

Inbound Sales

Enablement

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Your Inbound Counts

The B2B sales cycle is getting shorter. Millennial buyers, who account for 42% of B2B buyers (IBM, 2014), want their B2B buying experience to be as simple as ordering an Uber or an item on Amazon. “Customers have come to expect these experiences and this relevance,” Russell Glass, head of products for LinkedIn Marketing Solutions said at the BMA15 Conference (Ali, 2015). Millennials also site vendor representatives as their preferred source of information when making B2B buying decisions. These facts mean marketers will need content that not only engages but also includes technology sales innovators sooner in the process.

There is a gap in the conversation and this paper addresses some specific inbound techniques that can make a difference.

Inbound Content can Bridge the Gap created by Digital

B2B inbound sales enablement involves not only using best practices for content marketing strategy and governance but also integrating sales scenarios to engage sales teams. To begin the process, you will want to first develop a clear set of objectives and customer behavior outcomes.

Inbound Strategy

Why are we doing Inbound?

The focus on the customer decision journey, conceptualized by McKinsey and Company in 2009, has led to a new way of developing B2B campaigns to focus on sales cycle objectives. Those may be broken down into four different groups: Reputation, Demand Creation, Sales Enablement and Market Intelligence (Sirius Decisions, 2014). The benefit of this approach is that it requires content strategy to align with other marketing activities outside of the web. On the downside, it is long range – 12 months.

Whom are We Talking To?

For any inbound campaign, the first step to developing strategy is the development of a web persona for customers focused on discovery in five key areas: priority initiatives, success factors, perceived barriers, the buyer journey, and decision criteria. The persona includes answers to question including “What is the competitive situation?” and “What keep your customers up at night?” In a corporate setting with a technical product, this involves numerous layers of management and complexities.

What is Sales Doing?

With sales enablement as the objective, a similar discovery must occur with the sales team. A discovery of the sales process including what materials and information that your sales team used at different stages in the sales process is a great start. Talking to customers to determine what information was most helpful in the decision process is critical. Talking to non-customers about what was missing helps. Knowing the larger sales activities and events that will be occurring over the next twelve months provides integration for the inbound campaign

What Content Do We Have Now?

Your content inventory should include every department and information source and may net the content tools you need. Repurposing content for different web personas and different stages in the buying process can save time and money.

Who Will Create and Curate the Content?

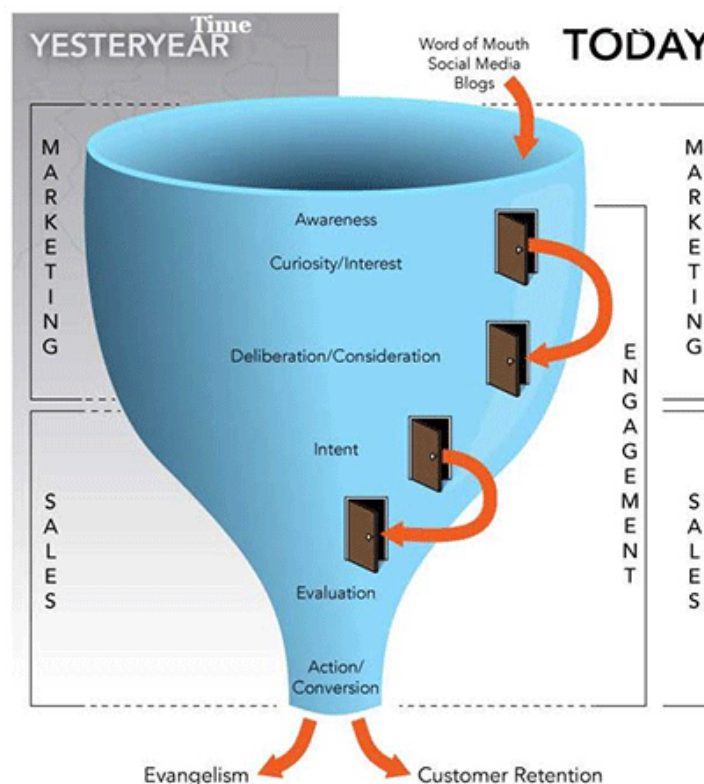
You will get a reality check by creating a content marketing calendar and determining who will be responsible for creating content and publishing content.

Creating the Content

Now that the current inventory and resources to create new content have been determine, you can start developing content with your campaign objectives, behavior outcomes and stage in the sales funnel top-of-mind.

The New Inbound Sales Funnel:

Sales enablement begins at the top level of the funnel. The sales funnel has changed dramatically with digital and mobile ubiquity. Today content users may engage with content very early and then go off the grid for months before returning at a different buying stage. This diagram shows the new circuitous routes that may occur before the lead is ready for the mid-stage sales cycle (Ceresa 2014):



Sales Enablement at the Awareness Stage:

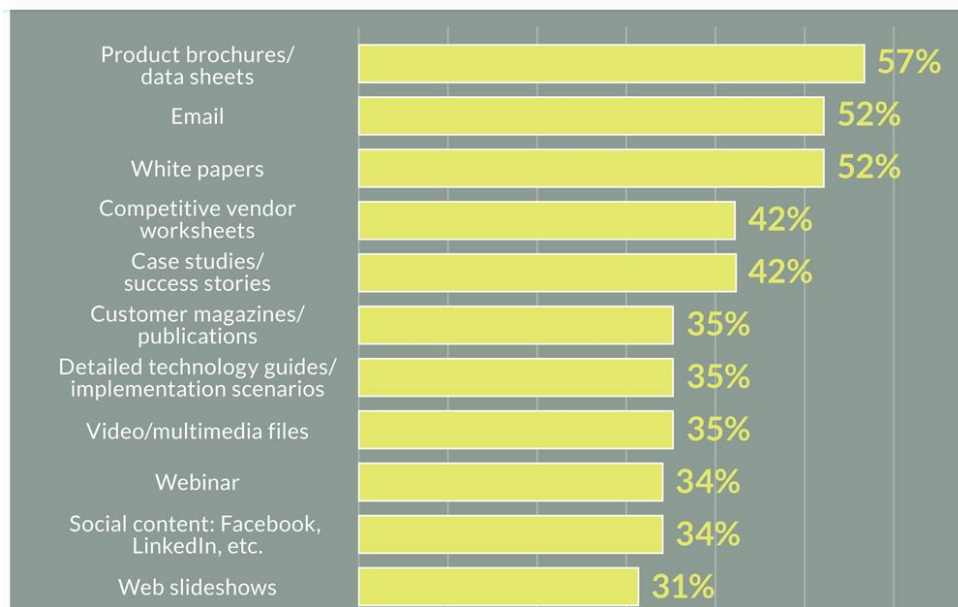
Although Sales may not touch leads at this stage, they need marketing to build influence and brand reputation to open doors later on. A list of tactics for awareness building include:

1. SEO - A huge 81% of technical buyers begin their buying process with a simple Google search (Demand Gen, 2014). For the first 90 days, paid SEO will help jumpstart campaign response, over the next few months, Organic SEO will begin to take effect creating inbound links and higher search ranking.
2. White papers create influence.

3. Create a great blog - Invite guest bloggers to contribute. Announce new content on social and on news feeds. Make content shareable and hashtag everything.
4. Get a list of top bloggers for your industry at and comment on their blogs. This list is available from GroupHigh.com. Give credit for any data sources.
5. Owned media is a way to develop content and create engagement and influence. Adobe's CMO.com and American Express Open Forum are examples.
6. Any content should have multiple response mechanisms – share, follow, click to call, subscribe, etc. This can shorten the funnel.

The Interest Stage:

Sales enablement at the interest stage will include much of the same information as the awareness stage and will focus on great landing pages and relevant content. Landing pages with video get an 81% better conversion. This chart shows the preferences for different types of content among tech buyers:



The Consideration Stage:

This is the stage where marketing tells a story and develops answers to the top priority decisions and barriers as identified in the personas. Gated content is important and may include email drip campaigns, stats and stories, downloads, videos, e-books, case studies. Make it easy to contact someone for more details. These contact calls maybe supported with the types of information that buyers need to answer questions that are part of their decision criteria.

The Intent stage:

These leads are becoming sales ready leads. This stage is where the buyer wants to get to know your company and get to know you. Sales needs clear direction on the company's market positioning and key differentiators as well as the market positioning and key differentiators of the competition. What makes the company unique among competitors? Content should have some details about the company values, vision,

reputation and an information about the sales team. Sales must have support materials and deal closers at the ready. Technical briefs, demos, data sheets, customer care policies are all part of information that customers need to evaluate. If it is easy to get this information, you will do well.

Action/Conversion

In the final action and conversion, stage the sales team will need to be able to sum it all up and add the sale details – volume discounts, service agreements, guarantees and any information they need to make an informed decision. Provide the details to ensure the customers success.

Create Customer Advocates

Customer will become advocates when you have provided an exceptional implementation and service experience. Ask for feedback early and often. Create customer advisory groups and participate in industry forums. Video is a great tool to make it easy for your customers to provide testimonials. Thank them again. Make opportunities to touch-base with customers beyond contract renewals. Memberships, surveys, gamification, thought leadership pieces about news in their industry are just a few content pieces that will cement the Sales Enablement campaign.

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