

## **How to Pitch Inbound Marketing to Your CEO / Management Team**



**Let's face it:** Inbound marketing is efficient, it's powerful, and it's here to stay. Even customers who have never heard the term inbound marketing before now fully expect it's what they're going to get when they start to engage with a brand – and that's equally true in both B2C and B2B.

Sales cycles are getting longer, and prospects have more control over the process than ever. With so many sources of information and so many competitors to choose from, there's no need for them to contact the sales team until they're good and ready.

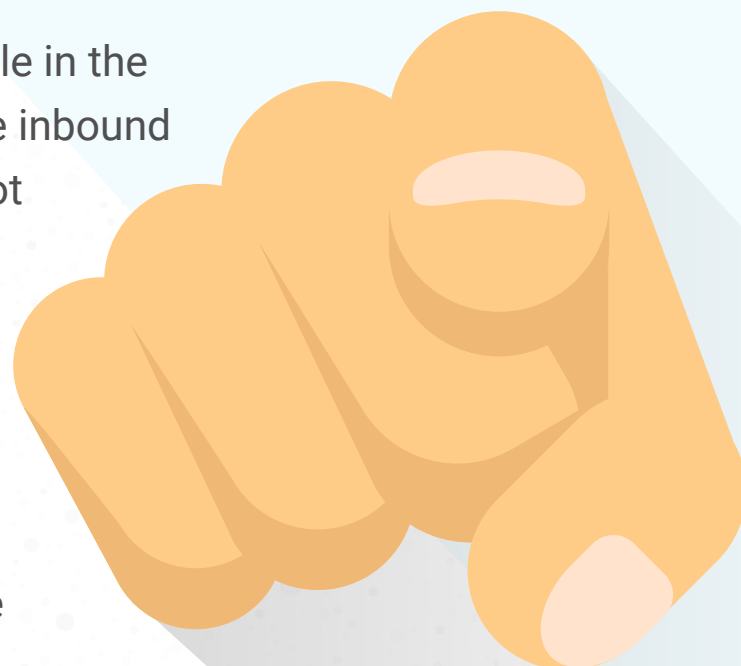
What does it all mean? Conventional outbound sales and marketing techniques are quickly losing ground. Prospects expect the enterprises they work with to demonstrate their quality and prove value before the first sale is made.

*That's precisely where inbound marketing comes in.*

As powerful as inbound marketing is, however, it's being overlooked in many companies. The biggest reason why is simple: **Inertia**.

Maybe there's simply not enough people in the organization who understand the value inbound has in store. Or, just as likely, there's not enough time and resources to drive a major campaign for change that will affect so many teams in such a considerable way.

Whatever the situation, inbound typically starts its journey with a single internal advocate: **You**.



No matter whether you're in marketing, sales, product development, or somewhere between them all, you have the power to start a wave of change that will bring inbound marketing to your business. It may not happen all at once, but each step you take makes the next one easier.



Most enterprises don't shift 100% from outbound to inbound marketing, nor do they embrace everything inbound entails right off the bat. But, if you want to shoot for the moon, the fastest way is to get your case in front of the CEO – who better to use their clout to spark change?

In the best case scenario, you have a mandate to craft a complete inbound strategy. In the "worst" case, you've built the framework for your team to integrate certain aspects of inbound and build on them in the future. Either way, your marketing will be that much more effective and customer-centered.

So, let's say you want to take inbound to the top – all the way to the CEO. In an ideal world, you could walk into the boardroom, give a stirring speech, and walk out with a full commitment to do what you need to do to make inbound happen.

In the real world, the preparation can take anywhere from a few months to a full year. Let's look at the steps you can take to bolster your case.

## Prepare the Foundation

They say Rome wasn't built in a day; the same is true of a good inbound marketing organization. The more prepared you are, the easier it'll be to pitch your case to senior leadership. After all, even agile thinkers like your average CMO want to be sure that initiatives aren't part of some flash in the pan fad. A full arsenal of facts and actionable ideas needs to be on your side.

Here's how you can assemble your toolkit one piece at a time.



## Find Allies Among Your Colleagues

Anywhere you look within a marketing or sales team, you're bound to find a few people who grasp the appeal of inbound marketing intuitively. After all, inbound allows you to get more work done faster – helping you automate the tedious stuff and focus on higher-level tasks.

Start the conversation around inbound simply by seeing what people know and where they stand. You may find that there are several team members already interested in diving into inbound, and some may be familiar with basic tools. What's missing? The spark of inspiration to pull it all together.

Make note of who seems interested in inbound and who brings solid skills to the table. As your efforts progress toward a pilot program or even full-scale inbound marketing adoption, you'll want to check in with these folks and help them get in on the ground floor.

## Gather the Facts from Top Inbound Sources

Inbound marketing offers a slew of critical business advantages that you'll find yourself repackaging depending on the audience you're talking to. It delivers better productivity, stronger marketing ROI, higher team morale and – most importantly, but often hardest to quantify – deeper customer relationships.

*Luckily, you don't have to re-invent the wheel and figure all these out yourself.*

In addition to our own humble blog (cough, cough) you can find plenty of other thought leaders out there who have gathered tons of research and hard statistics on the best that inbound has to offer. You can start compiling your dossier with [HubSpot](#) and [the Content Marketing Institute](#).

Sooner or later, you'll be using these stats as part of your presentation deck.

## Check the Health of Your Outbound Techniques

It's said that people only really embrace change to seek pleasure or avoid pain – and for most, the latter motivation is stronger. For enterprises that need to deliver earning results fast, this effect is enhanced: If existing outbound methods are falling down on the job, inbound can look even better.



There's still a place for outbound marketing in an inbound world, but the fact of the matter is this: Conventional cold calling and high pressure sales tactics are turning off more prospects than they pull in. Within your own company, you can probably find performance stats to back this up.

So, what happens if outbound is still doing great in your neck of the woods?

Well, first off, you have time on your side: More enterprises are adopting inbound and more buyers are giving outbound the cold shoulder. Still, it's best to keep sales pros on your side – after all, sales and marketing need to work together to achieve the best inbound results.

So, just remember that inbound marketing has a lot to offer sales teams in any earnings climate:

- Better lead qualification and less time spent chasing down people who'll never buy;
- More data for lead ranking, so teams can truly optimize time spent with prospects;
- Content marketing and other methods that operate as hands-free lead attractors;
- Typically, data integration with CRM to make lead nurturing that much simpler.

No matter what state you find outbound in, add the key points to your growing presentation: Inbound marketing has the potential to revitalize a flagging sales organization or imbue a winning team with new life. Either way, it's the road to success as prospects grow more resistant to outbound.



## Do Research on Your Competition

The need to keep up with competitors can help to shake enterprises out of their complacency. Luckily, foundational SEO tools like [SpyFu](#) can provide you with the competitive intelligence you need to see just how much your rivals are already doing with inbound.



Rival companies with substantial organic traffic and search visibility – especially on keywords related to your business – are sucking the air out of the room for your branding and sales efforts. Identify five major competitors: If even two of them are using inbound, it's a sign you need to move fast.

At this point, senior stakeholders who don't know the ins and outs of inbound marketing may be tempted to ask if the ship has already sailed – in essence, if it's "too late" to catch up to a rival's lead without spending money hand over fist.

Of course, it's never too late to establish a strong inbound marketing presence that helps you connect with your ideal customer. Still, the sooner you get started, the better; and the benefit will only build with time. You can incorporate some of this time pressure into your presentation.



## Find a Starting Point

Odds are good that your company is already doing something like inbound marketing, albeit by a different name. There may not be an overarching strategy, so start looking for the bits and pieces you can develop into a coherent inbound approach.

For example: Does your brand have a blog? Who is in charge of writing for it?

Are you using an analytics suite to capture user behavior data across your Web properties?

Do you have an automated email sequence for on-boarding and welcoming new prospects and customers? Is it properly forked and customized to meet the twists and turns of different buyer journeys?

All these elements and many more might already be quietly making the case for inbound. See what you can find out about the results these puzzle pieces are already delivering. It's not hard to connect the dots between your research and how much better those outcomes could be.

## PART II: Make Your Case

It may be weeks or months later, but by now you've got a good idea of how inbound marketing is changing the landscape inside and outside your business. You're probably already finding ways to draw inferences and whittle down your compendium of inbound marketing facts into a powerful presentation that will move your team forward into the new digital epoch.

Now, it's time to push things a little further and start working on the big strategic moves.

To get people enthusiastic about change and make it stick, you need one of two things: The right allies in your corner or existing results to point to. It's up to you to determine which of these is most feasible – and you can even go for both – but either road will lead you to your goals faster. Without one or the other, it's all too easy for stakeholders to circle the wagons and resist.

Let's head into phase two of our scheme:



## Look for an Executive Sponsor

Guess what? The information you already have may be enough to attract attention from senior marketing stakeholders – maybe even as far up as the CMO. You'll want to go as high as you can to find someone with the chops to get everybody else pulling in the same direction. Plus, if you end up presenting to the CEO, you can use this as a dry run and potentially get top-level feedback.

An executive sponsor makes the rest of the change management process much easier, and may even be where the story ends for the time being: You'll have the chance to institute a broader inbound marketing strategy that will deliver growth and build momentum for a bigger wave of change. But what happens if you need to start smaller and work your way up instead?

## Run a Pilot Program

If you can't quite climb all the way to the executive suite yet, a pilot program is for you.

For just about any other major change campaign, "dashing off a quick pilot program" would be like flying to the moon. Inbound marketing makes it easy: All you need is a sketch of a full strategy, an editorial calendar for content, basic blogging capabilities, and an analytics suite.

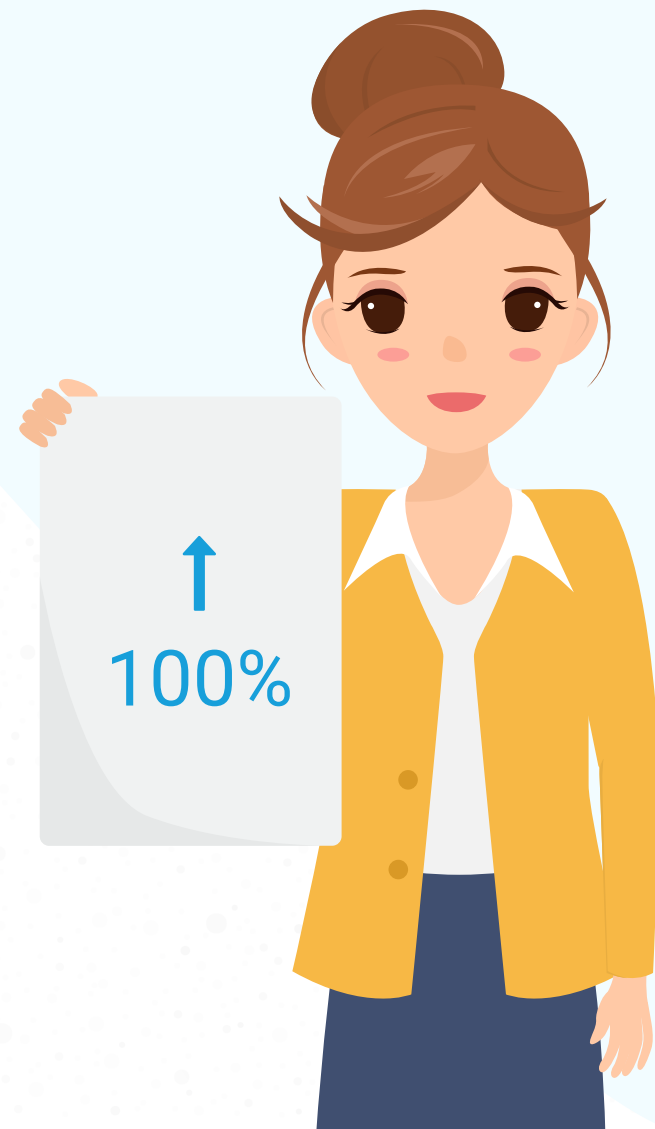
It's all easily accessible on your existing platform or free from third-party sources.

Done right, a pilot program combining blogging, social media, and visual content can show off your brand's power to connect with prospects through informative content. Using your existing knowledge about prospect pain points, plus a little keyword magic, you can drive traffic to relationship-building channels such as your subscriber list.

From there, the ROI is just a quick calculation away – and it all scales up easily.

## Determine Your Executive Audience

Armed with your presentation, your pilot results, and/or the backing of your executive ally, it's about time to put the



final touches on your inbound marketing pitch. In this, you've got a huge advantage over the average Joe: You understand how important it is to know your audience inside and out.

On the Web and in life, too many messages fall flat because they're targeted to anybody and everybody – leaving them compelling to nobody at all. Luckily, your C-suite consists of only a few people and you know what their key interests are, even if you've never met them personally.

Let's look at three of the key players whose concerns you should address:

### Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)

- Naturally most concerned about ensuring marketing remains modern;
- Wants to leverage digital technology trends to get better KPI results;
- Always looking for ways to drive down costs of customer acquisition;
- Advocate who usually educates the CEO on Web-based buying trends.

### Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

- Most concerned about achieving sustainable profit and shareholder value;
- Prefers approaches that generate strong ROI at lower upfront investment;
- Naturally believes in measuring and monitoring performance quantitatively;
- Wants to see a clear path from new investments to sustainable growth.

### Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- A potential wildcard – some very forward-looking, others very traditional
- Needs to be certain marketing shift won't imperil established brand image
- Focus on top-level execution, wants to know talent is there to drive change
- Tends to favor concrete KPI growth, so a pilot program is a big incentive.

A book or three could be written on the topic of executive presentations, so we won't dive deep into the nitty-gritty here. Suffice to say that if you've followed our advice so far, you should have a bevy of resources and powerful data – enough to make your case and answer common objections.



***The data  
doesn't lie.***

## Get Started on the Next Journey

Even if you wrap up to a standing ovation from the board, it doesn't mean it's all a cakewalk from here. Before inbound marketing is truly entrenched in organizational culture, you'll need about a year of consistent results.

In the first year and beyond, consistency and process maturity will be keys to success.

Luckily, it's hard to find yourself losing progress once you've built an efficient, effective, and scalable inbound marketing apparatus. In addition to geometric effects on Web traffic and engagement, inbound can also help you define your brand and strengthen customer loyalty. With the human touch, your business will be more protected from market downturns and other challenges.

No inbound marketing organization is perfect, and the journey never ends. Still, inbound will make your sales and marketing efforts more dynamic, creative, and impactful for your audience. As it grows, it can become one of the most powerful competitive differentiators you have.

And it all starts with the decision to champion inbound at the highest levels you can reach.

*So, what are you waiting for?  
Get out there and be the change – you can do it!*

