

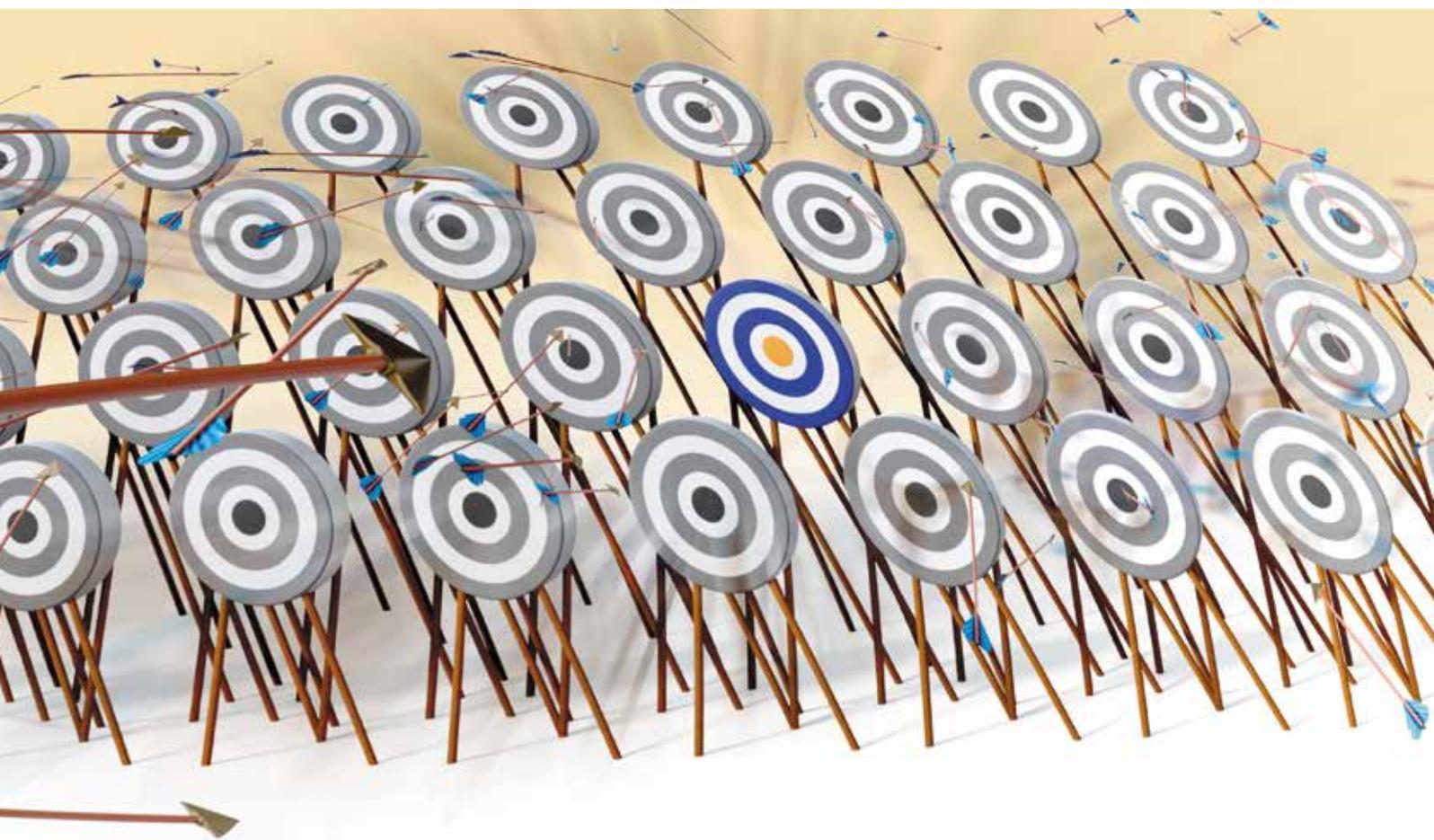
# Inbound Marketing: The Doctor Is In

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**L**ucy wants to build her 5¢ counseling business to serve more than the one customer she has now. Will she hand out flyers in school? Will she ask Charlie Brown to send his friends over to the booth? Or will she create a website that explains what happens when “the doctor is IN”?

In a perfect world, our prospects would eagerly seek out our products and services. We wouldn't have to “sell” them on the value; they would already know they need what we have. And prospects would easily find the website, self-qualify themselves, and either call, email, or visit Lucy's booth to make a purchase. That would be the ideal “inbound marketing” scenario.



## INBOUND MARKETING

According to Wikipedia, inbound marketing is based on the concept of earning the attention of prospects, making yourself easy to be found, and drawing customers to your website by producing content customers will value. Blogs, podcasts, video, e-books, e-newsletters, whitepapers, search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and other forms of “content marketing” are considered inbound marketing.

The benefits of inbound marketing are obvious:

- » **Less costly** than outbound marketing which includes a list purchase, creation of an email or direct mail campaign, managing an event and/or telemarketing follow-up. According to Hubspot, the cost of an inbound lead is 62 percent less than an outbound lead.
- » **More effective** than “chasing” the customers. If customers come to you, you have gained some measure of trust or credibility in their eyes and have earned their attention.
- » **Can shorten the sales cycle.** When prospects have finally made the decision to contact you, they are (somewhat) qualified and pre-disposed to listen to your message. Nine out of 10 buyers say that when they’re ready to buy, they’ll find you.

## THE DRIVERS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INBOUND STRATEGY

There are thousands of articles on how to be successful with inbound marketing, but all ultimately point to three key things that need to be in place:

- » A solid easy-to-navigate website that shows your credibility, differentiation, and offers up information of value to your targeted prospect.
- » Getting found. Build the “road” to that site via your blog content (content that you write but also that you comment on), your social networks, articles that you’re quoted in, Microsoft Pinpoint, and other directories, as well as websites such as the local Chamber of Commerce or SBA that have a link to your site.

- » Content, content, content. In fact, content is so critical to the success of your inbound strategy that it really needs its own bucket. Content drives search engine optimization (SEO), makes your website “sticky”, and increases your credibility. In the world of online marketing, think of content as your salesperson.

## THE ESSENCE OF GOOD CONTENT

But just throwing up content is not inbound marketing at its best. You need content that is

- » Relevant to YOUR reader.
- » Available in many formats – videos, blogs, infographics, whitepapers, brochures, FAQs, etc.
- » Integrated. A powerful infographic can convince prospects to “read on” and bring them into a more in-depth whitepaper or article. Catch their attention with a short snippet first, and then show them ALL that you have to share. For example, consider the rise in popularity of infographics. According to Billion Dollar Graphics, research at 3M Corporation concluded that we process visuals 60,000 times faster than text. That’s a powerful reason to re-think how to optimally combine graphics (for prospects) and text (for prospects and search engines) to capture the ideal target market.
- » Done well. While video is a GREAT medium for B2B content, only GOOD video works. You have three to five seconds to grab your viewer’s attention, and a flip cam talking head won’t do the trick. If you can’t do it well – don’t do it (or even better – hire a professional).
- » FRESH. Organic SEO is all about relevancy and freshness. So is stickiness. If I come to your website in search of 10 things I must know before I (insert action here), and that list is from 2008, I’m gone.
- » Easy to find (and is where I am). This can mean anything from optimized for search (so prospects find it when they’re looking) to being part of communities where they are likely to be, from LinkedIn to industry-specific forums.

## TO SUMMARIZE, LUCY SAYS...

The next step on your own path to inbound marketing success is...

- » Create your 2013 marketing strategy with a good mix of both inbound and outbound marketing tactics. Inbound marketing is ideal, but you still need a proactive outreach to get your prospect’s attention. (At least until the sales pipeline is overflowing.)
- » Add a page to the marketing plan that specifically addresses content development resources. You might outsource a portion of the unique content creation to a writer while backfilling the rest of the content needs (whitepapers, brochures, webcasts, videos) with Microsoft-specific resources.
- » Check out the Microsoft Ready-to-Go site for syndicated content you can quickly add to your website via the wizard type tool. <https://readytogo.microsoft.com/en-us/Pages/Home.aspx>
- » The Ready-to-Go site also has a “content finder” tool with 271 (at last count) items specific to Microsoft Dynamics. 

*Cheryl Strege and Barbara Pfeiffer from The Partner Marketing Group don't claim to have the wisdom Lucy dispenses for just a nickel, but they're pretty good at inbound and outbound marketing. Contact them at [Info@ThePartnerMarketingGroup.com](mailto:Info@ThePartnerMarketingGroup.com) to ask how your firm can maximize the benefits of inbound marketing and The Partner Marketing Group's content creation services.*

Sources: DemandGen Report 2011; Toolbox.com: iMEDIA CONNECTION; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inbound\\_marketing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inbound_marketing)

# GETTING ON TRACK

Building fresh, consistent, thought leadership content can be challenging. Start with this checklist.

## CONTENT CREATION CHECKLIST:

- ✓ **FAQs.** What are the questions you get asked most frequently? Answer them in a blog or article, and keep adding to it (for freshness!).
- ✓ **Blog, tweet, or post key takeaways from industry conferences you attend.**
- ✓ **Create a PowerPoint and share it on SlideShare ([www.slideshare.net](http://www.slideshare.net)).**
- ✓ **Create a poll or survey. It's a win/win. You engage readers with the questions and then share ORIGINAL content from the results.**
- ✓ **Bookmark the magazines and news sites in your target industry or geography. Once a week write a comment on an article and link back to the original.**
- ✓ **Set up several Google Alerts to capture content on specific industries or topics you want to write about.**