



CONQUERING THE
**INBOUND
MARKETING**
MOUNTAIN

7 TIPS BEFORE YOU START HIKING



CONQUERING THE INBOUND MARKETING MOUNTAIN

7 tips before you start hiking

It's time to prepare for the climb - *Conquering the Inbound Marketing Mountain* can challenge even the most experienced climber. There are ridges and valleys to cross, rocks and crevices to navigate and changing weather. Be a smart hiker and get yourself ready. Just like hiking a mountain, much of the success in Internet Marketing comes from really good preparation. Don't get half way up the mountain, only to learn that you're not prepared. Or worse, don't be the hiker that goes missing!

Here are seven concepts you must "have in your pack" before you start hiking the Inbound Marketing mountain.

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1. WHY ARE YOU CLIMBING?

Are you ready for the climb? What do you expect to find when you reach the peak? How quickly do you want to get there? (The faster the pace, the more exhausting it is.)

ESTABLISH INBOUND MARKETING GOALS

Think clearly about setting specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-targeted goals for your Inbound program. Be sure that you, your colleagues and vendors, clearly understand expectations and end-game targets for the program.

Here are a few questions to consider when deciding what goals to set for Inbound:

1. Are you ready to make a real commitment to your company's success, by tying the goals for your Inbound campaigns to larger company goals? Align the goals with what's most important to the company: Increasing qualified leads, increasing new sales and increasing customer retention.
2. Where do you want to be in 6 to 12 Months? How will you measure results? Basically, what are you

tracking (e.g. leads and newly closed business) and how will you track it? What content do you need to have in place to achieve your goals?

What will be the size and shape of the team you need in place in order to build the needed content? What is the best way to build the team?

Who will lead it? Insource? Outsource? Mixed?

Tip: *Be transparent with your team by sharing the numbers. Then, everyone can focus their efforts on the right goals!*

3. It's a good idea to anticipate the pace of your program: Are you jumping in with both feet, or something less?
4. Get personal. Can Inbound Marketing really help you reach your personal goals? Consider your role as the manager of the Inbound campaign. Embrace and be willing to learn everything you can about Inbound.

Gut Check: Are you ‘going Inbound’ because you're passionate about it or because you want some results? If you just want to affect the bottom line, somebody else better lead it. Either way, for it to work you have to embrace the principles and the process. Remember that Inbound is not “set & forget.” It must be nurtured and managed to perform optimally.

Are you ‘going Inbound’ because you're passionate about it or because you want some results?



2. PICK THE RIGHT MOUNTAIN.

Imagine reaching the top - and then realizing you climbed the wrong mountain! (Gasp.) It's absurd!

The view might be great. However while you enjoy it, your boss is e-mailing HR.

The persona is the Mountain.

Your Inbound Marketing journey will market to specific customer personas, with personas being your targeted customer types.

“Buyer personas are examples of the real buyers who influence or make decisions about the products, services or solutions you market.” (Source: [What is a Buyer Persona](#), from the Buyer Persona Institute.)

Take the time to really understand your personas well before you endeavor to climb.

KNOW, DEFINE, AND TARGET YOUR PERSONAS

Personas are key to inbound marketing. Your defined personas guide the decisions that you make throughout your Inbound Marketing processes and campaigns. All of your Inbound Marketing efforts will center around delivering value and building relationships with them. You need to nail your personas.

PERSONAS 101

Get ready to rock out with effective personas:

1. Aim for the right outcome: Descriptions of personas include common patterns, goals, skills, attitudes, and environment of each persona/group.
2. Add in a few fictional personal details to make the personas like realistic characters.
3. Understand how personas think and act, in the early phase of the buying journey. Get answers to the basic questions: What do personas want? What are their needs? What gets them energized? What turns them off? What are their priorities? How do they view success? How do they describe barriers to success and to purchases? What are their key purchasing criteria?

4. In the written personas, anticipate and describe what sorts of experience visitors expect. And, what delights them. Find out sites personas use when they are not on your site. For example, a snowboarding retailer might focus on X-Game coverage, or give “how to” info on hot tricks, or describe epic adventures. These sites might give expert reviews of the best gear -- what they actually sell.

Check out Adele Revella (@buyerpersona) for more depth and expertise. Inbound leaders like HubSpot lookup to Adele for her contributions regarding definitions, resources, workshops for teams and FREE eBooks. And, check out HubSpot’s free persona template: [The Marketer's Guide to Creating Buyer Personas](#)

3.

RESPECT THE MOUNTAIN

Many a soul has attempted to climb this mountain and failed. Avoid the mistakes these climbers have made.

Respect the mountain and it will welcome you at each step of the journey.

- Don't pitch. The mountain is a volcano and erupts with angry lava when pitched or pressured.
- Don't spam. Bears are on the lookout and will chase you away.
- Don't rush. Mountain passes may close for the winter. Push for the close too soon and you'll likely freeze to death! Be patient with the mountain, Spring will come.

Respect the mountain and it will
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journey.

UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER'S BUYING JOURNEY

Understand the buying journey that the customer takes from knowing nothing about you to understanding your value and deciding whether to buy from you, or not.

At each step in the journey, customers arrive at questions and decision points, seeking information to guide and support their decisions as they progress in their journey. Your Inbound marketing efforts should focus on these those questions and decision points. Focus on the three key phases of your customer's buying journey: Awareness, Consideration, and Decision.

CAMP IN THE RIGHT LOCATIONS, IN THE RIGHT ORDER

There are three awesome places to set-up camp on the Inbound mountain. They reflect the 3 key phases of the buying journey: Awareness Waterfall, Consideration Cliff, and Decision Divide,

Awareness Waterfall

At the top of the Funnel is where you answer customer questions without selling, simultaneously creating awareness about your expertise and the existence of your brand. You don't ask for any orders while camping at the waterfall, you simply offer a free flow of helpful information. Done right, your customers will often share your free information for you, becoming advocates before they're even your customer.

Consideration Cliff

At the middle of the Funnel, prospects arrive at the next campsite “Consideration Cliff.” There, prospects begin to consider the expertise and specific solutions you offer. Prospects there are thinking: “I want to know more about this company. They seem to know their stuff and do business in a way that appeals to me. Can they really help me? How will they help my company? Will their solution fit my needs and company culture?”

But, watch out -- it's a cliff! Don't push offers or prices yet. You're not going for sales qualified leads, you're looking for simple indications of qualification. If you push now, the mountain will push back, and the opportunity just might fall off the cliff!



Decision Divide

Decision Divide is where you camp at the bottom of the funnel and, with some irony, you are now closer to the peak of the mountain than you've ever been! Decision Divide is where prospects seek solutions to specific problems they want prospective vendors to answer. The prospect is thinking: "You know what? I'm going to engage with (your company), to see if they can answer specific questions about my project. I'll ask for a proposal, if the answers are good." This is where your sales qualified leads come from. Your customer has arrived, they need to be closed and onboarded with care. The view sure is pretty from here, isn't it?

The 3 key phases of the buying journey are: Awareness Waterfall, Consideration Cliff, and Decision Divide.

4. MAP YOUR ROUTE CAREFULLY

“A map does not just chart, it unlocks and formulates meaning; it forms bridges between here and there, between disparate ideas that we did not know were previously connected.”

— Reif Larsen

In climbing the Inbound Marketing Mountain, the route you plan is your editorial calendar. It manages the sequence, priority, assignment, and publishing of all of your content.

In fact, the editorial calendar will be the most important management tool for your campaigns.

The calendar is your content plan. It will:

- Establish your pace of writing, volume of content you produce, and the resources required.
- Cover all channels/platforms where your content will appear.
- Follow workflows for each customer type.
- Identify key dates that are relevant to each piece you are managing, including dates to review drafts, revise, and ultimately publish.
- Identify producers and owners, who are responsible for developing the content.

- Align with company goals and events. For example, the budget may be linked to a big Q4 push or a product launch.

Inbound Marketing without a calendar is like climbing a mountain without a map or compass -- you'll end up lost along the way.

TIP: Plan your first top of the funnel offers and then plan/schedule blog posts that naturally lead to the offer.

The mountain won't respect you if you don't address its biggest obstacles (aka common buying objections).

THERE IS NO EASY ROUTE!

The mountain won't respect you if you don't address its biggest obstacles (aka common buying objections). Ask sales and customer service what the biggest obstacles are to trial and then buy your product or service. Tackle those obstacles head on.

WHO'S GOING TO HELP YOU CLIMB?

When it comes to content development, consider your company's level of preparedness to produce content.

- Do you have, or plan to hire, internal writers?
- Will you hire contract writers?
- Do you need help from an Inbound Marketing agency?
- What content do you already have that can be repurposed for Inbound Marketing?

PRODUCERS: YOUR PARTNERS FOR THE CLIMB.

When it comes to content development, consider your company's level of preparedness to produce.

Perhaps your company has never - and will never - develop content internally. For example, there are no writers on staff, or interest in writing. If your company fits this profile, outsourcing your content development activities is totally doable. For example, WriterAccess.com provides SEO-friendly copywriters that produce custom marketing documents, and they understand Inbound Marketing. You can get a quick budget right on their homepage!

On the other end of the spectrum are companies that already produce lots of content, such as engineering companies, attorneys, scientific researchers, etc. This type of company is likely to possess content right now that can be repurposed for Inbound Marketing.

And, going forward possesses content resources in-house who are ready to develop future Inbound pieces.



5. CHECK THE TRAILS

There are many ways to present compelling content to prospects. So, how do you find content that works best? Answer: Regularly test different content.

It's like, there are many trails to take (or make!) to climb the Inbound Mountain. Some have loose rock to slip on and others might have creeks that have run dry. (No water!) Some trails will be more effective than others. And, you want to find the trails that work and avoid the trails that don't work!

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO TEST CONTENT

- Titles are huge. They are much more likely to be read than the content behind the titles, obviously. Tweet two or three test titles and see what gets the most clicks. (We spend LOTS of time focusing on titles that sizzle because we believe that a compelling title is the #1 way to drive more success from your marketing efforts.)
- Test landing pages: Short versus long; with and without video, etc. Conduct A/B tests to find out what works better.

- Try more than one Call to Action for the same offer, to find out which works best or which works best for different audiences or referring sites.
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6. GET IN SHAPE TO CLIMB

You won't be dropping all of your traditional marketing programs, right?

Assess the resources you may need for Inbound and get help, as needed. Here are some options.

OPTION 1: HIRE UP!

Get fit climbers on the team. Check out these three questions that Mike Volpe (@mvolpe) CMO at HubSpot asks potential new hires:

1. Funnel Question: “Pretend you're the COO and you have to decide what your marketing team should focus on. What do you do?” (Answer: Mike looks for Funnel stats like 25k visitors, 250 leads, 100 sales ready leads, 25 opportunities, 5 customers, in the answer.)
2. Lead Scoring Question: “I just e-mailed you an excel file containing 100k leads, and the 200 companies that became clients from these leads, how can you use that data to make a lead score that help us prioritize leads in the future?” (Answer: Mike looks for pivot table and/or regression analysis, in the answer.)

3. Homepage Question: The CEO likes “version A,” the COO likes “version B.” Which page do you launch? (Answer: Mike looks for “test them against each other.” Even better is “Conduct A/B testing of the messages on each alternative page.” Testing for conversion optimization must come up in the answer.)

OPTION 2: CONSIDER AN INBOUND AGENCY.

An Inbound agency, even helping part-time, will help you get up the mountain as fast as possible. An Inbound Marketing agency can help add structure, knowledge, needed resources, and expert tips to your team. To get up the mountain as fast as possible. You want to do it without unnecessary weight in your pack and with help overcoming obstacles.

Match yourself well to your Inbound Marketing agency. Be selective!

Here are four tips for qualifying an Inbound Marketing agency:

1. Get evidence of good work (or any work at all).
Ask for charts of the potential agency's clients' traffic, leads, and conversion rates. Request their search engine ranking results and lead conversion ratios. A company that doesn't know exactly how their clients are doing and can't share some charts with you (masking client names of course) is probably not paying much attention to their clients results. Naturally, this should be a red flag for you.
2. Find out how they measure and learn, for example:
 - What blog posts didn't work? What were the objectives and results? What did they change?

- What offers failed to convert? What were the objectives and results? What did they change?
 - What clients have seen lower ROI from Inbound? What were the objectives and results? What did they change?
3. To hire a company that only builds out content in "hopes" that it works, and does not regularly optimize, won't be well equipped to address inevitable challenges. (They'll probably just go get another client.)
 4. Reach out to their clients and talk to them! Find out if they are a high-quality service provider and ask if they would recommend the provider.
 5. The most important part of any partnership is knowing how to change/terminate it. Find out:
 - What happens if they do the work and you don't like it?

- What happens if you liked the work, but it's not converting or getting clicks? (Failing to achieve positive return on your investment.)
- What happens if your needs change and suddenly you want to scale-down, or end the relationship? Ask the prospective vendor.

7. UNDERSTAND, IT'S A JOURNEY.

Mountain climbing requires lots of energy. And, the payoff can take a while. Sometimes you'll get mosquito bites, chased by bees, and sunburn - all come with the mountain.



From the base of the mountain, map out a really good route and pack enough food for a 4-6 month journey. That's about how long it takes to build a high-quality Inbound Marketing program from scratch, with measurable results.

Endurance and commitment to the journey, combined with good hiking skills and a good compass, get's you ready for a successful climb.

If you need help with the map, the compass, or you want someone to strap on the boots and hike for you, get help.

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About the authors:

Kevin Barber (kevin@lean-labs.com) is the founder and president of Lean Labs. At Lean Labs Kevin defines the vision, strategy, and resources that achieve Responsive Web Design, Internet Marketing, Inbound Marketing, and Web App Development. Kevin is also head entrepreneur at Net Profit Services, Inc. Kevin values being spiritually grounded and living a principled life focused on family and serving others. His interests include: Cycling, Motorcycling, Boating, Homesteading, Family Life, everything Entrepreneurial, and talking with motivated/driven people.



Chris Leonard (chris@lean-labs.com) is an Inbound Marketer at Lean Labs. He is an expert in reaching audiences and developing engaging content that converts for Lean Labs and its clients. He has 15 years experience in Web development and marketing. His background includes global brand communications in product launch, product positioning, and brand message development. Chris holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. When not typing his fingers right off his hands, Chris puts to use his NCSAA coaching certificate, as a semi-professional youth soccer coach in the Philadelphia area.





The end...

or is it the beginning?

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