

The Complete SEO Inbound Marketing Guide

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If you want to improve the performance of your marketing results, you may not need to add headcount or invest more in media. Instead, the most effective strategy might be prioritizing inbound SEO efforts.

What is inbound SEO?

Inbound marketing is a high-level strategy that uses well-crafted and highly targeted content to attract customers by meeting them where they are at each stage of their buying journey. A highly optimized inbound marketing strategy blends content marketing, organic social, and SEO while helping fuel the demand generation funnel.

In contrast, outbound marketing involves reaching out to your audience with content to promote products or services your business offers. It is also referred to as traditional or disruptive marketing. Outbound marketing includes tactics like paid ad campaigns on search engines and social platforms and more traditional marketing methods like direct mail. While outbound marketing is designed to cast a wide net with non-targeted content, inbound marketing focuses on using the right kind of information to attract a specific audience. Inbound is all about showing up and being found organically by your customers where they spend the most time rather than paying to capture their attention.

Inbound SEO is the process of optimizing your marketing content to rank higher in search results so your audience can find and engage with your content easily.

How do inbound marketing and inbound SEO work together? Think of inbound SEO as an additional strategy to attract prospects that helps power and improve your overall inbound marketing engine.

Making the transition to SEO-driven inbound marketing requires the collaboration of multiple teams and departments. You'll want to align your content marketing, SEO, social media, demand generation, and marketing operations teams on devising an inbound strategy that works across channels and define how success in each channel will be measured. This will ensure full collaboration and buy-in as you develop a strong inbound marketing strategy with a high ROI.

Why is inbound SEO so valuable to a brand's marketing strategy?

To understand the potential impact of SEO inbound marketing, let's explore the business benefits of inbound marketing and inbound SEO. **Nearly 60% of B2B marketers say that SEO generates more leads than any other marketing initiative.**

Inbound leads tend to be less expensive to generate than using traditional paid channels since you aren't paying per click or impression and content continues to generate leads long after the initial investment has been made. HubSpot data updated in 2017 shows that **inbound marketing-dominated organizations experience a 61% lower cost-per-lead** than organizations that primarily use outbound marketing.

In addition, SEO helps buyers more easily find and connect with the content they need to solve their problems and make critical purchasing decisions. **The average B2B buyer will consume three to five pieces of content before they even talk to a salesperson,** according to Demand Gen Report's 2022 B2B Content Preferences Survey. The more helpful and value-driven you make your content, and the easier you make it for users to find that content on search engines, the more likely you'll generate sales or high-quality leads.

How to develop a winning SEO inbound marketing strategy: 8 core foundations

Inbound marketing and inbound SEO enjoy a symbiotic relationship. Developing an effective inbound marketing strategy without a comprehensive SEO strategy is difficult. If you're looking to begin an SEO inbound marketing strategy that combines the best of both disciplines, these eight core foundations can help you succeed.

01. Define your target audience

Before you can find the right leads, you need to identify your ideal customer profile (ICP). This will help you identify who your ideal customers are, the values they share, where they spend most of their time online, their core interests, and more. Most importantly, a detailed profile will also help you identify their pain points so you can create content that helps them solve their problems.

Once you determine your ICP, you may find it helpful to break your target audiences into more distinct personas. If you've never built personas before, this [buyer persona guide](#) offers six quick tips you can use to get started. If you haven't updated your personas in a year or more, it's a good idea to review them, determine whether they're still relevant, and tweak them as needed.

02. Map channels and content types to the right funnel stages

Inbound marketing strategies are built around the concept of a funnel, with that funnel (and your audience) getting narrower as you hone in on your buyers' pain points and your customers get closer to making a decision.

While each company's marketing funnel may look slightly different, most include these three stages:

Awareness Stage: This is the top of the funnel. At this stage, your prospects know their pain points and have started doing high-level research to learn how to solve them. To help them along their journey, create early-stage content. Infographics, blogs, checklists, benchmark reports, and videos are a few of the top content formats for this stage. Make sure these assets focus on the challenge your prospect is facing and not on promoting your product. You'll have plenty of time for product promotion in later stages.

Education and Consideration Stage: This is the middle of the funnel. At this stage, your prospects understand their problem fully and are looking to identify specific solutions. They're not yet ready to choose a solution, but they are gathering information and conducting research. Assessments, research reports, and case studies will help them understand your proposed solution's value and help them evaluate additional options at this stage.

Conversion Stage: This is the bottom of the funnel. At this stage, your prospect knows the type of solution they want to buy. Their only remaining question is which solution to choose. Late-stage content such as case studies, testimonials, third-party recognition, review sites, and external assessments can give them confidence in their decision and help them cross the finish line to purchase your solution.

To ensure you are prioritizing the right content types and distribution channels for each stage of the inbound marketing funnel, here is a visual analysis for B2B and B2C organizations.

Inbound Marketing Funnel for B2B and B2C

A look at which channels and content types to prioritize during each stage of the inbound funnel to drive the most impact.

B2B

Channels:

Organic search, organic social (LinkedIn, Reddit, YouTube, Twitter), PR

Content Types:

Infographics, blogs, videos, illustrations, landing pages, press releases, podcasts, CTAs, social graphics, checklists, benchmark reports

Awareness

B2C

Channels:

Organic search, organic social (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter), PR, influencer marketing

Content Types:

Short-form videos, social graphics, customer-generated content, blogs

Channels:

Organic search, organic social

Content Types:

Gated eBooks/whitepapers, case studies, newsletters, interactive content (quizzes, surveys, flow charts, etc.), webinars, how-to resources

Education / Consideration

Channels:

Organic search, organic social, influencer marketing

Content Types:

Chatbots, discounts/offers, interactive content (quizzes, surveys, etc.), how-to resources

Channels:

Organic search

Content Types:

Customer testimonials, third-party recognition, third-party review sites, product and pricing landing pages, comparison tools, demos

Conversion

Channels:

Organic search, influencer marketing

Content Types:

Customer reviews, third-party review sites, how-to resources, visual reference guides, customer-generated content

03. Involve the right team members

You probably have many of the right people on your existing marketing team to make SEO inbound marketing a success. For optimal results, ensure the following teams are involved in developing, executing, and measuring the success of your inbound SEO strategy.

Content team

Your content marketers should be responsible for creating content that speaks directly to your buyers' pain points at each funnel stage. Before they begin, they should conduct a thorough content audit, collaborate with the SEO team to identify the most effective keywords and topics for your brand, and map keywords and content to the funnel stages referenced above.

SEO team

It's a given that your SEO team is responsible for devising and executing against a strategy that optimizes your visibility on SERPs. This involves competitive analysis, content auditing, technical SEO to optimize your site health, and collaborating with your content team to set the direction of new content creation. They should also help you build a culture of SEO across teams, educating colleagues on best practices and evangelizing the importance of SEO organization-wide, so everyone who touches your website operates under the same best practices to maximize your site's visibility.

Demand generation team

Your demand generation team focuses on generating leads to fuel your marketing and sales funnel. This is where a strong inbound SEO strategy will strengthen the volume and quality of leads. Demand generation tactics may also include creating email nurture campaigns, retargeting, and paid media campaigns that drive conversions like content downloads, newsletter signups, webinar registrations, and free trials.

Social team

Use your social team to amplify your content creation and distribution efforts. Trust them to distribute your most helpful content across the proper channels. Task them with finding influencers and micro-influencers who can help spread the word about your solutions and engage with your target audience across social platforms to build a sense of community around your brand.

Marketing ops

Your marketing operations team is responsible for the implementation and accurate measurement of all your efforts, so you can report on the ROI of your inbound marketing effectively and adapt as needed. Ensure you align on KPIs and a measurement cadence with the stakeholders in your working group in advance.

04. Implement a content audit

One of the struggles many content teams have is spending time churning out new content without understanding the breadth, value, and impact of their existing content. Creating content for the sake of creating content or focusing on creating a high volume of content in a specific time frame are rookie mistakes that many new content marketers make.

Creating intentional content that focuses on a specific customer need is the starting point for all good content marketing practices. A content audit can help teams discover which current assets are performing well, which ones are underperforming, and where gaps exist. From this data, you can begin to identify trends and glean insights on topics and content formats that resonate best with your audience. You can use the results to define a plan for new content generation and prioritize which new pieces of content you should create first. If you've never done a content audit before, follow the four easy steps in this [content audit guide](#).



05. Ensure collaboration and alignment of Content, SEO, and Demand teams

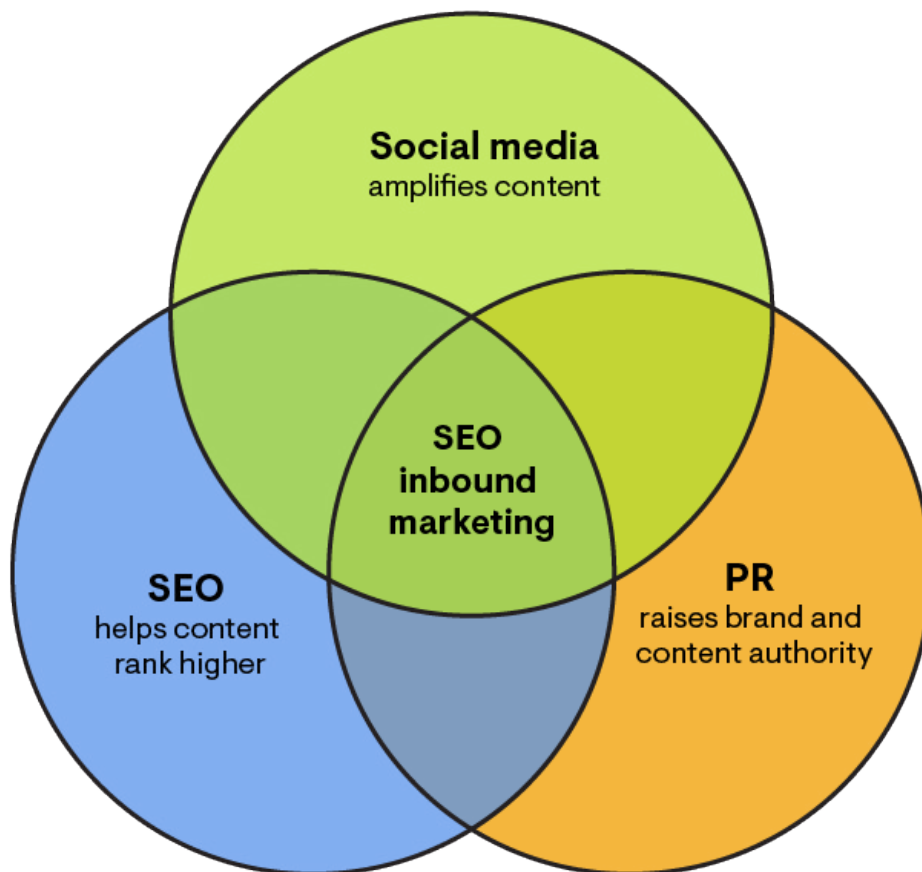
At Conductor, we've optimized team collaboration by implementing the following process. Your content and SEO teams should work together to generate and agree on content topics that will address customer needs and drive organic traffic. Then, these teams collaborate on content briefs with SEOs providing recommendations on elements like keywords, title tags, and meta descriptions. SEOs also provide a final QA check before any piece of content is published on your site.

Your content team collaborates with your demand team to understand the various campaigns demand has planned that will need content support. Content teams provide recommendations on topics that resonate best with different personas at different stages of the funnel to optimize conversions. Your demand gen, social, and content teams will collaborate on content distribution plans. Finally, your marketing operations team, in most cases, is responsible for campaign deployment and reporting.

06. Prioritize helpful content creation to fuel all of your channels

Google's **helpful content update**, released in August 2022, aims to have their algorithm prioritize content written for people and reduce the organic visibility of content written solely for search engines to secure SERP rankings. You can meet the intent of the helpful content update by ensuring the content you are creating meets your audience's needs; simply put, answer the questions your audience is asking.

Leveraging AI-generated content or creating pages on your website to target specific queries without trying to meet the need or intent behind those searches will not provide a shortcut to ranking at the top of page 1 on Google. Prioritizing authentic, helpful content continues to be the focus of Google algorithm updates and the best approach to attracting a loyal following. To supplement your optimized content, develop a strong distribution plan across channels. Here's how that creates maximum results:



07. Invest in developing a culture of SEO

In an ideal state, creating a culture of SEO means that everyone on your marketing team—and other teams throughout your organization—understands the value that SEO brings to your business and how to incorporate SEO into their initiatives. You can start creating a culture of SEO by teaching your content team best practices to incorporate into every step of the **content creation process** to drive more, better quality traffic. Three additional SEO culture-building exercises include:

Implementing the PIE methodology

The **PIE methodology** is a Conductor framework designed to help improve organic visibility on SERPs for topics that matter most to your audience. PIE stands for **Protect**, **Improve**, and **Expand**.



Protect your rankings. Determine which keywords you already rank for and want to keep in position. These will include brand names and late-stage keywords closely related to your product or service that help you drive conversions.



Improve your content. This step is about identifying opportunities you can execute on fast and start seeing results quickly, like pinpointing published content focused on keywords within striking distance AKA right on the cusp of ranking on Page 1. SEO tends to be thought of as a long game, but it's just as effective for quick wins when implemented correctly. There are smaller, strategic optimizations you can make to published content and landing pages to drive significant results.



Expand your reach with new content. Identify keyword opportunities you have a high likelihood of winning Page 1 rankings for through net new content generation to help increase organic visibility.

Investing in regular in-depth keyword research

The language your customers use to find your products is constantly changing, and knowing the nuances of their language matters. We recommend teams perform regular **keyword research** for every new piece of content and each new product offering to ensure it aligns with the voice of your customer.

A current best practice is to implement an **intention-based keyword strategy**. Find keyword phrases that align with what your buyer is trying to accomplish. Are they in the awareness phase and want information content? Are they in the education phase and seeking comparison content? Are they ready to transact and need product-focused content? When you match your keywords to your buyers' intent, you'll **create a customer journey that meets customer needs**.

Expanding SEO knowledge

Creating a culture of SEO means **getting your content team and your overall marketing team to care about SEO**. Show them that SEO data is buyer intent data. Teach them the foundational elements of technical SEO. Four top areas to focus on include:

- **Title tags:** Considered the most important on-page SEO element, **title tags** appear inside a search engine's tab and summarize your topic in a brief sentence or phrase. It's crucial to ensure titles are optimized to follow SEO best practices regarding length and include the target keyword or search phrases. An **August 2021 Google update** revealed that Google will change your title tags if they're not the proper length or highly relevant to your users, eliminating your ability to control the brand voice and digital presence of your content.
- **Meta tags:** These items live within your HTML code and play a crucial role in both SEO and the user experience. Meta tags include the meta title tag, meta description tag, meta robots tag, meta refresh tag, and meta keywords. **Learn the role each meta tag plays on your website.**
- **Schema:** When you **implement the correct schema to your HTML documents**, it will help search engines understand your content better so your snippets will appear more often and rank higher on SERPs.
- **Image SEO:** A **well-crafted image SEO plan** that considers image captions, alt tags, and load time can help search engines discover your images and rank them higher, increasing the odds of your content being found by the right users.

07. Build an authentic social media presence

Google data shows that **40% of Gen Z prefers using TikTok and Instagram for search over Google**. This speaks to the importance of building an authentic social media presence to extend your inbound marketing efforts and tell your brand story in a way that connects with your target audience. Invest in the channels your audience uses. These will differ for each company, so dig deep and examine whether emerging or non-traditional social channels like Reddit may benefit your business.

A real-life SEO inbound marketing success story

BraunAbility is a top U.S. provider of wheelchair-accessible vehicles. As they scaled up their marketing team, they noticed difficulties with their small WordPress site. They saw the value in inbound marketing and formed a partnership with Conductor to make it happen.

Within eight months, **BraunAbility grew website leads by 24%**, helping to sell 14% more wheelchair-accessible vans and highlighting the significant revenue generation an effective inbound SEO marketing strategy can produce.

If you're ready to merge the power of inbound marketing and inbound SEO, **schedule your free Conductor demo now**. We'll show you how to create an SEO inbound marketing plan that will help you achieve your business goals.

About Conductor

Conductor is the world's leading organic marketing platform, helping businesses accelerate search traffic, digital growth and revenue. Conductor's technology helps marketers create powerful marketing content to drive quality traffic to their site and track their organic performance. Websites are more valuable than ever and getting found online is a #1 enterprise priority.