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The Guide to Inbound Marketing Basics for eCommerce Companies



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Introduction

Retail eCommerce sales are expected to increase to **\$4.058 billion by 2020**, making up 14.6 percent of the retail sales for that year.

With this influx of competition, it is crucial for your eCommerce company to stand out from the competition with a solid inbound marketing strategy.

Long gone are the days of offering quick online discounts with the goal of skyrocketing sales. Today, eCommerce companies must rely on inbound marketing to educate, convince, and convert leads into paying customers.



What is Inbound Marketing?

Inbound marketing is defined as “the process of attracting customers through relevant and helpful content and adding value at every stage in your customer’s buying journey.”

This approach to marketing was derived from a change in customer behavior due to the abundance of information available on the Internet. Customers now want to do their own research and purchase on their time.

In fact, **61 percent of Internet users research a product online before making a purchase.**

According to **Hubspot**, inbound marketing has four distinct phases, which are:

- Attract.
- Convert.
- Close.
- Delight.

Marketers rely on engaging and informative content along with strategic marketing tactics to move potential customers through these four phases.

Your goal as an eCommerce company is to transform a website visitor into a happy, loyal customer through your content and conversations.

For example, eCommerce companies can **attract** potential customers through an educational blog post. You then **convert** the visitor into a lead through an email subscription form or onsite chat. To **close** the lead, you must entice the potential customer to make a purchase on your website. Finally, to **delight** the customer, you continue offering top-notch content and providing exceptional customer service long after the transaction.

As you’ll soon learn, every step of the inbound marketing process requires well-crafted content, from blog posts to product descriptions.

What Inbound Marketing Tactics Should eCommerce Companies Use?

To introduce potential customers to your company and help them through the inbound marketing phases, consider using these four marketing tactics:

Content Marketing

The [Content Marketing Institute](#) defines content marketing as:

“... a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience – and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

With this definition in mind, it is easy to see how content marketing fits into the inbound marketing funnel. eCommerce companies must create and promote content that attracts a target audience, with the goal of converting those individuals into paying customers.

There are numerous types of content that eCommerce companies can leverage as part of a content marketing plan, including:

- Educational Blog Posts.
- Press Releases.
- Product Descriptions.
- eBooks and White Papers.
- Interactive Content.

According to [Hubspot's](#) research, over 95 percent of website visitors do not make a purchase on their first visit. Instead, they do their research, think about their options, and finally, make a decision.

Content marketing helps educate and build a relationship with a potential customer. Creating content for every step of a visitor's purchase process increases your chance of a sale and ultimately, a long-term customer.

Search Engine Optimization

While creating valuable content for your audience is a vital aspect of inbound marketing, your audience needs to be able to also find that content online. **Search engine optimization** (SEO) is the process of “increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.”

Considering that **93 percent of online experiences begin with a search engine**, it is imperative that your website, content, and products rank well on top search engines. To decide the search result rankings, search engines send bots out across the Internet to crawl websites for information and data. The bots take a series of factors into consideration, including (in no order of priority):

- The quantity and quality of links to and from the website.
- Content length.
- Keywords and phrases.
- Social signals.
- Context of website pages.
- User data, such as clicks, navigation, and path.

As an eCommerce company, you want to optimize your product descriptions, product and service pages, website content, and marketing assets to rank higher on search engines for the appropriate keywords. Without such optimized content, you'll have a difficult time attracting an audience, which will lead to a lack of interested buyers in your inbound marketing funnel and poor sales metrics.

One common tactic for improving your eCommerce search rankings is leveraging customer reviews. It has been reported that **80 to 90 percent of shoppers read online reviews before buying a product**.

Wondering how to get started with SEO? Check out this quick **beginner's guide from Moz**.

Social Media Marketing

Remember, inbound marketing is about attracting, converting, closing, and delighting the customer. Fortunately, social media marketing fits into several of these phases.

For instance, you can use social media marketing to distribute your written content to the right audience through targeted posts and ads. You can also promote your eCommerce products (with expertly written ad and product copy, of course) with ads on the social networks your audience uses. When a visitor clicks on an ad, you've moved them from the Attract to the Convert phase.

Social media can also be used to entice audience members to Close or make a purchase. Have you ever been on a website and didn't make a purchase, only to see an ad on Facebook for that same product? These are known as remarketing ads.

Once the customer makes a purchase, they are in the Delight phase. Here, you must continue to provide relevant and engaging content via social media.

Social media marketing also offers eCommerce companies a wealth of opportunities, including:

- Customer research.
- Community building and engagement.
- Customer service.
- Content distribution.

With **23 percent of online shoppers stating they are influenced by social media recommendations**, social media plays a pivotal role in an eCommerce inbound marketing strategy.

Email Marketing

Similar to social media marketing, email marketing works with every phase of the inbound marketing funnel:

- Attract: Ask website visitors to sign up for your email newsletters.
- Convert: Send subscribers relevant blog content that informs and entertains.
- Close: Send subscribers exclusive deals, discounts, and promotions for your eCommerce products.
- Delight: Continue sending customers valuable emails containing pertinent information and exclusive offers.

When emailing subscribers and customers, remember to offer content that will add to their experience with your brand, not detract from it. Never bombard subscribers with numerous emails and always follow the 80/20 rule: 80 percent entertaining/educational content and 20 percent sales-related content.

Now that you know what tactics to use for inbound marketing, you'll need to gather a few assets to get started.

6 Assets eCommerce Companies Need for Inbound Marketing

For a comprehensive and successful inbound marketing strategy, your eCommerce company will need the following tools and necessities.



1. Sales CRM

To follow the user's path through the inbound marketing cycle, you'll need a customer relationship management (CRM) program. These sales and marketing tools allow you to track a wide set of customer information and a multitude of data points, such as:

- What products a visitor has viewed on your website.
- Where a visitor is in the sales cycle.
- What content a visitor has interacted with.
- What sales professional is assigned to a specific customer.

These relationship management platforms help you determine where a user is within your inbound marketing cycle and identify what tactics or processes must be used to guide them to the next step.

2. Effective Product Descriptions

Product descriptions can make or break a sale.

Potential customers can't go up to a sales counter to learn more about a product when shopping online. With this in mind, your product descriptions must tell a customer everything they need to know, from why they should purchase the product to the product's specific features.

Product descriptions are a crucial piece of content for your inbound marketing strategy. From the Attract to the Delight phase, product copy can be used for search engine optimization, on social media, and in email marketing messages.

Ideally, you will want to enlist the talents of a professional eCommerce copywriter. These experts have the know-how and experience necessary to understand your target audience and write flawless copy that creates customers.

3. Marketing Assets

Throughout your inbound marketing strategy, you'll also need a variety of marketing assets. Three main assets to possess are content, a marketing budget, and the right technology.

As you now know, an eCommerce inbound marketing strategy requires a wealth of content, from instructional product videos to inspirational blog content. Take time to sit down with your marketing team and discuss the various types of content you can develop for customers at each phase of the inbound marketing cycle. The more valuable content you can provide to help them with their purchase decision, the better.

You'll also need a defined marketing budget. This budget can be used for social media ads, pay-per-click search campaigns, email marketing credits, and so much more. Understanding the ins and outs of your marketing budget will help you make wise decisions regarding the direction of your inbound marketing strategy.

Lastly, you need the right technology to execute your inbound marketing plan. From a fully functional website to customer relationship management software, make sure these programs and tools are in place before you begin executing your strategy.

4. Social Media Profiles

If you plan to use social media marketing as part of your eCommerce inbound marketing efforts, you need to fill out your profiles in their entirety. Take advantage of every relevant section of your social media profile, including the imagery, descriptions, and links.

Also, your eCommerce company does not need an account on every social media platform available. Instead, use the networks your audience is most active on.

5. Optimized Website Content

As search engine optimization is likely also part of your inbound marketing strategy, your website must be optimized accordingly. Everything from the URL structure to the product description must be created and optimized with search engines in mind. Be sure to reference the [Beginner's Guide to SEO](#) from Moz to get started.

Without optimized content, you'll have trouble attracting the audience using search engines to find your products online!

6. Messaging Platforms

To help the customer through the various stages of inbound marketing, you need to be in constant communication with them. Messaging platforms are the perfect communication tool for eCommerce companies. In fact, research shows that **48 percent of consumers would rather connect with a company via live chat** than by any other means of contact.

From chatbots on networks such as Facebook Messenger to on-site instant messaging platforms, there are many tools that allow you to spark a dialogue with your customer at any point in the purchase cycle.

With messaging apps and chatbots, you can:

- Ask if the customer needs assistance.
- Deliver relevant and timely content.

- Answer customer questions.
- Help customers with support problems.
- Create an engaging dialogue with interested website visitors.

Plus, many of these chat platforms integrate seamlessly with sales CRMs for data-driven inbound marketing opportunities.

With these inbound marketing assets in your toolbox, you'll be ready to execute your strategy and drive online sales.



Content is Key for eCommerce Inbound Marketing

For a successful eCommerce inbound marketing strategy, you need exceptional content. From attracting website visitors with enticing website content to aiding their purchase decision with insightful product descriptions, content is the centerpiece of your strategy.

No matter how you organize your eCommerce inbound marketing plan, make sure you have well-written content for every step of the way.

