



*How to survive the radical changes in
marketing and thrive in 2018*

By John Moorhead



Traditional marketing is no longer as effective as it used to be.

In traditional marketing, companies focus on finding customers. Generally, they use techniques that are interruptive. These techniques could be anything from cold-calling and print advertising to TV commercials and junk mail.

But technology is protecting the customer with a defensive shield. Traditional techniques are becoming less effective and more expensive. Caller ID blocks cold calls, DVRs makes TV advertising less effective, and spam filters block unsolicited emails. While it's still possible to get a message out using these channels, most people are spending more to get even fewer leads.

Traditional marketing is interruptive and is centered on the marketer. The traditional way of doing things is convenient, because the marketer can push content in people's faces whenever they want – even when those people don't want it. But it's not such a great experience for the potential customer.

Inbound marketing techniques flip this model on its head and leaves the customer in control.

Inbound marketing succeeds where traditional marketing fails

We are in the middle of a paradigm shift in the way that business is conducted between companies and their customers. While interruption-based messaging where the marketer or salesperson had all the control is failing, inbound marketing strategies empower customers, satisfy their actual needs, and leave them in control.

Instead of buying display ads in print publications, a company can create a business blog that people would look forward to reading. Instead of interrupting people with television ads, a business can invest in creating videos that potential customers want to see. And instead of cold calling, they can create useful content so that prospects can contact them when they want more pertinent information.

TRADITIONAL



Cold Calling
Cold Emails (SPAM)
Interruptive Ads

Marketer is in control

VS

INBOUND



SEO
Blogging
Attraction

Customer is in control

Inbound marketing focuses primarily on creating interesting content that is likely to be found by customers online. It involves talking with a market, not talking at a market. The full focus is on the customer. It strives to be helpful and satisfy specific customer interests, needs and desires. Wouldn't you prefer to deal with a business that empowers you?

You've probably come across some of your favorite businesses actively practicing inbound marketing. It's that blog post about a new B2B service that shows up near the top of your Google results. It's the information about a new technology that you discovered on a social site like Facebook.

Inbound is about having a conversation with your customers. Being a part of that conversation means sharing helpful, relevant content with your target market.

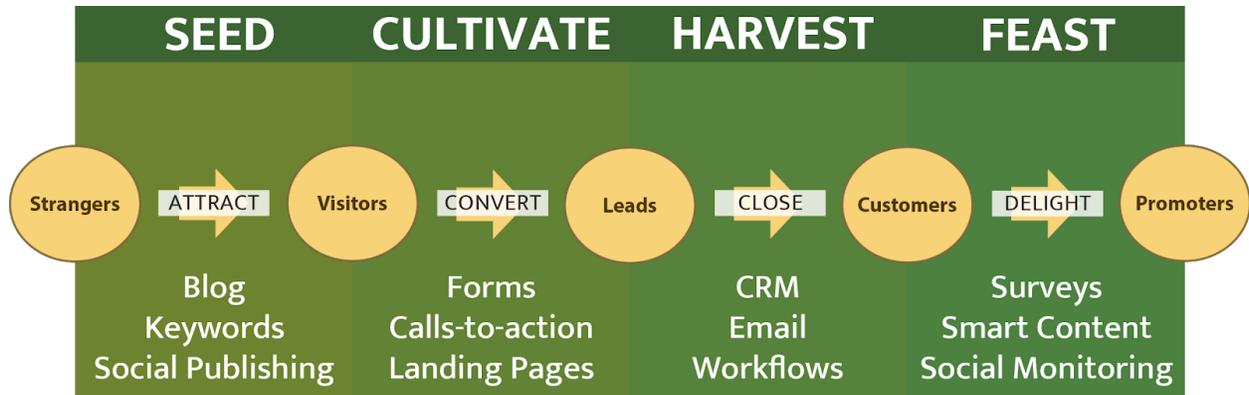
It is about drawing people to you. It is about creating marketing content that your customers want to find.

In today's world, the customer is in control. Buyers have more and more power. Think about the process you went through the last time you made a purchase. Did you call up a salesperson, asking to buy? Or did you hop online and do some research? I'd be willing to bet you did the latter.

It's time for you to support that buying process. It's time for you to join in and empower your potential customers to make the right decisions for themselves.

How does Inbound marketing work?

We have refined the inbound marketing and sales process into a four step methodology:



Seed, Cultivate, Harvest, and Feast.

Each stage of the methodology has a set of tools that are typically used to accomplish these actions. We've listed some of these on the above graphic.

Seeding visitors

You'll need to attract strangers to your site and turn them into visitors. Some of the most important tools to attract new users are blogging, optimizing your website, and taking advantage of relevant social media channels.

Cultivating leads

Once you've attracted new visitors to your site, the next step is to convert some of them into leads by gathering their contact information. At the very least, you'll need their email addresses. Obtaining contact information is vital to the success of inbound marketing. In order to obtain this

willingly, you'll need to barter with your prospective customers by offering them something that they want in return.

This often takes the form of informational offers, like eBooks, or white papers - whatever information would be interesting and valuable to your prospects. Website components like calls-to-action and landing pages can entice these visitors and help you get information about them, converting them from mere visitors into leads.

Harvesting customers

After attracting the right visitors and converting the right leads, it's time to harvest customers. In this stage, tools like email and customer relationship management software (CRM) can be used to help sell to the right leads at the right time.

Enjoying the feast

Inbound is all about providing remarkable content to your users, whether they're visitors, leads, or existing customers. Just because someone is already a customer doesn't mean that you can forget about them. Companies practicing inbound continue to delight and engage their customer base, turning them into happy promoters of the products and services they love.

In this new era of interconnectivity, your customers are your most powerful marketers. When your customers talk about you with their personal and social media networks more strangers learn about your products and services. The whole cycle begins anew.

Analyzing and optimization at every stage

Analysis must be a critical part of every single thing you do with your inbound strategy. Anything you do -- any piece of content you create, any campaign you launch, or any marketing action you undertake -- should be analyzed.

To be a truly successful inbound marketer, you need to know what's working, what isn't, and how to implement new solutions and improve your efforts as efficiently as possible. The smart way to do this is by taking the time to analyze your work.

The secret sauce of inbound marketing

People don't want to be sold to, they want to be educated, and inbound tactics will deliver the kind of information your prospects need to help them make smart, well-informed decisions.

You can begin to do this by keeping these best practices in mind:

- Use of **buyer personas**
- Understand the **Buyer's Journey**
- Creation of **remarkable content**
- **Distribute** your content creatively

Use of Buyer Personas

Since inbound marketing and sales is focused on the customer, you need to know specifically who you're trying to reach.

You don't want just any traffic to your site, you want the right traffic. You want the people who are most likely to become leads, and, ultimately, buying customers. Who are the "right" people? The right people are your ideal customers, what we call your buyer personas.

Buyer personas are semi-fictional representations of an ideal customer, based on real data and some educated speculation about demographics, behaviors, motivations, and goals.

Personas are created through research, analysis, and taking a close look at who's already buying from you. They can help you get into the mindset of your potential buyers and create the right content. When you create the right, impactful content, you'll effectively attract your ideal visitors, convert them into leads, and close them into customers.

Understand the Buyer's Journey



Every interaction your persona has with your organization should be tailored to where they are in the buyer's journey.

The buyer's journey is the active, multifaceted research process the prospective buyer goes through leading up to a purchase. Knowing the buyer's journey for your persona is key in creating the best content possible.

The buyer's journey is made up of 3 stages: the **awareness** stage, the **consideration** stage, and the **decision** stage that portray the experiences your potential customers go through.

You go through the buyer's journey in many everyday activities. It's the path you take when you have a problem to solve, from researching potential solutions to purchasing one.

Awareness

This stage is when your prospect is experiencing and expressing symptoms of a problem or opportunity. They're doing education research to more clearly understand, frame, and give a name to their problem.

Consideration

This stage is when a prospect has now clearly defined and given a name to their problem or opportunity. They are committed to researching and understanding all of the available approaches and/or methods of solving the defined problem or opportunity.

Decision

This stage is when a prospect has now decided on their solution strategy, method, or approach. They are compiling a long list of all available vendors and products in their given solution strategy. They could also be researching to whittle the long list down to a short list and ultimately making a final purchase decision.

Here's a real life example of the buyer's journey:

- You are feeling sick but you're not really sure what you might have. In the *awareness* stage you're experiencing symptoms or having a problem. In this case, you feel like you have a sore throat, fever, and are achy all over. You are asking "what's wrong with me?"
- In the *consideration* stage, that's when you've given a name to your problem and now needing to figure out your options. You realize - a-ha! I have strep throat, but "what are my options for relieving or curing my symptoms?"
- That's where the *decision* stage comes in, this is when you decide on your approach to solve the problem. If you have strep throat you could see a primary care physician, go to the ER, or go to a clinic and you make the decision to go to the nearby clinic.

In walking through the buyer's journey you want to think problems through from the buyer's perspective. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes.

Doctors will typically listen to your symptoms, provide options for you to get better, and prescribe you your solution. But what if you went into a doctor's office and they paid no attention to your symptoms and just gave you some sort of medicine immediately. Not a pleasant experience.

In marketing, this is what can often happen with website content. Rather than creating content that covers your buyer persona's problems and potential solutions, we tend to ineffectively jump to explaining our products or our services and why they're the best option.

Website visitors might come to your website for the first time in any of the different buyer's journey stages, but you need to have content prepared for each and every stage in order to take advantage of this..

Creation of remarkable content

Once you understand your buyer personas and their buying journey, it's time to start doing inbound marketing. Inbound marketing can't exist without content, and that's why the third best practice is to create remarkable, tailored content. Just as important is that the content you create fits the right context.

Your **content** is your marketing toolbox. Things like blogs, interactive tools, photos/infographics, videos, and eBooks/presentations work to help you to seed visitors, cultivate leads, and harvest customers.

The **context** is who you're creating it for. The best content – the stuff that's really going to fuel your entire inbound strategy – has to be well-thought out and in the correct context. It's not enough to just write a blog post or send out an email. The content in that blog post and that email need to be tailored to who you're trying to reach (your persona) and what they're most interested in seeing (which depends on where they are in the buyer's journey).

Distribute your content creatively



Website
Pages



Business
Blog



Social
Media



Landing
Pages



Calls-to-
Action



Marketing
Emails

Make that content available for your buyer personas to find: content distribution is what provides the context to your content. It's not enough to just have great content. You need to have a way to get that content out into the world. Distribution makes content relevant.

There are a few different tools you can use to leverage content by distribution. The right distribution technique gets the right content in front of the right person at the right time. You can use your website pages, business blog, social media, landing pages, calls-to-action, and marketing emails.

About Harvest91

We have been helping businesses make the most of the Web since 1995

When we saw the first website launch in 1991, we knew everything about marketing and sales was about to change. We developed some of the Internet's first interactive websites. We have been helping our clients succeed ever since.

We believe in making the most out of your investment

Content development, optimization and measurement are at the core of our marketing philosophy. We strive to maximize value for our clients and to make the most of their Internet marketing by constantly pursuing a better ROI.

We have 35+ Years Marketing Experience

John Moorhead is the founder of Harvest91 and is our Senior Marketing Strategist. With 35+ years of marketing experience, John leads the strategic component that serves as the foundation for all of our marketing programs.

We have 20+ Years of Web Marketing Experience

Mark Blair is our Content Marketing Director. Since the mid-90's, Mark has architected the Web marketing and infrastructure for hundreds of companies.

Request a free consultation

We are happy to arrange a free 30-minute consultation with our senior strategist. During this call we will discuss how your website and your online marketing programs are currently working. We will evaluate whether or not our content marketing program is a good fit for you.

[Schedule a consultation](http://www.harvest91.com) on our website at www.harvest91.com