

The image depicts a theater or conference hall. The foreground shows a row of red upholstered seats. A yellow string is stretched across the seats, with a red sign hanging from it that reads "RESERVED FOR MARKETERS". The background is filled with a dense crowd of dark silhouettes representing an audience. Above the audience, a row of spotlights is visible against a dark ceiling.

# Marketers: Claim Your Front Row Seat!

RESERVED  
FOR  
MARKETERS

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If you've been involved in B2B (and particularly high tech) marketing for at least five years, you've had a front row seat to the most significant change in how business and IT professionals research and shop for technology solutions.

Call it digital, inbound, content, push versus pull marketing – there is a whole new landscape of strategies and tactics that you should be deploying today to generate a steady stream of leads and maintain a robust pipeline. If you are a volume reseller or are selling SaaS solutions, these strategies and tactics are MUST-haves.

Let's focus on three powerful statistics relevant to marketing today and the skills needed to take advantage of them.

### **70 PERCENT OF THE LINKS THAT USERS CLICK ON AS A RESULT OF SEARCH ARE ORGANIC LINKS, AND 75 PERCENT OF USERS NEVER SCROLL PAST THE FIRST PAGE OF SEARCH RESULTS. (HUBSPOT)**

WAIT – don't skip this because you have an outside firm managing your search engine optimization (SEO). While we highly recommend every company hire a professional firm for this complicated strategy, getting traffic to your site requires tight integration between your external experts and you. With the rollout of Google Penguin – in the simplest terms – keywords, tags, and links have been given less weight (and sometimes negative weight) in favor of authenticity and authorship. SEO will only succeed to the extent that you are able to continue to add original content and show true engagement in social networks.

**The skill upgrade here?** You don't need to be an SEO professional, but you DO need to know the key drivers for organic search so that you are able to support your SEO firm's efforts. Schedule regular sessions with your SEO company to identify what else you can do to support them, and utilize sites like Moz (formerly SEOMoz) and Search Engine Land to stay updated (independently) as a cross-check for the advice you're getting.

### **BY 2020, CUSTOMERS WILL MANAGE 85 PERCENT OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT TALKING TO A HUMAN. (GARTNER RESEARCH VIA HUBSPOT)**

You're probably seeing a pattern here. Across the board, the future of marketing is in delivering powerful, valuable content that demonstrates your credibility and expertise to an audience that wants to "self-serve".

**So what skill set do you need?** Contrary to what many think, you don't need to be a writer. Rather, marketers today need to be curators, publishers, and editors. As a curator, you need to be able to research and follow information that has value for your target audience. As a publisher, you need a solid understanding of what is valuable and interesting to your reader (your prospects), and then you need to develop a plan to build and buy that content. You'll need to manage multiple sources including in-house blogs and more. You'll also need to be a good editor-in-chief by blocking any publication of pieces that don't meet your prospects' needs (you know the ones – the articles your tech guy created that only he cares about).

## Is inbound a big deal?

Inbound marketing has a 62 percent less cost per lead than outbound.

If there's one thread that's consistent throughout this article, it's that inbound marketing is here to stay, and inbound is not just one thing but rather MANY tactics and strategies that change OFTEN. With this in mind, skills upgrades are not a "one and done" training. We gave you some immediate things to do, but how do you make sure you are continually on top of the latest trends?

All marketers today should have a personal training plan and a commitment to keeping their skills fresh. Some ideas to get you started:

- » Identify two to three online communities that you can join/subscribe to and visit often for new information. Our favorites: The Content Marketing Institute, B2B Online, and B2B Social Examiner.
- » Set a goal for attending at least one webinar per month. Tip: Talk to your marketing automation software vendor about their educational webcasts. Learn more about how to maximize this critical tool. For other options, search "free marketing webinars" for a robust list from vendors such as Hubspot.
- » Attend at least one in-depth training or conference. Our favorite? The Partner Connections Event, of course!
- » Utilize resources available from Microsoft and The Partner Marketing Group, including:
  - » Deadly Marketing Errors: No Time, No Money, No Point in Nurture: [https://training.partner.microsoft.com/learning/app/management/registrationex/LMS\\_Registration.aspx?UserMode=0&Mode=0&ActivityID=844478](https://training.partner.microsoft.com/learning/app/management/registrationex/LMS_Registration.aspx?UserMode=0&Mode=0&ActivityID=844478)
  - » "Feeding the Content Beast" Webcast: [www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/](http://www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/)
  - » Digital Marketing Playbook: [https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/marketing/campaigns/existingcustomer/MSDY\\_SMBplaybook.htm](https://mbs.microsoft.com/partnersource/marketing/campaigns/existingcustomer/MSDY_SMBplaybook.htm)
  - » "The Year of Content – 52 Inspiring Ideas to Fuel Your High Tech Content Marketing Campaigns": [www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/](http://www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/)

**COMPANIES THAT EXCEL AT LEAD NURTURING GENERATE 50 PERCENT MORE SALES-READY LEADS AT A 33 PERCENT LOWER COST. (FORRESTER) AND 79 PERCENT OF MARKETING LEADS NEVER CONVERT INTO SALES. LACK OF LEAD NURTURING IS THE COMMON CAUSE OF THIS POOR PERFORMANCE. (MARKETING-SHERPA)**

Two stats with one clear message: the ability to nurture a prospect over an extended period of time is a vital part of any B2B marketing strategy.

**What does this mean for you and your skills?** First, marketers need to take a leadership role in bringing together marketing and sales to create an agreement on things such as lead scoring, the definition of a sales-ready lead, the process for leads to be passed on to sales, and (more importantly) the process for prospects not ready to buy who are passed back to marketing. Beyond building a sales/marketing integration strategy, marketers now need to be able to create process-driven campaigns (based on a prospect's activity) AND execute on them using powerful marketing automation tools.

**One last statistic here:** 62 percent of companies today outsource their content marketing (Mashable). That's recognition of the fact that most companies

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simply don't have (or want to have) the necessary resources to create a consistent stream of content that will attract and convert visitors. As such, a good marketer today needs to find and manage outsourced content generation projects more than ever before.

The above represents the most critical – but of course not all – the skills you'll need to stay on top of your game. Ultimately, the shift to the buyer driving the purchase experience (aka inbound) will drive marketing to the center stage in the most successful Partner organizations. And the most successful marketers will lead – from the front row seat – that shift for their organization. 🌱

## On another note...

There are some skills that are just too difficult to learn without a significant investment, and lack of experience with those skills can really show and hurt your efforts.

In this category are things like design (you CAN'T design your own website – unless you're a website designer), and writing – being able to write an article about marketing is NOT the same as being able to research and write a business value article about manufacturing trends.

If you don't have these skill sets in your company, then the skill you need is the ability to know what you can't do, and then outsource those key areas of your marketing plans.

For more on claiming your front row seat, contact Barbara Pfeiffer and Cheryl Strege at The Partner Marketing Group at [Barbara@thepartnermarketinggroup.com](mailto:Barbara@thepartnermarketinggroup.com) and [Cheryl@thepartnermarketinggroup.com](mailto:Cheryl@thepartnermarketinggroup.com). You can download Barbara's complimentary ebook, "The Year of Content – 52 Inspiring Ideas to Fuel Your High Tech Content Marketing Campaigns", at [www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/](http://www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/greenhouse-marketing-ideas/dig-deeper/).

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