

The sweet spot between account-based and inbound marketing

By [Christopher Brown](#)

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We're all in the business of generating, qualifying and converting leads. That's the marketer's credo but how we go about it is what makes all the difference. There's a world of strategies that brands employ to generate leads, from guerrilla marketing and cold-calling to database buying and transactional marketing.



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But we want to focus on two types of digital marketing that are hotly debated and mostly misunderstood: inbound marketing and account-based marketing.

Because they're opposites, people tend to approach inbound and account-based marketing with an either-or mentality. However, in our experience (and as we'll explain in this blog), these two methodologies work infinitely better together. So, let's disabuse you of some assumptions once and for all.

Stop us if you've heard this one before

As inbound marketing specialists, we've discussed it extensively in the past. We've written about its enduring relevance and outlined the basics of a high-performance strategy and how to take it six steps further. But let's go over the gist one more time. (Skip ahead if you don't need the refresher.)

Inbound uses content to attract leads to your product or service by educating them through the sales funnel. Unlike outbound marketing, which relies on pushing out marketing messaging to a general audience and hoping it will resonate with the right people, inbound marketing is all about data and timing.

Inbound marketing is all about serving specific content to people who match your personas when they cross critical junctures between the awareness, consideration and decision stages of the buyer's journey. The content must always be valuable to your audience while also addressing any objections preventing them from converting.

Inbound marketing generates 54% more leads than outbound marketing while costing 61% less per lead. In short: it works and it's more cost-effective.

Introducing account-based marketing

We haven't covered account-based marketing before so let's start at the beginning.

Account-based marketing is a growth strategy that works by tightly aligning sales and marketing to target high-value prospects and speed up the sales cycle. Unlike the long game that is inbound marketing which targets everyone who fits the defined persona, account-based marketing focuses only on high-value targets. Once marketing and sales have agreed on which "whales" to go after, they treat them all as one account and engage them with a consistent, personalised strategy.

If you think of inbound marketing as a net with bait for various fish that still share some important characteristics, account-based marketing is harpoon fishing with an incredibly accurate projectile.

There are several advantages to account-based marketing, especially for big-ticket sales between businesses such as commercial printers and construction vehicle fleets. Firstly, account-based marketing keeps sales and marketing teams aligned at all times. Secondly, they help you skip to the latter half of the sales cycle where you can convert and delight faster. Lastly, they boost your brand's relevance with the most important decision-makers in your target companies.

Two sides of the same ROI coin

Net trawling and harpoon fishing are fundamentally opposite methods - and so too are inbound and account-based marketing. This is why it's easy to assume that you can't use both.

In fact, these two strategies are the perfect complements. When used in tandem, inbound marketing and account-based marketing can amplify your ROI. You can use inbound marketing to continue trawling the seas for small to medium fish that meet the definition of your ideal customer while using account-based marketing to catch the big ones.

Also, relationships you have built through inbound marketing can be deepened by secondary account-based engagement. This hybrid approach is especially valuable when you have a mixture of B2C and B2B clients in general and niche markets.

Inbound marketing and account-based marketing have never been mutually exclusive, so there's never really been a need to choose one. You can have your hake and eat it too.

Get started

Inbound marketing can be used as a foundation for account-based marketing. By scoring your inbound leads using a strict set of criteria, you can start to identify which ones are high-value prospects that you can feed into your account-based strategy. But before you score them, you'll have to generate them.

Download the [Beginners Guide to Generating Inbound Leads](#) to find out how to do this.

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