



THE 3-STEP GUIDE TO MARKETING FOR MANUFACTURERS

HUDSON
FUSION

As a manufacturing professional, you have a unique technical understanding of your product, your market, and your industry. But reaching potential customers has become more challenging than it used to be. Today, leads are spread out online—as well as offline. Getting right-fit leads in the door requires a solid plan of action.

The right marketing strategy will provide endless routes to reach buyers and decision makers—and create loyal customers from your contact list.

The thing is, you may need to throw out some of your old strategies. The great marketing plans of today utilize new tools and tactics that are changing the name of the game.

Then:

- Didn't Share a Lot of Information
- Outbound Strategies
- Relied on Word of Mouth

VS.

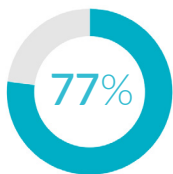
Now:

- Transparent About Processes
- Inbound Strategies
- Digital Is Where to Be

Debunking Myths in Marketing for Manufacturers

MYTH #1: *Manufacturers only need word of mouth to build and maintain a strong customer base.*

You need a steady influx of good leads to stay competitive. The best place to find leads today is online via inbound marketing efforts like content marketing. Not taking advantage of the digital space or optimizing your online presence can result in a huge waste of resources and lost opportunities. Maintaining word-of-mouth relationships is a great way to add depth and authenticity to your brand reputation, but **if you want to expand your pool of leads, you need to cast a broader net.**

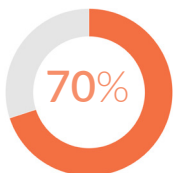


of Manufacturing Marketers Use Content Marketing to Build Audiences

Source: CMI

MYTH #2: *Manufacturers don't need to be online or use digital marketing to be successful.*

Most people, especially professionals, spend a significant amount of time online. Up-and-comers in manufacturing—those in their 20s and 30s—might not even remember life without the internet! Professionals in every industry today do research and look for information, answers, and suppliers related to their industry online. You want to **make sure that your company is positioned as a leader in your industry by building your reputation online** as well as off. You have the answers and information that your potential customers are looking for. Take advantage of the digital space to show that you're an expert in your field by providing and promoting helpful information.



of the Buyer's Journey Is Complete Before a Buyer Even Reaches Out to Sales

Source: Pardot

MYTH #3: Manufacturers shouldn't share any details about their products or process.

This common misconception often ends up hurting manufacturers more than it helps protect trade secrets. Definitely protect any patented trade details that can hurt you in the competitive landscape if they're shared... but your process and your product are what set your company apart from others, especially when many other manufacturers might be producing similar products. Highlight your Unique Selling Propositions (USPs), or how your process and products set you apart and how they make you better than your competitors.

MYTH #4: It's impossible to shorten the long sales cycle that comes with manufacturing industries.

Use marketing to inform buyers about how your company cares about their interests over promoting your own products. By focusing on your audience's needs instead of your own, you can [speak directly to the influential stakeholders](#) your buyers are trying to convince to purchase. Leverage personalized information from your engineers that speak to technical needs—that way, you bridge the gap that's created when buyers have to spend time wading through promotional, self-serving content from multiple potential suppliers.



of Manufacturers Struggle to Create Content that Appeals to their Target Audience

Source: CMI

Want to take the first step to more leads, conversions, and a company ready to grow? Follow the steps outlined below to position your company as a leader in your industry.

Step 1 | Define Your Marketing Goals

1.1 Evaluate Your Business Needs and Timeline

First things first: Knowing where to start means understanding and solidifying your goals.

When assessing your goals, evaluate any current marketing efforts and assets, and where you think your efforts aren't aligning with what your audience wants (we'll get into how to discover your audience needs next).

- Where are the gaps, and how can you build a plan to keep your marketing efforts working for you consistently throughout the year and throughout the sales cycle?
- What is your sales team doing, and how can marketing efforts support them to take pressure off bringing qualified leads into the funnel?

You might be interested in marketing because you want to increase brand awareness, modernize your website, bring in more leads, or [generally increase revenue](#).

Whatever you come up with, dig deeper. If you are in need of better reputation management, better leads, or more conversions, you're identifying weak spots in **how your current brand communicates with your audience**.

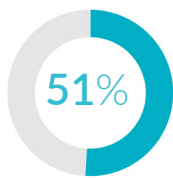
Your goals probably include increasing conversions. In order to get conversions, you first need qualified leads. To get qualified leads interested in your company, you need to figure out what they actually need from you.

1.2 Focus Goals Around Your Audience's Needs First

Marketing realigns your brand to speak to [specific, qualified buyer personas](#), attracting them to your products or services instead of offering potentially irrelevant offers to a broad, possibly indifferent audience (nobody wants that).

Instead, Inbound Marketing flips traditional marketing on its head. The customer-first philosophy of Inbound Marketing puts your ideal customer in the driver seat and makes sure your company comes to the rescue when they have questions. By educating them along their journey and nurturing hand-raisers, you have a greater chance of earning right-fit leads.

That's why doing comprehensive audience research is the bread and butter of a successful marketing strategy.



Only 51% of Manufacturers Prioritize their Audience's Needs in Content

Source: CMI

Audience research for manufacturers is completely different from any other B2B sector or consumer marketing.

Marketing for manufacturers means speaking to other experts.

In manufacturing, you're speaking to skilled, specialized professionals who have business-motivated interests, as opposed to consumers who are motivated for personal reasons. Marketing for manufacturers means speaking to other experts.

In B2C marketing, the consumer may not know as much about a product or service as the company. In B2B marketing in general—and manufacturing in particular—the level of knowledge that buyers and decision makers look for online is much higher.

The goal in a B2B relationship is to find what marketing information buyers and engineers want and need—then deliver it in the way that they prefer to consume it. Discovering who exactly you need to speak to, and what information they are looking for, is critical.

What to Look for When Doing Audience Research

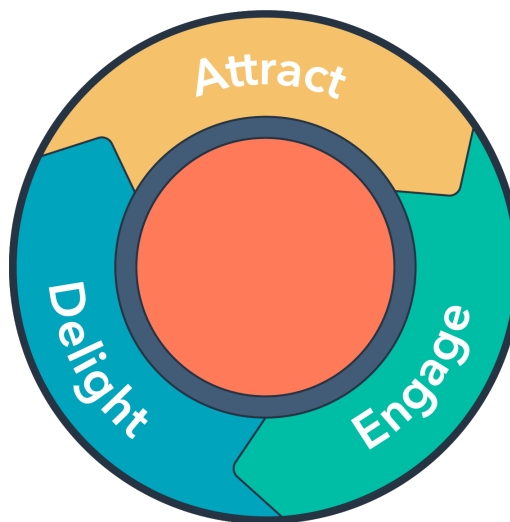
- Where your audience finds and shares information, from publications to social media platforms
- The challenges they face in their position
- What challenges they're trying to solve with your product
- Why they're looking for a new supplier
- How your product, your process, and the way you do things solve their problems
- If they're trying to influence the decision of a manager or higher-up

As a manufacturer, it's important to remember exactly how much research your buyers conduct before they contact a potential supplier. They're dealing with significantly higher numbers—both in quantity and value—than a lot of other B2B industries, and they usually need to convince a senior leader to commit to a purchase. Therefore, manufacturers need to provide a lot of useful, industry-specific information upfront—and it needs to be easy to find and digest. Most importantly, your marketing efforts should naturally lead your audience to the next step of the buyer's journey: contacting your company.

Go to: [How to Develop Buyer Personas](#)

Take the time to get to know who your audience is, where they're coming from, and what their challenges are.

A manufacturing company that does this well is often seen reaching out to the right community online—and in person. Every level of representative maintains some sort of contact with current and potential buyers. Whether they run into leads at trade shows, hop on the phone to answer their questions, or reach out with a personalized email, they make connecting with people a priority. This keeps every level of the organization in touch with who your audience really is, and how best to serve them during every stage of the [sales cycle](#).



[From HubSpot](#)

...but don't skip the formal in-depth audience research and buyer persona development. It's critical to a successful marketing strategy. If you only consider your company's own interests instead of taking your buyers' perspective into consideration, even the best marketing efforts will fall flat as soon as they're launched.

1.3 Are They SMART Goals?

As you formalize your goals, make sure they're smart. The best way to create attainable business goals—and a strategy to support them—is with this simple, effective acronym: [SMART](#). In short, SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time-Bound.

It may seem obvious, but too many companies fall into the trap of throwing random marketing efforts on the wall to see what sticks without carefully evaluating how they speak to your goals.

Without SMART goals—and efforts that always serve them—a marketing team can quickly become overwhelmed and lose sight of what you're trying to achieve, in turn wasting your valuable resources.

Creative teams can fall into the trap of becoming excited about new trends in marketing or your industry. It's easy to want to jump on the bandwagon or go all-in on an idea that seems like it will help you stand out from the crowd. Before committing to a potential drain on your resources, reframe your ideas. You may be able to make them work if you change the timetable. You may be able to find time to explore them down the line, and you may be able to make it measurable, and find the resources to make it actionable. But if it isn't relevant to the goals you've thought long and hard about, question whether it's truly worth your resources or if you're just keeping the team busy with tactics that don't serve your mission.

Step 2 | Determine the Best Way to Get in Front of Potential Customers

So, you've determined specific, time-bound **goals meant to help you appeal to your target audience**.

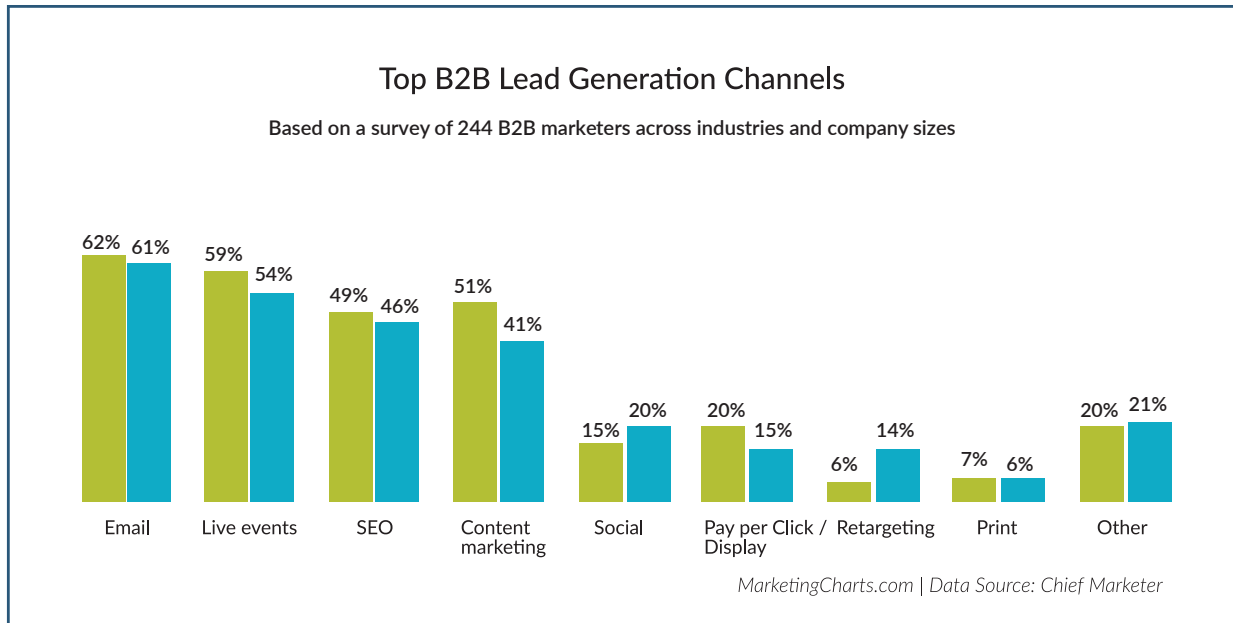
You have your WHY and WHAT. **The next step is to determine HOW to achieve those goals.**

2.1 Where do you need to be discovered?

When you did your audience research, you explored the spaces where they go to look for and share information. Chances are that some of your competitors are also in the same space already.

Take the time to [reevaluate your competition](#). Analyze current competitors to see where and how they operate online to help you discover a larger audience. While you're busy uncovering new potential buyers in these online communities, you may even find new and emerging competitors to track. Where are these competitors online, and what are they doing to grow business that works for them? Is it appropriate for you to be in the same spaces?

Identify and take note of where your community likes to go to talk shop with other industry players—and from your perspective, potential customers.



Map Out Target Platforms

Make a list of the platforms and publications that will help your company be seen as a thought leader and reputable expert in your industry. Think about where you look for information, where you see your competitors, and where your audience goes to solve their problems and learn more about the industry (industry watering holes). These might include:

- Trade Shows
- Social Media Platforms
- Organizational Websites
- Educational Resources

And don't forget the importance of optimizing your own website.



of potential customers turn to Google to do research before reaching out to companies about products or services.

Source: Pardot

That means that it's more important than ever for every authority in their space to provide ample information online to attract their target audience and keep them engaged—starting with your own website. Your website acts as the hub of information not only about your products, but your brand values, history, and industry news.

Once you have a list of industry watering holes, you know where to find potential leads—and how to bring them closer to a sale. Publishing or sharing right-fit content for your audience will lead them right where you want them: your website, where you can show them exactly what you have to offer.

In marketing terms, the best inbound strategies balance content marketing, SEO, and lead nurturing efforts to bring in right-fit potential customers.

2.2 How will your messaging speak to potential customers?

We already touched on the unique challenges manufacturers face when speaking to potential buyers: You're dealing with specialized experts and multiple tiers of decision makers, so you need to get on their level. Now that you know how to reach these potential buyers, it's time to determine how to speak to them.

The thing is, while a manufacturing marketing strategy is different from other industries and markets, and we're speaking to experts who care about tech specs, they are still people who end up making decisions based on emotional reasoning.

As you develop the messaging that highlights the benefits of working with your company, make sure to appeal to the emotional aspects of your buyer's decision-making process.

At the end of the day, you're still talking to real people who relate more to **messaging that makes them feel good about choosing your company** over another.

In order to bridge the gap from talking specs to appealing to the buyer's desires:

- Have some fun with messaging
- Make them eye-catching and memorable
- Make the connection to how their industry or your product are serving a bigger picture or a greater good
- Appeal to humans, not companies
- Appeal to the emotional aspects of your buyers' needs
- Highlight benefits over features
- Personalize: Include information unique to their industry
- Supplement emotional reasoning with compelling data and stats
- Keep in mind where your specific buyer person is in the sales cycle and buying process
- Highlight what sets you apart from competitors

How Much Information Is Too Much Information?

The content you offer needs to be catered to what a manufacturing audience cares about. Examples of the types of information they might be looking for include:

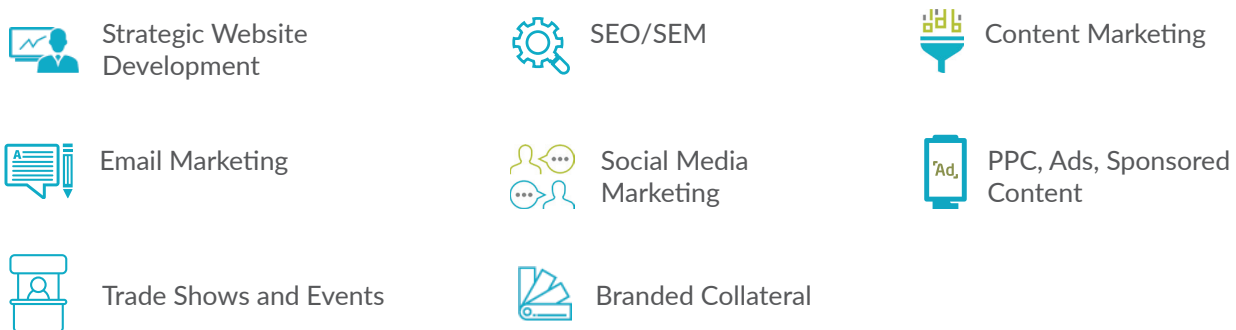
- New technology and products that can solve their challenges
- Your history and reputation in the industry
- Social proof that others trust you as an expert
- Product specs and other information they might need to evaluate your product, like safety documentation
- Product benefits
- Marketing collateral at trade shows or events they can share with other important decision makers

2.3 Create a Plan of Action

In looking at messaging, you'll already start forming ideas about the best ways to package information. It's important to remember that a complete marketing plan is made up of complementary marketing strategies. Each strategy serves a campaign and is deployed in one or more marketing channels.

Since they work together, you need to map out the best plan for them to work for you to achieve your goals.

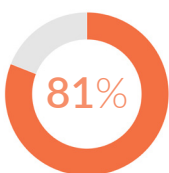
What makes up a complete marketing plan?



The key to a successful marketing plan is to be intentional. Avoid one-off tactics and isolated efforts. Never go all-in on one good idea if it doesn't speak directly to your overall goals and audience.

Strategies and Channels | The Goals They Serve

- **SEO** | Get found online for target keywords
- **Content Production, Including Case Studies and Whitepapers** | Thought and Data Leadership.



of B2B companies blog as a content marketing tactic.

Content Marketing Institute [2016](#)

- **Ad Spend/PPC** | Get new leads in the funnel. Marketing efforts like paid take some pressure off the traditional sales team by qualifying leads before sending them over and can be a huge win for efficiency.
- **Social Media** | Reputation Management, Social Proof, and Community Building. Reach out to and engage with your industry's community.
- **Website Development** | Get the most out of your digital presence by creating an easy-to-use, helpful, and appealing digital home base.
- **Email Marketing** | Stay top-of-mind with leads using emails. Nurture leads once you have them.

Print and Online Publications | Thought leadership and brand awareness. Pitch articles to trade magazines online and in print: Publications need expert contributors. As an expert in your field, you have the in-depth industry knowledge and insight that industry publications want to share. Answers common questions or offer solutions to challenges in your industry in an article. Mention the benefits of your product and process, but don't plug your company.

Events and Trade Shows | Reach potential customers in person. Stand out from competitors with visuals, your team's expertise, and the most compelling information at the event.

In the B2B setting, **events help generate the most leads**, while case studies help convert and accelerate the most leads.

Marketing Charts [2018](#)

Don't Be Afraid to Dive into Creative Content

As a manufacturer, you are likely supporting industries that are interested in new technologies and staying ahead of the curve.

Grab forward thinkers' attention by offering information in new, [eye-catching formats like video](#), audio, images, and infographics. Present data in an interesting, engaging, and context- or application-first way so that nothing about your product or process is unclear... or boring.

Most Common Content Marketing Tactics Used in Manufacturing

- 82% of Manufacturers Use Email Newsletters
- 81% Attend In-Person Events
- 80% Use Video
- 79% Publish Articles on their Website and Use Social Media
- 69% Publish Articles on Other Websites and in Print Media

From [CMI](#)



of B2B marketers credit email as the most effective distribution channel for demand gen efforts.

Source: CMI

While you want to compete in the content spaces where others see success, keep in mind that standing out might mean trying a different tactic to create new opportunities to reach leads.

Look to increase relevant website visits not only from potential customers, but from communities that look to you as an industry leader. Attracting engineering students or skilled workers could lead to broader brand awareness and even new hires down the road.

Ideas that Might Set Your Company Apart from Other Manufacturers

- Reach out to or speak at educational institutions.
- Offer internships or scholarships. Manufacturers have been known to struggle to fill skilled labor jobs. Efforts to make your brand's name known in educational or vocational circles can help.
- Consider sponsored posting.
- Look into reputable, non-competitor “influencers” in your industry and partner with them on projects and marketing efforts.
- Try pitching non-branded articles to less niche, generalist publications and approach your subject matter from an educational standpoint to appeal to a broader audience.
- Explore social media advertising, particularly LinkedIn.
- Share your process in a new way.
- Explore how you can fill a need or gap in your industry.
- Use your website to its full potential: optimize conversion paths and forms.
- Promote your blog and partner with other writers. Consider interviews and employee spotlights.
- Email campaigns, newsletters, and roundups keep your company top of mind with leads and contacts.



Almost 50% of manufacturers cite accommodating for a long decision-making process and difficulty in reaching target audiences as their top challenges.

[From CMI](#)

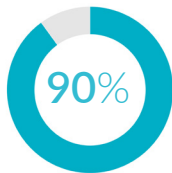
Step 3 | Optimize Marketing Efforts with the Right Tools

Measuring progress and optimizing your efforts means investing in tools and automation to keep your marketing strategy on target. To make sure your efforts are on track and worth your time, [get the tools and technology you need](#) to assess—and refocus—your marketing efforts as you go.

Today, you can easily find multi-purpose tools—even free versions of tools—that give you a variety of technologies to help you. Key capabilities to look for include:

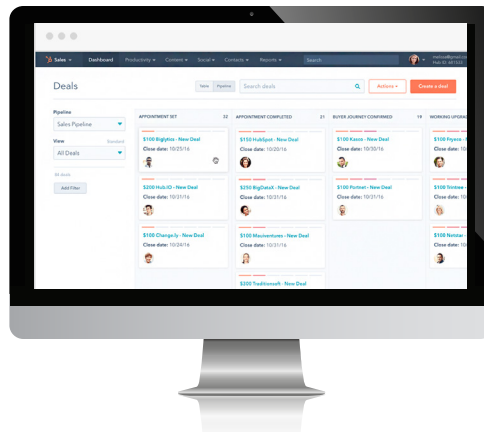
- Analytics
- Content Management System (CMS)
- Social Media and Engagement Management
- Automation Software
- Email
- Contact Management/CRM

A complete marketing tool that includes some combination of a CRM, CMS, and automation will help you determine how many leads you're winning through your marketing and content efforts.



of Manufacturing Marketers Use Analytics Tools to Optimize Content Marketing Efforts

Source: CMI



As you start conducting your foundational research, creating your plan of action, and setting up ways to track progress, don't be afraid to reach out to professionals that can guide you along the way.

Have questions about what marketing can do for your manufacturing company? We're here to help!

Let's talk about how you can start optimizing your brand, getting more right-fit leads in the door, and growing your business.

[I Want to Talk About My Marketing Strategy](#)

About Hudson Fusion

Hudson Fusion has led the Westchester, NY marketing and web design industry for over 20 years. We started as a web design firm back in 1996, and since then, we've mastered the art of business growth to help countless B2B companies evolve.

We work with businesses in a variety of industries including manufacturing, biotech, software & IT, law, finance, entertainment, and real estate... just to name a few.

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