

# Inbound Marketing:

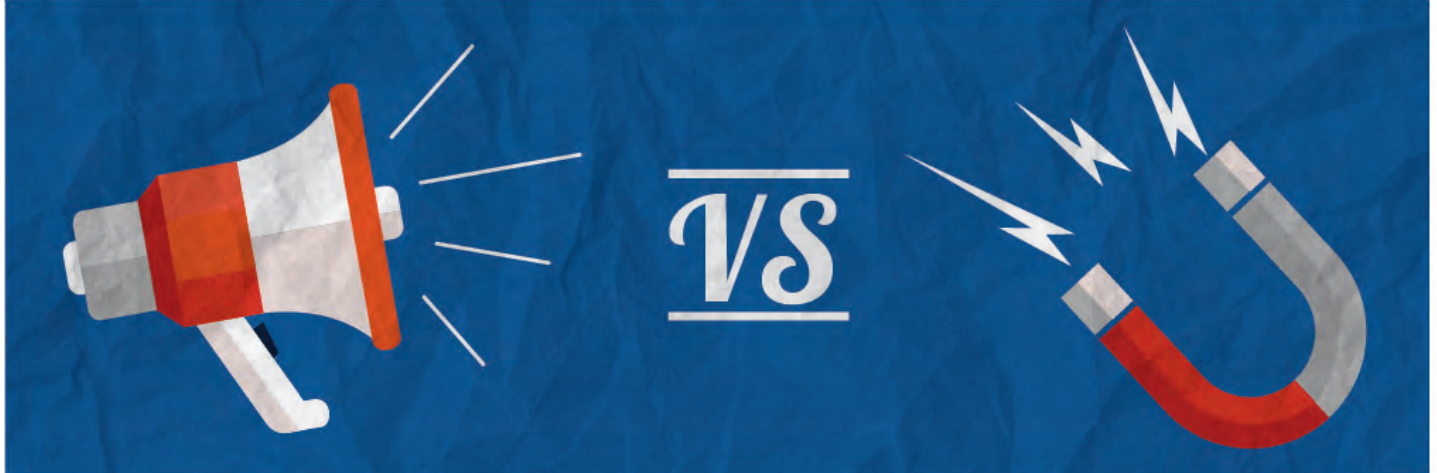
**Getting the Right Customers to  
Land on Your Digital Doorstep**



**Presented by:**

*spindustry*   
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## From the Team at Spindustry Digital



### Inbound Marketing: Attracting the Right Customers to Your Digital Doorstep

Inbound marketing is about creating and sharing content that attracts people who are interested in the products and services your company provides. According to HubSpot, a leading inbound marketing software platform, inbound marketing is attracting, converting, closing and delighting customers with quality content. Content comes in many forms, including blogs, social media, forms, landing pages, email and other written and visual information.

How does inbound differ from traditional marketing methods, including the website you probably already have and the social media channels you've dabbled in?

To answer that question, we need to:

- ◇ Define the basic concept of inbound marketing
- ◇ Explore how to connect with your audience
- ◇ Ensure your web presence is helping and not hindering your efforts
- ◇ Dive deeper into how social media can enhance your inbound efforts

### What is Inbound Marketing?

Inbound marketing is rooted in providing relevant, timely and interesting content to current and potential customers. **It's about attracting the right people.** Who are the right people? Those who will have mutual benefit from partnering with your organization. ***Why waste time gathering the names of people who aren't really interested in your products and services?***

Inbound marketing is a pull strategy vs. push strategy. Visualize this "pull" as a magnet drawing in the right people, instead of using a bullhorn to shout from the rooftops to anyone who will listen. What's so bad about telling everyone in the world about your business? No one will listen. There's already enough clutter. If you don't have relevant, timely and interesting information, you'll get lost in a sea of messages.

**"Inbound marketing is attracting, converting, closing and delighting customers with quality content."**



### Traditional Marketing Playbook vs. Modern Marketing Playbook

The traditional marketing playbook includes:

- ◇ Television ads
- ◇ Newspaper ads
- ◇ Cold-calling
- ◇ Direct mail
- ◇ Radio spots

This method is broken. Why? It's rooted in outbound efforts. The result? People are more likely to ignore it. It's an interruption to their day. **The modern marketing playbook's foundation is inbound.**

It includes:

- ◇ E-newsletters
- ◇ Blogs
- ◇ Social media channels
- ◇ Search optimization
- ◇ Desktop and mobile websites
- ◇ Calls-to-action

It's about serving up great content, so that as people seek out information, they find relevant and timely information. This requires a clear and concise digital marketing strategy — grounded in research — that tells you where people are looking and what they are looking for, so that you can be found. It's also about dispersing great content through different channels.

### Marketing Assets vs. Rental Marketing

When renting an apartment, the tenant is simply borrowing space for a period of time. The tenant is limited in what they can do with the space and ultimately, when their time is done, no one will remember or care who was in the space. Purchasing a newspaper ad is renting space. One day it's there and the next day it's replaced by a lawn and garden

coupon or movie advertisement. When the decline of newspaper readership is taken into account, you just spent money on a dilapidated, tiny rental unit.

If you take the same money that was spent on a newspaper advertisement and invest it in a video marketing campaign, you've created a marketing asset. With proper tagging and optimization, the videos would be a permanent fixture on the web, found through search engines and shared by customers via social channels, emails and blogs. People who opt in to your content are also marketing assets. Each person who "likes" you on Facebook, follows you on Twitter and signs up for your e-newsletter took a proactive action to stay connected with your company.

There's another huge value to inbound marketing — tracking and measurement. How many people saw that newspaper ad? Don't know. How many people opened up the email? 2,500. How many people clicked on the "like us on Facebook" link? 750.

**There's power in having real data to analyze and learn from, which will help you spot opportunities and better plan for the future.**

### Summary

Inbound marketing is the creation of relevant, timely and interesting content, distributed through various digital channels, to attract an interested audience.

- ◇ Content includes visuals (pictures, video and infographics).
- ◇ Inbound channels include blogs, social media sites, e-newsletters, websites and search engines.
- ◇ Digital content is a measureable marketing asset.



## Consumers Seek a lot of Content

The way people prefer to consume information has changed. People are now always connected – at home, at the office, at the coffee shop – there's no more waiting until the store front opens at 10 a.m. or a sales flyer shows up on the doorstep. People will seek out information right now, when it's convenient for them.

Traditional marketing uses the push method – for example – a direct mail piece to 100,000 random people who may or may not have any interest or need for your product. In today's environment, people are seeking out the opinions of others via online reviews. They are researching multiple options and looking for the one to best meet their needs.

Inbound marketing helps to facilitate research and conversation. Information is coming at the consumer in a landslide – all day, every day. And they're getting very good at ignoring irrelevant messages and paying attention to only the ones they care to see.

## Today's consumers are:

- ◇ Hyper-connected
- ◇ Empowered
- ◇ Feeding an insatiable appetite for information

## This information is received:

- ◇ **Ad-hoc** – Everything hitting everyone as they live their daily lives – billboards, tweets, texts, posters, digital ads and TV shows.
- ◇ **Unfocused** – Information enters the subconscious in no particular order and appears to have no connection.
- ◇ **Unfiltered** – No one can control the stream of information to every person. Every person's path to information is different, based on where and how they consume information and who they listen to for advice and recommendations.

## Sources are Diverse

Information and marketing messages are dictated. There are multiple and diverse audiences that deliver messages to your potential and existing customers. Each source is associated with a different level of trust, authority and genuineness, and each source creates a different trigger.

### Here are three main message dictators and how audiences regard them.

#### Customers, Friends, Relatives, Close Friends & Associates

- ◇ Most trusted – peer-to-peer has the greatest impact
- ◇ Messages from this audience change the impression
- ◇ Leads to action

#### Authoritative Figures, Market Leaders, Business Visionaries & Analysts

- ◇ Skeptically believed – “from a trusted and reliable source”
- ◇ Hold credibility, accountability, legacy and experience
- ◇ Weigh heavily in the mind of the customer

#### Marketing, Brand, Companies, Businesses

- ◇ Least trusted – customer is aware the messaging may only be intended to “sell” them something
- ◇ Expected and important, especially when comparing products/services to competitors
- ◇ Marketers create differentiation in the audience’s mind

According to a study by CEB & Google, 57% of buying decisions are made before a direct connection with the business is made. Consumers are informed enough by their own research and discovery to feel comfortable making a purchase without making that direct connection.

### Enter Inbound Marketing – Follow the Customers Through Their Discovery Journey

Inbound helps get the right content in the right channel for the right consumption.

After people find your content, it also allows you to follow the consumer through their discovery journey. Provide feedback to comments left on a Facebook post; respond to questions posed on a blog and invite those engaged users to do more, like sign up for an e-newsletter.

There’s an ongoing reciprocity with inbound marketing. As more relevant, timely and interesting content is distributed, more people discover your business. There’s the ability to evolve a person from a stranger to a brand advocate. The more engaging content shared, the more people will communicate with you and with each other. Discoveries will be made about what topics and trends people are interested in, what keywords they use to describe like products and services and what frustrations they have about the industry as a whole. The opportunity to address those questions and comments is available like never before.

### Let’s clear up misconceptions about inbound as well. Inbound is not any of the following:

- ◇ New
- ◇ A replacement to traditional marketing
- ◇ Just social deployment
- ◇ Attainable only by big, global companies
- ◇ Expensive – especially compared with “traditional” marketing

The advent of new technologies has facilitated the growth and understanding of inbound marketing. Providing people with relevant, timely and interesting

content is not new. How it's achieved and who most benefits from it has been further explored. Inbound doesn't necessarily replace traditional marketing. There's a time and place for a TV ad; however, the implementation of inbound marketing can improve the ROI on that ad.

Inbound marketing isn't just spewing out content via social channels. There's so much noise and clutter today that people will gloss over irrelevant information. Social media is a key component of inbound, but it must be executed properly to be useful. In fact, social can help smaller, local businesses get over the hurdle of reaching a broader audience. If you have the ability to serve a larger geographic area but cannot afford billboards in every community, a strategic inbound plan will help you connect with that broader audience.

It doesn't have to cost millions to achieve success either. There is investment required for inbound marketing, just like any other business activity. However, it's more of an investment in time vs. hard dollars. Producing stellar content is the key. Think creatively about how to secure content: Could a brand advocate produce a piece of content? Repurpose a presentation into blog posts? Share stats from a research project in a series of tweets? Just always keep in mind: use what's going to be relevant, timely and interesting to the target audience.

## Connecting the Who + How: Build Buyer "Personas"

It's critical to have a clear understanding of target audiences. What are their demographics? What are they interested in? What is their purchasing lifecycle? Who will they consult to make a purchase? Which social channels are they most engaged in? How do they typically receive information? What are their expectations for connecting with a brand? Yes, there is a lot of information to know about target audiences. The beauty is that the more you know, the more succinctly you can target and engage with them.

Start by building buyer personas – which describe a person's needs, goals, challenges and demographics. Understanding persona details helps determine what calls-to-actions are most appropriate, what will help this person hit a homerun with their boss or what will eventually help turn them into a brand advocate.



## Next, construct the appropriate message for each persona:

After building personas, develop a content message grid. Place the various communication channels on the grid by evaluating the level of effort to develop the right content and the frequency in which it should be distributed. This grid should address the personas' preferred style of communication, while keeping in mind a balance of the three different audience differentiators.

If your persona responds well to webinars, but you plan to host them infrequently, evaluate what else can shift on the grid so that you can connect with your audience in the right channel. Ask yourself if there is an opportunity to curate content from a reliable source and add your own business point of view to it. Most people explore more than one channel, so make sure you develop a fluid but consistent experience across all platforms. Know that frequent content distribution leads to higher customer acquisitions.





## Summary

Today's customer is seeking information — focused on research and finding answers. They are hyper-connected to the Internet, empowered to learn, have an insatiable appetite for knowledge and crave information designed for them. They receive messages from multiple sources and weigh the value and impact of each message differently.

Inbound marketing is not a replacement for traditional marketing, or just some social posts; it is a method to present the right information to the right audience at the right time to help them evolve from a stranger to a promoter of your brand or product. It is considering your audiences through their entire “learn and consider” journey. In order to distribute information to the right people, you might build buyer personas, define their needs and understand their goals and challenges.

## Don't Let a Bad Website Hinder Inbound Marketing Efforts

Inbound marketing captures the attention of potential customers by placing relevant, timely and interesting content in their hands. If the customer is interested and seeks to learn more information about your company, don't scare them off by having a website that isn't navigable, tries to do too much or is out of date. According to Marketing Grader,

72% of websites receiving a failing grade of 59 (out of 100).

### Here are 14 common website pitfalls and ways to fix them.

#### 1. Trying to be everything to everyone

**Solution:** Your company does something specific and does it well. Tell that story. Speak directly to your target audience and forget the rest.

#### 2. Trying to do too much

**Solution:** Segment your content, and let people select which “track” of information they'd like to follow based on which audience group they fall under, their stage in the purchase process, etc.

#### 3. Cluttered design

**Solution:** Simplify your visual cues, so visitors can get the information they need and move onto the next step.

#### 4. The wrong content

**Solution:** Publish valuable content that interests your clients – and do it often. Provide good resources for your visitors. *(This is really the foundation of inbound marketing.)*

### 5. Old content

**Solution:** Provide updated content to show you're an industry leader, and do it often – fresh content matters to search engines. Use blog posts to keep content fresh without re-doing your full website content every week.

### 6. Talking like a corporate robot

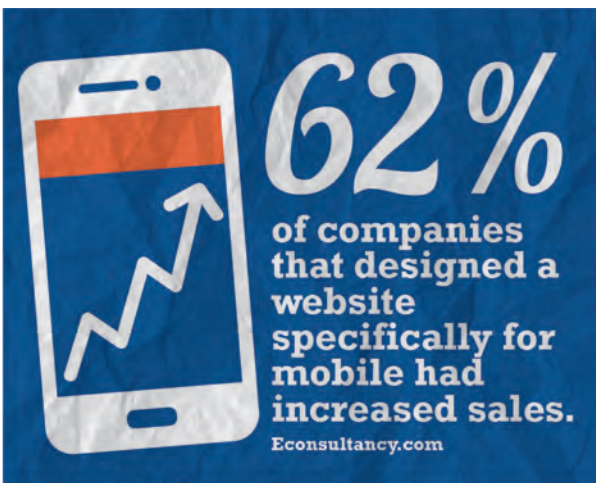
**Solution:** Forget the internal industry jargon. Write as if you were talking to a customer face-to-face.

### 7. Too many cutesy, catchy words

**Solution:** Speak clearly and answer what the client is really asking: "What can you do for me?"

### 8. Ignoring mobile

**Solution:** 55% of purchase-related conversions occur within one hour of initial mobile search. Ensure you have a strong mobile presence.



### 9. Annoying your visitors

**Solution:** Don't interrupt with overload of pop-ups and ads. Does this improve the experience or distract?

### 10. Hiding from search engines

**Solution:** Use SEO best practices – if search engines can't find the site, potential customers can't either. Here's a quick checklist of areas to keep in mind:

- ◇ Target 10 keywords
- ◇ Title tag
- ◇ Meta description
- ◇ Alt tag
- ◇ Body text

### 11. Writing for search engines only

**Solution:** Search engines favor enticing content written for real people. Is the content useful and worthy of sharing? Add sharing buttons on the site to make it easy for people to share it.

### 12. Omitting clear calls-to-action

**Solution:** Use clear and compelling calls-to-action (CTA) to gain inbound leads. Think about where the visitor is in the purchase process when they're looking at a particular page. Provide a couple CTA buttons on a page – for example, one to "buy now" and another to "learn more" before purchasing.

### 13. Not setting goals for the site

**Solution:** What is the business goal? More sales? More leads? Create goals for your website that support your overall business goals.

### 14. Not measuring the site's performance

**Solution:** What's working, what's not and how should it change? If you don't know the benchmarks, you don't know when something abnormal (good or bad) is happening. This crucial data is needed to make solid business decisions based on numbers – not a hunch.



### Summary

Before implementing an inbound marketing strategy, ensure that your website is prepared for an interested audience to visit. Use our checklist to evaluate your website and fix any issues before sending new traffic to it, as you don't want to waste efforts in driving people in only to have them immediately bounce right off the site.

### Using Social Media to Achieve Inbound Success

The advent of social media opened up a communication stream that's never existed before. People can stay connected to friends and family both close and far away, find new collaborators in their craft and research products and services.

Lots of people are using social media channels, but there's still hesitation about how it can be used to grow businesses.

### Why Companies Use Social Media

There are many valuable uses of social media. The most often cited in surveys are:

- ◇ "Joining the conversation"
- ◇ Getting more likes and followers
- ◇ Connecting with the community
- ◇ "Going viral"

These are fine reasons to employ social media – but all seem to lack an over-arching strategy. Getting more likes can be a positive outcome; however, if all the likes attained aren't in your target market, then there's little value to you. If your business is landscaping, then gaining more likes from grounds crew staff at local ball fields would be valuable to you. Now that you're starting to build a stronger audience, how can social media play a role in growing business?

### Engaging in social media within the context of an inbound marketing strategy can:

- ◇ Drive traffic to your site for conversion to lead and customer.
- ◇ Achieve SEO credit. Social shares are the new link building – it indicates fresh, high quality content to the search engines.
- ◇ Allow you to engage with your best prospects in the way they like to consume content.
- ◇ Delight your customers and amplify your raving fans.

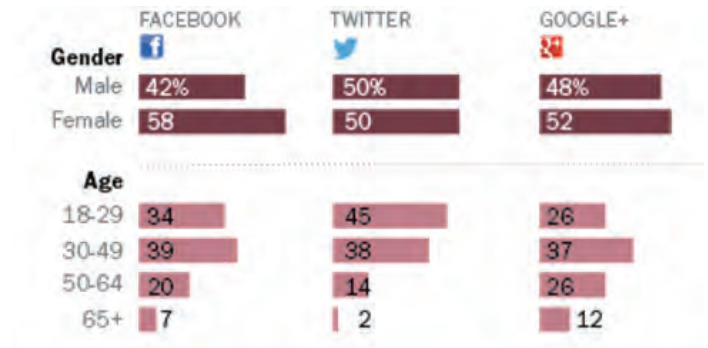




## Which Platform? It Depends on Your Audience

Before you can determine which platforms to use and monitor, make sure you cover these steps first.

- 1. Define target audiences** (create buyer personas, see page 6).
- 2. Research.** Find out where the audiences interact today. Start with the basics like understanding the gender, age and education breakdown of each social media platform. That gives you a holistic look; then figure out where your specific audience is engaging. Survey customers and ask which platforms they use and for what purpose. You can also ask prospects how they heard about you. Finally, pose questions on different channels to see if anyone answers and if they're in your target.



- 3. Define goals** you want to achieve with each platform. Evaluate your presence every six months to one year to verify if you are achieving those goals. If you are, you're likely still on the right channels. However, if the platform is not referring anyone to your website or you're not getting any engagement, and you know your strategy is sound, then consider ramping up your presence on that platform. You should only consider shutting down a social presence if it's clear that your audience is no longer engaging – or if your internal staff resources no longer can support the kind of engagement it will take to make it work. The worst thing you can do is to have an account that never posts or responds to posts from others.

Completing these three steps will give insight into which channels will likely help you best connect with your target audience.

Today, the most popular business platforms include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube. Next year the list will evolve, and dozens more channels will surface as the next “hot property.” Ensure you're building an inbound strategy that is “platform agnostic” – as you may transition to new tools better suited to your goals in the future. Conduct this three-step process on a regular basis to make sure you're still getting the level of engagement you need.

## Platform Advice

Here are a few stats and tips on how most users explore the more popular social channels.

## Social Media Platform Best Practices

### f Facebook

#### Stats

1.3 billion users across 126 countries  
52% of all marketers sourced a lead from Facebook in 2013  
30.8% of consumers have made a purchasing decision based off of content read on Facebook

#### Tips

Post a message once every two days and keep posts under 250 characters  
Best times to post – 6-8 a.m., 2-5 p.m. on weekdays  
Best content – videos and images, contests, interactive material (posing a question), perks and deals.

### in LinkedIn

#### Stats

259 million users across 200 countries  
1.2 million company pages  
Every second, two new members join  
1.5 million LinkedIn groups

#### Tips

Post daily  
Best times to post – 7-8:30 a.m., 5-6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays  
Best content – industry news and commentary, research and white papers, stories  
Encourage employees to share content on their profile pages

### Twitter

#### Stats

More than 600 million users  
58 million tweets a day  
2.1 billion searches every 24 hours

### Twitter

#### Tips

Post 1-4 tweets per hour  
Keep posts to 100-115 characters to maximize retweets  
Best times to post – 5 p.m. for retweets, Noon and 6 p.m. for clicks, midweek and weekends  
Best content – images (to get more retweets), ask questions, responses to customers and prospects  
Day-based hashtags can expand your reach to millions of Twitter users

### g+ Google+

#### Stats

345 million users  
45-54 age demographic increased 56% since 2012  
After page authority, a URL's number of Google+1s is more highly correlated with search rankings than any other factor.

#### Tips

SEO implications are huge  
Best content – keyword optimized, educational content rather than visual, hangouts and virtual meet-ups

### p Pinterest

#### Stats

70 million users  
35% of traffic is mobile only  
500,000 business accounts  
80% of pins are re-pins  
Average time spent on site is 16 minutes, which is the longest of any social platform

#### Tips

Best times to post – 2-4 p.m., 8-11 p.m. on Saturdays  
Best content – pictures, images and infographics, requests to re-pin



### How to Measure Success

It's important to monitor and evaluate how your social media efforts are performing. Just participating in social media doesn't mean your audience is getting any value from it. There are six key areas to monitor:

**Quality vs. quantity:** Quality audience engagement is more valuable than thousands of likes and follows from people who have nothing to do with your business. Take time to evaluate what kind of relationships are developing and what conversations are happening in your social channels.

**Engagement:** Engagement is the gold standard in social media success. Having real conversations with interested people is ultimately how businesses can utilize social media to grow. As you create interesting dialogue for your target audience and gather their feedback, insights and recommendations, relationships will grow deeper and help make your business better. Note that social media platforms base their algorithms around engagement, so it's really a domino effect. As you start engaging with more consumers, the number of impressions will go up and draw in more fans/followers to your social platforms.

**Traffic/views:** While you want that back and forth engagement, sometimes people simply want to acknowledge something they agree with or appreciate, as indicated by the "like" button on Facebook or retweet button on Twitter. Social media tools have built-in analytics that measure how many people have interacted with the content. This helps you understand if people saw and enjoyed the content or if it missed the mark. Aim for a steady increase in traffic over time.

**Demographics:** Monitor the demographics of visitors using Facebook Insights or Google Analytics. If the demographics aren't aligning to your targets, then consider tweaking your content or using a different social network.

**Referral traffic:** It's important to see who is referring web traffic to your various digital channels. You might uncover a brand advocate who's sending a bunch of traffic to your website but is someone you haven't connected with on your social channels. That data may tell you people are more likely to share your content on Twitter but not on Facebook. Use the data to shape your future strategy. The bottom line: people who actively follow your social channel and website already know, like and trust you. Follow their actions for behavioral clues on how they purchase products or request services.

**Leads/customers:** It's likely you're trying to grow your business by engaging in social channels with your target audience. Tracking the number of leads and customers who interacted with you is important. It's highly unlikely that a lead or customer only engaged with you in one manner. They may have listened to you speak at an event, which is what lead them to follow you on LinkedIn. Ask customers to identify various ways they've engaged with you, so that you know how social media is playing a role in gathering leads and customers.

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MARKETING SERVICES**



### Social Advertising

Unlike the newspaper ad example mentioned previously, where there's no real tracking mechanism and it's sort of an "all or nothing" undertaking, advertising on social networks can be a highly effective strategy. For example, a typical digital banner only reaches 38% of the target audience, while Facebook ads typically reach close to 90% of intended recipients (Facebook for Business, 2014).

Facebook has intentionally decreased the organic reach of posts so (in some cases) only 6.51% of your fans see your posts in their newsfeeds (TechCrunch, 2014). Granted, some individual posts may perform a lot better, but there's no guarantee. Facebook advertising has become an essential component to connecting with the right audience guaranteed.

Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube also have advertising platforms and Instagram is rolling out one soon. The difference with social advertising is the ability to target. You can select key demographics so that your ad is served only to those who would be interested in your products and services.

### Summary

Social media is a highly effective tactic to achieving inbound success, when approached with the right strategy. Identify which platforms are used by your target audience, develop a content and posting schedule and monitor the results. Consider growing your audience by investing in advertising on social networks. The ability to target makes it a much more effective tactic than traditional methods.

The core principles of inbound marketing are providing relevant, timely and interesting content, putting that content in the right place for your target audience to easily find and measuring the results to continue improving your plan.

### In this paper, we:

- ◇ Defined the basic concept of inbound marketing
- ◇ Explored how to define and connect with your audience
- ◇ Identified common website pitfalls and how to fix them
- ◇ Investigated how social media can enhance your inbound efforts

Communication methods have evolved and the way people consume information is influenced by many factors. Cut through the clutter by presenting content the consumer wants. Your marketing efforts will be more impactful and purposeful by implementing a sound inbound marketing strategy.

Spindustry Digital provides an array of engaging, smart and thoughtful digital services. We create comprehensive, strategic plans that blend together web and mobile sites, inbound marketing, PR, creative and search engine optimization that drive businesses forward. Contact Spindustry Digital to further explore how inbound marketing can connect you with your target audience.



**"Inbound marketing is all about creating connections – people want to find information that speaks to them and helps them solve a problem. Be that connection. Be that resource."**

*-Michael Bird  
Spindustry CEO*