

# New lead generation model

## Inbound is replacing outbound as the more effective lead generator

The effectiveness of traditional outbound marketing is beginning to ebb as the inbound model proves it can bring curious customers to a business's website with far less effort and expense.

"For customers and companies alike, the role of the sales person is changing," says Jonathan Ebenstein, partner, Skoda Minotti Strategic Marketing. "They are relied upon less and less to be their company's first impression and primary informational resource. That role is now being handled by the Internet and more specifically, a company's website."

Most consumers start the purchasing process by performing their own research. Websites, blogs and online reviews all provide decision-influencing information, insights and recommendations.

"By the time consumers speak with a sales person, they are extremely well educated and ready to buy," he says. "Businesses that want to compete today must have the ability to educate prospective customers during their due diligence process."

*Smart Business* spoke with Ebenstein about how companies can generate and convert leads through their websites.

### What is inbound marketing?

Inbound marketing is a strategy that turns strangers into people who want to, and should, do business with you. It focuses on creating content that earns the attention of prospective customers and attracts them to your website. It enhances your company's ability to be found and converts website visitors into customers via thought leadership in a measurable manner.

### What are its advantages?

Inbound marketing creates credibility by leveraging informative and objective content

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 **WEBSITE:** For more information on creating an effective inbound marketing program, visit [www.skodaminotti.com/marketing](http://www.skodaminotti.com/marketing).



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on a company's website, making it more trustworthy. Ads, by comparison, tend to generate skepticism because there is a clear, transparent profit motive.

With inbound marketing, prospects find you through search engines, social media and referrals. As content is shared and spread through the Internet, its reach grows virally, allowing companies to have an audience with prospects and customers that traditional outbound marketing tactics can't find or reach. Inbound marketing also levels the playing field for companies with modest budgets that struggle to keep up with larger competitors who out spend them on the more traditional outbound tactics such as media advertising.

### What does the process entail?

The inbound marketing process starts by attracting visitors to your website by creating targeted content that your prospects and customers will find useful.

When creating content, be sure to search engine optimize what you write by using keywords that are most relevant to what your audience would be searching for. After successfully bringing search traffic to your website, the next step is to convert that traffic into leads. This is done by creating permission based content such as e-books, white papers, tip sheets, or any other form of information they would find interesting

or of value, and exchanging it for their contact information. Once they submit their information, they receive your 'premium content' and you receive the name, company and email address of an individual who has a demonstrated interest in your company, product or service, as well as permission to contact them. These leads should then be funneled into your company's CRM database and followed up upon by the sales team as appropriate.

### How does content translate to conversion?

While content attracts visitors to a website, the use of tools such as call-to-action buttons, Web forms and landing pages allow a company's website to collect the names, titles, email addresses and phone numbers of those that visit the website. Companies can also acquire additional information about the prospect, which can be used to determine each leads' interest level as well as where they are in the buying cycle.

### How long does it take to build an effective inbound marketing campaign?

Inbound marketing is a long-term marketing strategy that requires the consistent publishing of highly relevant content on a frequent basis — ideally once per week. When executed properly, companies can start to see meaningful results in approximately six to nine months. ●