

Bridging the Marketing Gap

Introduction:

Seth Godin coined the term Permission Marketing in 1999. In 2005 Brian Halligan took the concept a step further with Inbound Marketing. Since then many people have heralded the end of what we now think of as outbound or interruption marketing with phrases like "cold calling is dead".. These slogans are great marketing messages for some of the proponents of these modern marketing approaches, but they don't always hold up in the ever practical world of reality.

The foundation of the inbound marketing concept has a great deal of merit. Using diverse and targeted content at various stages of the buying cycle to attract, nurture and convert leads makes sense, given marketing's overall mandate within an organization. This is not only a compelling message - it actually works!

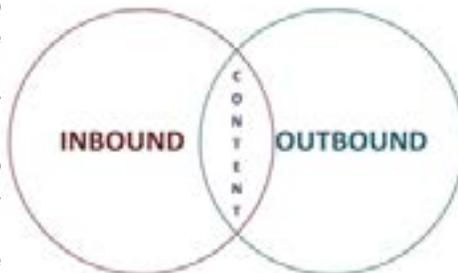
Inbound marketing, however, has not removed the need for outbound tactics--marketing directly to your audience, whether through mail, email or phone continues to have considerable value for both B2B and B2C organizations. Outbound marketing gives companies greater control over the delivery and timing of their message than inbound marketing can.

Finding the right balance between inbound and outbound is the key to ensuring that both approaches are working optimally. Even more important, however, is synchronizing and integrating inbound and outbound efforts - both are valuable to an organization, but they work better when they work together.

Problem:

It can be very daunting to bridge what can seem like a very overwhelming chasm between two fundamentally opposite methodologies. On one hand, we want to use modern techniques - especially in a high-tech field. We want our businesses to be perceived as leading edge, while at the same time the tried and tested methods of the past have been proven to be effective. Likewise, we are struggling with competing priorities. We want short term success (or it is expected of us) while at the same time, long term goals can't be ignored. Put simply, attracting new customers today can't take a back seat to keeping tomorrow's (or today's) customers happy - and that goes both ways!

This problem of competing priorities is exhibited most keenly when companies begin setting out goals and budgets for marketing initiatives. Inbound marketing can be very cost effective and can drive long term success in attracting, nurturing and maintaining customers.



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Our Services

Sales

Our goal is to understand your specific sales needs. Whether it's hitting your quotas or engaging with your ideal prospect - we are here to keep you on track.

Marketing

Our specific demand generation and nurture programs are set in place to keep your buyer engaged at every point of the sales cycle. Stay in touch with your prospects via digital,

Research

Do you understand your target audience? What are the trends impacting them? Can you quantify the issues? Do you need hard data and answers to tough questions? We do that.

Technology

We specialize in Salesforce.com CRM and Pardot marketing automation consulting. If you need better contact or opportunity tracking, nurturing, scoring and analytics, we can show you how.

The downside to the inbound marketing process is that it can take a long time to set up and it can be hard to demonstrate ROI for quite a while. Conversely, outbound marketing tactics like telemarketing or teleprospecting can produce results very quickly but are more expensive and significantly increase the overall cost per lead or cost of sale.

Solution:

The solution to the problem of reconciling these seemingly polar forces is 5-fold. It hinges entirely on the realization that inbound and outbound marketing are not opposites – in fact, there is quite a lot of overlap between them! In order to balance the competing priorities of inbound and outbound, near term and short term, contemporary and classic, demand generation programs must:

1. **Involve both sales and marketing** in both up-front and ongoing strategic discussions
2. **Audit all existing content**, assessing its relevance for each stage in the buying cycle and/or sales funnel
3. **Map content** to the buying cycle and/or funnel stages
4. **Coordinate campaigns** based on Content
5. Ensure that **inbound campaigns and outbound campaigns are working together** in tandem – supporting one another rather than competing or existing as completely separate entities

Involve BOTH Sales AND Marketing

This is the lynch pin. Without this nothing else matters. The bottom line is that in order for inbound and outbound to work together, you need input from the sales team as well as the marketing team. Gartner estimates that only 20% of the content created by marketing is ever used by sales. Why? It isn't being used because it isn't relevant to the sales process or to the needs of sales people (and consequently their prospects and customers). Considering the mandate in the CIM definition of marketing – to acquire and keep customers – this is absolutely unacceptable. Marketing must listen to the needs of sales in order to truly live up to its responsibility.

This involves regular, scheduled cross-function meetings and discussions, delving into the CRM to find out what conversations are taking place and what sales people are hearing from real customers and prospects. It involves an understanding of the past, current and future state of the sale pipeline and the opportunities in that pipeline. It involves talking. It involves sharing. And it involves creating service levels so each group understands its commitment to the other.

Marketers should get to know their specific sales/buying cycle, opportunity stages and/or funnel stages intimately... Everything else being recommended here hinges on this.

Audit Existing Content

The common ground between Inbound Marketing and Outbound Marketing is CONTENT.

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In order to do either one effectively we need good content. In order to bring them together, we need good content that works for both. But before we start building new content, we need to take a look at the content we already have.

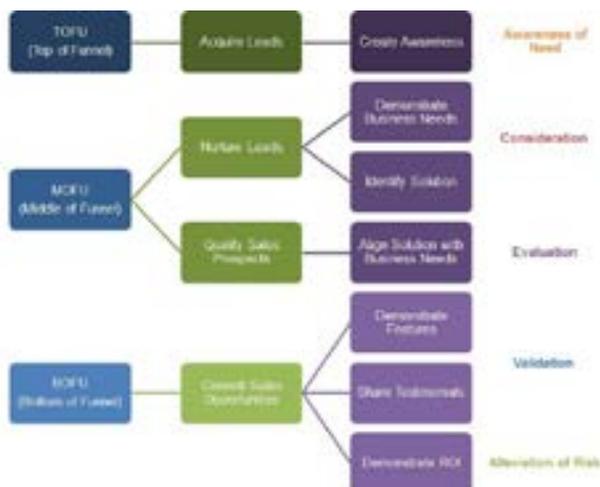
Auditing content can help to establish where there may be gaps and how much existing content is actually useful for selling your products and services. This is one place where input from sales will be essential. What is really working? What is the sales team actually using (and why)? What reaction are they getting? Ask your sales people serious questions about what content is being used and why, what content is being ignored and why? Demand honest answers and feedback here. This is important. In order to better plan content in the future – and that means content that is useful for both Inbound and Outbound Marketing – you need to build a realistic picture of the current state.

Map Content

Now that we have a good working relationship with the sales team, a solid understanding of their selling process and a clear picture of the state of content today, we can begin to strategize the content of tomorrow. Since we want content to be useful for both inbound and outbound campaigns – not to mention useful for the sales team, we need to keep that selling/buying cycle in mind.

This is important for outbound marketing (and sales) because sales needs different content targeted at prospects at different stages of the sales cycle. It's important for inbound marketing in order to drive leads through the funnel – attracting and nurturing leads and ultimately converting sales opportunities.

Typical Selling/Buying Cycle



Coordinate Campaigns with Content

Once you begin building content based on aligned sales/marketing goals, you can better focus your marketing campaigns. It is important to define your campaign goals up front. Are you seeking to acquire leads, nurture them, qualify them or convert them into sales opportunities?

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Knowing this – and knowing what content you have available today – and what new content is coming – will help you target marketing campaigns that fit your strategic goals.

Acquisition campaigns for leads in the top of the funnel, you want to focus on content that will educate and build awareness. People at this stage like to read, skim and watch, so including educational webinars, how to videos, blog posts and white papers are useful at this stage.

Once in the middle of the funnel, people need more data to look at and are interested in case studies, data sheets, product specific webinars, and product demos.

For those at the last stage of the marketing funnel, ROI calculators, testimonials and product trials will allow them to interact and see for themselves the benefits of the product or service.

Synchronize Inbound and Outbound

Since the content you need and the content you are planning is primarily based on your sales cycle or funnel model, rather than on a specific tactic or messaging channel, you can begin creating content that works for both Inbound and Outbound campaigns. That's great, but it doesn't go quite far enough. In order to truly bridge the inbound/outbound gap marketers must realize that neither inbound nor outbound marketing exists in a vacuum. They are happening in the same universe and – to a large extent – are targeting the same people. With that in mind, a coordinated approach is absolutely critical.

Integrating outbound telemarketing, email and direct mail with SEO/SEM, social media and webinars is crucial to optimizing all of your campaigns. Telemarketing is much more effective when coupled with supporting email or direct mail initiatives. Likewise, email, webinar and social media initiatives benefit from the live-touch that telemarketing can provide.

Summary

There are 5 simple steps to eliminating the gap between inbound and outbound marketing, making both infinitely more useful, effective, and give each one a better, more profitable ROI. In order for marketing to truly live up to the expectations we set for it, it needs to:

- Make and stay friends with sales
- Own its content
- Study the selling and buying cycles
- Align its activities with those cycles
- Use inbound and outbound tactics together

Inbound and Outbound marketing are not nearly as far apart than it seems. The only thing really standing between them is **CONTENT**.

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