

Outbound vs. Inbound Marketing

Know the difference and devise the right strategy for each.

It's common for companies to be expert in the development of technologies that underpin their products and services. But many organizations are less developed when it comes to knowing what it takes to drive awareness, generate leads, and achieve revenue through marketing activities. The usual solution is to hire a crack sales team. But active selling is only one half of the strategy companies should employ. This is a primer for what tech-focused executives should consider when preparing to go to market.

OUTBOUND MARKETING



Outbound marketing is where you go out and win the business; i.e. you reach out to a lead via email or phone, follow your typical sales process including qualifying, educating, overcoming objections, negotiating price, and then finally closing the sale. Think of Outbound Marketing like promoting your business by broadcasting through a megaphone.

INBOUND MARKETING



Inbound marketing is where business comes to you; i.e. a potential customer finds out about your product or company on the Internet; for example, enjoying content you placed on a prominent and credible website. The prospect researches further, contacts your company to learn more, and becomes a warm lead without active intervention. It's then up to you to turn that lead into a sale. Think about Inbound Marketing like promoting your business by strategically placing magnets around the Internet.

WHICH IS MORE EFFECTIVE?

Effectiveness depends on your specific type of product, service, or business and who you are selling to. In general, though, it is most effective to employ both inbound and outbound marketing strategies to achieve your revenue goals. Think of inbound and outbound marketing activities like this:

Inbound = 'Pull' Marketing

Tactics that *earn* people's interest instead of buying it.

attributes:

- Interactive communications
- Customers find you
- Provides added customer value
- Goal: educate & entertain

tactics:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Search Engine Advertising (SEA)
- Value-added content marketing
- Community referrals

Outbound = 'Push' Marketing

Methods that *push* products on customers they weren't necessarily looking for.

attributes:

- One-way communications
- You find customers
- Provides little customer value
- Goal: close the sale

tactics:

- Print, radio or TV advertising
- Email marketing
- Direct mail marketing
- Cold calling

Of course some company's products or services don't lend themselves to both inbound and outbound marketing strategies. But here is one way to consider whether you are employing all of the strategies available to support your company's success. Ask yourself...

- What more could your company do to actively push information about your products or services to where your target customers are located?
- What more could your company do to place value-added information (or entertainment) where your target customers might see and appreciate it?

Answering those two questions could help you create a winning strategy for both 'catching fish with your rod' and 'luring them towards your net.'

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Finally, here are a list of items that you need to know or at least consider when creating your plan:

1. Know the demographics of your target buyer and where you can find them. You can discover this through online ad testing or surveys. It is critical to your future success.
2. When defining who your target buyer is, consider that there are many different people you can sell to. The trick is to find the people who will see you as a hero and will tell all their friends.
3. You are the leading expert about your products or services and probably get asked questions about them all the time. Why not post the most common answers on your website as a FAQ?
4. Understand that if you are in sales, you are also in customer service and thereby set the tone for the entire customer relationship with the company.
5. Be on the lookout for new ways to use technology to your advantage for selling. The next mobile app, social media service, or custom video software could just be what you need to get noticed.
6. Be careful how you communicate, especially where humor is concerned. Tastes differ and making someone hate you is worse than selling nothing at all.
7. When qualifying your prospects either directly, or through indirect content, don't focus on their pain points. Instead, focus on their challenges and how to overcome what's holding them back. This requires a nuanced understanding of your customers, but is well worth the trouble to find out.
8. Most of all, think of the customer journey you are architecting—both inbound and outbound—and try to make it be like a theme park ride: when they get to the end, they should want to go again, and tell all their friends to try it as well.

Is there some aspect of marketing that you'd like to see us write about? Leave a comment below or contact us at info@prodalchemy.com.