the Web and helped the company pull in over three million users.

If you visit 37Signals today, their web site looks nothing like a traditional online brochureware site. Instead, it's an online hub for their industry and includes the company's original industry blog (*Signal vs. Noise*), a product blog, a job board, and information about their products and services. One interesting thing about this site is that the look and feel, colors, menus, and other features haven't changed since we first noticed them five years ago.

Like 37Signals, you must begin thinking about your Web presence in terms of an interactive, constantly changing hub for your entire industry—a hub that also happens to sell a project management product. 37Signals is successful because they leverage the disruptive power of the Web to tip the balance of power in their industry from much larger players, such as Microsoft.

While looking at the 37Signals site for inspiration, ask yourself what you can learn. For example, what other types of information, other than product specs, would be useful to your marketplace? What types of information and tools

can you put on your site that will pull in more people from your market?

To Do

1. Calculate your reach.
2. Go to website.grader.com (free) to find out the number of links to your site.
3. Stop obsessing over the way your site looks and feels.
4. Don't spend a bunch of money on a redesign. Start by adding a blog with RSS and e-mail subscription. Consider making your blog your home page the way Barack Obama does.
5. Check out www.37signals.com.
6. Keep reading to learn how to turn your site from Wellesley to New York City.
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

CHAPTER 3

Are You Worthy?

In order to move from outbound to inbound marketing, you need to stop interrupting people in your target market and "get found" by them instead. To do this, you'll need to ensure your company's value proposition is truly *remark*able. What do we mean by "*remark*able"? We borrowed the term from Seth Godin who uses it in place of the word "unique" and we took the liberty of italicizing "*remark*" in order to prompt you to ask yourself whether your product or service is worthy of other people's "*remark*s." Having a remarkable strategy in the inbound marketing era is more critical than ever for two reasons.

First, the Internet enables you to reach many more people than you could pre-Internet, but it also opens you to up to potential competitors everywhere (e.g. globally versus locally). The trick is to stand out by becoming as *remark*able (unique and valuable) as possible to a segment of buyers.

Second, the Internet enables *remark*able ideas to spread extremely quickly—far more quickly than pre-Internet days. *Unremark*able ideas languish unfound.

Creating a Remarkable Strategy

We had a brilliant strategy professor at MIT named Arnold Hax who used to frequently repeat the following phrase, "Watch your competitors, but don't follow them." Within your marketplace, unwritten rules form that you and all your competitors implicitly agree to and fight along. These rules are typically set by the current market leader who educates the customers—who then force the rules upon new entrants like you. There are two ways to create a winning strategy in an era where remarkable ideas spread virally and you face more competitors than ever.

The first method is to think across the traditional boundaries of your marketplace to alternatives, not just competitors. A classic example of this type of strategy is the iPod, which is an MP3 player. Before the introduction of the iPod, MP3 players had been around for a long time, but techies, who were the early adopters, were the only people who could figure out how to set them up to play music. The rules in the techie marketplace revolved around feature richness. Apple, on the other hand, didn't follow these "unwritten" rules imposed on the marketplace. Rather than compete with the other MP3 players by making yet another gadget with better/more features, Apple made their MP3 player MUCH simpler (and less attractive to the techie MP3 player crowd), integrated it with iTunes, and simplified the downloading of music. By ignoring the existing unwritten rules and viewing their market across market boundaries, Apple captured a previously untapped market of non-consuming MP3 player users—users that might have stuck with their easy-to-use Sony Walkman rather than "upgrading" to a technically challenging MP3 player.

The second method for creating a winning strategy in the era of inbound marketing is to be the world's best at what you do within your existing market rules. If you are not the world's best within your market, define your market more narrowly before one of your competitors takes that position. Take the case of the only monkey wrench manufacturer in San Diego who has been selling to plumbers in Southern California his whole life. (We like to use "money wrench" as an example—it's not a real business.) The good news about the Web is that it enables this manufacturer to get found by plumbers in San Antonio, Texas; San Francisco, California; San Juan, Puerto Rico; San Remo, Italy; and so on. The bad news is that it opens the company up to competitors in all these other cities *and* in Southern California. Rather than compete on the same playing field with hundreds of other monkey wrench manufacturers until the profit margins erode to zero, the owner of the company decides to specialize in monkey wrenches for left-handed plumbers—where he quickly becomes the world's best at it. Because far more left-handed plumbers exist around the world than in Southern California, the manufacturer's business explodes. If you cannot rethink your boundaries to get yourself a broad untapped market the way Apple did with the iPod, then you ought to narrow your boundaries within your existing market and become the world's best within those boundaries.

If you need further help redefining your value proposition, we recommend you read the first few chapters of *Blue Ocean Strategy* by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne. The ideas presented in this book are quite similar to those of Professor Hax.

Tracking Your Progress

Progress is particularly hard to measure here! If you have a wide profit margin, then you probably have a *remark*able product offering that matters to a relevant marketplace. If not, keep reading and consult with your advisors or board until you come up with something truly *remark*able.

Inbound in Action: The Grateful Dead

The Grateful Dead had a *remark*able product. They fused rock and roll with bluegrass and mixed in jazz-style improvisation to create a psychedelic sound. Not only did they have a remarkable sound, they had a remarkable strategy that nicely illustrates both methods described in this chapter.

Rather than compete for mass audiences with the Rolling Stones, Beatles, and other "popular" bands of its time, the Dead had a remarkable sound that resonated very deeply with a niche audience. They went narrower and deeper with their target market, rather than going broad and shallow against the myriad of other bands.

Most rock and roll bands treated concert tours as a necessary evil required to drive sales of their latest album. The Grateful Dead flipped this assumption on its head and made the concert tours the main revenue driver, and album revenues as upside to it (in fact, they let their concert goers tape their concerts and pass copies to friends for free). Because they flipped this assumption and focused on the concerts, they had superior sound and light equipment, as well as other concert enhancements, and created a unique

experience for their audience that went beyond the typical expectation of what a concert would be like. Most rock band fans buy albums and attend a local concert. The Dead's fans criss-crossed the country, following the band year-round. The Dead crossed boundaries from a rock band to a way of life.

From an early inbound marketing perspective, the Grateful Dead did everything right: they had a remarkable product (sound); they marketed that product to a rabid, niche market; and they ignored conventional wisdom about how to compete for dollars in the music business by making the concert, not album sales, their main revenue source. They ended up creating a movement that transcended the music itself—a strategy that enabled them to be one of the highest-grossing bands of all time.

The strategies employed by the Grateful Dead are more relevant today than ever because the Internet enables information to spread much more easily, which in turn makes traditional markets much more competitive.

Regardless of your musical tastes, you should apply the marketing principles The Grateful Dead used to the products and services you are trying to sell. Begin by asking questions. What are the sacred-cow rules in your industry that should be rethought? Rather than just focus on competitors, what alternatives can you compete with that cross market boundaries? Rather than try to expand your market, are you better off shrinking it and increasing profits from a more enthusiastic set of customers?

To Do

1. Go to iTunes and purchase a couple of Grateful Dead songs, including "Space," and note how *remark*able their sound is.

2. Answer the question: "What are you the world's best at?" If the answer is "nothing," re-think your strategy to get narrower or innovate across alternatives.

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

PART TWO

Get Found By Prospects

Either write something worth reading about or do something worth writing about.

—Ben Franklin

CHAPTER 4

Create Remarkable Content

Beyond a *remark*able value proposition, you must also create *remark*able content about your company and products, for two important reasons.

First, *remark*able content attracts links from other web sites pointing to your web site. In other words, you want your content to prompt other content producers on the Web to "*remark*" about your products and services and link back to your site. Every one of these links (remarks) gives you a double win: The links send you qualified visitors, and they signal to Google that your web site is worthy of ranking for important keywords in your market. More links equals more traffic from relevant sites, in addition to more traffic from Google via search—double win!

Second, remarkable content is easily and quickly spread on social media sites, such as Twitter, YouTube, Digg, Reddit, Facebook, among others. If you create a *remark*able blog article or white paper, it will spread like wildfire within your market today, relative to how quickly it would have spread just a few years ago.

Building a Content Factory

To make this double win work for your company, you need to create lots of *remark*able content. The people who win really big on the Web are the media/content companies (e.g., Wikipedia, *New York Times*, *TechCrunch*, etc.) who have a factory for creating new content. Each piece of content that has links to it can be found through those sites linking to it and through Google, and it can be spread virally through social media sites. A savvy inbound marketer learns from the media companies and is half traditional marketer and half content creation factory.

The nice thing about *remark*able content with lots of links to it is that the links never go away; as you create more content, it just produces more qualified traffic on top of the traffic you are getting on your older content. *Remark*able content works in the exact opposite way of paid advertising where you pay and have to keep paying to get more visitors to your site. *Remark*able content is the gift that keeps on giving, so you need to become really good at creating lots of it!

Variety Is the Spice of Life

To keep things simple, create content that you can produce rapidly and that people can effectively spread online. Here are some examples:

- Blog articles—One-page articles on topics related to your industry.
- White papers—Five- to seven-page papers that educate your marketplace on an industry trend, challenge, etc. White papers shouldn't be about products.

- Videos—Short two- to three-minute videos about your industry. Product videos are good too, but do not spread as easily.
- Webinars—Live online PowerPoint presentations on an industry topic.
- Podcasts—Ten- to twenty-minute audio programs or interviews with industry experts similar to radio shows.
- Webcasts—Live video shows viewed online.

You Gotta Give to Get

The counter-intuitive thing about *remark*able content is that the more you give, the more you get. The more *remark*able the content and the more transparent you are about your *remark*able content, the more links to your site and the better it will rank in the search engines. Think about the Grateful Dead from the previous chapter—they gave away lots of content and business came back to them in spades.

You want to move away from the mindset of hiding all of your *remark*able content in your founder's/salesperson's/consultant's head and use that content to attract links to your site, which will then attract visitors and move your site up the Google ranks.

Moving Beyond the Width of Your Wallet

Ten years ago, your marketing effectiveness was a function of the width of your wallet. Today, your marketing effectiveness is a function of the width of your brain. You no longer need to spend tons of money interrupting your potential

customers. Instead, you need to *create remark*able content, *optimize* that content (for search engines, RSS readers, and social media sites), *publish* the content, *market* the content through the blogosphere and social mediasphere, and *measure* what is working and what is not working.

You want to think of yourself as half marketer and half publisher. You might consider making your next full-time marketing hire be a writer/journalist, rather than a career marketer.

Tracking Your Progress

You need only track a few simple things to see how well you are doing at creating lots of *remark*able content.

First, track the number of other web sites linking to your web site. Every time a new web site links to yours, it is a vote for your site being *remark*able. Each of these links is like a new road being built to your city and enables more people to find your products and services more easily. You will want to track the number of web sites linking to you today and then track this metric over time, as it will give you a sense for whether the marketplace thinks you have increasingly *remark*able things to say!

Second, track the number of times someone uses Delicious to bookmark your site. Delicious (Delicious.com) is a social bookmarking site that is very similar to the bookmarking feature on your Web browser, but it is centralized. By tracking the number of people who are bookmarking your site over time, you can get a sense for how *remark*able your content is. If no one is bookmarking your site, then no one finds the content *remark*able, which means that you probably need to rethink your unique value proposition. If you have a nice increase in the number of people bookmarking your site or articles, it means that more and more people

think your content is interesting and want to return to it.

Third, track the number of pages on your site that have been indexed by Google and are ready to be served on moment's notice to an eager searcher. The more pages you have in Google's index, the more words you can rank for.

An easy way to track your links, your Delcious bookmarks, and the number of pages indexed by Google is by running your web site through website.grader.com, which gives all of these numbers for your web site in a free report. You ought to check that early and often.

Inbound in Action: Wikipedia

Wikipedia was founded in 2001 on the remarkable premise that the community could collaborate and build a better encyclopedia than an old stalwart like Encyclopedia Britannica. How many people told them that it was a stupid idea back in 2001!?

It turns out that there are major benefits to using a collaborative community approach to creating content. Wikipedia can access far more expertise in narrower topics than an organization with a limited set of editors; the site does not kill acres of CO_2-absorbing trees; it has far more articles; and the information is always up to date. In fact, Brian remembers using a 1967 encyclopedia at his house while in grammar school in the late 1970s—it did not have very up-to-date coverage of the Vietnam War for his book report!

Wikipedia has over 14 million pages of content, over 250 languages, and is the fourth most visited site on the Internet, according to Jay Walsh, head of communications for the Wikipedia Foundation. "The information is 100 percent volunteer created," says Jay. Wikipedia is a remarkable project in that we have an enormous amount of information about products, services, events, people—in short, we

have everything from mundane information to Shakespeare to World History."

According to Jay, Wikipedia has become an equalizer in that ideas and content can be made better through an editorial process. "Within Wikipedia, anyone and everyone has a chance to design words to describe a thing."

Because Wikipedia has become indispensable, it has over six million links from other web sites *remark*ing about it. That is six million different pages on the Web that people can click on and find themselves on Wikipedia's site. Because of the sheer volume of links into Wikipedia and the fact that it's a *remark*able content factory, Google considers it an authoritative site.

What can you learn from Wikipedia? Can you get your users, customers, partners, and suppliers to create *remark*able content for you? Could you set up an industry-specific wiki off of your web site moderated by your business and contributed to by your entire industry?

To Do

1. Think of your marketing function as half marketer and half publisher.
2. Start creating *remark*able content on an ongoing basis.
3. Go to website.grader.com and note the number of linking sites, Delicious bookmarks to your site and number of pages Google has indexed.
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

CHAPTER 5

Get Found in the Blogosphere

As we discussed earlier, to be an effective inbound marketer, it's important you create lots of *remark*able content. A great way to create lots of remarkable content is by starting a blog.

Blogging makes sense for many types of businesses for many reasons. First, a blog will establish your company as a thought leader in your market. Second, due to its dynamic nature and the fact you're creating new content on a regular basis, a blog will change your web site from an online brochure to a living, breathing hub for your marketplace. Third, a blog gives your potential customers a way to engage with you versus being hit with a premature sales pitch; by conversing with your potential customers via your blog, you build trust over time, so that when you actually talk to them about your product and service offerings, they're prepared for your offering. Fourth, a blog will dramatically improve your search engine rankings; a blog is great way to create more pages on your site (each article is a page), and the more pages Google has, the more your site shows up in the search engine results pages (SERPs) for dozens of keywords. And, because search engines like to see sites linking to one another, a blog helps your search engine

results because other bloggers are far more likely to link to a *remark*able blog article about your industry than to the products page on your web site. The more inbound links pointing to your site, the more traffic comes your way and the more Google views your site as an "authorative hub" and thus the higher your site goes in the SERPs.

Getting Your Blog Started Right

Many blogging platforms or tools exist to help you quickly set up a blog.

Whichever platform you choose, however, it's imperative that your blog not include the name of the platform in its URL, for example: ____.blogger.com, ____.typepad.com or ____.wordpress.com. The problem with keeping the name of the platform in your URL is that you're building authority for Blogger, TypePad, or WordPress—not for your company. We recommend having your blog address (or URL) be yourcompany.com/blog or blog.yourcompany.com (techies call this a sub-domain). Another option is to name your blog based on your topic rather than your business. You would then register a new domain for your blog and put your blog there. However, giving your blog its own separate domain can be a bit tough if your financial and/or staff resources are tight, as managing this second—and separate—brand can be a fair amount of work. You'd also then be working on building SEO authority (which we talk about in Chapter 6) for *two* domains.

One thing you'll want to do with your blog is ensure people can leave comments and that they can subscribe to your blog via RSS or e-mail. (Yes, many people do want to be alerted to new blog posts via e-mail.)

Authoring Effective Articles

Now that you have set your blog up, let's get cranking.

To have a successful blog that people will look forward to reading, we recommend that you focus your blog posts on your industry. If you're in the security software business, for example, we recommend you write about security software and not fall into the temptation of including articles about your weekend ski trip, your Red Sox Nation membership, your kids' pictures, or your coin collection. The length of your articles can vary widely, but we recommend you avoid writing anything more than one page long; despite how clever you are, articles longer than a page make people's eyes glaze over and can repel people looking for gold in their overstuffed RSS readers or e-mail inboxes.

What should you write about? Anything that pertains to your industry and that will be of interest to your readers: how-to articles, analysis of a current industry trend or challenge, announcements of upcoming events, feedback on articles you read in print publications, etc.

In addition to informative articles, you can include lots of other information that mixes things up nicely for your readers. Give your readers a list of links to 5 or 10 other relevant articles you've recently read or videos you've watched. Build on another blogger's work by adding to the discussion with your own insight or disagree with another blogger—this is a great way to get attention from the top bloggers in your industry. Diversify your blog posts by adding video—either embed links to existing YouTube videos or break out the video camera and record yourself talking about a hot industry topic, but keep it short—no more than two to three minutes, max! Create cartoons or caricatures of things happening in your industry. For inspiration, take a look at the

funny cartoons in the Sunday *New York Times* that parody politicians, and then find an artist who can create something similar for your industry. Buy a copy of the *New Yorker* magazine and take a look at the cartoons and try to find someone to create similarly humorous ones about your own industry.

In order to come up with consistently good ideas for your blog, you'll have to figure out the way in which you work best. For example, Brian tends to get his best ideas on Saturday morning after a good night's sleep, but Dharmesh finds good ideas all the time. In order to keep track of your ideas, either carry a notebook and pen with you or use your mobile device to store ideas. Brian, for example, uses a section in the notes application on his BlackBerry to note blog ideas. The best way to find ideas, however, is to learn from other bloggers by reading their blogs.

In addition to your own blog content, you'll want to invite others to write on your blog, including local professors interested in your industry, thoughtful customers, analysts in your industry, and other bloggers in your industry. Guest blog articles make sense for a few reasons: they expose your company to thought-leaders in your industry who will be flattered by your invitation, providing you a chance to engage them in a deeper way than if you just cold called them; guest articles lessen your content creation load; and they expose your audience to more ideas that (hopefully) reinforce your *remark*able value proposition. The upside for guest bloggers is that they get exposed to a new audience and get a link from your blog back to theirs.

When you ask someone to be a guest author, you might get some "pushback," as people are busy and don't have the time to write a new article (especially if they are prolific bloggers themselves!). To help people develop content for

your blog, you can use the following tactics: Send interview questions via e-mail to which they respond and you paste into an article; purchase an inexpensive video camera (such as the Flip Camera) and record yourself interviewing your guest—it can be rather fun pretending to be Charlie Rose or Anderson Cooper for an hour.

New bloggers often feel anxiety about how frequently they need to write. As a rule of thumb, we recommend you write a minimum of once per week. If you're a sole business owner, you'll have to take this on yourself. If you work for a larger company or partnership, we recommend you spread the work around. For example, in a security software company, the CEO, CTO, product manager and application engineer can rotate weekly—with each person writing one article a month. The benefit of spreading the work around is that it takes the workload off you, and it gives exposure to rising stars in your organization who will probably enjoy the privilege.

Above all else, make sure your articles are *remark*able!

Help Google Help You

We discuss search engine optimization (SEO) in Chapter 6, but it's worth touching on it now in the context of how you write your blog articles.

With regard to SEO, the most important part of your article is the title. Each individual article is its own page that sits in Google's index to be retrieved for an eager searcher. When Google matches what is being searched with all the pages in its index, one of the most important things it tries to do is match the article title with the phrase being searched. If you want your article to rank number one for the term "left-handed monkey wrench" in Google, then your article

title ought to contain that phrase. Having a keyword phrase in the article title is not a guarantee that your article rank well for that phrase, but it's very helpful.

Within the text of your article, look for important keyword phrases that describe your industry and turn them into hyperlinks. Techies call the words you can click on "anchor text." For example, if in the text of your article you have the phrase "world's best security software," then you ought to make that phrase a link that points to your home page or to another good article on your blog on that topic. The words Google and other search engines see in those hyperlinks help them understand the relevance of the page you are linking to.

If you are already a blogger, we recommend you start a project where you go back to all of your old blog articles and re-work the titles to include relevant industry keywords as well as find opportunities to create links from old articles to your web site or other articles.

Making Your Articles Infectious

If you want your articles to be read and spread, then you need to get really good at crafting catchy article titles. Many copywriting experts recommend that you spend half your time writing the article and half your time writing a catchy title.

Why is the title so important? Well, most people will find your article either through an RSS feed auto-generated from your blog, an e-mail auto-generated from your blog, an e-mail with a link in it from a colleague, a Google search, or a social media tool (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, StumbleUpon, Digg, etc.). We live in a society where every person has massive information overload, so your article needs to capture

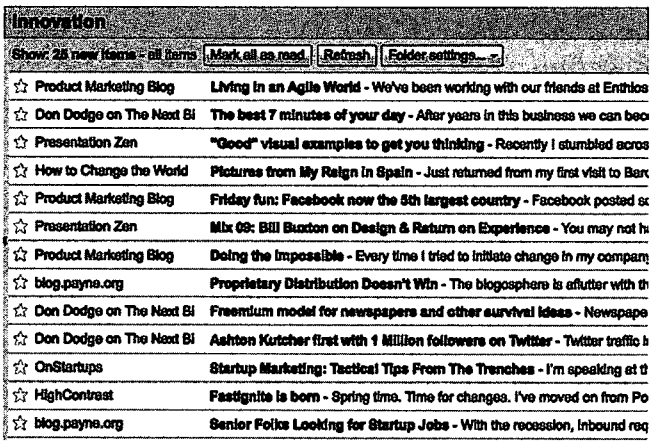


Figure 5.1 Inbox Overload

their attention in literally half a second. Think about how and why you click on certain articles—it's usually because the headline captured your attention. When you look at a Google screen with 10 results, for example, do you click on all 10 or just the first one that catches your eye? While in Facebook, do you click on someone's link every time or do you glance at the title first and only click on it if it really catches your attention? (See Figure 5.1.)

Remember, your articles are competing with hundreds of other pieces of information, so the title needs to be irresistible. Here are the titles of a few blog articles of ours that have gone viral:

8 Marketing Tips From An Olympic Gold Medalist

10 Leadership Lessons From Don Corleone

Steve Jobs & Guy Kawasaki—Powerpoint Best Practices

7 Signs You Should Run Screaming From An SEO Consultant

How To Convince A CEO To Enter 21st Century Internet Marketing

12 Quick Tips To Search Google Like An Expert

These articles went "viral" because several of them are numbered lists—for some reason our species is drawn to numbered lists (e.g., Top 7 Reasons ____ Is Going To Be Dead In 10 Years), so you might as well use this to your advantage. The articles also went viral because the titles mention famous companies (e.g., Google) or famous people (e.g., Don Corleone)—these tend to do better than ones that do not. Think about magazines at the grocery checkout: the headlines grab our attention because they shout out over-the-top "news."

Give Your Articles a Push

Now that you've spent time writing a good article with a great title, you'll want to market it so the most people possible will read it. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn all have a small form that lets you answer the question, "What are you doing?" You can post the link to your article on each of these social networks, and encourage your readers to share it. We also recommend that you encourage your users who are on the myriad of social bookmarking sites (Digg, Reddit, StumbleUpon, etc.) to post for and vote on your article by having these relevant icons on your site as well. If your blog is about left-handed monkey wrenches, it might not make sense to have an icon pointing to Digg or Reddit, but it does make sense to have icons for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and StumbleUpon.

Many industries have their own social bookmarking sites and/or discussion forums (e.g., Yahoo forums, LinkedIn

Answers, etc.). For your industry, you want to find these forums and make sure you post your good articles there for others to comment on as well.

If you're just getting started with your blog and do not have any followers, then we recommend that you *e-mail* a link to your article to a subset of your personal e-mail contacts who you think might be interested. Your e-mail should contain a link to the article and a request asking your contacts to forward it, comment on it, post it on their favorite social site, and subscribe to the blog if they enjoyed it. This gets very old very fast, so do use this tactic only with exceptional articles and only when you are first getting started.

Starting Conversations with Comments

You should encourage readers to leave comments, especially if they disagree with you. When readers come to your blog article and see a lot of comments, they assume the content is good and are more likely to read the article and enter the conversation through the comments section of the article. If you don't ask your readers to comment, they're less likely to do so. The call-to-action at the bottom of every blog post should state something like, "Please let me know your thoughts in the comments section below."

When first starting a blog, it can be disconcerting to think that others can openly comment on your thoughts, products, market, and so on. However, it's actually quite rare for an unhappy customer or a competitor to rant in your blog comments. If they do, we recommend you let those comments stay, as they give you a public opportunity to handle objections and exhibit your customer service skills. If you do not feel comfortable with that idea, almost all

blogging systems these days give you the ability to delete a comment once it's been posted.

Avoid the temptation to turn on your blog's "comment moderation" feature ("comment moderation" lets you approve comments before they appear on your blog), as this extra step in the process creates just enough friction to ensure that meaningful conversations cannot really take place. Comment moderation also discourages your active readers from commenting on later articles. Similarly, we recommend that you do not turn off comments altogether.

Most blogging systems will send you an e-mail when someone leaves a comment, so that you can respond quickly. If someone has taken the time to leave you a comment (which often takes the form of a question), do respond to the comment in order to get a discussion going on your site. These discussions will attract a lot more qualified prospects than the product page on your web site!

Why Blogs Sometimes Fail

The most frequent reason blogs fail is because the author or company writing the blog oversells their product or service. You want your blog to turn your web site into a hub for your industry, not just be advertisement for your product. The idea is to pull your industry in with neutral, brilliant content in the hope that prospects connect the dots down the road, see that you are the most thoughtful person in your industry on the topic, and eventually buy from you.

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Blogs are almost never an overnight success—they build cumulatively over time. Every time you write an article that

has links into it from other sites, that article can get found by people browsing the Web on those other sites forever. That same article can get found by searchers in Google for various search terms forever. That article might also attract visitors who might subscribe to your blog. The great thing about that blog article is that the page, the Google rankings, the links, and the subscriber are all durable assets. Once you write that article, it gives you value forever. When you write your second article, the same thing happens. And so on. A blog is a durable asset that delivers durable value that lasts.

If you spend your energy and money on advertising this month, you will get some traffic from it, but you will have to pay again next month to get more. The blog article delivers value on a semi-permanent basis.

Because the benefits accrue over time and are non-linear, it is easy to give up after a few posts. Our advice would be to stick with it.

Consuming Content with RSS

Now that we have covered how to create content on your own blog, let's shift our attention to how to engage potential customers on other blogs in your industry. This can work whether you have a blog or not!

Your first step is to find a good RSS reader, an essential tool for the inbound marketer, as it gives you the ability to keep track of many relevant blogs without having to revisit them constantly to see if new articles have been posted. It is relatively important that you keep on top of new content that comes out, as we describe in the comments section below.

You can choose from many RSS readers, but we recommend Google Reader. It's free, and completely web-based, so there's nothing to download. To sign up, go to http://google.com/reader. When a new article becomes available for a blog that you subscribe to, that blog will be highlighted in bold in your reader. An RSS reader works like a parallel e-mail inbox in that it fills with articles of interest from your favorite authors as soon as they become available.

Subscribe to Relevant Industry Blogs

Go to Google's blog search engine and type in the phrase or acronym that best describes your industry. Start clicking on the ones that sound interesting and subscribe to them with your RSS reader.

If only a few blogs exist for your industry, subscribe to all of them. If you find thousands, then use website.grader.com to determine which blogs have mojo and which do not. A high Website Grade (e.g., >90) means the blogger has lots of followers and high authority, so engaging on this blog will get you more leverage than engaging with a lesser-known blogger. Think about this process as though you were a lion hunting for elephants (customers). You want to hang around the watering hole (blog) where the most elephants come to drink and bathe.

Contribute to the Conversation

Now that you have subscribed to the relevant, authoritative blogs in your industry, make reading them a standard part of your daily regimen. Every morning when you get your cup of coffee, open your RSS reader for 20 minutes while you

boost your energy level! Reading articles through an RSS reader is much like reading a newspaper, but much more efficient. Quickly scan the titles looking for interesting stuff and dive down where your attention is drawn. A good way to get in the habit of doing this is to stop your subscription to your daily print newspaper and start taking your morning dose of news through RSS.

When you see an article relevant to your business, leave a thoughtful comment—one that extends the thoughts of the author in a meaningful way, perhaps by way of a perfect example. A thoughtful comment can also disagree with the author's article, so long as it is credible. Bloggers tend to like disagreement in the comments as it draws in more people. A thoughtful comment is not a two-word comment such as "great article" nor is it a blatant advertisement about your company's product such as "Come visit www.yourcompany.com." When you leave a comment, we recommend that you fill in the standard fields for name, e-mail, web site, and comment. Once your comment is posted, your web site address will automatically show up, so there is no need to re-type it in the comment itself.

Why do you want to do all of this commenting? Two reasons. First, you want the author of the blog to notice and appreciate your comment and then wander over to your web site (or blog) for a look. If the author does this more than once and finds your value proposition remarkable, he or she will often end up writing about your offering and linking to your site. This link gives your site more authority in the eyes of Google—which in turn moves your site up in the rankings for relevant keywords.

Second, commenting on blogs gives you relevant traffic. If readers of a blog appreciate your comment, they will often

click through to your blog or web site—thus sending you prospects. Remember, the more relevant and higher authority of the blog (based on website.grader.com), the more readers it will have that will click over and read your site.

The reason we're advocating that you read blog content through an RSS reader is based on timeliness. If the blog you're commenting on is very popular, it will have many comments posted to it literally minutes after the post goes live. If you're the 15th comment, your likelihood of being found by readers who are scanning down at the comments goes way down. You want to be one of the first people to comment.

Tracking Your Progress

You can track several metrics to determine the success of your blog. First, measure the number of subscribers over time (blog + e-mail) (see Figure 5.2).

Next, track the number of visitors to your blog (blog.yourcompany.com) over time, the number of qualified leads over time that came from your blog, and the

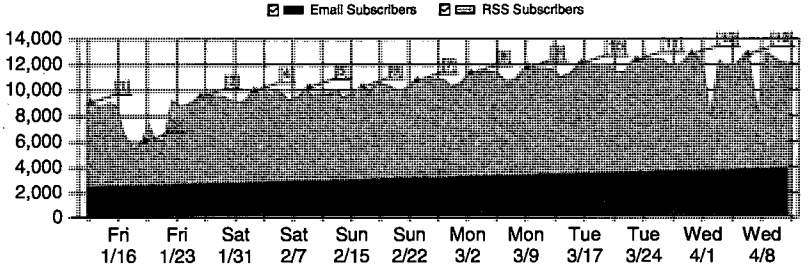


Figure 5.2 Subscriber Totals

Figure 5.3 Blog Funnel Analysis

number of new customers you signed up that originally found you via your blog (see Figure 5.3). You should take the visitors/leads/customers via the blog metric and compare that to other new channels such as Google and social media sites (inbound) as well as old (outbound) channels such as advertising, trade shows, cold calls, and others. After 6 to 12 months of following these steps, your blog will end up being one of the best sources of customers you have.

You should also track each individual article along the following dimensions: date, author, visitors, comments, and links. When you have this information together, you can do some interesting analyses. For example, you can sort the articles by each success metric to determine which article titles are getting the most interest, which authors are doing the best work, and so forth. You can use this information to consistently improve your blog content over time (see Figure 5.4).

A good proxy for how you are doing in the blogosphere is to measure the number of links back to your site over time, and measure the amount of traffic you get from links from blogs (see Figure 5.5).

ARTICLE	PUBLISHED	AUTHOR	PAGE GRADE™	COMMENTS	INBOUND LINKS	PAGE VIEWS
Web 2.0: On Bubbles and Business Models	2 years ago	Dharmesh Shah	2	275	8	294
Go West, Young Entrepreneur! Is The Valley Better For Software Startups?	2 years ago	Dharmesh Shah	9	226	11	223
Back to Basics: User Generated Revenue As A Business Model	2 years ago	Dharmesh Shah	2	216	7	234

Figure 5.4 Blog Analysis

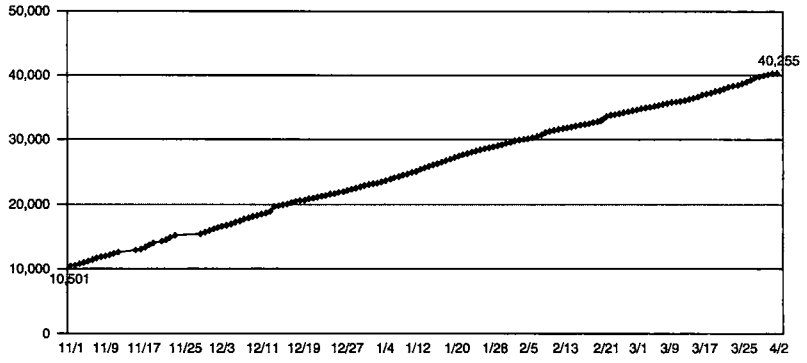


Figure 5.5 Tracking Inbound Links

Inbound in Action: Whole Foods

We can't tell you how many times we've heard that Internet marketing will not work in an "old school" marketplace. It doesn't get much older school than the grocery food business, yet organic seller Whole Foods Market is using its *Whole Story* blog to "share some of the cool things going on inside the company as well as the natural foods industry," according to Paige Brady, the Senior Coordinator of the Integrated Media Editorial Team for Whole Foods Market. You can find their blog at blog.wholefoodsmarket.com.

Instead of simply posting store hours or coupons on their site the way many grocery stores do, Whole Foods is creating remarkable content on its blog that pulls in new customers, enables them to connect more deeply with those customers, and makes it easier for customers to spread the word. Whole Foods is doing many things right on their blog, so let's go through some of their best practices.

Whole Food's content is *remark*able. Because Whole Foods has been creating remarkable content since July 2006, its blog is now a major, sustainable asset to them with over 1600+ pages in Google's index eligible to rank for different search terms. Over 12,000 other web sites link to these 1600

pages, giving Whole Foods 12,000 ways in which new customers can find them. This relatively large number of links tells Google that the Whole Foods blog is worthy of ranking for many important terms. Whole Foods also has tens of thousands of blog subscribers who get notified and sent a link every time the company posts a new article. The pages, the links, and subscribers are a major *permanent asset* to Whole Foods.

In our opinion, they set up their domain right: blog.wholefoodsmarket.com. Rather than create a new brand to keep track of, they made the blog a subdomain of their main web site—a practice that's becoming more common. According to Brady, the company is lucky to have a "whole bunch of smart, passionate people doing incredible work in all areas like organics, supporting local growers, green practices, Fair Trade, micro-lending, and all kinds of food-related stuff. We have a chief 'hunter-gatherer' for the blog to make sure we don't miss important stores and we invite our team member experts to write their own posts as well." Content on Whole Story includes straight articles, guest recipes, contests and video and is created by over 20 employees.

Whole Foods is particularly adept at writing clever, short article titles that are easy to spread virally within the social mediasphere, including:

Natural Approaches To Allergies

And The Green Prom Winner Is...

Pregnancy—A Time To Go Natural

The combination of pithy titles and good articles is one reason why the company has over 400,000 Twitter followers and over 58,000 Facebook followers.

Brady adds that another important aspect of the blog is "continuing the conversation through comments from our readers. We have an educated customer base and they ask excellent questions, which we answer either in the comments section or by posting a new blog entry. It's very important to us that we engage with our readers." The proof is in the pudding, as they say, as *Whole Story* is read by tens of thousands of subscribers.

The *Whole Story* team are masters of the soft sell. It is very hard to acquire subscribers and get lots of other web sites to remark about you if your blog is overtly selling your products. Approximately 90 percent of Whole Foods' blog content does not sell their products at all. A great example of a soft sell article is one concerning a sheep's milk cheese called Mons Cazelle de Saint Affrique. Instead of talking about the product itself (and why people should buy it) the cheese buyer wrote about the romantic town in which the cheese is made, how it's made, and the people who make it. The article ends with the following: "Either way it is a fantastic cheese that we are offering you during the month of April. Welcome spring with a lovely, young cheese from France, and hurry since it may not be around long!" (see Figure 5.6).

To Do

1. Set up your blog as blog.yourdomain.com or a "net" new domain (not ____.blogger.com or ____.wordpress.com).

2. Start creating remarkable content in different flavors (articles, videos, links, guest blogs) with search-friendly, catchy titles.

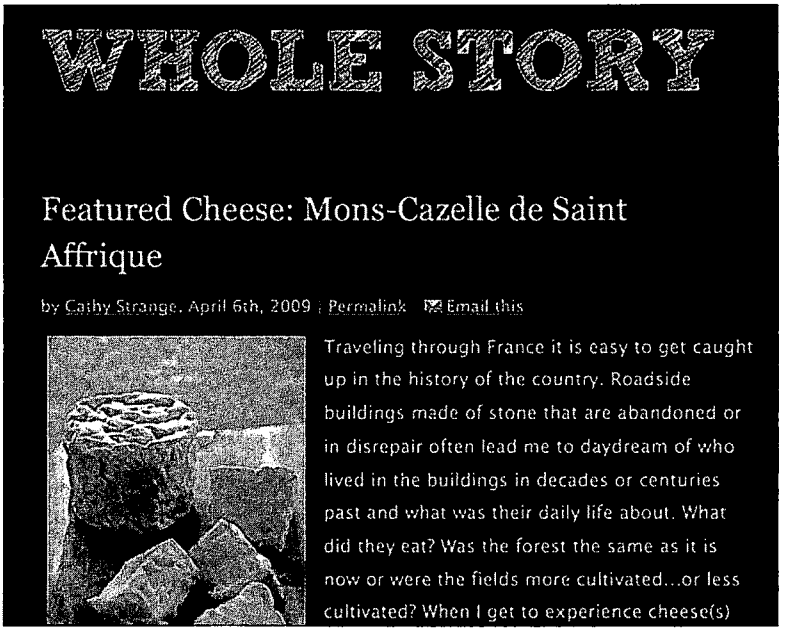


Figure 5.6 Screen Shot of Whole Foods' Blog

3. Market that content through e-mail, RSS, and the social mediasphere.
4. Measure subscribers to the blog, measure blog conversion to leads/customers, and measure individual blog articles for best practices.
5. Be patient.
6. Set up Google Reader.
7. Find and subscribe to industry blogs.
8. Unsubscribe to your daily newspaper.
9. Start commenting thoughtfully on other blogs.
10. When you have your coffee every day, read your RSS feeds.

11. Check out blog.wholefoodsmarket.com as an example of a good blog.

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

CHAPTER 6

Getting Found in Google

How many times did you use Google to look for something today? Chances are, several times. In fact, Americans conducted over 13 *billion* searches alone in April 2009 using Google, according to ComScore[1]. Total search activity for the same period for all search engines was over 22,000 searches. It's likely that amongst all those billions of searches, many were related to *your* product or service. Simply put, if your site isn't being found in Google, you're missing a major opportunity to generate leads for your business. In fact, you're probably sending these leads to your competitors!

Other than the sheer volume of potential visitors you can draw through Google, there's another important consideration for ensuring your site ranks well: People searching on Google are actually *looking for something*. This may sound a bit obvious, but contrast this to getting traffic from blogs. Blog readers are often focused on learning something or being entertained. They don't have a specific goal. Google searchers, on the other hand, are looking for

[1] comScore Releases April 2009 U.S. Search Engine Rankings; http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2009/5/comScore_Releases_April_2009_U.S._Search_Engine_Rankings

something. Sometimes they are searching for a product or service. Sometimes they're searching for information. But, they do have a specific goal. If what they are searching for is related to your business, you want to be found.

Paid Versus Free

When users conduct Google searches, two kinds of results appear on the SERP (search engine results page): the "organic" search results (also known as "natural" results) and the paid or sponsored results. Generally, the paid results, or Sponsored Links, appear on the right side of the SERP, and sometimes at the top (see Figure 6.1).

These Sponsored Links are essentially advertising—which is why the Sponsored Links are often referred to as "pay per clicks ads." Organizations can bid for placement in Google search results by purchasing Google AdWords, a pay per click (PPC) advertising program. Here's how it works: You offer to pay Google a certain cost per click (CPC) anytime your ad is shown to searchers based on what keyword they searched on. You pay for how often people click on your ad and visit your web site—not how often your ad is shown (impressions). For example, say you were a

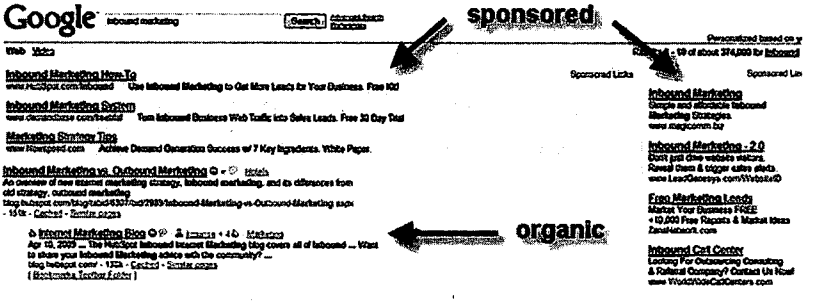


Figure 6.1 Screen Shot of Organic and Sponsored Google Search Results

tax attorney in Boston and wanted to reach Google users that searched on the term "Boston Tax Attorney." You could buy that Google AdWord and offer $2.50 per click. This means that if your ad is shown to users, you pay Google $2.50 every time someone clicks on your ad. The price that you offer (or bid) determines whether your ad will be shown, where it will be shown, and how many times. The price that you need to pay depends on how many other people are also interested in that same keyword. Google AdWords is an auction that's held in real-time. Those companies willing to pay more are more likely to get their ad shown in the limited amount of real estate Google has available for these paid AdWords ads. It's important to note that Google also uses the *quality* of an ad, in addition to the bid price, to determine ad placement. High quality ads that meet the needs of searchers can pay less on a per-click basis.

That's how paid search works. You pay Google to send visitors to your web site, and how much you pay is based on how many other people are competing for those same searchers.

On the other hand, the organic or natural results are not based on payment, but on the quality of the content and what Google believes would be the most valuable pages for their users. When your Web page shows up in the organic results, and users click on your link and visit your web page, these clicks are essentially free (you don't pay anything to Google for them). Clearly, all things being equal, you'd rather your business get visitors from Google for free, wouldn't you? It actually gets even better than that. Not only is placement in the organic results free, but visitors click on these results much more often than they do the paid results. Research from MarketingSherpa and Enquiro show

that 75 percent of searchers click the organic listings while 25 percent click on the paid results.[2] This means you'll likely get much more traffic if you can rank for certain keywords organically than if you were to try to buy your way into the paid results for those same words.

Clearly, you'd prefer to get free traffic instead of paying for it. That's what search engine optimization (SEO) is all about. You want to increase the chances *your* Web pages will show up as high as possible in the Google results when a user searches for a keyword related to your business.

By default, when users type a search term into Google, 10 results or listings are shown per page. This means the first page of results shows the top 10 results, the second page shows the next 10 results, and so on. It's important to note that getting on the first page of Google is very important, because the first page gets a lion's share of the traffic for that keyword. A recent study shows that Google's first page captures over 89 percent of the traffic, and most users will not look beyond the first page. Even within the first page, the traffic is not spread evenly—the top-ranked result (number one on the first page) captures about 42 percent of the traffic. The higher you rank for a given term, the more visitors to your web site, and the difference between the number of visitors does not occur in small increments—it's significant. So, you want to do your best to rank as high as possible for the keyword that you care about.

The practice of understanding how search engines work, and striving to get a web site to rank well for keywords, is known as search engine optimization (SEO). The

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[2] Organic versus paid search; http://www.hubspot.com/organic-vs-paid-search/; http://www.enquiroresearch.com/eyetracking-report.aspx

rest of this chapter looks at the basics of SEO and how you can leverage this practice to get more visitors to your web site.

A (Brief) Introduction to How Google Works

To succeed with search engine optimization (SEO), and rank for keywords you care about, it's necessary to understand a little about how Google works.

Google does two basic things. First, it crawls the Internet looking for web pages, storing these pages in its index. Think of the Google index as a massive catalog (much like a library would have a catalog of every book). Second, it has software that processes user searches and finds the best matching web pages from its catalog.

In order for your web page to rank well in Google for a given keyword, two things need to happen. First, Google needs to crawl and index your web page. If your web page isn't being crawled, you're not even in the race! Then, of all the possible web pages that Google thinks is a match for the keyword being searched, your page or pages have to be considered *better* than the other possible candidates.

Getting Google to visit a Web page and index it is not as hard to do as it once was. In the early days of SEO, it was often necessary to manually submit new web pages to the search engines so they would know these pages existed. Many SEO consultants and software tools offered this as a service called search engine submission. Today, manual submission of pages is rarely necessary. Instead, simply getting a link to a new web page from a page that is already being crawled by Google is sufficient to get the new page crawled as well. That's how most new pages get into the Google index today. If you do decide you want to manually submit

your pages to Google, it's free and easy (and should not involve hiring a consultant). Just use the Google Add URL tool (http://www.Google.com/addurl).

Getting web pages indexed by Google is not the problem. Getting them to *rank well* is where the challenge is. To understand how to rank well, it's helpful to understand the basics of how the Google ranking algorithm works.

How Google's Brain Works

Let's dig into how Google's software brain works. We promise not to make it too technical, and you'll know enough to impress your friends and family at the next holiday party.

When a user types a keyword into Google's search box, Google first looks through the billions of pages in its index and comes up with a list of results that are matches for the term. For example, if you type *inbound marketing* into the Google search box, there are currently about 625,000 pages that Google finds related to that term. Once Google has this list of pages, it sorts the list so the highest-quality results are at the top of the list and the lowest-quality results are at the bottom.

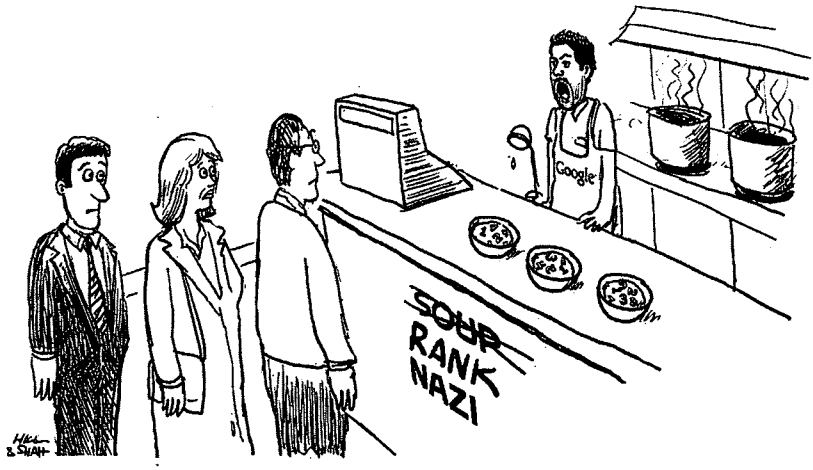
Ranking is based on a combination of two things, *relevance* and *authority*. The *relevance* is a measure of how close of a match a given web page is to the term being searched. This is based on factors such as the Title tag (sometimes called the "page title"), the page content, and the anchor text of links to the page. The *authority* of a page is a measure of how important and authoritative that given page is in the eyes of Google.

The authority of a web page is at the heart of the Google algorithm. Google calls this authority PageRank™, named

for Larry Page, one of the founders of Google. The idea behind PageRank is brilliantly simple and based on work at Stanford University on how to measure the credibility and importance of academic papers. The authority of a given academic paper can be determined by the number of *other* papers that cite and reference it. The more citations a given paper has, the better the paper. But, not all citations are created equal. A citation from another paper that itself has a high number of citations is considered to carry more weight. High-authority papers are cited by other high-authority papers. It is this same principle that drives Google's PageRank, but instead of academic papers, it's about web pages. And instead of citations, it's about links from other web pages. The authority of a web page is calculated based on the number of inbound links from other web pages and the authority of *those* pages.

Here's a simple example. Let's say you've created a web page about the best restaurants in Boston. If your page is just sitting out there, and nobody is linking to it, Google assigns a relatively low authority score to your page. This is not surprising. Google has no evidence that you know what you're talking about or that your content is of high quality. Over time, a few other bloggers find your web page and link to it from their pages. This causes your authority to increase. The more powerful the web pages that link to you, the more your authority goes up. Now, if someday, Boston.com (the web site for the *Boston Globe*) links to your page, your authority goes up significantly. Why? Because Boston.com itself is a high-authority web site.

So, to get SEO authority, the name of the game is to get as many links as possible from as many high-authority sites as possible. How do you get links? By creating *remark*able content.



YOUR CONTENT IS NOT WORTHY. *NO RANK FOR YOU!*

Search engine optimization (SEO) when done well is *not* about tricking Google into ranking your web page. It's about creating content that users would *want* to find and helping Google deliver great search results. The best way to rank well in the Google search results is to create content that is rank-worthy. By rank-worthy, we mean content that is *worthy* of being ranked because it is what the user who is searching would consider to be of high quality and relevance.

Picking the Perfect Keywords

The first step in search optimization is deciding which keywords to optimize your site for. Keywords are what users type into the search box for their search query. Three primary criteria go into selecting the right keywords to optimize your web site: relevance, volume, and difficulty.

Relevance

You want to pick keywords related to your business. When crafting your list of possible keywords, it is best to think

from the prospect's perspective. Try to think about what keywords a prospect looking for your offering is likely to type into Google. Come up with many different variations.

Estimated Search Volume

Even if you get the number one spot in the Google search results for a keyword, it doesn't guarantee you're going to get lots of visitors to your web site. The amount of traffic you will drive to your web site is dependent on how many people search on that keyword. To pick great keywords, you need to have a sense for the approximate number of times users search for that word in Google. Check the resources section at the end of the book for information on tools you can use to help with determining search volume for keywords.

Difficulty

This is a measure of how hard it will be to rank for the keyword, based on the strength of the competition and your own web site's authority. Ranking well in Google is a competition. Of the thousands of web pages trying to rank for a given keyword, only 10 can make it to the front page. So, if you have a new web site and are trying to break in to the top 10, you'll have to displace someone else. For some keywords, this is relatively easy to do, if the existing top 10 are relatively weak. For competitive keywords, the strength of the competition may be high, and ranking on the first page may be very difficult.

Picking the best keywords is an exercise in balancing these three factors. You shouldn't just solve for one factor. For example, picking a relevant keyword that has very high search volume is not going to mean much if the difficulty is

so high that you'll never be able to rank. Similarly, picking very easy words that have very weak competition is not going to generate much traffic, if only a few people a month use that term to search.

When picking your keywords, you should start with a list of relevant keywords for your business. Then, determine what the estimated volume is for those keywords and how much competition there is for that keyword. If you're just getting started, you should probably begin with keywords that have relatively low competition. If your web site doesn't have much authority yet in the eyes of Google, you're unlikely to rank well for a highly competitive keyword. In addition, if you don't make it into the first page of the search results, you are not likely to get much traffic from those keywords. Choose keywords that have relatively low competition instead. Then, as you build authority for your web pages, and start ranking for these keywords, you can move up to higher volume keywords that have more competition.

When coming up with your initial list of keyword candidates, it is important to think from the viewpoint of your potential customers. Don't just think about how you would describe your business, think about what users *searching* for your business might type into Google. For example, you might describe yourself as "interior design for businesses." You'd then come up with several variations on interior design, and maybe even interior decoration (because users often confuse the two). But, perhaps some of your potential customers don't use the phrase interior design. Instead, they might use "office space design." The key is to put yourself in the shoes of your potential customer. A very effective way to know how your customers might search for you is to watch them. If you have an existing web site that gets

traffic from Google, you can use analytics software to see what terms visitors are already using to get to your site. This doesn't work well if your site is poorly optimized and the only traffic you're getting from Google are people searching on your company name. In most cases, looking at this kind of data yields new insights into potential keywords that you can add to your list.

Using PPC for Better Data

If you have even a modest budget, you should consider launching a small PPC (pay-per-click) advertising campaign to determine what your best keywords might be. This is particularly useful if you are just getting started and don't know which keywords will work. When you run a PPC campaign, you can pick a set of keywords and begin generating traffic almost *immediately*. Often, with SEO, it can take weeks or months before you rank well enough for certain keywords to see any traffic. Further, you can channel the traffic to a specific web page, such as a landing page (discussed later). This way, you can measure what the *conversion rate* is for traffic from various keywords. The benefit of getting this conversion data is that you can make even better decisions as to which keywords to pick. Remember, the purpose of inbound marketing is not just to get more traffic to your web site, but to convert more of that traffic into qualified leads and customers.

On-Page SEO: Doing the Easy Stuff First

Once you've picked your keywords, the next step is to start using these keywords on your web site.

On-page factors that influence rankings are those contained within the page that you are trying to rank. These

Figure 6.2 Screen Shot of Page Title on Google

are factors that you can control directly by modifying your web pages and as such, are the easiest factors to address to improve your SEO.

The Power of the Page Title Tag

Of the elements on the page that influence Google, by far, the most important is the Page Title. The Page Title is what shows up at the top of the browser window (and is used for the text of the link in search results). In Figure 6.2, the Page Title tag is shown above the URL at the top ("Content Distribution Management software—Signiant").

Given the importance of the Page Title tag to SEO, it's worth spending a fair amount of time crafting great titles for your most important pages. The home page of your web site is a great place to start, since it likely has the most SEO authority. However, don't stop there. Look for deeper pages in your web site that are important and optimize the titles for those pages too. For most businesses, the traffic potential of these deep pages when added up is significant.

Tips from the Trenches for Page Titles

Here are five tips on writing great page titles:

1. Put your most important keywords in your Page Title. Too many web sites fail to use the power of the Page Title in helping with their SEO. This is such an easy win. Make sure your Page Titles contain your most important keywords.

2. Earlier words in the Page Title carry more weight than later words, so put your most important words first. For example, instead of "User Friendly Inventory Management Software," try "Inventory Management Software That's User Friendly." The term "inventory management" is probably more important (from a search ranking perspective) than "user friendly."

3. Don't forget the humans! The goal is not just to rank for your important keywords, but to actually have visitors click through to your web site. If your Page Title sounds like nonsense, people are unlikely to click on it. Make sure your Page Title tag is something that users will want to click on when they see it in the search results.

4. When picking the Page Title tag for your home page, consider putting your company name at the end of the title. This allows your most important keywords to have more weight.

Adding an Effective Description

Similar to the page title, the meta description tag is information *about* a web page. It is usually a brief summary of what a user can expect to see on a page. Also like the page title, the meta description is included in special HTML code in the page and doesn't show up "on" the page like the rest of the content.

From an SEO perspective, the meta description doesn't impact search rankings in any of the major search engines. So, including your keywords in the meta description will not help your rankings. However, the meta description is important because although the engines don't use it for rankings, they do often use it within the search results page. The

Figure 6.3 Page Description in Search Results

description (or a portion thereof) is often included below the page title. By writing a compelling and accurate description for the page, you are more likely to get clicks from Web users. (see Figure 6.3).

Here are three tips for writing your page descriptions:

1. Keep them short (1 to 2 sentences) and no more than 154 characters, because Google truncates long descriptions.
2. Every page should have a unique description (just like it should have a unique Page Title).
3. Use your keywords in your description. Google will often show the matching keywords from the search query as **bold** in the description. Having your keywords shown in this way increases the chances that users will click on your link in the results.

Optimizing URLs

Every publicly accessible resource on the Internet has a unique URL which is basically the Internet address of the page. (In case you were wondering, URL stands for "Uniform Resource Locator").

Here are some example URLs:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Url

http://www.visiblemeasures.com/video-metrics/

Most modern content management systems will let you customize the URLs for your web pages. You should take advantage of this feature and optimize your URLs from an SEO perspective. When Google crawls a web page, it looks at the URL as one of the factors it considers to determine the relevance of a web page for a given keyword. In the Visible Measures example above, note that both the words "video" and "metrics" are in the URL. If a user is searching on Google for the term "video metrics," this keyword-rich URL sends a subtle signal to Google that this is likely what the page is about, in addition to looking at other things like the page title and content. Second, when users link to your web site, they often just copy/paste the URL into their web page and do not go to the trouble of specifying the anchor text. In these cases, the URL often *becomes* the anchor text. If you have your target keywords in the URL itself, you'll have a higher chance of getting anchor text with those keywords when people link to your page.

Domain Names and SEO

A topic that comes up frequently when discussing URLs is the importance of the domain name. The domain name is that part of the URL that is shared by all other pages on the site (for example, hubspot.com and inboundmarketing.com are both domain names). Since the domain name is part of *all* URLs on a given web site, it is often useful to have a keyword contained within your domain name. The reason is simple, since all of your URLs contain your domain name, any keywords that are in your domain name automatically become part of all of your URLs. This is why keyword-rich domain names have become so popular recently. The question is, should you change your domain name so that it

contains one or more of your most important keywords? It depends. For a business web site, the domain name should likely match the name of the business. If the business happens to contain a descriptive keyword, then you're fine. If not, it's unlikely that you want to change the name of the web site and the business, simply to get a keyword-rich domain. Further, if you do decide to change your domain name, it will take some time and effort to reclaim any SEO authority you have built on the old domain name. Tread lightly here. We've gone through this process several times and it always has its challenges.

If you do want to use a domain name that has one or more keywords in it (which may be the case if you're a startup and have not decided on a business name yet), keep these points in mind: The best domain names are those that are relatively short and memorable. If you're running a business, you want to focus only on .com domain names. Though there are other top-level domains, such as .net, .biz, .info, and others, the .com extension is the de-facto standard for businesses. A noteworthy exception is international domains such as .ca (Canada), .in (India), and others, which are common for businesses within the respective countries.

The pool of unregistered, high-quality .com domain names with specific keywords is very limited. There's now an after-market for domain names, where you can acquire domain names that have been previously registered by someone else. If you're looking for a very high-quality domain name, you're likely going to have to pay more than just the registration fee. Prices for domain names can vary significantly from $100 to over $1 million. If you're starting a new business and traffic from search engines is extremely critical, you should consider creating your business name *around* a premium, high-quality domain name.

Page Content

So far, we've talked about the Page Title and the page meta description. Both of these are stored in a separate part of the web page because they describe the page. Now, let's discuss the page content itself, the body of the page. There are several considerations to keep in mind here too, from an SEO perspective.

Headings

When creating a web page, you can put headings in the page content. Much like the headings in a book or newspaper article, a heading in a web page is used to help organize information and to help make the content easier to read. When a visitor is scanning through an article, the headings act as visual cues as to what she might expect to see. For example, an article in the Sunday paper about the most popular things to do in town might have sub-headings such as "Museums," "Theatre," "Restaurants," and "Sporting Events." As you scan through this article, your eyes would quickly see the sub-headings and know what you'd expect to find in the article. Google does something similar when reading your web site. It looks at the headings in the page to determine what the page is about. This is why you should include your important keywords in the headings. When Google finds headings in your web page, it sees keywords in these headings as a signal that these words are important.

Just because some words look like a heading to people doesn't mean they look that way to Google. You must "tag" words on your pages so they look like headings to the search engines.

Tips from the Trenches for Headings

Follow these three tips for writing headings:

1. Use your important keywords in your heading.
2. Keep headings as short as possible so keywords get maximum weight (same principle as in the page title and URL).
3. Use a single h1 header on each page, and use multiple h2 and h3 headers.

Images

Many web pages also include images. Images are a great way to illustrate a point and make content more attractive and appealing. This is particularly true for long pieces of content with a lot of text. From an SEO perspective, one important thing to understand is that Google can't really "see" images, or any text that's in the image. For example, in Figure 6.4, though the words "Wall Street Journal" exist, they're part of a larger image so Google wouldn't really see those words.

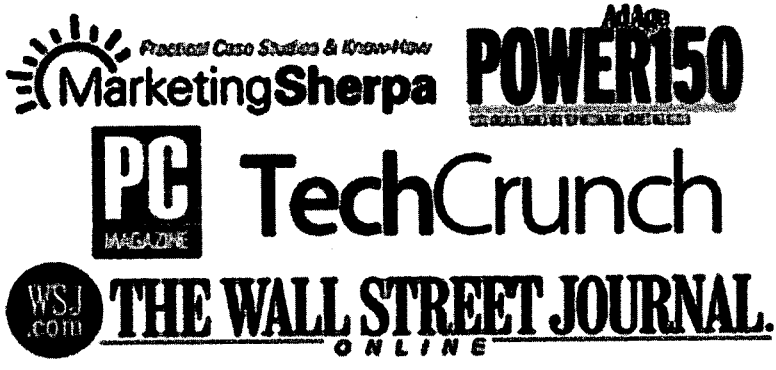


Figure 6.4 Screen Shot of Multiple Images on a Web Page

If your web page content consists primarily of images that have text on them, Google will not really be able to interpret the text embedded in those images. As such, they're not signaling to Google as to what your web site is about. A quick tip to determine whether certain text on a page is an image: Try to highlight the text with your mouse, as if you were going to copy/paste it. If you can't highlight the text, chances are it's an image and Google can't see it. To help with this, all important images on your web page should include what is known as an "alt" attribute. This is a special code that allows you to describe an image with text in a way that Google can see it. Also, like the URL of your web pages, the URL of your important images should contain your keywords.

Off-Page SEO: The Power of Inbound Links

Although the on-page SEO factors we discussed earlier are important and relatively easy to do, to make any significant improvement in rankings for your keywords you're going to need to address off-page factors as well. Off-page factors are those that are not on the pages you control but on other web pages. The most important off-page factor is inbound links. An inbound link is a link on another web page that points to your page. As discussed earlier, Google places a great deal of emphasis on the authority of a web page in determining search rankings. Authority is calculated based on the number of inbound links to your web page, and the authority of those pages linking to you.

The most effective way to get inbound links is by creating *remark*able content that is useful and interesting. And, getting inbound links is the most effective way to get better rankings in Google.

Requesting Links from Others

One way to get links from other people is to contact them and request that they link to your site. This is often done as an e-mail to the web site owner for a site that you'd like to get a link from. Although this can work in some situations, we're not big fans of the link-requesting model. It's hard to get great, high-quality links by requesting them from other people who don't know you. Like most site owners, we get requests for links all the time. We treat these link requests like spam messages—we delete them. Having said that, if you've created some exceptionally good content that you think would be beneficial to the readers of a particular site or blog, it is fine to reach out to them. When reaching out to bloggers or site owners, make sure the e-mail is highly personalized. Demonstrate that you read their site and understand their audience. Send a link to the content you think would be relevant for them. Usually, this is not your home page, but a deeper page, like a blog article. Finally, don't explicitly ask for a link. You're basically sharing information that you think they might find useful. If they do, they might link to it.

Measuring the Value of Inbound Links

With the proliferation of blogs and the comments left on those blogs, Google ran into an issue. Most blog comments allow the commenter to enter a URL that links back to a web page of their choice—usually the comment author's blog or company web site. The problem was that this feature allowed any user to create an inbound link for themselves on any web site that allowed user-submitted content, making life difficult for Google. The search engine could not distinguish legitimate inbound links, which were seen as an

JOE'S SEO CONSULTANT ADVISES HIM TO DO SOME LINK ~~BEGGING~~ BUILDING.

endorsement, and which could be used as a signal of quality for the page being linked to, and potentially low-quality links that the web site owner didn't really create. To solve this, the "no-follow" attribute was created for links.

The no-follow attribute is information within the source code for a page that can be included on a link. When Google sees a link that is marked as a no-follow, it treats this as a signal that the site owner does not wish to pass SEO credit to the target page. Though users can still click on the link (it looks like any other link), it does not help the page being linked to from an SEO perspective. Today, most blogs automatically mark all links left within comments as no-follow. In fact, most software that allows user-generated content (content created by the general public, not by the site owner) will mark the links within this content to be no-follow.

It's important to recognize that spending lots of time creating content on other people's web sites with the sole purpose of getting SEO value doesn't work very well. Most

of those links will be no-follow and, as such, will not pass SEO credit.

So, how much is a given link worth from an SEO perspective? Many factors that go into determining how much SEO authority you will receive from a given inbound link.

Factors That Affect Link Value

There are four factors that affect link value:

1. The authority of the page that the link is on. The higher the authority of the page, the more of this authority it can pass on to your web page.
2. Whether the link is a no-follow or a do-follow as discussed above.
3. The number of other links on the page linking to you. The more links that are on that page, the less SEO credit each link passes.
4. The anchor text of the link. This is the text that the user sees on the page and that is clickable. By default, anchor text shows up as underlined on most web pages. Links that have your desired keywords in the anchor text are the most valuable to you in terms of ranking for those keywords.

Black Hat SEO: How to Get Your Site Banned by Google

The terms "black hat" and "white hat" were derived from old western movies where the bad guys generally wore black hats and the good guys wore white hats. SEO experts constantly debate as to what practices are considered white hat

versus black hat. In our mind, the big difference is that white hat SEO *helps* Google deliver quality results to users by working within existing guidelines. On the other hand, black hat SEO involves exploiting current limitations in Google's software to try and trick it into ranking a particular web page that would normally not have ranked.

Whatever you call them, you should avoid SEO practices that rely on tricking Google and distorting search results. Here's our rule of thumb: If a given technique is not improving the experience for a user, and it can be detected by a human doing a manual review, then it's probably a bad idea. It's safe to assume that if you try to exploit a hole in the Google software today, your advantage is going to be temporary. More importantly, you carry a significant risk of having your web site penalized or banned completely from Google. The risk is not worth the reward.

Here are the techniques you should stay away from when optimizing your site for Google.

Link Farms

There's general consensus that one of the strongest influences on search rankings is the number and quality of inbound links to a web page. A link farm is a group of web sites created for the primary purpose of creating a high number of links to a given web page. These web sites are not real, and the links on them are not genuine signals of quality. They are often generated automatically by computers and their content is of minimal, if any, value.

Automated Content Generation/Duplication

Search engines like content. They particularly like frequently updated content. Unfortunately, creating unique

content takes time and energy. In order to try to trigger search engine spiders to index more pages from a web site and do so more frequently, some may try to auto-generate content or scrape Web content from other sites and republish it. This technique often goes hand-in-hand with link farms. That's because if you're creating thousands of sites, you need *some* content to put on them. Google has gotten very good at determining what is natural content versus content that is computer-generated gibberish with no value. As for duplicating content on other web sites without permission, this is not only penalized by Google, it is often in violation of copyright laws.

Keyword Stuffing

This practice involves over-populating certain portions of a web page with a set of keywords in the hope that it will increase the chances that Google will rank the page for that keyword. Search engines caught on to this trick years ago, and it's no longer effective. Of course, this doesn't keep people from trying it.

Cloaking

This practice involves delivering *different* web site content to Google's spider than what is delivered to human users. The usual motivation for this is to send the search engine crawlers content for ranking on a certain term—but send different content to real users. It's pretty easy for the search engines to detect this. If you're suspected of using cloaking, it's easy for someone (like a Google employee) to simply visit your web site as a human and check if you're cloaking. This technique, when discovered, is one of the most reliable ways to get a site banned.

Hidden Text

This technique hides text on the web page. The idea is to include text so only Google can see it, but humans cannot. The simplest example is some variation of white text on a white background. This combination is not easily visible to human users, but from a computer's perspective, the content still exists. This technique is a bit harder for Google to detect, but not by any means impossible.

Doorway/Gateway Pages

This practice is similar to the cloaking technique. Instead of dynamically delivering different content to Google, a doorway page involves getting a given page to rank well in Google, but then redirecting human users to a different page. Clearly, this is not in the interests of end-users, as they don't get the content they would have expected.

It's not smart to try to outsmart Google engineers. Just about all of these questionable tactics presume that the search engines will not detect them and are based on exploiting *currently presumed* (and perhaps even non-existent) limitations of search engine algorithms. We'd argue that Google as a company is pretty smart and spends considerable resources updating its algorithm. An Internet strategy that's predicated on outsmarting Google is not a smart one.

For most marketers, the time and energy spent on trying to take these short-cuts is much better invested in improving the company web site so that it *deserves* to be ranked highly and *helping* the search engines discover this content for the benefit of users. Working *with* search engines instead of trying to *exploit* them is the only approach to SEO that works in the long-term.

The Dangers of PPC

We've talked a fair amount about organic rankings and how to do SEO. But, we haven't spent a lot of time talking about paid search via PPC.

PPC advertising has proven to be an effective way for many marketers to drive targeted traffic to their web sites. However, there's long-term risk in becoming too reliant on PPC for traffic. The problem is that because PPC programs like Google's AdWords act as a real-time auction, it is possible for the cost per click (CPC) to rise unexpectedly.

Let's look at a concrete example of this. Say you're buying clicks for "wedding caterers San Francisco" and you're paying about $2.50 a click. You've analyzed the data and have determined that at this price, the clicks are worth it because the value of the leads generated from these clicks exceeds the cost. Now, things are going along just fine and then one morning, you find that your CPC has risen to over $3.00, a 20 percent increase. This can happen for a variety of reasons, but the most common is that there is suddenly new competition that is interested in that same word, and they're willing to pay more. Even if you're a PPC expert, there's little you can do to prevent others bidding up the price. You are vulnerable because the price changes constantly based on competition. Your prices can spike and do so very quickly. Contrast this to how SEO works. If you make an investment in ranking for your top keywords in the organic listings, it is much less likely that a new market entrant that doesn't understand the business is going to be able to displace you quickly and take away the traffic you are getting. Organic listings are usually not achieved by new entrants that are just getting started. Even throwing money at it (as they can do in PPC) doesn't work very well. And, even if this new

competitor does ultimately beat you in the organic rankings, it will likely happen over time. You can watch the rankings for your top keywords and see if competitors are gaining ground.

So, our advice is to appropriately balance your investment in PPC and SEO. In the early days of building Web traffic, it might be necessary to buy traffic. Or, you might be running a short campaign to collect valuable data about which keywords work. However, over time, you should work towards establishing your organic rankings. This investment has a better rate of return in the long-term and is much more defensible.

Tracking Your Progress

Tracking your progress in terms of rankings is an important part of SEO—and it's relatively easy.

Use the free Website Grader (http://website.grader.com) tool and create a custom report for your web site. It will give you a lot of useful information, find problems, and give you suggestions to fix them. Make a note of what your score is, follow the suggestions, and regularly monitor your grade over time. Website Grader looks at several different factors and gives you a higher-level view of how your web site is doing.

One of the data points you should check is how many of your site's pages are in the Google index. If the number of indexed pages seems lower than you expect (or zero), there's likely some problem with your site architecture and Google is not seeing all of your web pages.

Monitor the number of inbound links you are getting to your web site. As we've discussed earlier, your Google rankings depend a lot on the number and quality of links

you are getting. You should be working to get this number higher and higher.

Track a list of your favorite keywords (those that have the right mix of relevance, high search volume, and low difficulty) and see how your rankings are doing. You'll find that you do better for some words than others. Start looking for patterns. Pay particular attention to which web pages on your site are starting to rank. These pages are important assets because Google is sending you a message (by ranking those pages) that they are gaining authority.

Most importantly, track your *actual* results. How many visitors are coming to your web site through organic search? How many became leads? For bonus points, implement a closed-loop reporting system and track how many of these leads converted into customers. (Closed loop means you track a new customer from initial inquiry to closed sale.)

Inbound Marketing at Work: DIY Shutters

T Kestrel, based in Pennsylvania and in business since 1989, is a global provider of fine-quality shutters, which people can purchase at the company's web site DIYShutters.com.

One of the broad but relevant terms for DIYShutters is the keyword "shutters." As expected, this is a highly competitive keyword with approximately 18,000 searches done for "shutters" every month and over eight million pages that contain this word. According to owner and manager Jim Lapic, to buy an ad for this keyword in Google AdWords, the company would have to pay Google about $3.22 for *every click*. Thanks to SEO, DIYShutters.com now ranks number 20 for this word, and has been gaining ground steadily. Although the site's ranking for this keyword is relatively low, "shutters" still generates ***hundreds*** of

visitors a month for the company. By capturing these leads organically, the company is saving thousands of dollars and the site also ranks well for many keywords *related* to "shutters," such as "exterior shutters," for which they have a number one ranking in Google.

According to Jim, the company focused on SEO basics. They made sure they had proper on-page SEO, including optimizing page titles and ensuring the site had a clean and simple design so that users (and Google) could easily find the content. They also started a blog in order to offer useful information to their target market. Interestingly, although the blog is new and the site has been around for a while, the blog is already quickly gaining ground in terms of SEO authority. And, Jim spent a lot of time picking the right keywords to optimize his site and tracking his progress on these keywords.

To Do

1. Run your web site through website.grader.com. Follow the suggestions.
2. Discover which of your pages are the most powerful.
3. Optimize the page titles of your most import pages (like your home page).
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

CHAPTER 7

Get Found in Social Media

Social media is all the rage. We'll bet that not a week (or perhaps even a day) goes by when you're not having a colleague connect with you on LinkedIn, receiving a friend request on Facebook, or hearing about Twitter on TV. What is social media? The all-knowing Wikipedia defines social media as "Internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings." That's not a bad definition. We'd simplify it and say that social media is about people connecting, interacting, and sharing online.

Why should you care about social media? The answer is the same as why you should care about Google—because it provides a great way to reach and engage potential customers. As is the case with Google, more of your potential customers hang out at the social media watering holes, so this is where you need to hang out, too, if you want to engage with them.

You can find a variety of social media sites on the Web today. These include social networking (such as Facebook and LinkedIn), social news sites (Digg and Reddit), and social bookmarking/discovery sites (Delicious and StumbleUpon). Each has its different uses, but most share the ability to create a user profile, connect to others on the site, and interact and share information with the network's community of people.

Creating an Effective Online Profile

In the rest of this chapter, we look at specific social media web sites and how you can leverage them, but before we do that, let's look at one aspect that's common to most of these sites: the user profile. A profile often consists of your username, avatar image, bio/summary, and web links. As you start building a social media presence, it's helpful to spend a little bit of time thinking about how you approach building your personal brand in social media.

Picking a Username

For many of the social media sites (e.g., LinkedIn and Facebook), you don't invent a new username for yourself—you access the site as *yourself*. In fact, creating a fictitious person or a persona is in violation of the terms of service of these sites and is likely to get you kicked off. But, not all sites operate this way. Sites like Digg, StumbleUpon, and Twitter allow you to create any username you want. Based on your goals, different approaches to a username might make sense. If you're reading this book, we'll assume that you're a business person trying to expand marketing reach for a product or service. In that case, we have several tips for usernames:

1. Wherever possible, use your real name for your username. For example, we use @bhalligan and @dharmesh for our primary twitter accounts. (We also have @hubspot for our business.)
2. Make your username simple and clean. Stay away from usernames that play clever games, e.g., using the number "3" as a backwards letter "E."

3. Don't include numerals in your username. Not only is this reminiscent of a bygone era ("Hi, I'm John4382 on AOL!"), there's a chance that people will think your account is a bit spammy.

4. Pick a name that's available on all or most of the major social sites so that you can have a consistent name across as many sites as possible. If you have a common name, this may be difficult, but try your best. The goal is to build your online brand so people start recognizing you.

Picking an Online Avatar/Profile Image

In addition to your username, all of the social media sites allow you to upload a small image associated with your account. This image shows up with your profile, and often is attached to comments and other contributions you make on the site. Pick a nice photo of yourself and make sure it's the right dimensions when you upload it. Try a couple of variations. If you lack the technical skills to resize and retouch photos, get a friend or family member to help. The profile image is an important part of your online identity and it's not that hard to get it right. Use the same image across all of your social media profiles. If you're setting up social media accounts for your business, your avatar image should be some variation of your logo. Think of your profile image as part of your overall brand (because it is). Try for something that is distinctive and memorable. Be consistent.

Bio/Summary

Social media sites usually let you tell the world about yourself with a short, one- or two-sentence description. Don't skip this step! Many people in social media will read your

bio to determine if they're interested in hearing what you have to say. A missing bio rarely instills confidence and people are likely to just skip by you, so it pays to spend the time to write a brief but compelling bio. When writing your bio, we advise focusing on the people with whom you're interested in connecting. Though some of them may care that you're a dog-lover or wine expert, they're more likely interested in knowing your area of business expertise and what they can expect to gain from being connected with you. Of course, there's nothing wrong with instilling some personality in your bio, just be interesting and relevant.

Web Site Links

Social media sites often allow you to enter one or more links to web sites where people can learn more about you or your company. Common approaches include linking to your blog (if you have one) or to your business web site. Unfortunately, these links generate little (if any) SEO value. They're usually no-follow links (which don't pass SEO credit). However, they can still generate traffic to your desired web site, so you should take advantage of them.

Getting Fans on Facebook

Facebook is one of the largest and most active social networking sites on the Internet. As of this writing, Facebook has:

- More than 200 million active users
- Over 100 million users logging on at least once a day
- The fastest-growing demographic of people 35 years and older

This last statistic is particularly interesting because although Facebook started as a web site for students, it has grown well beyond that and is no longer a web site just for college students to hang out on. It's now a widespread application used by millions of people of all ages.

You may be wondering what the advantage is of having a presence on a social media site like Facebook when your business already has a regular web site. The answer is *reach*. You want your message and story to reach as many people as possible. To maximize your reach, you need to have a presence where people are hanging out and increasingly they're hanging out on Facebook.

Creating a business page in Facebook is easy and free. Once created, the page can be branded with your company's logo and customized to include information about your business and a link back to your main web site. Users on Facebook can then become "fans" of your business page. In addition to providing a page that has basic information about your organization, Facebook allows a multitude of other features that help better engage your community. These include discussion forums, photos, videos, testimonials, and hundreds of other features created by third-party developers. It's these interactive features that truly make Facebook a vibrant community where like-minded individuals can interact and share.

What makes Facebook's reach particularly powerful is its *viral* aspect. When individual users join your community on Facebook, their friends see an update in their Facebook home page. This leads to more users joining your community, causing more people to be exposed to your business, and so on. By leveraging this social aspect of Facebook, businesses have a chance to reach a large group of people.

Creating a Facebook Business Page

All Facebook users have a personal page where you can post information about yourself, post status updates that others will see, and share information, such as photos and links. In addition to your personal page, you should create a separate page for your business. This is what Facebook calls a fan page, but we'll call it a business page (as that makes more sense). Over four million users become fans of pages each day.

If you don't yet have a personal account on Facebook, create it *first*. You should not create a standard user account for a business. This is in violation of Facebook's terms of service, and you will be at risk of having your account terminated.

To create a business page, you must first be logged in with your personal account (only logged in users can create fan pages). Once you're logged in, visit the following URL:

http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php

The first step in creating your page is to determine which category it falls into. You can choose from many choices organized by Local, Brand/Product/Organization, and Artist/Band/Public Figure. Pick the one that fits best.

Once you've created a business page for your company, you'll need to spend some time promoting it. Here are a few ways you can do that:

1. Post a link to your business page from your personal profile. You can do this by clicking the "share" button when viewing your business page.

2. Promote your new Facebook business page within your existing channels (your company web site, your blog, your e-mail newsletter, your LinkedIn profile, etc.).

3. Buy social ads on Facebook. Facebook shows these ads to targeted users within various locations on the site.

To make it easy for potential customers to visit and remember the location of your Facebook page, create a sub-domain (facebook.yourcompany.com) on your main domain that sends users to your Facebook business page. It's free and takes just a few minutes for whoever is managing your domain configuration. You should also customize the URL for your Facebook business page. This way, users can access the page with a URL that looks like http://facebook.com/yourcompany instead of the ugly and indecipherable default URL that Facebook provides by default.

Learning from Facebook Ads

Facebook allows business to advertise their business pages (or any other web page) within Facebook. These ads are shown to specific Facebook users in various parts of the site.

Even if you're not planning to buy Facebook social ads, it's worth taking the first step as if you're launching an ad. Facebook's ad tool allows you to specify demographics such as age and gender—which is a great way to get a rough sense of how many Facebook users fit your target market. Figure 7.1 shows a sample demographic for "marketing": 47,260

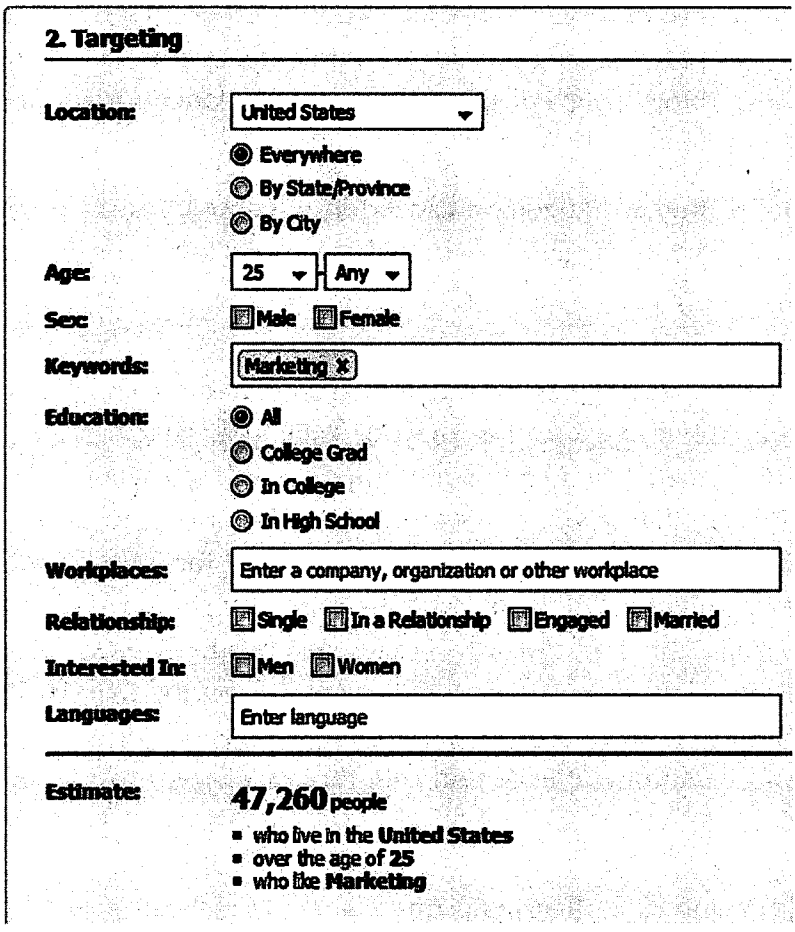


Figure 7.1 Facebook User Demographics

people over the age of 25 in the U.S. have specified the word "marketing" somewhere in their profile. Try running this tool for your own industry and see how many users you can find. This is particularly helpful if you're a local business focused on a specific geographic area, as Facebook allows targeting by location, as well.

Getting started on Facebook is easy, but it requires a certain amount of ongoing attention to achieve maximum

value, as users expect to see fresh information on the site. You should plan to have someone in your company accountable for updating the site and participating in the conversations regularly. Devoting time to fostering a social networking page may be a bit of a challenge for small businesses with limited resources, but it's a worthwhile investment. Sites like Facebook are large enough and growing quickly enough that they should not be ignored. Having a presence on a social networking site is swiftly becoming as important as having a web site. The social media sites are, in a sense, an extension of a traditional web site. Facebook's functionality, viral nature and large user base makes it an ideal marketing platform for many different types of organizations.

Tips from the Trenches

Here are three important tips:

1. Don't create a fake account. Be genuine.
2. Check the insights feature of the Facebook pages regularly to see how well your business page is doing.
3. Link to your Facebook page from your business web site and from other online materials. Build reach within your community.

Creating Connections on LinkedIn

If you're a business professional, there's a good chance that you've heard of LinkedIn and have already registered as a user. LinkedIn is a web site for professional social networking; the average age of users on the site is 41. Unlike other

social networks such as MySpace and Facebook, which focus on a broad set of users, LinkedIn is all about business. As we write this, it has amassed over 20 million users. The LinkedIn basics are similar to Facebook. You register for an account and build out your profile including a brief summary or bio, employment history and academic credentials. Like most social networks, LinkedIn also allows you to connect to others. In the case of LinkedIn, this is most often work colleagues.

This information about millions of people, including their connections, is what makes LinkedIn such a powerful tool. Let's say you're looking for a new position as a VP of Marketing at a specific organization. LinkedIn allows you to search its database and find people at that company whom you are somehow connected to. What makes this particularly useful is that you don't have to be *directly* connected to these individuals, as LinkedIn finds a path between you and those with whom you want to connect. For example, let's say you're trying to connect to the CEO of a specific company. You don't actually know the CEO, but someone in your immediate list of connections does—in fact, a colleague of yours from a prior job is now reporting directly to this CEO. LinkedIn allows you to request a virtual introduction through one or more intermediate connections. This is a powerful way to leverage LinkedIn's social network to connect with people for mutual interest and gain.

Building a LinkedIn Group

Groups are a relatively new, but very powerful feature of the LinkedIn system. A LinkedIn Group is essentially an online community of people interested in a particular topic

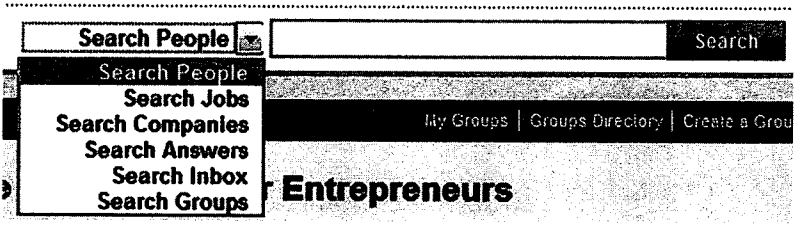


Figure 7.2 Clicking "Search People"

(whatever the focus of the group is). Over 250,000 different Groups on LinkedIn cover a wide range of topics. We have a Group, Inbound Marketers, which happens to be one of the top 50 groups on the system with over 25,000 members.

Starting a Group is quick, easy, and free. If you have not already done so, determine if a Group already exists that focuses on your industry or area of interest. To do this, you can use the Groups search feature by clicking the dropdown arrow next to the "Search People" field in the top right corner of the application (see Figure 7.2). Select "Search Groups" from the list of available searches and then enter some keywords that describe the kinds of groups you're looking for.

Figure 7.3 shows the results from a sample search for "small business." (Notice when you do your own search that the "OnStartups" group is the number one result with 59,459 members. Dharmesh is the creator of this Group and of the 250,000+ Groups, it is one of the top five largest.)

Once you start browsing through the list of available Groups, determine whether there's an opportunity to create a specific one for your industry. Even if you find existing groups, the opportunity still exists if the Groups haven't been well managed or haven't caught on yet (look for

your market through channels like social media and blogs, rather than e-mail, is that your market is pre-programmed to ignore everything coming through e-mail as propaganda while relying on their RSS feed and social media sites for new information. Your e-mail audience is unlikely to physically *respond* to an e-mail blast (especially when the e-mail address is noreply@yourcompany.com), but they are much more likely to engage by commenting back to you when they are notified about new offerings through social media contacts and your blog. And too, notices of new offerings sent through social media sites are much more viral. For example, if you announce your new service offering on Twitter and one of your followers tweets back, then many of their followers' attention will be drawn to your announcement. The same holds true for Facebook, LinkedIn, and your blog.

Tracking Your Progress

You can measure several things in the lead-to-customer conversion stage addressed in this chapter, but the most important one is how efficiently you are closing customers with your marketing efforts.

You can tweak your landing pages and conversion forms by measuring the conversion rate on your landing pages to determine if you're leaking too many visitors and thus lowering your conversion rate. Often, creating more targeted content and simplifying the form can improve your conversion rate dramatically.

Finally, you should track the effectiveness of your lead-nurturing programs. For example, when you send an e-mail out to your list, how many of your subscribers actually click through on one of the links in the message? If you're selling

a product, how many purchase it? Measuring how well your lead-nurturing programs are performing will help you get a better sense of the *value* of a lead, even when that lead is not yet ready to buy.

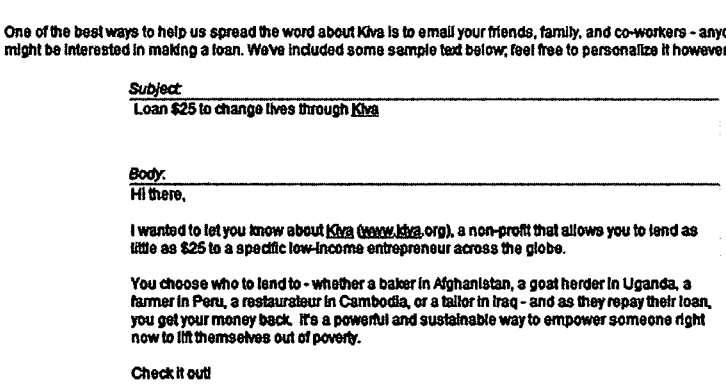
Inbound in Action: Kiva

Not-for-profit Kiva's mission is to connect people through lending for the sake of alleviating poverty. The organization's person-to-person micro-lending web site empowers individuals to lend directly to unique entrepreneurs around the globe.

Kiva has built an exceptional level of reach in a relatively short period of time using inbound marketing. The kiva.org web site is currently one of the top 10,000 web sites in terms of traffic, according to Alexa, and has amassed over 1.4 million links from other web sites; the organization also has over 5,000 members in its Facebook group. By any measure, this is an online success story. But, what's particularly impressive is that they have done this with a relatively low budget (remember, inbound marketing is not about the "width of your wallet").

Most non-profit web sites simply state the organization's mission, and share some brochureware information (in many cases, the content is actually the *same* as the printed brochure!). Kiva goes well beyond that in getting their existing community to help extend their message.

One example is the "Email Your Friends" feature on the web site. Kiva provides sample text that users can simply copy and paste—making it easy for people to tell their friends about Kiva. What's fascinating about their implementation is that it uses *no special software*. They kept it simple, but it accomplishes the goal (see Figure 10.2).



Email your Friends

One of the best ways to help us spread the word about Kiva is to email your friends, family, and co-workers - anyone you think might be interested in making a loan. We've included some sample text below; feel free to personalize it however you like.

Subject:
Loan $25 to change lives through Kiva

Body:
Hi there,

I wanted to let you know about Kiva (www.kiva.org), a non-profit that allows you to lend as little as $25 to a specific low-income entrepreneur across the globe.

You choose who to lend to - whether a baker in Afghanistan, a goat herder in Uganda, a farmer in Peru, a restaurateur in Cambodia, or a tailor in Iraq - and as they repay their loan, you get your money back. It's a powerful and sustainable way to empower someone right now to lift themselves out of poverty.

Check it out!

Figure 10.2 Screen Shot of Kiva's "Email Your Friends" Page

Kiva goes even further in getting help to spread their message. In addition to the ease of allowing people to e-mail their friends, Kiva also provides simple instructions on how to add the Kiva message to a person's *e-mail signature*. When a particularly loyal member of the community adds this message, every e-mail he or she sends out contains Kiva's message at the bottom of the e-mail.

For its more tech savvy community members, Kiva provides several ways to promote the organization on the Web, the most impressive tactic being a dynamic banner/ad that users can add to their web site. Figure 10.3 shows an example.

We love this banner ad tactic for several reasons. Once the banner is installed on a web site, the amount of traffic it generates for Kiva increases as that web site grows, meaning Kiva is piggy-backing on the success of its members' own web sites. Second, the banner is *dynamic* and allows Kiva to show a specific call-to-action with a specific goal.

In addition to *building* their reach, Kiva also does a great job of *nurturing* that reach. For example, like many people, we were intrigued by the idea behind Kiva and registered right away. But, like many people, we didn't

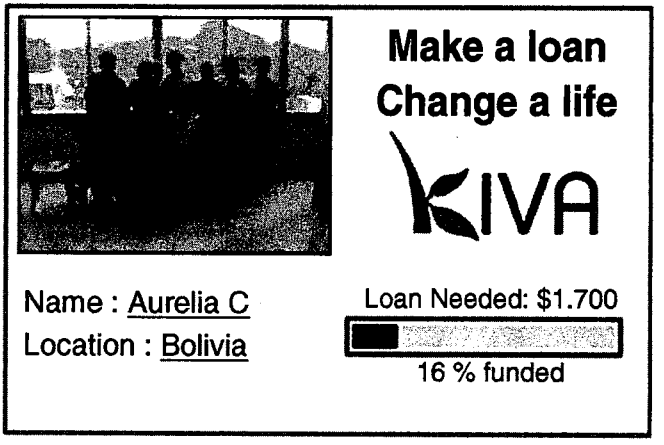


Figure 10.3 Screen Shot of Kiva's Banner on Their Web Site

spend the time to go through the steps to actually make a loan due to becoming distracted with other things. A few days later, we received the following friendly e-mail from Kiva. (See Figure 10.4.)

This e-mail worked because it was clearly sent *only* to users that had registered for the site, but not actually

Dear Dharmesh,

Thank you for registering recently on Kiva (www.kiva.org)!

I noticed you haven't made a microloan yet. So, I wanted to check in and invite you back to lend to an entrepreneur today.
http://www.kiva.org/app.php?page=businesses&_te=nl

For as little as $25, you can empower a specific individual in over 40 developing countries around the world - whether you choose a goat herder in Sudan, a farmer in the Dominican Republic, or a tailor in Iraq, you can help a real person right now.

If you have questions about Kiva or how to use the site, please let us know. Just reply back to this email or check out our Help Center, and we'll get you started. http://www.kiva.org/app.php?page=help&_te=nl

Thanks,

Jessica Jackley Flannery
Co-Founder
www.kiva.org
Loans that Change Lives

Figure 10.4 Kiva E-mail Reminder to Registrant

completed a loan. The e-mail included a specific call-to-action: "I wanted to check in and invite you back to lend to an entrepreneur today." Third, Jessica recognizes that Dharmesh might not be ready to take the next step yet and offers more information and the ability to ask questions—*by responding to the e-mail*! The entire message has a casual but professional tone. It's effective in stating Kiva's goals, but does not sell too hard and is one of the best examples of proper lead nurturing we've seen.

To Do

1. If you have dozens or hundreds of leads coming in, you should use the criteria above to grade them and then hand your qualified opportunities to your sales reps.

2. If you have dozens or hundreds of leads coming in, you should segment and nurture your unqualified opportunities until they are ready for your sales organization.

3. You should start measuring your market reach over time, including the number of e-mail addresses, blog subscribers, Twitter followers, LinkedIn group members, Facebook friends, and so on.

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

PART FOUR

Make Better Decisions

In God we trust; all others bring data.

—*Dr. Edwards Deming*

CHAPTER 11

Make Better Marketing Decisions

If you're like many marketers, you already have a very long "to do" list: buying e-mail lists and sending out e-mail blasts, hiring telemarketers, hiring/managing PR firms to call magazine editors about your press releases, managing and attending trade shows, developing marketing campaigns, and so on. If you want to run before you walk with inbound marketing, then you'll need to cross the least productive outbound marketing items off your to-do list and add a few of the new inbound marketing items (e.g., content creation), measure the results for awhile (e.g., three to six months), and then continue to eliminate the unproductive tactics at the bottom and replace them with new more productive channels/campaigns. After a year or so, much of your marketing to-do list will end up being inbound activities; on average inbound marketing leads are 61 percent less expensive than outbound marketing leads.

How do you decide which "to-do's" to cross off and which to add? Your first step is to create a living, breathing sales and marketing funnel to help you make marketing investment decisions. The inputs at the top of the funnel include all of your channels/campaigns that drive leads into

your business, such as e-mail marketing, trade shows, seminars, sales relationships, telemarketing, cold calls, branded organic search traffic (e.g., searchers who use your company name), unbranded search traffic (searchers who use industry terms), paid search traffic (if any), traffic from social media sites, traffic from blogs and other web sites, among others. These tactics all drive targeted and untargeted prospects into your funnel—and generally, not all of these prospects come out at the bottom as paying customers, which is why you must grade, qualify and nurture your leads. We call it a funnel, rather than a pipeline, because it is shaped like a funnel—there are a lot more inputs coming in the top than customers coming out the bottom.

Levels and Definitions

The first step in creating your funnel is coming up with a list of sources/campaigns/inputs at the top of your funnel that create "prospects" for your products and services.

After you have determined which sources/campaigns/channels drive prospects into the top ("prospect" level) of your funnel, you then need to figure out a definition for the second step of your funnel. Let's call this the "leads" stage for lack of a better term. A lead might be anyone a sales person (or you) qualify as being eligible to spend at least an hour with, showing your product or discussing your service. After you have figured out the lead stage definition, you then determine the definition of the third stage of the funnel, which we'll call the "opportunity" stage. At this stage, the potential customer has an internal "champion" within a company advocating for a purchase of your company's product or service this quarter. The last level in the funnel is the "customer" step—someone who has purchased your product or service. The key is not to over-think

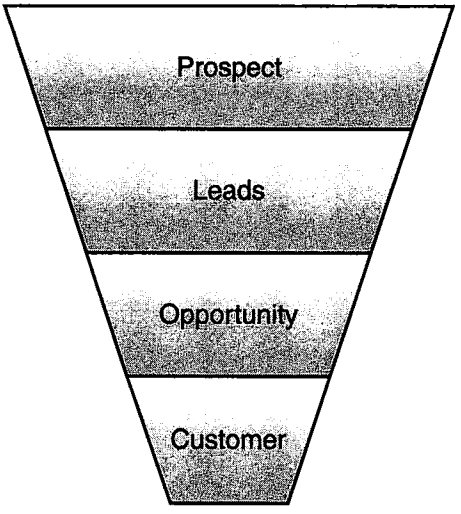


Figure 11.1 Funnel Diagram

this exercise—limit your team to a one-hour meeting to make decisions on the funnel stages and definitions. You can hire an outside consultant and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to come up with funnel definitions, but you can do it yourself if you are decisive. The key to an effective sales funnel is not the decision criteria—it's that you have a funnel (see Figure 11.1) and that you consistently measure it.

Now that you have your levels (prospect, lead, opportunity, customer), you measure the size of each level on a quarterly (or monthly) basis. Once you have the size of each level, you can measure the conversion rate between each phase plus the total yield of the funnel—the percent of prospects that turn into customers (see Figure 11.2).

Campaign Yield

The key piece of information you get from this exercise is the shape (ratios) of the funnel per campaign/channel. For example, you might look at your branded organic search

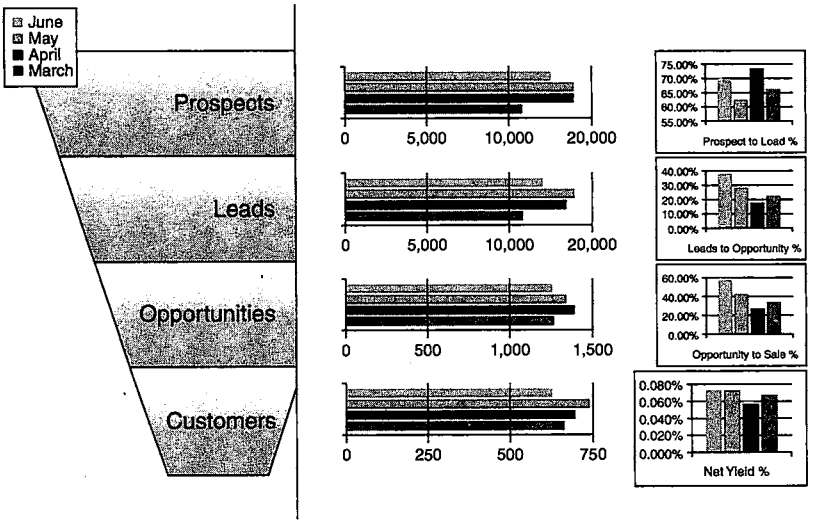


Figure 11.2 Funnel Metrics

(people using your company name during a Google search) funnel. How many prospects last quarter did you get from branded organic search, how many leads did you get from that channel, how many opportunities, how many customers, and what was the overall yield (prospects over customers) of that channel? How did those numbers change relative to the previous quarter?

You should also determine ROI (return on investment) per channel. For example, you can compare the cost per channel, per quarter, with the revenue that channel produced per quarter.

This campaign yield and ROI information should influence which items you cross off the bottom of your marketing to-do list, and which tactics should get additional resources. The better the yield and higher the ROI, the more resources you should pour into that channel. The low yield and low ROI campaigns should be replaced, *even if they are sacred cows*. A typical sacred cow is the annual trade show

that "everyone" goes to, but never results in any business because "everyone" includes competitors and job-seekers, but not potential customers.

As this book is on inbound marketing, we suggest that once you get this framework in place, you cross off your bottom two channels and add two new inbound channels (e.g., a blog and Twitter).

Tracking Your Progress

This chapter is about measurement: measure your monthly prospects, leads, opportunities, and customers per channel over time as well as the ratios between the levels over time. Use this information to help you decide which programs to double down on and which to eliminate.

Inbound in Action: Constant Contact

Constant Contact is an e-mail-marketing firm that started in 1999 and went public in 2007 on the Nasdaq stock exchange. The company now has over 250,000 customers, and as with many successful companies, is exceptionally analytical about every aspect of its business.

Constant Contact has three levels to their funnel: unique visitors, trials, and customers. They have a myriad of sources that feed prospects into the top of their funnel, including paid search, organic branded search, organic unbranded search, resellers, radio advertisements, viral footers (messages at the footers of all e-mails sent out by customers), and others. Reports Constant Contact CEO Gail Goodman, "Inbound marketing practices have been one of the key ingredients to our success thus far. Our ability to measure our funnel by campaign and by partner has enabled us to

make better decisions on how to allocate our sales effort and marketing budget."

The company measures and analyzes their data carefully every month and plots over time for their overall funnel and for each source: number of unique visitors, number of trials, number of customers, visitor to trialer ratio, trialer to customer ratio, and visitor to customer yield.

This funnel shape information gives them a fantastic baseline from which to run a myriad of useful experiments, such as increasing/decreasing PPC budget, increasing/decreasing the size of the trial sign-up forms, increasing/decreasing the size of their support number during the trial, and so on. Based on these experiments, Constant Contact has continuously improved their yield over time, and despite having many competitors, is the sole e-mail marketing software vendor that is publicly traded.

To Do

1. Define all of your marketing campaigns/channels.
2. Define your funnel stages.
3. Measure each stage by channel.
4. Measure the yield by channel.
5. Measure the ROI by channel.
6. Replace poor performing outbound channels with new inbound channels.
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

CHAPTER 12

Picking and Measuring Your People

The rules of marketing haven't changed much since companies such as Procter & Gamble, Coca Cola, and IBM perfected the craft of interrupting their way into customers' wallets using outbound marketing. As we have shown throughout this book, the era of interruption-based marketing is coming to an end because people have become much more efficient at blocking out these traditional methods of marketing and have become equally as efficient at finding *trusted* information online.

The next several decades will usher in an era of inbound marketing. Just as P&G, Coca Cola, and IBM built huge companies because they became really good at outbound marketing, a new wave of successful companies will be built around inbound marketing. Will one of those companies be yours?

What does this change mean for your marketing staff? Simply put, your hiring criteria need to change and your way of measuring performance needs to change along with it. The following is a suggested framework called DARC

for hiring and developing inbound marketing savvy employees.

D = Hire **D**igital Citizens

A = Hire for **A**nalytical chops

R = Hire for Web **R**each

C = Hire **C**ontent Creators

Hire Digital Citizens

Do you know people who happen to be handy around the house and who are as good with wrenches and pipes as they are with saws and wood? It seems like you either have the "handyman" gene or you don't. We think the Web is similar in that way. Some people seem to really "get" it and are naturally curious about it and others aren't. One way we've heard people categorized is as follows:

Digital Citizens—Born Web or very familiar with the Web. Speak Web fluently.

Digital Tourists—Born analog and/or not deeply familiar with the Web. Speak Web with an accent.

In this new era of inbound marketing, it's important that you hire Digital Citizens, not Digital Tourists. It's relatively hard to figure this out using standard interview questions, so you need to test for it. Your marketing interviews should include questions like the following:

- What RSS reader do you use? Can you show it to me?
- What blogs do you read?

- Do you rank first for your name in Google?
- Do you use Delicious? Can you show it to me?
- Do you have a blog? Can you show it to me?
- Do you use Facebook or LinkedIn? When was the last time you updated your profile?
- Do you use Twitter? Can you show me?
- Do you have a channel on YouTube? Can you show it to me?

If your prospective hire gives you blank stares or a lot of "I was planning on setting that up," then you don't have a Digital Citizen on your hands.

Hire Analytical Chops

The good thing about inbound marketing is that everything is completely measureable. No longer do you have arguments about how XYZ or ABC major account found your product. You know whether it was a Google search (and which term the account used), a link from another site, a discussion on LinkedIn Answers, or others. The old saying, "I know I'm wasting half my marketing budget, but I'm just not sure which half" is no longer true in the inbound marketing era.

Modern marketing organizations must analyze all of this great information in order to make better decisions. This means that when you bring on new hires, some of them should be very Analytical. It's difficult to figure out if someone is Analytical from a standard interview, so to test for it, you should have your prospective hire bring to the interview

his or her favorite spreadsheet with pivot tables, and show you some counter-intuitive insight that came out of the spreadsheet model in graph format.

Hire for Their Web Reach

Over the years, it has been common practice for companies to hire sales representatives who have a Rolodex full of contacts in their industry—their contacts can help them short circuit the sales process. In the era of inbound marketing, it's become just as important for marketers to have a Rolodex, but not the same type of Rolodex as a sales person's. This new type of Rolodex is called Web Reach.

Good inbound marketers today are cultivating their own personal network of loose (e.g., blog subscribers, Twitter followers) and tight (e.g., Facebook friends) connections within their industry through the Web. Good inbound marketers often have their own blogs, Twitter feeds, Facebook accounts, LinkedIn accounts, and so on. Just as we discussed earlier in the book about corporate reach, individual inbound marketers, too, have Reach. If you hire a marketer within your industry that has a large Twitter following or a popular industry blog, your company dramatically extends its reach because that marketer opens up new channels into the top of your funnel.

Similar to the other inbound marketing criteria, Reach is a little difficult to tease out in a typical interview, so you should do some online research about the candidate, and ask pointed questions when you are both in front of a computer during the interview—yes, marketing interviews should include a session where you and the interviewee are online together. The following are some of the questions

you might ask to determine if potential new hires have significant Web Reach:

- How many subscribers to your blog? Do you talk about our industry on your blog or about personal stuff?
- How many Facebook followers do you have? Do you talk about our industry at all on your Facebook account?
- How many LinkedIn followers do you have?
- How many Twitter followers do you have? Do you talk about our industry on your Twitter account?

Compare a prospective hire's Reach to that of other candidates and your company's own reach to see if you can open up the top of your funnel by bringing this person on board.

Web reach is relatively hard to acquire and is very valuable. Most organizations underestimate both of these assets. If you can become skilled at evaluating an individual's Reach, you'll be able to snap up some high-quality talent that is relatively undervalued in the marketplace. Eventually, all companies will figure this out, so there is a short-term window for you to take advantage of the situation.

A great example of a company that understands the value of Web reach and is actively recruiting for it is American Express. They recently had the brilliant idea of hiring Guy Kawasaki to start writing for them on the American Express blog. Guy is an author, entrepreneur (www.alltop.com), and investor who was an early blogger about these topics, and because of his *remark*able content, he's built up a huge following, including over 70,000 blog followers and over

	LinkedIn Followers	Twitter Grader	Facebook Group	Blog Subscribers
Jane CEO	200	0	10	0
Joe CMO	300	80	50	0
Marvin PR	400	90	60	10
Linda Marketing	500	99	90	3000

Figure 12.1 Guy Kawasaki's Reach Being Leveraged By American Express

100,000 Twitter followers. Most of Guy's new, *remark*able blog content is now written for American Express. In addition to American Express getting great content, Guy posts a note on his blog (See Figure 12.1) and on Twitter pointing his 170,000+ subscriber/followers to the American Express blog. American Express is greatly benefitting from Guy Kawasaki's reach!

Hire Content Creators

As we have discussed, inbound marketing starts with creating *remark*able content that spreads virally in the social mediasphere, attracts links from other sites, and drives up your rankings in Google. This remarkable content turns your web site from a small town like Wellesley, Massachusetts (one highway) to a large metropolis like New York City (many highways, many airports, many train stations, many bus depots).

Your next marketing hire, therefore, should be someone with great writing skills, preferably an existing journalist looking to make a career change, rather than a technical writer of manuals. Before hiring this person, we recommend you test them by paying them to write a blog article for you (approximately $200). You should measure the effectiveness of this article by seeing how many links it attracted,

how many views it got, and how many comments it received relative to other blog content you have produced.

Another interesting skill to have in-house is someone who can Create remarkable video content for you. If you want to stick your toe in the water with video, you could hire an intern from a local university who is majoring in film or use someone internally who has basic technical skills and a Mac. You can buy this person a video camera for $250 and send him or her off to work. If you want to test potential recruits for aptitude, just ask them to show you other videos they have made and have posted to YouTube.

Developing Existing Marketers

Many professional marketers today are so steeped in the traditions and skill-sets of outbound marketing that it can be difficult to get them to learn new skills. It's very hard to teach someone to be analytical or to become a good content creator if they're not trained that way early on, but you can make an attempt at improving people's inbound marketing knowledge. You can send people to the Inbound Marketing Summit or Inbound Marketing University, you can point them to this book, or you can direct them to some thoughtful bloggers who talk about inbound marketing.

In many cases, you will find that the employees you have who are Digital Citizens will start shining more brightly than your more experienced veteran outbound marketers.

Tracking Your Progress

In baseball, a "five tooled" player is one who can field, throw, hit for average, hit for power, and steal bases—an ideal player! In inbound marketing, an ideal hire is a "four

tooled" player: a Digital Citizen who is Analytical, has Web Reach, and who can Create *remark*able content. Will it be easy to find D, A, R, and C in spades? Probably not—there just are not a lot of them around yet! If you have a very small business, then you want to try to get as many of these qualities in one person as you can. If you are in a slightly larger business, you can specialize a bit by hiring some folks who are analytical and others who are content creators as an example.

If you are like most companies, you do not have a huge budget to go out and hire lots of new people, so it pays to have more of your current team do some of the work. Some of these skills are hard to measure (e.g., Analytical), but others are easy to measure. We suggest you create a Reach Grader grid for your organization where you track your executives' and your marketers' individual Reach and how it changes over time. See Table 12.1 for a good example. The Reach Grader is the type of tool that should be updated and posted on a monthly basis. All of this information is public, so you might as well pull it together and let all employees consume it on an ongoing basis. It will create a strong incentive to improve.

Table 12.1 Reach Grader Grid Measuring Employees' Web Reach

	LinkedIn Followers	Twitter Grade	Facebook Grade	Blog Subscribers
Jane CEO	200	0	10	0
Joe CMO	300	80	50	0
Marvin PR	400	90	60	10
Linda Marketing	500	99	90	3000

Table 12.2 Marketing Grader for Employees

	Digital Citizen	Analytical	Reach	Content Creation	Score
Joe CMO	2	8	2	1	13
Marvin PR	5	7	3	5	20
Linda Marketing	7	2	8	7	24

On the Content creation side, you should track each piece of content's impact on the funnel. For example, if you have two people writing blog content, you should track which person's article drew in more new visitors who ultimately ended up buying your products or service. This is the type of information that should be publicly available in your company—the mere act of making it public will create incentive for improvement.

In terms of how to evaluate marketers in their annual review, you might think of creating a different model similar to the one in Table 12.2 (Marketing Grader), where you and your peers rate each employee on a scale of 1 to 10 for each of the inbound marketing criterion. The Reach and Content creation columns can be derived squarely from the data while the analytical and Digital Citizen data are a bit more subjective.

Each company is a little bit different, so we suspect you'll want to add other criteria to the list along with the ones listed below—perhaps some of the items from Jack Welch's leadership 4E's below might be good additions.

What gets measured gets done. If you track these inbound marketing criteria and tie them to raises, you'll develop competitive advantage for your company over time.

Inbound in Action: Jack Welch and GE

We've always been big fans of legendary General Electric CEO, Jack Welch. Jack ran GE for 30 years, during which time he increased the value of the business 30 times and turned it into the most valuable company on the planet. In Jack's books and lectures (he is a senior lecturer at MIT these days), he credits much of his success with his hiring/evaluation criteria for his employees. Jack spent 50 percent of his time on talent acquisition, evaluation, and development. He had four criteria he used for evaluating talent at GE:

Energy—Individuals with energy love to "go, go, go." These people possess boundless energy and get up every day ready to attack the job at hand. High-energy people move at 95 miles-per-hour in a 55 mile-per-hour world.

Energizers—These people know how to spark others to perform. They outline a vision and get people to carry it out. Energizers know how to get others excited about a cause or crusade. They are selfless in giving others the credit when things go right, but are quick to accept responsibility when things go awry.

Edge—People with edge are competitive types. They know how to make the really difficult decisions, such as hiring, firing, and promoting, never allowing the degree of difficulty to stand in their way.

Execute—This is the key to the entire model. Without measurable results, the other "E's" are of little use. Executers recognize that activity and productivity are not the same and are capable of converting energy and edge into action and results.

Just as Jack Welch spent much of his time recruiting talent, evaluating performance, and developing performance using his 4E's, we recommend you use the DARC criteria

to evaluate potential marketing recruits, evaluate marketing employee performance, and develop your staff. Because we are at the beginning of the inbound marketing era, getting people in your company who possess these characteristics, evaluating them along these criteria, and developing these qualities can give you a competitive advantage. Ten years from now, everyone will be looking for inbound marketing mavens, so now it is the time to put these people in place and develop your existing people along these lines.

To Do

1. Increase the percentage of time you allocate to recruiting, evaluating, and developing inbound marketing mavens.
2. When hiring new marketers, use the DARC criteria: Digital Citizen, Analytical, Web Reach, and Content creation.
3. Evaluate yourself, your staff, and executives using the Reach Grader grid shown earlier. Show changes over time.
4. Measure your staff over time using the Marketing Grader grid shown earlier. Tie improvement to compensation.
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

CHAPTER 13

Picking and Measuring a PR Agency

Traditionally, a PR agency earns its fees by introducing its clients to editors of print journals that cover their industry, such as *CIO Magazine* or *Modern Bride*. This model has been beneficial for the PR firms, clients, and print journalists for several decades now.

PR agencies have two core competencies. They have a Rolodex of relationships with print media people *and* they are efficient at interrupting print media people in an attempt to get your new offerings in front of them. However, both of these core competencies have problems.

The first problem is that the print journalists no longer have a corner on the market for news as more people turn to bloggers and social media for critical information. The interesting thing that has happened is we have gone from a world where there were a limited number of journalists whom a PR agency needed to have relationships with to a world where everyone is a journalist. In the inbound marketing era, it is nearly impossible for a PR firm to have proprietary relationships with all of the key journalists in an industry as it was before.

The second problem is that information is much more readily available to journalists and bloggers, so they no longer rely on PR firms to funnel it to them. Just as your customers are getting better at blocking out interruptions, journalists and bloggers are getting better at blocking out interruptions from PR firms.

In this inbound marketing era, does the PR agency still have its place? Well, it depends on your company and on the PR firm you are dealing with.

If your company is full of four-tool players who are Digital citizens, Analytical, have huge Reach, and are Content creators, then you might not get maximum value from a PR agency. This is particularly true about the reach criteria. If your company has some holes to fill, particularly in the reach area, then you could end up getting great value from the right type of PR agency.

Picking a PR Agency

There are a number of filters you should use when selecting a PR agency.

The first filter piggybacks on the digital citizens and reach criteria from the previous chapter. When you meet with a PR firm, you typically meet a partner who is a fantastic salesperson. Once you are on the path to a decision, you meet the team that actually works with you; these people are typically much less experienced than the partner. You should evaluate the partner, and each person on the team assigned to you, through Twitter Grader and Facebook Grader; look them up in LinkedIn; see if they rank first for their name in Google; and run their blog through Website Grader. If you find that some of them are engaged less in the Web than your own people, then you should probably

CARL DECIDES TO VISIT HIS NEXT-GENERATION PR CONSULTING FIRM IN-PERSON.

keep looking. If you find a weak link, you might suggest it be replaced.

The second filter is to see whether the PR agency eats its own dog food. You should run the PR agency's web site through Website Grader. Many PR people will talk about how they focus on their customers and ignore their own site when you bring up their Website Grade, or they will say they were just starting an initiative to begin inbound marketing for their own agency. Our advice is to *not* buy either of these arguments. If they really understood inbound marketing, they would find the time to better market themselves.

Ask the prospective PR agency for the names of some of their other clients and how long their clients have been with them. Run their clients through Website Grader and note their clients' Website Grades relative to your own, and take particular note of the inbound links section and compare it to your own.

By running these three simple filters on your PR agency or prospective PR agency, you avoid getting sold by the one person in the firm that actually gets this stuff, and then being moved to the rest of the firm once you sign up. The good news is that the PR industry is full of smart people and they realize the industry is transforming, so more firms can pass these three filters.

Tracking Your Progress

Once you have a PR agency, you can use many complicated and expensive tools for measuring them. We give you two simple ways to measure success.

First, you want to measure the number of new links into your site and the number of new web sites linking to yours. Once you hire a PR firm, you should see the number of web sites linking to your web site increase in pace. This increase sends you more traffic and helps you improve your Google rankings. If you want specific bloggers and web sites to link to you, then you should make a list of those sites and have your PR agency track how many of them link to you on a monthly basis. If you are not seeing a material increase in the number of sites linking to your site, you have a problem with your PR firm. If you are seeing a big increase in the number of links, your PR agency should be rewarded.

The second thing you want to measure is the number of mentions your brand(s) is getting in Google when you do a search on it (e.g., search "inbound marketing" with quotation marks in Google) and you should track this metric over time. (See Figure 13.1.) If your brand is not getting mentioned at increasing rates in Google, then you have an issue

Figure 13.1 Brand Mentions in Google

with your PR agency. If your brand is increasingly mentioned in Google, your PR agency should be rewarded.

Inbound in Action: Solis, Weber, Defren, & Roetzer

A handful of PR professionals out there really get it, judging by their own reach, the improved reach of their clients, and the content they are producing. Here are a few examples.

Brian Solis at FutureWorks maintains a blog called bub.blicio.us and another one called PR2.0, which both got web site grades of 97, meaning they are authoritative. In addition, Brian has over 20,000 Twitter followers. "Inbound marketing versus outbound marketing is the difference between broadcast PR and genuine "public relations," says Solis. "PR agencies, consultants and communications professionals either establish an epicenter that serves as the resource hub for their industry or they will intentionally remove themselves from the radar screens of customers and influencers alike. In the social Web, we are presented with a privilege to establish meaningful dialogue and collaborative relationships with the people who define our markets. This is an incredible opportunity to establish relevance and discoverability. Remember, consumers have choices. We're not part of those decisions where we're not present. Inbound marketing serves as the bridge between those seeking information, direction and insight and those willing to

provide guidance and support." Brian clearly understands how to create content, optimize that content, and market it to create a following. Having him in your corner brings you expertise and some reach. Larry Weber at W2 Group published a book called *Marketing To the Social Web*, which is about how to build and leverage customer communities. It is less about leveraging inbound marketing to get found by your customers and more about leveraging your existing customer community. According to Larry, "Inbound marketing is the right approach in the 'dialogue age' of marketing and hits the bullseye on the future of customer-centric relationships.

Todd Defren at Shift Communications maintains a blog called PR-Squared that scored a 99 on Website Grader. Todd has over 10,000 followers on Twitter. According to Todd, "Inbound Marketing is findability based on authority based on authenticity based on content based on passion." Paul Roetzer runs PR20/20, an inbound marketing agency. His firm has a unique business model that allows companies to buy inbound marketing PR a la carte. "Inbound Marketing has given PR firms the ability to expand their service offerings and consistently deliver measurable results, including: inbound links, web site traffic, leads and sales. There is tremendous demand developing for social-media savvy agencies that can build relationships, produce search engine optimized content and directly impact the bottom line." These four people get inbound marketing and have reach. The question you need to ask yourself is whether they are a good fit for your business. You also need to figure out if the people you currently work with really understand inbound marketing, or whether just the founders who create the content are the ones who actually understand it.

To Do

1. Evaluate whether you really need a PR agency.
2. Pick a PR agency by running them through the three simple filters above.
3. Measure a PR agency by running them through the two simple filters above.
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

CHAPTER 14

Watching Your Competition

We recently spent some time with Jim Cash. Jim is a former professor at Harvard Business School and now is a professional board member, serving on the boards of Microsoft, GE, Wal-Mart, Chubb, The Boston Celtics, among others.

We asked Jim to tell us about some of the world class CEOs that he has worked with. He mentioned a few attributes about them, but the one that stuck out was that the top CEOs were all a little bit paranoid. They were always watching what their competitors were doing and were all leery of potential upstarts that could do damage to them. What Jim has to say is consistent with what legendary Intel CEO Andy Grove said in his book entitled, *Only The Paranoid Survive*.

The Web is a flattener of all marketplaces—it is the ultimate meritocracy. Because the Web makes it so much more efficient to spread ideas, it poses a great opportunity for upstarts with unique new products or services, so you should be more paranoid now than you have ever been because you have never been so vulnerable!

Tools to Keep Tabs on Competitors

On the flip side, it is easier than ever to track how your competition is doing on the Web if you know what you are doing. Here are seven different ways you can track yourself relative to your competitors:

1. Website Grade—Go to Website.Grader.com and run your web site alongside your competitors' web sites to see how well you do. Pay special attention to upstart competitors who might be more focused on leveraging the Web than some of the more traditional players.

2. Delicious—Look on the Website Grader reports for you and your competitors and keep track of how each player is doing. Delicious.com is an online version of someone's browser bookmarks, so if many people have your site bookmarked, it means you have remarkable content. If your competitors' bookmarks grow rapidly, it means the marketplace is starting to respond to something they are saying or doing.

3. Inbound Links—Look on the Website Grader report and pull out the number of links for you and your competitors. An increase in the number of links to a site can indicate that a competitor is getting more traction with its products.

4. TwitterGrade—Go to Twitter.Grader.com and run your company's Twitter profile through and compare it to each competitor. You should track this metric over time.

5. Facebook fans—Go to Facebook.com and see the number of fans your company's web site has relative

to your competitor's web site. You will have to search around to find the company page in Facebook. This number is worth tracking over time—if your competitor starts to gain a lot of fans, then it means their customer loyalty is increasing. This might mean it is going to get harder to steal customers from them, forcing you to focus on non-consuming parts of your market.

6. Compete—Go to Compete.com and compare their estimate of the traffic your site is getting versus your competitors.

7. Buzz—Go to Google and do a search on "your brand" (in quotations) and look at the number of results in the upper right hand corner. Do the same for each of your competitors. The number of results shows the number of pages on the Web where the brand is mentioned. This metric is worth tracking over time as it will let you know how your "buzz" is relative to your competitors'. You can do the same thing in blogsearch.google.com to see how your buzz is going relative to your competitors in the blogosphere.

Tracking Your Progress

The following is a snapshot of the tool we use to track how we are doing on these important metrics relative to our competitors (see Figure 14.1). We recommend you track your traditional competitors, upstarts, and companies you consider as alternatives to your product.

It is important to get a baseline of how you are doing relative to your competitors once, but even more important to get a baseline of how you are doing relative to your

WEBSITE	WEBSITE GRADE	GOOGLE PAGE RANK	TRAFFIC RANK	BLOG RANK	INBOUND LINKS	DEL.ICIO.US BOOKMARKS	GOOGLE INDEXED PAGES	KEYWORDS IN GOOGLE TOP 100
www.hubspot.com	99	6	8,911	3,224	37,538	930	551	701
www.websitegrader.com	93	6	184,416	Not Ranked	37,819	4,685	83	8
blog.hubspot.com	99	5	8,871	8,078	33,179	228	921	353
twitter.grader.com	99	5	4,734	3,233	230,240	2,209	63,000	58

Figure 14.1 Competitor Grader

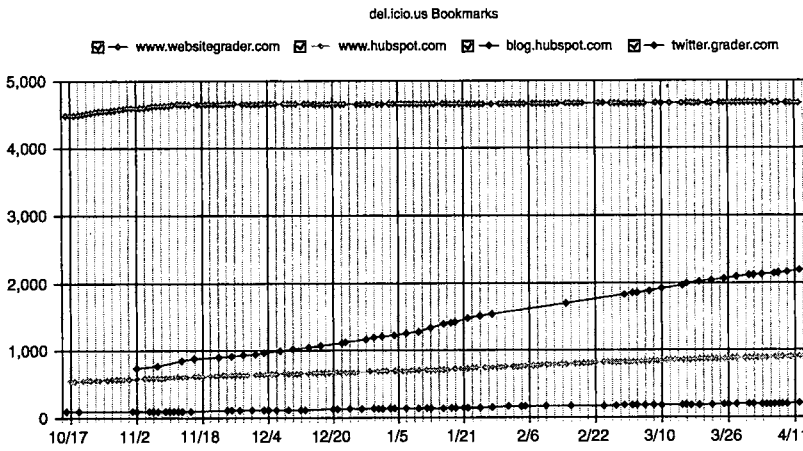


Figure 14.2 Delicious Bookmark Comparison Over Time

competitors over time. (See Figure 14.2) You need to look at each of these metrics and watch for big moves along any of these dimensions. As mentioned earlier, the Web can give competitors a big advantage if they know how to use it.

Inbound in Action: TechTarget

TechTarget was founded in 1999 and went public in 2007. TechTarget is an expert at using inbound marketing to generate leads that it sells to technology companies. They create topic-specific web sites with *remark*able content that draw people in who convert into leads that they then sell to technology companies. According to Greg Strakosch, Founder

WEBSITE	WEBSITE GRADE	GOOGLE PAGE RANK	TRAFFIC RANK	BLOG RANK	INBOUND LINKS	DEL.ICIO.US BOOKMARKS	GOOGLE INDEXED PAGES	KEYWORDS IN GOOGLE TOP 100
constructionsoftwarereview.com	90	5	513,171	1,815,794	6,344	7	3,560	765
searchcrm.techtarget.com	95	6	1,993	Not Ranked	13,051	59	8,020	N/A
www.nationalcontractors.com	84	4	577,845	Not Ranked	8,898	9	12,700	N/A
www.distributionsoftwarereview.com	23	1	8,716,642	Not Ranked	42	1	80	N/A
www.ganttnead.com	89	6	87,720	157,757	23,727	959	21,400	N/A
project-management-software.org	57	5	205,022	Not Ranked	714	218	75	N/A
www.web-based-software.com	67	5	239,568	Not Ranked	2,031	119	269	N/A
www.findaccountingsoftware.com	89	5	234,390	Not Ranked	2,398	20	20,100	N/A
www.healthtechnologyreview.com	90	4	799,498	7,603	1,666	12	572	N/A

Figure 14.3 TechTarget Comparison Chart

and CEO of TechTarget, "Our use of inbound marketing techniques has been a key ingredient in our success thus far."

Like a lot of successful companies, they are very clever about how they analyze their competition and how they analyze each site relative to that of their peers. Figure 14.3 shows how they lay it out for themselves.

For each one of those Web metrics, they then track how they are doing versus their competitors and peers over time as is shown here where they look at their Website Grade for www.constructionsoftwarereview.com (moved from last to first) relative to their competition over time (see Figure 14.4).

They also like to analyze how they are doing relative to their competition/peers in Google organic ranking, and keep track of it in the following tool (see Figure 14.5).

Strakosch commented that, "All of this competitive information is used to keep us abreast of how we are doing

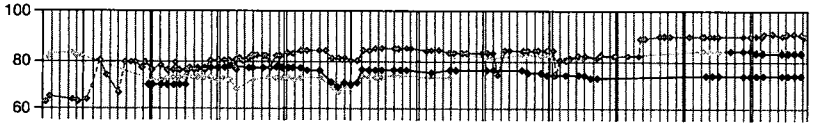


Figure 14.4 TechTarget Historic Comparison

KEYWORD	MONTHLY SEARCHES	CONSTRUCTION... RANK	SOFTWAREADVI... RANK	CAPTERRA RANK	CTSGUIDES RANK
applied computer systems jobpower review	Low	1	100+	100+	3
applied computer systems review	Low	1	100+	100+	49
builderhelper review	Low	1	100+	100+	100+

Figure 14.5 TechTarget SEO Comparison

against the competition. It is also used in our sales cycle to differentiate us from the competition."

To Do

1. Be more paranoid.
2. Run your site through the different tools described above.
3. Track the results in a spreadsheet or application.
4. Track the results over time and check on a monthly basis.
5. _____
6. _____

CHAPTER 15

On Commitment, Patience and Learning

Learning inbound marketing is like learning to play the guitar. The first step in playing the guitar is learning how to play the G chord by placing three fingers on your left hand in awkward positions and strumming the strings with a pick in your right hand. The second step is learning the C chord and the D chord, both of which involve tricky three finger positions on the left hand and strumming with a pick in the right hand. The third step is learning to move your left hand between these three chords quickly. The fourth step is doing a strum with your right hand that sounds half decent while you are moving between the three chords on your left hand. The fifth step is finally learning your first simplistic song. In any given year, x number of people who take up learning how to play guitar; .5x get to step two, .25x get to step three, .125x get to step 4, and .06x get to step five. In other words, for every 100 people who start to play guitar, only six get through the first hurdles to play a simplistic song. Up until step 5, the hours you spend practicing are most un-gratifying because everything you do sounds terrible. Once you get to step five, it becomes easier to play and you get immediate

gratification from practicing more. In other words, there is a big hurdle at the beginning of learning to play guitar and this hurdle weeds out those people not fully committed. Once you get over the barrier, however, the benefits accrue quickly in a most satisfying way.

Learning to do inbound marketing has a small hump in the learning curve in a similar way as learning to play the guitar does. In order to get maximum value from inbound marketing in the form of leads, you need to stick your leg in the water for a couple of months to start, not stick your toe in the water for a couple of days. The benefits come very slowly at first, but they accumulate until you reach successive tipping points. For example, if you just start writing a blog, you do not get much benefit. If you write a blog and your company builds a large following in Twitter, then you get much more benefit from every blog article you write, as you can spread your blog articles through your Twitter network ($1 + 1 = 3$).

You'll come to points in this process where you'll want to give up, and only those who persevere will make it through. The reality is that none of these individual steps is all that difficult, but they take perseverance.

If you have not started doing inbound marketing yet, get started today before your competitors do. If you have dipped your toe in the water and haven't seen results, put your whole leg in. We have seen inbound marketing work first hand for hundreds of companies in a myriad of different industries—we're confident it will work for you if you persevere and continually learn.

Tracking Your Progress

Go to your calendar and physically block out some time every day of the week for the next three months dur-

ing which you will create remarkable content, optimize that content for search engines and social media, publish that content, market the content through the social media-sphere, and measure the results.

Inbound in Action: Tom Brady

Tom Brady was a backup quarterback at the University of Michigan for his first two years before becoming a starting quarterback later in his career. He was drafted by the New England Patriots in the sixth round after 199 other players, and made the team initially as its fourth-string backup quarterback. When their All Pro starter, Drew Bledsoe, went down with an injury, Coach Bill Belichick put in Tom Brady. The rest is history, with Brady going on to break the all-time touchdown record for one season and leading the Patriots to three super bowl victories (so far).

When interviewed about Tom Brady, Coach Belichick said Brady did not have the physical attributes of a great quarterback in those early years, but he practiced harder than anyone else on the team. In fact, when the coach would arrive at practice, Brady would already be there, having organized the practice squad to do extra drills before the regular squad arrived. Brady persevered despite sitting on the bench behind an all-pro quarterback for what must have seemed like an eternity.

The great thing about inbound marketing is that you don't have to be a diamond in the rough like Tom Brady. Although social media does take some time, creativity, and know-how, it also has very low barriers to entry—meaning anyone can do it as long you preserve and commit to it. Keep working away at it, and before long you'll find yourself a minor celebrity in your extended network.

To Do

1. Open your calendar and book two hours a day for the next three months to dedicate to getting found, converting, and making better decisions using inbound marketing.
2. Start summarizing your "to do" lists from this book.
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CHAPTER 16

Why Now?

One hundred years ago, most companies were local businesses and most of their marketing happened door-to-door. The introduction of motion pictures, radio, and television platforms ushered in the first major marketing shift in the last century as companies found it much more efficient to mass outbound marketing to consumers and businesses. Because outbound marketing scaled better nationally than locally, this new, efficient marketing model enabled companies to became national in footprint. Companies such as P&G, Budweiser and McDonalds, as well as the major Madison Avenue firms that were masters of efficiently converting huge sums of money into even more valuable customer relationships through outbound marketing, grew into the behemoths they are today.

This outbound marketing revolution has lasted for more than 50 years and is winding down as people become more efficient at blocking marketing interruptions and turn instead to the Web for their learning and shopping needs. This seismic shift in the way commerce takes place is giving rise to a whole new set of large companies, as well as a new type of Madison Avenue. The new companies and

marketing/PR firms will need to learn the new rules of inbound marketing in order to convert creativity, content, and conversation into valuable customers.

Just as the rules from door-to-door didn't translate to outbound mass marketing, the rules from outbound marketing do not apply to inbound marketing. You can't simply move your advertising budget and 30-second TV spot, online—it won't work. Pushing a message at a potential customer when that message has not been requested will fail as a major source of new customers, and by extension, revenue, for most companies.

The churn rate of the Fortune 500 shows early evidence of this new seismic shift in the economic landscape. From 1955 until 1995, the average annual churn rate of the Fortune 500 was 4 percent. In other words, every year about 20 new companies dropped out of the Fortune 500 and 20 new companies entered. Since 1995, the churn rate has doubled to 8 percent per year—40 new companies drop out and 40 new companies enter. Of the 500 companies in the Fortune 500 in 1995, only 250 remained in 2009! The reshaping of the industrial landscape has already begun: New companies such as Amazon, eBay, and Google have joined the Fortune 500 and stalwarts such as Toys 'R' Us, Ace Hardware and Polaroid have left.

Seismic shifts like the one we're living through pose an amazing opportunity for new entrants into markets and an amazing threat to incumbent leaders (see Figure 16.1). New companies in markets with remarkable offerings can easily take advantage of the changing landscape to rise up to the top. Old stalwarts relying on marketing techniques that worked in the 1960s will become vulnerable to attack.

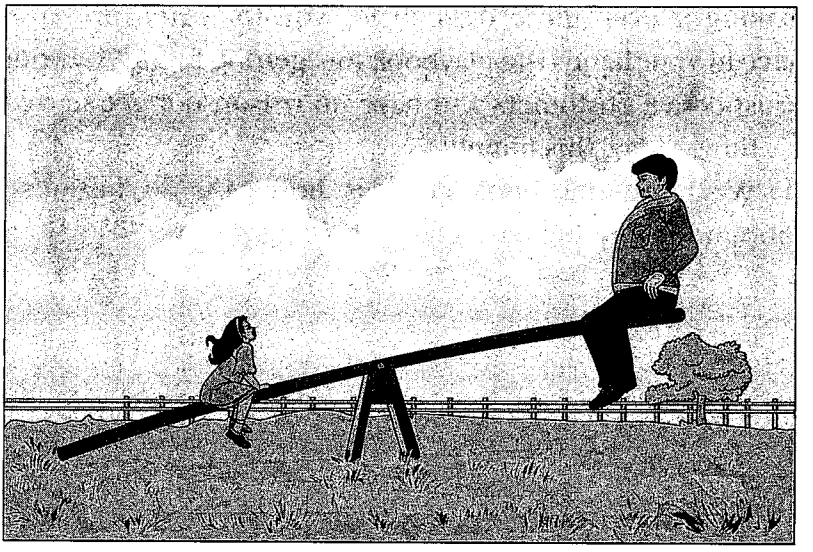


Figure 16.1 Inbound Marketing Levels the Playing Field

Another interesting aspect of these shifts is that in these new markets, there tends to be one winner and several "also-rans." A few examples:

- eBay is number one in online auctions . . . who is #2?
- Google has 70+ percent of the search market.
- Zappos is number one in online shoes . . . who is #2?
- Amazon is number one in books . . . who is #2?
- Salesforce.com dominates the CRM (customer relationship management) business.

Will you take advantage of the shift from outbound to inbound to become the winner in your market? If so, now is the time to start, because if you wait another year, more of your competitors will have entered into your market,

making it even more difficult for you to "catch up." You have in your hands the playbook for "getting found" by your prospective customers and have no reason not get started . . . now, today, this minute.

We hope this book changes how you do business. Inbound marketing has definitely changed ours.

Tools and Resources

In this Appendix, we'll look at some of the tools and resources that we think you'll find useful as an inbound marketer.

InboundMarketing.com

InboundMarketing.com is a free online community for inbound marketers. It is a complement to the book.

We think you'll find these specific sections particularly useful:

Forums—The site includes an active community of marketers and small business owners from around the world. You'll find the forums a great place to ask marketing questions—or to answer questions and build a reputation as an inbound marketing expert.

Service Directory—What do you do if you've learned about inbound marketing, know you want to dive in, but need some help with a specific part of the process—designing your website, updating your blog or maybe managing your SEO campaigns? InboundMarketing.com has a directory of marketing service firms that can help you with your projects.

Marketing News—The marketing world is going through a significant transition—changes that are being

discussed on blogs and news sites every day. At Inbound-Marketing.com, we collect the best and most important of all these articles—making it easy for you to find the most relevant information in one place.

Jobs—Looking for an inbound marketing job—or want to hire an experienced inbound marketer? Inbound Marketing.com features a jobs page with dozens of the best inbound marketing job opportunities.

We hope you'll join our community . . . and help spread the word about *Inbound Marketing*!

Advanced Google Search

You already know how to use Google. You use it every day. So you're probably thinking, "How can Google be a power tool for inbound marketers?" Chances are, you're not using Google to its fullest and some small tips can help a lot. The following are simple but powerful features to use Google. These are useful not just for doing searches, but also for tools like Google Alerts (which we discuss next).

If you're like most people, you simply type a search term into Google in the simplest way possible. You hope to get what you're looking for, and if you don't, well, you simply change the words. However, in addition to typing regular search queries, you can also use special modifiers that tell Google more about what you're looking for. Here are some of the most useful modifiers:

Explicit Phrase: Let's say you are looking for content about Internet marketing. Instead of just typing *Internet marketing* into the Google search box, you will likely be better off searching explicitly for the phrase. To do

this, simply enclose the search phrase within double quotes.

Example: "Internet marketing"

Exclude Words: If you want to search for content about Internet marketing, but you want to exclude any results that contain the term *advertising*, simply use the "-" (hyphen) in front of the word you want to exclude.

Example Search: Internet marketing-advertising

Site Specific Search: Often, you want to search a specific web site for content that matches a certain phrase. Even if the site doesn't support a built-in search feature, you can use Google to search the site for your term. Simply use the "site:somesite.com" modifier.

Example: "Internet marketing" site:inboundmarketing.com

Another useful tool that's a variation on this is to not include *any* keywords in the search, but just the "site:" operator. This tells you approximately how many pages from the specified site are in the Google index.

Example: site:www.facebook.com

Similar Words and Synonyms: If you want to include a word in your search, and also want to include results that contain similar words or synonyms, use the "~" (known as a tilde) in front of the word.

Example: "Internet marketing" ~professional

Specific Document Types: If you're looking to find results that are of a specific type, you can use the modifier

"filetype:". For example, you might want to find only PowerPoint presentations related to Internet marketing.

Example: "Internet marketing" filetype:pptx

This OR That: By default, when you do a search, Google will include all the terms specified in the search. If you are looking for one or more terms to match, then you can use the OR operator. (Note: The OR has to be capitalized.)

Example: Internet marketing OR advertising

Monitoring with Google Alerts

Imagine if you had a personal assistant that did nothing but monitor Google for you. You'd hand him a list of search terms, and he'd dutifully type them into Google every day. Anytime something showed up, he'd e-mail you. Even better, he'd remember which items he'd already sent you, so you only got the new stuff. That's precisely what Google Alerts does. And it's free!

To sign up for Google Alerts, visit http://Google.com/alerts. Set up an account (if you don't already have a Google account from some other Google web site, this may take an extra couple of minutes). Once your account is set up, adding alerts is easy. You tell Google just a few things:

1. The search query you want to track. Example: inbound marketing.
2. How you want to be notified (e-mail or an RSS feed).
3. Whether you want to receive an alert "as-it-happens" (as soon as Google finds a match), or just once a day.

We suggest setting up Google Alerts to track your most important terms. Things like your company name, your key industry terms and your competitor names.

An important point to remember is that you don't have to type in just simple words into your alerts. You can use *any* of the special modifiers that you learned about in the previous section on advanced Google searches. You'll find that these modifiers (particularly the explicit phrase and exclude modifiers) will come in handy. At first, the number of alerts may be overwhelming. You can use the special modifiers to help better target what you track.

Tips from the Trenches for Startups

If you are thinking about a new startup, already have one, or just planning on starting a new project, there are a number of tips that we'd suggest. The following list has been pulled together from years of experience starting new things. Although the list is not comprehensive, it captures some of our best thinking in terms of actionable items. If we were starting a new company or project today, these are the things we'd do in the first couple of weeks.

1. **Pick a name that works.** Needs to be simple, memorable and unambiguous. The ".com" domain should be available without playing tricks with the name (like dropping vowels or adding dashes). Also, just because there's no web site on a domain doesn't mean it's available. Available means something you can register immediately, or that has a price attached to it that you're willing to pay. Don't wander down the rabbit hole of finding the perfect name if you have no indication that it's for sale. This will waste a bunch of your time.

2. **Put up a simple web site.** Doesn't have to be fancy. The goal is to put enough content on the site to start the Google clock. Don't worry about the site not saying much (nobody's going to be looking at it anyway). Make sure to use a decent content management system (CMS) and not Dreamweaver or (shudder) FrontPage. Just because you can hand-craft HTML doesn't mean you should for your new

web site. The structure and features of a CMS are going to be important someday. Trust me.

3. **Get some links to your web site.** If you have a personal web site, link to it from there. If you have friends/associates/family with web sites, cash in some favor chips and get them to link to it. The goal is to get the Google crawler to start indexing your site. You only need one decent link to get things going. To check whether your site is being indexed by Google, do a search such as site:yoursite.com (not perfect, but good enough).

4. **Setup a Twitter account.** Name of the account should match your company/domain name. Link to your Twitter account from your main site and to your main site from your Twitter account. (Note: If you have a natural skepticism of the value of Twitter, you are welcome to this skepticism. But, go ahead and grab your Twitter account name anyway. You can resume your skepticism after you do that.)

5. **Setup an e-mail subscription.** Although we're big fans of RSS, and you should be too, not everyone is there yet. Allow your web site visitors to be notified of updates by e-mail.

6. **Get a nice logo.** Run a quick contest on 99designs or CrowdSpring and you'll wind up with something decent enough. Make sure you get the vector file (Illustrator or EPS file) as part of the final deliverable. Logos are pretty important online, because you'll be using a variation of it for many of your online profiles.

7. **Setup a simple Facebook business page.** This is also known as a "fan" page. You're not going to get many

fans in the early days. That's OK. Just get something out there. Add a simple description of your business and link back to your main web site.

8. **Create a simple Facebook URL.** Facebook now allows specifying a custom URL for your fan page. So, you can create something like http://facebook.com/hubspot (instead of the ugly URL Facebook gives you by default). Take advantage of this feature. For bonus points, set up a sub-domain and redirect it to your Facebook page. For example, here's what we did: facebook.hubspot.com. Setting up this sub-domain is free and usually pretty easy (it's done through the registrar for your domain).

9. **Kick off a blog.** You can use one of the free hosting tools (like WordPress.com), but *don't* use their domain name. Put your blog on blog.yourcompany.com, or if you have the technical proficiency, make it yourcompany.com/blog. Do NOT make it yourcompany.wordpress.com because you want to control all the SEO authority for your blog and channel it towards your main web site. Chances are, WordPress.com doesn't need your help with their SEO.

10. **Write a blog article.** Talk about what you're passionate about. What makes your business different? Describe your favorite customers.

11. **Set up Google Alerts.** You want to create alerts for at least the following: your company name, link:yourdomain.com and "industry term." Try to find a good balance for your industry term so you don't get flooded with alerts that you simply will start ignoring. This may take some iteration and refining. (Oh, and use the "As It Happens" option in Google Alerts so you're not waiting around for new alerts to show up.)

12. **Find your closest three competitors.** Pretend someone is paying you $10,000 for locating each competitor. Really try hard. Barely managed to find three? Take a lot of effort? Great. Now find three more. Of these six, pick the two that you think are the most marketing savvy. They should have a Website Grade >95, a blog with some readers, a web site that you can envision people using, a Twitter account that they actually post to, and so on. These are the competitors you're going to start tracking and learning from. Add their names and web sites to your Google Alerts.

13. **Update your LinkedIn profile.** You do have a LinkedIn profile, right? Mention your new startup web site, and add a link to your startup to one of the three slots for this purpose. Make sure you specify the anchor text. Don't go with the default of "My Website." The anchor text should be your startup's name and maybe a couple of words describing what it does.

14. **Find relevant Twitter users.** Use the Twitter .grader.com search feature to find high-impact Twitter users in your industry. Start following them. You want to start forging relationships and building your Twitter network. Resist the temptation to mass follow a bunch of random people or play other games just to get your follower count up. That's not going to matter. Get some high-quality relationships going. If you're really serious, start using an app like TweetDeck so you can more easily monitor conversations.

15. **Create a StumbleUpon account.** Specify your areas of interest (part of the registration). Spend 10 minutes a day (no more!) stumbling and voting things up/down.

Start befriending those who are submitting sites that are relevant and interesting for your startup. Don't submit your own stuff—just start contributing.

16. **Subscribe to LinkedIn Answers.** Pick the category (or categories) that best fits your area of interest. Answer one question a day that you feel you've got some expertise in. Don't self-promote. You're seeking to build credibility and trust, not sell anything.

17. **Find the bloggers who are writing about your topic area.** Subscribe to their feed, and read their stuff regularly. Leave valuable comments and participate in the conversation. (Do not spam them or write "fluff" comments. If you don't have something useful to add to the conversation, don't comment.)

18. **Start building some business contacts on Facebook.** Organize your users into groups—one for your business and another for friends/family. This will come in handy later. Don't spam people and ask them to visit your web site. At this point, your web site is still probably not worth visiting.

19. **Grade your web site on Website Grader.** Fix the basic errors it finds. You should be able to get a 50+ just by doing the simple things it suggests.

20. **Install web analytics software.** You need to start tracking your web site traffic. Where is it coming from? Where is it going? What keywords are pulling in qualified leads?

21. **Engage your blog commenters.** When you start seeing blog comments (and you will), make sure to

engage them. Leave a comment yourself to continue the conversation, or answer a question that someone had. This demonstrates that you care about the conversation.

22. **Promote your promoters.** When someone links to you or writes about you on their blog, help get *them* more traffic. Tweet about it. Stumble it. Digg it. Helping them helps you. Further, other people *notice* this behavior and are more likely to link to you and write about you because they know you're not the type to hoard Internet mojo.

23. **Grab your company name on YouTube.** Just like grabbing a domain name and a Twitter account, a YouTube username allows you to post videos and strengthen your brand (e.g., http://youtube.com/hubspot).

24. **Create and post a screencast.** A screencast is a simple recording of your computer screen and audio. Record a simple and short "how-to" for something related to your industry. Demonstrate how to do something simple (just because it's simple to you, doesn't mean everyone knows how to do it). Post this video to the YouTube account for your business. Write a blog article with some explanatory material, and embed this video in the article.

25. **Make a list of all the top people in your industry.** Convert this into a blog post. Example: "17 Real Estate Rockstars I'd Love To Have Coffee With." Just list the people and why you think they're great. Link to their web sites or online profiles (this is good, because it helps those that read your article and it increases the chances that the people you mention will notice your article and visit).

26. **Subscribe to your personal LinkedIn RSS feed.** It's helpful to keep up with your network of connections

and do a quick scan of what's going on with them (who they connect to, which groups they join, etc.). The best way to do this is to subscribe to your personal RSS feed. To do this, click on the orange RSS icon in the "Network Updates" section of your home page on LinkedIn.

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To connect with today's buyer, you need to stop pushing your message *out* and start pulling your customers *in*. The rules of marketing have changed and the key to winning is to use this change to your advantage.

If you've wondered how to get found in Google or why blogs and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are important, *Inbound Marketing* is the book for you. HubSpot founders Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah give you the tools and strategies you need to improve your Google search rankings; build a blog to promote your business; grow and nurture a community on social media sites; and analyze which of your online marketing efforts are working.

Stop wasting money blasting the world with marketing messages that nobody cares about. Instead, learn to *get found* with *Inbound Marketing*.

"If you've been looking for a trustworthy primer on getting found online, here's a great place to start. Buy one for your clueless colleague too."
–SETH GODIN, author of *Meatball Sundae*

"If you have more money than brains, you should focus on outbound marketing. If you have more brains than money, you should focus on inbound marketing by reading this book."
–GUY KAWASAKI, cofounder of Alltop, and author of *Reality Check*

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