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## Inbound Marketing versus Outbound Marketing

### **Remarkable Content**

Material that can be spread online, that is industry related, that is smart, intelligent, valuable, provocative, engaging, unique and interesting is **remarkable** content. It is content worthy of people's remarks.

It should be white papers about industry trends or habits, product or educational videos, blogs, forum participation, answers to on-line questions etc.

It's anything and everything that will make you look like an **authoritative voice** within your industry.

If you're not the world's best within your market, define your market more narrowly so you become the best – or at least beat your competition at making that claim.

It can be – but rarely is – self-promotional.

### **A Change in Habits**

Over the last 5-10 years, business and purchasing habits have changed. Even if purchasing from your firm isn't done online like it is for retail, the research and **information gathering by the purchasing decision-makers certainly is culled online.**

5-10 years ago purchasing mailing or email lists and sending out blasts or direct mail worked well. However, research shows that the average open rate for these techniques is down from 39% in 2004 to 22% in 2008.

Trade show attendance is down as is trade publication subscriptions. Trade writers are now writing their own blogs.

Today, you need to **make it as easy as possible for your prospects to find you online.** That means being pro-active with an **Inbound Marketing** strategy.

## Outbound vs Inbound Marketing

Think of all the tried-and-true marketing techniques such as trade advertising, direct mail, email blasts, trade show participation as **Outbound Marketing**. This is marketing that you pay for up front and usually have a diminishing return on your investment calling for further investing to sustain brand recognition.

Don't give up on Outbound Marketing, but it needs to be used more wisely in conjunction with an Inbound Marketing strategy.

**Inbound Marketing** are the techniques and ways of pulling-in the thousands of prospects utilizing the Web today. Some of these marketing channels include blogs, using a Fan base on Facebook, creating connections on LinkedIn, getting followers on Twitter, driving traffic to Digg, being bookmarked on Delicious, or being found on YouTube.

The more your brand and content is out in cyberspace, **the more easily you will be found** and the more chances that something of yours will go viral.

## Blending *Remarkable* Content with Inbound Marketing

The thing about remarkable content is that the more you give, the more you get. The more the information you offer is seen as being valuable, the **more links you'll get back to your site** and **the better it will rank in the search engines**.

A great way to create lots of remarkable content is by starting a **blog**.

Due to the fact that you're creating new content on a regular basis with a blog, search engines will more likely **rank you higher on the SERP**.

Allow for RSS feeds of your articles from your website.

Encourage readers to leave comments, especially if they disagree with you. This allows you to **engage with your prospects**.

An article with remarkable content **develops influential followers**. A follower is likely to link their site or blog back to yours which gives you authority – thereby **giving you better ranking on SERPs**.

You should use Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitters forms that allow you to **post a link to your blog**. Encourage your connections to share your posts.

You should encourage your users who are on sites such as Digg, Reddit, Delicious or StumbleUpon to **vote on or pass along your posts**.

You should post articles on industry forums. You should read and comment on industry forums or blogs.

Unlike many Outbound Marketing techniques, **Inbound Marketing delivers value on a semi-permanent basis**. Articles, videos and links **stay active, archived and accessible for years**.

## Get Involved in New Media Channels

**New Media Channels** is my term for Social Media. Why the new term? Social Media is still thought of as friends exchanging comments online. But today all kinds of business information is gathered using a variety of these channels. These channels are all used to connect, interact and to share – **within all business industries**.

There are well over **100 million blogs** in the blogosphere. Your target audience is reading these as much as – if not more than – the trade publications.

**Facebook** (200 million users. Growing demographic of those aged 35 and older.), **LinkedIn** (20 million users. average age 41) and **YouTube** (100 million views each day) are all becoming mainstream. From a business' perspective, these are all useful New Media Channels. Other powerful channels are news sites (**Digg.com**) and bookmarking sites (**Delicious.com**).

You must **match** the way your prospects learn about and gather their decision-making information – and today that means utilizing these **New Media Channels**.

Not only does your company need to have a visible presence in this new media world, but your sales force must also be involved. That means **Subscribing** (RSS) to good, relevant industry blogs to keep on top of new content as it comes out.

**Contribute** to online conversations by leaving thoughtful comments. By constantly leaving good, relevant comments the author is likely to notice and go to your blog and perhaps link back to your site. This creates authority for you, thereby **creating higher SERP ranking for you**.

Build a strong online brand with **well written profiles** and have consistent use of user names and avatar image.

**Develop a business page on Facebook.** This allows for better engaging with your prospects including forum discussions, photo uploads, testimonials etc.

**Build connections on LinkedIn.** Consider building a LinkedIn Group, or get involved in an existing one.

**Contribute to the LinkedIn Answers feature.** (Only answering those questions you can answer well. It's all about presenting yourself as an authority within your industry.)

Create a YouTube account and **post videos**.

**Submit articles to Digg** and use a Digg button on your blog to encourage votes. Visibility on the front page of Digg can get you over 25,000 views to your website.

Consider using the "discovery" site StumbledUpon and it's browser toolbar on your site.

**Why** involve yourself with all these new channels? Two words – **MORE REACH**.

## Creating a Web Hub Not a Web Site

Web sites are usually **very static**. They're online brochures. At one time that was fine, but not any longer.

You need to think of your web site as a **web hub**. Get away from a one-way sales message and become a collaborative, living, breathing place for your marketplace (and thus your products) to come to often.

Unless you have compelling, ever-changing information on your site, there's no reason for a visitor to stay long, or come back. The B2B sales cycle is a long one. **You need to engage and encourage the return to your site.**

Once you create remarkable content for your site, most of your focus should be spent **creating communities outside** your site thus driving prospects to your site.

Think of your site as a major city with many roads and highways running through it. It has airports, bus and train depots. It has lots of people passing through versus a site that is like a country town that has maybe two roads in and two roads out. All those roads and activity are the search engines, links and thousands of mentions of your company in the new mediasphere.

## Final Thoughts

**Your web site does need to look professional.** It needs to function well and have an underlying strategy. It does need to promote your brand. However, it doesn't need to be "over designed". **It doesn't need an expensive "bells and whistle" look.**

If designed professionally and is well thought-out, your visitors will think it looks just fine. They're coming to gather information. They're coming to read something interesting. They should leave **wanting to come back again** because of the content.

**Consider utilizing a Content Management System (CMS)** as your site's platform. Joomla and WordPress are the two most popular. I would recommend using Joomla. It was designed as a CMS from the start versus WordPress which started out as a blog platform then moving to CMS. **Joomla's back-end SEO features are far superior to those of WordPress's.** 2% of all the web sites in the world operate using the Joomla platform.

A CMS platform allows for **easy non-programmer-knowledge editing** and updating.

An **Inbound Marketing strategy can be extremely successful.** It worked out pretty well for **Barack Obama**. It's worked well for companies such as Zappos, 37Signals, Wikipedia, Whole Foods Market, DIYShutters, FreshBooks, Kiva, ConstantContact, TargetTech, eBay and Amazon.

## Success

In order for an Inbound Marketing strategy to be successful two things are required – **Commitment** and **Patience**. It takes commitment to regularly create remarkable content and it takes some patience to see results. But once you start to see results **they grow exponentially and they have staying power.**

**Inbound Marketing is not easy, but it can be successful.**