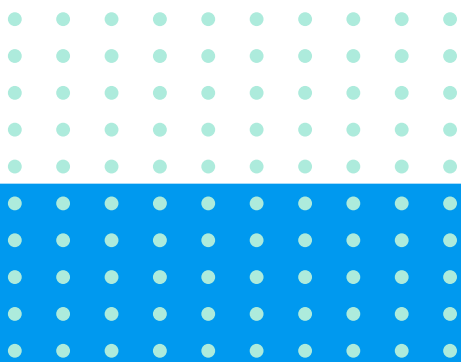


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The framework for magnetic inbound marketing



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Inbound vs Outbound

Our life as consumers, together with some popular misconceptions of what “marketing” is, create an image much more closely aligned to traditional outbound tactics, than to inbound ones.

The reality is that outbound tactics have struggled to produce results for a long time now, and the most successful marketing teams have moved onto an inbound-first mindset. This has resulted in a stark increase in both the popularity and effectiveness of inbound, reflecting the dramatic changes of the buyer journey and buying process throughout the last decade.

Jargon buster:

Buying committee: The people who together, share responsibility for the purchase process within an organisation. E.g. C-Suite, Procurement & IT

Buyer journey: The process of a prospect discovering a product or service for the first time, engaging with the company, completing the sale and becoming a customer.

Funnel: The metaphorical funnel containing prospective customers. From the initial stages at the top of the funnel when a prospect learns about your business to the bottom, where the chances of conversion are far higher.

Two different methodologies

Outbound marketing takes the mindset of casting the net wide, reaching out into the world and bringing people in to engage with your product or services. The world of outbound marketing has been fantastic for producing impressive sounding metrics about audience size, and even (with enough spend), the number of clicks through to your website – Click Through Rates (CTRs).

Crucially though, these prospects are being contacted cold by your organisation, potentially having never heard of you or your services before.

Outbound relies on tactics like email list purchases, cold calls and Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising at its core.

However, cold email opens, outreach phone calls and other tactics have seen declining

success since their peak in the noughties. This decline led quick-thinking marketing teams to shift tactics, and before long, the thunderous arrival of the SEO industry and inbound mindset changed B2B marketing forever.

Tactics in outbound vs inbound

Inbound	Outbound
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Website structure✓ Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)✓ Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)✓ Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising✓ Closed Forum advertising✓ Marketing Automation✓ Subscriber newsletters✓ Retargeting✓ Social media marketing✓ Influencer marketing✓ PR placements✓ Content marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cold email marketing✓ Telemarketing✓ Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising✓ Paid social advertising

At the heart of the inbound methodology is the idea that B2B buyers want to conduct their own research before making any decision.

The Inbound marketing methodology is:

The process of creating a marketing presence in the areas where the buying committee, in prospective customer businesses, are searching for a business or service like yours.

The foundations for success

In order to see success from your inbound marketing, you need to build an online presence which you can be proud of. Our advice here, is to take the time to lay the strategic marketing foundations firstly.

For example, create your buyer personas, their personal customer journeys and your value proposition. Agree your market position internally. Define the areas which truly set your business apart, then condense them into effective messaging. Understand your competitors and what the customer expectations are likely to be in your marketplace.

And of course, with your strategic marketing foundations in place, create your marketing strategy.

With your strategic pillar as your bedrock, it's time to begin checking off the bare-minimum list of credibility and digital assets which will be used to convert visitors on their research journey into paying customers.

Website

The old adage, "your website is your shop window" has been done to death.

Sadly, though – it's true.

The inbound methodology is built on the principal of being credible to your prospects when they find you from their own research. A good website, which is built to convert, is an absolute must.



If your prospects are looking for solutions like yours, and the competition looks more professional, you will be hard-pressed to bring them into your funnel. The good news, however, is that modern CMS and website solutions enable you to create a standout site that reflects both your offering and your prospects' buying and decision-making journey.

Considering the prospects hitting your website are looking at a variety of credible vendors, your website should be squarely focused on demonstrating your value in the marketplace, and telling good news and success stories of your past and current work.

Whether your prospective customer is researching specific products/services or checking out your website more generally; be sure to layer in those proof points to showcase your credibility.

Company SERP (Search Engine Results Page)

Once you've done the hard work, and entered your prospect's research phase, you need to be well prepared for them to return. This is particularly important when you think about the size of the modern B2B buying committee – which can be up to 15 people.



Breaking through to any prospect is tough, so when your name is mentioned, you will want to make sure that you're appearing professionally both through your site and in the first place they're likely to look – the search engines.

That means knowing what results appear when someone Googles your company name or service.

There are a few things to be aware of here:

1. Are you number 1 in organic for your company name? And if you're not... why!?

Your website should be doing the heavy-lifting so you serve top of the SERP. Remember, the search engines want to give their users the information which they're looking for; and if somebody is searching for your company name, then they expect to find your company.

2. Competitors may be bidding on your brand name. And that's okay!

Whilst your competitors may bid on your brand name, the option is open to you too. Considerations include your position in the organic results in the SERPs. If you're not yet ranking well, bidding on your brand name not only provides protection from your competitors but enables you to be found. It also allows you to control your messaging and capture high-quality leads that are at the point of conversion.

3. Get your site ranking

If you aren't ranking top of the SERPs then you likely need to do some of the basics within your site. A few to begin with – ensure your site is mobile friendly, that you have the technical basics in place and your SEO meta is fully completed and user-friendly. It's all about marginal gains.

4. Social profiles, review profiles and industry profiles all have great value in SERPs

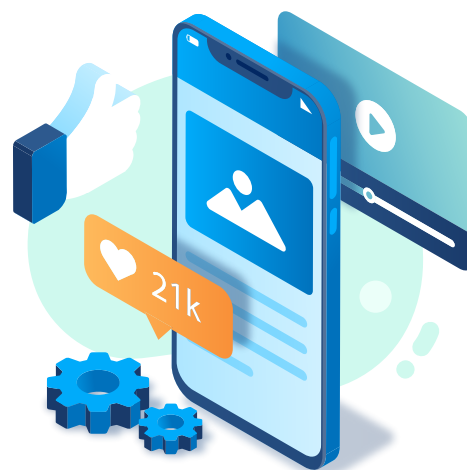
Nothing too complicated here, just an added reason to make sure you have populated your social media profiles, with professional branding and copy. Search engines value site credibility and usage and there's very little out there which will do better than credible social media platforms.

You should also take a look at some of your company's other listings across the internet, and ensure they are up to date. Anything which is served on page 1 of Google, will get hits from your inbound audience.

Social Media

One of the first places your prospects are likely to find you is on social media. This is true for people researching both on a company and solution level.

Whether you're extremely active on social media, or simply have a profile with little to show, you will need to make sure you're doing the basics right, in order to showcase your credibility.



A good idea in the early days of your strategic inbound marketing programme, is to carefully select and define your use of each social media platform.

Do you have bandwidth for regular news-style updates? Twitter could be an option. Does your buying committee spend its time on LinkedIn? Then get posting.

If you can define what you want to achieve with your social media marketing, and whether it fits into your broader inbound strategy, then you will be able to allocate your resource wisely. Creating a strong profile on the platforms you do choose, should be the bare minimum.

Marketing Automation

When following an inbound methodology, your business is placing the responsibility into the hands of your prospects who are making the purchasing decision. This can be an intimidating idea as your prospects are in the driving seat.

Marketing automation and analytics tools like Google Analytics bring the element of control back into the hands of your organisation.

Analytics will allow you to aggregate data and learn what a successful user journey (resulting in conversion or a key step in the buying process) looks like.

Marketing automation platforms such as HubSpot, allow you to measure activity, like analytics, but also enable you to take action, based on the results of that activity. This means you can “nurture” prospects throughout the buying funnel, creating profiles that store valuable demographic and behavioural information to inform your marketing, as well as delivering the right content to the right person, at the right time, to increase the likelihood of closing business.



Generating results in the short term (PPC)

Once your house is in order, the time has come to begin directing traffic into your website. The priority here should be to build pipeline using paid, that generates a ROI and allows you time to get your SEO and other longer-term tactics up and running.

What PPC channels are out there?

PPC is often over-simplified or used to describe just one channel, such as paid social media, or Google Ads.

The reality is that PPC applies to any form of Pay Per Click advertising, and even some forms of pay per impression (sometimes called PPM) advertising, too. Using this classification will allow you to bucket several types of channels together under one lead source, which is more aligned to Return on Investment (ROI) and Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS), rather than the particular marketing tactic you're using.


There are many channels which offer a Pay Per Click model, most of which now allow you to implement code on your website which tracks visits from their platform all the way through to key actions taken on your site. This extended visibility of the user behaviour is superb when it comes to balancing spend v return and placing your marketing budget in the right places.

Choosing the right PPC channels for you

When you're making decisions about where to spend your first PPC budget, keep your target audience and the types of companies you want to convert at the heart of what you do – always.

The algorithms available on most paid platforms enables machine learning to shuffle budget and ads according to results. In the early stages of building your inbound funnel, we recommend creating campaigns which focus on high-intent search terms, to try and draw in “bottom of funnel” leads – the low-hanging fruit. These types of search terms can sometimes be more expensive, but if you take care to understand the ROI required for your business, and set a monthly, weekly or daily budget which reflects that, then the results should pay for themselves.





With high-intent search PPC traffic, you are doing your best to eliminate speculation and align yourself very closely to the types of search queries which would be a part of the research process. For example, in the world of Norton Anti-Virus, a high-intent search term would be “Top antivirus software 2022”.

Alternatively, if you want to build your pipeline, broader search terms will allow you to fill your funnel more quickly.

The decision as to which part of the funnel to focus on comes down to your objectives and your strategy.

Drive Traffic up, up and up

Once you have your paid channels up and running, you can (and must) turn your attention to the longer-term organic traffic goals for your business.

The great news when it comes to organic traffic, is that best practice, and a good product will be rewarded by some of the biggest hitting traffic sources: social media, industry authorities and search engines.

Let’s take a look at some of the inbound strategies you can use.

Utilise your network

No matter whether you’re a growing team of 10, or an established company of hundreds, your customer base and your employees are a powerful force multiplier for your traffic. Social media has the power to contribute large portions of B2B traffic, and when posts are singing your praises or showcasing your expertise, your prospect is coming into your site from a very positive place.

In this regard, the importance of case studies and customer reviews cannot be over-stated. If you aren’t already doing so, then build the collection into your customer lifecycle. Approach customers at the point where they are happiest and most likely to support you in collecting reviews.

Target the most powerful review sites available to you, and level up your profile with meaning. Once you reach a point where you are driving traffic into your corporate site from the

Top Tip

Your landing pages are your most valuable resource for conversion. Look into best practice within your industry, and take time to ensure you give yourself the best possible chance for conversion.

3rd party, either double down or find the next 3rd party on your list.

13 month strategy for SEO

Invest your time in SEO as early as you can.

SEO is one of the most effective ways to build credibility and drive traffic with the potential to convert into your site. However, it takes time to hit your stride.

If you're looking for a place to start with your SEO, then we've included a couple of tips from our SEO Guide below.

Download our guide:
**The Definitive Guide
to SEO**

Download now



What is the most critical SEO ranking factor?

There is no doubt that any professional SEO expert will answer “It depends” to this question. It may be exasperating, but it’s the truth.

No one-particular factor dominates all others when it comes to SEO, so the context of where you are starting from, and what activity will represent the lowest hanging fruit for your SEO journey is crucial.

Some great places to start, and subjects which we’ll cover in this guide are:

- Meta data with a purpose
- Quality backlinks, not quantity of spam
- Content length to rank for competitive keywords
- The words you use to match your target search term
- The technical elements such as user experience (UX), site speed and mobile friendliness



Top tip

When you're planning your keyword research, take a look at the page 1 results for your most important and desirable search terms. It's often the case that the keywords we think are important, are not the keywords your potential clients are using to find services/products like yours.

Looking at the page 1 results will give you an idea of the content that's being served and may cause you to think again.

The role of content marketing

It is important to always keep the idea of your prospect's research journey at the heart of your inbound marketing strategy. With that in mind, what are the questions your prospects are trying to answer? What are the subjects which they're looking into? Where are they spending their time searching for answers?

Answering those questions will lead you to your content strategy, and help you to remain present in the research being undertaken by your target audience.

The questions your prospects are asking

There are a few ways for you to look into the market and understand the questions your audience are asking. Google Key Word planner is a good place to start.

The tool allows you to test different search terms, and see the volume of impressions monthly. This is valuable for learning about the language your audience use to describe their problems, as well as helping you to prioritise your content, based on what the audience actually wants to read.

By entering a variety of questions into the keyword planner (top tip, don't include punctuation if you want your query to return results), it's easy to quickly identify the areas of SEO (in this example), where users are having the most difficulty and subsequently searching for answers.

Once you learn the questions which are most worthy of your time, producing the answers to those questions will mean that your content garners far more attention. Whether from SEO, PPC or social media – ensuring that you answer the right questions will get more bang for your buck across all platforms.

The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Planner interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Search, Reports, Tools and settings, Refresh, Help, Notifications, and a user profile icon. The main header area displays 'Keyword plan', 'Draft plan', 'Plan from Jan 25, 2023, 11 am, GMT', and a 'Just saved' status. Below this, the location is set to 'United Kingdom', language to 'All languages', and search engine to 'Google'. The date range is 'Jan - Dec 2022'. A 'Create campaign' button is visible. The left sidebar shows 'Keyword ideas', 'Forecast', 'Keyword plan', 'Saved keywords', and 'Negative keywords'. The main table lists search terms with their metrics:

Keyword	Avg. monthly searches	Three month change	YoY change	Competition	Ad impression share	Top of page bid (low range)	Top of page bid (high range)	Account Status
how important are backlinks	10 – 100	0%	0%	Low	—	£0.79	£5.98	
how to do seo	100 – 1K	0%	0%	Low	—	£1.41	£3.79	
should i be using meta data	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
what are keywords	1K – 10K	0%	+900%	Low	—	£0.17	£1.55	

The bottom right corner of the table area shows '1 - 4 of 4'.



The subjects which your prospects are researching

This should be one of the simpler topics for you to address internally. Are the subjects which matter to your prospects, the ones which you are highlighting and addressing in your content?

If you are a multi-service platform or organisation, then looking at the full range of subjects to be covered, and prioritising the ones most important to your customer is critical.

If your business offers 4 services, then your content should reflect that. A great way to approach this, is to produce a long form asset for each service. Once you have created that asset, take elements of it and break them down into snippets, sound bites, social posts etc. If you can create several short pieces of content from your one large-form element, you will quickly appear as an expert to prospects researching your chosen subject.

A little goes a long way when it comes to content. Prospects are busy, and want to reserve their time for quality rather than quantity. Produce something truly reflective of your business as a long form asset, then use the short-tail elements to create volume, to catch prospects in your content-web.

The places your prospects are doing their research

Finally, you must consider content distribution.

As with content production, this is focused on keeping the reader/target persona at the heart of what you do. Research your ideal customers and ensure your distribution is in the appropriate places.

Don't just choose the right platforms for your team, or the ones with the fanciest features. Really challenge your expectations and ensure that you're spending time in the same locations as your target audience.

Distribution is key to content marketing. Very few organisations can continue a great content machine and simply wait to be discovered by luck. Don't let your company's content become a "hidden gem" – challenge the status quo and find the right channels for your subjects.

And Finally

Inbound Marketing is a framework which relies on laying out strong business and marketing foundations. If your product and service teams are doing their jobs well, then marketing can lift them up, by paying attention to the items discussed in this guide.

The move away from traditional cold approaches, and into the buyer research journey has created a more comfortable purchase process for the buyer. Understanding, and even embracing that, provides your business with the opportunity to start your customer relationship on a hugely positive note and to get to know your prospects deeply.

A great website, content and presence in the right places to collect the right traffic is a powerful combination. Get these areas underway whilst your SEO, review and word of mouth grow steadily over time in order to set your organisation up for inbound marketing success.

Remember, the inbound marketing philosophy is based on making your presence felt within the prospect's research phase and nurturing through to conversion. You must look at your company's marketing presence and performance through the lens of the prospect's research journey at all times, to help guide your inbound marketing in the right direction.

[BOOK A 30 MINUTE IM CONSULTATION.](#)



About Incisive Edge

Incisive Edge is a strategy-first B2B marketing agency. Our expertise lies in customer acquisition and we specialise in tech. We have more than ten years of experience delivering high quality strategic marketing projects for our customers across the entire B2B landscape. Our specialisms are centred around core Inbound Marketing concepts including Go To Market and inbound Strategies, SEO, HubSpot implementation/optimisation, and pipeline generation.

We're the digital marketing agency for growth-obsessed tech companies.