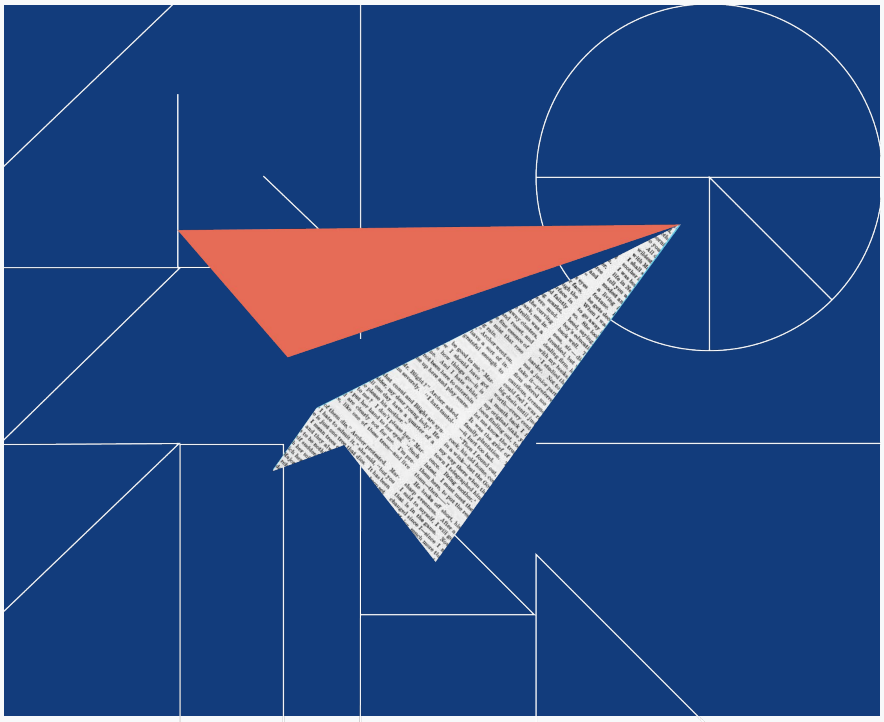

4 inbound marketing ideas that'll make your phone ring

CallRail

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Section 1

Introduction

As a business owner or marketer, you're aware of inbound marketing. In fact, you're probably at some stage of implementing it for your business. This stage could be early, like building up your content archive, or more advanced, like bringing in consistent leads on your website's calls to action (CTAs).

Here at CallRail, we field a lot of questions from prospects and customers about how to find the right balance of inbound and outbound marketing. For instance, does that perfect balance differ by industry? What about businesses that haven't invested in inbound marketing yet? Is now the right time? If so, what inbound marketing examples can they follow to get started?

To answer those questions, **we analyzed 129,393,520 calls** over the course of 2020 (Jan 6 to Oct 8, 2020, effectively). The calls studied came from CallRail's customer base of 150,000 small businesses and agencies, representing industries such as **healthcare**, **real estate**, **home services**, and **legal.**

What we learned: **Businesses that invest in inbound marketing drive more leads from calls** than companies who stick solely to traditional outbound methods. This supports the position that prioritizing inbound marketing is crucial and prudent in this day and age for businesses of all types.

With that knowledge behind us, we reached back out to ask small businesses and agencies to share some inbound marketing examples and what they see for inbound marketing in 2021.

Before we dig into those inbound marketing examples and insights, let's explore the rise of inbound marketing and its irreversible impact on consumer behavior.

Section 2

Trends that shifted consumer preference toward inbound marketing

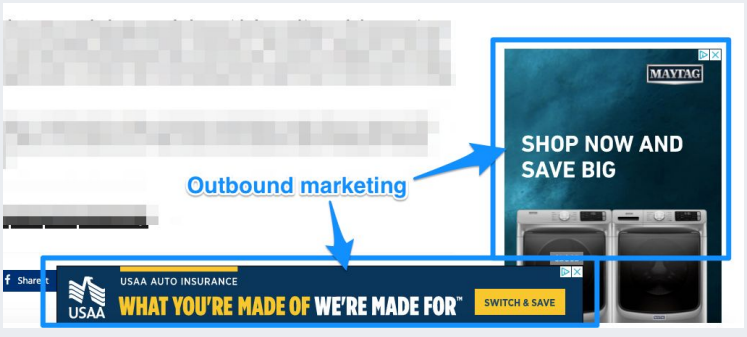
Inbound marketing was coined in 2005 by HubSpot and has only exponentially increased in popularity and effectiveness with consumers and businesses since. Kapost reported that "inbound marketing yields three times more leads per dollar than traditional methods," a truth that can't be taken lightly.

First off, the differences between inbound and outbound marketing are distinct. Outbound marketing includes cold calling, email outreach, billboards, or TV ads, to name a few. These methods involve reaching out to leads that haven't made contact with your company before. Inbound marketing is the other side of the coin: attracting leads to your website, educating them through content related to their challenges, and gradually familiarizing them with your business. Inbound and outbound marketing have the same goal, of course: to make sales.

Over time, consumers have come to prefer inbound marketing methods over outbound. Two big reasons why: innovations in technology and the shift to a new main consumer base — millennials. In today's landscape, outbound marketing is interruptive, reaching out to potential customers when they're not necessarily in a buying mindset. Because of this interruptive approach, outbound has developed the reputation of being aggressive or pushy, losing some of its effectiveness in the market.

Outbound marketing

A modern example of outbound marketing is shown here: display ads for insurance and a washer/dryer. Note that the blog reader has not previously researched these products. The assumption is that the readers of this blog would be interested in these products — but it's just that, an assumption.



(Source: McKinsey)

Does this mean inbound marketing should replace outbound? No. It means outbound tactics shouldn't be the only options in your marketing toolbox, especially with the increasing success of inbound's softer touch. The marketing landscape has changed drastically since the 1960s, when consumers largely made buying decisions from TV commercials, print ads, and radio jingles.

But in today's age of information-sharing via internet search engines or social media, consumers have a wealth of information at their fingertips. That puts them in control of when, where, and what marketing content they consume.

Explosion of internet content

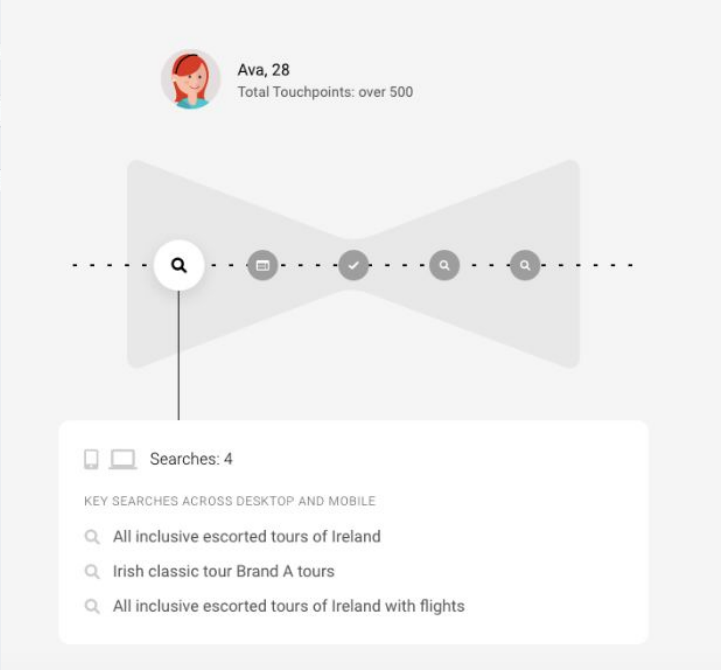
Obviously, the development of the internet turned the marketing world on its head. Company websites and content swung in as the new marketing touchpoints in a buyer's journey to purchase. These content archives would later serve as cornerstones for inbound marketing.

One of the big impacts of the internet and the content therein was the rewiring of **the overall customer buying journey**. Done well, marketing catches consumers at the right touchpoints to influence their buying decisions. With the internet, those touchpoints and the way consumers gathered product information changed.

Compared to TV commercials or marketing touchpoints of the past, blogging on the internet was more democratic in nature for companies. There were lower cost and labor barriers to entry than shelling out thousands on a TV ad, so content began to take off. (And even more so when search engines came on the scene.)

Rise of the search engine

The invention of search engines in the late 1990s has forever transformed information gathering. The rise of the internet and websites as a necessity for businesses has brought a new age of information democratization. At the forefront, facilitating this information democratization were **search engines like Google** (and its predecessors Yahoo!, AltaVista, and Ask.com). Those search engines crawled and indexed the new content (blogs and webpages), using their algorithms to fetch results in record time. And those results got more sophisticated and numerous by the day.



(Source: Think With Google)

Since the late '90s, consumers have been empowered. Before, messages from the companies or word of mouth were the main source of truth when someone was considering a new product or service. With search engines, consumers gained the ability to seek information about services, products, or anything, really — all on their own terms. With this empowerment and wealth of knowledge came a new buying process for consumers.

What does this new buying process look like? **It differs by consumer and by product or service**. This can take hundreds of brand touchpoints across multiple devices and searches, like this example customer journey for a trip to Ireland.

This ability to look up infinite information has enabled the personalization of the buying experience. It's not about catering to the masses in a typical outbound marketing message. It's about catering to the individual and delivering content to them at various stages of the customer journey to guide them to a decision.

Millennials dictate changes in consumer marketing

Across decades of marketing advancements, consumer bases (and their preferences) have changed, too. Millennials, the first generation brought up in the internet age, crave individualistic experiences — even when being marketed to. Why do their preferences matter? By 2030, millennials will hold more buying power than any other consumer demographic in terms of numbers (and dollars). They're projected to outnumber baby boomers **78 million to 56 million**.

Millennials "engage with brands far more extensively, personally, and emotionally — and in entirely different ways — than have other generations," according to **BCG**. The consulting firm goes on to say, "They are influencing and accelerating shifts in consumer attitudes, spending habits, and brand perceptions and preferences among Gen-Xers and even baby boomers."

Millennials connect on mobile devices, demand more personal buying experiences, and grew up using search engines. As can be expected, their demographic has vastly different expectations of brands than their older counterparts.

This means that outbound marketing not only has a harder time reaching millennials but also that millennials won't buy from companies who can't or won't adapt their marketing (Gen-Zers are close behind them). In fact, 84% of buyers age 25–34 reported having **left a favorite website because of intrusive or irrelevant advertising**. We repeat: "left a **favorite** website."

That said, outbound still plays a role in marketing, but **marketing strategies evolved to complement** and embrace inbound marketing over time. If you still need to implement an inbound marketing strategy, don't worry. You're not too late, but you have to act fast.

The sooner you make inbound part of your digital marketing strategy, the more of a lead you'll have on your competition as **digital transformation** continues reshaping your industry. Use these inbound marketing examples to help your business get started.

Section 3

4 inbound marketing examples small business owners and marketers should steal to drive calls

Kurt Lambert, vice president of SEO and development operations at performance marketing agency **Silverback Strategies**, beautifully puts how inbound and marketing work together. “Marketing is like fishing. You can fish with a net (outbound) or a spear (ABM, aka account-based marketing). But inbound marketing is like fishing with a pole. You have to have the right bait (content) and hook (offers) to attract prospects,” he said.

These inbound marketing examples will help you do that, even if you’re in an industry that’s long relied on outbound marketing, such as real estate services. Use these inbound marketing examples as inspiration to attract leads, convince them to call, and then convert them into customers.

1. Law firm Block O'Toole & Murphy's SEO strategy

Search engine optimization, or SEO, refers to optimizing your website and its related assets, such as your blog or product pages, so they appear in customers' online searches. For personal injury law firm Block O'Toole & Murphy (BOM), SEO has made search one of its strongest marketing channels.

"In 2020 alone, SEO traffic was up over 95% from the previous year," Ying Huang, BOM's director of marketing, said. Even more impressive, BOM's SEO had already been growing prior to that. "Our organic search traffic has risen significantly in the past couple of years through making sure our site was sound from a technical SEO standpoint and focusing much of our efforts on content strategy."

By putting links to its main category pages directly on the homepage, Block O'Toole & Murphy makes its most valuable pages easily accessible to visitors and search engines.

Here's an example of how BOM used SEO to generate inbound marketing leads. BOM created topic pages around its main services, then linked them directly from its homepage. See the clickable icons immediately below the hero image (the picture of Manhattan), which lead to the topic pages.

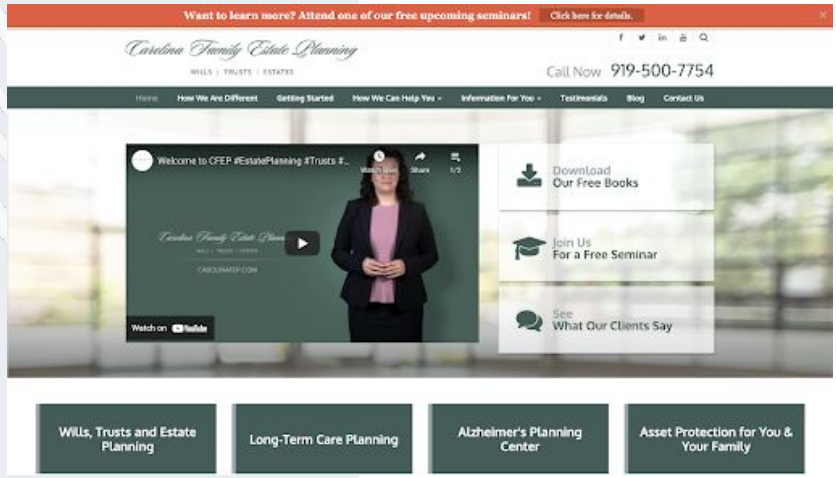
For each of these practices, BOM created authoritative category pages that anticipate customers' questions. BOM's page on construction injuries is almost 3,000 words long. It breaks down applicable laws in easy-to-understand language, presents an FAQ, and offers social proof in the form of case results (including a $110 million verdict for a paralyzed cyclist).

The results: BOM pulls in more than 5,000 visitors from search each month, ranking in the top 10 for keywords like "construction accident law firm" and "New York car accident lawyers." This steady stream of traffic helps explain why inbound marketing costs 62% less per lead than outbound.

All that inbound traffic makes it easier to get leads on the phone, too.

"In our industry, we're prohibited from cold calling and soliciting potential clients, but we are permitted to follow up once someone has given permission for us to communicate with them," said Jackie Bedard, elder care attorney and founder of Carolina Family Estate Planning. Once an inbound lead makes contact through the site, whether by a phone call or form submission, law firms can then have their salespeople follow up.

2. Content marketing strategies like the ones these businesses use



Carolina Family Estate Planning presents multiple forms of visual and written content, from webinars to e-books.

Content marketing refers to reaching customers through blogs, podcasts, videos, and other types of content. It's easy to think of content marketing as SEO, but keyword-optimized webpages are only one of many forms of content you can use. Carolina Family Estate Planning's use of content offers a strong inbound marketing example to follow.

"White papers and e-books continue to be a strong source of inbound marketing and list building for our firm," Bedard said. Her practice's homepage greets visitors with a playground of content. That diversity does more than create a personalized choose-your-own-adventure for leads — it also gives Bedard's firm assets they can repurpose on other marketing channels, such as email and social.

Wondering where your business should start with content marketing? Two strong options: original research and optimizing existing content.

A huge part of content marketing is educating the customer about why you are the solution to their problem. Before customers call you, they're likely to look at your content to make sure you're worth calling. That's a big part of what makes original research so valuable.

Original research could come from your company's unique knowledge (think Block O'Toole & Murphy's category pages in the preceding section). Alternatively, it could come from compiling and analyzing data on a problem your customers have.

"A great inbound strategy calls for content that your audience truly cares about. That's why we're conducting primary market research on the consumer behavior in industries we want to target," Silverback Strategies' Lambert said. "We will distribute these insights a number of ways, including via webinars, podcasts, email, guest articles, blog posts, social media, and more."

For Andrew Miller, co-founder and vice president of strategy at marketing agency **Workshop Digital**, original research means projects like "an analysis of 6,600+ local search results pages to identify the characteristics of top-ranking bank websites." That research will help Miller create content to attract clients in the financial services industry.

If you've already invested significantly in content, though, your best starting point might be optimizing what you already have.

"We are in the middle of reorganizing years of blog posts, changing from the 'sock drawer' model to an intelligent **hub and spoke model**. It will necessitate updating, rewriting, and, in some cases, deleting old posts. And of course, filling in the gaps with new ones," said Brian Cooper, vice president of SEO services at digital marketing and automation agency **OpenMoves**.

By that, Cooper means that instead of having lots of related but scattered posts (sock drawer), he and his team will restructure their blog into long-form topic pages (hubs) that guide readers through related subtopics (spokes). This hub and spoke content model is highly effective because it mirrors customers' buying journeys, answering high-level questions first (common AC problems) and then narrowing toward more specific ones (how much does an AC compressor cost).

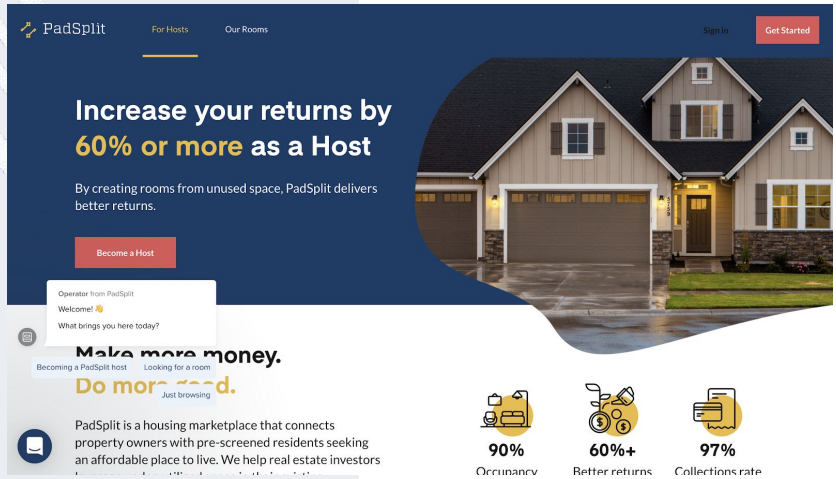
"A great inbound strategy calls for content that your audience truly cares about."

Kurt Lambert
VP SEO and Development
Silverback Strategies

3. PadSplit's personalized conversational marketing

Millennials expect a personalized experience when they visit your site. They'll even share their data to get it. SmarterHQ found that 70% of millennials are fine with letting retailers track their browsing and shopping behavior, as long as it results in a personalized shopping experience.

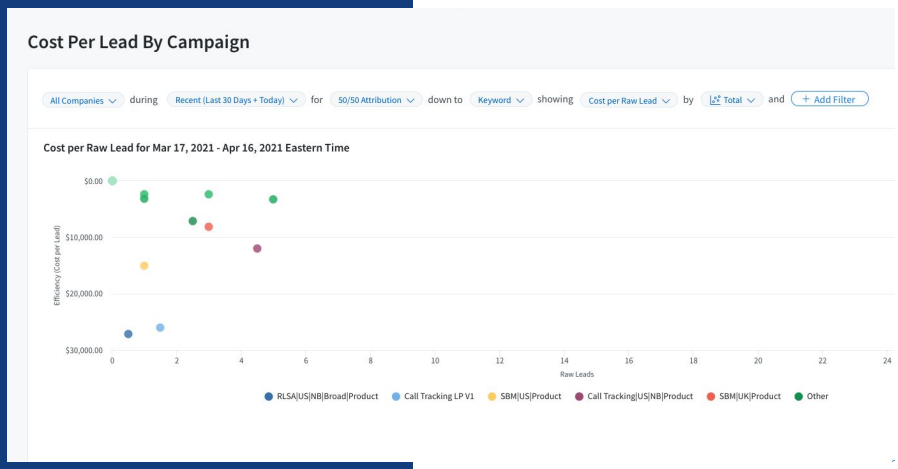
PadSplit, an Atlanta-based real estate service that helps low-income workers gain financial independence through affordable co-living environments, provides a strong inbound marketing example that uses personalization.



Notice the live chat option in the lower left-hand corner of PadSplit's site, which presents pre-loaded questions to quickly help visitors get the information they need.

"We started using a third-party live chat and on-site banner tool that allowed us to customize messaging for different customer buckets. This was a very successful marketing execution," marketing director Deniz Camsari said. "We are in the hospitality/accommodation industry, and as we chase occupancy targets, it's crucial for us to target the right audience and find the right room at the right price."

This personalization closes the gap between inbound and outbound marketing. The immediacy of live chat, a form of conversational marketing, means PadSplit can engage leads moments after they enter the site. Instead of clicking all over the site, customers can share details like their desired neighborhood and rent, then get personalized recommendations, all through live chat.



A report in CallRail showing cost per raw lead by both online (Bing ads) and offline (print ads) channels.

4. The full-touch attribution these businesses use to find and double down on their best channels

What if, at the beginning of the year, you didn't have to change anything about your marketing strategy except adjust spend to your highest ROI channels? That's possible when you combine a strong inbound marketing strategy with full-funnel **marketing attribution**.

That's the scenario Andrew Miller and Workshop Digital find themselves in for 2021. "We are doubling down on research and distributing our findings through existing channels rather than spending more money on paid acquisition channels," he said.

The same goes for Jackie Bedard and Carolina Family Estate Planning. "In 2021, most of our marketing strategy is focused on doubling down on our existing [inbound] marketing," she said. "As a small firm with a limited budget, we know we must track every dollar of marketing spend so we can get maximum return on investment from our marketing. We use direct response marketing and track all lead sources using CallRail."

To get that level of attribution, small businesses like Bedard's use CallRail to combine their **call tracking**, **form tracking**, and digital advertising data in one place. Now, business owners and marketers can see multi-touch timelines of each customer's journey, from what keyword prompted their call to which web pages they visited. From there, businesses can tie leads to marketing spend and then lead value by channel.

PadSplit's Camsari puts it best. "Inbound marketing strategies are as powerful as how much companies can automate their data flows and their analytics."

"In 2021, most of our marketing strategy is focused on doubling down on our existing [inbound] marketing."

Jackie Bedard
Elder Care Attorney and Founder
Carolina Family Estate Planning

Section 4

Implement the right mix of inbound and outbound for your business

It's clear inbound marketing's time has arrived. This presents one of two takeaways for small business owners and marketers like yourself:

1. If you haven't yet implemented inbound marketing, join the crowd, or you'll be left behind quickly.
2. If you've dabbled in inbound but haven't depreciated outbound spend to max out your budget dollars, it's time to experiment with your marketing spend. It's more likely than not that you're missing out on inbound channels that deliver leads more efficiently than your outbound channels.

As for outbound, it still has a place as part of your marketing strategy, depending on your industry and approach. We have some tips to share on how to strike the right mix of inbound and outbound marketing for your business:

➔ **Implement inbound if you haven't already.** We can't stress this enough. If you've been neglecting your digital marketing, this is the sign you need to drive digital transformation. Otherwise, you'll spin your wheels trying to generate leads against the momentum of inbound.

➔ **Use outbound as an area to experiment in.** Don't consider those budget dollars as fixed because their effectiveness is depreciating over time. Wean yourself off. Don't sink too much budget into buying lists when inbound marketing is so effective and affordable by comparison. Instead, consider outbound as an arena to make bets with a little budget and to experiment with new sources that aren't the majority of your budget to obtain leads.

➔ **Track your efforts.** If you don't have a way to determine exactly which marketing efforts turned into X amount of leads, you're going to need it. Our study's visualization is representative of what data is readily available through CallRail for tracking calls and forms submitted to your company. If that's a giant question mark for you right now, give CallRail a try free for 14 days.

➔ **The mix between inbound and outbound will differ by industry.** Real estate can still thrive with a heavy outbound. "We need outbound strategies to fuel our growth," PadSplit's Camsari said. So don't let us take away your bus stop bench. But do bring a critical eye to what you've considered as "standing expenses" over the years to cut and spend your budget smarter.

How much does your inbound marketing win for your bottom line vs. outbound?

If you're running your marketing efforts blind or just getting started with inbound to drive lead generation, **try CallRail free** to arm you with the numbers you need from the get-go to justify your spend and efforts.

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