
MARKET BRIEF
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Four Steps to More
Effective Inbound
Marketing

Corporate**ink**
Public Relations

We talk with dozens of marketing executives every month – and it's fair to say that no one is 100% satisfied with their programs, or their results.

There's no singular weak point, though the weak spots are becoming performance gaps.

- **The Database:** It should be an asset. But sometimes, it's handicapping the program.
- **Killer Content:** Sure, everyone wants it. How do you create it? Scale it? And if you're paying for it – get what you need, without endless rewrites that kill delivery times?
- **Analytics:** How do you get the backing to drop the irrelevant stats, and still justify your program? And how do you get sales to buy in?

Creating a full-bred inbound marketing program isn't a pipe dream. But it's not the full story, either.

Yes, we're getting people to opt-in. But then we're also applying standard targeted outbound marketing techniques – giving them content that speaks directly to their interests. Taking the next forward step, to data-driven personalization, that integrates their actions – like registering, opening an email, attending a webinar, downloading whitepaper – with a whole suite of customized, synchronized content. Few companies are at that level today, though it will become a much bigger priority by 2014.

Here are four strategies we're seeing – and applying – for better results, with a lot less work than it seems. And when you factor in the total cost of staff time, a lot less money.

With CEOs paying more attention to marketing's contributions, marketing leaders are being held much more accountable for generating revenue. Program 'vulnerabilities' will become unacceptable weaknesses, quickly.

Step 1: Tap your insiders.

Content may be king, but it's also a deal-killing, morale-sapping machine. Dull content kills response rates. Great content is also hard to come by, and often, it's even harder to predict what will pull best. And it's harder still to scale: How can you reliably create a 'rolling thunder' system of effective content that doesn't overload your team?

Too many companies go outside for content. That's a huge mistake. Your biggest experts – and fans – are inside the company. They have the stories, the data, and know what customers care about. Most of the time, though, they don't want to make time to write it down, or, more honestly, they're afraid to write, or actually don't write well enough to meet your needs.

So turn them into resources – interview them. Product marketing managers are a great first stop. Then partner with an outsider or a writing specialist, to tie these specifics into the broader vision. This bigger message is key for customers – who urgently need to understand – and believe in – the direction, as well as the product.

The best content will also speak in a voice you understand, and like. This means more human, very authentic and less corporate. That's becoming more important – and something outside writers should be able to do with ease. It's a bit harder for the inside experts, who have probably drunk a little too much of the corporate Kool-Aid.

Step 2: Rethink your segmentation.

This is a persistent quagmire for many companies, with lists that don't even cover the basics: targets by job title, size of company, company industry, etc.


Analyzing web behavior data is the next step, and will begin to take hold as inbound marketing becomes more relied on across the enterprise. But list segmentation is here and now, and underperforming, too-broad categorization won't hold up for long.

Why Bother? Because...



39%

of email marketers who practice list segmentation see better open rates.



28%

see lower opt-out rate.



24%

see better deliverability, as well as increased leads and ultimately, greater revenue.

61% of B2B marketers send all of their leads directly to sales. But just 27% of those leads will be qualified.

Step 3: Get really, really clear about goals.

Marketing specialists tend to fall in love with awareness. Awareness is great – but it’s a big step away from measurable leads. So if you want leads, that’s what you need to measure.

Believe it or not, opens and click-throughs are just a step along the way; what did they do after visiting the landing page? Conversion rates – Web traffic to download, download to customer – drive far more understanding with the leadership team, and sales.

The most valuable nuggets are found in those conversion rates, which can help move leads down the funnel and uncover how to improve the nurture process.

Understandably, internal competition for owning the ‘last click’ is fierce – and shaping up to be a tougher battleground for SEO, PPC, promotions and marketing spend, and budgets.

Best practice models for attribution are still very much in flux, but this brief provides some useful direction. (B2C companies are generally leading the way here, in part because their volume, and sales, often eclipses that of B2B companies.)

“79% of marketing leads never convert into sales. Lack of lead nurturing is the most common cause of this performance gap.”
– MarketingSherpa

Step 4: Double-check every single call to action.

Here’s an uncomfortable surprise: A lot of sites – and pages – are foggy about this. Many don’t even have a CTA. Others bury it in a tiny box that’s dark, hidden and not very inviting.

Some CTA’s don’t even map to the bigger goal, of conversion – especially when there’s no clear formula for what happens after the person gives up their contact information, and downloads the first item.

Plenty of companies are still giving away content, without requiring any information. That’s just a waste.

Once you are extremely clear about the #1 goal – leads – it becomes easy to shape the landing pages to support it.

What do you want to learn next?

[How Net Promoter™ Creates a Trust Advantage](#)

[4 Top Issues for Today’s CMO’s](#)

[SEO: Capturing Page One](#)



office: (617) 969 9192

email: talktome@corporateink.com

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