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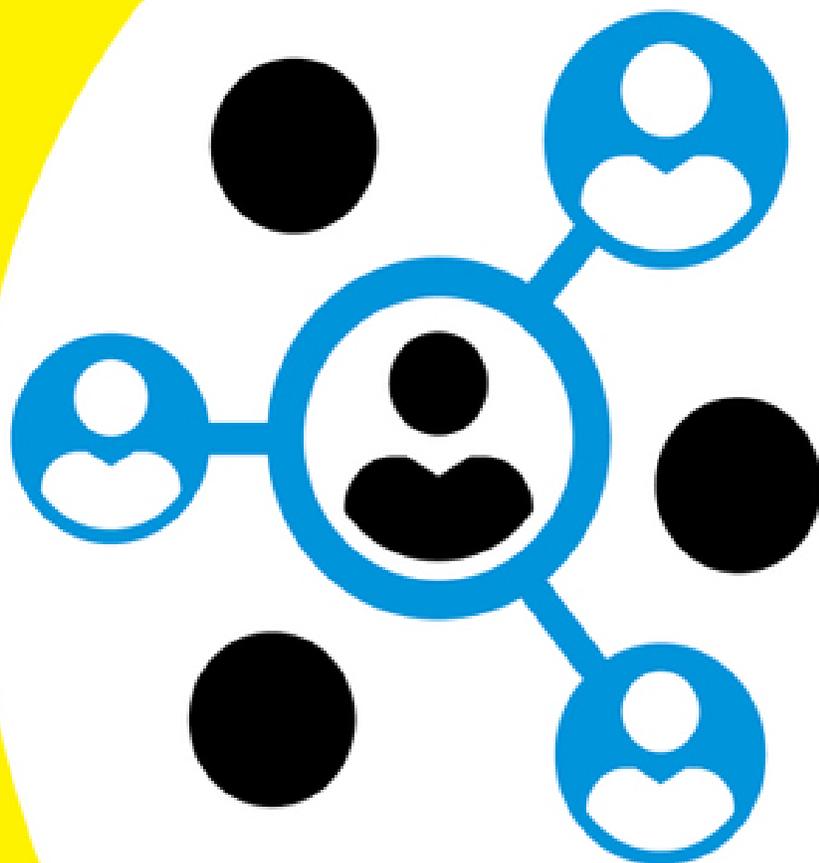
Inbound Marketing

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Build your inbound marketing team
- Develop relationships with your customers
- Convert your inbound traffic to sales
- Attract more website visitors

Scott Anderson Miller



Introduction

Traditional marketing methods don't work anymore. With over three billion people accessing the Internet, over half of them via mobile devices, you are living in the connected "global village" predicted by Marshall McLuhan in 1968. Power is shifting from company brands to individual consumers armed with influence and currency. Consumers research, shop, and purchase when and where they want, on their own schedules. Does this mean you should give up marketing for good?

Meet *inbound marketing*, a holistic system that creates meaningful connections between organizations and people. The ultimate inbound-marketing goal is marketing to a customer as an individual, creating a connection that culminates in a desired end — an action in the form of a sale, donation, or subscription.

This book teaches the principles of connecting with consumers on *their* terms, not on the marketer's terms. My aim is to clarify inbound marketing best practices so marketers succeed in connecting products with people. This book is a guide for you as an inbound marketing strategist and practitioner.

Inbound marketing is attractive because it creates timely, relevant, and contextual connections. When executed properly, inbound marketing results in an end purchase, donation, or engagement that appears natural to the user because the consumer proceeds at his or her own pace and stays in control throughout the process. All you have to do is communicate an authentic message that resonates and attracts consumers. Better connections result in better conversions. This customer

attraction and conversion process is the essence of inbound marketing.

About This Book

Inbound marketing is a hot topic. It's more than a trendy fad or a buzzword. Inbound marketing's foundation is attraction over interruption messaging. Inbound marketing integrates messaging that is contextual, relevant, and timely for the intended recipient, and integrates into your target consumer's purchasing behavior. Interruptive messaging (such as a TV ad), on the other hand, unnaturally disrupts your consumer's behavior. Integrating your marketing based on your target customers' needs is a fundamental paradigm shift from "push" marketing to "pull" marketing.

In this new paradigm, traditional marketers are quickly becoming dinosaurs. Their old methods of marketing don't apply in the new digital age. They need a primer to adapt and evolve. By connecting with consumers early in the purchase process and by serving up content that is relevant and timely, marketers can achieve a higher level of success. Anyone new to this paradigm needs a guidebook to correctly implement inbound marketing in his or her organization. That's where this book comes in. *Inbound Marketing For Dummies* teaches marketers and business owners how to succeed in this new, dynamic environment.

Foolish Assumptions

The book clarifies the principles and processes of inbound marketing to aspiring and seasoned marketing professionals alike. It teaches how to attract, convert,

and keep customers for life. As such, it's a good resource for any of the following:

- ✓ Marketing directors
- ✓ Marketing coordinators
- ✓ Marketing consultants
- ✓ Ad agency owners
- ✓ PR firms
- ✓ Small-business owners
- ✓ In-house marketing personnel
- ✓ Bloggers/content producers
- ✓ Users of marketing automation software or sales customer-relationship management software

This book assumes you have a basic working knowledge of marketing from which you are looking to expand and grow. It also assumes your company has Google Analytics connected to your website.

Icons Used in This Book

In this book, material of interest is sometimes indicated by icons in the margins. This section briefly describes each icon in this book.



Sometimes the volume of inbound marketing information can be overwhelming. You'll see this icon to help you easily scan important inbound marketing information.



Whenever there's a simpler or better way to make complex information simple, you'll see this icon.



There's a lot that can go wrong with inbound marketing. Believe me, I've made my share of mistakes. Paying attention to this icon helps you avoid common inbound marketing pitfalls.



Used sparingly, this icon designates information beyond the basics of inbound marketing. When you see this icon, don't freak out! Just knowing the basics of inbound marketing elevates your knowledge base above the typical marketer.

Beyond This Book

A lot of extra content that you won't find in this book is available at www.dummies.com. Go online to find the following:

✓ **Online articles covering additional topics at**

www.dummies.com/extras/inboundmarketing

Here you'll find out how to create three-dimensional content that connects with consumers, learn ten steps to creating an inbound marketing campaign, and ten criteria for choosing marketing automation software, among other details to aid you in your inbound-marketing journey.

✓ **The Cheat Sheet for this book is at**

www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/inboundmarketing

Here you'll find additional helpful inbound marketing resources online and on my inbound marketing tech e-cheat sheet.

✓ **Updates to this book, if we have any, are also available at**

www.dummies.com/extras/inboundmarketing

Where to Go from Here

This book makes the new marketing paradigm clear to you. Although it's important to remember inbound marketing is a process, and even small pieces contribute to the whole, feel free to scan the table of contents or the index to find topics helpful to your particular marketing situation. Additionally, I've provided a glossary of useful inbound-marketing terminology at the back of the book.

Part I
**Getting Started with
Inbound Marketing**



Visit www.dummies.com for great *For Dummies* content online.

In this part ...

- ✓ Learning the difference between inbound marketing and traditional marketing.
- ✓ Understanding the positive impact inbound marketing will have on your organization.
- ✓ Learning the four objectives of inbound marketing.
- ✓ Introducing the three-step inbound process to your organization.
- ✓ Discovering components of an organized, systematic inbound marketing plan.

Chapter 1

What Is Inbound Marketing, Anyway?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Viewing inbound marketing as a philosophy and a system
 - ▶ Understanding inbound marketing's contribution to success
 - ▶ Attracting and converting customers
 - ▶ Connecting on multiple levels with inbound marketing
 - ▶ Knowing the three-step inbound marketing process
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Welcome to the world of inbound marketing. If you're a marketer who believes in authenticity, thrives on achieving goals, and embraces measurable success, you're in the right place. Inbound marketing is more than just marketing; it's a business practice. The inbound philosophy can create meaningful change in organizations large and small. Many times, this business evolution transcends financial metrics, affecting the very culture of an organization. The resulting productivity and achievement often surprises even top leadership. The metamorphosis from traditional marketing to inbound marketing attracts better customers and better employees. The outcome is usually expressed as higher revenues and profits. Inbound marketing has improved the businesses of my clients and of my own two marketing firms. I trust that by instituting an inbound

philosophy within your organization you'll realize positive change, too. Just remember, inbound is not something you do, it's something you live.

Knowing the Basics of Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing is both a science and an art. Inbound marketing involves the science of measuring connections and making data-driven decisions, and the art of dissecting, analyzing, applying, and testing initiatives that connect in a meaningful way. Specifically, inbound marketing measures:

- ✓ Connections between companies and customers
- ✓ Connections between sales and marketing
- ✓ Connections between marketing investments and meaningful, measured financial results defined in terms of return-on-investment (ROI)

Inbound marketing causes actions and reactions. At its most basic level, inbound marketing consists of:

- ✓ Attracting visitors to your website
- ✓ Nurturing those visitors, on their terms, within a structurally planned dynamic environment (your website) that facilitates action
- ✓ Converting those visitors into leads and, in turn, leads into customers through mutual exchange of valuable data (content for customer data) via a systematic process
- ✓ Reconverting prior customers into loyal, lifelong customers

Some other assumptions under the inbound marketing philosophy:

- ✓ Consumers engage with companies on their own terms and on their personal timeline.
- ✓ Information empowers consumers to make smarter shopping and purchase decisions.
- ✓ Online authenticity is rewarded with high customer satisfaction and positive online consumer reviews.
- ✓ Openly sharing information and content creates trust.
- ✓ Content connects products with people, the marketing department with the sales department, and marketing initiatives with measurable business results.
- ✓ Data-driven decisions increase the odds of success.
- ✓ Measuring what matters improves performance.
- ✓ Customers' needs dictate product features and service offerings.
- ✓ Marketing automation facilitates efficient business practices.
- ✓ Relationships between brands and consumers are possible in the digital world.

Understanding Inbound as a Philosophy and as a Marketing System

You've heard plenty of buzz about it. You're pretty sure you should be doing it. But what — exactly — is inbound marketing?

Inbound marketing is a holistic, fully integrated approach to building your business via the Internet, based on the law of attraction — the belief that like attracts like. Inbound marketing is also both a business philosophy and a business practice.

Inbound as a philosophy

Philosophically, the term “inbound” goes beyond the marketing function, though the scope of this book is limited to marketing strategy and initiatives. Inbound as a business philosophy, and specifically as a marketing philosophy, refers to a complex customer-centric business model.

In particular, inbound marketing is a paradigm shift from the belief and practice of interruptive “push” marketing methods to a philosophy of attractive “pull” marketing. Inbound marketing isn’t solely about great creative campaigns, beautiful graphic design, or logos. Although these things may represent characteristics of inbound marketing, a truly attractive inbound marketing campaign dives deeper than sleek advertising whose main intention is to seek attention.

Does your organization believe in the inbound philosophy? Here are some traits of the inbound methodology:

- ✓ Your company innovates based on satisfying unfulfilled consumer needs.
- ✓ Your customer relationship extends beyond the transactional.
- ✓ Your company connects with customers at multiple levels at multiple points in time.
- ✓ Your focus is beyond making the first sale, extending to creating a customer for life.

- ✓ You encourage customer interaction, listen to feedback, and respond accordingly.

Is your company ready for inbound?

Answer these questions to determine whether your company is ready to try inbound marketing:

- ✓ Does your company actively interact with prospective customers before the first purchase?
- ✓ Does your company interact with its customers with non-sales messaging before the first purchase?
- ✓ Does your company know the lifetime value of its customers, expressed in terms of dollars and influence?
- ✓ Does your company use content to create meaningful connections before, during, and after a sale?
- ✓ Does your company know its customers beyond the first purchase?
- ✓ Does your company create consumer value beyond a transaction?
- ✓ Is your public messaging customer-centric or product-centric?
- ✓ Is your private internal messaging customer-centric or product-centric?
- ✓ Does your company solve customer problems?
- ✓ Do you communicate with prospects at both the emotional and rational level?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, your company is primed and ready to begin implementing inbound marketing.

The inbound philosophy thrives upon mutual trust, meaningful relationships, and two-way communication. Inbound marketing creates shared connections between consumer and company based on mutually beneficial connective points. The most successful companies create value beyond the product or service they're selling to enhance a consumer's lifestyle. Brands like Starbucks and Red Bull have a value that extends well beyond the customer's need for a beverage; they represent an

aspirational lifestyle to which their customers connect on such a deep level they actually “live” the brand.

Inbound marketing as a system of attraction and conversion

In practice, inbound marketing is a connected system of online customer attraction and conversion. When a stranger becomes a lead, a lead becomes a customer, and that customer lives and advocates your brand ... *that* is the flawless execution of inbound marketing. This powerful conversion process is why more and more organizations are practicing inbound marketing. Of companies that practice inbound marketing, 93 percent see an increase in lead generation.

Using this principle, inbound marketing specifically aims to attract those potential customers who have signaled or demonstrated an interest in what your organization has to offer. You have a valuable product or service consumers want or need — something they’re searching for online. Inbound marketing speaks directly to that need by creating conversations that connect with prospective customers, then facilitating a positive conversion action. By the way, these conversions are not always measured by the items in the online shopping cart. Your desired conversion action may certainly be a purchase, but it also may be any derived action, including:

- ✓ Donations
- ✓ Reviews
- ✓ Shares or Likes on Facebook
- ✓ Retweets on Twitter
- ✓ Downloads

- ✓ Demos
- ✓ Free trials
- ✓ Webinars
- ✓ Newsletters

By offering value and facilitating connections, inbound marketing “pulls” in customers based on their specific expressed needs. This attractive “pull” method is a key approach that defines inbound marketing.

Simply put, the practice of inbound marketing can be defined as:

Attraction + Conversions = Customers

Learning Why Inbound Marketing Is Important to Your Organization

Massive change is occurring in the business ecosystem. This is true in the business-to-consumer and business-to-business sectors. Inbound marketing doesn't just address this change; it embraces it.

There is an unprecedented shift of power from the giant corporate conglomerate brands to individual consumers. Never in history has the individual consumer wielded so much power, currency, and influence. You and your brand have lost control. And that's okay ...

Today, the individual consumer decides:

- ✓ What information to consume
- ✓ Where to consume information online

- ✓ When to consume information online
- ✓ When to engage with your company
- ✓ Whether to perform an online conversion like downloading, purchasing, donating, or signing up for a service or newsletter
- ✓ When to buy
- ✓ Whether or not to leave a positive/negative review of your business or product

Each consumer's online action affects your business. The aggregate consumer behavior may have profound effects on whether or not you're able to attract visitors and convert those visitors into leads or customers. Individual actions affect your overall ability to succeed in business.



Inbound marketing is at the heart of this change in power from brand to individual. Inbound marketing embraces this change by communicating to an individual's specific needs. When your website greets visitors and customers on *their* terms, on *their* timeline, at *their* pace of content and product consumption, you're practicing inbound marketing. Interrupting this flow disconnects you and your brand from your website users. That means you're disconnecting yourself from potential business.

The shift in power from brand to consumer is good news for the savvy, adaptable marketer. It's bad news for traditionalists who keep shouting louder at smaller audiences, barking up the wrong trees.

Exploring the Benefits of Inbound Marketing



Here are the benefits your organization will see upon embracing the inbound marketing philosophy and implementing an inbound marketing system:

- ✓ Measurable marketing that connects initiatives with business ROI
- ✓ Better communication between your marketing and sales departments
- ✓ Earlier access to the consumer purchase path
- ✓ Increased customer engagement with your brand and products
- ✓ Internal accountability and ownership of results
- ✓ Business growth in dollars, units sold, and market share

Defining the Differences between Traditional and Inbound Marketing

Traditional media isn't dead, but it's dying. The traditional marketing methodology of interruptive "push" messaging is dying at an even quicker rate. This is due to the ability of the individual to dictate purchase patterns.

Here are some major changes occurring as you read this:

- ✓ 2014 marked the first year in history that total search engine marketing (SEM) spending surpassed total broadcast TV spending in the U.S.
- ✓ Two out of three marketers have moved at least 30 percent of their budgets from traditional media to digital media in the past three years.
- ✓ Print ad revenues are now the lowest they've been since 1950.
- ✓ Nearly half of consumers say they won't return to a website if it doesn't load properly on their mobile devices.
- ✓ In 2015 mobile searches (85.9 billion) overtook desktop-based searches (84 billion) for the first time ever.

Traditional marketing

Traditional marketing was designed with good intentions, but it was limited by the medium. Before the advent of the Internet and the resulting proliferation of information and data, control of information rested in the hands of a few powerful media outlets. If you wanted to know the weather forecast, for example, you stayed up late to watch the evening news. Remember when TiVo was considered cool because you could watch your favorite show whenever you wanted?

Traditional marketing worked, and it can still work, but traditional marketing, by definition, is a one-way message from brand to consumer. Traditional marketing was founded on interruptive, product-centric messaging, and it relies on massive message broadcasting that's not conducive to developing meaningful, personalized consumer relationships. Further, more media choices means more fragmentation. Consumers accessing multiple screens simultaneously (TV, desktop, mobile

devices) results in divided consumer attention, eroding the impact of your commercial message. Individual media consumption and behavior is migrating away from broadcast messaging. So although traditional marketing consumption is still great when measured in terms of hours spent with traditional media, it is becoming less relevant and less effective.

Inbound marketing

Inbound marketing works for the very reason that traditional marketing doesn't. Inbound marketing meets a previously undiscovered or unfulfilled need: creating meaningful conversations based on individual actions.

By definition, inbound marketing systems create opportunities through bidirectional messaging between brand and consumer. This two-way messaging is attractive to individual consumers who wish to engage on *their* terms and based on *their* perceived needs.

Although traditional and inbound marketing campaigns may be combined, they are quite frequently misused, such as TV ads with QR codes or the annoying pop-up ads on websites. It's too easy for online searchers to bounce from your website by clicking somewhere else, leaving your site and engaging elsewhere with another brand, maybe your competitors. Knowing that traditional marketing practices do not apply to your inbound marketing success helps you avoid costly mistakes, lost revenues, and negative reviews. ([Table 1-1](#) compares the features of inbound and traditional marketing.)

Table 1-1 Traditional Marketing vs. Inbound Marketing

<i>Traditional marketing</i>	<i>Inbound marketing</i>
Product-centric	Customer-centric

<i>Traditional marketing</i>	<i>Inbound marketing</i>
“Push” messaging	“Pull” messaging
Interruptive	Attractive
One-way communication	Two-way conversation
Transactional	Relationship-based
Defined start and finish	Ongoing loop
Linear	Multi-faceted
Static	Dynamic
Brand power	Consumer power

Understanding the Four Objectives of a High-Performance Conversion System

A high-performance inbound conversion system is designed to attract and convert. A well-designed system facilitates action and reaction. This conversion system acknowledges the multiple conversion points along the purchase path and facilitates a conversion at each point.

Your inbound marketing system’s four primary objectives are:

- ✓ Inbound marketing attracts visitors to you where you greet the prospective customer on *their* terms.
- ✓ Inbound marketing engages your website visitors through meaningful, relevant content so visitors become leads.

- ✓ Inbound marketing encourages a lead to take actions that can eventually be monetized (purchase/donation/referrals/and so on).
- ✓ Inbound marketing reengages previous customers, causing reactions (additional purchases/reviews/and so on) resulting in repeat customers while fostering a loyal fan base. These loyal fans are sometimes called brand evangelists, fanatics, or advocates. I call them *Lifestylers*.

The type of visitor you attract depends on your customer profile. Conversion time and buyer paths also vary by individual business model. The time it take for a visitor to become a customer and, in turn, a loyal customer, varies greatly for a business-to-consumer e-commerce retailer with an average purchase of \$2.00 as opposed to a business-to-business manufacturing company whose average sale is \$200,000.

Attracting interest with inbound marketing

What is inbound marketing if it does not address the needs of your prospective customers? Nothing. So, give customers what they want. Period.

The first tenet of inbound marketing is attraction, search engine marketing (SEM). SEM consists of various methods of attracting people to your website. The various forms of SEM that attract include:

- ✓ Pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns through Google AdWords re-targeting campaigns
- ✓ Bing ads in the U.S. and Baidu in China
- ✓ Online paid display advertising
- ✓ Paid listings

- ✓ Search retargeting and remarketing
- ✓ Search engine optimization (SEO) to be found in organic rankings
- ✓ Content marketing
- ✓ Social media campaigns on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and so on
- ✓ Email marketing

Purists contend that paid search and online banner advertising are not part of the inbound family. I disagree because SEM practiced under the inbound philosophy is attractive marketing, meaning it serves up relevant results that satisfy consumer needs, based on your understanding of those needs. PPC is a subcategory of SEM and inbound SEM helps attract visitors to your website. Your website content should be relevant, timely, and well-organized regardless of whether it is earned or paid media that attracts the prospective buyer.

Creating internal and external connections with inbound marketing

Effective inbound processes systematically track visitor and customer onsite behaviors. A well-designed inbound system delivers timely, relevant, and contextual information. We call this *content*.

So, ideally, you'll be able to deliver the information your prospects and customers want when they want it. That's determined by:

- ✓ The customer's location in the Purchase Funnel/Buyer's Journey/Lifestyle Loop

- ✓ The buyer profile/persona with whom you're attempting to create a conversation
- ✓ The product/service/conversion you're encouraging the customer to seek and buy

Causing customer conversions with inbound marketing

Customer conversion is a process rather than a single end event. As you can see in [Figure 1-1](#), customer conversions are a series of progressive, connected events. There are key conversion events that can be measured and should be. Each of these key conversions is a link in the Customer Conversion Chain.



Figure 1-1: The Customer Conversion Chain.

The customer conversion process and the Customer Conversion Chain are covered more in-depth in [Chapter](#)

19.

Introducing the Three-Step Inbound Process

At both of the marketing firms I've owned, we practice a process I learned from Blair Enns, author of "Win Without Pitching" and a consultant to marketing firms. It's deceptively simple because it's only three steps — although I've modified the language a bit. Here it is:

1. Diagnose the business problem.
2. Prescribe strategic marketing solutions.
3. Apply marketing solutions to solve business problem.

Although this message is designed for marketing firms, it has far greater application because it exemplifies the inbound process. In fact, it's a great way to approach any problem because it helps frame and define your situation first. Knowing the problem you're trying to solve may sound like common sense, but how many times have you begun marketing initiatives before fully understanding the business problem at hand? Statements like "We need to do Social Media" or "Let's hire an SEO expert" are usually off-base or premature because they assume an incorrect starting point. Beginning campaigns with tactics is why so many marketers never earn the respect of their business peers. Start with your desired end business result — that is, your ideal business outcome.

Diagnosing with a baseline assessment/audit

Imagine this scenario: You walk into your doctor's office after twisting your ankle, and he says, "Don't bother

sitting down. You look sick. I'm going to get you on chemotherapy right away. Come back and see me next year if you don't get better." You'd leave, wouldn't you? Any sane person would.



Physicians are trained to diagnose before they prescribe. Marketers should do the same. Like a good physician, you should begin by asking questions of your organization:

- ✓ How do you know where you're trying to go if you don't know where you are?
- ✓ Do you know your consumer profiles?
- ✓ Have you written target buyer personas?
- ✓ Do you know what motivates your prospective customers?
- ✓ Do you know and measure your website and page visits, conversion rates, and track leads from marketing to sales?
- ✓ Are you able to source those leads?
- ✓ What's the value of your customers?
- ✓ Can you connect this data, reporting it as meaningful business ratios?

Diagnosing your current marketing situation will help you see where your organization is as opposed to where you want to be. You'll discover there is a gap. Don't worry, there's always a gap. If there wasn't, you couldn't grow.

Unless you are a panicked marketer or an irresponsible marketer, or unless you just like to leave you or your clients' success up to the whims of Lady Luck,

performing a marketing diagnostic is the best starting point.

Prescribing business solutions through strategy

Strategy is a written prescription. Effective inbound marketers start with a strategic assessment (diagnosis) and a formal, written strategic document. This strategic document is your inbound strategy prescription. The best inbound strategies

- ✓ Define your current state with highly defined metrics
- ✓ Identify your organization's desired end business results
- ✓ Define future success, usually in dollars
- ✓ Perform a SWOT analysis — strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- ✓ Include SMART goals — specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timebound
- ✓ Use keyword research to uncover consumer needs
- ✓ Connect your current state to your desired future state with a series of well-planned marketing initiatives
- ✓ Outline a prioritized set of initiatives to most efficiently reach goals and objectives
- ✓ Include a content strategy
- ✓ Assign ownership and accountability
- ✓ Define meaningful metrics by which your success will be gauged

The idea of including a SWOT analysis and articulating SMART goals is not a revolutionary one. It should be standard practice for marketers, but it's not. It's time

inbound marketers incorporate a common business practice into their actions and language. So, start with strategy based on a solid audit or assessment or don't start at all. Anything else is just a sophisticated form of gambling.

Applying solutions with inbound initiatives

The third step is to apply solutions. Remember, the inbound marketer is solving customer problems and business problems, not mere marketing problems. The marketing is the connection between product and persona, and there is no singular path to achieving success. With inbound marketing, there is rarely a "right" or "wrong" initiative. The world is too complicated, the competition too sophisticated, and the consumer too dynamic to predict everything. So even though you're attempting to satisfy a successful desired end result, the path may be twisting with some blind spots along the way. Your end destination is the same, but your method of getting there may change as you uncover new information.

You're here to solve business problems. This is where the marketing expertise of yourself, your team, and your professional marketing partners converge. Knowing your organization's strengths and weaknesses and knowing when to ask for help is as important as the inbound marketing initiatives themselves.

Things You Can Do Now

- ✓ Read more about inbound marketing so you familiarize yourself with the inbound concept.

- ✓ Research inbound marketing online to further expand your knowledge.
- ✓ Attend a webinar or a conference to fully immerse yourself with other inbound marketers and learn from them.

Chapter 2

Introducing the Inbound Philosophy into Your Organization

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding inbound marketing as a philosophy
 - ▶ Understanding inbound marketing as a connected system
 - ▶ Learning whether inbound marketing makes sense for your organization
 - ▶ Overcoming internal resistance to change
-

Whether you're the CEO of an enterprise organization or a marketing intern tasked with checking out "this inbound marketing thing," you may face forces that interfere with instituting inbound marketing in your organization. It's easy for old habits and the temptation of others to reinforce a traditional mindset derailing the implementation process.

So, to the CEO I say: Be bold and courageous in leading your company into the forefront of the digital age. Inbound marketing is a proven process and it works. To the marketing person whose pleas for change fall on deaf ears I say: Follow the steps outlined in this chapter — create a case for inbound marketing as a business solution and in doing so you'll create more value for yourself as an employee and for the marketing department as a whole. If you're unable to create change