

Inbound Digital Marketing Strategy for an Industrial B2B Company with a Complex Sales Process / Case Company X

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<p>Nowadays, companies are constantly struggling to gain and retain customer's attention due to the boisterous and information-packed environment we inhabit. B2B companies with long and complex sales processes often face many difficulties when communicating and reaching out to potential markets effectively. Consumers are tired of the conventional approaches to marketing featuring unengaging ads and boring newsletters. Attention is starting to shift towards brands that understand this and strive to build empathetic relationships with customers.</p> <p>Inbound marketing has been positioning as one of the most influential and profitable approaches to marketing to answer the status-quo requirements of the last decade. Instead of typical techniques that aim to disturb and get the audience attention by any means necessary, inbound taps into the natural human instinct of curiosity and knowledge to engage in sales processes that focus on providing the lead with the needed information in a delighting experience.</p> <p>The thesis is divided into four project tasks. The first will introduce the project and provide a general overview of the commissioning company. Secondly, we will study Company X's products, pain points, and market. We will then analyze inbound marketing and its principles to recognize how it fits into Company X's business model. Finally, in the last chapter, we will present an inbound marketing strategy tailored for Company X's needs and resources.</p> <p>The strategy presents models, schemes and schedules that exemplify the inbound methodology (attract, engage, close and delight) to ensure that the company creates an interconnected marketing and sales process that helps customers make informed and smart decisions while having insightful and pleasant interactions with the brand. Even though its general principles might apply to different companies, it focuses on helping Company X improve its marketing and communications and grow its revenue by creating value for its audience.</p> <p>The completion of this project resulted in a practical inbound marketing strategy highly tailored to the commissioning company that leverages one of the deepest human desire, recognition. By understanding this principle, marketing professionals will be able to create massive results. We encourage brands to use this principle responsibly and now, more than ever, to acknowledge their power of influence and strive to create beneficial impacts in society.</p>	
Keywords Sales funnel, inbound marketing, landing page, lead & digital marketing.	

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Background	2
1.3. Project objective and project tasks.....	3
1.4. Demarcation.....	3
1.5. Anticipated benefits to stakeholders	4
1.6. Commissioning company introduction.....	5
1.7. International aspect of the thesis	5
1.8. Key concepts	6
2. Commissioning company study.....	8
2.1. The company	8
2.1.1. Company X.....	8
2.1.2. Core business.....	9
2.1.3. Values of the company.....	10
2.1.4. The product.....	10
2.1.4.1. Bureaucracy	12
2.1.4.2. Lack of communication	13
2.1.4.3. Financial guidelines.....	14
2.1.5. The market	14
2.2. Current marketing situation.....	15
2.3. PESTEL analysis for the Brazilian market	17
2.3.1. Introduction to PESTEL analysis.....	17
2.3.1.1. Political	18
2.3.1.2. Economical.....	19
2.3.1.3. Social	21
2.3.1.4. Technological.....	22
2.3.1.5. Environmental.....	23
2.3.1.6. Legal	24
2.4. SWOT Analysis.....	24
3. Inbound marketing	25
3.1. Introduction to inbound marketing	25
3.2. Why inbound marketing	25
3.3. Inbound marketing methodology	28
3.3.1. Attraction.....	28
3.3.2. Convert	29

3.3.3.	Close	30
3.3.4.	Delight.....	31
3.4.	Inbound marketing components	32
3.4.1.	OKRs	32
3.4.2.	Massive transformation purpose (MTP).....	34
3.4.3.	Buyer persona	36
3.4.4.	Social media marketing.....	39
3.4.5.	Paid social media marketing.....	40
3.4.6.	E-mail marketing.....	43
3.4.7.	Content marketing.....	44
3.4.8.	Search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO)...	48
3.5.	Marketing and sales integration	50
4.	The strategy for Company X	52
4.1.	Introduction to the strategy	52
4.1.1.	Considerations	52
4.1.2.	OKRs	53
4.1.3.	Company X's value proposition	54
4.1.4.	Buyer persona	54
4.1.5.	Selected channels	55
4.2.	Marketing calendar plan.....	56
4.3.	Paid social media strategy.....	59
4.4.	Content marketing strategy	59
4.5.	Marketing automation software and funnel construction.....	61
4.5.1.	Top of the funnel (ToFu)	61
4.5.2.	Middle of the funnel (MoFu).....	62
4.5.3.	Bottom of the funnel (BoFu).....	63
4.6.	Integration of the funnel.....	64
5.	Conclusions	66
	References	78

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Since the start of the 21st century, technology seems to be moving forward at an accelerated pace. Things that we thought impossible are now happening as we speak. Technologies such as the Internet have opened a new panorama of possibilities for everyone. Individuals, governments, and companies have started to embrace this new form of living.

The Internet can be understood as a multidisciplinary tool that allows us to create content, communicate with others and even escape from our reality (Dentzel 2014). People have started to build their everyday activities around it, and they use it as a primary source of information and communication.

Furthermore, business-to-business companies (B2B) are starting to notice a change in the way consumers want to be reached. Conventional digital marketing approaches are starting to become an antiquated practise for businesses that want to stay profitable. Companies must implement online presence via social media and generate value through high-quality content and delighting interactions to stay relevant inside their action market (Riserbato 2021).

According to Sprout Social (2020), 91% of people believe in the power of social media to connect individuals and companies. Likewise, 78% of consumers want brands to use social media to help them feel connected with them. Consumers are starting to turn their attention towards brands that make them feel understood, heard, and, more importantly, connected with each other. Responsive brands are beginning to answer this need by building insightful and empathic relationships with their consumers through comprehensive digital marketing strategies that use multiple contact channels such as email, social media, podcast, and blogging.

This relationship development is starting to gain importance and become a highly effective strategy to display brands as authorities in their industry and appear as go-to solutions for their audiences whenever they have a need. This process is impacting the way brands interact with potential customers, and rather than companies reaching out and contacting

directly potential customers, the audiences themselves, through these interactions, are reaching out to the companies wanting to do business.

1.2. Background

Companies have always looked for diverse ways to stand out throughout business history and differentiate themselves from their competitors. Several types of advertising methods have been used, ranging from the most common ones like print publicity to the most flamboyant ones such as aircraft advertising and flash mobs. Marketing and advertisement are nothing new. They have been around for as long as writing has (Rez 2016). With the current technological and communication breakthroughs, its objectives and methods have improved efficiency and minimized investments and efforts required. The principles, although, remain the same. Inform, convince, and influence other people into a defined action and, whereas thousands of years ago, the goal was to tell a story through rupestrian paintings, today, the focus is still telling a story, but with a much broader scope towards value generation.

We are living in a fully interconnected environment in which the lives of most of us revolve around digital environments. People engage in all sorts of interactions online, from working to investing, exercising, buying, and even dating. Having all of these interactions repetitively happening millions of times every day, makes a rather significant case about why companies would want to invest and generate traffic inside these internet channels.

More than 4,000 million people access the Internet daily. Of those, 98% of them use a search engine such as Google regularly, 82% watch videos constantly, 73% participate actively in at least one social media network such as Facebook, Linked In and WhatsApp, 57% read blogs. What does this mean? This means that daily, there are more than 4,000 million opportunities around the world to be promoted and be considered by millions of users for a purchase decision. (Ramirez-Corzo 2019.)

Conversely, this also means that everyday companies are constantly competing with thousands of different companies online that understand this and have mechanisms and complex strategies to gain and retain a customer's attention (Rez 2016).

1.3. Project objective and project tasks

The objective of this project-oriented thesis was the development of a detailed inbound marketing strategy that aimed to close the gap between conventional social media strategies and the consumer's need of obtaining value and having the company prove its worth before purchasing. At the end of this process, we provided the commissioning company with a results-driven plan with all the required guidelines for the plan to be implemented in the company right away. Simultaneously, the strategy also aimed to help with some of the most significant pain points of the company.

Due to this project's extension, for practicality and effective goal accomplishment, the main project objective (PO) was divided into several smaller project tasks (PT) that, throughout the progression of this thesis, were developed. These goals are presented as follows:

- **PO – Inbound Marketing Strategy for Company X**
 - PT. 1 -. An introduction to the commissioning company and industry, PESTEL and SWOT analysis, product overview, and MATERIAL Y rubber sealing market analysis.
 - PT. 2 -. Development of a theoretical framework about inbound marketing relating to the B2B sector and why inbound marketing is the most suitable marketing approach for this particular case.
 - PT. 3 – Presentation of the strategy tailored for Company X and relating information.
 - PT. 4 – Conclusion.

1.4. Demarcation

This thesis primarily focused on digital marketing principles, especially ones related to inbound marketing. Principles of digital marketing such as email marketing, search engine marketing, and paid media marketing were also discussed within this thesis because they all pertain to the correct and all-around inbound marketing strategy implementation.

Even though the guidelines reviewed in this document might be applicable to different types of businesses, the scope was B2B marketing which widely differentiates from B2C and C2C due to the nature of the customer relationship and the customer journey each utilizes. The

thesis further specialized in industrial companies acting within the high-performance rubber seals market.

Inbound marketing focuses on a lot of different tools and resources to convert traffic into customers effectively. One of the most important ones is content creation. Companies can show themselves valuable and attention-worthy for their audience before a transaction takes place through quality content. Consequently, a considerable part of this thesis focused on the creation and divulgation of it.

1.5. Anticipated benefits to stakeholders

Several stakeholders were benefited from the development and completion of this thesis. Initially, the commissioning company itself because they received a valuable document that enclosed a detailed step-by-step guide that will provide a lot of profitable results for them in the medium and long term. They also acquired valuable data and statistics such as key performance indicators (KPIs) that will allow them to develop more effective strategies to grow the company.

The project also benefited the author because this task will be presented as the final project to obtain the graduation right by the educational institution. The thesis must prove that the author has obtained sufficient knowledge, technical and practical skills, and most importantly, possesses the professional capabilities to develop a high-quality research document that proves of real value for a real company. Digital marketing has also been one of the most significant interests for the author throughout his academic career. Using this topic to create his thesis contributed to his professional career towards the new and emerging technologies and approaches to marketing and sales.

Other stakeholders related to this thesis are other students looking for a reference to produce their thesis, focusing on delivering an actual company a strategy for B2B markets focusing on results.

Finally, indirect stakeholders that will be benefited are third-party business owners, marketing strategists, managers, and other individuals with participation inside a business of any kind, especially B2B interested in implementing or improving inbound strategies.

1.6. Commissioning company introduction

This project was developed using a commissioning company called Company X Industria Nacional de Vedações Ltda., this was the company employing the author at the moment of writing. Permission to create this project has been obtained beforehand and was granted by the CEO and Founder. At the moment of writing, the author holds the marketing intern position for the company, working remotely from Mexico.

Company X is a Brazilian start-up located in Brazil. The company itself was founded inside its mother company Company Y, but it was not until recently that it went public through a crowdfunding campaign and split from Company Y. Company X specializes in the research, development, and manufacturing of high-performance materials and compounds for rubber seals referred to as O-rings. Pioneering in the production of MATERIAL Y seals in Brazil, they seek to improve their customer's operations by implementing the most suitable sealing material for each industrial application.

1.7. International aspect of the thesis

As of now, Company X is a national company with business operations all around Brazil. Recent developments had led the company to achieve an international partnership with a Colombian company that operates as an industrial equipment retailer. As Company X continues to expand and gain market share in the national and international industry, the idea of internationalization of operations is a strong possibility.

International marketing activities were forecasted to start this year in the company and, while this project was designed for its application inside Brazilian territory, the strategies can certainly be adapted to appeal and engage with an international audience.

Another international aspect of this thesis that translates into multicultural collaboration skills was the partnership between the commissioning company having its operations in Brazil and the author of the thesis that currently resides in Mexico. That collaboration by itself was another example of the international context of the thesis.

1.8. Key concepts

Call-to-action – According to Leaning (2020), a call-to-action (CTA) is an element inside a website or landing page that encourages visitors to do a specific action. Very often, this action is directed towards converting a visitor into a lead. CTA can vary depending on the website and its context.

Conversion – in inbound marketing, conversions are understood as the moment in which a visitor interacts with a website in the way that it was planned. This interaction is usually a specific action that can be many different things, ranging from purchasing a product to filling out a contact form. (HubSpot Academy 2021.)

Funnel – An inbound funnel is an important aspect of an inbound marketing strategy that we will cover later in this work. For now, we will say that it is a predesigned process by the marketing and sales team of a company to create a nurturing experience for a lead to help convert visitors, potential clients, leads, customers, and promoters. (HubSpot 2018.)

Keywords – According to Harsel (2020), a keyword is a word or group of words entered into any search engine that offers visitors results relating to their research topic.

KPI – This is the abbreviation of a key performance indicator, and it is a commonly used term in any business area. According to Domínguez, Pérez, Rubio, and Zapata (2020), KPIs are tools for measuring the performance of activities in areas that require improvement.

Landing page – The word landing page used in digital marketing to refer to a stand-alone website where visitors are sent from other places such as email inbox, social media, and other websites. It is used for specific marketing and advertisement purposes. The most significant difference between landing pages (LP) and regular websites is that LP focuses on one objective, and websites encourage exploration of different sections and options. (Unbounce 2021.).

Lead – Leads are individuals that express interest through different forms in a company's product or service. Leads are usually contacted by request of the lead himself instead of randomly cold-calling strangers to see if they are interested (Kolowich 2020).

Marketing qualified leads – Subclassification of leads that can be used solely for marketing and communication purposes (MQL).

Reach – According to York (2020), the term refers to the total number of people that are able to see the company's content on the Internet.

Sales qualified leads - Leads that can be used for sales processes such as talking with a sales rep or receiving a quotation (SQL).

2. Commissioning company study

2.1. The company

2.1.1. Company X

As we have previously introduced, Company X. is a Brazilian start-up focused on the research, development, and manufacture of innovation within the rubber sealing market. They own patented technologies based on nanomaterials' application to manufacture polymers that can serve better the requirements of Industry 4.0 (Industry 4.0 is a term used to describe the new technologies that use artificial intelligence, automation, networks, and the Internet of things to maximize productivity with minimal human input).

Company X was founded by CEO & Founder Employee 1. Its headquarters are in an innovation cluster for companies based Brazil. The name Company X comes from combining the words "service" and "all," referencing that the company produces materials and parts that can assist any market and any application regardless of its complexities.

Due to its innovative manufacturing processes and its compound formulation, Company X can produce parts with increased resistance to the mechanic, chemic and thermic conditions that can withstand the roughest circumstances for extended periods compared to other materials. These improvements result in the reduction of maintenance, operations, and downtime of production lines in industries, ultimately leading companies to increase efficiency while minimizing costs and, most importantly, diminishing the impact on the environment.

Company X works with various materials to attend to each segment of the market from the less to the most demanding ones, such as the aerospace and petrochemical industries. Another important aspect about the company, is that they are one of the very few companies worldwide pioneering in the production of MATERIAL Y parts O-rings. MATERIAL Y is the abbreviation for the chemical compound known as Material Y, which is today one of the most resistant materials for seals.

Company X also offers its clients products with international certifications and registries. One of them is the FDA food and beverages certification (CFR 21.177.2600), a commonly known accreditation that proves that those seals have gone through exhaustive testing and have

proven safe for their application in machine processing human consumable goods. This certification is mandatory for all companies that work within the food and beverage industry.

Furthermore, Company X also offers clients the possibility of manufacturing personalized parts that fall out of the standard dimensional requirements. This process is called Co-design and allows customers to send in designs, blueprints, measurements, and information of the application in which the part will be used, such as chemical contact, operating temperature, and pressure for the company's trained personnel to analyse to suggest a material that allows optimal performance in any specific situation.

Since the beginnings of Company X back in 2010, the company has been awarded several different recognitions and prizes. FINEP Award to Innovation and Santander Entrepreneurship prize are some of the most important ones. The Petrobras CRCC and the investment funding program awarded to Company X from Badesul are other relevant achievements that Company X has attained.

According to its last valuation made back in October 2020, the Company X brand and all its assets are worth R\$ xxxxxx which equals a total of xxxxxx EUR. Its forecasted value for 2023 is close to XX million EUR.

2.1.2. Core business

Company X focuses mainly on manufacturing high-performance seals in high-quality materials such as MATERIAL Y, FKM, and Aflas. However, even though the demand for these materials worldwide is exceptionally high and will only increase for the coming years (Adroit Market Research 2019.), the Brazilian market is not yet demanding large quantities and consuming as would be expected. Company X is receiving substantial demand for lower performance materials like EPDM, NBR, and Silicone.

Even though these last materials have minimal profit margins, the company's management has decided to keep them in their business lines because they feel that to compete with the big players of the O-ring market, they must supply other types of materials like these. It is important to mention now that one of the most important objectives that the company wants to achieve through marketing and communications is to provide education to the industrial market audience about how higher performance elastomers applied in O-rings can translate into long term savings and increased efficiency.

Higher quality seals such as MATERIAL Y, FKM, and Alfas have much higher profit margins, last longer, and withstand more aggressive environments that involve strong chemicals, higher temperatures, and higher pressures. By increasing the sales volume of these products, the company can provide higher value to clients and generate higher profits.

2.1.3. Values of the company

Since its beginnings, Company X has always acted according to its philosophy. These concepts presented below act as guidance for every action and decision the company makes. Clearly defining the company's values was essential to ensure the actions taken in the marketing department are always in compliance with these principles.

- Mission
- Vision
- Purpose
- Values

The previous principles can help us understand what the brand wants to achieve, what the brand cares about, and how they want to impact the world. With all this information, we can summarize that Company X is an environmentally centred company that focuses on improving industrial efficiency through the constant research and development of materials. They strive to become leaders in their field of action and to add value to their customers. They prioritize safety in the work environment and reliability in their transactions to ensure that they are selling products that are safe for industrial operations, workers, and the environment.

2.1.4. The product

Having understood what, the company does and its background. We will now focus on explaining the product. The product Company X focuses on, is rubber seals. Rubber seals

can appear as very strange and not so common parts. If we dive deeper into this product, we will be surprised about how important these pieces are in our everyday lives and how they make possible many processes that we often do not know. Rubber seals are vital for industrial machinery and everyday appliances.

Present in all sorts of equipment that works with any type of fluid such as liquid or gas and ranging from refrigerators to spacecrafts, they are used to seal passages between two or more sections and prevent the exterior of a system come into contact with its interior. Its mechanical sealing properties allow the part to bridge the contact points and minimize leakages and pressure drops (Instrumentation Tools 2016). Moreover, while these parts are used everywhere, Company X focuses on research, development, and manufacture of these for particular contexts.

Let us take, for example, an application that requires sulfuric acid to be transferred from a container to a chamber in which it will be mixed with other chemicals to produce plant fertilizer. In this case, the pipes that connect the container to the duct will need a sealing part that ensures that the connection between them is safe, and the acid is not leaking. A seal made from a low resistance material such as silicone or standard rubber would melt after several encounters with the acid, and a leak would happen. This leak would result in an emergency stop of the machine and a maintenance team coming in to replace the seal. Company X focuses on solving these issues by developing materials that can resist these conditions for extended periods.

Other applications are not always related to the product chain's main activity but rather a secondary activity that helps the primary process. For example, let us review the food industry. As it seems evident that production chains for food would never relate to chemicals that can melt a rubber, they do. Once the production cycle is done, this machinery needs to be cleansed from all the waste inside of it, and one of the most common ways to do this is by running strong chemicals along the line, and more often than not, these chemicals start corroding the seals, and the same process occurs. The problem with this is that machine downtime is a big profit drainer for companies. This hassle also requires many logistics and complex processes that require time, money, and people involved.

Furthermore, like these examples, there are thousands of more processes that could be improved by implementing high-performance seals in the industry. This is why Company X's R&D team focuses on increasing efficiency.

There are two main challenges that Company X products face today:

- The price.
- The lack of knowledge.

In comparison with low-performance ones, high-performance materials tend to be between 50 to 80 times more expensive. When a company's purchasing department starts analysing our products and prices against others, it is not difficult to understand why a buyer would go with the part that costs a dollar against the one that costs 75. Nevertheless, if an accurate comparison that takes into account all the costs related to the one-dollar part purchase replacement are analysed accordingly, most of the time, higher performance parts will be the best choice in the long run.

Having mentioned this, is it tough to make purchasing departments understand this? No, the real challenge was not there. The real challenge is that most companies do not have a purchasing department aligned with the technical department; therefore, these comparisons never occur. The procurement and technical department often function as independent units—each of them with a personal agenda and productivity goals to achieve.

It was out of this project's scope to dive into the scientific and statistical results of the replacement and implementation of MATERIAL Y seals, requiring a different approach and a different field of study. However, it is essential to mention that the company has led several projects in different industries, and it has been proven with data how MATERIAL Y seals can maximize the production periods of machines and drastically reduce maintenance operations.

The company faced a big challenge for their marketing and communications department. That challenge was to find a way to spread and share information with the industries around Brazil and the world. This information must allow potential customers in different industry segments to know about this material and, most notably, understand how this material can disrupt maintenance processes and make them more sustainable and more efficient. This challenge requires different issues to be solved for its competition. Issues such as bureaucracy, lack of communication, and financial guidelines inside companies must be addressed to achieve success.

2.1.4.1. Bureaucracy

According to Cambridge Dictionary (2021), bureaucracy is "a system for controlling or managing a country, company, or organization that is operated by a large number of officials employed to follow the rules carefully". Today's bureaucracy is one of the most significant factors that slows down businesses. Although bureaucracy is necessary for today's structures, it needs to shift so that it no longer presents a burden for improvement but rather complements it and assists it in accomplishing its true purpose. As Schwartz (2019) mentioned, bureaucracy is needed, but it should adapt to the circumstances for people to achieve things.

Most of the time, Company X's negotiations with potential customers have to go through different technical, procurement, financial, and management departments. These units have to give their authorization before a purchase can be approved. These extensive processes tend to make the sales flow slower and often require more time than expected, giving room for things to go wrong.

The lack of understanding about MATERIAL Y by non-technical departments such as financials and purchasing can often withhold the purchase decision.

Since most of the clients that Company X interacts with today have never heard about this product before, very often, sales that should go through the purchasing department directly tend to be sent towards the improvement or project department in which sales process are extended even further. In these cases, Company X has found that its sales personnel have to go through several stages like supplier investigation, testing, and standardization to become a registered supplier. This process can take several years to conclude and much collaboration between Company X and the buyer.

2.1.4.2. Lack of communication

As we previously stated, miscommunication between the interested departments inside the potential client's company was another barrier to beat to conclude the sales process for Company X successfully.

Most of the time, purchasers are not the people needing and using the products. They are only receiving instructions and carrying out purchases on behalf of other departments. Procurement departments often receive basic guidelines about the goods they have to purchase for the production and maintenance departments, and very commonly, they do not

know all the details about that product. Their main concerns are things such as accomplishing the budget goals, delivery time, and payment options. The lower the price of a good, the better as long as it fulfils the requested features.

On the other hand, we have the maintenance, technical, and production departments which are the employees that interact and use the goods. They are the ones in charge of assembling and maintaining the machines and the products they sell.

This situation creates a gap between what is needed and what is bought. In addition to this, the lack of technical knowledge from purchasing might often result in complex requirements not met.

2.1.4.3. Financial guidelines

On top of all these obstacles, financial departments tend to be involved in these types of processes. When a product bought at 5 USD one day costs 75 USD, the financial department will reject those requests only due to a financial approach without assessing the situation.

Employees working in the financial departments will not understand technical points of view and the underlying reasons behind the more expensive product.

2.1.5. The market

Virtually, Company X's parts can be used in any industry and in any application that requires the use of O-rings. O-rings and other types of rubber seals are present everywhere. Nonetheless, Company X's target market is companies that work with harsh environments and are looking for alternatives to improve their processes. Strong acids and bases, lubricants, boiling oil, ethylene, and oxidants are examples of the main chemicals that make low-performance materials fail to accomplish their objective of sealing passages' and prevent leakages.

Company X has found that this industry's consumer segment can be broken down into three groups representing the company's most significant types of clients today. These segments are:

- Retailers.
- Direct users.

- Indirect users.

Retailers are the consumers that buy from us to sell our products to third parties and profit from the intermediation. These are usually known as industrial retailers and often have physical stores where they exhibit and sell products they buy directly from manufacturers. When this type of company buys high-performance materials from Company X, it usually is because they already have a buyer. Due to the high cost, the price volatility, and the wide variety of measurements that exist, retailers do not tend to keep stock nor buy before they have confirmed the sale with the client. Since this is a product only available upon request, Company X needs to work fast to avoid having the final client wait extended periods. Selling lower performance materials to retailers is not very lucrative for Company X because, as mentioned before, these have significantly reduced margins, especially when selling to retailers.

The second type of consumer is indirect users. Indirect users buy and use the products to assemble them into what they manufacture and later sell to the end client. Here, we can find all industrial equipment manufacturers such as mechanical seals, reactors, pumps, valves, and engines among the many different appliances. Typically, indirect users tend to select cheaper and lower performance rubber seals for cost efficiency purposes. The less they spend on the production, the more they will profit from the transaction. As a result, Company X focuses on servicing indirect users that manufacture high-performance equipment for high-performance demanding applications. Only to this type of companies the higher prices for the higher performance materials will make sense and will, in the end, benefit their client.

Direct users are the last type of consumers. This type of consumer buys and utilizes directly in their production process. They usually buy as a replacement for current parts that require maintenance mainly due to corrosion and wear. Company X can be understood as a high-performance aftermarket supplier as it does replacement parts. Most of the time, these parts might even be of higher quality than the OEM parts. OEM stands for original equipment manufacturer and is the term utilized within the industry to refer to the parts that have been assembled by the supplier initially in the machine.

Industries such as chemical, petrochemical, mineral, pharmaceutical, and aerospace are today the biggest consumers of high-performance seals (Adroit Market Research 2019).

2.2. Current marketing situation

Until now, Company X has not given much priority to marketing and sales, they have focused mainly on product research and process development, and even though they have a consistent client base, it will not be enough to reach the growth goals they strive to achieve for the coming years. Consequently, at the end of 2020, Company X decided to start investing money, time, and personnel into their marketing and communications department.

Before this decision, Company X had a fundamental approach to digital marketing. Talking about social media marketing, they had Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts set up. These channels had a regular stream of content with 1-2 posts a week. All of them focused on brand awareness and recognition. The published content had an inconsistent and simple design throughout the different channels. The content that was shared on each platform was practically the same.

Other essential resources that the company used were a mobile-friendly website with a complete overview of the company that included sections like "About Us," "Products," and "Clients". The website includes plenty of information about what the company does, its market, its products, and its client portfolio. The website also includes a "Contact Us" section with all the contact information and a get in touch form to start a conversation with possible clients, which was very important. Call-to-action and WhatsApp buttons are also spread across the website. The website incorporates a blog section (which will be of much importance later for the inbound strategy) that was not updated, having its last post made back in December 2019.

Email marketing efforts were made in early 2020, but after the first email campaign was sent, nothing else was done, and no follow-up was given to the campaigns.

Added to all this, the company has an active partnership with two different software companies. The first one is a tool for marketing called RD Station. RD Station is software for marketing automation and centralization. The company can use it for doing a lot of different marketing actions in the same place. When implementing an inbound strategy, specific tools are required to manage all the processes and facilitate the interaction with the leads generated as a result of the strategy.

RD Station allows the marketing department to plan and automate actions and processes according to the stage in which the lead is located (Calixto 2020). RD Station also enables marketing personnel to use a wide variety of options to attract users, convert them into leads,

create relationships with them and analyse the performance of each action individually or as a whole process.

Whereas there are plenty of different tools around the Internet to do these different tasks, the convenience of having all inside one tool was very important and help workflows be considerably more effective. Using this tool also allows every action and task to be measured. Measuring everything is one of the advantages of using digital marketing tools. Tools like RD Station help measure every type of interaction and help managers make informed decisions regarding the strategies and optimize them.

The second tool they used is called Exact Sales. This software is a mixture of a CRM (CRM stands for client relationship management) and a lead search engine. This software helps companies research potential customers and track the interactions between the clients and the sellers to provide the best possible pre- and post-sale follow-up (Exact Sales 2021). The software's main objective is to provide the users with comprehensive and robust software that allows agents (or the so-called pre-sellers) to find new business opportunities, assign them a grade according to their relevance for the company goals, and if they come up as relevant opportunities for the company they can be transferred to the sales department.

Exact Sales is a powerful tool for B2B companies for generating an outbound source of lead generation. Especially if they have very long and very technical sales processes like is the case for Company X, what it does is that it shortens the pre-sales process and filters the potential clients so that the salespeople only receive the contact information of decision-makers of highly qualified leads.

2.3. PESTEL analysis for the Brazilian market

2.3.1. Introduction to PESTEL analysis

Several factors influence how a company performs inside a determined market. Aspects such as politics, economics, society, technology, environment, and legal are the most important ones. Through a deep analysis of all these factors, we can understand and forecast the results of a business and make adjustments to fit the market better and increase its implementation.

Pestel analysis does precisely that. According to the Oxford College of Marketing (2016), it is a study used for assessing the current macro external forces that an organization faces in a

given moment. The acronym stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal. In this field of study, a PESTEL analysis will be of high relevance because it allows us to understand the Brazilian market's current situation and use all the information for the correct design and implementation of the strategy. It will also help identify potential changes in the macro forces that might present future challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic scenario and new opportunities such as the growing demand for these materials.

We will proceed to break down every item inside the PESTEL analysis and then provide a figure summarizing and highlighting the most critical factors for each force inside the Brazilian industrial market.

2.3.1.1. Political

Brazil has been a federal presidential representative democratic republic country for more than 35 years. This means that they have a popularly elected president that leads both the state and the Government. Brazil is divided into 26 states and a federal district as well as municipalities. As of today, Brazil is going through a relatively politically stable period. Having Jair Bolsonaro as elected president, the country is divided into the people supporting him and his actions and those who do not. The country will have elections next in October 2022 in which the President, Vice-president, National Congress, State Governors, Vice Governors, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Federal District Legislative Chamber are going to be chosen (Gender Equality Observatory 2021).

One of Brazil's main issues today is corruption. According to Transparency International (2020), Brazil ranks as the 94th most corrupt country out of 179, and this problem has been getting worse over time. Since 2012, Brazil has fallen eight places. Corruption tends to slow down different factors that lead a country to higher levels of development. When the corruption perception is low, other development factors tend to rise, such as educational attainment and longer life expectancy (Lopez 2019).

On the other hand, Brazil is considered the most powerful country in South America and a middle power globally. Regardless, the southern country is also a member of several organizations and unions such as the G20, Mercosur, the United Nations, OECD, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and BRICS, which is an international organization that groups the five biggest emerging countries which are Brazil, Russia, India,

China, and South Africa. According to BRICS official website (2019), these five countries represent 42% of the population, 23% of the GDP, 30% of the territory, and 18 per cent of trade globally.

Regarding bureaucracy, Brazil seems to be a very bureaucratic country. According to the World Bank, Ease of Doing Business Ranking (2020), Brazil holds 124th place out of 190 countries, which means that the regulatory environment is rather hard to start and operate a business in this country. This ranking measure and scores different indicators to provide a score on each topic. Some of these topics ease starting a business, ease of getting electricity, and tax policies.

Taxation, bureaucracy, international trade, and labour legislation are complex and tend to be inconvenient businesses and present many business owners' challenges.

2.3.1.2. Economical

As we have previously stated, Brazil is the most significant power in South America. They are also the 12th largest economy globally when measured by GDP (IMF 2020). Throughout history, Brazil has experimented with various cycles of growth and reduction in its economy. As we can see in figure 1, Brazil recorded an estimated negative growth of 5.8% (compared to the previous year) in 2020, and it is forecasted that the growth rate will increase 2.83% in 2021 and stay in the 2.2% growth level for the following four years (IMF 2021). According to the Growth Lab at Harvard University (Atlas of Economic Complexity 2019), they also rank the 49 most complex economy in the Economic Complexity Index.

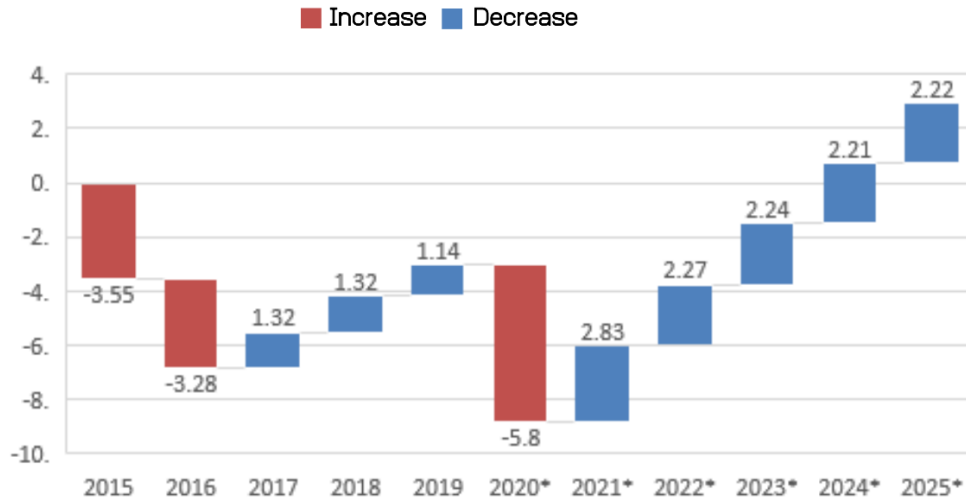


Figure 1. Brazil: Growth rate of the real gross domestic product (GDP) from 2015 to 2025 (Adapted from IMF 2020)

As of 2019, Brazil's net imports achieved 230 billion against 177 billion in imports. Brazil's top exports in the year 2020 were Iron Ore (2.75B), Crude Petroleum (1.44B), Raw sugar (625M), Corn (505M), and Coffee (468M) (The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2021). The country also ranks amongst the top 5 more prominent exporters globally for the following products: Coffee (1st place), Soya Beans (1st place), Beef (2nd place), Sugar (1st place), Sulphate Chemical Woodpulp (1st place), and Iron Ore (2nd place) (The Observatory of Economic Complexity 2021). They primarily export to China (63.5B), which has led the country to experiment with rapid growth as the Asian demand has drastically increased over the years. They also export considerable amounts to the United States (30.5B), Argentina (9.85B), and the Netherlands (9.13B). They Mostly import from China (36.6B), The United States (32.6B), and Germany (11.3B).

According to the World Bank (2020), on the labour side, we can see that the services lead the employment distribution in Brazil with 71.29%. Agriculture employs 9.1% of the labour force, whereas the industry 19.59%.

According to UNCTAD, World Investment Report (2020), Brazil is the 9th biggest FDI recipient worldwide with a total investment of 72 billion. The countries that invest the most in Brazil are the Netherlands, the United States, Germany, Spain, the Bahamas, and Luxembourg. Most investments are directed towards oil and gas extraction, commerce, electricity, the car industry, financial services, and the chemical industry (Export Enterprises S. A. 2020). It is

also worth mentioning that in 2020, the pandemic greatly affected Brazil worldwide. In the first half of 2020, Brazil suffered a reduction of 50% in the FDI. Nevertheless, on the second, the situation seems to be improving overall as the economy reopens and the situation develops (UNCTAD 2020).

2.3.1.3. Social

As of 2019, Brazil's total population is 210.15 million (IMF 2021). According to UN DESA & Gapminder (2019), 75.56 is the average life expectancy for a healthy individual in the country. Portuguese is the only official language. Brazil's most-followed religion is Catholicism and Protestants, with 64.6% and 22.2% of the population (CIA World Factbook 2021). Brazil has made economic progress through the last years. In 2019 24.7% live in poverty, and 6.5% of the total population still live in extreme poverty conditions, and the unemployment rate is at 11.7% (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics 2019). Literacy levels in Brazil are 93.23% as of 2018 (World Bank 2018).

88% of the Brazilian population concentrates in urban areas near the eastern coast (Worldmeter 2020). The biggest ones are São Paulo with 46.28 million, Minas Gerais with 21.29 million, Rio de Janeiro with 17.36, Bahia with 14.93, and Paraná 11.51 million. These five states alone represent 53% of the country's total population (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics 2020).

Overall, Brazil has a young population with people between 15-64 years old representing the 69.74% and the 0-14 years old representing the 21.01% of the total population.

Brazil faces other issues such as education, housing, healthcare, child labour, drugs, gangs, crime, prostitution, and discrimination of gender and race. According to the Telles (2021), most Brazilians recognize the existence of discrimination and its consequences leading into distinct aspects of life, such as racial inequality and discrimination in the labour market.

Oppositely, Brazil's middle class is one of the biggest in Latin-American and continues to proliferate. According to Corporación Latinobarómetro (2018), 67.1% of the total Brazilian population consider themselves the middle class. They also tend to be very up-to-date and love luxurious lifestyles and products.

2.3.1.4. Technological

Brazil offers a robust technological infrastructure. According to Internet World Stats (2020), the country ranks in the 1st place number of internet users of Latin America with a total of 149.06 million, just below other major countries around the world such as Indonesia (171.26 million) and the United States (313.32 million). Brazil also has a very high number of mobile users, with 136.49 million users in 2020, and this number is expected to increase to 157.85 by 2025 (Statista 2019) and over 420 million mobile devices such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets (Meirelles 2020). In 2010 the per capita density of mobile users was only 50% or .5 devices per habitant. This number has increased to 300% or three devices per habitant in 2020, considerable growth in only ten years.

According to Statista (2020), in 2019, around 65% of the population has accessed the Internet, making Brazil one of the biggest online markets worldwide. They forecast that by 2025, internet penetration will increase to 72%.

The country is also considered to be going through an increase in mobile commerce for individuals and households. E-commerce in Brazil is set to undergo an expansionary period. The country has been steadily growing in mobile device usage for purchasing since 2013, when they experienced an expansion in this sector of 84.2% (Biz Latin Hub 2019). During the first semester of the pandemic, eCommerce grew 47% (Nielsen/Ebit 2020).

According to Stanford Education, the Brazilian Government is heavily investing in increasing the development of technologies in Brazil, having one of the top computer science education programs in Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, and the new tech-based technologies coming into the country such as IBM are good examples of how tech is advancing in Brazil (Stanford Education 2021). "Nearly half of all IT costs in South America can be attributed to Brazil, demonstrating Brazil's power as a technology hub in the region." (Stanford Education 2021).

Brazil has also allocated plenty of resources for projects regarding the Internet of things (IoT). In 2019, Brazil's president opted the country in on a national plan for the Internet of things (Internet of Business 2019). This plan aims to promote the development and adoption of IoT.

Brazil is the second-largest agricultural exporter in the world, surpassing Canada and Australia, this growth has led the country to a stage in which technology in this fields is

crucial, and their 338 agricultural tech start-ups (Jardim 2018) confirm how technological entrepreneurship and innovation in Brazil is rapidly expanding.

2.3.1.5. Environmental

Having the Amazon river and jungle, The Iguazu Falls, and more than 2000 beaches with a total extension of 7000 Km, Brazil is widely known for its nature and diverse flora and fauna. Brazil also has 69 national parks that englobe many different habitats such as jungles, deserts, and waterfalls (Minnesota Libraries 2016).

On the other hand, Brazil also faces several environmental problems such as deforestation, water pollution, illegal poaching, air pollution, and illegal animal trade and hunt. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists (2020), Brazil is the 14th country with the most CO₂ emissions.

Being the 5th country in the world in terms of area and population, Brazil has a high urbanization rate with 86.82%. (World Bank 2020). This is a significant cause of environmental issues.

Another important environmental issue in Brazil is the limited access to water. According to Water.org (Atlantic Forest Ecosystem 2020), there are currently 3 million people in Brazil who cannot access safe water supplies and 24 million that cannot access improved sanitation systems.

According to BBC (2020), deforestation in Brazil, especially in the amazon rainforest, reached a new all-time high since 2008, with a total of 11,088 km² of rainforest destroyed in 2019. It is worth mentioning that Amazon homes three million flora and fauna species and more than one million people. Other threats to the Amazon, such as fire, have also doubled up in 2020, risking the loss of many species (BBC News 2020), and damaging the ecosystem that, according to specialists, slows down the pace of global warming.

Overall, despite Brazil's environmental issues, the country has advanced and comprehensive legislation covering ecological and sustainability problems. These legislations cover many aspects such as forest, wildlife, and water since the '30s (Hudson 1997). Many programs promote and encourage the protection of the environment, such as "Legal Earth," which focuses on regulating the utilization of public lands of the Amazon (Leal 2014).

2.3.1.6. Legal

Brazil's primary source of law is the constitution of 1988. Generally, its legal system is complex and very often extremely hard for outsiders to understand. The INPI manages the protection of intellectual property. Brazil is also part of the international organization called MERCOSUR and a signatory of the Paris Convention. Usually, the main rules of international law are accepted by Brazilian buyers and sellers. Portuguese is the official language, and it is usually necessary to use interpreters for legal interactions.

As we have previously stated, running a business in Brazil is challenging due to all the bureaucracy, tax system, and corruption. Restrictions of FDI for particular sectors such as healthcare, mass media, telecommunications, aerospace, rural property, maritime, insurance, and transport make FDI in the territory overly complex (United States Department of State 2020).

2.4. SWOT Analysis

We will now develop a SWOT model for Company X to better understand and identify the company's inner and outer factors that influence the company's operation and might be of importance for the later development of the marketing strategy. This model allows marketing departments to analyse critical items for the construction and implementation of the strategy while looking into the potential future opportunities and threats to forecast solutions and a better way to navigate future scenarios. (Armstrong & Kotler 2015, 85.)

Due to confidentiality principles, the SWOT analysis with its component breakdown has been moved to the appendix section. Please refer to appendix 1 for further reading.

3. Inbound marketing

3.1. Introduction to inbound marketing

According to HubSpot (2021), inbound marketing is a methodology that creates customer attraction by creating valuable content and experiences personalized to them. Inbound, in contrast with outbound marketing, create connections, enhance experiences, and provides solutions instead of interrupting and disturbing the customer. The most important aspect of this methodology is providing value and empowering the potential customer to reach a predefined goal or fix a problem he is looking to solve.

Inbound marketing provides high-quality and appealing content in different formats relevant to potential customers and clients (Halligan & Shah 2014).

Companies wanting to shift from outbound to inbound must ensure that the company they work for has a remarkable value proposition for two main reasons: competition and communication (Halligan & Shah 2014). While the Internet allows companies to reach more people, it also enables creates many competitors. Differentiating through a value proposition is a vital characteristic for this marketing style.

To better understand the concept of inbound marketing, let us utilize Blanchard's (Rez 2016) definition for content marketing relating to inbound marketing:

- Content marketing is the opposite of advertising. It is about engaging consumers with the stuff they really want, in a way that serves your brand's purpose and ideals, rather than just trying to jam your logo into their periphery. It is trying to appeal to the exact audience you want to achieve and abstain from reaching everyone. It is offering the experience that your target audience is seeking and not making an exciting offer only to discourage them with a discrepant proposal later. In summary, it is the evolution of publicity into something more effective, more efficient, and less hidden.

3.2. Why inbound marketing

Up to this point, we had thoroughly explained the company, its inner workings, the market it serves, and its values. Throughout this next chapter, we will introduce the concept of inbound marketing and further develop its importance and benefits for highly specialized B2B sales processes. However, while reading and understanding inbound marketing, one might doubt if building all this costly and tangled structure is more effective and better instead of going with the traditional outbound marketing approach?

According to Lippert (27 April 2021), different marketing approaches offer different conditions. For example, marketing strategies that focus on direct outreach require less time but generate less profit. This type of strategy tends to generate less engagement and interaction with customers, and since it is extremely straightforward, everyone can do it, and there is much competition, resulting in less profit. On the other hand, inbound marketing takes a long time to perfect and harvest the results, not to mention all the resource investment required, but the profit generated is considerably higher. Let us take three of the most important digital marketing tools for an example: Google Ads, YouTube videos, and blogging (going from the more direct marketing appealing to the less). As figure 2 shows, the less time it requires to develop, the less profit it will create.

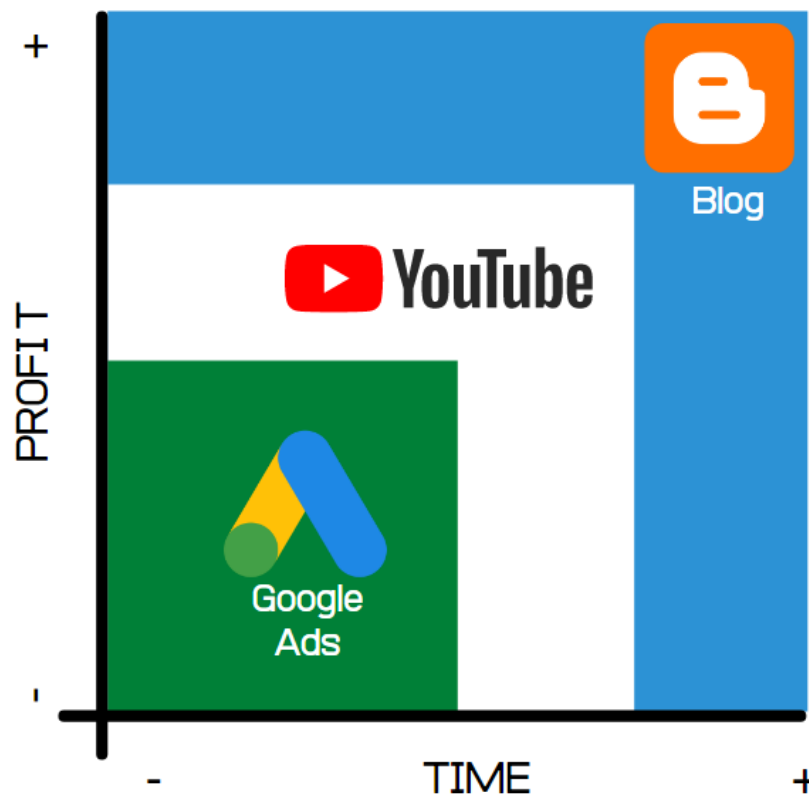


Figure 2. Marketing approaches comparison (Adapted from Lippert 2021)

Another important consideration about inbound is its power to turn non-interested visitors into engaged customers. According to Holmes (2007), and his model called "The buyer pyramid", in every market, the audience can be divided into five different groups:

- People interested in buying now.
- People open to considering a purchase.
- People not thinking about making a purchase now.

- People who do not believe they are interested considering the information they currently have at hand.
- People who are certainly not interested.

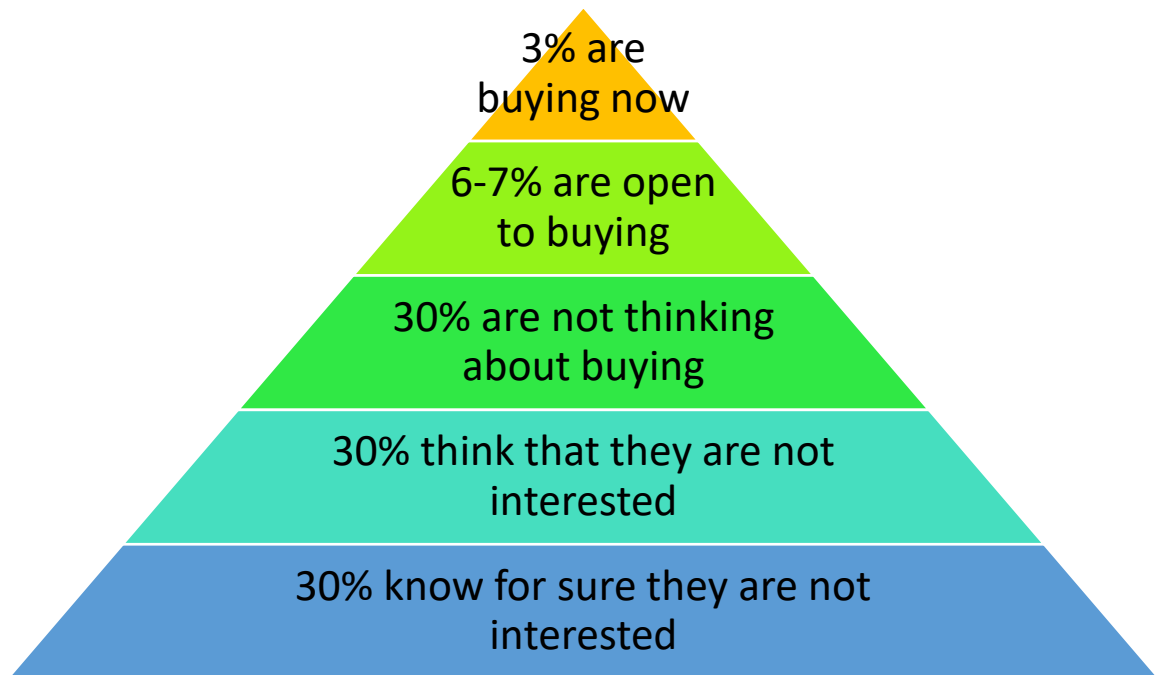


Figure 3. The buyer's pyramid (Adapted from Holmes 2007)

The diagram in figure 3 further exemplifies the importance of relationship building and why it is relevant for companies to not only create marketing and sales strategies to reach the 3% of the audience that is ready to purchase but also with the other 67% of the individuals that require more information before they feel prepared to make a transaction with the company.

Subsequently, this is where inbound marketing comes in handy, and this is the cognition behind creating sales funnels, providing a high-quality experience, and keeping brands at the top of mind (TOM) so that when prospects are ready to buy, they think of the company as the first option when considering purchasing a specific product of a specific category (Study.com 2021).

In the following subchapters, we will analyse every process of the inbound marketing methodology to understand better how it works and how it assists in building relationships while allowing brands to provide potential customers with the right content in a way that helps them to make an intelligent buying decision.

This methodology is an effective way of providing an educative output of information about what the brand is, what they do, and how they do it. Creating consciousness in the consumer's mind and helping him make an informed purchase, reducing the problems that often stall business negotiations, such as bureaucracy, lack of communication, and financial obstacles.

3.3. Inbound marketing methodology

The methodology is divided into four stages: attraction, conversion, closing, and delighting (HubSpot 2021). These four stages are part of a cycle presented in figure 4 and are compared against different processes and methodologies relating to B2B inbound selling. Each of these stages represents an essential part of the sequence that will eventually come together to turn a visitor into a promoter, using strategies that focus on content marketing, lead generation, and lead nurturing and employing objectives such as awareness, consideration, decision, and post-purchase follow-up. It is important to mention that from this point, we will refer as a visitor to individuals that are accessing any of our communication channels, such as our website or our social media profiles.

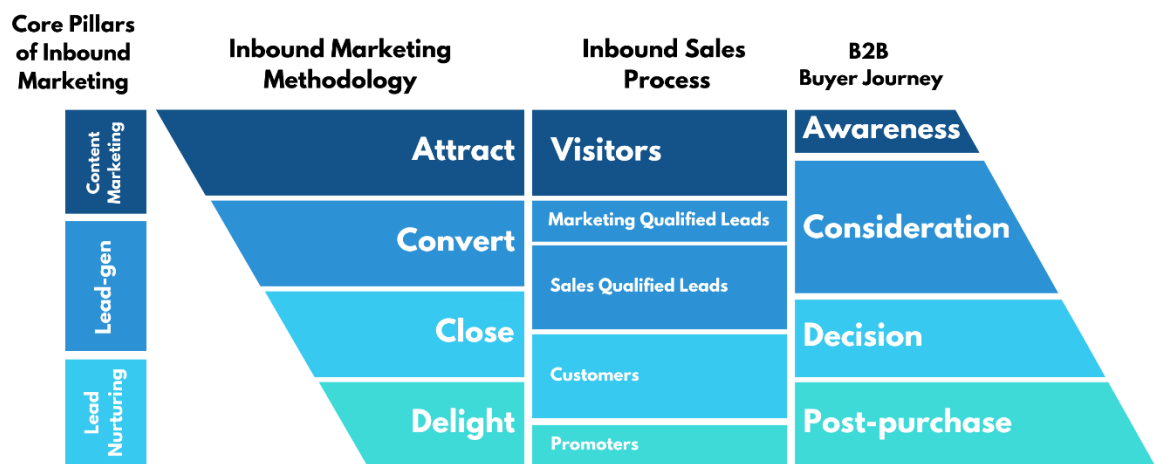


Figure 4. Relationship between inbound marketing and B2B sales process (Adapted from Da Silva 2018)

3.3.1. Attraction

Attraction is the initial stage of the inbound methodology that refers to the first impression that the company makes with the visitor. This stage must make the target audience interested, develop and display the brand as an authority in the field.

An essential consideration in this initial stage is concentrating all the attraction efforts into attracting the right person. By focusing on only attracting the people that the brand is interested in interacting with and potentially selling, the impact of the communication is amplified, and a lot of money is saved. Instead of appealing to everyone and making efforts to do this, companies will increase their success rate in inbound lead creation by specializing and breaking down segments to reach the designated target audience. (Pippi 2018).

In inbound marketing, the most efficient way of really drawing only the persons the company wants to reach and thinks that they will bring the most value to the company is by creating buyer personas. Later in this document, we will talk about them.

The most important tools to utilize in this stage of the process are the ones that allow marketing managers to reach big audiences. Some examples are social media paid advertising, search engine optimization in the biggest engines such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing, and quality content distribution that results interesting to the previously defined buyer personas. (HubSpot 2021.)

3.3.2. Convert

The second phase of the cycle focuses on providing value to visitors that, in this case, have turned into a potential customer. Giving solutions and providing answers to common problems that they are facing, or they might face is vital to building rapport and empathy with a brand and increases the chances of a visitor turning into an actual customer (Pippi 2018).

According to Kasari (2016), building rapport is the basis for developing credibility and trust, which results very relevant in long-term business relationships. When adequately planned out, it can offer benefits at the beginning of the relationship and the later developments.

The most crucial step in this stage is to be able to convert the visitor into a lead. Depending on the strategy and the campaign's objective in question, the conversion might result in either a marketing qualified lead (MQL) or a sales qualified lead (SQL).

Understanding the difference between these two types of lead results is essential to explain the purpose of the lead. The objective of generating leads is to gain specific information about an individual that can be used for many different purposes, from selling to personalizing experiences or even getting in contact. The difference between a MQL and a SQL is that the

first is an individual who has been qualified to engage in marketing-related activities through an automated marketing funnel or system. These activities can include receiving newsletters, offers, and informative content, whereas the second one has been qualified as an individual who is ready to engage in sales activities, like talking to a specialist about purchasing a product (Madero 2015).

Making this differentiation is essential to build specific experiences according to the type of lead. It is important to note that respecting this differentiation will also help build trust with the brand, while not respecting it may negatively affect it and result in potential customers running away. Building non-sales experiences for MQL is a crucial process to allow the transformation of them into SQL.

Depending on the goal of the campaign, SQL or MQL can be generated through inbound strategies. Moreover, whereas SQL is the desired type of lead most of the time, marketing departments must strive to convert all the MQL into SQL.

3.3.3. Close

There is no point in attracting and converting hundreds of leads if, in the end, the sales process is ineffective and fails to convert SQL into customers that bring profit into the company. To this end, leads should only be brought to this stage when businesses are entirely sure about the lead's purchase intent and interest in making a financial transaction with the company.

Companies can potentialize their SQL-to-Customer rate abruptly by creating lead nurturing campaigns and materials. This material is content focused on helping the SQL, also known at this stage as a prospect, make a purchase decision. Topics such as why choose our company, the benefits of choosing our product, and our product compared to the competitor's product are often good examples of nurturing materials. One of the most critical objectives behind this is maintaining ongoing communication and interaction with the prospect to remain a TOM (Top of mind) brand (Halligan & Shah 2014, 153).

Another potent tool to increase conversion rate at this stage is the implementation of CRM software. This is a broad topic which we will cover later in this work. Nonetheless, it is essential to mention that implementing and utilizing a powerful CRM enables the company to keep track of every interaction between the business and the prospect. With this information,

the company can know the specific details about SQL and its preferences and provide higher quality service (Pippi 2018).

Mixing the benefits of a CRM with marketing automation software like RD Station maximizes the effect of a correct closing stage implementation. The marketing department can design several processes that do not require human input and are triggered when a lead does a specific action online through marketing automation software. These processes are referred to as automated marketing flows and can be as simple as an automated email sent to a dense multi-channel process that features personalized remarketing and complex programming.

If a company is looking to create a nurturing process, it must ensure that the process itself provides the prospect with a high-quality experience in which the lead can interact and obtain value. Otherwise, the prospect will stop interacting with the company's content and mark the communications as spam or garbage. This hurts the interaction with that single client and the company's perceived image overall and could potentially harm the algorithm that determines if the content is relevant to the audience (Rez 2016). These algorithms are usually why some companies have very little visibility on the Internet while others regularly show in users social media feeds and inboxes.

3.3.4. Delight

This last step is not to be seen as a final step but rather as a constant of the cycle that will bring plenty of profit for the company if performed correctly. Until now, we have gone through several stages, starting with the user's first contact with the brand and its communication materials. Then, this user turns into a lead trading something of value from the company, such as educational materials or offers in exchange for specific information from the lead (conversion). Once the lead starts interacting with the company, assessing its value proposition, and further inquiring into the benefits and differentials of the brand against its competitors, the lead will convert into a customer by closing a negotiation period. What comes after this stage defines a company's future success and profitability in the long run (Kolowich 2020).

This stage is referred to as a delight in this context and focuses on making the customer feel pure satisfaction about every interaction with the company, including its purchase decision

and the post-purchase service. This process allows customers to find success in the commercial transaction. (HubSpot 2021.)

This stage will aim to maintain contact with the customer while building and strengthening the relationship further. This is not easy and cannot be accomplished immediately. However, if achieved, it will turn customers into promoters of the brand, meaning that the customers will not only buy from a company, but they will also recommend it within their social circles, bringing in more customers through word of mouth, allowing the company to experiment exponential growth. Even though this sounds too good to be true, it is possible but requires a lot of work and planning. The way to do this is by keep providing outstanding customer experiences with subsequent interactions with the brand and constant communication. It is essential to properly define and explain this step because as we move further ahead into creating the strategy, the strategy must be carefully planned out to align with the four stages of building the sales funnel framework (Bodnar & Cohen 2011).

The sale can be understood as the overall result of building a strategy coherent with the inbound methodology. Every step in the funnel contributes with important information and characteristics that eventually add up and assist the potential client in making an informed purchase decision.

3.4. Inbound marketing components

In order to plan and implement a successful inbound strategy, there are some elements to take into consideration. Each of these defines a specific aspect of the strategy and facilitates its definition, implementation, and analysis. We will proceed to break down each of these components.

3.4.1. OKRs

According to Ismail, Malone and van Geest (2014, 130), OKR is the acronym for "Objectives and key results" It is a tool created by Intel's CEO, Andy Grove, in the '90s. It is a bidirectional approach to goals aiming to break them down into smaller objectives that can be understood as how they will know if they are achieving what they want to achieve.

The most crucial aspect about OKRs is that they are developed to be focused, simple and have smaller feedback loops to understand precise tasks easily. According to Larry Keeley

(2013), there are close to 65 different metrics for innovation (KPIs). Companies should not measure and work on all these 65 but rather select six that best suit their business model.

The effectiveness of this approach to goal setting can be seen in the companies that utilize this method. These companies include Intel, Google, LinkedIn, Zynga, Oracle, Twitter, and Facebook. (Berman 2016.)

The essential characteristics of OKRs are thoroughly explained by Ismail & al. (2014). Here is a small summary of them:

- OKRs are set from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy of the organization. In contrast, KPIs are set from top to bottom.
- The objective is the dream, and the Key results are a way of measuring progress towards that dream.
- Objectives are qualitative, whereas Key results remain quantitative.
- OKRs focus on the company's objectives and how the performance of each employee adds to that objective.
- Individual employee performance assessments are not related to OKRs.
- Objectives must always be ambitious and must feel hard to achieve.
- Usually, there should not be more than five objectives and four key results per objective.
- Key results should always be around 60-70%. If this is overperformed, the level has been set too low and should be reassessed.

One of the many benefits of digital marketing, as we mentioned above, is the fact that everything is measurable. Therefore, objective methodologies like OKRs are incredibly relevant and important in inbound marketing. The correct selection of OKRs in an inbound marketing strategy allows marketing teams to work in conjunction and obtain real-time data allowing analysis and comparisons against the previously determined key results. Marketing managers can make the required adjustments to the strategy and its implementation to achieve those objectives. Small feedback loops allow a more responsive decision-making approach, where informed decisions result in inbound marketing testing and experimentation. (Berman 2016.)

As Reutgers (Da Silva 2018) explained:

- "Inbound aims towards a goal, so we set a very clear goal, a very clear path. We build on great fundamentals, so we have a solid base: defined buyer persona, we understand the buyer journeys, have set KPIs, and on top of that, we build campaigns that aim towards the ideal customers and aim towards the path they take. With a strong base and with a great marketing strategy, companies will reach their goals. No matter what."

3.4.2. Massive transformation purpose (MTP)

Companies that want to experience exponential growth must aim towards high-stake objectives in order to achieve exponential growth. Otherwise, it is improbable that the company follows a plan and strategies focused on growth, and even if the company manages to grow, the success will overrun the business model and eventually leave the company lost and purposeless (Ismail & al. 2014).

If we look into the mission of the most successful companies of the last decade, we will find statements that might sound too hard and too big to accomplish. For example, let us review Google's mission, "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." This seems almost impossible considering that according to Vuelta (2021), as of 2021, there is an estimated amount of 44 zettabytes of information hanging around the Internet. This number equals 44,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 GB, too big of a number to understand. However, considering Google's market share of 86.6% (Stat Counter 2021) and Google's satisfaction rate in the US of 79% (ACSI 2020), we can conclude that they are doing remarkably good organizing the world's information.

This is why MTP is so vital in today's business environment. MTP does not talk about what the company does but rather what it wants to create and transform globally. They do not fully relate to the company's market but instead strive to conquer the attention and interest of individuals within and without the company. The key to finding it is to focus on what changes or impacts the company wants to make that will have massive results and create value for a market segment (Ismail & al. 2014).

Regardless of its size or field of operation, companies must always define their MTP with sincerity and certainty that they can, and they will achieve those goals. Whereas they strive to disrupt the world, an industry, or even a tiny segment of a small market, they must always focus on the massive transformation that results in cultural movements (Ismail & al. 2014).

The most significant benefit to creating a powerful MTP is that it enables the power of attraction to start functioning in favour of the company. This power allows for a community to be built around this company. This pull force will allow the company to engage with a community that is eager to buy new products and set a solid client base. This effect will also help companies find different individuals that will be important for expanding into new horizons and business stages. These people will allow the company to increase performance to reach the next stage of development. (Brown, Hagel, & Heath 2012.)

Additionally, creating culture through a powerful MTP also enables an alternative approach to team working for internal policies while keeping a close relationship with the consumer to allow a broad perspective of the market. Opposed to the traditional approach that builds rigid structures unable to obtain deep insights of their consumers due to the gaps in communications generated by surveys and inaccurate market research. (Ismail & al. 2014.)

Companies can build their MTP following the principles of the Golden Circle model, which utilizes a three-stage diagram to explain the two most essential interrogatives about corporative purpose, why it works, and why the organization exists (Sinek 2009), see figure 5.

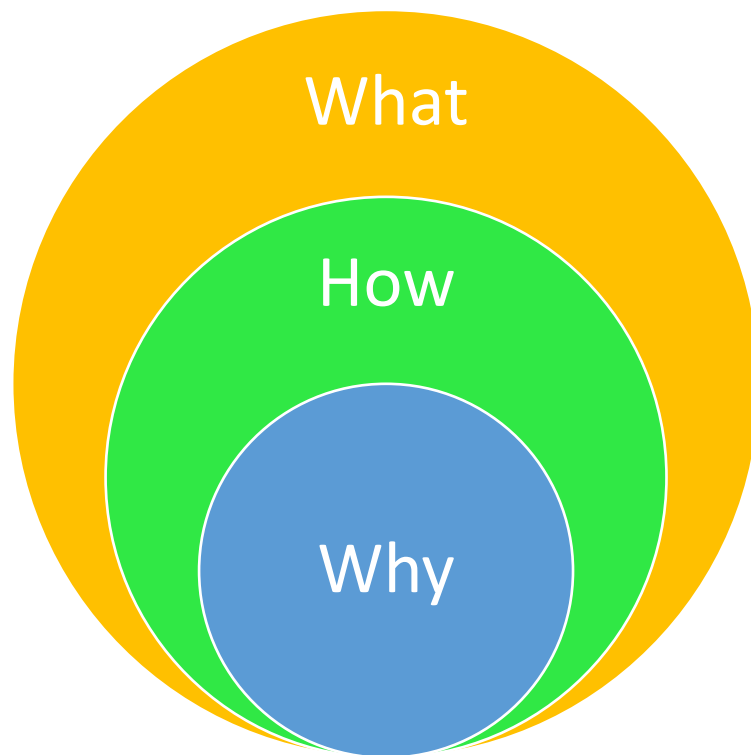


Figure 5. The Golden Circle model (Adapted from Sinek 2009)

The three circles in the diagram represent a different dimension of the company's mission. In his work, Sinek (2009) explains that individuals and company's need to find their purpose in the inverse way of how it is done traditionally.

To find a powerful and attractive mission, the approach should start with the question "why we do what we do?" followed by "how we do what we do?" and finally, "what is it that we do?" (Sinek 2009). Through this insightful process, individuals and companies can gain insight into

the real reasons behind their purpose. Once we have found the purpose, the MTP can be easily found.

The first step to find the company's mission is to define why the company does what it does. Regardless of profit generation, companies must always have an underlying reason for doing what they do. Just as in Google's example, companies must find a truly passionate purpose in their operation.

By correctly defining the why, the company will create an impactful message that will enable the company to connect. This sentence is powerful because it taps into the listener's brain and inspires them to take action (Chaffey 2020). This is why will it set the base for the firm's value proposition that will later shape the company's MTP.

The second step towards building a robust base for a MTP is the how. In this section, any sort of trait and characteristic that sets the company apart should be mentioned. According to Sinek (2009), this sentence will engage with the limbic section of the brain. This section manages behaviour and emotion, and it is also essential for driving action for the company's benefit.

Lastly, the final step to define the company's value proposition, the what. Most business managers will find this the easiest of the three. This stage needs to talk about the products or services that the company sells. This part of the proposition will appeal to the neocortex, the brain's rational centre. (Sinek 2009.)

By joining these three elements together, companies can produce an elaborated value proposition adapted into a MTP. This MTP will be of massive importance in further developing the inbound strategy and all its components (Halligan & Shah 2014).

3.4.3. Buyer persona

Defining a buyer persona is one of the bases of a successful inbound marketing strategy. Knowing how to reach, when to reach, and where to reach is not enough. Nowadays, companies need to understand their target audience profoundly, and to do this, building an accurate yet detailed representation of the type of customers that the company wants to reach is critical for designing delighting experiences (HubSpot Blog 2018).

In inbound marketing for B2B segments that include long buyer journeys and plenty of assessments before making a purchase decision, it is imperative to define a buyer persona and a customer journey to promote business approaches relevant to customer profiles (Da Silva 2018, 49).

Buyer personas are imaginary models of people that buy the company's products or services. These models allow the company to map semi-fictional profiles of the ideal customer generated based on factual consumer information and market research (HubSpot Blog 2018). These profiles can include detailed information apart from the usual age group, gender, education, and interests. Buyer personas allow a deeper insight into the traits and characteristics of customers.

As a result of generating buyer personas, company's gain the required information to design well-thought-out experiences that allow marketing departments to generate tailored content, product development, and sales follow-up that eventually adds up for the attraction of high-value visitors, leads, and customers who will generate more profit for the company in the long run (Vaughan 2021). Proper market research to create buyer personas can help the company find new business opportunities, find different approaches for product development, and even help businesses in the initial stages to decide which market segment to enter. (Rez 2016, 72.)

To create a helpful buyer persona, marketing workers must go further ahead of the typical information requirements for designating a target market. Information such as specific needs, interests, and background are the basis for creating a buyer persona.

Depending on the type of business, marketing departments can have from one to twenty different buyer persona (HubSpot Blog 2018). The more business lines, products, services and industries, the company attends, the more buyer personas the company will have.

As we mentioned before, building a buyer persona should be approached as a multi-disciplinary task lead by a designated person from the marketing department. The information included in the model should come from a mixture of accurate information coming from customers, prospects, contacts inside and outside the database that relate to the chosen target market (Vaughan 2021).

According to Vaughan (2021), these are some of the best ways to gather information to design buyer personas:

- Researching how visitors and customers are consuming the company's content to find trends.
- Gather information relevant to the constructing of buyer persona through conversion forms inside the company's website
- Utilize sales team input to get information about the current most common types of customers.
- Conduct small interviews with customers and leads to find what they like the most about the product or service.

This process will provide plenty of information and insight into real market consumption data. The next step is to identify patterns and trends within those groups of people and populate the buyer persona model presented in figure 6.

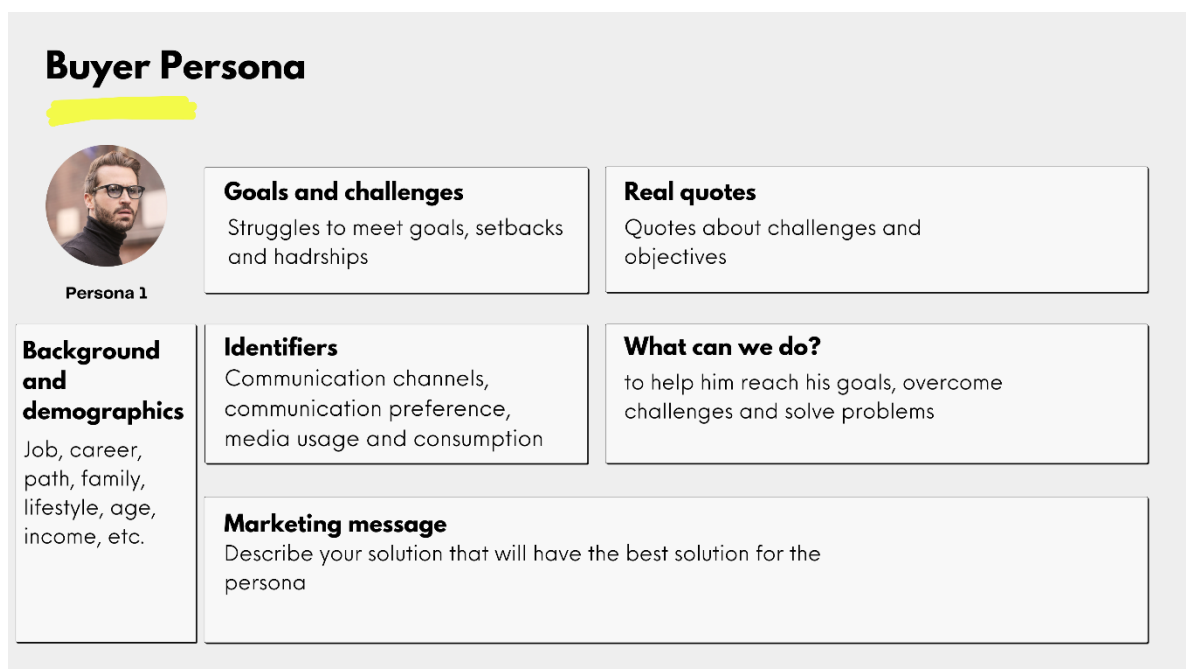


Figure 6. Buyer persona model (Adapted from HubSpot 2021)

Once this process is finished and the buyer persona is ready, it needs to be shared with all departments inside the company, especially with all the departments contributing to the customer's business experience with the company. These departments range from marketing to sales and customer support. This information is precious, and these different departments will benefit from it (Vaughan 2021).

3.4.4. Social media marketing

Social media today is one of the most important forms of communication. Using social media to keep up with family, friends, and professional acquaintances has become a regular practice for individuals. News portals in social media have become powerful outreach channels for the masses.

Social media promotes a direct outreach to customers in a personalized and, more importantly, in a human way (Resultados Digitais 2020). Companies can now also benefit from this movement and market themselves in these channels to conquer, excite and create brand loyalty. The power of massively reaching audiences makes social media another essential tool that allows inbound marketing to generate traffic.

Nonetheless, creating and implementing a social media strategy for inbound marketing is significantly different from the usual outbound strategy that focuses on reaching out to the customers instead of making the customer reach out to the company.

According to Hootsuite (Global Digital Report 2019), 81% of Brazilians above 13 are active in social media. This number decreases to 58% worldwide. This highlights the importance of social media marketing, especially in the Brazilian market. Furthermore, the Brazilian engagement rate on Facebook posts is 4.22% against a worldwide average of 3.75%.

The base principle of inbound marketing is creating organic (non-paid) interest in the audience through value. Social media is present in every stage of the inbound marketing cycle, but results are more relevant in the initial stages that focus on generating traffic and attracting visitors. Social media will be one of the channels that will help companies spread their messages, content, and knowledge around the internet. (Resultados Digitais 2020.)

When creating social media postings, marketing managers should always have in mind the objective of that post. Social media not only assists in content divulgation. It can also help build brand awareness and recognition, generate brand consideration for the late stages of the sales funnel and even help marketing teams obtain insight into the customer's perspective about the company through feedback and survey (Linn 2015).

It is relevant to always build additional communication channels for the company, especially in social media marketing, where the rate of success of a post is tightly related to the underlying algorithm of that particular social media channel. Having multiple social media

channels set up allows the company a certain degree of security by not relying on one single traffic and attraction source.

According to Resultados Digitais (2020), there are several guidelines that allow companies to create results-driven strategies for social media marketing in inbound marketing. These are broken down as follow:

- Content relevance – social media marketing inbound must always focus on posting highly relevant content according to the buyer persona profile previously generated. This contents always need to be aligned with the business, tone, visual identity, and values.
- Proper media channel selection - The content should also be created, considering the social media on which it will be posted. A careful selection of the social channel must be made according to the buyer's persona profile. Different channels offer different benefits and characteristics. E.g., LinkedIn offers businesses the possibility to interact with people through their professional accounts. Facebook offers the most comprehensive user portfolio, which is important for generating much traffic. Finally, Instagram allows showcasing visual features, which is important for e-commerce and product-based businesses.
- Frequency – Human beings are used to create patterns and habits. We tend to feel attracted to things that are familiar to us. The same happens in social media marketing. Once a company starts creating momentum and a posting chronogram, marketing departments must commit to it and consistently deliver communications timely. Uncertainty and unfamiliarity in social media are undesirable and must be avoided at all costs.
- Planning and scheduling - this point is significant and enables companies to maintain frequency in social media. Planning and scheduling a social media strategy is just as crucial as doing social media marketing. Understanding how the strategy for the coming months planned helps marketing departments properly organize their tasks and deadlines to comply with the schedule. Scheduling results are especially important when the company's overall strategy is complex and requires input from different players such as designers, content creators, copywriters, and social media managers. A monthly calendar should be created, and it should include every required information that the different departments need to implement the strategy successfully. This information can include the date of the post, topic, objective, content, hashtags, copy, responsible, and embedded links.

3.4.5. Paid social media marketing

Paid social media marketing is today one of digital marketing's most potent assets. Only in Brazil, it is set to top a total investment of 2.7 billion dollars in 2023 (Statista 2021).

Compared with organic, paid social media marketing allows businesses to reach thousands of targeted individuals rapidly and easily regardless of the size of their following. Additionally, it allows firms to access distinctive features such as detailed metrics and tools for added

functions such as call-to-action buttons embedded directly into the posts to generate traffic into the company's landing page or website.

On top of that, this marketing tool can help, through cookies, to build powerful retargeting strategies that impact potential customers in very personalized ways. For example, if a visitor is searching for flights from Mexico to Canada on the website of Airline X, Airline X can develop a strategy that when a visitor y enters Facebook, they see a targeted ad offering a 10% discount on flights from Mexico to Canada. Like this example, through different programming methods, marketers can build structures that allow highly targeted ads to be displayed to visitors that perform specific actions such as searching for flights from Mexico to Canada.

Compared with traditional marketing tools, paid social media marketing offers a more efficient retribution scheme based on results instead of fixed amounts of money for uncertain and expensive results. CPM is an important KPI in digital marketing. It stands for cost-per-mille, and it allows analysts to see the estimated average cost of 1000 impressions in a specific campaign. Figure 7 shows a graph that better exemplifies the cost-effectiveness of publicity in traditional means vs digital marketing. It measures the required investment to reach 1000 impressions in the different marketing channels (Siingh 2016).

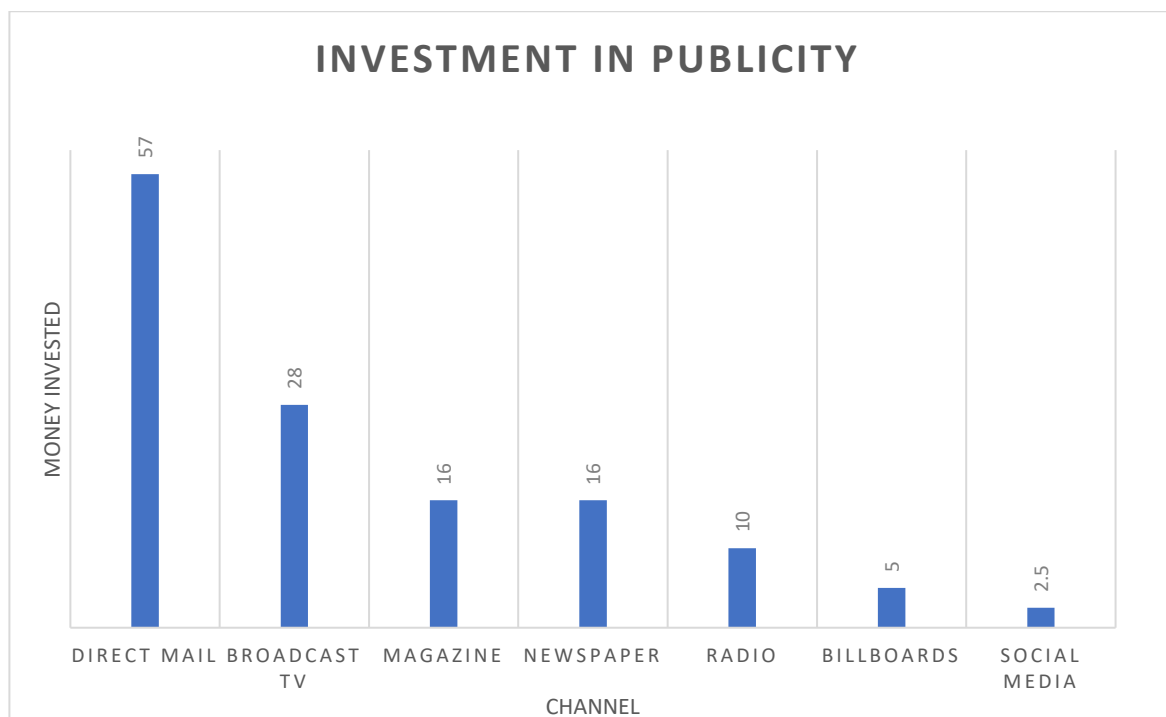


Figure 7. Traditional Media vs Social Media Advertising - CPM Comparison (Adapted from Siingh 2016)

Different social media platforms offer different business models, but the main characteristic of paid social media is that the firm pays for the generated results. In other words, companies only pay for the traffic that the social media channels send to the website (Halligan & Shah 2014).

Often, companies create paid campaigns on social media without a purpose in mind. According to WordStream (2021) is like going around a forest without having a map. The objective should allow marketing personnel to trace a roadmap to achieve that objective. Whether the goal is to generate traffic, gain impressions, or find leads, social media platforms will always bill based on the chosen results. Certain objectives and specific platforms tend to be more expensive than others. Therefore, knowing how to turn that traffic, impressions, and leads into benefits for the company is extremely important.

Once the objective has been appropriately identified, the next step is defining the age group, physical location, hobbies, interests, and occupation. This helps narrow down the millions of social media users into segmented groups increasing conversion rates and making messages more powerful (Coleman 2021).

Having defined the objective and the target, the next step is to create the material that will aid the visitor conversion. Video, image, audio, and text are usually the most common contents used in this environment. As we have previously discussed since value creation through content is the most important aspect of inbound marketing. The material generated for paid social media marketing strategies must work towards that goal. Commonly, this value creation process takes part somewhere outside that social media; therefore, the objective for social media posting will not be to provide the content directly but instead promote and distribute content somewhere else.

The next step in social media marketing is budget setting. Knowing how much the company is willing to invest in a campaign is of extreme relevance. To set this, managers must review different business model elements such as the company's resources, the company's investment capability, average ticket value, profit margin per product, and customer acquisition cost (Coleman 2021).

Once all this information has been gathered and analysed, the business must decide how much demand and sales they want to generate. From here; deep analysis has to be made considering the average amount of profit a customer brings into the company and the cost of

all the activities related to generating a new customer. Lastly, it can be decided what amount of demand the company wishes to generate.

As the last consideration for investing in paid social media, companies must always ensure that they maintain a sustainable return on investment, known as ROI, regardless of the investment amount. ROI is a particularly useful KPI for analysing investments in digital marketing. It measures the amount of money spent in a marketing campaign against the benefit generated (Beattie 2018). ROI will allow marketing personnel to analyse the level of success of marketing efforts, optimize and improve the tactics to lower the cost and increase the results.

3.4.6. E-mail marketing

Currently, there is an estimated 4.03 billion email users (The Radicati Group 2021). This means that more than half of the world's population has an email account, making email another powerful resource for reaching audiences.

According to Imme (2020), email marketing first started in the 70s, when Digital Equipment Corp sent 400 emails promoting the company's computers. This campaign eventually created a profit of 13 million dollars in sales for the business. From here, companies started using email to distribute unwanted and uninteresting marketing material, a situation that peaked in the 99s. Further ahead on time, in 2000, it became evident that sending emails without keeping the receiver's interests in mind was not enough.

Email marketing strategies can be used in several different ways in all of the stages inbound cycle. In order to successfully implement an email marketing strategy, there are some important guidelines firms need to follow, to always stay within the inbound scope and avoid stepping into the outbound zone, which can often lead to different outcomes. Outbound marketing tactics focus on reaching the customers directly with or without their permission to encourage trial and purchase (Chaffey 2019). In contrast, inbound aims to achieve a so-called "permission marketing" status in which companies obtain the prior authorization of the audience to present their content, thus avoiding being perceived as unwanted material or spam (Rez 2016).

Consequently, depending on the stage of the funnel we are working on, the content of the email will vary. Considering that for this thesis, we will only work with email databases

created as a result of permission marketing, utilizing tools such as opt-in forms, pop-ups, and landing pages, email marketing efforts should aim to create value and should awake a genuine interest in readers enough to make them eager to receive the next one. (Bodnar & Cohen 2011.)

Experiences in inbound marketing contribute vastly to the success rate in turning visitors into customers. Marketing automation software has much importance in this field. Through automation flows, marketing departments can design specific email flows for specific processes ranging from welcoming the client to the newsletter or inviting the customer to participate in a webinar organized by the company and even thanking customers for buying products or services from the company. According to Mawhinney (2020), this is precisely what lead nurturing is, providing relevant information to a defined group in every stage of the inbound process. Customer feedback and customer reactivation are other relevant topics to explore in the late stages of the inbound methodology implementation.

Email marketing is compelling, especially for converting current leads into customers. Building and maintaining a direct stream of communication with leads through email can be the difference between having a big list of leads and a big list of customers. As we previously saw in figure 5, 90% of the audience is not considering purchasing. Keeping communication and constantly bringing in value to the leads via email will ensure the company's steady flow of leads turning into customers (Holmes 2007).

Later in this work, we will review aspects relating to the integration of customer relationship management software, but for now, we will mention that email integration with CRM also plays an essential part in the experience-building process of the strategy.

3.4.7. Content marketing

Content creation allows companies to reach and connect with audiences and markets genuinely and organically. It can be defined as planning, creating, distributing, and publishing content to improve important aspects of marketing, such as awareness, interaction, sales, and loyalty (Baker 2021).

Companies can obtain emotional responses from the public, attract audiences and generate more business opportunities through content creation. Creating these reactions is extremely

important in digital marketing because people tend to share content they find inspiring (Rez, 2016).

Throughout this entire work, we have emphasized the importance of adding value through content creation because it sets the basis for the development and execution of the inbound strategy. As Pippi (2018) mentions, inbound marketing cannot work correctly without a content marketing strategy. It is now time to develop why it is essential to integrate content creation in an inbound strategy and provide guidance into creating it (Ramos 2009).

According to Handley (2017), 85% of the B2B marketing professionals attribute the organization's increase in success to higher quality and more efficient content creation, while 72% attribute it to strategy development or adjustment, and 53% attribute it to content marketing becoming a priority for the company. These numbers alone provide an essential insight into why developing an inbound /content marketing strategy must become the number one priority for companies. She also mentions that 91% of marketers feel email and LinkedIn are the most important channels for content marketing development in the B2B field. Furthermore, 71% of B2B sales are generated from simple web browsing, and 91% of business purchasers take part in activities such as blog reading and are active on social media; nonetheless, only 43% of these persons produce content while the remaining 57% act as recipients of that production.

Having mentioned this, it is also relevant to say that developing a valuable content strategy is not an easy task. Moreover, it requires a considerable amount of discipline and organization to do it correctly. If the company is not fully committed to investing a significant number of resources such as time and money, the results will not be enough. Results in this approach are not immediate and tend to increase over time, but once a certain level of relevance is achieved, results are likely to remain consistent and grow organically (Rez 2016).

The approach to content creation should always be to build authority to earn the lead's trust while providing a quality experience towards the end of the cycle, which is the sale (Pippi 2018).

Writing everything for everyone is one of the most common mistakes of content marketing. According to Hurmerinta (2014), successful content can only be created by the company knowing whom they are writing for and their needs. When content creators understand whom they are writing to, they can focus on developing topics like challenges, aspirations, and issues that exclusively relate to those groups. This results in the production of highly

appealing content tailored to a particular market segment capable of creating these genuine connections we discussed earlier, instead of the typical situation in which brands produce extremely generic content that proves how little companies know about their audiences (Rez 2016, 191).

The second key aspect of content creation is providing the **right content to the right person at the right moment** (Linn 2015). Inbound marketing's essence is creating journeys that turn visitors into loyal customers through experiences. Every stage of this journey adds an important element to the final purchase decision. When marketing personnel understands this, they can create content for each of these stages with different purposes according to each goal.

In digital marketing, we refer to the top of the funnel (ToFu) to refer to the initial stage of the inbound process, middle of the funnel (MoFu) for the intermediate stage, and bottom of the funnel (BoFu) to the final stage. Creating interest, answering questions, and even managing objections are challenges each stage presents and requires a solution to move ahead in the process. In figure 8, we present a small diagram to explain better this methodology and the content requirements for each of them. See figure 8 to understand the critical components for each stage better.

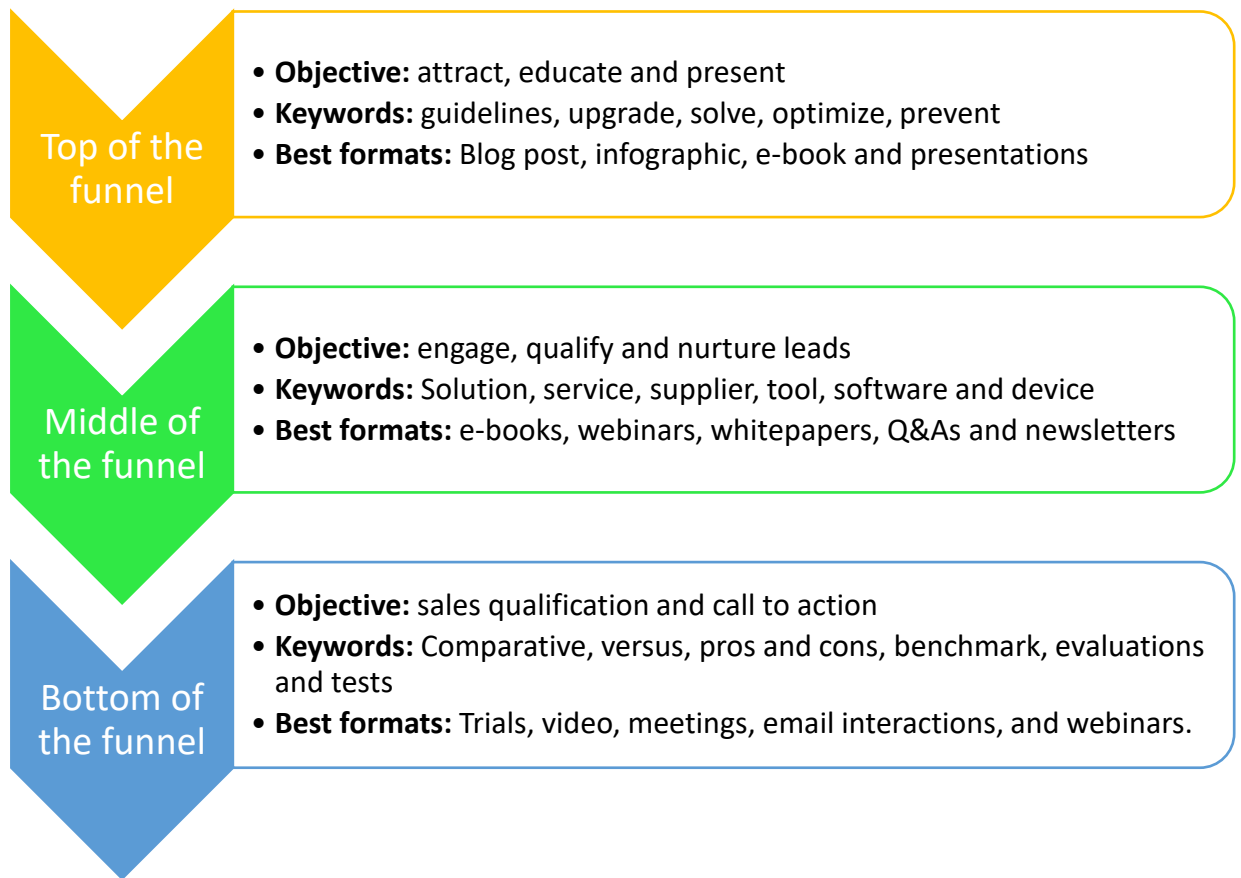


Figure 8. Content creation funnel (Adapted from Rez 2016)

After defining the format of the content and the objective, the next step is to use images and quality **graphic content**. According to Trafton (2014), human brains can process entire images in 13 milliseconds. There are hundreds of studies into how much images and visual content impact our brains and either create curiosity towards the text or scares the visitor away. Human eye like images. Subsequently, adding this type of elements to the business content will generate more engagement and impact the readers. Posts with real applications, image galleries, and interactive media and figures like graphs and tables are good examples of this (Rez 2016). All these elements must always work toward the goal of proving that the product or service works.

According to Smith and Chaffey (Smith & Chaffey 2013), several types of content can be utilized in content marketing, apart from the traditional eBooks and whitepapers. Formats such as videos, podcasts, interactive sites, and user-generated media are some examples of this. This opens an immense panorama for different possibilities to differentiate from other competitors, especially today that consumers tend to rapidly evolve in their content consumption habits due to the infinite amount of available information on the internet (Eastin, Daugherty, & Burns 2010).

Equally important as these previous guidelines are the **use (or abuse) of call-to-action (CTA)**. If a business is generating high-quality content and properly distributing it but not correctly directing the audience into the action that the company wants to promote, potential clients will not generate value for the company. In other words, they are not going to buy (Rez 2016). When people click on CTA, they voluntarily move into the next stage of the process, either if it is from a visitor into a lead or a lead into a customer, CTA must always induce a sense of enthusiasm and interest in the person navigating through the page. According to Probert (Pippi 2018), the essential elements of a successful CTA are wording, aesthetics, and positioning.

The idea behind all these components is to create one extremely high-quality content per a certain amount of time (defined by a strong strategy) from which different mini contents can be generated. Create once and distribute everywhere possible (Rez 2016). This way, the reach of the content can be amplified, and its impact can be more beneficial, and the company can get the most out of all of the resources invested in the creation of this material.

The key for successful content marketing is carefully planning out the creation of each content beforehand, considering several aspects such as buyer persona, objective, and stage of the funnel for which the content is aiming to achieve. Having considered all this, the proper selection of a topic that enables the company to create real value is essential. Companies should invest a considerable number of resources into content creation and carefully choose who develops the content. This becomes particularly important in the business models that work with complex sales processes or industries that require expert knowledge. (Rez 2016.)

3.4.8. Search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO)

Search engine marketing and optimization is an extensive topic. To maintain the focus of this thesis in the inbound strategy as a whole, we will limit the depth of our SEM and SEO strategy to the basics.

Search engines like Google, Yahoo!, and Bing are tools that individuals use to go about their everyday tasks. With a staggering amount of 5.6 billion queries per day (Georgiev 2021), Search engines allow people to filter the abundance of information available on the internet to find the information that they are looking for without needing to navigate through unrelated sites; without them, the internet would be practically useless (Smyth 2021).

Search engine marketing and search engine optimizations are two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, we have SEM, where relevant keywords are selected, and whenever a person fitting the previously defined target market searches for those words inside the engine, a link to the company will be displayed on the screen (Pippi 2018). SEM is a practice that requires setting an amount of budget so that whenever an individual click that ad, the company pays, very similar to paid social media marketing.

In contrast, SEO is a series of actions and tactics done to make a website move up to the top of the organic results for a specific keyword or set of keywords, ensuring its visibility to the searcher, which becomes highly relevant when considering that usually only the five top results are evaluated and taken into account (Yalçın & Köse 2010). According to Barnard (Varagouli 2020), SEO is the art and science of convincing search engines to prioritize the company's content over others due to it being a better solution for the user's problem. SEO can help leverage paid strategies such as third party's software, but it can also be done through non-paid actions. This field of marketing requires a vast amount of technical knowledge in order to obtain good results. Special personnel must be used and contracted to work in this area. Nevertheless, if correctly deployed, the power of ranking high by search engine optimization and marketing can bring enormous benefits and advantages for firms.

In inbound marketing, SEO and SEM play a significant role in the promotion and dissemination of content. These principles are especially important for small companies and start-ups that have reduced budgets that force them to grow organically. Due to the nature of inbound marketing, the ability to be easily found through search engines, especially when researching, solving problems, implementing new things, or learning about new subjects relating to the company's core business (Radd Interactive 2020).

A common characteristic from the most successful cases in the marketing field today is that they all focus on creating quality content and ensuring that content can be easily accessed and found on the internet, primarily through Google. Today, most renowned brands see SEO and SEM altogether as one of the most important features of their strategies (Rez 2016).

Considering all of the above, it is essential to follow and adjust the following guidelines to create the company's SEO and SEM strategy:

- Set a budget and the approach - the first and most important step is to set a budget that can be fully allocated in SEO and SEM. Considering the required actions to

achieve success in both of them, it is crucial to set and a specific budget for each according to the goals and business model of the company. As a rule of thumb, we can consider SEO a strategy focusing on the long term. Results cannot be seen immediately with this approach, but it can create meaningful connections between companies and visitors over time. Companies can either pay or not to do SEO. SEM, on the other hand, focuses on immediate results. It does not have a minimum or maximum amount of investment and allows companies to hyper-target different audiences searching for specific keywords (Varagouli 2020).

- Define and execute– Once the budget and approach have been set, the next step is to plan the strategy's execution. For SEM, we are talking about selecting the keywords and the web site's content that each visitor will see. On SEO, the company will require defining the strategy and deciding if it will be done in-house or through a specialized third party (Rez 2016).
- Assess and optimize – analysing and taking actions based on the results of the actions taken towards SEO and SEM is equally as important as the planning and execution. As we mentioned before, digital marketing allows users to measure every indicator to the minimum metric in order to be able to make informed decisions. Taking advantage of this data is very important, especially for SEO and SEM. Even though their analysing methodology might be very different, it is essential to take time to see the data, analyse the results and take decisions based on the performance. (Lombana 2019).

3.5. Marketing and sales integration

The integration of the marketing and sales department has a significant impact on the customer experience and the potential for earning revenue of the firm (Madhani 2016). Ideally, the marketing department of a company should work with the sales department closely, but in the real business environment, this is usually not the standard. What usually happens is that while the marketing team focuses on adopting and implementing the newest and most efficient trends on lead and traffic generation, the sales department tries to close sales through calling, emailing, and following up on sales opportunities, rarely interacting and giving feedback one with the other (Patel 2017).

Connecting the marketing process into the sales process is not an easy job. However, it is part of implementing an inbound experience for clients that delights them and encourages them to buy again and recommend it to their social circles. When companies fail to do so, all the momentum that has been built through the attract, engage, close, and delight methodology is lost, and customer conversion rates tend to decrease (HubSpot Academy 2021).

According to Lyus, Rogers, and Simms (2010), by successfully integrating the two departments, companies can obtain certain benefits such as gathering better market

intelligence data and better reactions to market dynamics to formulate effective and strategic responses to different market behaviours.

When talking about complex and extended B2B business models, this miscommunication often worsens the situation. The key to overcoming this issue is to promote the interaction between personnel and information from both departments (Patel 2017).

Encouraging interactions of marketing with sales and vice-versa is an important first step into this integration. Furthermore, allowing them to foster friendship amongst the personnel of both departments can enable strong connections in companies that could result in more robust teamwork environments leading to sales success (Jantsch 2018).

It also results extremely important to create an inclusive strategy that requires the participation of both departments is essential (Jantsch 2018). Implementation of joint objectives and key results that rely on collaborative work can encourage teams to support and design strategies in this field.

By gathering information that goes from the first visit to the website, the first business call, the first quotation, and the first sale, businesses can valuable and insightful information that can help in follow-up, resource allocation, and sales forecasting.

To sum up, in order for a company to be able to integrate both departments, they need to implement a client relationship management system (CRM). According to Herrera (22 April 2019), a CRM is the attempt of a company to codify the corporate values of a business by giving the customer the priority. Implementing a CRM is the most critical step towards the integration of the sales and marketing departments. CRM allows firms to gather all the information generated by every interaction from the business with a company so that that information can be used to provide a high-quality experience. With marketing automation software, a CRM allows companies to reach potential customers at the right time and place through the right means, and even though these tools might represent an expense, the benefits will outrun the cost if used correctly (Pippi 2018).

4. The strategy for Company X

4.1. Introduction to the strategy

4.1.1. Considerations

As we have seen up to this point and taking into account all the micro and macro forces that have effects on the company, we have developed a deep understanding of why an inbound strategy applied to the marketing and communications department of Company X is the most suitable approach for the company to grow its revenue streams and KPIs for branding and awareness. With this marketing approach, the firm can solve its communication issues while helping customers better understand the brand, the product, and the pricing.

By embracing an inbound strategy, the firm will position itself as an authority in the rubber sealing market. This also allows the sales department to have a secondary inflow of information to the customer, creating a multi-channel approach to potential clients. Through this inflow, Company X can move toward a more responsive approach to different clients such as retailers, direct and indirect users.

By taking this method, the company will generate revenue funnels and cycles that will generate SQL (sales qualified leads) and create an identity that will give the brand a voice. This voice will assist in further stages when the brand wants to launch new products or diversify into different markets.

Considering Company X's current state regarding resources, personnel, and business stage, we suggest applying the strategy below. To deploy this strategy successfully, several implementations and strategic changes have to be done beforehand to achieve the desired results. These implementations are presented below:

- Allocation of a dedicated employee in charge of managing all the marketing and communications (CMO). This employee will bound together with all the marketing and communications of the company and establish a brand identity, allowing current and future customers to have a correct customer journey and make every interaction of the brand with them meaningful and high quality, connecting and harmonizing the work among sub-departments such as brand identity, advertisement, and sales.
- Allocation of a budget that the company is willing to invest in marketing and communications. According to The CMO Survey (The CMO Survey 2020), companies

usually spend 11.3% of the total budget on marketing. This investment will be divided and applied according to the strategic goals and objectives.

- The utilization of an outsourcing platform allows the CMO to delegate different tasks and projects to specialists in different marketing fields. This platform will allow the company to keep expenses low while accessing professionals on-demand and maintaining productivity high. Designer, copywriter, and paid campaign manager are some of the specialists that will be employed through this system.
- Implementation of a CRM cloud software allows the sales department to unify and record all of the interactions made with SQL, including quotations and closed deals. This software will benefit the sales department by generating a robust tool for selling and allowing the marketing department to analyse different parameters such as lead quality, customer journey after conversion, and essential KPIs such as cost per sale, average sale amount, and customer lifetime value. We suggest Pipedrive for maximum integration capabilities with RD Station and its customer-centric dashboard organization.
- Implementation of a weekly meeting with COO and CEO. 20–30-minute meetings, including the operations department and the company's general manager, are significant to align the company's goals and objectives, assess performance, and address issues that generate through the company's daily operation.
- Since content creation and divulgation will be an essential element of the strategy, the company must designate or find a highly specialized individual capable of generating high-quality content. Due to the nature of the company's field of action, this person has to be experienced in the field and possess knowledge in mechanics, chemistry, physics, and the industry. He will be receiving guidelines and topics of different topics to develop content in different formats such as blogs, videos, presentations, and infographics. The correct selection of the profile and the individual itself will be very relevant in this strategy's success rate.

Moving forward into the strategy, the first and most crucial step of the implementation will be goal setting. According to Pulizzi and Barret (2009), the strategy must be planned according to the organization's overall objectives in order for it to be successfully implemented in a specific business.

After thoroughly analysing the company's product, business model, and complex sales process and understanding its needs, bottlenecks, and pain points, the following OKRs were set.

4.1.2. OKRs

- **Objective:** Create an efficient SQL generating system through inbound marketing.
 - **Key result #1:** Increase brand awareness and brand recognition.

- **Key result #2:** Implement inbound strategies that convert at least 20% of the visitors into MQL.
- **Key result #3:** Increase the SQL conversion rate by 10% monthly.
- **Key result #4:** Find the cost of acquisition (CAC) and Customer lifetime value (CLV) and create a command dashboard.

4.1.3. Company X's value proposition

Company X's Golden circle was structured as follow:

Why – Disrupt the rubber sealing market and contribute to the construction of a more sustainable industrial environment.

How – Through research and development in material science and nanomaterials, we help companies achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing operational and maintenance costs.

What – Supply high-performance rubber sealing solutions personalized to the needs of the application.

We strive to disrupt the rubber sealing market and contribute to the construction of a more sustainable industrial environment with research and development in the science of materials and nanomaterials, helping companies achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing operational and maintenance cost through the supply of high-performance rubber sealing solutions personalized to the needs of each application.

MTP: To contribute to the creation of a sustainable industrial environment by helping companies become more efficient.

4.1.4. Buyer persona

With the help of our research in the company and the information included in our databases, marketing software, and daily customer interaction, we developed three different buyer personas for Company X, presented as follows.

Buyer persona #1 Direct David
(see appendix 2)

Buyer persona #2 Indirect Isaac

(see appendix 2)

Buyer persona #3 Retailer Robert

(see appendix 2)

4.1.5. Selected channels

After thorough research into our buyer personas behaviour and social media usage, we came up with the following considerations for the social media channel selection.

- LinkedIn – We chose the implementation of a LinkedIn channel for two main reasons. The first one is because LinkedIn specializes in promoting interactions between professionals. The second reason is that LinkedIn allows building several types of paid campaigns that allow Company X to either redirect traffic into a landing page outside of LinkedIn or have leads fill a form natively inside of it. LinkedIn fits perfectly into our inbound strategy because many people who utilize this platform are doing it for professional purposes like networking with other individuals, looking for solutions to problems they are currently facing, and supplier research. Therefore, our LinkedIn approach should aim to portray Company X as an authority in the rubber sealing market.
- Facebook – We chose Facebook mainly due to its potential of reach. Being the biggest social media network with more than 2.7 billion active users every month (Facebook 2021) and available in approximately 129 countries (Cosenza 2021) makes this platform a powerful tool for reaching out to national and international markets. Even though most of the time, interactions inside Facebook are not professional, building brand awareness and recognition is important to keep Company X's brand as a top-of-mind option for purchasing rubber seals. Content distribution and posting through Facebook should be highly engaging and appealing to obtain the desired results.
- Instagram – Since Company X is a product-based company, this platform will be a powerful tool for product showcasing and content distribution. Today, more than 25 million brands use Instagram, and 80% of users follow at least one (Smith 2019). This makes Instagram a robust tool for communicating with clients. Furthermore, Instagram also offers engaging tools that help companies organically grow. Live stream capabilities are also included in the platform. Another important benefit to Instagram is that it is linked to Facebook, so even though they are both different platforms, paid campaigns and advertisements can be programmed and managed in the same platform, making this process much faster and efficient.
- YouTube - Finally, we chose YouTube to distribute video format content. Among all the different video platforms that exist, we concluded that YouTube is the best overall, offering different capabilities and characteristics—starting with the fact that YouTube is the most renowned video platform today, it has a daily video upload average of 500 hours of content and more than one 1 billion of hours watched (Smith 2020). Offering livestream capabilities and integration with helpful webinar management software, YouTube was a clear choice for video sharing for Company X.

4.2. Marketing calendar plan

Having successfully established Company X's OKRs, MTP and selected the distribution channels, the next step was creating and implementing the strategy through a marketing schedule. As we have explained in a previous chapter, this calendar helps marketing teams organize and successfully implement a marketing strategy. This marketing schedule gathers the most critical aspects of the strategy and display them in a model presented in appendix 3. The calendar compiles the agenda of the paid social media strategy, the social media posting schedule, and the email marketing campaigns into a single model that displays emails, posts, and campaigns programmed for every day.

The strategy presented next is a plan designed for a two-month inbound funnel cycle. This cycle will aim towards attraction, engaging, closing, and delighting visitors that appeal to Company X's buyer persona #2 (see appendix 2). The model includes the following information:

- A calendar-shaped model – this will be the framework for the model. The calendar will hold together all the information about the strategy and serve as a visual representation of the strategy's timeline.
- A specific day for each post.
- The channel in which each content will be distributed.
- The objective of the post. These objectives are aligned to the OKRs of the company. The objectives can be branding, conversion, closing, and delighting.
- The content that will be posted or distributed, such as image, infographic, blog post, paid campaign, email, or webinar.

Find attached in appendix 3 the calendar for two months worth of strategy.

Starting with the social media post schedule, the strategy consists of two posts per week in one post every other workday model. In appendix 3, the reader can better understand this model. The strategy will be divided into two main groups, the funnel building posts, and the secondary posts. The funnel building posts will aim to promote the content that forms the inbound infrastructure and take visitors through a nurturing experience that will allow them to understand Company X's products profoundly and make informed purchase decisions that pay off in the long term.

Further divided into three stages (awareness, consideration, and decision), these posts will have an image promoting content on Company X's website (e.g., blog posts or videos) or

landing pages. In the example presented in appendix 3, we start the cycle with a post and a blog article about common rubber seals and why they fail. This post strives to **attract** customers by tapping into a recurring problem they probably experience constantly.

The second stage of this funnel is sharing content through a video about the performance of MATERIAL Y in comparison with other materials usually employed in O-rings. This attempts to make viewers potentially **consider** using MATERIAL Y O-rings due to its benefits in the long run, even though it might be more expensive than the material they currently utilize.

Lastly, the funnel's third stage will make visitors **decide** to use MATERIAL Y rubber seals and buy them from Company X. To achieve this, the content created for this stage will showcase the brand and all its benefits, including comparisons against competitors, price, quality, national production, delivery time, and product personalization.

Secondary posts will help Company X communicate its message, create brand recognition and build up its MQL database that will later be used for other marketing purposes. These posts are thoroughly planned to maintain a constant stream of information about topics that range from the brand's origin to a section called Company X informs in which news about the rubber sealing industry and other relevant industries are shared and discussed. Below we break down the different kinds of secondary posts and provide examples.

- Traffic – these types of posts are essential for Company X to help the brand communicate its message. By starting to drive visitors to Company X's website and social media profiles, the company increases the post's and website's impressions allowing the firm to spread its content and reach more people. This traffic can also be turned into followers. Having many followers in social media channels creates authority and social proof, not to mention that it indirectly increases the reach of Company X's content. See appendix 7 for a traffic post example.
- Marketing qualified lead-gen – As we have defined in the previous section of this chapter, Company X's main objective is to create SQL. Having ads optimized for native or external conversion through a landing page is mandatory in order to achieve the company's main objective. In order to promote conversions, some bait content offers can be made. An excellent example of this is offering a free eBook about Company X's core business like MATERIAL Y O-rings. By offering a reward for visitors that leave their contact information, Company X can share valuable content and generate MQL, which can be later turned into SQL. Landing page quality in this regard is essential and has massive implications on the conversion rates. See appendix 7 for a lead-generation post example.
- Brand recognition – While traffic posts might not directly impact traffic, or profit, creating familiarity through repetition is critical for digital marketing. Company X will be able to position in potential customer minds by multichannel experiences that offer visitors a subtle stream of Company X branding and consideration material. This

post's only purpose is to create a high volume of impressions to ensure maximum exposition to potential customers. See appendix 7 for a brand recognition post example.

The model also displays a colour code section on top of each day of the week representing the paid social media and search engine marketing campaign. We gave a colour code for each stage of the inbound funnel, awareness, consideration, and decision. Each day with a colour banner will represent a specific type of ad that will be active that day. These ads contain the same structure as the funnel building posts, but the difference relays in the reach. Social media posts can only reach a limited audience mainly composed of followers and contacts of followers who share Company X's content. In paid social media and search engine marketing, the reach is only limited by the marketing budget and the size of the target market. This way, the strategy's reach is exponentially increased to generate more leads in each stage.

On top of this, an additional branding campaign with a reduced budget will be active during all the cycles. This campaign will generate MQL through an eBook bait content offer. In other words, we will offer a free eBook about MATERIAL Y in exchange for the visitor's contact information. This information cannot be used for sales (yet). This information will be used in nurturing automated sequences to occasionally send high-quality content to convert that MQL into a SQL.

Even though the delight stage is not directly addressed as an individual step or individual ad. The strategy strives to generate an overall delightful experience that starts from the first stage of the funnel to the last stage. Each component of the strategy must be carefully and thoroughly planned out so that every contact point with the lead is seamless and provides a good experience.

This model also includes the scheduling of e-mail marketing campaigns. These email newsletters will be sent out once every month and summarize the best contents generated in that month. The objective of these is to build an additional contact channel where content can be shared in a more personal yet, refined way. Newsletters will drive additional traffic into the funnel resulting in better results. Visitors and potential customers will have several options to opt-in to the newsletter, such as website exit pop-up and SQL-gen campaigns.

4.3. Paid social media strategy

In the previous section, we discussed the marketing calendar and the different contents that it handles, and the paid social media strategy's functioning. The paid social media strategy will focus on boosting the funnel building posts and contents through the different ad managers of the social platforms. In other words, Company X will pay to Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to display its ads to followers and non-followers that attend to the previously selected buyer persona profile.

In appendix 4, we provide a model that helps understand the paid social media campaign better and understand its distribution throughout the eight weeks.

To analyse, measure, and optimize the performance of the social media investment against the results generated, such as the number of leads and profit generated. Company X requires to generate a results dashboard. These dashboards can be organized with data visualization tools such as Google Sheets or Microsoft's PowerBi. This tool will allow the CMO to assess important KPIs such as CPL, CPO, CPA, CAC, and CLV and ensure that the made investments are within the permitted values and generate the desired results. If those KPIs are off, actions and adjustments must be taken to ensure effectiveness and a favourable cost/benefit ratio.

By outsourcing this service, Company X would be able to maximize the performance and results of the social media investment. At the same time, much time can be better allocated towards other essential tasks for the company.

4.4. Content marketing strategy

We have now reached the most critical element of inbound marketing, content. Content is what will set apart a successful strategy from an unsuccessful one.

Due to Company X's core business nature, content creation cannot be left in the hands of any member of the marketing team. Content creation for Company X needs to be either third-partied to a specialist or done in-house by employees with the required knowledge to develop topics relating to chemistry, mechanics, and industry.

In this particular case, we will use the figure of a rubber sealing specialist that will be an in-house employee contracted with the unique function of developing high-quality technical content for Company X's marketing strategy. This on-demand work will be the production of content by request of the marketing department. Marketing personnel should define a material creation order in which they will include the following requirements:

- **Name of the specialist** – author and responsible for the material.
- **The number of content** - sequence of content creation.
- **Request date** – the date on which the content was requested and sent to the specialist to produce.
- **Deadline** - a deadline a few days before the posting date should be included to allow the marketing department time to make the necessary changes to the redaction style and copy optimizations.
- **Format** – The type of format in which the specialist has to return the content. E. g. video, text, infographic, PowerPoint presentation.
- **Objective of the content** – It is essential to define the purpose of the content so that the specialist can tailor and focus the content into the result or the feeling that the marketing department wants to generate in the reader.
- What **stage of the funnel** is the content addressed for - the stage is also needed to understand the best approach for the content and type of content should englobe.
- **Topic of the content** – what the topic of the content will be.
- **Keywords** - keyword selection is also vital for SEO and ranking purposes of the content. According to the topic of the content, certain words need to be chosen so that the material is easier to find and access by visitors looking for information about that topic.
- **Content** – a brief description of the content that needs to be developed by the specialist and the most important subtopics to develop.
- Other **notes** - special considerations or other important information that the marketing department wishes to communicate to the specialist.
- **Call-to-action** description - marketing department should mention whether a call-to-action is going to be included in the material or not. Some examples of a CTA are:
 - Request a quotation.
 - Schedule a consulting session.
 - Participate in the webinar.
 - Contact us.
 - Etc.

Find attached appendix 5, an example for a content creation request for specialist John Doe for a blog entry presenting himself as a rubber seal specialist for Company X.

Having defined all these previous points, the request will be sent to the specialist to develop the content and deliver it in the requested time.

Depending on the type of content requested, a distribution strategy will be planned out beforehand in the strategy calendar.

Notably, for Company X's inbound strategy, we concluded that a new process would start every two months. This means that every two months, four main contents are going to be created for Company X. Each of these four contents will attend each of the inbound stages (attract, convert, close, and delight). Simultaneously to the creation and distribution of contents attending the four stages, secondary contents will be created and distributed to assist inbound processes for customers and potential clients outside the primary inbound cycle, ensuring that every client and potential client is an outstanding experience.

4.5. Marketing automation software and funnel construction

Automation is today a shortcut towards productivity in any industry; the marketing industry is not the exception. Previously in this project, we discussed the importance of having marketing automation software. According to Rez (2016), a good strategy for companies to increase their sales without increasing the number of salespersons is through marketing automation. Having robust automation in a firm's marketing strategy helps businesses to generate more leads while ensuring an automatic yet scalable follow-up.

Moreover, a marketing automation software will construct the general structure of our marketing funnel that starts with a visitor and ends with a buyer. Since Company X was already using RD Station, we will continue with it. RD Station will be the hub for centralizing all marketing operations. Like the inbound process, the RD Station menu offers options such as attracting, converting, engaging, and analysing. Each of these options will provide different tools that we will need along the creation of the inbound process. We will now provide an overview of each of this option and their application into Company X's strategy to create the sales funnel

4.5.1. Top of the funnel (ToFu)

Starting with the top of the funnel (ToFu), also known as the attract section, Company X will reach customers and give the brand visibility. In this section, we will be able to automate social media posts on Facebook, Linked In, and Instagram so that all the posts are done automatically at a specific day and time. Additionally, we also have a keyword planning dashboard that helps the company to identify and assess the keywords that will be used in the search engine marketing strategy with the most important metrics such as the existing competition for each word, the average cost per click (CPC) and an estimated volume of searches for that word every month. In appendix 6, the reader will find an example of some

relevant keywords for Company X’s strategy. Social media posting and search engine marketing combined with a paid marketing strategy and quality content targeted for the top of the funnel will ensure a high volume of visitors flowing into the top of the funnel every month. Refer to figure 9 for a graphic explanation of this first stage.

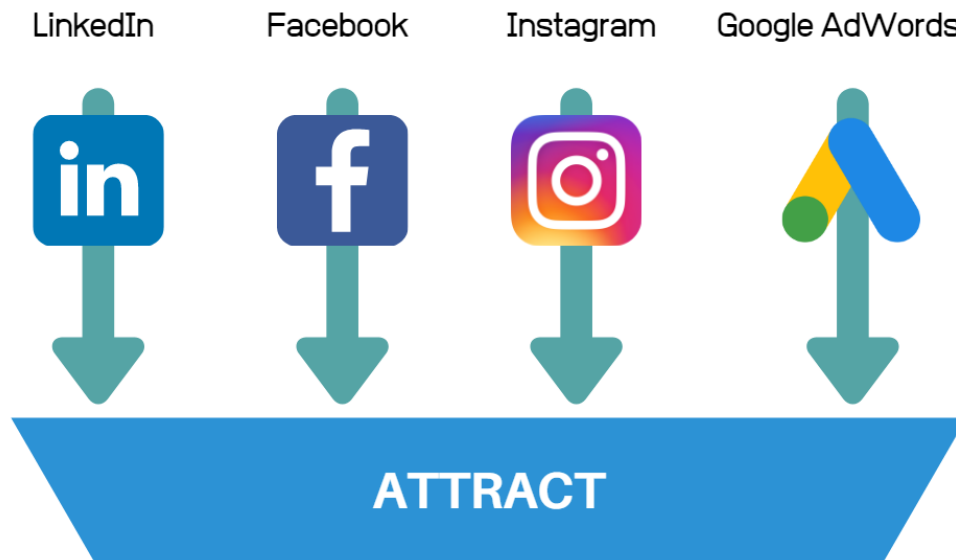


Figure 9. Top of the funnel (Adapted from Stoican 2020)

All these different channels will showcase either the content made by the specialist or the free eBook in an attempt to bring traffic from the channel (Facebook, Instagram, Linked In, or Google) to the next stage of the funnel.

4.5.2. Middle of the funnel (MoFu)

The middle of the funnel or conversion stage is the next step in the strategy. Once we have captured the visitor’s attention, we will either bring him to our website or our landing page. Here, we will try to convince the visitor into converting to a lead by providing an immediate value offer. This value offer will either be a blog post with a CTA written by a rubber sealing specialist (SQL) or a free eBook download (MQL). RD Station will then save all the visitor information in our database. Depending on the type of lead SQL or MQL, the lead will either be sent to a specialist or kept in RD for further communication and actions (see figure 10).

Additionally to the landing page, in this part of the menu, we will also activate the exit pop-ups used in our website to capture leads that did not take any action or conversion in our website

and register an exit-intent. These pop-ups are small emerging windows shown to the visitor once the website detects that the visitor wants to exit.

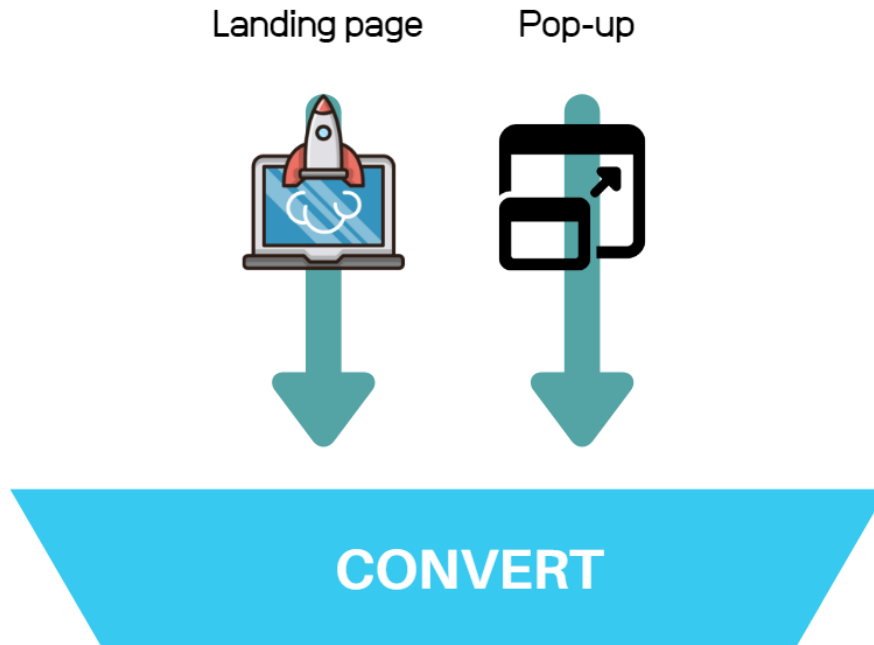


Figure 10. Middle of the funnel (Adapted from Stoican 2020)

4.5.3. Bottom of the funnel (BoFu)

On the final stage of the funnel, we will focus on lead nurturing and closing. Here we will find tools relating to the customer journey of each of the leads. We will be able to access the history of interactions from each potential client with any of our points of contact. We can use this information for different purposes like improving and optimizing customer journeys or finding trends and patterns in the consumers. However, for the purposes of this work, we used it to set up marketing automation flows that will allow the company to send automatic emails every time a visitor converts into a lead through a landing page or pop-up.

Going back into our example of the free eBook and the specialist blog post with a CTA. Our sales automation software will recognize the origin of each of the conversions and act accordingly. In the case of the MQL generated through the eBook offer, they will stay within the database of RD Station and will constantly receive different types of content that will have different goals to eventually create purchase intent and change the type of lead from MQL into a SQL.

On the other hand, SQL will be automatically sent to the company's CRM to be further managed by the sales department. RD Station will automatically identify that the lead has a purchase intent and input that lead's information into Pipedrive. Pipedrive will receive the lead and notify the chosen specialist that the lead has purchase intent, and the specialists will then be responsible for managing the relationship and try to close the sale. In figure 11, we showcased the structure of the third and last part of the funnel.

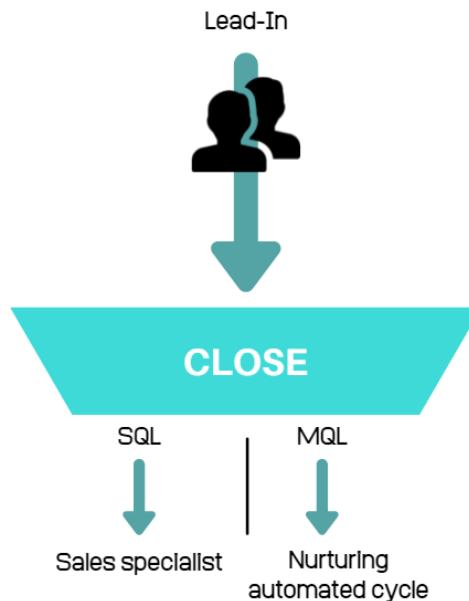


Figure 11. Bottom of the funnel (Adapted from Stoican 2020)

Once we close the first sale, the real work begins. The marketing department is now responsible for keeping the engagement between the company and the lead alive. By doing this, the new customer will always think first in Company X when wanting to purchase O-rings. By doing so, the company can create a recurring and loyal customer base that adds up to the new leads that enter the funnel every month.

4.6. Integration of the funnel

Once all the required infrastructure has been set, the result should be an integrated sales funnel where every stage is interconnected with different tools and resources. This infrastructure also allows marketing personnel to have all the KPIs required to assess the performance of the tunnel and make the required optimizations to increase conversion rates. We can think of the funnel as a machine for generating sales and revenue. Once it has been appropriately planned, programmed, and assembled, the machine has to be feed with content

and investment (see figure 13). This investment will allow the content to reach substantial amounts of persons. The persons that identify with the content and find it helpful will start flowing into the funnel. This system also functions as a filter, where in the end, the only persons that are going to talk with the specialists are the highly qualified and informed leads.

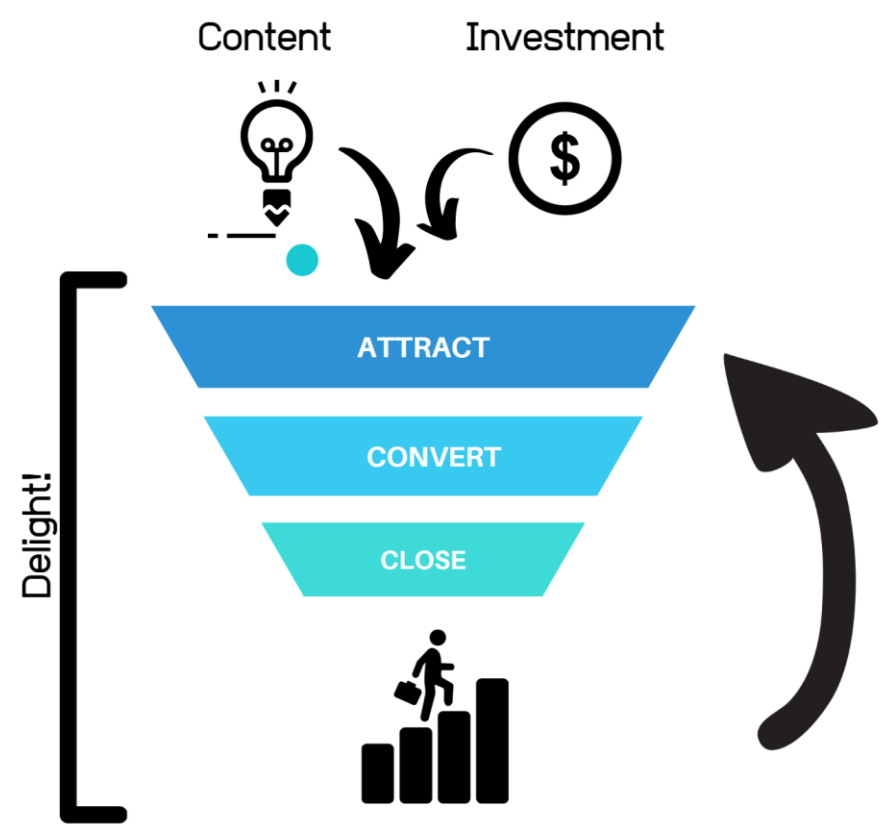


Figure 12. Inbound marketing funnel integration (Adapted from Stoican 2020)

Once the cycle is complete, it starts again for new leads and current customers. The most important thing is to provide an outstanding experience through every stage of the funnel. In the end, everyone can make a good product, everyone can invest in digital marketing, but not everyone can provide a high-quality experience through every step of the funnel. This will pay off and will differentiate Company X from other competitors in the MATERIAL Y O-ring market.

5. Conclusions

Throughout this project, we reviewed the creation of an inbound digital marketing strategy for Company X. We analysed why this type of marketing approach is the best suited for the company's specific business model, market, product, and particular conditions. The strategy presented, if properly planned and executed, over time will bring value for Company X in financial terms but more importantly, it will allow the company to fulfil its mission of contributing to the environment while allowing companies to be more efficient, accelerating the speed of industrial modernization and the same time, protecting our planet.

This strategy aimed to create a defined marketing process that allows customers to reach four very punctual determinations before closing a sale: coming in contact with the brand and understanding the problems it solves rapidly (**attract**), comprehending its value proposition and how it could be a potential fit for the prospect (**convert**), enabling a correct and seamless transition with the sales department (**close**) and lastly, ensuring that every further online interaction with the brand always pertains to the highest of quality and provides a pleasant experience (**delight**). It was explicitly created for this commissioning company and focuses on solving its most fundamental communication challenges due to the complexity of its consumers, the challenges of the market it serves, and the pain points of its sales processes.

By following the previously defined framework, other industrial B2B companies with similar characteristics to Company X might find this work relevant for their businesses. However, most of them will require to make certain adjustments and tweaks to allow the strategy to fit its requirements and business objectives.

The world has changed and will continue changing for as long as humans exist. Inbound marketing is not the unique path to business success and fulfilment. Understanding the underlying marketing principle that this thesis strives to communicate, is. By doing so, any marketing professional will be able to navigate through the constantly changing human mindset and generate value for any type of business. This principle is linked to the deepest human desire, recognition.

Recognition is what makes humans, humans, and content is one very effective way to appeal to that instinct and make audiences feel part of something bigger and more profound to life than life itself.

New businesses and start-ups like Company X must understand this and use it responsibly to influence and create consciousness in the new generations. Companies today, more than ever, must fully embrace and acknowledge their accountability as role models for society and act accordingly.

A better world is just one post away.

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