

THE INBOUND MARKETING HANDBOOK

FOR FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS



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PART ONE: WHY INBOUND MARKETING WORKS FOR FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS



FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS WORK WITH A DIVERSE CUSTOMER BASE FROM

DISTRIBUTORS AND DEALERS, TO DESIGNERS AND ARCHITECTS,
TO BUSINESS OWNERS AND END USERS OF THEIR PRODUCTS.

Communicating with personas at the many different stages of the buyer's journey can be a daunting task. How does a manufacturer connect with all of these groups, solve their challenges, and ultimately form an ongoing business relationship?

ENTER, INBOUND MARKETING. Read on for practical ways inbound marketing works for this industry.

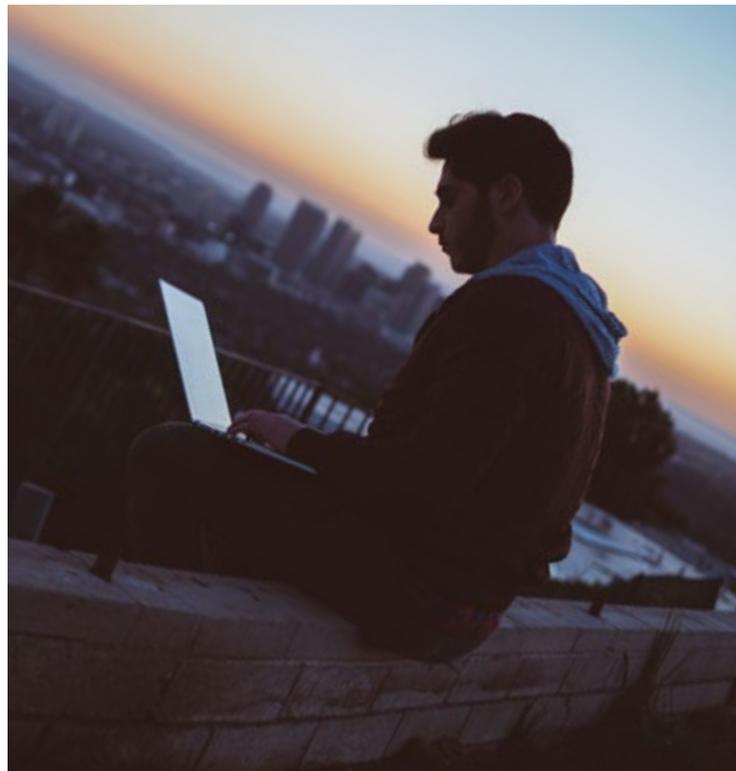
PART ONE: WHY INBOUND MARKETING WORKS FOR FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS

TO BEGIN, LET'S EXPLAIN WHAT INBOUND MARKETING IS:

Inbound marketing is a customer-centric marketing strategy that proactively **ATTRACTS, CONVERTS, CLOSES**, and **DELIGHTS** customers for your business.

PURPOSE: DEFINING THE CUSTOMER

The first way inbound marketing helps furniture manufacturers is by defining who their customers are. Because there are so many layers to a sales process, how do you send the right message, if you aren't clear on the target audience and desired outcome? Traditional marketing takes a wide-net approach of broadcasting your message to the masses with as much common appeal as possible. Inbound marketing takes the time not just to identify who a furniture manufacturers' customer is, but also the what, why, how, and when that makes their customers unique. This information is consolidated into fictional characters called buyer personas. Clearly defining your personas sets the basis for all other inbound activity.



CUSTOMIZING THE COMMUNICATION

The second benefit inbound marketing provides includes the creation of strategic, targeted content in multiple formats. To create this type of content, you must have a clear understanding of the buyer's journey:

PART ONE: WHY INBOUND MARKETING WORKS FOR FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS



THE BUYER'S JOURNEY IS THE
ACTIVE RESEARCH PROCESS
A POTENTIAL BUYER GOES
THROUGH LEADING UP TO
A PURCHASE

So to bring everything together, it includes a combination of elements like specific personas (that's the 'who') receiving targeted messages (the 'what') based on what stage of the buyer's journey (the 'when') the customer is in. Content messages are delivered via blog posts, social media channels, eBooks, slides, email, video, and of course the furniture manufacturer's website, just to mention a few.

The specific tools employed with any inbound marketing strategy are based on how the manufacturer's personas communicate and consume information. **For example, a heavy use of targeted email messages that highlight a series of chairs featured on your website may be effective.** For others, image-rich blog posts supported by active social platforms are most effective. Inbound marketing provides the flexibility and customization that furniture manufacturers need.

As a manufacturing company exploring the possibilities of inbound marketing, you may consider yourself well ahead of the curve - and you're not wrong. **But the truth is, for manufacturers who are actively engaged in inbound lead generation, finding and tracking success is easier said than done.** Yes, most manufacturers are currently failing at inbound marketing. But don't take that as a sign that inbound marketing strategies don't work. Instead, read on to find out why this failure is so prevalent and what you can do about it.

PART TWO: WHAT YOUR FURNITURE MANUFACTURING COMPANY NEEDS TO ENSURE INBOUND SUCCESS



ACCORDING TO THE CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE (CMI)

AS OF LAST YEAR 84% OF B2B MANUFACTURERS
WERE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN CONTENT MARKETING

Which CMI defines as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience - and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.” Manufacturers know that inbound marketing works, which is why most of them have jumped on board. So, why do only **26%** of those creating content for marketing consider their efforts effective? If the industry is so gung-ho, what do they need to overcome to ensure their strategies are successful?

PART TWO: WHAT YOUR FURNITURE MANUFACTURING COMPANY NEEDS TO ENSURE INBOUND SUCCESS

DEVELOP A STRATEGY

CMI's definition of content marketing, which we'll use as a synonym for inbound marketing in the case of this resource, is **“strategic.”** The fact is that most manufacturers do not take the time to develop an inbound marketing strategy before they start creating and sharing content. Then, when they don't see the results they expect, they can't understand why it's not working. When you go into inbound marketing without a strategy in place, the result is that you won't see results.

FOCUS ON MEASUREMENTS

67% of manufacturers say that website traffic is the top indicator they use to measure the impact their content is having. But, when your ultimate goal is sales and increased revenue, this can be a big mistake. After all, with a manufacturing sales cycle, it is extremely rare to have someone visit your site and make a purchase right away. Increased traffic is great, in theory, but an increase in leads and ultimately in conversions is what really means success for an inbound marketing strategy. When you combine under-strategizing and questionable measurements, it's easy to see why inbound can look like a major failure and waste of time.



PART TWO: WHAT YOUR FURNITURE MANUFACTURING COMPANY NEEDS TO ENSURE INBOUND SUCCESS

DOCUMENT GOALS

Before you strategize or measure results, you have to know what you are trying to achieve. One thing we can never stress enough is setting appropriate goals.

SMART goals are a great place to start.

(S - SPECIFIC, M - MEASURABLE A - ATTAINABLE, R - REALISTIC, T - TIMELY) When you know exactly what you want your marketing efforts to get you (e.g., sales, leads, or even website traffic if that's what you decide) then you can strategize around that goal and create a big picture plan to get you there.



DON'T COMMIT TO ONE STRATEGY FOREVER

Digital marketing as a whole is always evolving at the speed of technology. So, once you develop and document your goals and your inbound marketing strategy to help you achieve those goals, it is important not to rest on those laurels. Instead, use your measurements and your goals to determine whether your strategy is actually taking you in the right direction, or sending you off course. Maybe you are attracting more website visitors, but your conversion rates have dropped. Consider reassessing your content and buyer personas to determine how to focus your content towards actual, interested buyers.

Inbound marketing doesn't happen overnight, so if you don't see an immediate jump in sales do not assume that you are failing at inbound marketing. Instead, learn from your B2B peers and make sure to think through your plan strategically, with a measurement system that makes sense, and you will start to see the results you want.

PART THREE: CREATING A FURNITURE MANUFACTURING WEBSITE THAT WORKS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

For some of you, you might be thinking, **“Well, this is all well and good, but I don’t think my website is set up or capable of all of the things we’re talking about here.”** Well, you aren’t alone. We talk with many manufacturers today that are finding they invested resources into a site so customers could find them online, but it’s not doing anything to help reach business goals. In fact, most manufacturing websites fall into this trap - robbing them of tons of leads every day.

WHY LEAD GENERATION FROM YOUR WEBSITE IS ESSENTIAL

Your website is an investment in your business. A huge percentage of your future customers will see your website before they know anything else about you or your company, so it needs to make a good impression. But, while you’re choosing colors and layout, you could be letting leads slip through your fingers. Your manufacturing website should be able to guide a new visitor down a path that is tailored to their needs, which means giving them content that they want in a way that makes sense during each stage of their buyer’s journey. That’s how you will be able to collect their information and move them from site visitor (and complete stranger) to a qualified marketing lead.

HOW YOU’RE GIVING AWAY LEADS

As a manufacturer, you have a lot of valuable information to share with your customers. From pricing data to compatibility information and product comparisons, you’re a veritable fountain of knowledge! And that’s why interested people will come to your website. The question is - **what will they do once they get there?**

If your site is anything like most manufacturer’s websites, the answer is pretty simple. They’ll come to your site, download your spec sheets, and scurry off into the night to compare your information with your competitors. Will they come back? Maybe. Will you be able to reach out to contact them, answer their questions, and send them highly targeted marketing emails encouraging them to come back? **No.**

These visitors could be leads if you play your cards right. But right now you’re letting them get away.

PART THREE: CREATING A FURNITURE MANUFACTURING WEBSITE THAT WORKS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



WHAT TO DO INSTEAD:

It doesn't have to work like that. It isn't very difficult to pluck these visitors out of the "stranger" pool and put them squarely in your "leads" pool. All you have to do is make one simple change: landing pages. When you put your most valuable information - specifically your product specifications - behind a landing page, you can start generating manufacturing leads' data right away.

Landing pages are pages of your site that include forms and descriptive information about your downloadable content. When someone visits one of your landing pages, that means they are already interested in what you have to offer. So interested, in fact, that most of them will fill out a form that includes their contact information to access your offer. When you put your spec sheets behind landing pages, you will see your leads skyrocket because everyone that wants to download that content will have to give you their contact information.

But you can (and should) ask for more than a name and email address. You can also use that opportunity to ask simple questions that will tell you if they are actually a qualified lead for your sales team. Often, this will be a question about their company or their job. You can ask about their yearly revenue, their decision-making power, or their title. When you collect this kind of information, you can easily categorize new leads and send them to your sales team in a way that makes it much easier to follow up and do so in an effective way.

PART THREE: CREATING A FURNITURE MANUFACTURING WEBSITE THAT WORKS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

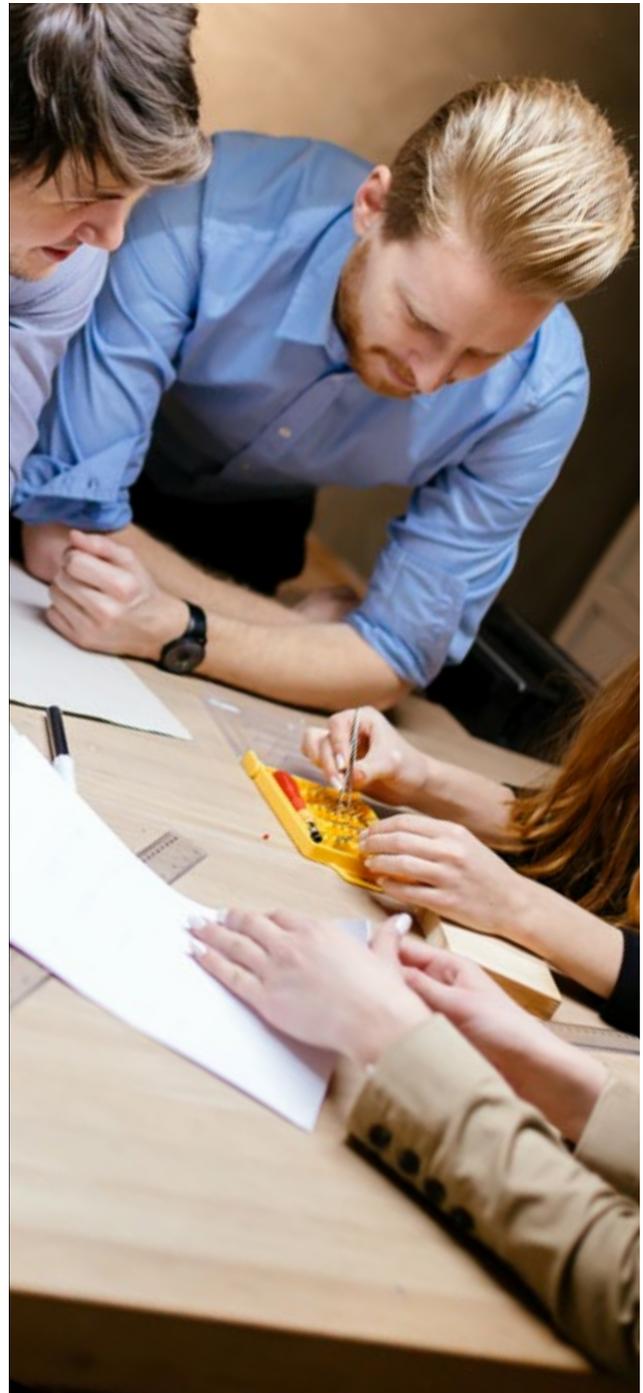
REVISIT YOUR STRATEGY AGAIN (AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN)

We can't stress enough how often you should be revisiting your strategy.

56% of engineers use digital resources before contacting a vendor and are typically in the second or third stage of the buying cycle by the time they connect

To maintain an edge over competitors, your brand's website should have valuable and relevant content to be considered a contender by consumers. Constantly reevaluating your content strategy will guarantee you are offering the content they are looking for.

Search engines will play an important role in the research process, as this is where a large number of consumers begin. SEO and content go hand-in-hand. Providing compelling content to consumers on your website will aid in generating your brand in the search terms.



PART THREE: CREATING A FURNITURE MANUFACTURING WEBSITE THAT WORKS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

CONTENT

Content will be the most important part of your website strategy and providing relevant content is key.

But what is considered relevant content? Industry Week developed the **B.E.S.T (BEHAVIORAL, ESSENTIAL, STRATEGIC, AND TARGETED) FORMULA** to give your brand a structured approach to providing the most valuable content to your customers. Here it is:

○ BEHAVIORAL:

Define your purpose. What do you want to result from consumers reading your content?

Having a result in mind will push you towards the direction of what you will share.

○ ESSENTIAL:

Get down to the basics. What is the most valuable information the customer needs to know at that moment? This is the bulk of your content marketing. Share the information that is pertinent for the customer to know about your brand and its products.

○ STRATEGIC:

The content you share should align with your overall business model. Keep your strategy in mind and be sure that the content you share will result in the success of your strategy.

○ TARGETED:

Who is your customer? Knowing your customer and what their needs and wants are will ensure that the content you share will be appropriate for your target demographic.

Your website is an opportunity to discuss your products and how they can work for the consumer. What problems will it solve? How can the product fit into current operations? For example, if your company focuses on construction products, you will want to outline the benefits of upgrading to a new window design. You will want to highlight the energy-saving costs and other benefits of the upgrade. Your website is the perfect opportunity to bring awareness to your brand and all that it can do. By providing the most valuable content in an engaging way, your brand will bring success to your business strategy.

PART THREE: CREATING A FURNITURE MANUFACTURING WEBSITE THAT WORKS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Furniture manufacturers utilizing inbound have a wealth of information available in the form of raw data. By providing detailed and accurate analysis of marketing and sales activity, you gain a snapshot of what has happened, as well as real data for developing ongoing strategic plans. Inbound marketing practices, when used on a robust marketing automation platform like HubSpot, provide historical and real-time data on what content is being consumed, how engaged your leads are, and even when those leads are truly ready to talk to a sales person.

This data translates into measurable results that all business professionals need - the return on their marketing investment.

Analyzing historical data can help to better define the buyer's journey a manufacturer's customer takes, the ideal time for sales to engage with a lead, and even areas of their website that can be improved for a better user experience.

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