

# Don't pitch, educate

## Use inbound marketing to become a trusted source of information

INTERVIEWED BY ADAM BURROUGHS

To successfully market and sell your products and/or services, your business must be “at the ready” at your target audience’s convenience. The perpetual search by prospective customers for relevant information suggests that buyers want to get better educated before making a purchasing decision. This approach to buying has created a need for companies to take a more consultative and interactive approach to their web marketing.

“Unfortunately, most sellers in the B2B space are not marketing in a way that matches customer behavior or needs,” says Jonathan Ebenstein, partner, Strategic Marketing Services, Skoda Minotti. “Many companies have websites that aren’t leveraging best web practices. Rather than being an educational resource to help guide prospective customers through the buying process, while at the same time serving as an interactive selling tool for their business, most B2B websites are simply cyber brochures with static content that’s been unchanged for years.”

*Smart Business* spoke with Ebenstein about best practices for B2B marketers.

### In what ways can companies attract visitors to their site?

Attracting site traffic starts with search engine optimizing a company’s website. This is done so that anyone searching for keywords related to a given company’s products or services will find that company’s website at the top of their search results. In order to ensure that your website comes up in search it is

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essential that you create and post thought leadership content, such as blogs, white papers, how-to guides and e-books. This material helps educate an audience so they are better, smarter buyers while at the same time positions your company as a credible expert.

Best practice dictates adding new content on average once a week, but it’s better to publish a blog once a month that’s relevant to your prospects needs than post updates every day that don’t position you as the expert.

You should also be utilizing social media. Once content has been developed, leverage as many distribution channels as is feasible to promote it, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

### How can companies convert visitors into leads?

Create call-to-action (CTA) buttons and place them strategically throughout your website and other e-communications. CTAs promote special offers or premium content such as a how-to guides, white papers or e-books. A CTA will direct users to a website landing page, where in exchange for their contact information and answers to a few simple questions, they can download the premium content.



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Download “The 30 Greatest Lead Generation Tips, Tricks and Ideas” at [skodaminotti.com/leads](http://skodaminotti.com/leads).

In the end, they get the information they seek and you get a qualified lead.

Another lead converting best practice is to include contact forms on all website subpages for visitors to fill out and connect with a company representative. You never know at what point a visitor will want to reach out.

### What are some best practices for qualifying leads?

Lead scoring is a great way to qualify leads. The process starts when a visitor fills out an online form on a landing page in order to download premium content such as an e-book or white paper. Online forms should always request some basic information such as the person’s name, company and email address. It should also include a couple of simple questions to learn more about the prospect and where they are in the buying cycle. Questions to ask could include company size, their biggest challenge or timing to purchase. Upon submission, each answer is given a lead score — the higher the total score the hotter a lead is.

### How should manufacturers take advantage of inbound marketing?

B2B suppliers need to get to prospective buyers when they are performing their initial due diligence. This is when they are most impressionable because they are still figuring out their needs, forming their opinions and creating the technical specifications for an eventual request for quote or proposal. Since most due diligence is completed via the web, the B2B supplier that positions themselves as the educational resource for these buyers will not only increase their chances of making the buyers short list, but will be positioned as one of the favorites. ●

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