


THE MANUFACTURERS GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AN INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY

A **seven step process** to generating
new sales in a digital economy

A black and white photograph of an industrial welding process. A robotic arm is positioned over a workpiece, with a bright, intense light and a spray of sparks emanating from the point of contact. The background is dark and industrial, with various mechanical components visible.

Equinet
THE INBOUND
AGENCY

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The manufacturing industry is being disrupted. Macro forces are combining to place intense pressure on organisations and entire industries. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (and all that it entails) is looming large.

Manufacturers can no longer rely on a direct or distributor sales force to generate growth. And traditional sales and marketing tactics don't work like they used to. You need a different approach, and inbound marketing could be the answer.

As a manufacturer, you will understand the importance of measuring your processes and systems. Your marketing should not be the exception. And, putting strategy before tactics, you are assured of the best possible outcome from your marketing efforts.

Knowing how you appear to the outside world and how you compare to your competitors in this new digital age is an absolute imperative today. It is no longer an option to rely on referrals or to lean back on the 'sales-led' approach you used to employ.

Recognising the forces driving change in your industry has to include the shift in power from seller to buyer and the need to be found, understood and valued way before your sales team is in conversation with new prospects.

So, how do you plan and implement an inbound strategy for manufacturing? This seven step process will provide a roadmap to guide you.

STEP ONE:

ESTABLISH A BASELINE AUDIT WITH GOALS AND TIMELINES

Before you develop an inbound strategy, you need to evaluate where you stand by conducting a comprehensive baseline audit. You also need to establish your goals and timelines.

With specific goals in place, you can determine the right sales and marketing tactics and the level of application needed to achieve those goals. Questions to answer here may include:

- How much traffic do you attract to your website each month?
- How many leads do you convert from that traffic?
- How many sales do you generate from those leads?
- What is the current impact of your online assets on these outcomes?
- What content assets do you already have – blogs, eBooks, white papers, videos etc?
- When were they last updated?
- Are there gaps and opportunities in your content library?
- What keywords are you ranking for?

STEP TWO:

EXPLORE YOUR COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Conduct research on your competitors and answer the following questions:

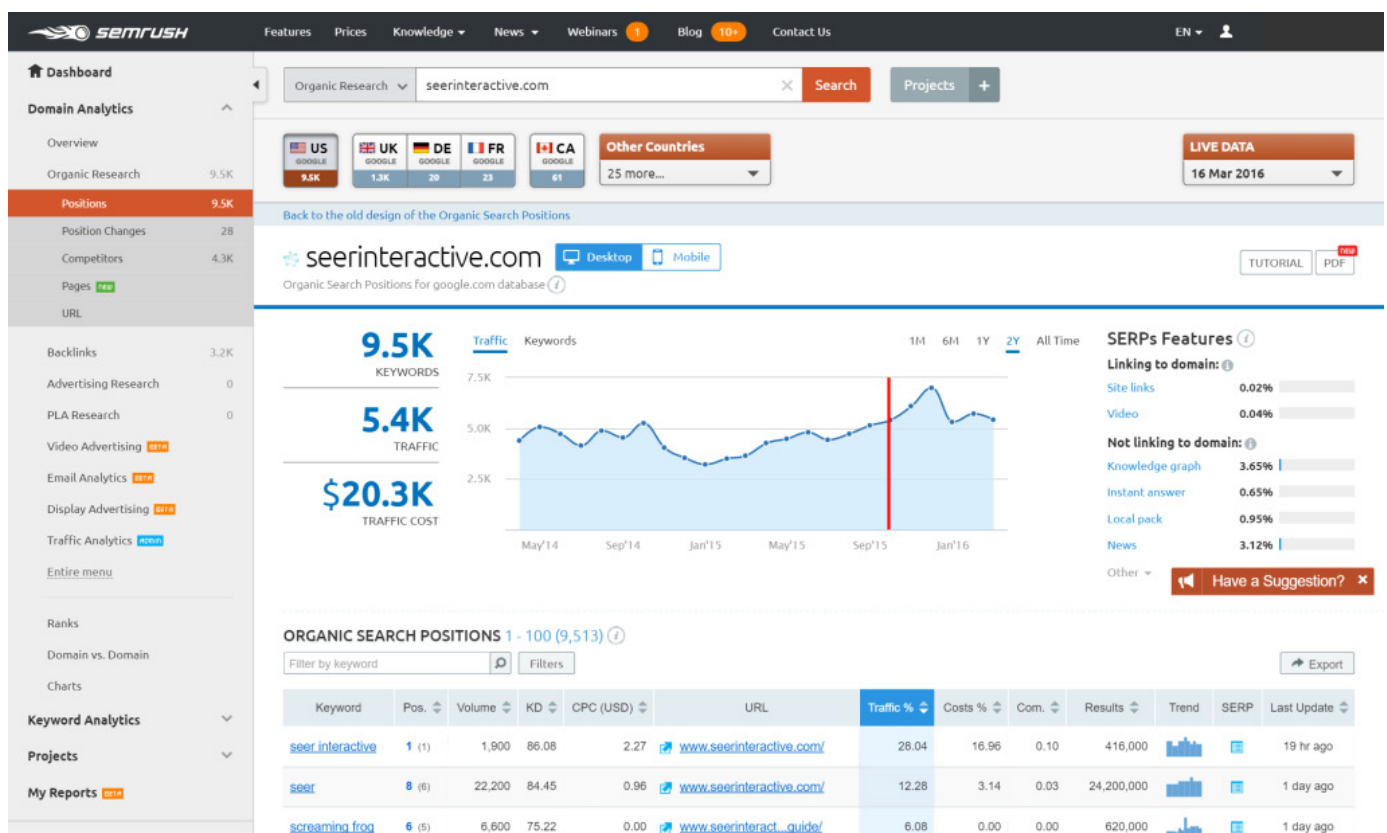
- Where do you stand and how do you stack up against your competitors in the eyes of your prospects?
- How are their websites performing in comparison to yours?
- What can you learn from their content?
- How well do they perform on social media?

With this intelligence, and the data from your baseline audit, you can prepare a comparison report to get a clearer picture of positioning in your marketplace.

Useful tools that could help you run this analysis include:

Website Grader – a free tool from HubSpot which will grade your site (and your competitors) against key metrics like performance, mobile readiness, SEO, and security.

SEMrush – a paid (about £800 pa) tool that will give you deep insight on you and your competitors SEO, Social, Backlinks, Brand visibility and much more.



STEP THREE:

DEVELOP CORE MESSAGING THAT SETS YOU APART



BRAND MESSAGING WORKSHOP AND POSITIONING

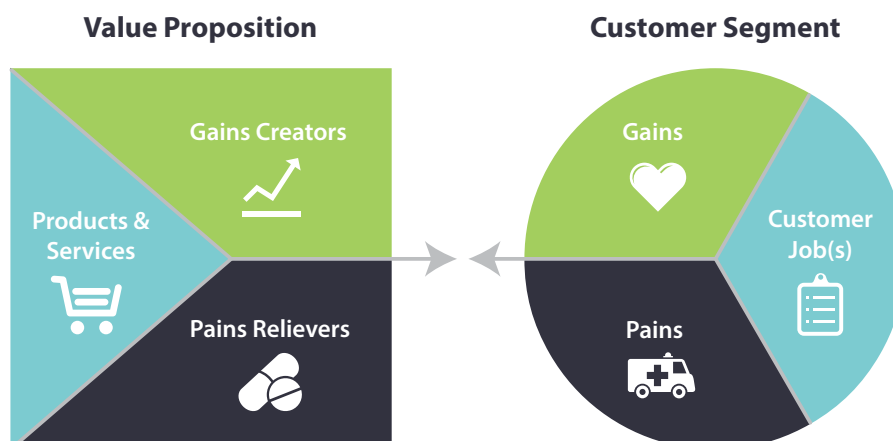
Many manufacturing businesses still think of “brand” as their logo and the colours on their site. But a brand means more than this. You need to develop core messages that resonate with your customers, that communicate who you are, how you operate and what you stand for.

Organise a brainstorming session with your key personnel to establish:

- **Your core propositions** – clear and to the point statements or sentences that get right to the heart of what you do as a business, what differentiates you and makes you stand out to your customers.
- **Reasons to believe** – What is it that you have or do to prove and support your core propositions?
- **Brand personality** - Focus on what’s important to your customers – quality, value, reliability, and expertise are encapsulated in a brand and peoples’ perception of it, for example.

Once complete share this document with your team. You can then work to ensure that your marketing efforts reinforce your organisation’s message and goals.

Another exercise you might employ can be found in [Strategyzer’s Value Proposition](#) Online Course if you are ready and prepared to put in the time and effort to really dig into your value propositions.



STEP FOUR:

DEFINE YOUR BUYER PERSONAS AND BUYERS JOURNEY

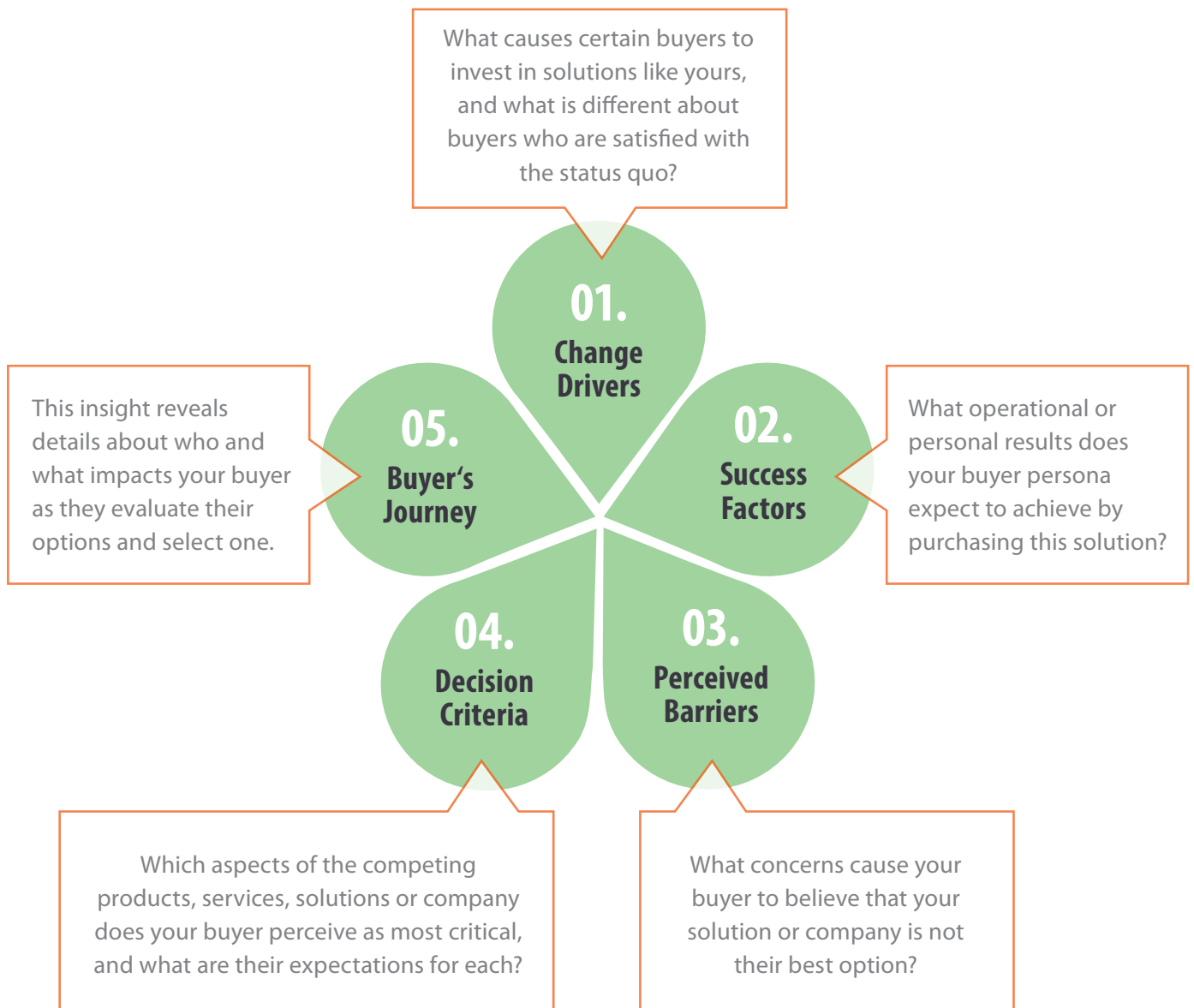


To create compelling and relevant content that resonates with your target audience you need to develop buyer personas. Buyer personas are representations of your target customers based on real-world information and educated guesses. Their likes, dislikes, habits, behaviours, motivations and concerns, as well as their job function, where they spend time online, decision criteria, and more.

You are likely to have more than one target persona. But, ideally, you can narrow it down to two or three archetypal personas - for the benefit of a focused marketing programme. And, it is important to get everyone in your business aligned around what your buyers care about.

Devise questionnaires and circulate to your key personnel to help shape your personas. You should start by asking them to give each of your personas a name, age bracket and gender. Other key questions to consider include:

- What is their job description?
- What are their Priority Initiatives - their Buying Triggers?
- What are their Success Factors?
- What are their Perceived Barriers?
- What is their Buyer's Journey?
- What is their Decision Criteria?



Once the responses are collated, organise a brainstorming session with your team to define your final personas and then circulate the final versions to all of your staff.

NEXT STEPS: CREATING INSIGHTFUL BUYER PERSONAS TO INFORM AND SHAPE YOUR CONTENT

Develop and use buyer personas to attract your ideal customers and win more business. Follow our three-step guide to creating a content plan to nurture prospects through the buyer's journey.



DOWNLOAD TODAY

Or visit <https://www.equinetmedia.com/download-the-insider-guide-to-developing-and-using-buyer-personas>

STEP FIVE:

ESTABLISH A FOUNDATION FOR CONTENT CREATION



Content is the fuel that drives effective inbound marketing. The information and solutions your prospects are searching for will vary according to where they are in the buying cycle. Content intended to generate awareness is different from content designed to convert leads to customers.

With typically long sales cycles in manufacturing, developing well considered content at each step throughout the funnel can respond to the need to create multiple touchpoints. It takes time to build trust and authority; if you can't speak to contacts today before they are ready to connect, you will have to ensure that your content is doing that job for you.

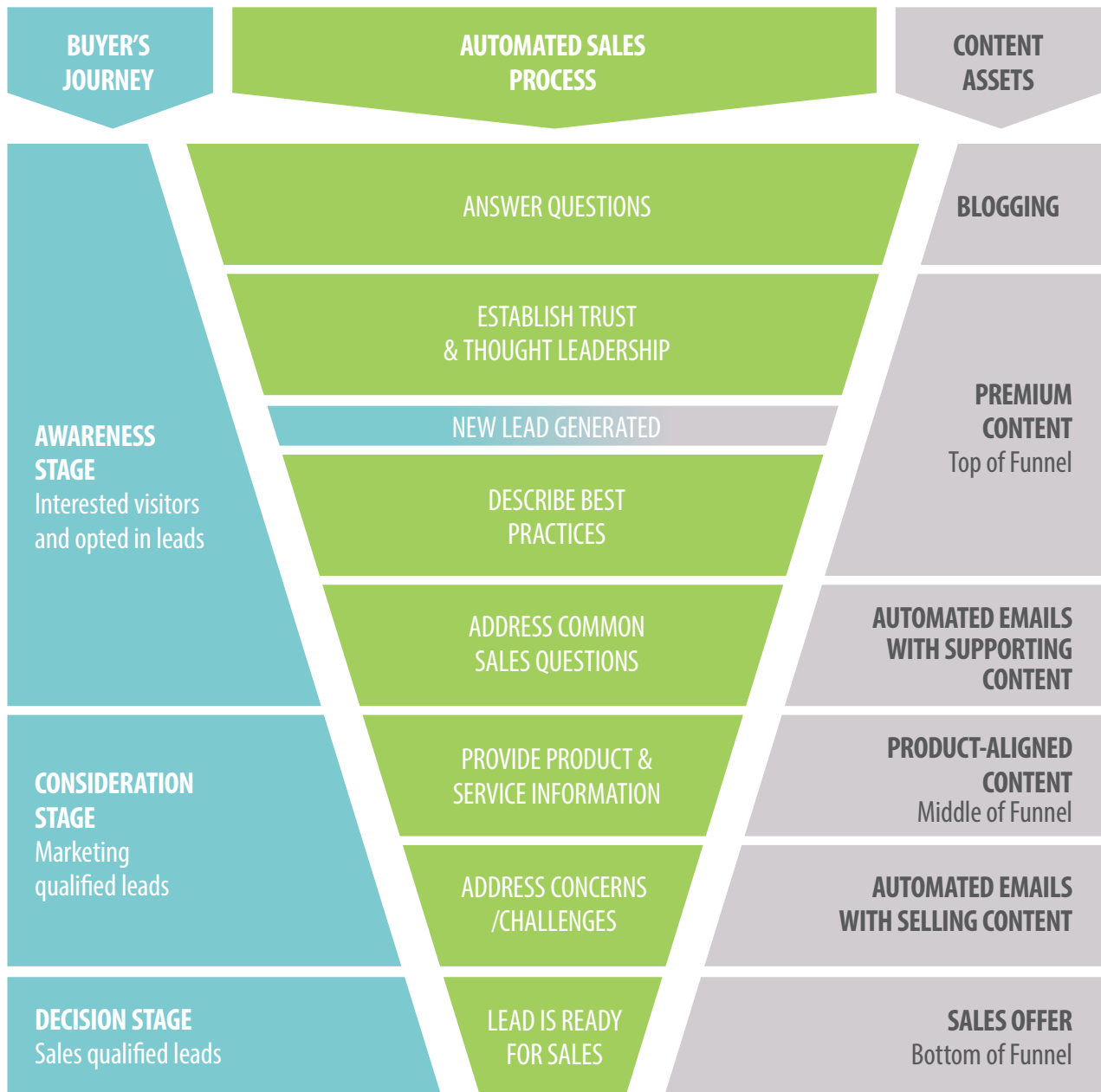
The type of content required at this step will vary depending on the results of your content audit (step 1). Using the data from your content audit as a starting point, build a content plan - decide which content you will produce, when and who will create it.

Title	Format	Funnel	Keywords	Persona	Who
8 steps to ensuring quality standards	Blog	TOFU	Quality standards	Quality Ed	Robert Palmer
PCB assembly: selective or wave soldering?	Blog	TOFU	Pcb assembly	Engineer Ed	Tracy Chapman
Guide to Product Design in Manufacturing	eBook	TOFU	Product design	Engineer Ed	Tracy Chapman
Changing Face of Outbound Logistics	Webinar	MOFU	Outbound logistics	Delivery AI	Robert Palmer
Working with a contract manufacturer: 1st 90 days	Video	BOFU	Contract manufacturer	Owner Mike	Tom Yorke

TOFU, MOFU, BOFU Top, Middle, Bottom of the funnel

You need to ask where this content fits in the context of your buyers journey or lifecycle stage.

INBOUND MARKETING FUNNEL

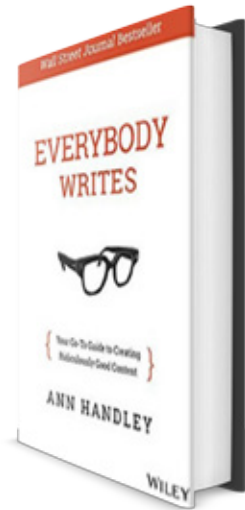


Start by developing synopses' for your core content assets and develop blog titles for your first ten blog posts. Creating this framework will help you think through how to generate this content. Remember, this has real value to you, especially in light of the changes brought about by the internet and the social web, this is vital activity to be investing in.

Identifying existing resource and potential budget for outsourcing here is important as content creation can be a challenge. Or maybe you should recruit talent into the company. Or you may choose to acquire the services of a specialist agency in the field.

Whatever you chose to do, consider content as the fuel that drives your inbound engine. Without it, you are going nowhere.

Good resources for internal staff who might fit the bill include books like:



Everybody Writes
by Ann Handley



Content Strategy for the Web, 2nd Edition
by Kristina Halvorson



Made to Stick
by The Heath Brothers



Clout: The Art and Science of Influential Web Content
by Colleen Jones



Epic Content Marketing
by Joe Pulizzi

STEP SIX:

EXPLORING OPTIMAL WEBSITE PERFORMANCE

When it comes to website design, many businesses fail to focus on the most important consideration: your site needs to be about your customer first, not your services, features and benefits.

There are pre-requisites for a website today without which you would struggle to remain competitive. Being responsive and optimised for mobile. Sound security. Fast page load time, to name just a few.

You have three options for your website.

Keep your existing website

Choosing this option requires that you have a site that is accessible, up to date and fit for purpose.

A website redesign on a platform such as HubSpot

The HubSpot CMS has been developed from the ground up to work harmoniously with HubSpot's full-funnel sales and marketing solutions. With it, your content is optimised for search, responsive to any device, and you can deliver customised experiences for different visitors depending on who they are and what they have previously done.

Take a growth driven design approach

The new gold standard for delivering results and bringing measurable business value through web design. It is a smarter, agile and data-driven approach that minimises the pitfalls of traditional web design. You can find out more about this approach [here](#).

Whichever route you chose, here are six considerations that matter.

1. What are the performance goals that we are trying to achieve? How have we performed historically, where would we like to improve, and how will this impact our marketing goals?
2. As your design needs to centre around the user it is important to consider the research you did in Step Four to develop persona profiles.
3. Draw on the quantitative audit from Step One and Step Two and review what is, and is not, performing well, where users are dropping off, and identify opportunities for improvements.
4. Reach out to existing users to gain a better understanding of how you could improve their onsite experience. Also consider tracking software like Hotjar on the existing site to record user visits and collate heatmaps to measure current behaviour and activity.
5. Using what you've learned in previous steps, start forming fundamental assumptions about users. Some examples of fundamental assumptions include the various locations and devices users will be accessing your website from and what information your users are looking for.
6. The assumptions from point five above can help explain the behaviour and motivations of users and be influential in setting a global and page by page strategy for an inbound oriented site design.

STEP SEVEN:

CLOSING THE LOOP WITH INBOUND SALES ENABLEMENT

Inbound marketing will generate new streams of leads for your business. How your Sales team deal with them is important. An inbound lead is more informed and more qualified than an outbound lead.

You will need to align your sales and marketing teams and adopt an inbound sales approach for those leads if you are going to adopt an inbound approach. You can find out more about how to do that and develop an SLA between sales and marketing [here](#).

Similar to inbound marketing, inbound sales transitions prospects through the stages of awareness, consideration, and decision, all the while working to support the buyer rather than focusing on the needs of the seller.

Conduct an audit of your current sales process and look for areas where improvements can be made, or new techniques can be introduced. This includes an audit of your existing sales materials, for example, case studies, brochures, product demonstration decks, pricing guides, etc.

You need to ensure your content marketing plan (Step Five) includes relevant content for sales at every stage, to drive prospects through the sales funnel and close them as customers.

By following these steps, you will build a strong inbound marketing strategy for your manufacturing company. Implementing an inbound strategy will help you to reach more of the right people, on their terms. It can create a clear structure for your marketing efforts, which is more than fit for purpose in today's environment.

NEXT STEPS: DISCOVER HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN INBOUND STRATEGY?

Find out how **Equinet** can help you develop a bespoke inbound plan for your manufacturing business. Explore the research, the workshops and the outputs and gain a deeper understanding of how we track your business goals and timelines back to outcomes you can bank on.



DOWNLOAD TODAY

Or visit <https://www.equinetmedia.com/developing-an-inbound-strategy>