

COMPANY BRANDING E-BOOK

Building A Brand

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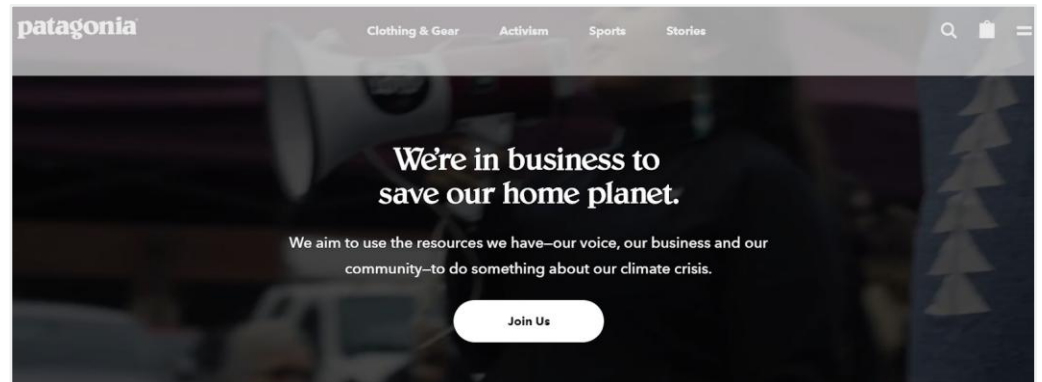
Introduction

Your brand is the first impression that potential customers have with your company, and you know what they say about first impressions... you only get one. Your brand encompasses your brand style guide, tone in your website copy and on social media, your color palette and logo, and the aesthetic of your website.

Not only does your brand include visual elements, but it portrays your company's mission and values. For example, Starbucks is dedicated to empowering employees and provides benefits like healthcare and educational opportunities.

[CEO Howard Schultz](#), a de facto [brand loyalty expert](#), comments, "If people believe they share values with a company, they will stay loyal to the brand."

Another example is Patagonia. The company features an ["Activism" tab](#) right on their homepage, urging customers to help them save our planet, a mission that resonates with consumers.



Source: [Patagonia](#)

In this guide, **we'll review the definition of a brand, how to create a brand style guide, implementing your brand on your website and social media, and how to monitor and measure your brand's reach and awareness.** We'll review brands that are successful and how they connect with their audiences, and how your brand can bring you new leads and customers.

CHAPTER 1

What Is A Brand?

Brand: a person's perception of a product, service, experience, or organization based on an organization's identifying logo, name, and presence.

In the inbound marketing age, “brand” can be tricky to define. Typically, branding refers to branding on the internet - and the internet moves pretty fast. More than ever before, brands can be built up in an instant, and in turn they can fall just as quickly. A successful brand is one with longevity that is built up over time and flexible enough to adapt to the current market trends and expectations. So, what separates the flash-in-a-pan brands that come and go seemingly overnight from the brands that retain loyalty across demographics and generations?

The key: a differentiator.

A brand's differentiator is what sets it apart from the competition and moves its brand from simply being known and recognizable to being desired beyond the confines of the brand identity. Once a brand finds that differentiator, it becomes its calling card. It's how everyone recognizes the brand and the first thing everyone judges it by – so your brand needs to be consistent.

No matter which channels your customers choose to interact with your brand –your website, blog, email, Facebook, Twitter, or whatever tomorrow's technology may bring –they should all demonstrate the unique experience that your brand represents.



Examples of Great Brands

The common thread shared by all great brands is their dedication to their differentiator. See if you can identify the calling card of each of these well-known, successful brands.

Apple and Microsoft



Two tech giants, and two of the most formidable brands of the 21st century. What makes these brands great is their simple, recognizable logos and their aesthetically pleasing and consistent marketing. This level of brand-greatness is one that attracts and retains millions of loyal users.

Disney



By focusing their branding efforts on children as well as adults, Disney was able to create space for themselves in any type of home life scenario. What other brands do you know of that would be able to sell the promise of dream fulfillment?

Toyota



When you think of Toyota, you probably think of a trusted, reliable car manufacturer that has been a mainstay in the automotive industry for decades. The staying power of this brand is due in large part to their ability to capitalize on their legacy while looking to the future. For example, when Toyota started selling environmentally friendly hybrid cars they already had the trust in their brand behind them to support this major company shift.

Nike and Adidas



Nothing fuels brand awareness more than a good old fashioned rivalry. The war behind these two retail giants is practically as famous as either of the brands themselves. Each has its respected instantly recognizable logo and internationally famous athletes as brand ambassadors, but it is the healthy competition between the two brands that keeps their names on the tip of our tongues.

CHAPTER 2

Creating a Brand Strategy

A brand strategy is a long-term plan for developing a successful brand presence in order to achieve specific goals. First, let's clear up the biggest misconception about brand strategy: Your brand is not your product, your logo, your website, or your name. Your brand is far more encompassing—it defines the visceral and frequently intangible aspects of your company identity.

A well-thought-out and defined brand identity should be the backbone of any successful company, particularly for online enterprises that typically lack the physical brand components of brick-and-mortar stores. It's that hard-to-pin-down feeling that separates powerhouse and mediocre brands from each other, and the jumping off point of any brand strategy is your brand style guide.

In this chapter, you will learn how to build the perfect style guide for your brand.

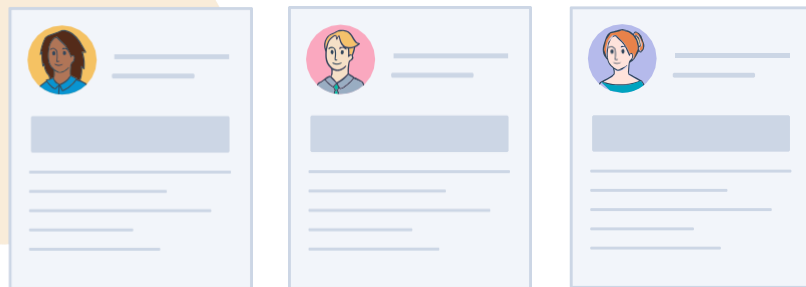


Creating Buyer Personas

To most effectively target your customers, you need to know who they are as people. What kind of person is your ideal target customer? To determine that, you need a buyer persona.

A buyer persona is like a character profile of your ideal customers: who they are, what they want, and what their lives are like. It also helps you to understand their underlying motivations for engaging with your brand, and hopefully for buying your product.

All blogs, white papers, and other inbound content should be written as if addressing this buyer persona. This makes it easier to target and connect with customers on a more personal, individual level, without having to tailor a different approach for every single customer. A buyer persona should include...



Demographics

By understanding some of the key demographics for your target market –e.g. gender, marital status, age range, or income level –you begin to get a sense of who your customers might be, and narrow down their range of interests.

Job Level/Seniority

This is particularly important for all you B2B marketers out there. Even though you're selling to a business, you're still dealing with a person within that business. What authority do they have in the decision-making process with regards to making this purchase? The CEO of a small business thinks and acts differently than the marketing manager at a mid-sized company, and the same can be said for managers in enterprise organizations. Of course, identifying the customer's job is important for B2C companies as well. A homemaker is looking for something different than a young whippersnapper salesperson straight out of college. Which leads us to our next piece of critical intelligence...

Typical Day

If you can piece together your buyer personas' routine on a typical day, you'll understand many of the things that occupy their time, and what is and isn't important to them. If you can align your value proposition with what your customers care about and figure out how to communicate that value proposition to the customer, then you're a branding rockstar.

Pain Points

What keeps the buyers up at night?

What problems do they need the most help solving?

Information Sources

How are your buyers researching their problems? Where do they get their news? What do they read? Do they consume blogs? What social media do they use, and how do they use it? Once you know where the buyer is going for information, you can put your information there for them to find.

Objections

No need to sugarcoat things. There are always objections. Figure out the reasons why the buyer is still hesitant to make a purchase and why that buyer might opt not to make the purchase from you. Arm yourself and your team with answers to these objections that will alleviate their prospects' concerns –communicated in a fashion that will appeal to the specific persona you've created.



Components of a Great Brand

A brand is a living thing that is made up of an incredibly specific combination of moving parts. The best brands pull off the magic trick of seeming effortless, but even the most recognizable and successful of the bunch consist of the same six essential factors. Here are the specific branding essentials for you to implement in the inbound age:

1 Website Design

Your website is the face of your company. Make sure your site is simple to understand and navigate, your logo transitions seamlessly from page to page and that the little details like the font and color palette remain constant. Those design elements, however small they may seem, are an essential part of the brand.

2 Colors

You know branding is done well when seeing certain colors immediately calls to mind a particular brand – even when those brands' names are nowhere nearby. A good color scheme can go a long way. Take Facebook for example. Regardless of updates to its newsfeed and small tweaks to the logo, that medium blue tone is instantly recognizable.

3 Logo

A logo is arguably the most memorable piece of a brand's collateral. For example, when you think of Nike, can you see the swish? If you hear McDonald's, does the image of those Golden Arches flood into your mind? Logos provide an opportunity for customers to automatically associate products or services with any given brand itself.

4 Tone and Voice

What does your brand sound like? Are you irreverent? Silly? Professional? Academic? All of the above? This may actually fluctuate somewhat between channels. Emails may be more formal, and social media may be more casual. That's totally fine! But there should still be a unifying factor; a blanket mission statement or mantra that all content adheres to. Remain true to your mission statement, both when promoting the positive aspects of your brand and when responding to negativity.

5 Images

The images you share, regardless of the platform, should take into account all of the above points. This means they should reflect the tone your brand has set out for itself, follow a color palette and include your brand's logo. Be methodical in your selection to guarantee that your visual identity is just as strong as your written one.

6 Domain Name

Your domain name should be well aligned with the brand itself, and it needs to be easy for your customers to find. Great domain names are intuitive, they're short and they help your customer to get access to the information about you they're looking for immediately. So, make sure you spend a bit of time coming up with a domain that's easy to remember (and spell) to drive more traffic to your website.

Ensuring Brand Consistency

Despite the necessity of having these essential 6 aspects, they are nothing unless they are consistent.

Brand consistency is when every observable aspect of your brand —whether it's your website, your blog, email, or social media —are the same, so that your audience has the same experience with your brand, no matter where or in what form they encounter it.

Naturally, your brand will evolve and improve over time (we'll get to that in a bit). However, brand changes should never feel stark or out of place —whether they are momentary discretions from the brand identity you've worked so hard to build, or a thorough, methodical rebranding effort your team is taking.

Your customers, partners, and readers don't want an inconsistent experience with your organization, so make sure you document your brand's purpose in your brand style guide —and hold all company stakeholders accountable to sticking to it.

CHAPTER 3

Putting Your Brand in Play

Now that you have identified your buyer personas and created the look and feel of your brand, it is time to put your creation to work.

By the end of this chapter you will have learned how to optimize your content creation and create an authentic social media presence, all while building your brand voice.



Optimizing your Content Creation

Content is how you showcase the knowledge your business has mastered. It can include blogs, videos, ebooks, case studies, and much more. Your content allows your customers to get to know you. It can offer advice on an issue, provide commentary on recent news events, give a step-by-step guide to solving a particular problem, or just tell an anecdote that your customers will find interesting.

Branded content should:

Establish your personality

Provide value to your customers

Help build trust in your brand

This is why it's so important, when creating an inbound marketing campaign, to make sure that your site provides:

1. lots of content
2. targeted content

In every way, a company's content is its brand online.

It's the company's salesperson, its store, and its marketing department. It's the company's story. Every piece of content you publish online defines your brand. Often, what you choose not to publish says more about your brand than some really snappy copy. When developing your content strategy, ask yourself:

Is this topic interesting to the brand's target persona?

Does this piece of the content address their pain points?

Is this the format in which the target persona likes to consume their content?

Does your target audience trust the way you're presenting your content, or are they unsure whether they should click on your links in the first place?

Is this tone appropriate for the subject matter and reader of this content?

What is the goal of this piece of content?



Establishing a Social Media Presence

One of the things that sets online marketing apart from traditional marketing methods is the opportunity to create a two-way conversation with your customers. You can actually connect with them, respond to feedback, answer their questions in real-time, help them resolve an issue, or just check in and let them know that your brand values what they have to say. You can also get great content from your users, and find out what to post more. This is what social media is all about for brands! It allows you to communicate directly with your audience and establish your brand as trustworthy in their minds, creating an impression that will define how they think of you for years to come.

A social presence for your brand is essential in the inbound age. Brands need a variety of forums in which to interact with customers, not every social channel is right for every brand. Different target demographics frequent different social sites and use them for different things.

Since maintaining an effective presence on every single social platform simultaneously is impossible, it's important to determine which ones will best help you reach your target persona, and focus your efforts on building up their brand and presence on those specific channels. You're no doubt familiar with the most prominent social media sites, but here's a basic rundown on how best to use them in targeting customers.



Facebook

The King Kong of social media, with 1.2 billion users and counting. Establishing a Facebook Page will help you develop and foster a sense of community between your and your customers. Facebook is best used for visual content, links, and community building/engagement.



Twitter

Twitter keeps users connected in real-time, with short bursts of information, in 280 characters or fewer. This gives you a platform to communicate in an informal, personable way—even if that's not how your brand usually operates. Brands that really understand twitter are ones that make their tweets humorous or that celebrate the brand or its customers.



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an important platform for any B2B business. Not only is it a tool to help you forge connections, but it's also a lead generator and (most important for brand managers) a place to assert your company's thought leadership position.



Instagram

Instagram fosters branding creativity and can be useful in grabbing users' attention, connecting with them, and even encouraging them to post pictures of their own related to your brand. With Instagram, many users take a long time to get to the 10k followers required for more frequent link sharing. If you've only got the one link to work with, using a branded link in your bio will allow you to update the destination URL you send customers to as often as you want.



YouTube

YouTube is uniquely a social media site and content sharing platform. Publish video content from broadcasting one-on-one interviews or roundtable discussions, to product demonstrations, to behind-the-scenes glimpses into your company and its inner workings, to short films, to entertaining news jacks of pop culture events that will help elevate your brand.



Building a Brand Voice

The voice or tone that a company applies to all content is the equivalent of its brand's personality. The voice you establish for your own business is an integral part of your website, blog, social media presence, email campaigns, and everything in between.

Things like striking the right balance between casual and serious, helpful and intrusive, or educational or haranguing, will determine whether people find a brand appealing or abrasive. So how will you know when you've struck the right balance? Start with your buyer persona, and mix those expectations with what makes your brand so special. Then, adjust over time based on feedback and results.

The voice in your content should reflect how you want your brand to be perceived, but should also be appropriate based on the type of content.

For example, keeping your social media voice more casual than your longer blog posts is a great way to attract new potential buyers. But remember, the key is still consistency. There is a difference between pivoting between casual and serious tones depending on the type of content you are producing and completely changing voices all together across platforms.

CHAPTER 4

Monitoring & Measuring Your Brand

People are talking about your brand beyond your developed, intentionally promoted content. They're blogging about you. They're mentioning their experience with you on their own Facebook pages. They're discussing your brand in groups on LinkedIn and posting videos about it to YouTube. There's a whole lot of conversation going on about your brand that you have no control over.

Some of this conversation may be good, and some of it may be bad. Some of it may even be outright lies. But for better or for worse, it will live incyberspace forever. What you can do, however, is monitor the conversation. Obviously, you can't catch every comment out there, but you can keep an eye on the larger and more obvious channels.

The first step is to know what to monitor, then you can implement the necessary tools to measure your chosen metrics. Lastly, you can implement damage control when needed or extend the reach of people's positive experiences into your own channels.



The Importance of Monitoring and Measuring

The key to brand longevity is monitoring the public perception of your brand by tracking different channels to find and observe mentions of your brand. Seeing how and where your brand is mentioned in the public is the only way for you to gain a clear understanding of how your brand is perceived. Otherwise, you run the risk of building your brand in a vacuum.

To concisely monitor and measure your brand, determine the most relevant metrics to monitor and then put to work the right tools to measure these metrics.

Metrics to Measure

To begin the process of monitoring your brand, here are some metrics that you can measure to begin seeing the full picture of how your brand is interacted with and perceived by the public:

- 1 Monitor your keywords** to determine which result in the most click throughs to your landing page.
- See which blog content drives the most **comments, social shares, and inbound links**.
- Find out **which email content drives the most forwards and reconversions**, and to what segment of your list that content goes, so you can better align future email campaigns with other content that elevates your brand.
- Learn which landing pages result in the highest purchase volumes**, and most lucrative average sales per customer.
- Test which links get the highest click through rates on different platforms** and make sure they're up to date, regardless of what campaign you're currently running.
- Find the type of social media content which results in the most engagement, and **track whether that engagement ever leads to revenue-driving behavior in the future**, and at what rate.
- Monitor your mentions on social media**, and specifically those mentions including questions so you can keep a pulse on how people are talking about your brand.
- Measure the growth rate of your social media accounts by selecting a reporting period.** Then, calculate your new followers over that specific period by dividing your new followers by your total followers.

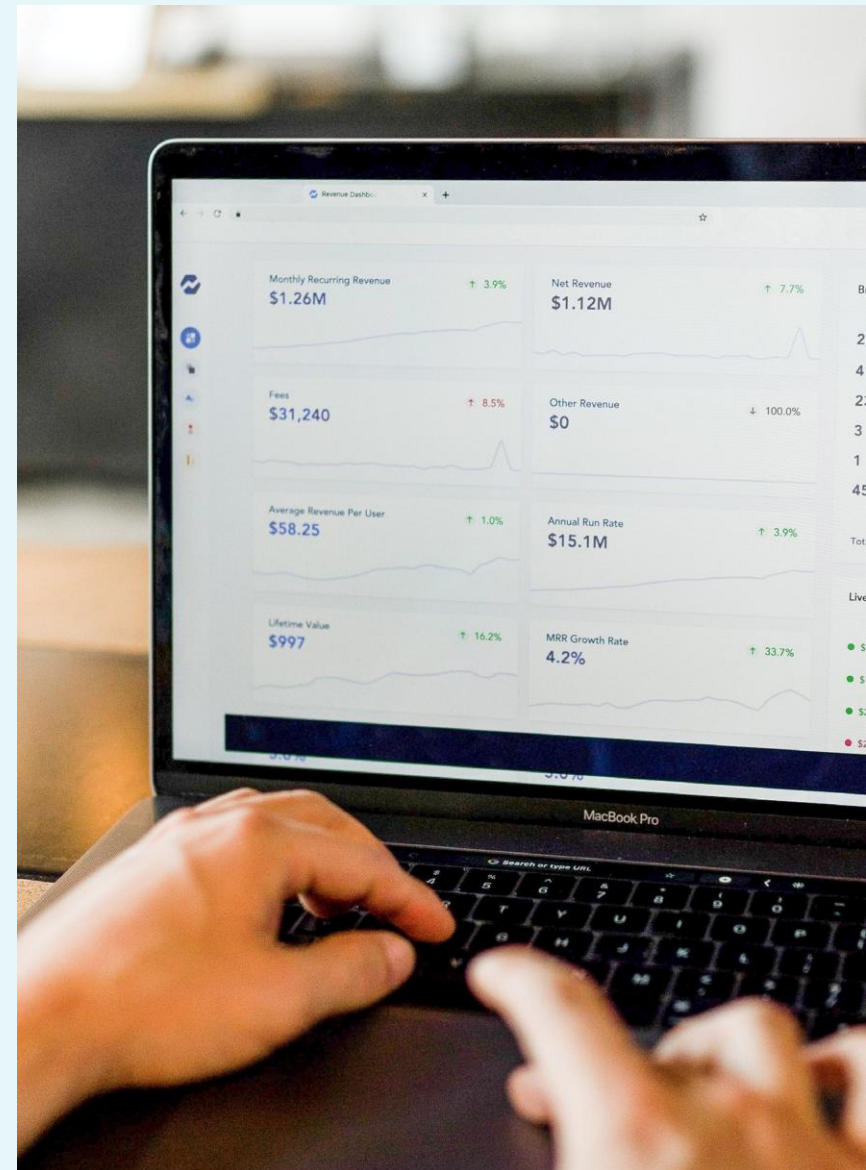


To determine if the time and money you've spent on social media is turning into customers, sales, or brand awareness, use this formula to figure out a basic ROI.

ROI FORMULA

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{(\text{Earnings} - \text{Investment})}{\text{Investment}}$$

Let's say you earned \$1500 in revenue from social media ads or eCommerce and your investment was \$500. Your ROI is revenue (earnings) minus investment (1500 minus 500) divided by your investment, which makes your profit \$1,000 and your ROI 200%.

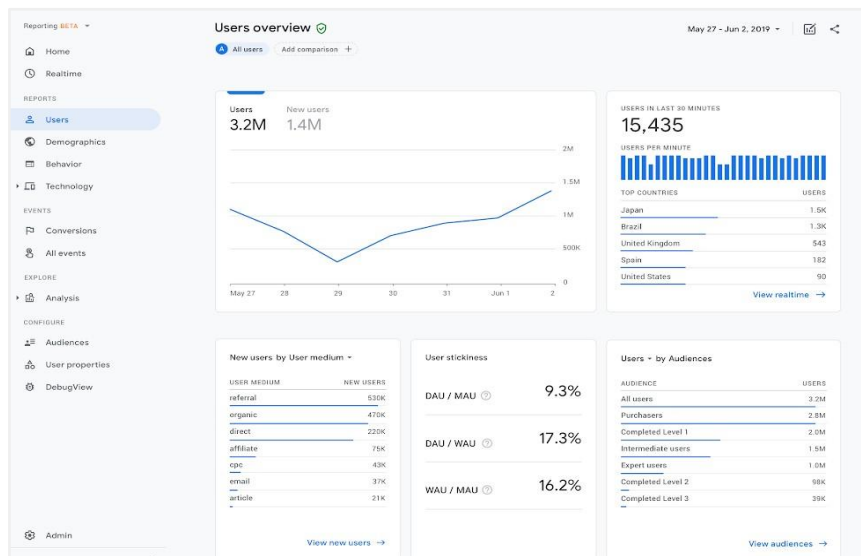


Tools to Use

Now that you know which metrics are worth your time to monitor, here are the top tools you can use to measure them:

Google Analytics

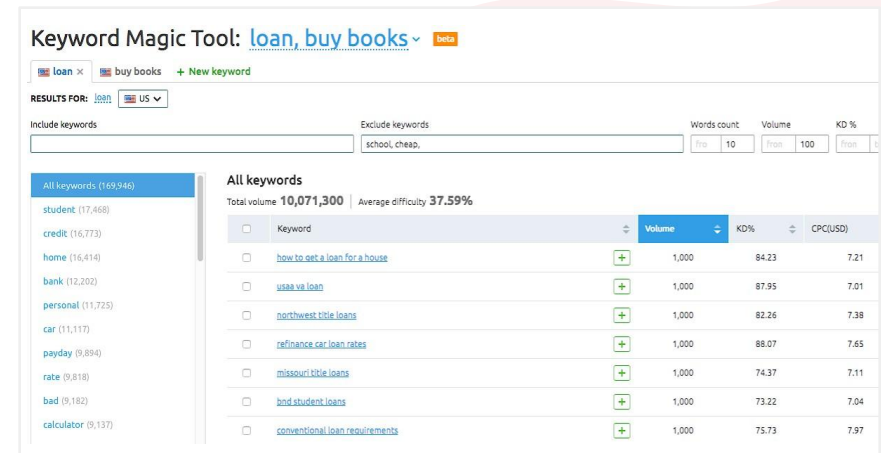
[Google Analytics](#) is a tool used to measure website traffic by monitoring referral sources, and it shows you your site visitors based on demographic and site behavior.



Source: [Google](#)

SEMrush & Moz Keyword Explorer

Use keyword research tools like [SEMrush](#) and [Moz Keyword Explorer](#) to see how your content and brand keywords compare to your competition.



Source: [SEMrush](#)

Knowing When/How to Improve your Brand

Before jumping right into the results of your monitoring, decide ahead of time which types of incidents constitute a crisis for you and which are just bumps in the road. Then, develop a response plan and assign teams to handle each outcome.

Which types of crises will which teams handle? For instance, a technical glitch would probably go to your IT department, whereas a dissatisfied customer might go to customer service.

Being prepared for these instances is critical for maintaining the good brand you've built up. But the key is timeliness. Any crisis or PR disaster can be smoothed over, but the longer you wait to respond, the longer the negative press has a chance to spread, with nothing to quench the flames.

They say there's no such thing as bad publicity, but some events can seriously, even permanently damage your reputation if not dealt with properly. It's better to be right than fast. Time is of the essence, but not at the expense of accuracy.

Using Brand Metrics and Social Monitoring

- When considering your brand metrics and social monitoring discussed earlier, how can you use these metrics to improve your brand performance?
- Is your website a barrier for consumers to find the information you need? Can you improve your brand's perception simply by providing more information, updating your website more regularly, or offering live chat or other support for potential customers?
- Review customer support and sales feedback to find out the biggest complaints or sore spots people have with your brand. Use regular surveys to find out what your staff hears about most often, and address the issues with the potential to have a large impact.

Conversations with existing customers and prospects can be a major source of data for your team and maximizing brand reach. Use these conversations to your advantage and monitor regularly, then take action.



Conclusion

Everything you know about brands and brand management in the real world holds true in the inbound age. What's different is that now your brand extends far beyond the world over which agencies have traditionally had control. Before, when a customer had a complaint about your brand, only you, they, and perhaps a small circle of their friends and family knew about it. Now, anybody with an internet connection knows how to find –or memorialize –that complaint forever.

In the inbound age, there are so many moving pieces to managing a brand, from the website to the call center to the Facebook Page, to the LinkedIn group, to whatever that brings. **As a result, you need to be more active, more vigilant, and more knowledgeable than ever to realize and prove maximum return on the investment of establishing a knockout brand.**

