

# Building the Marketing Plan: A Blueprint for Start-ups

## Messaging

- User personas
- Positioning statement
- Mission statement

## Building the machine

- Infrastructure
- Mapping the sales process
- Addressing sales hurdles
- Tools and content
- Metrics

## Demand generation

- Inbound marketing
- Outbound marketing
- Prospecting
- Offers, tools, utilities

## Building the team

- Stages of growth
- Content creators, Evangelists, Optimization gurus
- Certification and professional development

## Timeline and budget

- Metrics and milestones
- Learning and pilots
- Stepping on the gas

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Rev. 8-1-2010

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## Introduction

I talk to a lot of start-ups about their marketing and sales operations. Often, the conversation turns to the subject of building a marketing plan – how to prioritize, what to do, activities, infrastructure, etc. I’ve noticed that my suggestions have been roughly the same, because many of the challenges start-ups face are similar: on a small budget, with a small team, you need to go from a standing start to quickly create awareness, establish a new category, educate the market, generate and nurture leads, make sales, nail down the product and company processes. And you’re probably trying to build an ecosystem and gear up for exponential growth in the coming months and quarters – with entrenched Goliaths in your rear-view mirror.

Outlined on the following pages are some considerations – with respect to messaging, infrastructure, demand generation, process, budgets and timelines – that have proven useful across a bunch of markets and companies. This would of course need to be customized for your business, emphasizing the things that are important in your world and de-emphasizing others (for example, rather than deploying Salesforce.com, you may need to build a shopping cart and a product catalog back end).

More than one management consultant has pointed out that this stuff is really obvious. They’re right. But the hard work is not putting it on a PowerPoint slide – it’s actually doing it. The good news is that it’s now easier than ever to do this, quickly, on a small budget. Nowadays, there’s no reason you can’t have a web site up in days, start publishing content within weeks, run quick experiments regarding prospecting lists/messages/offers, and within a couple months start to see the needle move in terms of traffic, leads and prospects.

## Nailing Down the Messaging

Good start-up people have a bias for action, but here's one of the times it's worth spending some team cycles thinking, debating, refining – because you'll soon put it all to use developing your content and approach:

- **User personas:** who are the primary target users and decision makers, for whom you're crafting your product, your messaging, your content – the “[archetypal person whom you want your marketing to reach](#)”? It's almost never just one persona, nor can you realistically do a good job with more than three or four. If you're selling to businesses (B2B), it might be the end user (e.g., sysadmin, mechanical design engineer, accounting clerk) and the principal decision maker (director of IT, engineering manager, CFO). If you're selling to consumers (B2C), where the user and decision makers are one and the same, it's still useful to identify a couple of the key personas. For example, if you've built a photo sharing site, different product features and marketing messages may appeal to Gen Xers as compared to recent retirees.
- **Positioning statement:** Geoffrey Moore's seminal book [Crossing the Chasm](#) has been a bible for countless start-ups. [Moore's template](#) for a positioning statement forces the start-up to have laser focus around who your product is for, what problem it's solving, what the breakthrough capability is, and what the leading competitive alternative is. Certainly your marketing will be broader – reaching multiple segments, promoting multiple benefits, and targeting more than one competitor. Forcing yourself to narrow the focus with the positioning statement helps avoid wishy-washy schizophrenic marketing, where depending on where you look, you can't tell what the hell a product does, for whom, and why you should bother.
- **Mission statement:** While the positioning statement is immensely useful, it's primarily an internal document – a compass keeping you on track. On the other hand, the [mission statement](#) is indeed for public consumption – a brief statement of the essence of the company. Ideally, this will be closely connected to the [elevator pitch](#) for the product.

### Moore's Positioning Statement Template

**For** (target customers)  
**Who** (have the following problem)  
**Our product is a** (describe the product or solution)  
**That provides** (cite the breakthrough capability)  
**Unlike** (reference competition),  
**Our product/solution** (describe the key point of competitive differentiation)

#### Example: Moore's positioning for SGI (during SGI's heyday)

*For movie producers and others  
Who depend heavily on post-production special effects,  
Silicon Graphics provides computer workstations  
That integrate digital fantasies with actual film footage.  
Unlike any other vendor of computer workstations,  
SGI has made a no-compromise commitment to meeting  
film-makers' post-production needs.*

Invest early in the right infrastructure

Salesforce automation

Customer relationship management

Campaign management

Customer support

Analytics

Content management

Blogging engine

Search engine optimization tools

Competitive intelligence

## Building a Sales & Marketing Machine

### Infrastructure

Early in the start-up's life, you need to choose marketing and sales platforms. There are a variety of good tools and technologies out there, but I'm extremely partial to a set-up that integrates [Salesforce.com](https://www.salesforce.com) and [HubSpot](https://www.hubspot.com). Between these two products, you can quickly and easily build the infrastructure that'll enable you to have a web presence, get found online, convert visitors into leads, and manage the sales process from start to finish. Marketers will spend much of their time in HubSpot; salespeople in Salesforce.com; and because of the nice integration between the products, you'll have end-to-end analytics to make better marketing and sales decisions. And depending on what's relevant for your business, there's a lot of useful supporting tools/technologies available (e.g., tracking individual clickstreams via [ClickTale](https://www.clicktale.com), or capturing customers' suggestions via [UserVoice](https://www.uservoice.com)).

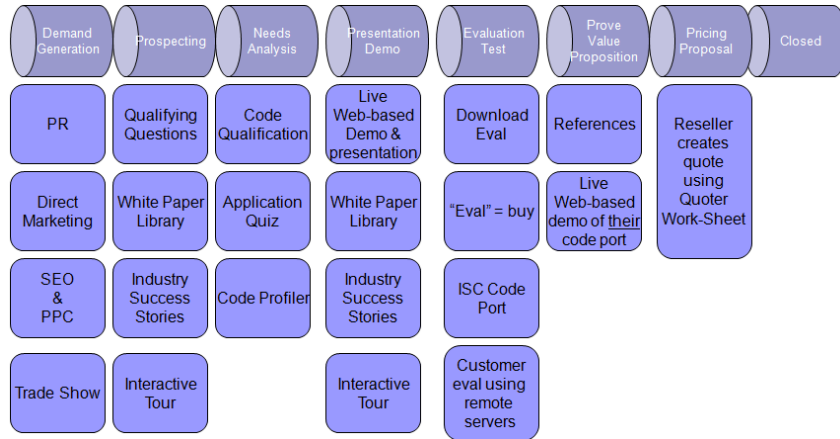
Salesforce.com and HubSpot are the biggies because they're important investments that require commitment, will have a major impact on your business, and have non-trivial switching costs. Sure, you can weave together half a dozen technologies and services – content management, analytics, hosting, SEO tools, campaign management, salesforce automation, customer support – and with some custom programming and duct tape get it to work. Though having done it a few times, my advice is: DON'T. You risk spending too much time and money connecting disparate systems, customizing, and inevitably running into limitations – and every second of that will take away from marketing and selling.

### Mapping The Sales Process

Very early on, it's critical to figure out what the sales process looks like – after all, you will likely need to eliminate major hurdles and bottlenecks in order to scale your business from the first 10 sales, to the next 100 and beyond. **So you must engineer your marketing and sales process with as much rigor as you engineer your product.**

After we made our first dozen sales at Interactive Supercomputing (a venture-backed MIT spin-off acquired by Microsoft), we sat down and mapped out the steps of every deal we won and lost to date – steps such as demand generation, qualification, needs analysis, demo, product evaluation, proving the value prop, and proposal. Every one of these first engagements was made with a rough product, crappy collateral, and a whole

### ISC's Sales Process (rev. 1 – “the early days”)



Figuring out the sales process at Interactive Supercomputing:

1. Mapped out the sales steps;
2. Identified the bottlenecks, hurdles, and key questions;
3. Developed sales tools and content to address bottlenecks.

(And of course, as the product matures and the market evolves, there's a corresponding evolution of the sales/marketing steps, tools and metrics.)

From “[Lessons from Leaders: How JBoss did it](#)” by David Skok  
(And check out other articles on his blog, [www.forentrepreneurs.com](http://www.forentrepreneurs.com))



lot of improvisation. For each step, we thought through what we can do to reduce the effort and time.

For example, while it was useful to do live demos the first few times we showed the product, we quickly zeroed in on a handful of vignette demos and scripts. We recorded them and put them on the web – freeing up our application engineers, and letting prospects explore the product demos on their own schedule. Within a short time, we had a library of short demos and thousands of prospect views. At another bottle neck, we were spending a lot of time assessing whether our product could accelerate the customer's source code. So we built a utility that a prospect could download and run, which would predict – with good accuracy – whether our technology was a fit.

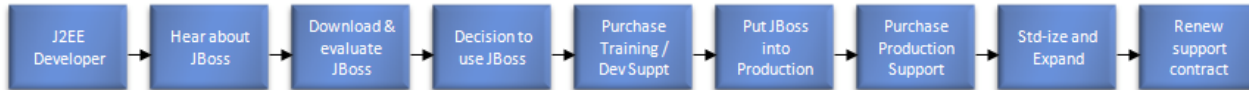
The beauty here is that you don't need to wait months to identify the bottlenecks, nor do you need months to address them. Rather, there was just a disciplined process to: 1) map out the sales steps; 2) identify the bottlenecks, hurdles, questions; and 3) develop tools and content to reduce cycle time, and let prospects learn more on their own and self-qualify.

When I ran Marketing at SolidWorks, I had the fortune to work with [David Skok](#) (Matrix Venture Partners), who was on our board. Before becoming a venture capitalist, David was a serial entrepreneur – so between his own experiences and that of his portfolio companies, he saw first-hand many best (and worst) practices. Out of this experience, he drummed into us some excellent strategies and tactics around building [a sales and marketing machine](#).

At [JBoss](#), David and the team mapped out their sales process - and by looking at it from the point of view of the customer, they could identify the CONCERNS and MOTIVATIONS at each step (see figures on next page). Once the sales process is understood, you are in a position to design the marketing and sales tools and techniques to address your prospects' concerns and motivations. The JBoss team treated it as an engineering system – one that can be designed, analyzed and optimized.

## CONCERNS

- Is JBoss a market leader?
- Technical features?
- Price?
- Easy of download/use?
- Good support?
- Open Source fears
- Safe Choice?
- Quality?
- Scalability?
- Good support?
- Cost?
- Quality of support?
- Operations people: Safe Choice?
- Good support?
- Scalability & reliability?
- Fit with other datacenter tools?
- Cost?
- Quality of support?
- Value?
- Successful implementation
- Cost?
- Quality of support?
- How much did we use it?
- Value?

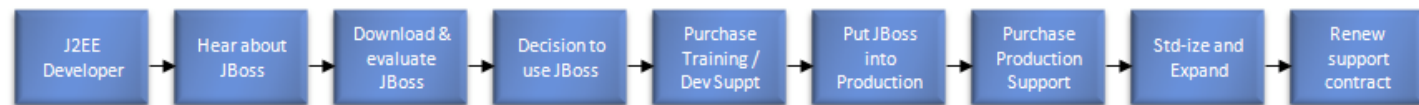


- Price
- Easy to download and get started
- Recommendation
- Positive Review
- Press articles
- Price
- Architecture, Features, Performance, etc.
- J2EE certification
- References
- Partners
- References
- Developer's providing support
- Price
- Production References
- Partners
- Leadership quadrant of analysts?
- Need for insurance
- References
- Value proposition (needs improving)
- Price
- Good support
- Perceived value

## MOTIVATIONS

*"Using the methodology, we worked to understand the customers' mindset and motivations at these key steps in the sales cycle, and looked at the tools available to motivate them to do what we wanted."*

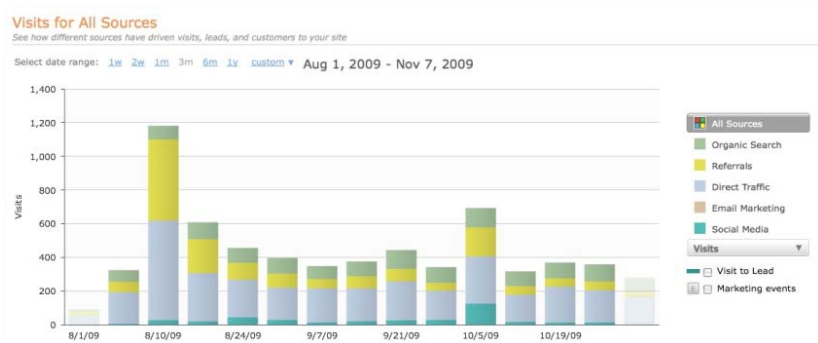
(From "[Lessons from Leaders: How JBoss did it](#)" by David Skok)



- PR
- Analysts
- Advertising
- Partners
- Google Words
- Trade Shows
- JUGs
- Forums/BLOGs
- White Papers
- Reviews
- Analyst reports
- Web Site
- Docs
- Email campaigns
- Webinars
- Telesales
- Calls and on-site visits from SEs
- Reviews
- Analyst reports
- Marketing of Support
- References
- Partners
- Advertising
- Build awareness that it exists
- Email campaigns
- Price/value
- References
- Telesales
- Direct sales for large accts.
- References
- Support
- SE calls and visits
- Partners
- Get into leadership quadrant with analysts
- Build awareness that it exists
- Telesales
- Direct sales for large accts.
- References
- Increase perceived value
- Advertising
- Literature
- Ensure successful implementatn
- Good support
- Telesales
- Direct sales for large accts.
- Ensure successful implementatn
- Good support
- Increase perceived value
- Telesales
- Direct sales for large accts.

### Tools to move customers through specific stages

(From "[Lessons from Leaders: How JBoss did it](#)")



**Competitors**  
How are your competitors doing on key marketing metrics?

WEBSITE	WEBSITE GRADE	GOOGLE PAGE RANK	TRAFFIC RANK	BLOG GRADE	INBOUND LINKS	DELICIOUS BOOKMARKS	GOOGLE INDEXED PAGES	KEYWORDS IN GOOGLE TOP 100	DETAILED REPORT
www.hubspot.com	99	N/A	3,106	92	153,375	0	1,020	699	<a href="#">Run New Report</a>
blog.hubspot.com	99	N/A	3,113	99	67,711	367	2,000	430	<a href="#">Run New Report</a>
twitter.grader.com	99	6	7,383	99	346,230	3,338	92,600	68	<a href="#">Run New Report</a>
websitegrader.com	95	N/A	3,014	Not Graded	7,399	0	353	129	<a href="#">Run New Report</a>

## Metrics

Without metrics, you're dead meat. The good news is that it's increasingly easy to measure nearly anything, much of it with free (or almost free) tools. Every business is different, so while there's no universally-applicable list of what to measure and with what depth, there is a short list of metrics that are actionable, and collectively paint a reliable picture:

- **Traffic** – what is the volume, where is it coming from, which content is most popular
- **Leads** – which programs/sources/offers are driving leads
- **Conversions** – traffic to leads, leads to prospects, prospects to sales; cost per customer acquisition
- **Competitors** – how do all the key players stack up in terms of traffic, reach, inbound links, key words rankings

You'll want to drill down, looking beyond the aggregate stats. For example, in addition to looking at the big picture of monthly traffic/leads/opportunities pipeline, what might be particularly actionable is figuring out which content drove interesting volume of traffic and inbound links; or which community site drove visitors that ultimately had higher conversion rates. Some great tools are Google Analytics; the integrated analytics in HubSpot; and specialized tools such as ClickTale to really examine your visitors' behavior, or Visible Measures for web video metrics.

## Demand Generation Activities

To drive leads and sales, a reasonable approach to take early is hedging your bets across three methods, each one employing a variety of content and offers:

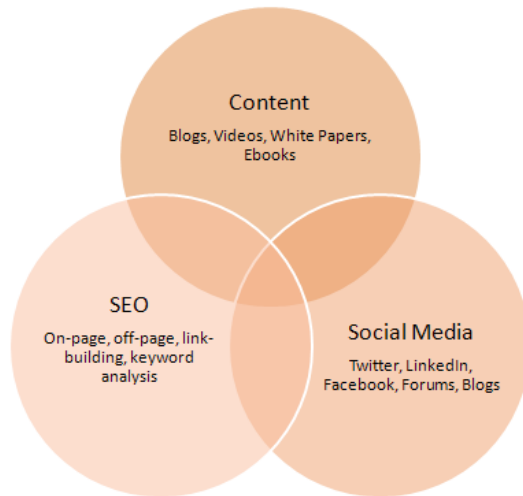
1. Inbound marketing
2. Outbound marketing
3. Sales prospecting

Each method has pros and cons, and until you have more data to rebalance the investment portfolio across these, start with some of each. (Unless you're building this plan very early, you are probably already late delivering leads to the Sales team!)





## Components of Inbound Marketing



Publish not only a blog, but every form of content that your target customer will enjoy. For example, the team at HubSpot publish a blog, a podcast ([www.HubSpot.tv](http://www.HubSpot.tv)), videos, photos, presentations, and even a book.

## Inbound Marketing

[Inbound marketing](#) is about getting found by customers, with the following primary elements: creating remarkable content, optimizing that content for search engines, and promoting this content through social media. Unlike paid traffic – which disappears when you shut off the spending, inbound marketing content is a gift that keeps on giving, [building your barrier to entry](#). There's a ton of excellent [resources on the topic](#) online, so I'll just add a few observations and suggestions:

- 1) Although getting started is relatively easy (certainly easier than building your product), it's interesting that a ton of start-ups have at best a beautiful website, but little content that attracts traffic and links. So don't wait to come up with a comprehensive 12-month marketing plan of every activity – start publishing content, experiment, see what sticks, rinse and repeat. Don't worry: search engine optimization (SEO) is not some complex black magic – there's a relatively short list of things for a mere mortal to think about and spend a few minutes a week on in order to see real results.
- 2) One common question is, **what is the right content to publish?** The best thing I've heard on this is, "[nobody cares about your products – people care about their problems](#)." So look beyond brochures and white papers, and think about creating content that'll help your target customers solve their problems. (For example, look no further than the content the HubSpot team is publishing – the blog, e-Books, webinars – provide tips, best practices, industry information that's useful regardless of whether the reader is using HubSpot's product.)
- 3) One cool thing about inbound marketing is that once you figure out what's of interest to folks, you can repurpose content in a variety of ways. For example, a blog post can be leveraged in an e-Book, a short video, provide the basis for a tutorial, etc.

At my last company, Cilk Arts (a venture-backed MIT spin-off, acquired by Intel), we made a big bet on inbound marketing: I was hired to start the inbound marketing process 8 months before we shipped product; we hired no sales people; and the entire company contributed content. No outbound marketing, not a penny on paid ads. Within months we reached over 100,000 developers, had thousands of downloads, and hundreds of schools started to adopt our software and content in their curricula – all through publishing content that addressed our target prospects' challenges and concerns. ([Here's a slide deck](#) that provides more of a drilldown regarding what we did.)

## Getting Started with Inbound Marketing

Often, start-up teams “buy into” inbound marketing, but are not sure where to start. It might seem daunting and overwhelming. Teams that know how to build awesome products and create great supporting collateral find themselves stuck when it comes to turning their website into a magnet for prospects. *Whom exactly should they target? Where do their prospects hang out online? Where are the relevant online conversations? What keywords matter?* Etc.

Fortunately, there’s a variety of great resources available:

- <http://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing-hub> from HubSpot
- [How To Build Your Inbound Marketing GamePlan](#) from PR 20/20
- [Grader](#) tools to help you measure and analyze your marketing efforts
- [Online marketing blueprint](#) from HubSpot

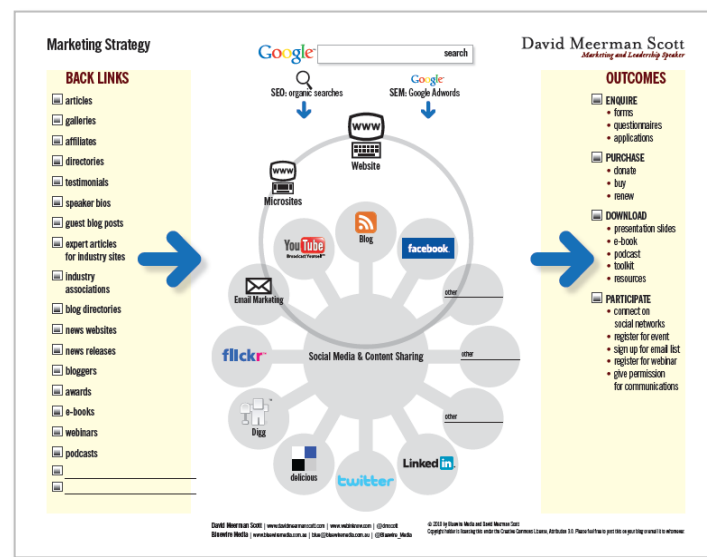
Check out the Appendix for a great tool: A Marketing Strategy Planning Template from David Meerman Scott.

Marketing Strategy Planning Template		company name _____ product/service _____	David Meerman Scott <i>Marketing and Leadership Speaker</i>
<b>WHO</b>	<b>BUYER PERSONA</b> Description Who is this person? What problems does this buyer have?	1 ::	2 ::
<b>WHAT</b>	Problems you solve for this buyer? Why are they buying from you? Actions you'd like them to take Engage, order, buy, connect etc.		
<b>WHY</b>	How are you remarkable? What value do you bring? Proof Credibility indicators, guarantees, testimonials etc.		
<b>WHERE</b>	Where are they? Google, blogs, Facebook, Twitter etc.		
<b>HOW</b>	Your company personality What kind of company are you? Creative Look and feel Tone of voice Language you'd use Keyword phrases? What buyers type into Google Marketing tactics & Content strategy Blog, Twitter, YouTube, email newsletter, Google Ads, e-books, webinars, podcasts, etc.		
<b>WHEN</b>	Things to do today 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	Things to do next week 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____	Things to do next month 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

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## Outbound Marketing

I'm a huge fan of inbound marketing, but there's also a lot of value in doing some outbound marketing, at least early on. Inbound often takes months to generate results – perhaps longer than you have to make your first sales, start figuring out and optimizing your sales process, and building the right tools and content. So outbound programs – in particular, pay-per-click (PPC), direct mail and email – provide an opportunity to do three great things:

- 1) **Allow you to pressure test list sources:** Brainstorm a list of the possible list sources (e.g., trade publications, or consumer-focused vertical pubs) and job titles or demographics to test. It's not rocket science to generate a [partial factorial](#) set to test, and within a few weeks and a few thousand dollars, you can execute at least the first round of your experiment, starting to zero in on a combination of campaign variables that can deliver leads.
- 2) **Test several offers:** Thinking about the steps of the sales process, you'll probably want to have offers that help prospects at each step – addressing the particular questions and overcoming the hurdles. So early on, there might be a need for an information kit with valuable tips, or a brief demo that lets them dream; later on, once you've earned the right to ask for more time, you might offer an e-Book or white paper; and so on. You won't know ahead of time what might really resonate, so experiment, and quickly. Don't be the company that – 6 months after shipping product – just has a white paper behind a lead form.
- 3) **Quickly drive some leads:** If you need 100 leads this month, you may not get there from a standing start using strictly inbound marketing. So while you wait for that flywheel to spin faster and faster, fund the direct marketing list/offer combinations with the best cost/sale. Hopefully, within a couple rounds of testing, you'll know which direct marketing campaigns have enough life in them to fill your opportunity pipeline. This may not be hugely scalable or even particularly profitable, but early on that may be less important than customer traction.

**Tradeshows:** I am both weary and wary of trade shows. Tradeshows can really consume a small start-up team that's trying to get a product out the door. Participation takes a lot of work, and the costs per lead is high. Sometimes you really need to be there – maybe there are really important prospects, analysts, partners. My advice here is to

really limit your involvement – don't invest in a big splash. Have a small booth, do the guerilla thing and crash the relevant parties to network. One or two months later, look back at what you and the team accomplished and adjust future plans accordingly.

**Public Relations:** I used to be afraid to not have a PR agency – until my last company where we didn't go with one, and the sky didn't fall. I don't mean to say that [PR is dead](#); rather, that you shouldn't simply pay the \$10K-\$20K monthly retainer and be satisfied with the occasional press release and the rare contributed article placed in a trade pub. Instead, consider what some of the best PR firms are doing – crafting and executing inbound marketing strategies, content creation, social spreading, etc. (Here are [some great resources](#) on this topic.)

**Pay-per-click advertising:** Google AdWords and other paid advertising can be great for jumpstarting your business or carrying out carefully designed experiments. But it should not be the centerpiece of your long term strategy. PPC can be a drug for marketers - it is expensive, makes you feel good... But then the feeling goes away and you need to pay again to feel good (i.e., to get more leads). Rather than building long term assets for their company, the addicts just keep raising the limit on their credit cards. That's not a long term strategy for lead generation. Instead, think about building a long term asset, just like the machinery in a factory – aim to build tools and develop content that will attract leads at zero marginal cost.

## Sales Prospecting

The best sales guys are ones that are not counting on anyone else to bring them leads, and are willing to run through brick walls to make the first few sales. Yes – Marketing is working hard to build a lead generation machine...but assume all that will take time – so start calling, talking to people, knocking on doors. In the course of product development, undoubtedly the company has identified some early adopters. Talk to them, ask for referrals. There's a myriad of sources for targeted prospecting (e.g., online directories where you can filter by industry classification, size, etc.). Monday morning at 8AM, build the plan for the week for how you'll make the 250 dials, counting on nothing from Marketing.

At Interactive Supercomputing, one of the segments we targeted was financial services. One of the first things our VP of Sales Dave Gibson did was to make a list of 200 firms in Manhattan in the segment, and started calling. No leads from marketing campaigns, no names from a purchased list. It wasn't easy to find the names and roles, it wasn't pleasant to make the cold calls, and there were many NO's. Yet the following week, Dave was in a board room in Manhattan with a dozen senior stake holders of an important project.

The early days for Sales are difficult – not only are there no leads, but you might be missing some biggies like the right sales script, the value prop might not be crisp or compelling, you're showing beta product, and working with crappy collateral. Those first couple months are not for the timid. **So Marketing: keep all this in mind as you build the lead gen engine.** Be empathetic, feel the same sense of urgency, and “eat your own dogfood” – make some of the sales calls, use your call script and other sales tools, give the demo yourself before you roll it out to Sales. And broader than that – develop a [Service Level Agreement with Sales](#) that defines lead quality and quantity.

## Marketing/Sales Offers

There's often a tension around how much content, tools and products are placed behind a lead form, and how much is to be given away freely. When in doubt, I tend to err on the side of giving the stuff away for free. This gives you yet another opportunity to earn your prospect's trust and attention, and allow your prospect to self-qualify. Of course eventually you will need some leads, so having a rich set of offers is key.

Great marketing offers are ones that address your prospects' concerns and motivations at as many steps of the sales process as possible – guiding your prospect along. For example, early on you might start out with a free utility; then offer an information kit; and eventually a product evaluation. Each time, deliver something of value, and earn the right for more attention, deeper engagement.

## Viral Tools and Utilities

It's a ton of fun to build tools and utilities that go viral. If successful, you can dramatically transform your cost of customer acquisition, your required capital, maybe even your business model.

At SolidWorks, we spent millions on lead generation programs. But the single biggest lead source was from a clever little utility – [eDrawings](#), the industry's first self-viewing email-enabled design communication tool. It spread virally, and quickly grew to be our single biggest lead generator – with a marginal cost of ZERO.

Similarly, consider [Website Grader](#) – a free tool that offered enough value to go viral and first put HubSpot on the map. By now it's been used by millions of marketers to grade their web sites, and those of their competitors.

I bet your other leads will cost you somewhere between \$20 and \$500. So how many free leads does a viral tool need to drive before it pays back its development costs and more?



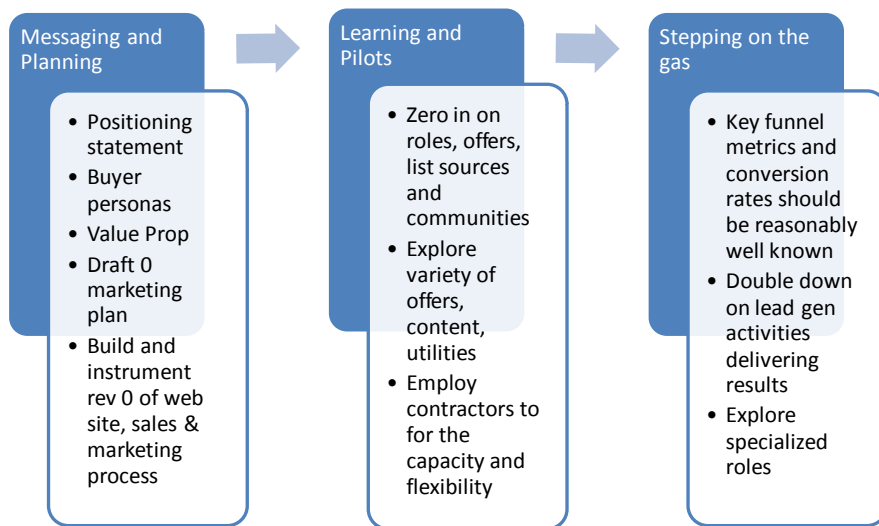
Based on the success of Website Grader, HubSpot built more and more single purpose tools aimed at their target audience. These tools have evaluated millions and millions of Twitter profiles, Facebook pages, Blogs, Press Releases, and more.

## Staffing

I think of building and scaling the marketing machine as roughly a four-stage process:

- 1) **First, there's just you:** Before hiring others, you obviously need to build the plan, and start executing it. If some of the hiring decisions depend on preliminary results, you need to wait a bit.
- 2) **Add contractors:** Once you have a plan and seen some success with initial experiments, it might be time to add contractors – freelance writers, marcom specialists, etc. This gives you the ability to cost-effectively get a lot of different kinds of talents on the team, and fund a variety of activities while still experimenting. At two of my start-ups I worked with Jeff Scholes of [Scholes Marketing](#). Jeff is a great jack-of-all-trades, having done a ton of direct marketing over the years, supporting a variety of campaigns and activities. He is also a certified HubSpot partner, so we were on the same planet with respect to crafting and executing our overall marketing plans. Depending on business needs, for months we varied his involvement somewhere between 5 and 25 hours per week.
- 3) **Small full-time team:** Once you find yourself with contractors spending much beyond 15-25 hours per week, it might make sense to consolidate some of the activities. And so the first couple hires might be generalists. They might not be a blackbelt at social media or podcasting – but early on you go broad, not deep.
- 4) **Specialize:** Once you and your small team of generalists explore enough of the landscape, you'll have a pretty good idea of where to invest further. And at that point, [you're ready to start hiring specialists](#). Let's say you've found that videos work really well in your market – hire a video production guru. Or, you might have discovered that PPC campaigns are driving some really profitable leads and customers – perhaps that's a sign that instead of logging into your AdWords account once a month for an hour to review your 5 ads and 80 keywords, you should hire a PPC expert who can manage the complexity of multiple campaigns with thousands of keywords, scores of ads and really targeted landing pages.

One final thought regarding team qualifications: encourage everyone to get the [Inbound Marketing Professional](#) certification. The curriculum covers lots of key concepts, can be studied in a few days, and the whole thing is free. It's not rocket science (I passed it!) and matches well the very things today's marketers must know and do. (Or at the very least, have folks you're interviewing for internet marketing roles take the certification exam.)



## Timeline & Budget

Roughly speaking, in the early days of a start-up, there's a learning period, and a "step on the gas" period. Don't get me wrong – it's not that the learning stops (it never does). Rather, there's an initial period where it makes little sense to invest more until you actually see some "signs of life" and have a good sense of WHAT to scale. A reasonable timeline might look like this.

### Phase 1: Learning & Pilots

- First couple weeks: get the lay of the land, build your marketing plan;
- Within a month, you should have a basic web site up, testing out a couple landing pages and offers;
- Within the first two months, you have hopefully hit the following milestones. (If not, that's an early warning bell):
  - You should have created enough content to start to see inbound traffic, links, conversions;
  - You should be able to execute at least a round or two of direct marketing experiments to get a sense for what campaigns (list sources, job titles, offers) can yield results;
  - The sales prospecting and lead follow-up should have contributed to the funnel.
- Budget spent so far: your salary; \$5K-\$15K for miscellaneous one-time and infrastructure costs; another \$5K-\$20K for campaign experiments.

### Phase 2: Stepping on the Gas

- Metrics and activities vary widely here, but the bottom line is that within a short number of months you can (and should) be experiencing strong lead flow from inbound and outbound marketing.
- At this point, you should have a good enough sense of what is working (and what is not) to double-down on increased investments – content creation, targeted outbound campaigns, innovative utilities and other tools.
- Money should hopefully be flowing a lot easier now, because you've demonstrated a closed-loop process that has strong ROI.



## Summary

These few pages only scratched the surface of what it really means to put together and execute a marketing plan. This first revision was put together rather quickly, and misses some areas entirely. So I look forward to hearing your thoughts and best practices on putting together a marketing plan for a start-up, and what tools, techniques and activities have worked well for you.



Performing with Guns N' Roses tribute band Mr. Brownstone at [Eugene Mirman's book release party](#).

## About the Author

Ilya Mirman has spent the past decade building, marketing, and supporting enterprise software products.

Most recently, as VP of Marketing at Cilk Arts (a venture-backed MIT spin-off acquired by Intel), Ilya wore multiple hats (marketing, sales, support) and led all marketing efforts for the company from 8 months before product launch through company acquisition.

As VP of Marketing at Interactive Supercomputing (a venture-backed MIT spin-off acquired by Microsoft) he built and ran the marketing, customer support, and application engineering organizations.

As VP of Marketing at SolidWorks (the world's leading vendor of mechanical design software) Ilya helped establish SolidWorks as the standard in 3D mechanical design software, used by hundreds of thousands of engineers worldwide.

Ilya holds a BSME from the University of Massachusetts, an MSME from Stanford University, and an MBA from MIT's Sloan School. Earlier in his career Ilya designed lasers for high-speed fiber optic communication systems, worked on NASA's Mars Mission, and washed dishes at Souper Salad. He enjoys jamming with friends, concert photography, and San Pellegrino mineral water.

### To connect with Ilya:

Twitter: [@IlyaMirman](#)

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Concert-related side project: <http://www.Kerslappity.com>

# **Appendix:**

# **Marketing Strategy Planning Template**

**David Meerman Scott**

# Marketing Strategy Planning Template

company name \_\_\_\_\_

product|service \_\_\_\_\_

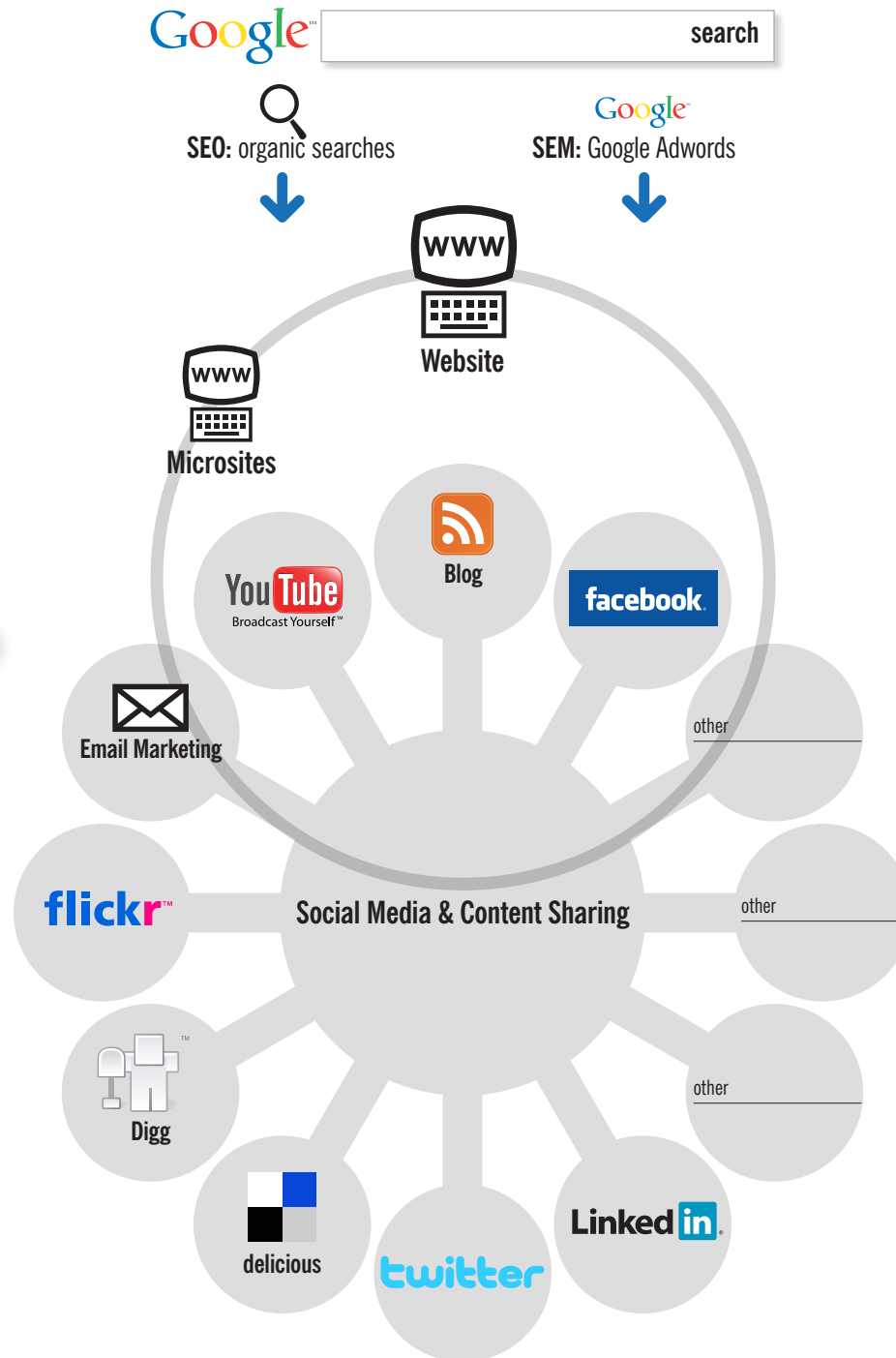
David Meerman Scott

*Marketing and Leadership Speaker*

<b>WHO</b>	<b>BUYER PERSONA</b>	<b>1 ::</b>	<b>2 ::</b>
	<b>Description</b> Who is this person? What problems does this buyer have?		
<b>WHAT</b>	<b>Problems you solve for this buyer?</b> Why are they buying from you?		
	<b>Actions you'd like them to take</b> Enquire, order, buy, connect etc.		
<b>WHY</b>	<b>How are you remarkable?</b> What value do you bring?		
	<b>Proof</b> Credibility indicators, guarantees, testimonials etc.		
<b>WHERE</b>	<b>Where are they?</b> Google, blogs, Facebook, Twitter etc.		
<b>HOW</b>	<b>Your company personality</b> What kind of company are you?		
	<b>Creative</b> Look and feel		
	<b>Tone of voice</b> Language you'd use		
	<b>Keyword phrases?</b> What buyers type into Google		
	<b>Marketing tactics &amp; Content strategy</b> Blog, Twitter, YouTube, email newsletter, Google Ads, e-books, webinars, podcasts, etc.		
<b>WHEN</b>	<b>Things to do today</b>	<b>Things to do next week</b>	<b>Things to do next month</b>
	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____

## BACK LINKS

- ☐ articles
- ☐ galleries
- ☐ affiliates
- ☐ directories
- ☐ testimonials
- ☐ speaker bios
- ☐ guest blog posts
- ☐ expert articles for industry sites
- ☐ industry associations
- ☐ blog directories
- ☐ news websites
- ☐ news releases
- ☐ bloggers
- ☐ awards
- ☐ e-books
- ☐ webinars
- ☐ podcasts
- ☐
- ☐



## OUTCOMES

- ☐ **ENQUIRE**
  - forms
  - questionnaires
  - applications
- ☐ **PURCHASE**
  - donate
  - buy
  - renew
- ☐ **DOWNLOAD**
  - presentation slides
  - e-book
  - podcast
  - toolkit
  - resources
- ☐ **PARTICIPATE**
  - connect on social networks
  - register for event
  - sign up for email list
  - register for webinar
  - give permission for communications

