

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State of Inbound 2017

AN EBOOK FROM SAGEFROG MARKETING GROUP



INTRODUCTION | Executive Summary: State of Inbound 2017

Inbound marketing meets the unique needs of the modern consumer in ways that traditional marketing often cannot. Over the years, a great number of smart marketers have recognized inbound’s potential to bring about return on marketing investment (ROMI) through alternative and non-invasive tactics. In order to contextualize the growth of inbound and its positive effects on the marketing community, inbound champion HubSpot surveyed more than 6,000 B2B and B2C marketing and sales professionals from individual contributors to managers and c-level executives.

This Executive Summary is a digest of the most important figures from HubSpot’s 2017 State of Inbound report, with special attention given to findings most relevant to today’s B2B marketers.

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SALES & MARKETING | Priorities

Sales and marketing professionals often find themselves at odds when it comes to uniting their efforts to guide leads through the sales funnel and help improve the customer experience. Unsurprisingly, this ongoing struggle is demonstrated in the State of Inbound findings, which reflect a sharper focus for both on acquiring new leads and closing deals.

But proving ROI remains a constant priority for both sales and marketing teams — a challenge that both need to work together to overcome.

SALES

71% consider closing deals and **44%** consider improving the sales funnel top priorities

Social selling, or relationship building, is the third most popular priority at **29%**

Sales enablement and investments in CRMs are the **least prioritized sales goals**

MARKETING

70% consider converting leads and **55%** consider increasing web traffic top priorities

Inbound marketing priorities include growing SEO at **61%** and creating blogs at **53%**

With print advertising considered the **most overrated tactic**, traditional marketing is not a priority

Many marketers are reducing broadcast efforts to put energy into building an on-demand environment through inbound content creation and improvements to the sales funnel.



SALES & MARKETING | Challenges

Priorities for the year ahead typically align with professionals' current challenges, but the State of Inbound found that the majority of those surveyed see prospecting as the biggest struggle for sales representatives over closing deals. This might indicate a disconnect between marketing and sales teams in qualifying leads to increase successful conversions.

Marketing professionals identified a great number of challenges, including securing adequate budget for marketing activities, identifying effective technologies and repositioning their marketing strategy for the modern age.

SALES

The **most difficult** sales responsibilities are obtaining responses from prospects and closing deals

36% of sales representatives say telephone is the most successful channel to connect with leads

23% say manual data entry is a big challenge for CRM use in sales and integration is another at **17%**

“At Sagefrog, we combine the transparency of available marketing platforms with our high-touch approach to deliver and demonstrate ROI, always analyzing where the best results are coming from and further optimizing areas to accelerate success.”

Mark Schmukler,
CEO and Co-Founder at
Sagefrog Marketing Group

MARKETING

Technology use, content development and disruptive strategy are **common concerns**

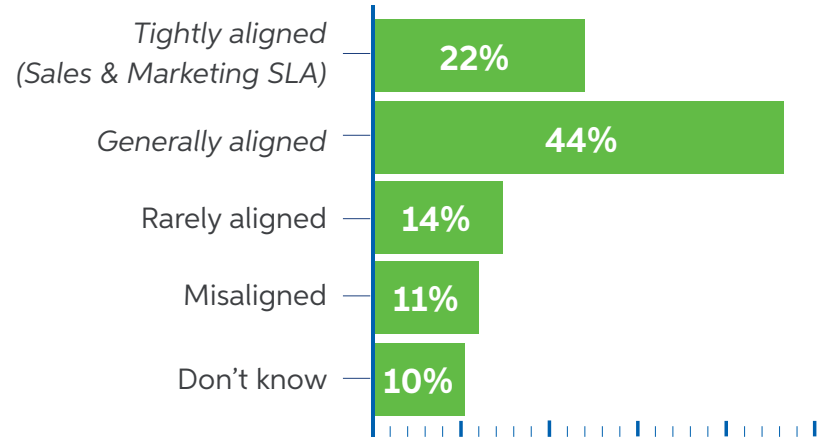
63% of marketers consider generating traffic and leads their biggest challenge

40% of marketers consider proving ROMI their biggest challenge



SALES & MARKETING | Alignment

Most members of the inbound community are well aware of the crucial need to align sales and marketing in order to optimize the customer experience and accelerate business growth. Data demonstrates the evolution of this relationship, but a comparison of c-level and individual contributor respondents shows that executives might be overestimating the true status of this configuration.



THE SALES & MARKETING RELATIONSHIP

13% of surveyed c-level executives characterize the relationship as rarely aligned or misaligned

25% of individual company contributors characterize the relationship as rarely aligned or misaligned

44% of all surveyed professionals characterize the relationship as generally aligned

Smarketing, a trending term for the strategic alignment of sales and marketing efforts, can be achieved by closing the loop on leads, meeting regularly to discuss the results of current tactics and integrating marketing analytics and CRM software to measure performance.

DISRUPTORS

Because the world of marketing and advertising is dynamic, professionals run into new disruptive factors every year. Shaking up the way we conduct marketing, these powerful factors present both challenges and new opportunities to reach desired audiences. The State of Inbound report makes predictions regarding video, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and social media, but one of the most concerning disruptors today is the changing preferences of the modern buyer.

The most popular way to keep up with the times and meet the needs and wants of consumers is to invest in what the survey regards as today's main disruptor: video.

MAIN DISRUPTOR:

More marketers are betting on live video and regular video content distribution as valuable tools in connecting with prospects

POTENTIAL DISRUPTOR:

Big data, AI and automation will become widely adopted in the future to enhance the personalization and distribution of content

CONSTANT DISRUPTOR:

It's difficult to keep up with new opportunities on social media, but many consider it necessary to maintain a presence on top social channels

The trend toward digital purchasing has diminished the relationship between consumers and salespeople and shifted the perception of the salesperson as a gatekeeper of key information.



THE MODERN BUYER

The inbound methodology is based on the idea that by crafting unique, informative content, consumers will find their way to your products and services through a series of engagement stages. This concept has proven to be an effective means of pulling in qualified buyers, but because modern consumers have grown to expect educational content, competition for attention is at its highest level.



More trust has gone to media articles and vendor-authored content over detailed analyst reports



Marketers are flocking to LinkedIn over Facebook for professional posting and buyer engagement



Modern consumers rely on word-of-mouth and customer referrals for decision making

Consumers hold the power in the buyer-seller relationship today, researching and using available tools to complete much of the purchase cycle before engaging with a sales representative.

CONCLUSION

Results from the State of Inbound 2017 signify the growing adoption of inbound techniques and the continued faith in content marketing's ability to feed the sales cycle. For marketers in the B2B industry specifically, inbound marketing can be a great way to influence leads along their Buyer's Journey.

"For B2B companies in the highly competitive and dynamic healthcare and technology space, inbound marketing is a useful tool in breaking down complex offerings for the less technical buyer personas."

Mark Schmukler,
CEO and Co-Founder at Sagefrog Marketing Group

BIGGEST TAKEAWAY

Inbound marketing is not a total solution; the priorities and challenges reflected in the State of Inbound data cannot be satisfied using inbound tactics alone. This report serves as a reminder that popular inbound and traditional outbound efforts must be combined in order to achieve the modern marketer's goals. An integrated marketing approach is the only way to successfully meet buyers on all levels of their purchasing paths.

References:

[HubSpot State of Inbound 2017](#)



Sagefrog Marketing Group, LLC is a full-service B2B marketing agency that specializes in healthcare, technology and business services. Founded in 2002, with offices in Doylestown, PA and Princeton, NJ, our capabilities include branding, digital, public relations & social, traditional and integrated marketing.

Contact us and we will leap into action!

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