



## **HubSpot Academy Lesson: Inbound Marketing Fundamentals**

### **Video: Why You Should Invest in Inbound Marketing**

In all great stories, the concept of the hero's journey is simple. The beloved hero goes on a quest, faces untold difficulty, but rises victorious and returns home transformed.

They have help along the way, of course. Often taking the form of a sage or wizard, there's usually someone who aids the hero on their adventure, providing guidance and advice. This guardian helps the hero grow to their fullest potential and achieve what they set out to do.

When it comes to marketing, the role of the sage advisor falls to you. Every prospect and customer is on a quest to accomplish a set of goals. They may not know where their journey with you will lead them quite yet, but as a marketer, it's your job to act as a guide. This means being ready for any of your visitors' questions or concerns when they need answers the most. Why? In short, your help, education, and attention builds trust between you and your prospect or customer.

The question then becomes, how do you scalable-y interact with the multitude of buyers pursuing your site and marketing channels? How do you go beyond answering questions to empower and inspire so many potential buyers? Inbound marketing.

Inbound marketing is a strategy that attracts and retains customers by creating valuable content and tailored experiences. Inbound marketing forms connections customers are looking for and solves problems they already have. While outbound



marketing interrupts your audience with content they don't always want, inbound marketing seamlessly integrates into a buyer's decision-making landscape.

Effective inbound marketing relies on successful implementation of the inbound methodology across all your marketing strategies.

The inbound methodology is a method for growing an organization by building lasting relationships with people and helping them reach their goals. This is carried out in three stages: attract, engage, and delight.

Let's examine and review the marketing applications for each stage.

In the attract stage, you attract visitors with useful content and eliminate barriers as they learn about your company. The key is to earn people's attention, not force it.

When applied to marketing, this means using strategies like blogging, SEO, social publishing, paid search ads, and display advertising. Together, these approaches will help you reach your target buyers on the channels they're using to look for solutions to their problems, ways to achieve their goals, or browse new products and services of interest.

But, here's a protip: Focus on the attract stage if your goal is to generate more traffic and leads.

In the engage stage, you make it easy for customers to shop and buy from you by enabling buyers to interact with you on their preferred timeline and channels. Here, you focus on opening relationships, not just closing deals.

When applied to marketing, this means using website and email personalization, database segmentation, marketing automation, lead nurturing, and multichannel communication (such chat and messaging). These tools help you build trust with your



leads and start to deliver awesome content at every stage in their decision-making process.

With that in mind, here's a pro-tip: Focus on the engage stage if you are looking to convert more leads and prospects or trying to lower the cost to acquire new customers.

Finally, in the delight stage, you help, support, and empower customers to reach their goals. Here, you focus on creating buzz around your brand.

When applied to marketing, this means using social mentions, reviews, word-of-mouth marketing, a customer loyalty program, or user-generated content.

Oftentimes, this requires you to shift your resources so they're more effectively distributed throughout the entire customer experience. The payoff comes in the form of more loyal customers and new referral traffic to your site.

Which brings us to our last pro tip: Focus on the delight stage if you're looking to improve your customer retention, customer lifetime value, and referrals.

Overall, these strategies help you remain present and in-tune with your leads and customers. But effective implementation of any of these strategies at any stage, requires a few processes to be in place. They will act as guardrails and ensure no matter the exact strategy or tactic you use, your buyer's are at the center of everything you do.

To start, you need to research and fully understand who you're trying to reach. After all, you don't want just any traffic to your site. You want the right traffic. And the right traffic is the visitors who are most likely to become leads, and, ultimately, happy customers. These visitors fit your buyer personas.



Buyer 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.

Buyer personas help you identify groups in your customer base that share similar demographics, psychographics, and behaviors. They reveal what these groups of visitors want to see, when to deliver it, and how to better service folks throughout their lifecycle with your business.

This information about who your leads are and their preferences will also help inform how you'll go about personalizing your content to fit their needs – which brings us to the buyer's journey.

Throughout the buyer's journey, your visitors will overcome their challenges and accomplish their goals differently. You'll need to understand what they're thinking and – potentially more importantly – feeling, as they progress toward making a purchase. That way you can match them step-for-step; from the awareness that a problem exists, to consideration of the potential solutions, until they reach a decision.

Knowing who your leads and customers are, the type of content they want to interact with, and when they need content is a great first step. Next, you need to know about their preferred platforms and methods of communication. That is, where would they like to engage online!

Think critically about your publishing and distribution channels. Consider how you're leveraging ads, engagement, and business pages on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, or Twitter. Are your buyers turning to search engines like Google for research? Consider your content strategy. Where are you currently ranking with content like pillar pages, blogs posts, or video content?



This may seem like a lot of information to unpack and understand upfront. But, doing this research and getting these answers will inform how you reach and engage with users. This level of personalization pays off.

According to a study conducted by Epsilon, 80% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase when brands offer personalized experiences.

Furthermore, Adobe found that 67% of consumers think it's important for brands to automatically adjust content based on current context. That same study cautioned that 42% of consumers will "get annoyed" if brands don't adjust their content to their needs. Which, in your day-to-day, is why you need segmentation and automation.

These strategies help you ensure your outreach and lead nurturing is both efficient and effective.

Now, customers expect unique experiences. This includes tailored recommendations, dynamic content, and exclusive offers. These are usually configured based on a visitor's behavior on your website, their demographics, and their interests. Audience segmentation helps group your most important buyers based on behavioral and demographic data.

Using that data, you can determine which of those audiences are most valuable and most receptive to certain kinds of messages, and therefore, which audiences you should focus on creating content for.

Similarly, effective marketing automation considers the evolving needs of your leads, and the behaviors and interactions they have with you across all of your marketing channels – not just email. Using behavioral inputs from multiple channels, such as likes on your social media posts, views to your pricing page, or engagements with particular pieces of content gives you the context you need to fully understand a lead's challenges.



But how do you know all this effort is paying off? You need to know what's working and what's not for your marketing team. That takes a special type of reporting: marketing attribution reports.

Marketing attribution reports pull together all the relevant interactions from your buyers' journey using pre-built models that can definitively answer which channels and content are helping you meet your marketing goals. They help you and your team get the credit you deserve. That's important because in the past, it's been really difficult for marketing teams to prove their contribution to their company's bottom line. With attribution reports, you can show just how much influence your content had, which can help you advocate for more headcount and budget.

As you can see, before diving into all the strategies that can power your inbound marketing flywheel, you need to start with a strong foundation.

By building your inbound marketing strategy with these pieces in place, you can make data-driven decisions, grow sustainably, and ensure your customer is at the heart of everything you do.

And, while the customer may be the hero, you have the opportunity to help educate and inspire them along the way. Inbound marketing is about making your customers more successful, building relationships by doing the right thing, and focusing on the long-term even when it's not the easiest path. By focusing on your customers, your business will grow better.

### **Video: Inbound Marketing in Practice**

Inbound marketing is all about publishing helpful and interesting content your audience wants to consume. But, with an infinite number of approaches and ever-increasing creative standards, designing campaigns can be overwhelming.



To ensure this approach doesn't feel too abstract, we'll examine some examples of companies using personalized and delightful content to reach and resonate with their leads and customers. Let's get inspired.

Let's start with blogging. Blogs help drive traffic to your website, convert that traffic into leads, establish authority in an industry, help your business grow and attract new customers months and even years after publication.

If you're looking for inspiration, look no further than the M.M. LaFleur blog.

M.M. LaFleur is a professional apparel brand designed to bring ease and comfort into the lives of their customers. Their blog, called The – M – Dash, promotes women's empowerment.

Women who work in virtually any industry can read the blog to feel inspired by other businesswomen as well as to learn about different aspects of being a woman in the workplace (gender equality, stereotypes, etc.). Posts related to attire – what to wear on your first day, casual Fridays, and job interviews – also populate the pages of The – M – Dash blog.

To sum it up, the blog promotes education and discussion around the topic of women in the workplace, all while relating this content back to their clothing line. They discuss societal issues in a way that makes readers feel good which leads them to feel good about the brand as a whole.

The – M – Dash teaches you to take time to understand the topics your audience really cares about. This helps you resonate with the people who matter most to your success – leads and customers. Brainstorm ways you can incorporate thought leadership pieces into your content strategy. This can help your brand build credibility in your online space over time.



Social media marketing is another great way to develop a strong brand image with fun social media engagement. Let's look at an example.

Founded close to two decades ago, ASOS is now a globally renowned clothing brand. The firm sells its own line of clothing as well as clothing from 850 brands. It currently serves and ships to customers in 196 countries.

ASOS has maintained a positive reputation as it's scaled. In fact, the brand inspires great loyalty from its customers. How? ASOS specializes in engaging with their customers through various platforms. Currently, they have massive followings on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Pinterest, and Facebook.

Their Instagram has over 12.2 million followers with over 14k posts. On average, ASOS posts six times a day and all their posts are edgy, colorful, and inspirational. They usually include outfit inspiration, a celebrity wearing ASOS, or styling tips. On some of their Instagram posts, if they are showcasing a product, they add the product's serial number in the caption for easier access.

According to John Mooney, brand creative director at ASOS: "We're always evolving our content, social media strategy, and channel focus to ensure we're staying relevant to our fashion-loving, 20-something customers."

Recently, that has meant leaning into platforms like TikTok to make sure the brand always stays top-of-mind for its target audience. Videos featured on its brand account usually include a mix of styling tips, behind-the-scenes exclusive content, and collaborations with influencers. They also create short, funny videos commenting on what's going on in the world of fashion and celebrities.

ASOS continues to keep it light-hearted and fun on its other social media profiles, such as its verified Twitter account. Here, the social media team focuses on creating quippy and engaging content that its followers love to share. If you look past the surface, however, you'll see it's a bit more than just fun and games. The only link in





their account description directs to their customer care page. This shows that ASOS knows it's personas will likely turn to Twitter to get help, versus the other social media platforms where they may be more interested in discovery or bonding.

ASOS' social media strategy reinforces the need to understand the platforms that your audience considers interesting and relevant. After all, your audience is likely diverse and spread out, so using different channels creates multiple points of contact which, in turn, nurture leads and increases conversions.

Their strategy stresses the importance of creating content that matches the voice and tone you want to establish for your brand. Brand voice is a critical factor for creating consistency across communication channels, regardless of who creates the content.

Additionally, throughout their platforms, ASOS published the type of content a user may be looking for on that specific channel. That's because not all types of content perform the same on every channel, particularly on social media platforms, which often serve different purposes for their users.

Another popular type of inbound content is email. Now, before you say email is dead, consider this: According to a study by OptinMonster, 99% of email users check their inbox every day, with some checking 20 times a day. Of those people, 58% of consumers check their email first thing in the morning.

Email marketing as a tool isn't dead. But, some email marketing practices are, such as impersonal email address lines, violating GDPR, and ignoring the user experience. With that in mind, let's learn about a brand that does email marketing campaigns really well: JetBlue.

JetBlue Airways, often referred to just as JetBlue, is a low-cost, major American airline, and the seventh largest airline in North America by passengers carried. And here's a secret: HubSpotters have a serious email marketing crush on JetBlue



because they deliver their lovable marketing in cheeky email campaigns that aim to humorously reengage customers.

You can tell how much attention they put into each of their emails. Every element, from their headers to their actionable, contrasting CTAs work together to create an engaging email that is promotional without being pushy.

In this example, the header is personalized to the recipient based on past flying and search history. This copy is bursting with friendly personality and airline jokes. The email is relatable and reads as though it comes from a friend, which helps earn a positive reaction.

JetBlue understands that every interaction counts. You want to use a voice and tone your audience will relate to and ensure it contains content that is relevant to them. To do this at scale, you need to think beyond just demographic segmentation and take past customer behavior into account.

Finally, let's explore how targeted audiences and personalized outreach improve results. Sock Club is a subscription service that delights its customers by delivering high quality socks right to their door.

The company is unique because it caters to both businesses looking to personalize socks with their logo and individuals looking to get socks featuring their favorite furry friend. That's a lot of different segments for any team to handle at scale. But, Sock Club has mastered personalized outreach.

Through careful analysis of their customer data, Sock Club has found that potential customers typically find them through organic or paid search. The team structures their entire content strategy around SEO best practices to ensure they can reach the majority of their target audience.



Once a potential customer lands on the Sock Club website, they are directed to create an account to begin their personalized order. By streamlining the sign-up process, Sock Club is able to gather critical personal information early on, which then helps them personalize the customer experience.

After a client uploads their logo to their account, an account manager reaches out with customized quotes either directly in their account (through messaging) or through email and the lead is passed to sales.

Here's where it gets interesting. Members of the Sock Club noticed an interesting nuance in their customer's behavior. After their account had been created, potential leads and customers didn't engage as much with Sock Club content. So that meant automated lead nurturing workflows promoting pieces like blog posts weren't performing as highly as the team anticipated.

The team turned to A/B testing and experimented with the type of experience they were providing. Their findings were spectacular! So, what drives the clicks and conversions for Sock Club?

Simple text emails personalized to look like they're coming from a lead or customer's account manager. This has changed how Sock Club thinks about lead nurturing.

Now, they automate outreach regarding upcoming sales, incentives, and promotions without all the bells and whistles of a traditional marketing email – because that's the experience their customers want. And by implementing tracking along the way, they now have data for every stage of their buyer's journey and sales pipeline. Sock Club can now able tell which leads and customers are completing certain actions and it has the setup to ensure they're following up meaningfully.

What can you take away from Sock Club's approach? Personalization and automation can be your best friend. It makes certain strategies accessible to you, even if you don't have a massive marketing team with a large budget. Testing and tracking how your



content performs can also be key to unlocking further insights about your audience. This helps you create the type of experience they want to engage with.

This was by no means a comprehensive list of creating all types of inbound content.

You'll also want to consider creating ads that help, rather than interrupt, or videos that educate and are easily shareable. The biggest takeaway is that what inbound looks like will depend on your audience, the type of content and experience that works best for them, and how you plan to scale it to achieve your short-term and long-term marketing goals.

## **Video: Why You Should Invest in Inbound Marketing**

Now that you understand what inbound marketing can look like in practice, it's time to consider the tools, information, and resources you need to create a strong inbound marketing foundation at your organization.

Just as you should build your inbound marketing strategies around your buyer personas, you should build your marketing toolkit around your customer data. Any company that wants to maintain a relationship with their customers can benefit from using a CRM – customer relationship management tool. As its name suggests, CRM software is a system for managing relationships with your customers.

For most businesses, their most valuable and important asset is their customers. And at most companies, the details about those customers – who they are and how they've interacted with your organization – are spread out in many different places.

Your prospects and customers will notice the effects of a disjointed team. From their perspective, they have a relationship with one company, not a collection of different people and departments. Everyone on your team needs context about every



customer's needs, wants, and current state, so they can pick up the conversation where it left off.

A CRM provides one central place to organize all the details of your leads and customers. It makes it easy for everyone on your team to gain insight into the state of your business and the status of every customer relationship.

But a CRM alone likely won't be enough to create awesome content and consistently reach your buyers.

A marketing technology – martech – stack is the list of tools that marketers use to execute elements of their marketing campaigns, from lead generation to email marketing, and from social media management to search engine optimization. These tools are timesaving, as they typically streamline and automate your processes. They also help marketers analyze the success of their efforts over time.

One martech tool is typically used for each marketing discipline, but you may find certain platforms help you accomplish many tasks. With that in mind, let's review some popular pieces of software that help marketers effectively execute in today's market.

SEMrush, Moz, Ahrefs, and Google Search Console all support search engine optimization (SEO). These different software solutions help you measure, monitor and evaluate your online visibility and contain tools to help you build links, conduct keyword research and competitive analysis, audit your site and more.

Content marketing focuses on creating and distributing valuable content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. That means you need tools like Wordpress to build and maintain a website, Buzzsomo to measure the success of your content, HotJar to track and monitor online behavior, and Canva to design stellar graphics. Hootsuite, Buffer, and Sprout Social are great places to start for all your social media marketing needs. Each of these tools helps you create and curate awesome content



and schedule your posts as well as manage your social media tasks and measure your ROI.

And finally, for managing your advertising strategy, consider AdRoll, Rollworks, 6Sense, and Adstream. These tools can help you manage the creation, optimization, and delivery of your advertising content. Certain ones, like AdRoll help you create remarketing campaigns with ease!

Instead of adopting a plethora of individual tools, some marketers adopt an all-in-one solution such as HubSpot to ensure their data stays connected.

Whichever platforms you choose, make sure you have at least one good automation feature in your toolbox. This will help you cut down on time wasted doing daily tasks like saving emails and files to spreadsheets. Having a tool that makes your life easier and saves you time is ideal.

Looking for a great automation tool? HubSpot has a powerful automation tool included in its paid marketing tiers. It doesn't just send drip sequences. You can also use it to trigger specific actions such as updating a contact record or adding a contact to a list when certain criteria are met.

Other marketing automation tools include:

- Drip, which helps use customer data from your ecommerce store to create personalized, branded emails for your different email segments.
- Marketo, which helps automate and measure marketing engagement, tasks, and workflows.
- Omnisend, which helps create cohesion between your email, advertising, and messaging strategies.

Most marketing automation tools also provide reports that allow you to see and present your campaigns' performance to other employees in your company. What if you want a more holistic look at the health of your marketing?



Here are some fan favorite reporting tools.

Google Analytics, or GA, is an analytics tool that gives you an extremely in-depth look at your website and/or app performance. It integrates with Google's marketing and advertising platforms and products (including Google Ads, Search Console, and Data Studio) making it a popular choice for anyone using multiple Google tools.

Next up is HubSpot. HubSpot makes it easy to create custom reports to answer even your most complex questions by seamlessly connecting your marketing, sales, and service data. You can easily import data into HubSpot using custom objects and integrate your favorite apps via the HubSpot Marketplace to make the custom report builder even more powerful.

Finally, consider Databox. Databox allows you to view analytics data on your mobile, desktop, and TV from a variety of data sources such as HubSpot Marketing, Google Analytics, SEMRush, and Wistia – in just a few clicks.

Aligning communication across the company is necessary for keeping day-to-day tasks manageable and streamlined. Consider collaboration tools like Slack, a powerful messaging app that allows teammates to quickly chat back-and-forth without the hassle of email.

Slack has powerful features and integrations that make it possible for you to integrate all your other daily tools – like Trello, Gmail, Giphy, and so many more – right where you're already communicating. You can start channels between different teams or just chat with specific colleagues. Slack makes remote and in-person work possible and easier than ever.

But how do you manage all the moving pieces of a marketing campaign or project? There are many project management tools available, but one rises to the top with the number of integrations and features at the price of – oh yeah – free! Trello.



Trello is a fantastic project management tool for small teams and individuals. With its fun user interface, Trello lets you set up to-do lists and tag individual cards with due dates, members, labels, and more. You can attach files, links, images, and more, and easily and comprehensively view any project you're working on.

Other helpful project management tools include:

- Asana (a HubSpot Marketing favorite)
- Airtable (a HubSpot Academy favorite)

This is by no means a comprehensive list of all the tools you could or may want to use. But between a CRM and a comprehensive martech stack that includes automation, reporting, collaboration, and project management features, you'll have the inbound marketing toolkit you need to attract, engage, and delight your customers at scale.