Are you online or are you behind?
Digital inbound marketing as a necessity in B2B markets

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Companies in B2C markets generally put more time and resources into marketing than those operating in B2B markets. InfraSight Labs is working to change their outlook on the subject, through the help of guidance through the digital inbound marketing (DIM) model - a model created to help B2B companies within the software/software as a service (SaaS) industry.

Patented hashtags, free exposure through invested followers, and viral live videos. There is no doubt that the digital revolution has brought about extensive changes in all areas of business, and not in the least, marketing and sales. Since the introduction of the new millennia, B2C companies have gone through a multitude of digital hypes and worked hard to provide the customer with simple and user-friendly buying environments. In comparison, B2B markets seem to be paralyzed in traditional ways of doing business. In contrast to the newer ways of numerous B2C organizations, many B2B companies still see marketing as an outbound, one-way method of blasting potential customers with information on the values of their product - instead of utilizing inbound methods which allow customers to find their own way. So what is holding B2B companies back from fully accepting digital inbound marketing methods into their long-time strategy? And how is InfraSight Labs working to incorporate it into theirs?

Though Hollywood may like to tell a different story, B2B purchasing in the 21st century is not all based around expensive dinners and personal relationships. In fact, studies show that the average B2B customer has already completed 57 percent of the purchase decision before engaging in any direct contact with a supplier sales representative. Let us not forget that other than 40 hours a week, B2B purchasers are private consumers who too have grown accustomed to a simple buying process and having access to an unlimited amount of information within the range of a few clicks.

With a variety of digital channels, and the internet as the main source of information in many parts of the world today, circumstances have never been better for companies to implement inbound marketing methods. Targeting business customers is no longer an excuse to be left behind, and though research in general on B2B digital marketing is scarce, the digital inbound marketing (DIM) model can provide a well-needed path in the thick and growing jungle that is inbound marketing.

The model at InfraSight Labs
At InfraSight Labs, the model was implemented in order to guide them in their approach of designing a digital inbound marketing strategy. Based on academic research and case studies done on successful implementations of B2B digital inbound marketing strategies, the DIM model was developed for small B2B companies in the software/SaaS field. It highlights the four key areas of importance when designing a digital inbound marketing strategy: knowing the customer, creating valuable content, sharing through relevant channels, and evaluating to improve.
Knowing the customer
Anyone that has ever heard the word marketing knows that targeting the customer should always be the number one priority. However, the DIM model pinpoints the many relevant ways of which to assess a prospect in order to create several complete personas.

Apart from defining the contact’s customer segment, one must also consider their role in the buying organization, as well as how far they have reached in the marketing and sales funnel, i.e. how close they are to making a buying decision. Customizing the marketing message to apply to all of these three criteria of a persona, will provide a more positive customer reception.

Creating valuable content
Once the customer has been specified, one must create relevant content based on the previously defined personas. For example, a technical FAQ webpage would be a well-suited source of content for technically interested developers, whereas a thought-leadership piece may be of greater interest to a small business owner.

Sharing through relevant channels
When stranded on a deserted island, you are going to want to send out your emergency message on several frequencies. Similarly, a multi-channel approach is recommended when engaging in content marketing. Naturally, you will want to figure out on which channels your personas can be found and adjust accordingly, however, existing on only the most obvious ones may lead to you missing out on new potential prospects.

Using channels with appropriate timing is also of great interest. How close to a
buying decision is a prospect? And how will this affect how often it wishes to receive information? Season-wise, when does a potential customer make its buying decision? Which time of year does this make it especially useful to reach out?

Evaluating to improve
How can you know what you need to improve without assessing the situation? Constant evaluation is key to constant improvement. Many businesses have gotten into the habit of measuring simple metrics such as website visits or social media followers, however, the model highlights an additional two key types of evaluation.

While measuring specific metrics is important on an operational level, it is equally essential to evaluate the customer’s journey through the marketing and sales funnel and the conversion rate between different steps. Which step leaves most room for improvement, and why?

Finally, the relationship between internal company departments also needs to be fostered. Continuous communication between sales, marketing and product development departments can lead to useful insights for all parties and therefore equally needs to be measured.

How can you make use of the model?
The DIM model helps provide guidance to B2B companies when implementing an inbound marketing strategy. By highlighting the many criteria to keep in mind when attempting to draw in customers, it can hopefully help change the outlook on marketing in general in B2B markets.

With digitalization here to stay in today’s society, it is time for B2B companies to start depending on more than just personal contacts and face-to-face selling. InfraSight Labs is getting ready to take their marketing to the next step, are you?