

Attracting Ideal Customers Through Inbound Marketing

Case: KOULU Education Group Oy

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Degree programme International Business	
Report/thesis title Attracting Ideal Customers Through Inbound Marketing Case: KOULU Education Group Oy	Number of pages and appendix pages 67 + 47
<p>This thesis was written for a commissioning company called KOULU Education Group Oy. The objective of this thesis was to create a guideline that helps the commissioning company attract its ideal customers through inbound marketing. Inbound marketing is a marketing approach that is becoming increasingly important for companies as traditional, outbound, marketing is losing its effectiveness.</p> <p>The project started with gaining an understanding of inbound marketing and the first inbound marketing action, to attract. The first inbound marketing action describes a methodology of attracting ideal customers to a company, specifically to a company's website. This task required researching literature and online sources related to the topic. When theoretical knowledge had been obtained, the company staff and intermediaries were interviewed. The company staff was interviewed face to face with an aim to gain an understanding of the company background. The intermediaries, who represented the company's target markets in Turkey, India and Pakistan; were interviewed via Skype. The purpose of the interviews with the company's intermediaries was to gain an understanding of the company's ideal customers and consequently to create the company's buyer personas.</p> <p>As the company was not completely new into the inbound marketing methodology, conducting a situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation was essential. Situational analysis was conducted through the author's structured observation and utilization of various free online analysing tools. Based on the outcome of the situational analysis and the previous tasks, a guideline for the commissioning company was created.</p> <p>The outcome of this project is a guideline that helps the commissioning company attract its ideal customers through inbound marketing. The guideline first introduces the inbound marketing and the first inbound marketing action, to attract, from a theoretical point of view. After that, the actual recommendations on attracting the commissioning company's ideal customers are provided and suggestions for further steps by the company are listed. The buyer personas developed for the company are included in an attachment for the guidelines.</p> <p>The project was implemented according to a plan and the guideline was positively accessed by both the company and the author. The project can be thus considered successful.</p>	
Keywords Inbound marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), social media	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of inbound marketing with a special attention given to the first inbound marketing action – to attract. Inbound marketing is a relatively new marketing approach that has gained a popularity in recent years due to benefits that its implementation can provide to companies. The thesis is conducted as a project for a commissioning company with an aim to develop a guideline to attract the company's ideal customers through inbound marketing.

In this chapter the thesis topic, the commissioning company and the project objective will be introduced along with the key concepts and benefits that this thesis provides.

1.1 Background

During the past years, there has been a big change in the way people find products or services, and choose companies to buy from. Due to the invention of the Internet and the remarkable growth of internet users, the first thing that many people do when looking for a product, a service or a company to buy from is to search for information online. A great Web presence is thus crucial for any company that wants to succeed in today's world. (Halligan & Shah 2014, xi; Leinbach-Reyhle 16 June 2015.)

Inbound marketing is a marketing approach that responds to these relatively recent changes. Inbound marketing focuses on creating and publishing relevant and helpful content online, content that pulls customers towards a company; along with the utilization of various tools that support successful transformation of strangers into customers, and possibly even into a company's promoters (HubSpot 2017). Inbound marketing can benefit companies in many ways. As one example, Ciunci (2016, 47) mentions that by implementing inbound marketing methodology, companies can save money while reaching the right customers in the right way. It is possible to say, that inbound marketing is the most effective marketing method for doing business online (HubSpot 2017).

The commissioning company is rather new into the inbound marketing approach. As a start-up company with limited financial resources and increasing the company's online visibility and consequently attracting its ideal customers as a main marketing objectives, implementation of the first inbound marketing action - to attract, can be particularly beneficial for the company. The guideline, which will be the final product of this thesis, will provide relevant and helpful recommendations on attracting the company's ideal customers through inbound marketing.

As a person with deep interest in building a professional career in a digital marketing field, this thesis is very important for the author's further academic and professional development. Deep research into the inbound marketing topic, insight into the company's marketing operations, and practical experience in applying specific marketing methodology into the commissioning company will provide the author with the opportunity to expand the marketing knowledge and develop relevant skills.

1.2 Case Company

KOULU Education Group Oy (in this thesis referred to as KOULU Group) is a Finnish start-up company which was established in 2014 and which launched its operations in June 2015 (Järvinen 8 December 2016).

The company focuses on improving the capacity of educational institutions, mostly in developing countries, through school development frameworks and international teacher trainings. The services and solutions that KOULU Group offers are based on the best educational expertise from Finland. KOULU Group provides its services mainly in Pakistan, India and Turkey. KOULU Group's customers, are private school owners, principles/rectors/deans and teachers. In some cases, it is the school owners or principles/rectors/deans that pay for KOULU Group services, in some cases teachers themselves. KOULU Group focuses primarily on providing its services to the schools that are for middle and upper-class families. (Järvinen 8 December 2016; KOULU Group 2017a.)

The company does not provide the same services in each of its geographic target markets. School development frameworks are offered in Turkey and India, whereas international teacher trainings are offered in Pakistan. (Järvinen 8 December 2016.) The brief description of KOULU Group's target markets for each service can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1. KOULU Group's target markets

service	INTERNATIONAL TEACHER TRAINING	SCHOO DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
customers	School owners and teachers	School owners or principals/rectors/deans
country	Pakistan	India, Turkey

When providing its services, the company is using intermediaries located in each of its geographical target market. These intermediaries are highly knowledgeable about the

services that KOULU Group provides and at the same time, they possess a good understanding of the company's customers. They enable the company to connect with ideal customers – by contacting the ideal customers; and facilitate the service provision. Among the company's most important intermediaries are Bhanu Alptekin, representing the Turkish market; Amber Arora Shah, representing the Indian market; and Lisa Maria Markula, representing the Pakistani market. (Ngo 24 February 2017.)

The company consists of 6 people: Antti Koskinen - the founder and CEO of KOULU Group, Satu Järvinen - the partner and director, Huong Ngo - the Key Account Manager, Emmi Ollila - the Innovation Manager, and finally Jonna Holopainen - the Communication Manager. The company operates primarily from their office in Helsinki. (Järvinen 9 February 2017.)

As was mentioned during the interviews with the company's personnel, KOULU Group is highly interested in learning more about inbound marketing, especially about the first inbound marketing action - to attract (Järvinen 8 December 2016; Ngo 12 January 2017). The company is to some extent knowledgeable about the benefits that inbound marketing provides to organizations, and thus the idea of creating a guideline with recommendations on attracting the company's ideal customers through inbound marketing as a thesis was warmly accepted. Although KOULU Group is relatively new into the inbound marketing topic, the company is already applying some of the inbound marketing tactics that are also part of other online marketing theories.

1.3 Project Objective

The project objective of this product-based thesis is to develop a guideline that helps the commissioning company attract its ideal customers through inbound marketing. As was already mentioned, KOULU Group is rather new into the inbound marketing approach, and thus developing the guideline with practical recommendations on how to apply the first inbound marketing action – to attract, into the company's marketing activities will be essential. By implementing the first inbound marketing action, the commissioning company will be able to improve its online visibility, attract qualified prospects and continue building trust and credibility for its business (HubSpot 2017). The project tasks (PT's), which will lead to the project outcome, are listed and described below.

PT 1. Researching topic related literature and online sources: The first task is to go through the available literature and online sources related to inbound marketing and the first inbound marketing action - to attract. Deep understanding of the inbound marketing

approach and the first inbound marketing action will enable the author to effectively develop the guideline for the company.

PT 2. Conducting a background research on the company: Secondly, the company's staff will be interviewed to receive the information, both general and marketing, about the company. Topics such as the company's operations, target markets, intermediaries, marketing goals and activities will be discussed. This will enable the author to gain a comprehensive understanding of the company's background, from the general and marketing point of view. The information about the company background will be essential for the whole project implementation. Some of the information received about the company's marketing activities will provide a starting point for a situational analysis (project task 4).

PT 3. Developing the company's buyer personas and receiving intermediaries' opinions on the company's first inbound marketing action: Thirdly, the company's buyer personas will be developed based on the interviews with the company's intermediaries and their opinions regarding the first inbound marketing action, to attract, will be received. Getting in touch with the company's customers and prospects is not possible due to the company's request. As the company's intermediaries possess a good knowledge of the company's target audience, they will be interviewed on their behalf.

Not all of the activities involved in the first inbound marketing action will be reviewed. The particular importance will be given to receiving the opinions about the content that the company should produce and the structure of the company's website and blog – the areas that are more subjective and cannot be analysed and designed only by the author.

The information collected from the intermediaries will enable the author to gain a comprehensive understanding of the company's ideal customers, build buyer personas and receive opinions on the company's first inbound marketing action. All of this information will consequently lead to the development of the guideline that is based on the buyer personas/ideal customers point of view.

PT 4. Conducting a situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation: Fourthly, the situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation will be conducted based on the author's structured observation with use of the Internet, and with use of free online analysing tools. With the knowledge of the company's current situation, the author will be able to design a guideline that will be really relevant and useful, taking activities that are already implemented into consideration.

PT 5. Developing a guideline to attract the company's ideal customers: Fifthly, based on the outcome of the previous tasks, the guideline to attract KOULU Group's ideal customers will be developed. The guideline will be produced in MS PowerPoint. In order to make the guideline for the commissioning company relevant and helpful, it will be necessary to take into consideration not only the inbound marketing methodology but also the company background, its current situation regarding the first inbound marketing action and KOULU Group's ideal customers'/buyer personas point of view. These components will be combined and based on them the guideline for the company will be produced. The relation between these components is visualised in figure 1 below.

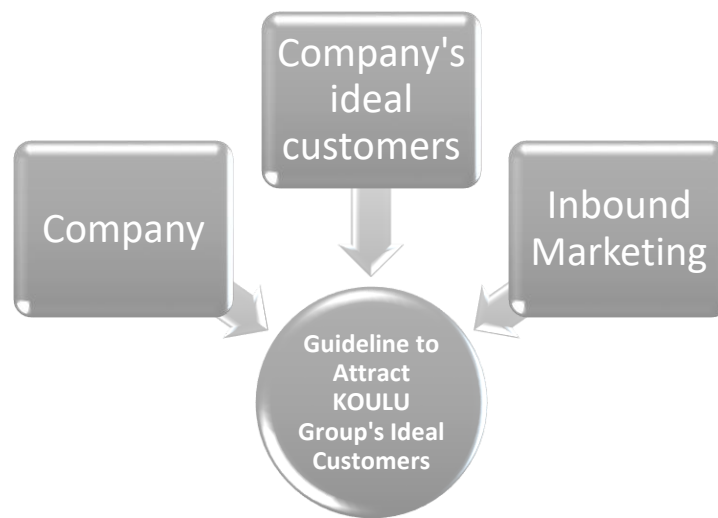


Figure 1. Development of the guideline

PT 6. Presenting the guideline to the company: Sixthly, the guideline will be presented to the company. The presentation will be conducted face-to-face in the company's premises in presence of the company's key account manager. After the presentation, the company's feedback on the guideline will be received.

PT 7. Evaluating project: As a final task, the entire project will be assessed by the author.

Table 2 presents the project management methods and outcomes for each project task.

Table 2. Overlay matrix

Project Task	Project Management Methods	Outcomes **
PT 1. Researching topic related literature and online sources	Desktop study	Theoretical framework for attracting ideal customers through inbound marketing
PT 2. Conducting a background research on the company	Staff interview	Information about the company background
PT 3. Developing the company's buyer personas and receiving intermediaries' opinions on the company's first inbound marketing action	Skype interview with the company's intermediaries	Created buyer personas and received intermediaries' opinions on the company's first inbound marketing action
PT 4. Conducting a situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation	Observation with use of the Internet, free online analysing tools	Situation of the company's first inbound marketing implementation
PT 5. Developing a guideline to attract the company's ideal customers	Working with MS PowerPoint	Created guideline for the company
PT 6. Presenting the guideline to the company and receiving the feedback	Meeting with the company	Company is informed about the outcome of the guideline and the feedback is received
PT 7. Evaluating project	Own assessment	Project assessment

1.4 Project Scope

As will be described further in chapter 2.1.3, inbound marketing consists of four consequent actions. Due to the limited scope of a bachelor's thesis and in order to make the guideline really valuable for the commissioning company, the author will focus only on the first inbound marketing action – to attract, as can be seen in figure 2 below.

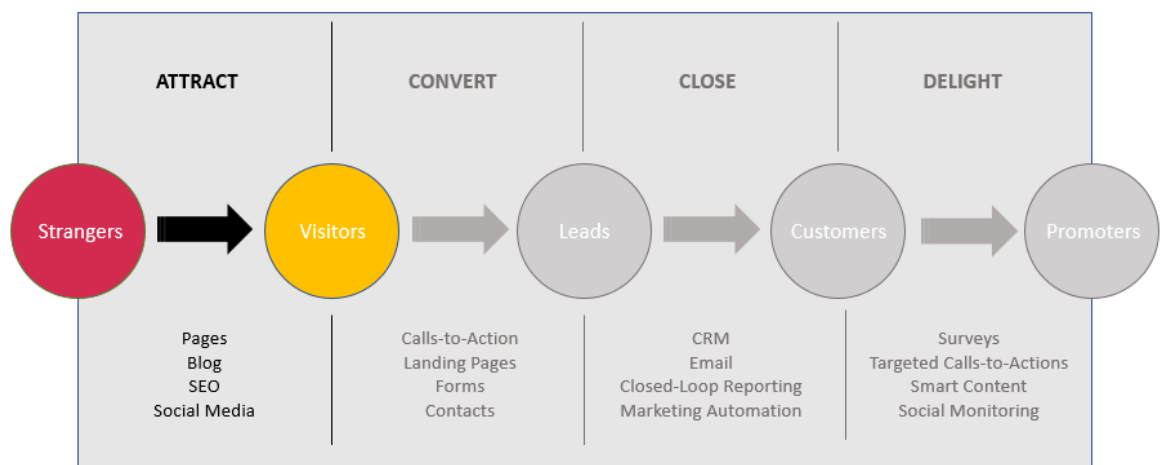


Figure 2. The first inbound marketing action – to attract (Reproduced from HubSpot 2017)

Moreover, it is important to mention that inbound marketing is only about online marketing practices; thus, offline marketing will not be included at all in this project. It is also important to clarify that the actual implementation of the guideline is not part of this project and will be done by the commissioning company itself.

1.5 International Aspect

The commissioning company is operating internationally. The company is offering its services, education solutions for learning and development, in Pakistan, India and Turkey. As each of these markets are different, the author will have to conduct interview with one of each country's representatives to develop the guideline that will take cultural and other differences into consideration.

1.6 Benefits

The first party that will benefit from this project is the commissioning company. The commissioning company will receive the guideline with valuable recommendations on implementing the first inbound marketing action that will help the company in attracting its ideal customers. In general, the application of inbound marketing methodology leads to the increase in a company's online visibility, improvements in a company's search engine rankings, more effective money distribution on marketing activities and with that connected increased company's return on investments (Vaughan 31 October 2011). Although, the company will be able to implement only the first inbound marketing action based on the final product of this thesis, many of the above mentions results can be achieved already at that point. As one of the main ideas of inbound marketing is to create a high-quality content specifically designed to address problems and needs of a company's ideal customers, through implementation of inbound marketing, KOULU Group will be able to provide added value to its customers and earn customer loyalty (HubSpot 2017; Vaughan 31 October 2011).

The second party that will benefit from this project are the company's ideal customers. As was previously mentioned, one of the main ideas of inbound marketing is to create a high-quality content that addresses problems and needs of a company's ideal customers (HubSpot 2017). By publishing the right content, in the right place and at the right time, KOULU Group's ideal customers will be able to easily find content that they are looking for.

The third party that will benefit from this project is the author. Deep research into the inbound marketing topic, insight into the company's marketing operations and practical ex-

perience in applying specific marketing methodology into the commissioning company will provide countless advantages for the author's further academic and professional development.

Finally, this project will also benefit the field of inbound marketing. Inbound marketing is directly related to internet marketing, which means that inbound marketing is a rather new topic with limited number of resources and examples. A practical guideline on attracting ideal customers through inbound marketing might be valuable for other thesis writers or even marketing professionals.

1.7 Key Concepts

Inbound Marketing is a marketing approach that focuses on attracting customers through content and interactions that are relevant and helpful (HubSpot 2017).

Content Marketing is an approach focused on publishing content on the Internet that empowers, engages, educates, and connects readers and that makes the party that publishes this content more visible and sellable (The Internet Marketing Academy 2011, 10).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a structured approach used to improve the visibility of a company, brand or its products on the result page displayed by a search engine (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 669; Turban, Strauss & Lai 2016, 315).

Social media is defined by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, 61) as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".

2 Attracting Ideal Customers Through Inbound marketing

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for creating the product of this thesis will be explained and elaborated.

First, we will look into the theory of inbound marketing, what inbound marketing is and how it differs from other theoretical approaches. After that, the key inbound marketing components and actions will be described. The key inbound marketing components along with the tools used during the first inbound marketing action – to attract, will be further elaborated. Most of these concepts will overlap as many of the tools used during the first inbound marketing action are at the same time the key inbound marketing components. In the last part of this chapter, the inbound marketing plan will be introduced.

2.1 Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing is a relatively new marketing approach that has gained a popularity in recent years (Pardot 2017). According to HubSpot, a main website about inbound marketing that is run by the inbound marketing theorists Halligan and Shah, inbound marketing is a marketing method that focuses on attracting customers through content and interactions that are relevant and helpful. With inbound marketing, potential customers can find a company or product/service through various channels like a blog, social media or search engines. By creating high-quality content, which is designed to address needs, problems or concerns of ideal customers; inbound marketing attracts qualified prospects and builds trust and credibility of the business. (HubSpot 2017.)

Inbound marketing is about pulling people in, it is the potential customers who find the company. Inbound marketing focuses on publishing the right content, in the right place and at the right time, making the marketing relevant and helpful for the customers (HubSpot 2017).

Inbound marketing provides several unique benefits for companies. Inbound marketing is a very powerful long-term marketing strategy for lead generation, conversions and for increasing overall website traffic and brand awareness. (Pool 2017, 65.) By implementing this strategy, companies can reach positive results and even save money. Inbound marketing costs 61% less per lead than a traditional outbound marketing (Halligan & Shah 2014, 137). Moreover, inbound marketing does not have to be as time consuming as it might look. Many of the inbound marketing tasks can be automated (Pool 2017, 65). According to HubSpot (2017), inbound marketing is the most effective marketing method for doing business online.

2.1.1 Inbound Marketing vs. Online Marketing

Before getting deeper into inbound marketing, it is important to differentiate inbound marketing from online/internet marketing - two marketing theories that might at first glance look the same but that differ.

To start with, inbound marketing is about practices performed online, practices that aim to organically pull people, particularly ideal customers, to the company. Although this will be obvious from further inbound marketing elaboration, there is no direct statement saying that inbound marketing is only about practices/tactics performed online. However, this can be indirectly inferred from several inbound marketing descriptions. The first, provided by HubSpot (2017) that says that inbound marketing is the most effective method for doing business online. The second, from Fishkin and Hogenhaven (2013, 3), stating that inbound marketing can be seen as practices that can be done on the web to earn traffic and attention, and that do not directly cost money.

Although inbound marketing is about practices performed online/on the Internet, inbound marketing is not the same as online/internet marketing. According to Neil Patel (2017), online marketing refers to any efforts that aim to spread the word about the company that uses the Internet to reach people. Online marketing is an umbrella for different tactics done online, such as search engine optimization, search engine marketing (the paid version of SEO), social media marketing, affiliate marketing, content marketing or email marketing (Neil Patel 2017).

Unlike inbound marketing, online marketing does not limit itself to the use of organic (unpaid) practices and attracting customers through relevant and helpful content as can be seen in inbound marketing. Online marketing includes also outbound marketing practices that will be described below. However, this is not the only difference that can be seen between inbound marketing and online marketing. It is important to notice the difference in how the tactics (i.e. SEO) and practices are viewed – in online marketing as separate units that are shield under the online marketing term, whereas in inbound marketing as systematically used tools/components that help to transform a company's ideal customers from strangers into the customers, and ultimately into the company's promoters (HubSpot 2017).

2.1.2 Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing

Outbound marketing is traditional marketing. As opposed to inbound marketing, in outbound marketing it is companies that find customers, most commonly through advertising

(Hill 2013, 174). Outbound marketing, also commonly called push marketing, is a one-way discussion of a company, not a two-way communication between a company and a customer as it is in inbound marketing. Outbound marketing is usually highly impersonalized. (VanRysdam 2010, 48-51.) Outbound marketing is an approach that includes both online and offline marketing tools, such as direct mail, email, cold calls or print advertisements (Pool 2017, 62).

According to Halligan (7 July 2010), outbound marketing is becoming less and less effective. One of the main reasons behind this is that people receive extensive amount of advertisements daily and so they tend to find different ways on how to block them, including caller ID, spam filtering or TiVo (Halligan 7 July 2010). To outline this trend, the steep growth in active adblock plugin users worldwide, from 21 million in January 2010 to 198 million in June 2015, can be seen in figure 3 below.

Number of active adblock plugin users worldwide from January 2010 to June 2015 (in millions)

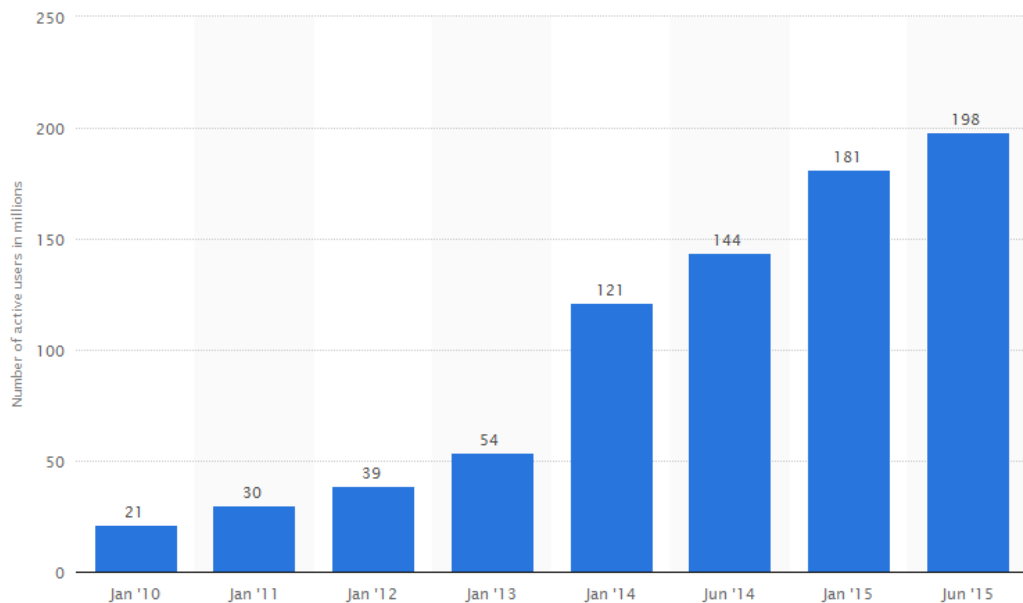


Figure 3. Number of active adblock plugin users worldwide from January 2010 to June 2015 (in millions) (Statista 2015)

In addition, nowadays, customers are self-directed, they want to be in control of the buying process, it is not as in the past when brand managers could directly shape a prospect's discovery experience from start to finish (Ciunci 2016, 46). Forbes (2016) mentions that based on a survey of 250 retailers, 82% of customers research major products online before purchasing them. People are commonly looking for information using Google or another search engine (Halligan & Shah 2014, xi).

As an outcome, there are various opinions whether companies should replace outbound marketing with inbound marketing or whether they should use both. For instance Halligan (7 July 2010) states that, “Rather than doing outbound marketing to the masses of people who are trying to block you out, I advocate doing inbound marketing where you help yourself "get found" by people already learning about and shopping in your industry”. On the other hand, Pool (2017, 65) states that, “Any good marketing mix should utilize both inbound and outbound marketing strategies”.

2.1.3 Key Inbound Marketing Components

According to Burnes (18 November 2008) the most successful inbound marketing campaigns have three key components – content, SEO and social media, as visualized in figure 4 below.

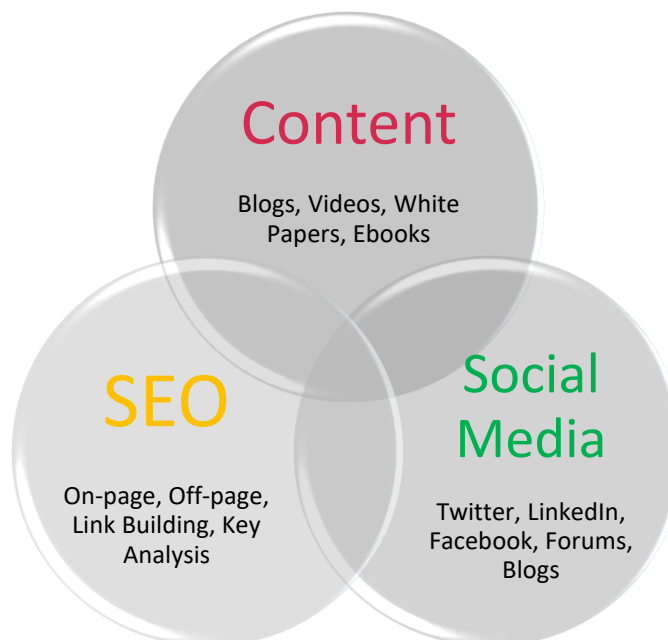


Figure 4. Key Inbound Marketing Components (Reproduced from Burnes 18 November 2008)

The first key inbound marketing component is a **content**. According to Burnes (18 November 2008) content creation is the centre of inbound marketing campaign. By creating useful content and tools that people are looking for, a company is able to naturally pull potential customers into the business (Burnes 18 November 2008). The content can be presented in several forms, for example in the form of blog, video, eBook or white paper.

The second key inbound marketing component is a **search engine optimization (SEO)**. Search engine optimization is essential if a company wants their content to be easily found by potential customers. Search engine optimization can maximize a company's ranking in search engines, where most of the customers start their buying process. (Burnes 18 November 2008.) On-page SEO, off-page SEO, link-building or use of keywords are some of the elements of SEO.

The third key inbound marketing component are **social media**. According to Burnes (18 November 2008) social media like Twitter, LinkedIn, blog or Facebook can amplify the impact of the content which the company produced.

2.1.4 Inbound Marketing Actions

According to HubSpot (2017), inbound marketing consists of four actions – attract, convert, close and delight. Several tools are utilized during these actions to support a successful transformation and they will be briefly explained in the following text. The most important tools, some of them at the same time the key inbound marketing components, will be also further elaborated in the separate subchapters. The inbound marketing actions and tools that are utilized during these actions can be seen in figure 5 below.

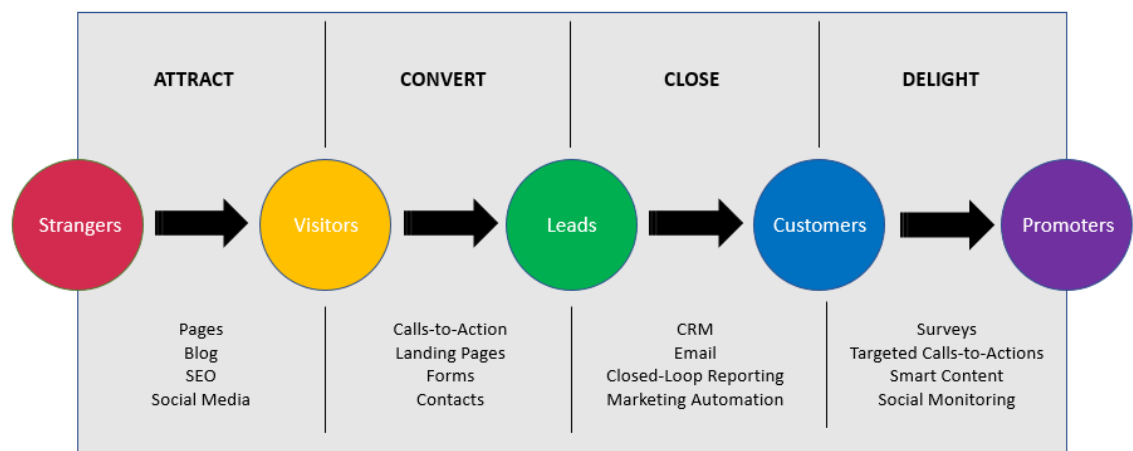


Figure 5. Inbound marketing actions (Reproduced from HubSpot 2017 and Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 7)

The first inbound marketing action is to **attract**. The aim of this action is to get a traffic to the company's website. The company should primarily strive to attract individuals who have a realistic potential of becoming a company's valued customers, so called buyer personas or ideal customers. A focused inbound marketing strategy, which starts with high-quality content creation, is a must for attracting buyer personas. (HubSpot 2017;

Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 7-8.) As was previously mentioned, a company should create content that is relevant and helpful, primarily for buyer personas. The most important tools for attracting the visitors are:

- **Blogging:** According to HubSpot (2017) the initial step and the best way in attracting the visitors is to start blogging. The content that company produces should be directed to its buyer personas. The content should be educational, answer the buyer personas' questions; and remarkable so it can be easily and quickly spread on social media sites. (Halligan & Shah 2010, 29; HubSpot 2017). Companies can produce various content such as industry tips, trends, reviews, comparisons or even infographics and videos (Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 9).
- **SEO/Keywords:** As was mentioned in chapter 2.2, most of the customers start their buying process online, commonly using search engine to find information they are looking for. SEO will enable the company and the content that the company creates to be easily found. Keyword optimization is one of the aspects of SEO. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 10.)
- **Pages:** The company's website should not be only optimized to be easily found in search engine but also optimized to visually and interactively appeal to buyer personas (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 11).
- **Social media:** When the company creates a remarkable content, social media publishing provides an opportunity to the company to easily and quickly spread it. However, social media do not only provide an opportunity to publish the content but also to put a human face on the company. Establishing, cultivating and maintaining a social media presence is thus one of the most important tasks for attracting ideal customers. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 9.)

Once the company attracted visitors to the site, the next action is to **convert** them into leads by gathering their contact information. In order to gain the contact information, the company has to offer something interesting or valuable in return. In inbound marketing, this comes in the form of content, like eBooks, webinars, or reports. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 11.) Some of the most important tools used during the converting stage are:

- **Calls-to-action:** Calls-to-action are buttons or links on a company's website and they are crucial in generating leads. They encourage visitors to take an action, for instance to "Download an eBook" or to "Attend a Webinar". (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 12.)
- **Landing pages:** Once a website visitor clicks on the call-to-action he or she should be directed to the landing page. There, the offer in the call-to-action is fulfilled in exchange for contact information that are filled into the form. (Halligan & Shah 2014, 115-116; HubSpot 2017)
- **Forms:** The visitor becomes a lead when filling a form with contact information (Hubspot 2017). Halligan and Shah (2014, 120) point out that the form should be

short and simple, asking only the most important questions, such as the name and the email address.

- **Contacts:** The company should create a marketing database to keep track on the contacts and their interactions, and to be able to plan future steps. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 13.)

The third action is to **close** the leads and turn them into happy customers. CRM, Closed-loop reporting, Email and Marketing Automations are the most important tools at this stage and some of them can help the company recognize that they are closing right leads at the right time. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 13.) The tools are described below.

- **CRM:** Customer relationship management (CRM) system facilitates sales by having all information collected and organized in one place. With CRM, the company can keep track of the details about the contacts, companies, and deals in the company's pipeline. (HubSpot 2017.)
- **Closed-loop reporting:** Closed-loop reporting is an important tool for determining how well marketing and sales efforts work together, typically by connecting marketing analytics software with CRM software. Close-loop reporting enables marketers to plan more strategically for the future by analysing what were their best and worst lead sources. (Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 15; Georgieva 26 March 2012.)
- **Email:** Sending series of emails with relevant and useful content to the prospects, who showed the interest into the business but did not make that final step yet, can be especially helpful in turning these prospects into customers (Halligan & Shah 2014, 128-129; HubSpot 2017).
- **Marketing automation:** One of the most effective ways to nurture the leads is marketing automation. Marketing automation represents a union of email marketing and targeted sales and involves development of a tailored communication campaign through email and social channels. (Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 14.)

Once a lead has turned into a customer, a company should keep nurturing the relationship. This will increase chances of retaining the customer or even turning the customer into the company's promoter. To achieve this, the company should continue in engaging with the customer through content that will **delight**. Surveys, targeted Calls-to-Action, high-quality tailored content and social monitoring are some of the most important tools that will help to delight the customer and turn him/her into the company's promoter. (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 15.) The tools are described below.

- **Surveys:** Feedbacks and surveys will enable a company to get know what users want, and thus the company will know what to provide (HubSpot 2017).
- **Highly-targeted calls-to-action:** Highly-targeted calls- to-action should provide customers with different offers, based on a buyer persona and a lifecycle stage (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 15).

- Smart content: The company should keep providing customers with the remarkable content that is tailored to their interests and needs. The company should aim to help their customers to achieve their goals but also introduce them with new products and services that might be of interest to them. (HubSpot 2017.)
- Social monitoring: The company should monitor social conversations, especially the ones that matter the most; listen and answer to the customers' questions and comments, and provide them with relevant content (HubSpot 2017; Kelly & Kvarfordt 2013, 15).

2.2 Content as a Key Inbound Marketing Component

As was mentioned in chapter 2.1.3, content is one of the main inbound marketing components. In this subchapter, content marketing theory (theory that discusses content utilization), common tools and practices will be introduced.

As stated by Pulizzi and Barrett (2009, xvii), "Content marketing is the art of understanding exactly what your customers need to know and delivering it to them in a relevant and compelling way".

Content marketing is a marketing strategy focused on creating valuable experience through relevant, helpful, educational, engaging and attractive content. Content marketing is about being present when consumers need and seek out for the company, product, relevant advice or information. This marketing strategy is about attracting, acquiring and engaging a clearly defined and understood target audience with a main aim of driving profitable customer action. (Lieb 2012, 1-3; Pulizzi 2014, 5.) Content marketing can provide several benefits to companies, starting from creating brand recognition, trust, authority, credibility, loyalty and authenticity to increased company's visibility (Johnson & Sparks 2013, 5-6; Lieb 2012, 2).

2.2.1 Content for Each Stage of Buying Process

When companies create content, they should not only keep in mind their target audience, but also the buying process of its customers. The buying process commonly consists of three stages – awareness stage, that represents the top of the funnel; evaluation stage, that represents the middle of the funnel; and purchase stage, that represents the bottom of the funnel. (Stephenson 8 August 2013.) Each of these stages ask for different content that will be placed on and off the company's site (Stephenson 8 August 2013; Moz 2017d). It is important that companies create content for each stage of the funnel and provide a variety of content to satisfy the informational needs of its audience (Stephenson 8 August 2013).

During the **awareness stage**, companies should produce educative content, that would introduce audience to the industry and guide them through beginner level concepts and ideas. The example of such type of content would be blog posts, infographics or how-to-video. During the **evaluation stage**, companies should offer content that would help audience recognize that the company is the best choice, the content that demonstrates that the company is an expert in its field and that shows how will the specific solution fulfil the customer's need. During this stage, companies should produce content such as customer testimonials, frequently asked questions or case studies. During the **purchase stage**, company's leads are ready to make a purchase but they need just a bit more information or reassurance to finish this step. Free consultation, pricing page or coupon are some of the content examples used during the purchase stage. (Stephenson 8 August 2013.) The funnel with different content examples can be seen in figure 6 below.

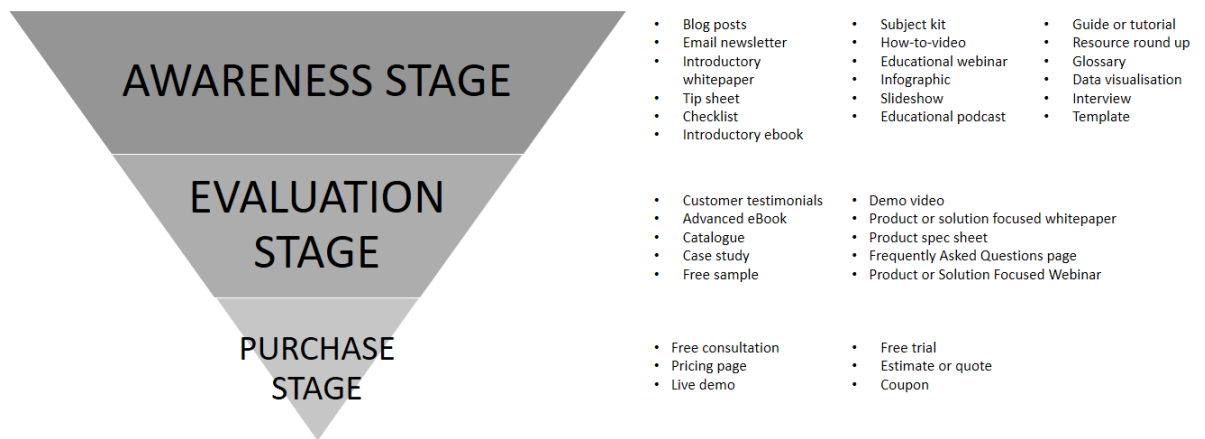


Figure 6. Content for each stage of the buying process (Reproduced from Stephenson 8 August 2013)

2.2.2 Content Marketing Strategy

Content marketing strategy can help companies in effective and successful content marketing implementation. Based on Johnson & Sparks (2013, 6-7), content marketing strategy consists of 4 steps, that are pictured in figure 7 below.



Figure 7. Content Marketing Strategy

The **first** content marketing strategy step is to determine company's content mission. The company must decide what mission/message they want to distribute with the content that will be produced. This should be determined based on a thorough buyer personas under-

standing. What buyer persona problem do we try to address or what do we want them to know or feel? (Johnson & Sparks 2013, 6-7.)

The **second** step is to create content calendar. To different personas suits different content and each of this content should bear a content mission. The company should not depend only on own opinion about what content to produce but they should also find out from customer conversations. It is important to find out where and how does the audience consume the content and focus on these areas. Companies should also take into consideration that each buying stage demands different content. Companies should create a daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly content plan to be well prepared. (Baer 2016; Johnson & Sparks 2013, 7.)

The **third** step is to aggregate third-party content. The company staff does not have to produce all the content themselves. There is a lot of relevant content, such as content from industry trade journals or mainstream media, which would be interesting for a company's clients and prospects and which can be shared on blog and social media accounts. By regular aggregating third-party content, a company can become a go-to-source for clients and prospects, and increase a chance of generating high-quality leads. (Johnson & Sparks 2013, 7.)

The **last** step is to monitor, report and adjust. It is not enough to just produce a content. Companies need to monitor and report which content was successful and which was not, what was a client's or a prospect's next step after that and how long did they stay on the website. Based on the achieved results, company should adjust their content marketing strategy to achieve the best possible results. (Johnson & Sparks 2013, 7.)

2.2.3 Content Marketing Tips

There are several tips and mistakes to avoid during the content marketing implementation.

According to Rouhiainen, headline is the most important part when creating a content. Headline is the first thing that the audience sees and it will determine whether the audience consume the content or not. (Rouhiainen 2015a.) There are several types of headlines that have proved to be particularly effective.

First are **how to** headlines, such as how to increase the muscle strength. These headlines are effective because they are important for the audience, they help them to solve particular problems. Second are headlines that contain **numbers**, such as 3 tips to save money. Numbers are catchy and easy to screen; the audience usually expects to see some lists in

the content, which are structured and easy to follow. Third are headlines that **mention the ideal customer**, for instance what should be travelers aware of when going to Croatia. Headlines that mention the ideal customer/buyer persona makes it easy to understand that the content could be particularly valuable for this group of people. Forth are headlines that **talk about mistakes and errors**, such as 10 common mistakes math teachers should avoid. People are usually highly motivated to avoid the mistakes so they are interested to get to know them. Fourth are headlines that **contain questions**, such as how safe is it to swim in the Atlantic Ocean? These headlines create interest and get usually a lot of attention. (Rouhiainen 2015a; Rouhiainen 2015b.)

Rouhiainen also mentions some typical content marketing mistakes that should companies avoid. For the purpose of this thesis, these mistakes were reversed into the following tips.

The first tip is to let **everyone** in the company to **participate in content creation**. Content does not have to be produced just by marketing department, other employers should be involved as well. For instance, the chef in a restaurant could make videos with simple recipes. The second tip is to create a **high-quality content**. Many companies are currently producing content so to stand out, the company needs to produce high-quality content, meaning that the content is relevant and useful. Rouhiainen mentions that too short articles cannot be really useful, and thus he recommends writing at least 1000 words. The last important tip is to **ask questions as a last think in the content**. This will prompt a discussion and encourage audience to take other important actions. (Rouhiainen 2015c; Rouhiainen 2015d.)

2.3 Search Engine Optimization as a Key Inbound Marketing Component and a Tool to Attract Ideal Customers

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to the process of improving the visibility of a company or a brand on the results page displayed by a search engine (Turban, Strauss & Lai 2016, 315). It is important to mention, that SEO improves the visibility specifically in organic/natural search results as SEO does not involve paid advertising (Chaffey & Smith 2008, 283).

Search engine optimization organically increases the online visibility of a company or brand, which is essential if the company wants to be found. According to Dodson (2016, 10), ninety-one percent of searchers will not click past the first results page. Thus, the higher-ranking company can achieve, the better chance of being found it has.

Search engine algorithm, the formula based on which search engine ranks the sites, is developing constantly (Grappone & Couzin 2011, 50). According to Fishkin and Hogenhaven (2013, 5-6), Google is nearly every day changing its algorithm slightly and larger changes are also quite frequent. Thus, in order to stay competitive, companies should continuously follow development in search engine algorithm and adjust to the changes.

According to Dodson (2016, 8), search engine optimization can be divided into two different categories – on-page optimization and off-page optimization as can be seen in figure 8 below.

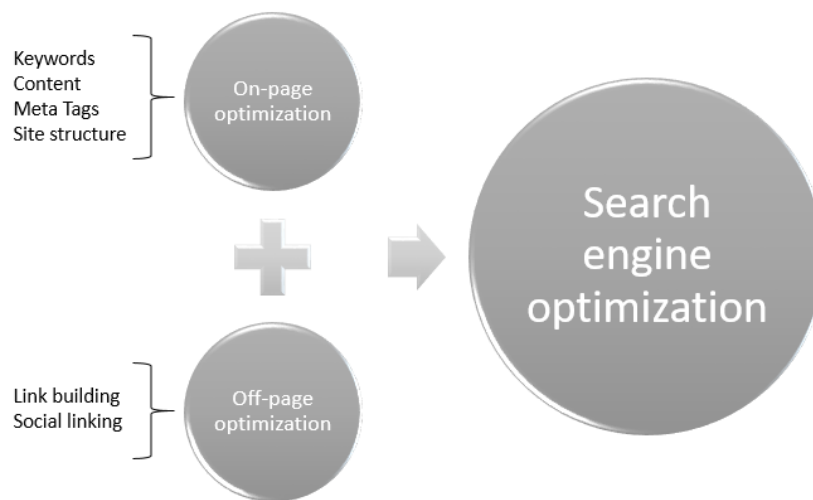


Figure 8. On-page and Off-page optimization (Reproduced from Dodson 2016, 8)

On-page optimization are techniques that are used on the pages of the website and that deals with factors like keywords, content, meta tags ad site structure. On the other hand, off-page optimization are techniques that are used everywhere else than on the pages of the website and that deals mainly with link building and social linking. (Dodson 2016, 8; Rouhiainen 2015f.)

On-page and off-page optimization are very comprehensive topics that will be briefly elaborated in the following subchapters. As search engine algorithm is changing frequently, it is important to base the theory on rather new sources. Thus, in this case, the theory will be built around on-page and off-page optimization described by Dodson (2016, 7-41) and it will be accompanied or slightly adjusted according to other authors who deal with the SEO topic.

2.3.1 On-Page Optimization

The initial step in on-page optimization is to **research keywords** as this will have a strong impact on other elements (Dodson 2016, 16). According to the Internet Marketing Academy (2011, 25) keywords are the most commonly used words or phrases that are typed in search engine when someone is looking for information about a product, service or topic. From a company's point of view, keywords are significant words or phrases that relates to the content on a company's website (Dodson 2016, 17).

Internet users are commonly typing into search engines two to four keywords; however, with increased digital literacy rates people tend to type longer search terms that generate more relevant results. That is why it is important for companies to find and use both general keywords, which contains only one to two words; and long-tail keywords, which consist of three or more keyword phrases. (Dodson 2016, 16-17; Rouhiainen 2015e.)

Companies can use several online tools like Google Adwords or Wordtracker to determine the keywords that are relevant and most frequently used by users, but it is advised to first brainstorm with the team and naturally generate keywords that could people look for when searching for company's product or service. (The Internet Marketing Academy 2011, 26-27.)

In the second step, a company should **make sure** that its **site has a hierarchical structure and is visually pleasing**. The company's site should have a menu navigation bar that points to other subpages and that has ideally three to four levels so it is organized and its content can be easily reached by both users and search engines. The site should be simple yet visually pleasing, including a variety of media, bullet points, headings and the like. The company should make sure that it produces unique, relevant and up-to-date content, focusing on the content that proved to be popular among site users. (Dodson 2016, 20-22.)

All of these areas can help companies to rank higher in search engines as they increase chances that the site visitors will easily find information they are looking for and enjoy the website experience. Patel (11 June 2014) mentions that user engagement and user's time on the website are some of the factors that affect site's search engine ranking.

The third and at the same the most comprehensive step in on-page optimization is to **optimize technical mechanics of the site and insert keywords**. All of the technical ele-

ments that can be optimized on the website are listed and briefly described in the following list.

- A company should insert selected keywords into the URLs of each web page on the site so the pages are descriptive, telling users, search engines and people who see the page shared on social media what the page is about. Hyphens and dashes should be the only symbols used as word separators in URLs, companies should avoid using underscores, which are not easily read by Google. (Dodson 2016, 22.)
- The page names should act as labels, they should briefly tell the users what the page is about. As page names usually consist of only one or two words, incorporating keywords into them might be very challenging and actually it is not totally necessary. More important than that is, that the page name is appropriate and relevant to the page content. (Dodson 2016, 22-23.)
- Meta tags provide important information about the content of the page, which is used by search engines to index the site. This information is not displayed on the page layout. Meta tags contain title tags and meta descriptive tags. It is recommended to optimize the length of title tags and meta descriptive tags, to a maximum of 50-60 characters in title tags and 160 characters in meta descriptive tags. Optimizing meta tags with keywords is not as important an SEO factor nowadays as it used to be; however, it can be used as something additional in a company's SEO. (Dodson 2016, 23; Moz 2017a; Moz 2017b; Ryan 2017, 80.)
- Breadcrumb navigation enables users to easily and quickly return to the previous sections of the website without having to use the main navigation bar. Companies should definitely consider using breadcrumb navigation not only to provide better experience to their users but also make it easy for search engines to get an overview of site's structure. (Dodson 2016, 23-24; Ryan 2017, 81.)
- A company's page should be divided into headings that will clarify structure of the page and help to guide both users and search engines in reading the content on the site. Headings, starting from H1 and ending with H6, should indicate the most important parts of the page content and clarify how these parts are interconnected. Heading 1 (H1) should be the main heading and following headings should be the subheadings. It is beneficial to include keywords in headings. (Dodson 2016, 24; Eng, Spencer & Stricchiola 2015, 304)
- When considering the body of the text, general webpages related to the product or service should consist of a minimum of 300 words; however, articles, white papers and case studies should consist of at least 1000 words and blogs should aim to have between 1,500 and 2,500 words. (Dodson 2016, 25.) Using keywords in the text used to be one of the keys to successful ranking in search engines, nonetheless it has changed and nowadays it has only a small impact. Currently, the bigger importance is given to the user experience and thus, it is recommended to not overuse keywords, rather include keywords and their synonyms into the content naturally. (Eng & al. 2015, 305.)
- Another important component that companies should include on their sites is anchor text. Anchor text is a visible, clickable text which is at the same time a hyperlink and which can advance visitors and search engines to another page at the same site. Having all pages accessible through a link is important as well as having an-

chor text descriptive and relevant, and possibly containing keywords. (Dodson 2016, 26; Moz 2017c.)

- Visual content can greatly enrich user experience and although search engines are becoming more and more progressed in recognizing content of photos, it is still very important to describe the image shortly, both for visitors and search engines, in image caption, file name and alt text. Alt text should be succinct and descriptive; consisting of only four to six words and whenever possible, the image description should include keywords. This can help to improve company's ranking in search engines. (Dodson 2016, 26; Ryan 2017, 81.)
- Company's pages should be optimized to be easily shareable on social media platforms (Dodson 2016, 26).
- The last technical element that's should be included on company's site is a HTML site map that provides overview of company's structure. HTML site map will provide valuable information for search engines to crawl company's site more effectively. When site map is created, it can be submitted either manually to major search engines or by adding an entry to the company's robots.txt file. (Dodson 2016, 26; Ryan 2017, 89.)

The fourth step in on-page optimization is to **consider technical aspects of SEO and adjust to them**. First, company should check its website cross-browser compatibility with Chrome, Internet Explorer (currently Microsoft Edge), Safari, and Firefox to provide a good user experience. If the website is not compatible with some of these browsers, the company should use tools like BrowserStack to solve the problem. (Dodson 2016, 27.)

Secondly, the company should check whether its website is compatible with mobiles, in other way whether it is responsive to different sizes of screen, as this factor has nowadays a strong impact on the company's ranking in search engine. For this purpose, the company can use online tools like Google's Mobile Friendly Test. (Dodson 2016, 28; Enge & al. 2015, 299.) Rouhiainen (2015g) also mentions that the company's site speed is an important factor in search engine ranking and in increasing users' experience. The site speed should not be only analysed for desktops but very importantly also for the mobile phones. The site speed should be as low as possible, not exceeding 5 seconds' mark. (Rouhiainen 2015g.)

Lastly, the company should optimize its site the way that it does not show any 404 errors, also called Page Not Found, that are caused by site removal or by changes in the page's URL. 404 errors are very unacceptable by both users and search engines and they can be avoided by redirecting the page to another or at least by changing the message the visitor receives. (Dodson 2016, 29; Enge & al. 2015, 353.)

2.3.2 Off-Page Optimization

Off-page optimization is completely different from on-page optimization. Off-page optimization is not about technicalities, it is about being opportunistic, proactive and competitive. (Dodson 2016, 34). Off-page optimization is mainly about link building and social sharing which are currently, along with content, three primary strategies in SEO (Gunjan 2012, 207; Zhang & Cabage 2017, 148).

As stated by Masterson & Tribby (2009, 73), "Link building refers to the practice of acquiring links to your web site from other relevant web sites around the Internet". These links from external pages are called inbound links. Link building is not only about getting as many inbound links as possible, more importantly it is about getting high-quality inbound links - inbound links from the sites that are authoritative and/or popular. (Dodson 2016, 36; Zhang & Cabage 2017, 149.) Creating quality content can have a great impact on link building; however, companies can use also other practices like asking partners to link to the company's site, making an agreement with other organization about reciprocal linking or offering a well-written testimonial for an authoritative website that will at the same time link back to the company (Dodson 2016, 36-37; Chaffey & Smith 2008, 310-311).

On the other hand, social sharing is about getting people share a company's content on social media sites (Dodson 2016, 38). Companies should primarily aim to create interesting and viral content that will get naturally shared on social media (Zhang & Cabage 2017, 149). Companies should conveniently place social media share buttons throughout the site, making it easy and quick for visitors to share the content. The more shares the company gets, the better, however it is beneficial to get shares from different sites. (Dodson 2016, 38.)

2.3.3 Analysing Website's SEO Performance

When the website is optimized, it is important to monitor the website's SEO performance (Hines 21 May 2012). The company should regularly analyse what is the volume of traffic coming into the site, where are users coming from, what are users doing on the site, what keywords or content is bringing them in, and what pages are driving/expelling conversions and based on the results plan further adjustments (Dodson 2016, 38-40).

There are several free online tools that can help to analyse a website's SEO performance. SeoSiteCheckUp, Google Analytics or HubSpot's Marketing Grader are some of the examples.

2.4 Social Media as a Key Inbound Marketing Component and a Tool to Attract Ideal Customers

According to Ryan (2017, 121), “Social media is the umbrella term for web-based software and services that allow users to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in any form of social interactions”. Social media are not that new anymore, however the practice of social media is changing.

Social media used to be mainly about individuals nowadays they have become very important for businesses as well. As was already mentioned, in the past, customers used to be passive recipients of marketers’ messages. Nowadays, due to the Internet, customers are getting more involved as they can search for information and interact with others online. Thus, establishing a social media presence is becoming increasingly important for any company’s success. (Ryan 2017, 120-121.)

With social media, businesses can not only promote products and services, but they can also foster productive and meaningful relationships with customers and gain insights into the customers’ perceptions about the company, its products or services. Moreover, social media enable customers to contribute and collaborate in the businesses that, if companies can leverage, can have a greatly positive impact on both parties. (Ryan 2017, 121; Tapp, Whitten & Housden 2014, 297-299.)

Social media can be divided into different categories that varies from author to author. According to Albarran (2013, 19) there are following social media categories: blogs (i.e. WordPress), microblogging sites (i.e. Twitter), social networking sites (i.e. Facebook), collaborative websites (i.e. Wikipedia), content communities (YouTube), sharing sites (i.e. Flickr), business networking sites (i.e. LinkedIn), social news and bookmarking sites (i.e. Reddit) and lastly, social gaming and virtual worlds sites (i.e. Second Life). The examples that were mentioned are sometimes also referred to as social media platforms or channels.

One of the most crucial steps when establishing a social media presence, is to optimize selected social media. There are practices that differs from one social media platform to another; nonetheless, optimizing profile is one of the areas that can be applied to all social media in general and that will be thus briefly elaborated here.

According to Jackson (28 July 2015), it is very important that companies provide as many information as possible to make the profile trustworthy, visible and helpful. A company’s

bio should include the company's description, keywords and links to the company website. Companies should use same profile picture throughout different channels, it is particularly recommended to use a company's logo. A company's cover image should be relevant, representing what the company does. (Jackson 28 July 2015.)

Companies should not only establish their presence at social media but they should also monitor their progress to see how they are doing and what needs to be adjusted. There are several tools that companies can utilize, among the main ones are Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, LikeAlyzer, Twitter Analytics, LinkedIn Analytics, YouTube Analytics (Dodson 2016, 228-242). What will companies measure will depend on their goals but in general, companies should measure and analyse their social media return on investment, content consumption, content sharing, content conversations and content engagement (Tuten & Solomon 2013, 210, 217).

Rouhiainen mentions, that companies should keep in mind that the number of followers is not as important as the engagement, as that is what indicates the real interest in the company (Rouhiainen 2015i).

In the following subchapters, different social media will be further elaborated. As describing all social media categories and their examples would be too extensive, the focus will be rather given to social media that are the most suitable for B2B companies. According to Rouhiainen (2017), two essential social media platforms for any kind of company are YouTube and Facebook. On the other hand, VanRysdam (2010, 145) gives the highest importance, for B2B companies, only to social networking sites, particularly to Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Thus, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn will be further described in the following subchapter.

Blog, the crucial part of inbound marketing, will be described in a separate subchapter, as it will be explained from a general point of view, not as a specific social media platform.

2.4.1 Social Media Platforms for B2B companies

Facebook

According to Lieb (2012, 62) Facebook is the leader among social media platforms and at the same time online mass media channel. At the end of 2016, Facebook had some 1.86 billion of monthly active users worldwide, which is a significant increase from some 1.228 billion at the end of 2013 and 0.608 billion at the end of 2010 (Statista 2017a).

Facebook provides several opportunities for businesses. Among the main ones are the opportunity to cultivate fans of brands, companies or products/services through various content types; disseminate news feeds and updates which can be further shared; and a possibility to engage with users or fans and receive their feedback (Lieb 2012, 63).

It is important that companies are on Facebook friendly, natural, relevant, and that they post mainly visual content like videos, photos or Facebook Live Videos. Their posts should be succinct, containing no more than 80 characters. It is recommended that they post content often and regularly, i.e. small or start-up companies at least once a day, and that they post emotional or emotions triggering content, like photo of happy customer, as it increases chances for followers' engagement. Companies should not be self-centric, they should rather talk about/ to their followers, asking them questions and opinions, not directly selling their products or services. (Dodson 2016, 160-161; Rouhiainen 2015g; Rouhiainen 2015h.)

Twitter

Twitter is the official broadcasting tool of the web (Pulizzi 2014, 233). It is a great tool for anyone who is too busy writing the full blog posts but still want to stay up on the latest trends. Tweets - twitter posts, are short messages that contain no more than 140 characters. (VanRysdam 2010, 190.) Twitter went through major user growth between 2011 and 2014, however it still stays a very popular tool with some 319 million of monthly active users worldwide (Statista 2017b).

Twitter provides several opportunities for companies, from interacting with customers, keeping an eye on competition, monitoring news about the industry that companies operate in, into directing people to a deeper content on the companies' website via links in tweets (Lieb 2012, 80; VanRysdam 2010, 190).

There are several tips on using Twitter by businesses, some of the most important ones are listed as follows. Companies should tell a story through their tweets; these tweets should be compelling, consistent, and relevant to the brand and/or the industry they operate in. It is beneficial to make tweets visual (include image or video), ask questions or run polls as that is the kind of content that generate a lot of engagement. In order to make the content searchable, companies should include one to three keywords into each tweet. As with any other social media, it is important to analyse. It is important to analyse what kind of content gets many retweets/shares so companies can produce similar content more often, and it is also important to analyse at what time and day people engage the most so companies' tweeting can be adjusted accordingly. One good idea on what companies can

tweet about is a live coverage of main industry events, which provides insights for the audience in real time. The last tip is to retweet other great and relevant content as it is not always necessary to produce own content. (Business Twitter 2017; Krogue 30 August 2013; Pulizzi 2014, 233-235.)

Although Patel mentions that there is no ideal tweeting frequency, as this varies from case to case depending on the goal that companies want to achieve, he recommends, for companies in general, to tweet 1-5 times a day (Patel 12 September 2016).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest professional network worldwide (Lieb 2012, 65). LinkedIn has grown quickly during the past years. Based on the statistics, LinkedIn had some 467 million members in the 3rd quarter of 2016, which is almost two times more than at the end of 2013 (277 million members) and more than five times more than at the end of 2010 (90 million members) (Statista 2016).

With its size, LinkedIn is becoming increasingly important way for companies to build reputation, credibility, profile, and ultimately leads (Tapp & al. 2014, 309). Companies can present, promote and position their company at LinkedIn with basic information, lists of products or services, news feeds, tweets, blog entries, multimedia content and many other (Lieb 2012, 65). LinkedIn has also become an important tool for recruiting (Lieb 2012, 65).

For any kind of company that decides to establish its presence at LinkedIn, it is important to fill in the profile and keep it updated. In order to get more searchable, company's keywords should be included throughout the profile. The company should get active, nonetheless at LinkedIn quality is valued over quantity, thus sharing only quality content is important. The company's staff can connect their personal profiles with the brand and contribute to the company's content creation. It is also advised to be part of different LinkedIn groups that are relevant to the company and where company's customers can be found, and participate in the discussions in a credible and engaging manner. The company can also share relevant user-generated content. (Pulizzi 2014, 237; Tapp & al. 2014, 309-310.)

YouTube

YouTube is the king of video-sharing platforms, with over billion of users and hundreds of millions of hours of YouTube content watched daily (YouTube 2017a; Dodson 2016, 178). YouTube is a social media platform that allows people to discover, watch, discuss and share originally-created videos (YouTube 2017b). It is a very important platform for com-

panies as it provides them with the opportunity to reach customers through video, the most powerful form of media for user engagement (Dodson 2016, 178; Newlands 2011, 37).

There are several video types that are particularly beneficial for businesses. Some of them are viral videos, usually highly entertaining videos with important messages; vlogs, short video blogs; interviews with other people in the industry; tutorials or how-to videos; customer stories and personalization videos, videos about the company, its staff or its products/services that makes company or its personnel more real (Newlands 2011, 38-39; Nottingham 13 September 2013).

Brafton (2017), Pulizzi (2014, 236) and Rouhiainen (2015j) list other general recommendations that companies should bear in mind when creating and consequently running their YouTube channel.

- A company's channel should include links to other social media channels and the company's website, that can include some permanent or temporary calls to actions such as "learn more" or "register for event".
- Calls to actions should be also included within the videos itself and within the video descriptions.
- A company should have introductory trailer on their channel that for instance describes what the company does and why should people subscribe.
- The videos that company create should be short and succinct and each video should rather contain compilation of different content pieces than one long shot that might make the content too boring.
- The videos that a company creates should be sorted into topic-specific playlists that makes the channel organized.
- Thumbnails, snapshot that will appear on video before playing, should stand out to attract attention.
- Each video should contain relevant tags and include some of the company's keywords.

2.4.2 Blogs

Blog, also a web log, is a web site where writer (blogger) or group of writers post items on a regular basis and that displays these items in reverse-chronological order (Parker 2012, 44; Thelwall 2009, 47). Blogs are becoming increasingly popular, not only the private ones but also the professional ones (Lieb 2012, 73). Blog is a perfect place to present content that companies produce.

Wide variety of companies can utilize and benefit from blogging. According to Halligan and Shah (2014, 29), blogging can help companies to become a thought leader in their industry, it enables them to engage with potential and existing customers and at the same time to build trust. Moreover, regular content creation can help to make a company's web-

site a living breathing hub and dramatically improve site's search engine ranking (Halligan & Shah 2014, 29).

Halligan and Shah (2014, 30) recommend setting a blog as part of a company's website as using other platforms, like WordPress, build the authority for the platform, not for the company itself. Companies should blog at least once a week and produce posts that are relevant to the industry they operate in (Halligan & Shah 2014, 30-32). Newlands mentions (2011, 89) that every step the blogger makes, from designing the blog to writing a blog, should keep in mind the target audience. How-to articles, analysis of particular industry trend or challenge, statement about (company's) upcoming event or feedback on article relevant to the industry are some of the examples of content that companies can produce (Halligan and Shah 2014, 30-32; Newlands 2011, 102-103). A company can also make interviews with clients or some other person in the business or invite different guests or guest bloggers, who have something to tell about the field of business, to write on company's blog (Newlands 2011, 102-103.)

Because everyone has different preferences regarding the form of the content, the Internet Marketing Academy (2011, 36) recommends producing content in different forms, to ensure that it will appeal to many people. Thus, companies should not produce only text content, but accompany that also with videos, images or audios.

Dodson (2016, 182-183), Halligan and Shah (2014, 30), Moz (2016), and Sprung (17 May 2016) list several other recommendations that should help businesses to succeed in blogging. They are:

- enable commenting on the blog
- enable subscribing to blog via RSS (Rich Site Summary) or email
- include at least one to two images in the post to make it catchy
- ask questions at the end of the post to stimulate engagement
- organize the content to be easily consumed
- time publishing of posts – test at what time blog readers are the most available and willing to receive and share the content
- include links/sources in the posts to add credibility to the content
- be consistent, post regularly and always produce quality content
- add relevant tags and keywords to posts to support search engine optimization
- promote the blog on social media platforms
- add social-plugins to the blog to make it easily shareable
- when being established, ask other more popular bloggers to host your blog

One task that is not about blogging itself but that can help companies to get discovered and considered to be the experts in the industry, is subscribing to other relevant industry

blogs and contributing to the meaningful conversation in the comment section (Strauss & Frost 2012, 339).

2.5 Website as a Tool to Attract Ideal Customers

A great website presence is becoming essential for any kind of company as increasing amount of businesses and interactions are happening online (Newlands 2011, 74). Since a company's website (pages) is often the first step into the company, it is important that a company's website provide inviting, relevant and organized content (Strauss & Frost 2012, 304).

It used to be common, that a company's website was providing only one-way communication through sales-oriented messages. This is nowadays changing and it is becoming increasingly important that a company's website is like a hub, based on a collaboration between users and the company itself, and connected with many other websites. This connection will enable users to discover the company's website through search engines, links from other sites, and mentions of the company in the social media. (Halligan & Shah 2014, 9-10)

A company's website should not be designed to appeal to everyone as it is something impossible to achieve. A company's website should be primarily designed to appeal to the company's target market. Companies should consider how will users access the website, what they will want to find there, and how can their website fulfil these needs. (Ryan 2017, 41.)

Usability and accessibility are crucial ingredients to a good web design. Usability refers to delivering information and functionality that users want, that are comfortable and they are familiar with. It is about simple, elegant and functional design that helps users to achieve their goals almost effortlessly. On the other hand, accessibility refers to the process of designing a company's website to be equally accessible to everyone, for instance to mobile users by optimizing website for mobiles or to sightless users by including descriptive text alternatives to images and multimedia content that can be read by various text-to-speech software. (Ryan 2017, 41-44.)

Halligan & Shah (2014, 12) highly recommend having a blog as part of company's website. Blog will bring important collaborative ingredient to the website and make the place livelier. For many people, it is inconvenient to regularly visit a company's website to check if there are any news or blog posts. Thus, it is highly recommended that companies enable users to subscribe to their content through RSS feeds or email (Halligan & Shah 2014,

11). RSS readers and email subscribers will get notified whenever new content is generated. It is important that companies monitor how many RSS feed and email list subscribers they have (Halligan & Shah 2014, 11).

2.6 Inbound Marketing Plan

HubSpot recommends using the following inbound marketing plan when implementing inbound marketing into the company.

As was already mentioned, ideal customers are the main point around which all of the inbound marketing activities are built; thus, defining the company's **buyer personas** first is essential (Mawhinney 14 March 2014). According to Revella (2011, 5), a buyer persona is an archetype, a composite picture of the real people who buy, or might buy, products or services that the company sells. Vaughan (28 May 2015) refers to these people as ideal customers. According to Rose and Pulizzi (2011, 42), companies should create one persona for every distinct group to whom they are marketing. The buyer personas are commonly developed through customers or prospects interviewing, but the important information can be also received from the company's sales and customer service staff (Rose & Pulizzi 2011, 43). It is recommended to conduct at least 3-5 interviews for each persona development. During the persona interviews, the interviewer should aim to receive information about the person's role, company, goals, challenges, shopping preferences, and other valuable information that might be further utilized. When the persona interviews are conducted, it is important to identify the common patterns and commonalities among the interviewees and based on them the buyer personas are created. (Vaughan 28 May 2015.)

The second step in the inbound marketing plan is to define buyer personas pain points that cause them to search for information about the company's product, service or industry; this can be referred to also as **defining marketing triggers** (Mawhinney 14 March 2014). This information is received from the buyer personas development. As a third step, the company **creates a list of keywords**. Creating the content that contains the keywords representing what the company does and what people are searching for, will enable the company to attract the right people. As a fourth step, the company **sets its inbound marketing goals**. These goals should specify exactly what the company tries to achieve with inbound marketing implementation and when – for instance to increase the monthly unique visitors to the company's website from 500 to 700 in two months. Fifth, the company **outlines its content marketing strategy**. As was previously mentioned, buyers go typically through three stages of marketing funnel – awareness, evaluation and purchase. Planning and developing the content for each of these stages is important in

order to provide information that the buyers are looking for at each stage. Sixth, the company **designs its lead nurturing process**. Getting buyers to the bottom of the funnel – to purchase, is essential for the company's success. Thus, planning how this will be achieved, for example by series of automated emails that buyers will receive, is crucial. The seventh step is to **create a conversion focused blogging strategy**. This strategy is designed to attract highly relevant traffic to the company's website with ultimate goal of converting this traffic into leads. Each blog post should be thus designed to answer buyer personas questions and concerns and encourage them to access company's exclusive content that will contain further information. The encouragement will be done by call to action – for instance download our whitepaper with 10 more tips on improving school environment. As an eighth step, the company **implements an inbound marketing platform**. This will require finding technology that facilitates inbound lead generation. As a last step, the company **recruits a team of inbound marketing experts** – someone who has for instance knowledge of SEO, blogging or copywriting. (Mawhinney 14 March 2014)

However, this inbound marketing plan focuses on the inbound marketing as a whole, not only on the attraction action. The plan for the purposes of applying only the first inbound marketing action – to attract, to the company that already applies some of the inbound marketing tactics was designed, based on the previous one, by the author as described in the following text.

First, the company **sets its goals** – What do we want to achieve with the first inbound marketing action implementation? Secondly, the company **creates a list of keywords**. Thirdly, the company **defines its buyer personas**. Within the buyer personas description the marketing triggers will be described. Fourthly, the company **conducts a situational analysis regarding the first inbound marketing action** – Which first inbound marketing action practices and activities do we already apply? In the last step, the company **implements the first inbound marketing action methodology and controls** its performance against set goals. The implementation will include utilization of the first inbound marketing tools – pages, blog, SEO and social media; and the key inbound marketing component - content. The implementation will be based on the situational analysis that was conducted in the previous step, meaning that the implementation will be particularly focused on the areas that are not yet implemented. The process, accompanied by the corresponding project tasks (the last step equaled to the guideline development), can be seen visualized in figure 9.

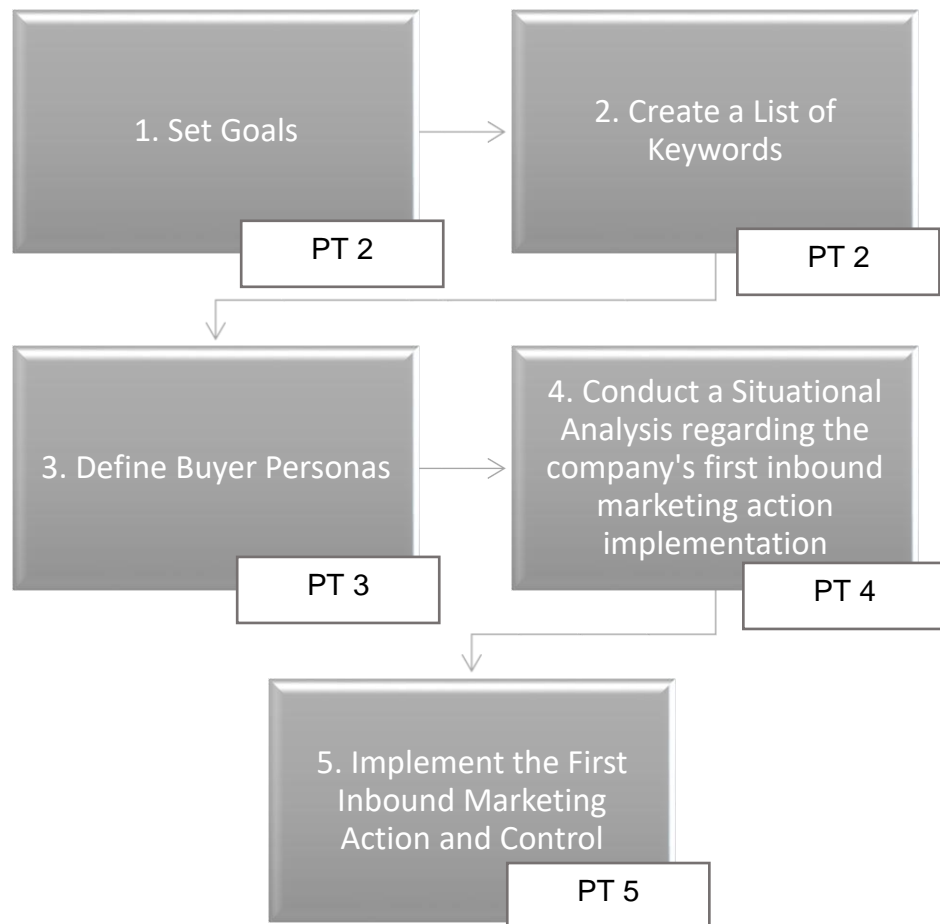


Figure 9. Inbound marketing plan for attracting ideal customers

3 Project Management Methods

This chapter describes in detail the project management methods that were used to implement the project objective.

3.1 Project Schedule

The project began in December 2016 and was finalized at the beginning of May 2017. During December 2016, January, February and March 2017, the author had obtained all the necessary information from the company and from the theory sources. During April 2017, the information from the company's intermediaries were received and the guideline for the commissioning company was created. At the beginning of May 2017, the guideline was presented to the commissioning company and the project was assessed by the author.

3.2 Project Management Design

As was previously mentioned in chapter 1, the project objective of this product-based thesis was to develop a guideline that helps the commissioning company attract its ideal customers through inbound marketing. The process, which led to the fulfilment of this objective, is captured in figure 10 and further elaborated in the following text.

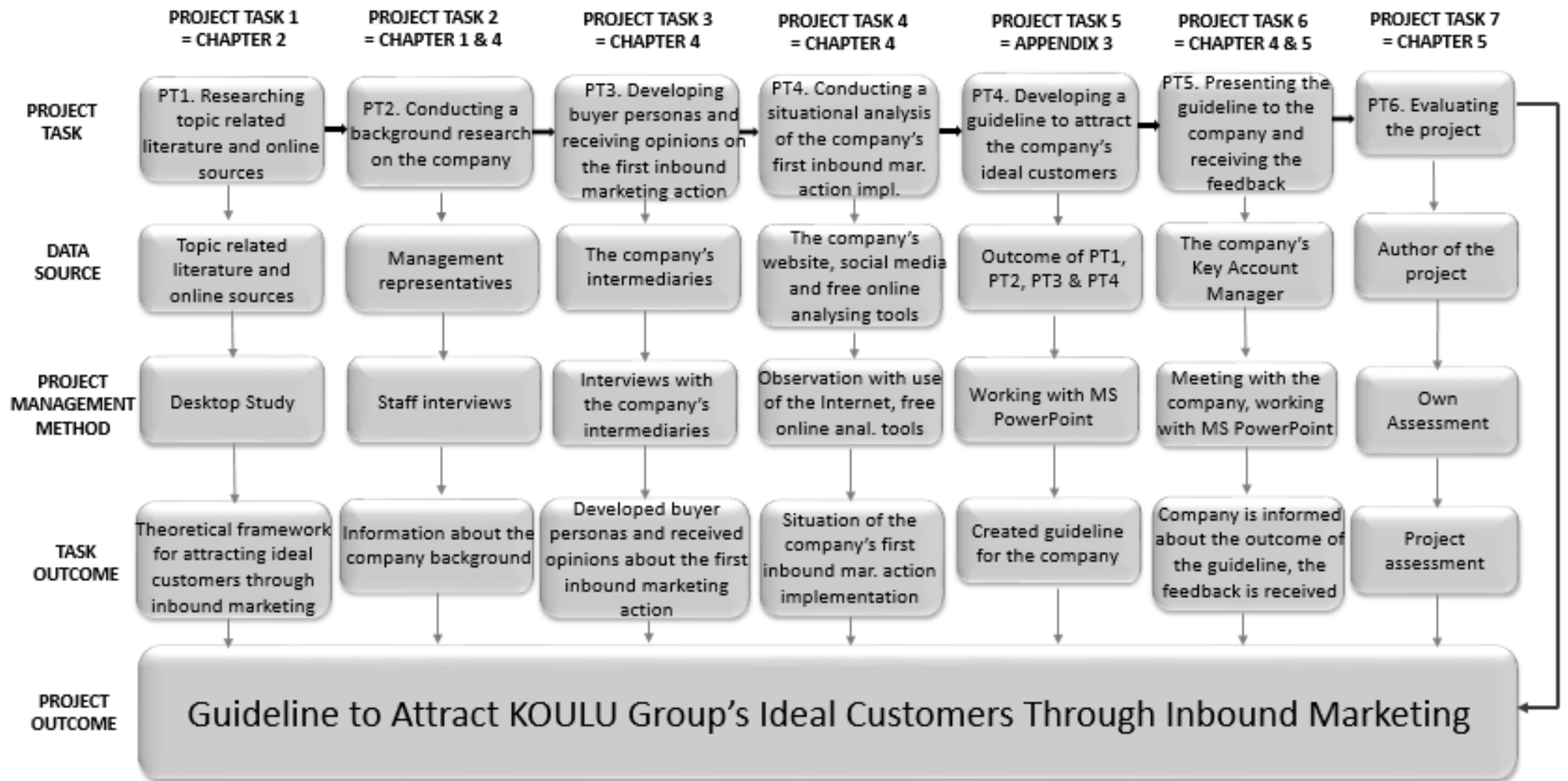


Figure 10. Project management design

There were six project tasks that formed the final project outcome – the guideline to attract KOULU Group’s ideal customers through inbound marketing.

The **first project task** was to research topic related literature and online sources that served as a theoretical framework for this project. The theoretical framework specifically covered the inbound marketing and the first inbound marketing action. Due to the relative novelty of inbound marketing, this required researching not only relevant literature but also trustful online sources. Moreover, as the amount of reliable inbound marketing sources was limited and because the inbound marketing strategy is built around other strategies, like content marketing or SEO; the concepts described in the theoretical framework often required combination of inbound marketing and other topic relevant sources.

The **second project task** was to conduct a background research on the company. This required collection of primary qualitative data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the company’s representatives. Semi-structured interview was chosen as a data collection method, as it provides a framework for the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees (the company’s representatives) but at the same time it enables the interviewer to discover some relevant themes and responses further (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 391).

The interviews were held between December 2016 and March 2017, two times with the company’s partner and director Satu Järvinen and three times with the company’s key account manager Huong Ngo. Each interview lasted about 40 minutes. The interviews with Satu Järvinen answered mainly to the questions about the company background, in general; whereas the interviews with Huong Ngo were mainly targeted at discovering KOULU Group’s marketing situation and objectives. The outline of the interview questions can be seen in appendix 1.

The **third project task** was to develop the company’s buyer personas and receive intermediaries’ opinions and ideas regarding the particular areas of the first inbound marketing action - to attract. These primary qualitative data were received through semi-structured Skype interviews with the company’s intermediaries located in each of the company’s geographic target markets. Semi-structured interview was selected from the same reason as in the previous project task - as it provides a framework for the author but enables him/her to discover specific topics deeper based on the flow of the interview (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 391). Skype interview was selected due to the convenience that it could provide to all of the involved parties. Skype interview was the most convenient

method for conducting the semi-structured interview with people who live in the remote areas. It also provided an opportunity to have not only verbal but also body language interactions.

Three intermediaries that were interviewed, Lisa-Maria Markula that represented the ideal customers in Pakistan interested in the international teacher training academy, Amber Arora Shah that represented the ideal customers in India interested in the school development framework and Banu Alptekin that represented the ideal customers in Turkey interested in school development framework, are listed in the table 3 below.

Table 3. Interviewees on behalf of the buyer personas

Name	Lisa-Maria Markula	Amber Arora Shah	Banu Alptekin
KOULU Group's service representing	International teacher training academy	School development framework	School development framework
Position representing	School owners and teachers	School owners and principals/rectors/deans	School owners and principals/rectors/deans
Country representing	Pakistan	India	Turkey

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were informed about the purpose of the interview and about the most crucial marketing terms that had to be understood before the start of the interview. Due to the rather significant differences between the markets, buyer personas were developed for each country separately and they were grouped and described based on the ideal customers common traits. The outline of questions that were asked during the interview, that were based on the questionnaire designed by HubSpot for buyer personas development, can be found in appendix 2. It is important to mention that the questions to which the interviewee could not provide any reliable answer (that would be based only on an interviewee guess) were left unanswered.

The **fourth project task** was to conduct a situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation. This required collection of primary qualitative and quantitative data with structured observation, during which the Internet was utilized; and collection of quantitative data with use of various free online analysing tools like SeoSiteCheckup or LikeAlyzer. The analysis was performed against the first inbound marketing action methodology, meaning that KOULU Group's content, website, blog, social media, and current application of SEO were analysed.

The **fifth project task** was to develop a guideline to attract the company's ideal customers. The plan was designed in MS PowerPoint and previous project outcomes served as data source for creating the guideline. The company's current situation regarding the first inbound marketing action implementation was compared with the theory, and its outcome was adjusted based on the results of the interviews with the company's staff and the company's intermediaries.

The **sixth project task** was to present the guideline to the company. The presentation was conducted face-to-face with the company's key account manager, a person that is the most knowledgeable about the inbound marketing approach and that will be responsible for the actual implementation of the first inbound marketing action based on the guideline. For the presentation, a laptop was utilized. The presentation lasted approximately 60 minutes.

The **finale project task** was to evaluate the whole project. The project assessment was done by the author.

4 Project Tasks Outcomes

The project task outcomes will be elaborated in this chapter. The outcomes will be listed in a chronological order, except for the project task 2, 3 and 4. The outcomes of the project task 2, 3 and 4 are too extensive; therefore, they will be elaborated in the separate sub-chapters, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

The **outcome of the first project task** was a theoretical framework that was presented in chapter 2.

The **outcome of the fifth project task** was a guideline to attract KOULU Group's ideal customers through inbound marketing, that can be found in appendix 3. The guideline was divided into different chapters – introduction into inbound marketing, introduction into attracting ideal customers through inbound marketing, attracting KOULU Group's ideal customers through inbound marketing (including topics like website, blog, SEO, social media and content), and further steps. The first two chapters were theoretical, providing the introduction into the topic; the last two chapters were practical, providing recommendations on the actual implementation at KOULU Group and suggestions for further steps. The developed buyer personas were included as a guideline attachment for the company's further utilization.

The **outcome of the sixth project task** was the informed company on how to implement the first inbound marketing action according to the guideline and a received feedback from the company. The company was pleased and satisfied with the outcome of the project, and excited about implementing listed recommendations into the company. The company found the guideline relevant. The company's key account manager mentioned that the recommendations from the guideline are achievable and helpful in regard to the company's current goals – increasing the company's online visibility and attracting its ideal customers. The company's summarized feedback can be found in chapter 5.

The **outcome of the seventh project task** was the author's project assessment that can be found in chapter 5.

4.1 Company Background Research

The outcome of the second project task, background research on the company, will be described in this subchapter.

A lot of general information about KOULU Group were already stated in chapter 1.2 but there are still many, particularly in the marketing area, that need to be mentioned and further described.

First, it is important to clarify what services KOULU Group actually provides. KOULU Group's primary services are International Teacher Trainings and School Development Framework. International Teacher Trainings are offered in Pakistan and they include four days of teacher/educator training in Pakistan (provided by KOULU Group's educators) and 15 days of online teacher training that includes five webinars. On the other hand, School Development Framework is offered in India and Turkey and includes many independent modules. The most important ones and at the same time the same time the most demanded ones are Innovation Camps for Educators, that include customers visit into Finland and getting to know Finnish education system in person; and Certificate Programme in Education Development that aims to provide similar results as Innovation Camps for Educators with the only difference that KOULU Group's educators come to a customers' place instead of customers coming to Finland. Certificate Programme in Education Development finishes with an official certification given to the customers. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

As was already mentioned, KOULU Group was very interested in learning more about inbound marketing and implementing inbound marketing methodology into its marketing practices due to the opportunity to achieve their goals for relatively low costs. KOULU Group's primary marketing objectives were increasing its online visibility and consequently awareness among its ideal customers. The company did not have any specific goals regarding the first inbound marketing action implementation, as they were not able to estimate in what time horizon they could implement recommendations from the guideline. The company was hiring several marketing interns during the thesis process that might be able to help them with the first inbound marketing action implementation. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

As a start-up company with limited financial and personnel resources, the company was not interested in receiving unlimited recommendations on implementing the first inbound marketing action. The company was interested in receiving realistic recommendations that can be achieved during the near future. Further discussion about the first inbound marketing action showed, that the company was interested in receiving all of the recommendations regarding the utilization of the company's pages, blog, SEO and social media; however, the company was interested in producing only particular content used during the awareness stage - namely blog posts, email newsletters, how-to-videos, educational webinars, infographics, slideshows and interviews. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

As was already mentioned, KOULU Group had been already implementing some of the inbound marketing practices that are also part of other marketing theories. To start with, KOULU Group has its own website with a blog and is present on several major social media platforms, specifically on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google+. The company is active on its LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts, not on its Google+ account that was created just for practical reasons. The company is occasionally using paid advertising on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter; in order to further advertise its upcoming events. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

Regarding the content that the company produces, it had been mentioned that the company produces mainly blog posts and social media posts. The company produced just one infographic and three videos (one of that being an interview). The company also produced an introductory whitepaper, in the form of PDF, that includes brief information about the company and its services, and that is sent to the company's potential customers. The company's content is almost always generated by the company's marketing and communication representatives. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

KOULU Group had also already detailly analysed its keywords, both general and long-tail ones, and they are: education, learning, Finnish education, education/al expertise, teacher training, quality education, school development framework, Finnish educational expertise/educational expertise from Finland, educational excellence, access to learning, digital learning, solutions for learning and development. Thus, it was mentioned that going through this activity again is not necessary. (Ngo 29 March 2017.)

4.2 Buyer Personas Development and Intermediaries' Opinions

In this subchapter, the outcome of the buyer personas development and the intermediaries' opinions will be introduced.

4.2.1 India

Amber Arora Shah (26 April 2017) was interviewed as a representative person for KOULU Group's ideal customers in India. Based on the knowledge and insights that the interviewee possessed, it was stated that KOULU Group has two main groups of ideal customers in India – first, a primary and secondary school owners between the age of 40 and 60, and secondly, primary and secondary school principals/rectors/deans that are in the same age. Both of these groups are represented mainly by men. The customers are interested in the company's school development framework services, particularly in its Innovation

Camps for Educators and Certificate Programme in Education Development. Based on these two groups of ideal customers, the buyer personas that can be seen in figure 11 and figure 12 were developed.

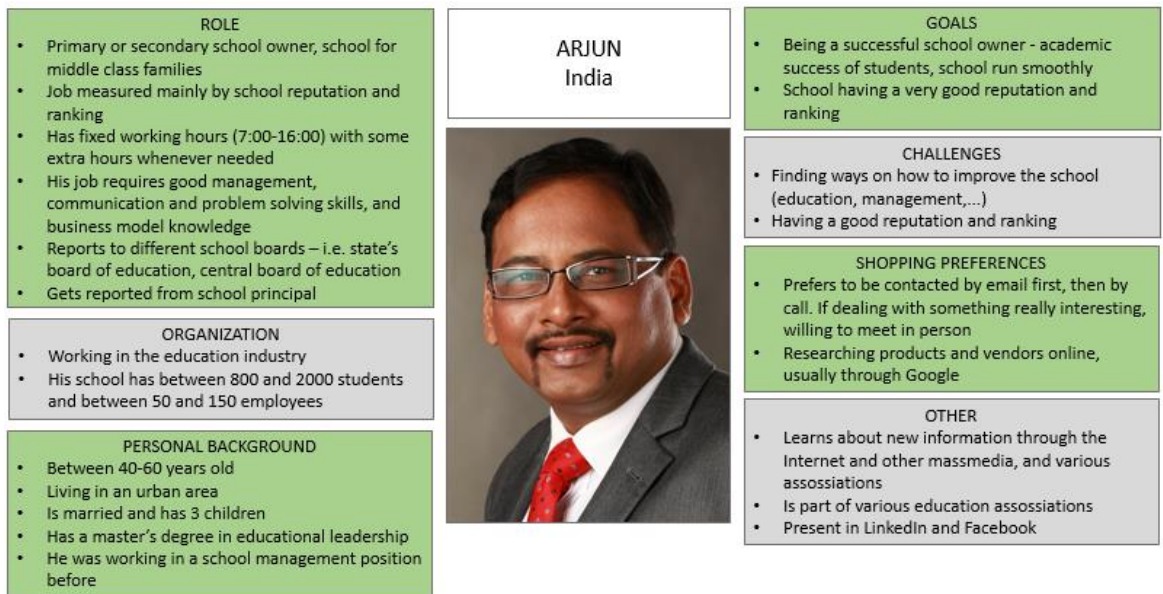


Figure 11. KOULU Group's buyer persona – primary or secondary school owner in India

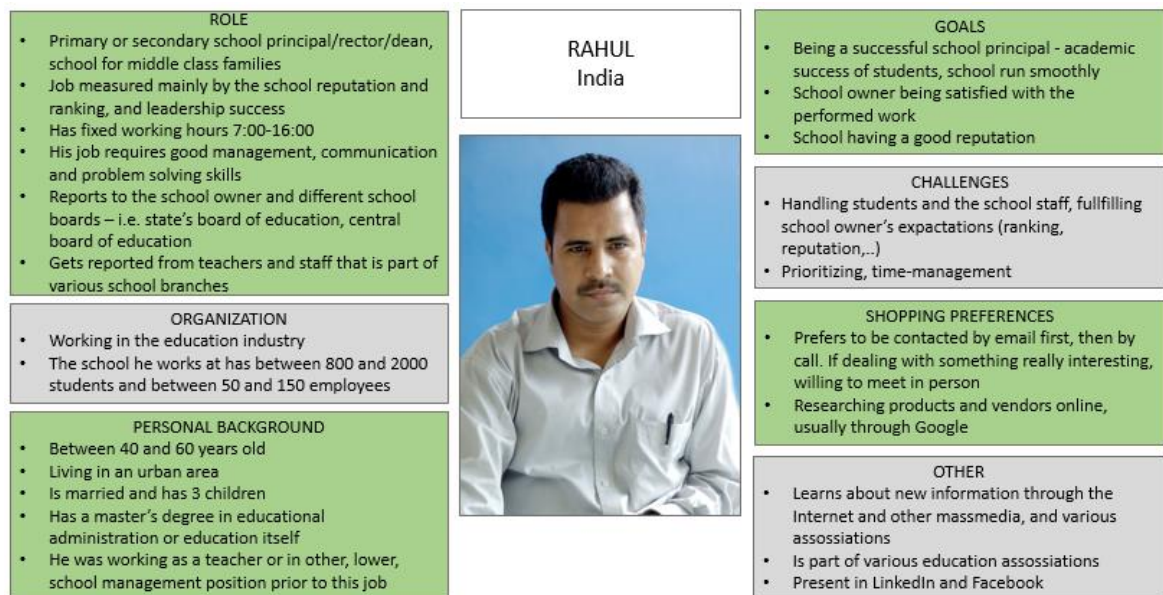


Figure 12. KOULU Group's buyer persona – primary or secondary school principal/rector/dean in India

The marketing triggers for both buyer personas would be the desire to improve or sustain the school's ranking and reputation by developing the school and its staff further.

In the second part of the interview, the interviewee was asked several questions about the first inbound marketing action at KOULU Group. The interviewee stated, that the company provides relevant, inviting and organized content on its website; the content that is valuable and helpful for the ideal customers. The interviewee found the specific design of the website confusing at first but after figuring out how it works, she had no problem using it. Based on the interviewee point of view, the company's blog is organized and keeps in mind the company's ideal customers.

When discussing the content that the company should continue/start producing, the interviewee mentioned that continuing to design blog posts, with topics particularly focused on introducing educational trends and approaches that helps to improve the education at schools, would be really valuable and probably very popular. The interviewee recommended company to create how-to videos, interesting interviews, slideshow (brochure), infographics and email newsletter. On the other hand, the interviewee mentioned that the educational webinars might fail in India as the ideal customers will probably not have a time to participate due their busy schedule.

4.2.2 Turkey

Banu Alptekin (28 April 2017) was interviewed as a representative person for KOULU Group's ideal customers in Turkey. Based on the discussion, it became clear that the company's ideal customers in Turkey are mainly primary and secondary school owners between the age of 30 and 60. These ideal customers are mainly represented by men. The customers are interested in the company's school development framework services, particularly into Innovation Camps for Educators and Certificate Programme in Education Development. Based on this knowledge, the buyer persona that can be seen in figure 13 were developed.

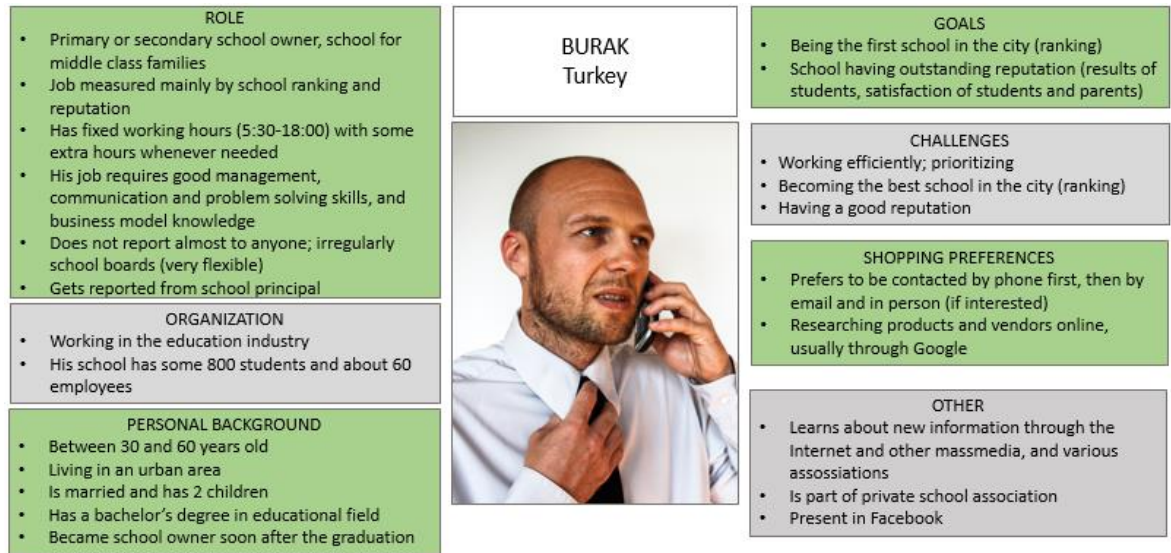


Figure 13. KOULU Group's buyer persona – primary or secondary school owner in Turkey

The marketing trigger for this buyer persona would be the same as in the previous case, a desire to improve or sustain the school's ranking and reputation by developing the school and its staff further.

During the second part of the interview, the interviewee stated that the company provides inviting, organized and relevant content on its website, the content that is designed to appeal primarily to the company's ideal customers. The interviewee had never any problem with the way the company's website is designed (possibility to scroll down through the whole website). The interviewee also perceives the company's blog organized and interesting, stating that it keeps the ideal customers in mind.

When considering the content that the company produces or plans to introduce, the language barrier was seen as a main obstacle. As was stated by the interviewee, majority of the company's ideal customers do not possess a good knowledge of English, and thus might have difficulties to understand the content that the company produces. The interviewee mentioned that how-to videos or videos with the interviews might be interesting as subtitles can be easily added. The interviewee was also very interested in the email newsletter, mentioning that it would be very nice for the ideal customers, enabling them to stay in touch and updated. The newsletter content could be also easily translated by the interviewee. The same could be done with the brochure in the form of a slideshow. The infographics might be also well accepted as they do not contain a lot of text. The educational webinars and blogs would cause probably big problems due to the language difficulties.

4.2.3 Pakistan

Lisa Maria Markula (30 April 2017) was interviewed as a representative person for KOULU Group’s ideal customers in Pakistan. Based on the discussion, it was commonly agreed that KOULU Group’s ideal customers are school owners (usually each school covers kindergarten, primary and secondary school levels) between the age of 35 and 60, and kindergarten and primary school teachers that are between the age of 30 and 50. Both of these ideal customer groups are represented mainly by women. These ideal customers are interested into the company’s international teacher training service. Based on the general knowledge of the ideal customers, the buyer personas that can be seen in figure 14 and figure 15 were developed.

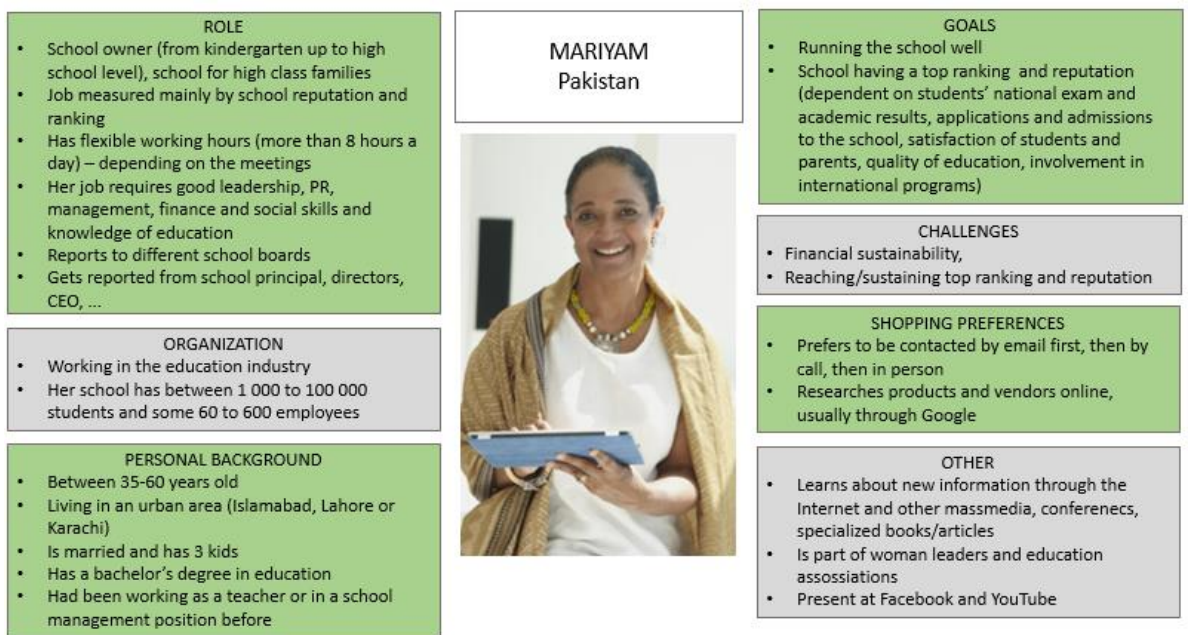


Figure 14. KOULU Group’s buyer persona – school owner in Pakistan

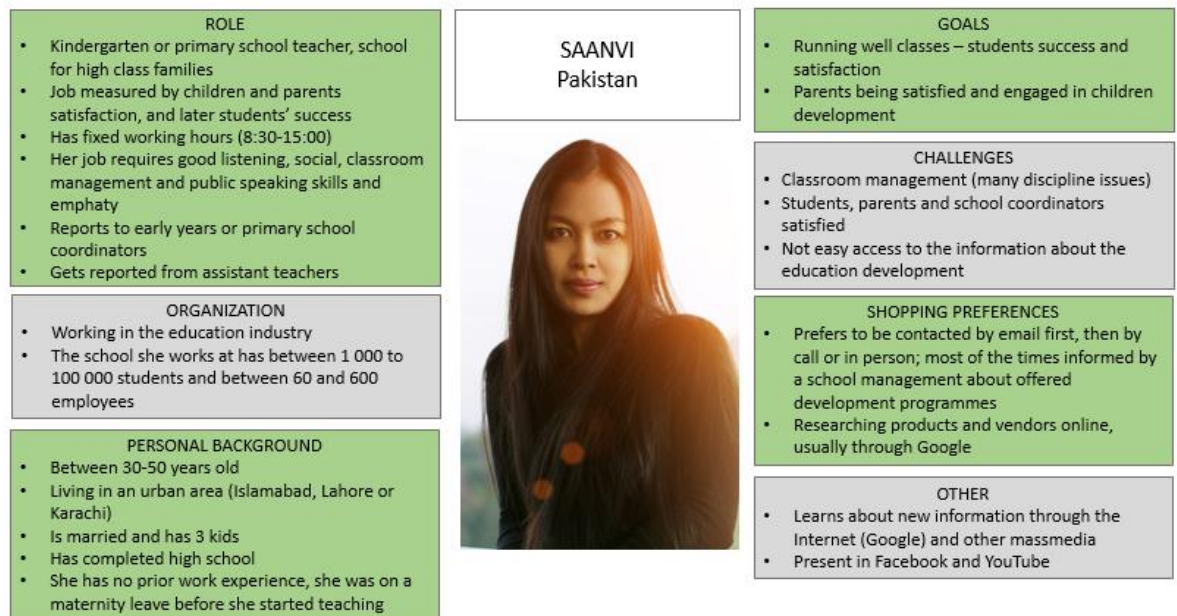


Figure 15. Kindergarten or primary school teacher in Pakistan

The marketing trigger for the first buyer persona, the school owner in Pakistan, would be again improving or sustaining the school's ranking and reputation by developing the school further – by training the teachers. In the case of the second buyer persona, the kindergarten or primary school teacher in Pakistan, it is mainly the true desire to provide better education to students.

During the second part of the interview, the interviewee stated that the company provides inviting, organized and relevant content, the content that is designed primarily to the company's ideal customers. However, more detailed information about each service might be provided. The author finds the website's design (possibility to scroll down through the whole website) confusing. The interviewee perceived the company's blog organized and interesting, mentioning that it keeps the ideal customers in mind.

Regarding the content that the company should keep or start producing, the interviewee mentioned that all blog posts, email newsletters, how-to videos, educational webinars, infographics, interviews and brochure as slideshow are amazing ideas and something that is highly demanded from the company's ideal customers in Pakistan. The particularly demanded content is the one that would be helpful for the ideal customers such as providing more information about the Finnish education system, latest trends in education, initial tips on how to improve the education and introducing more detailly what the company does. It had been mentioned that the company's ideal customers are missing more of a personal aspect in the content and demand rather visual content – videos, infographics, webinars.

It was suggested by the interviewee that the ideal frequency of email newsletters would be one month. The email newsletter should notify ideal customers about new trends and the upcoming company's events. The slideshow should be in a form of PowerPoint as many people have problem opening the PDF files. The brochure, that possibly includes more detailed information, is a good idea for a slideshow that would be sent by email. The educational webinars should be the initial step when the ideal customer discovers the company. The webinars should be in a way like tasting sessions, briefly introducing the Finnish education system and the content and the structure of the program (service that the company provides). It was mentioned that getting to know the company's people (providing more of a personal aspect) before the service is provided is extremely important in Pakistan.

4.3 Situational Analysis

In this subchapter, the outcome of the situational analysis of the company's first inbound marketing action implementation will be described. Some of the basic information regarding the company's situation were already stated during the interviewing. However, majority of information were received through the author's structured observation and through usage of various free online analysing tools. It is important to note, that all of the results that will be discussed, were approved by the company's key account manager.

4.3.1 Search Engine Optimization

SeoSiteCheckup is an online free tool that analyses a company's SEO. Analysis of KOULU Group's SEO through SeoSiteCheckUp, provided several important insights into the company's practices. The company's website is in many ways optimized for search engines; nonetheless, there are some important areas that is not company optimizing. The screenshot of KOULU Group's score at SeoSiteCheckup can be seen in figure 16, the results will be described in the following text.

SeoSiteCheckup Score:

http://koulugroup.com

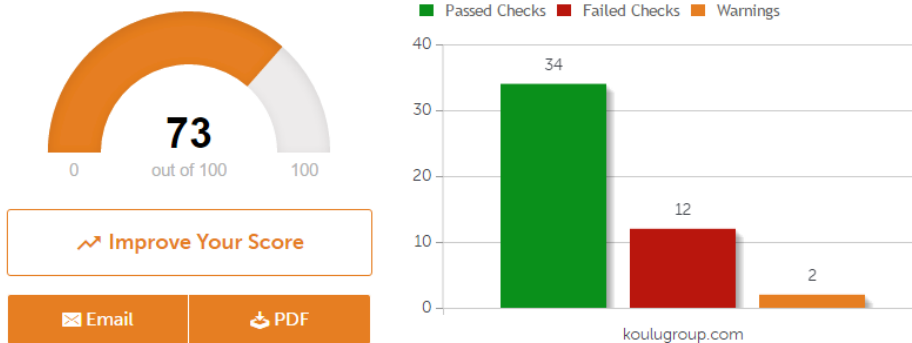


Figure 16. KOULU Group's SeoSiteCheckup Score (A screenshot from SeoSiteCheckup 2017a)

First will be described the most important checks that the website passed. The company has optimized meta titles and meta description in a way that it contains recommended amount of characters. Some of KOULU Group's keywords, specifically educational excellence, education excellence and teacher training appear within the meta tags. The company optimizes its website with sitemaps and the website does not contain any broken links. KOULU Group connects its website with social media, specifically with Twitter and Facebook. Very importantly, the company's website is optimized for mobiles. (SeoSiteCheckup 2017a.)

On the other hand, one of the most important checks that the website failed is that the website is missing any headings that would indicate the importance of its text (H1 and H2). Site loading speed is almost 6 seconds, which is above recommended limit of 5 seconds. The company is not using SEO friendly URLs, the particular problems in the website's URLs is that they include underscores and dashes. The company is not using alt attribute/text with images that would helps search engines and users to read the picture. (SeoSiteCheckup 2017a.)

Moreover, SeoSiteCheckup toolbox indicated that there are 15 inbound links, from 10 domains, to the company's website. These domains are having rather low importance – they are not that popular and/or authoritative. (SeoSiteCheckup 2017b.)

In order to analyze the website's compability with search engines, PowerMapper online free tool was used. The website successfully passed many of the browser checks. The

tool; however, identified a critical problem with SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) images that appear on the website. These images are not compatible with Internet Explorer 8 and with older Android devices that use original Android browser. (PowerMapper 2017.)

SeoSiteCheckup tool analysed only the company's website loading speed for desktop devices. In order to analyse the same for mobile devices, Think with Google free analysing tool was utilized. Although the tool does not show the speed in seconds, it shows the score, both for desktop and mobiles. KOULU Group website reached score 52/100 for desktop devices and 44/100 for mobile devices. Both of these results were classified as poor. (Think with Google 2017.)

During the further analysis, the author discovered that KOULU Group is not using breadcrumb navigation neither anchor text. The company had also a misspelling in its title tag "KOULU Group - Experience the Educational Excellence". On the other hand, the company's site includes menu navigation bar and uses very descriptive and relevant URLs and page names. When considering KOULU Group's keywords, the company is using them throughout its website – i.e education, learning, Finnish education or school development framework. These keywords appear naturally within the text and often also within the URLs of the company's pages – i.e. <http://koulugroup.com/our-services-koulu/koulu-school-educational-excellence/>. As was mentioned in chapter 2.3.1, frequency of keywords within the text is not that important anymore, and thus this aspect was not analyzed.

4.3.2 Social Media

Facebook

LikeAlyzer is an online tool that can help companies analyze their Facebook presence and activities. KOULU Group had passed but at the same time failed many of LikeAlyzer checks. Some of the main recommendations that the company received can be seen in figure 17 below. In the following text, the most important checks that the company passed will be described and after that the most important checks that the company failed.



Figure 17. Main Recommendations for KOULU Group’s Facebook Page by LikeAlyzer (A screenshot from LikeAlyzer 2017)

KOULU Group has registered its username, described the company and provided link to the company’s website. The company has also liked several other pages that it should interact with. The company has over 2,000 likes and the likes growth is quite quickly increasing – about 10 percent during the last month. KOULU Group is receiving many likes, comments and shares per posts, on average some 790. Nonetheless it is important to say that there are big differences between the posts, majority of them having less than 10 likes and some of them, during which paid Facebook advertisement was used, over 6,000 likes. The company is posting a lot of images and videos, not only text, and thus it is providing a variety of content to its followers. The company is having a perfect timing for their posts, between 9am and 11am (GMT), the time when followers engage the most. The company also allows others to post to its Facebook timeline so a lot of important feedback and questions can be received. (LikeAlyzer 2017.)

On the other hand, the company is not creating enough engagement on its Facebook page. The company has very low PTAT (People Talk About This) indicator, meaning that people relatively rarely talk about the company on the page. It has also a very low engagement rate, only about 2.6 percent of followers engage with the company by liking, sharing or commenting on posts, while minimum of 7 percent is recommended. There are only about 1.48 posts a week that KOULU Group produces, which is a very low amount. KOULU Group’s posts are not raising enough curiosity as there are not many questions asked within the posts. Moreover, KOULU Group is not receiving many, if any, posts on the Facebook page from fans. Lastly, LikeAlyzer analyzed that the company is not using

any hashtags within their posts and creates too short posts. (LikeAlyzer 2017.) Nonetheless, none of these issues were discussed in the theoretical framework, and thus they will not be mentioned in the guideline.

For further comparison, it is also important to mention that KOULU Group's Facebook profile image is the company's logo and the cover image is a picture from Helsinki, Finland, as can be seen in figure 17. The company uses some of its keywords within its Facebook account bio - namely education, learning and Finnish educational expertise, but also other forms of the company's keywords. The company's posts are succinct and relevant. (Facebook 2017).

LinkedIn

LinkedIn Analytics is an internal tool, and therefore LinkedIn was analyzed only through the author's own observation. In the profile, the company provides the basic information about the company and a link to its website. The profile image that the company uses is KOULU Group's logo. The account has some 200 followers. KOULU Group is sharing own blog posts; writing about own events; and sharing articles from news, magazines or other blogs that are often discussing Finnish education. On average, KOULU Group posts about five updates (posts) a month, each receiving less than five likes and rarely any comments. Updates always include image or even a video. In the updates, the company rarely asks any direct questions from its followers. The company is using some of its keywords within the company description – namely education, learning, solutions for learning and development, educational expertise from Finland, and school development framework. (LinkedIn 2017.) The screenshot of KOULU Group's LinkedIn account can be see in figure 18 below.

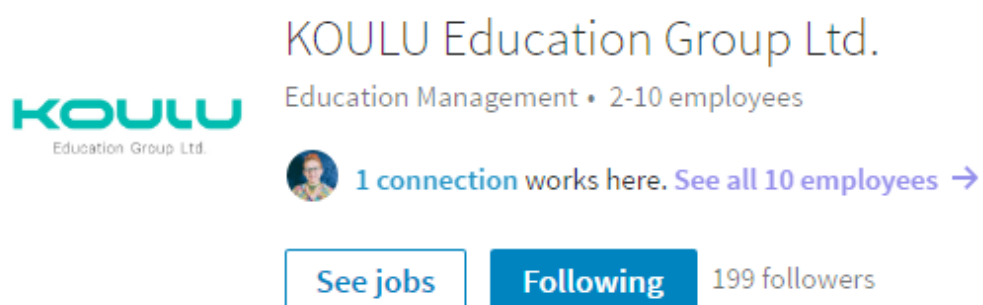


Figure 18. KOULU Group's LinkedIn account (A screenshot from LinkedIn 2017)

Twitter

Twitter Analytics is an internal tool, and therefore the company's Twitter account was analyzed through the author's own observation. The account has the company's logo as a profile image; however, with different background colours than on other social media platforms. The account's cover image is the same as on Facebook. The company provides a description of its business, the website and a hashtag #FinnishEducation. This hashtag, along with other hashtags that contain the company's keywords, is often used throughout KOULU Group's updates. KOULU Group has some 400 followers at Twitter and some 490 tweets (own tweets and retweets) with 533 likes in total. The company is tweeting/retweeting about once a week and their tweets are accompanied by images or videos. The content that the company tweet/retweet is relevant and compelling. There are rarely asked questions within the company's tweets. The company is using several keywords within its bio – namely solutions for learning and development, educational expertise and Finnish education. (Twitter 2017.) The screenshot of KOULU Group's Twitter account can be seen in figure 19 below.



Figure 19. KOULU Group's Twitter account (A screenshot from Twitter 2017)

YouTube

YouTube Analytics is also an internal tool, therefore the company's YouTube channel analysis was based on the author's own observation. KOULU Group does not seem to be very active on its YouTube channel. The company has only a brief company description on its channel and does not provide any link to its website or to its social media accounts. The profile image on the channel is the company's logo and the cover image differs from the cover image on other social media platforms. The company has only four subscribers to its channel and there are only three videos uploaded - one a year ago and two about six months ago. Two videos are about KOULU Group's events and one is a TV interview with Satu Järvinen, the company's partner and director. Each video has between 100 and 200 views, one to two likes and no comments. The channel is not having any introduction video and no playlists. The company placed some of its keywords within its

company description – namely learning, education, quality education, solutions for learning and development, educational expertise from Finland (YouTube 2017.) The screenshot of KOULU Group’s YouTube channel can be seen in figure 20 below.

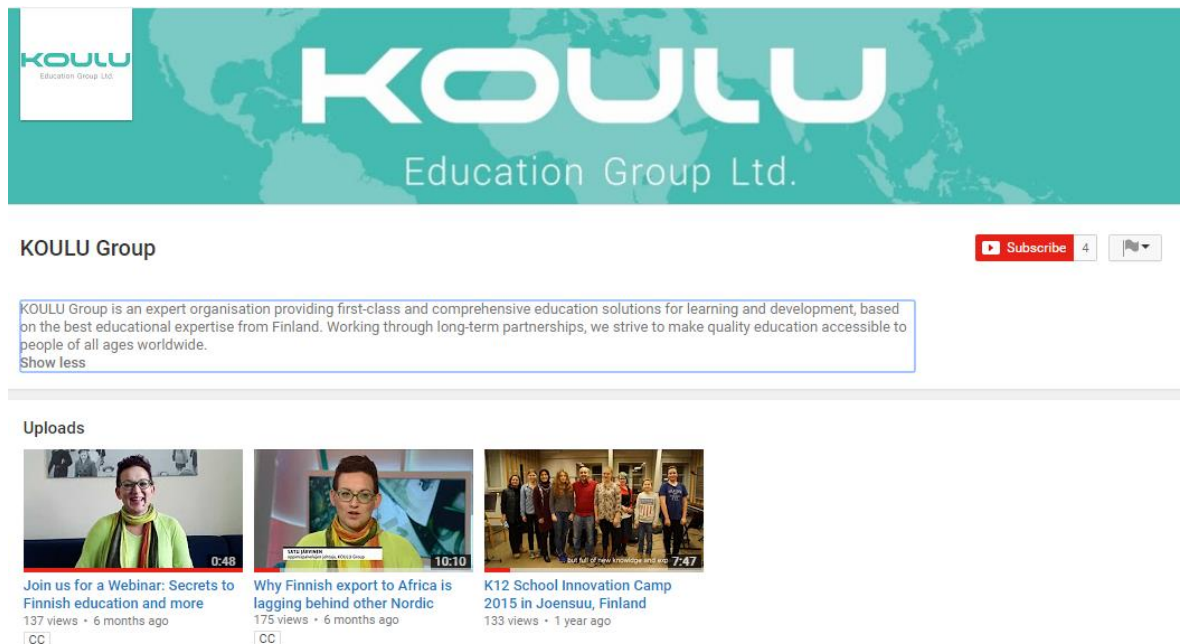


Figure 20. KOULU Group’s YouTube channel (A screenshot from YouTube 2017)

4.3.3 Website and Blog

The company’s website SEO was already analyzed via SeoSiteCheckup but there were still some areas on the website and the blog itself that needed further attention.

The company’s URL is simple and descriptive, containing the name of the company (koulugroup.com). The page background differs from KOULU Group’s social media cover images as can be seen in figure 21 below. Although SeoSiteCheckup found that the website is connected with Facebook and Twitter, there are two more social media platforms that the website is connected with – LinkedIn and YouTube. The website is designed a little bit atypically, allowing users to go through all of the parts just by scrolling down, not only by selecting and clicking different topics. This might happen to be confusing for someone, as initially happened to the author. On the other hand, in the author’s point of view, the website looks clear, providing inviting and relevant content. The company seems to keep its ideal customers in mind when designing the website and its content. Educational icons are used throughout the website and based on the author’s point of view, the various important sections are clearly and briefly introduced; such as information about the company, its services, Finnish education, news, blog, contact information or possibility to ask question via the website. The news section might be as

well presented as part of the company's blog. It is also important to say that although the company provides an opportunity to ask questions, only the one-way communication can be seen throughout the website. (KOULU Group 2017a.)

KOULU Group did not publish many blog posts so far, only seven, the first being published in September 2017. The posts are posted irregularly. The blog posts are not only about the education itself, but also educative. The education is sometimes discussed from the general point of view, sometimes incorporating the company itself. Based on the author's opinion, the posts are organized. They contain between 300 and 600 words and always include social media share buttons. The company promotes its blog posts on its social media accounts. The blog titles commonly contain just simple statements, the question has been asked only twice. The numbers have never been used withing the blog title. Whenever relevant, the company mentions sources to their information. The company does not encourage engagement by asking questions at the end of its posts and has not enabled commenting below the posts. The company places frequently its keywords within the posts - such as learning, education, digital learning or Finnish education. (KOULU Group 2017b.)

The company does not provide RSS feed option or email subscription for its website or blog readers (KOULU Group 2017a; KOULU Group 2017b).

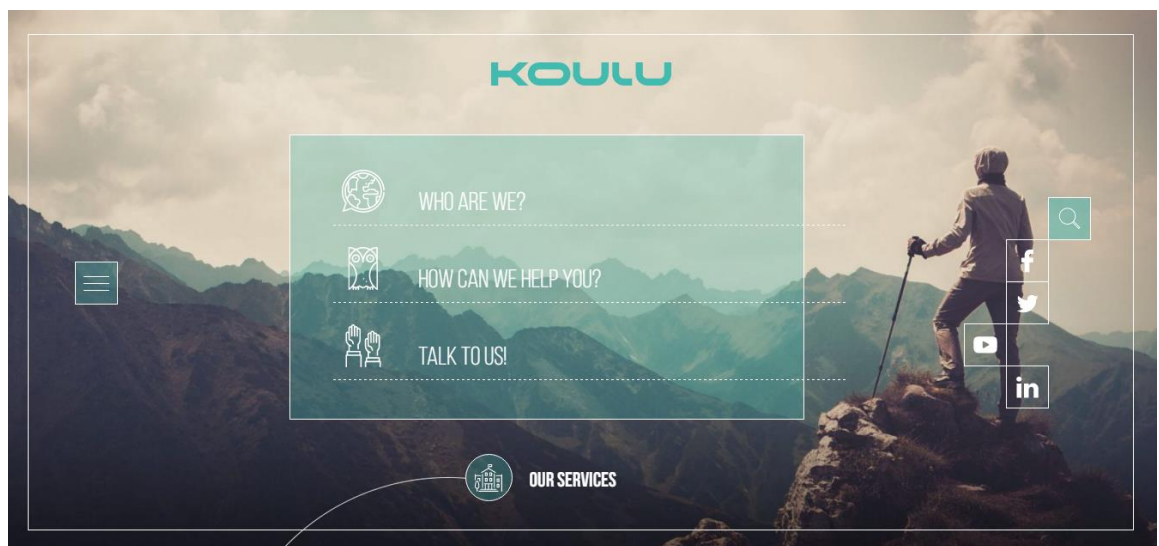


Figure 21. KOULU Group's website (A screenshot from KOULU Group 2017a)

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the product of this thesis and the project as a whole will be assessed, suggestions for the company's further steps will be provided and the author's own learning will be analysed.

5.1 Product Assessment

The guideline to attract KOULU Group's ideal customers through inbound marketing provided a basic theoretical information about inbound marketing and attracting ideal customers through inbound marketing, and the practical recommendations that KOULU Group should keep doing, start doing and control. The guideline also provided recommendations to the company on their further steps and the developed buyer personas as an attachment.

Both the author and the company were satisfied with the result of the product, finding the guideline succinct, informative and helpful regarding achieving the company's marketing goals. The company found all of the recommendations listed in the guideline achievable and the guideline organized and structured. The company's statement that the guideline helped them to see their marketing activities from a new, inbound marketing, point of view was perceived as a particularly important result.

5.2 Project Assessment

The project planning and implementation was an interesting journey, bringing a lot of surprises and challenges to the author. The plan had been changed several times based on the information received in the theory research and based on the information and requests received from the company.

The author found the first project task, researching the inbound marketing relevant books and online sources and putting the theory together, particularly challenging. The author had found only two books that were more deeply dealing with inbound marketing, one of these books was written by the inbound marketing theorists. However, both books were written very generally, focusing on providing information to complete marketing beginners and describing the approach in a way that it can be easily sold. HubSpot, the website run by the inbound marketing theorists, provided some further insight into inbound marketing but in rather uncomplex way, through blogs. In order to get further understanding of concepts that are used in inbound marketing, researching other, non-inbound marketing

sources was necessary. Organizing the theory in a way that it corresponds to the inbound marketing methodology was challenging and time consuming.

On the other hand, collaborating with the company was easy. Although the company was very busy, the company's staff always found the time for a meeting. The company was very supportive but at the same time, let the author work very independently on the project. The only obstacles were to find what the company actually provides, as this was perceived differently from person to person; and communicating to the company the importance of interviewing someone who can provide the real insight into the company's ideal customers. At the beginning, the company seemed too busy with all of their business activities to fully comprehend the importance of thorough understanding of their ideal customers' needs, challenges and preferences. However, this had changed during the thesis process and contacts to the company's intermediaries, that could provide some insight into the ideal customers, were provided.

Due to several changes in the project plan, the process of writing and organizing the thesis itself took a lot of time. The author had also some difficulties to write all of the information in a succinct and a reader-friendly way. Despite this, the process of developing the guideline was fast and a possibility of being more creative was very pleasing.

Although the process was challenging and brought many surprises, the actual outcome outweighed all the stress and confusion that the author experienced. The author had an opportunity to learn a lot, not only from an academic point of view but also from a personal and business points of view. Moreover, the company's satisfaction with the project and the project outcome was very rewarding for the author herself.

5.3 Suggestions for Company's Further Steps

As was mentioned in the theoretical framework, inbound marketing is about providing content and interactions that are relevant and helpful, primarily to a company's ideal customers (HubSpot 2017). In order to fully understand what content and interactions would be relevant and helpful, a company's ideal customers should be interviewed. In this project, the company's ideal customers were not interviewed on the company's request. Instead, the company's intermediaries were interviewed on the ideal customers' behalf.

As a further step, the author had recommended the company to interview its ideal customers directly. Interviews with the ideal customers will enable the company to gain a deeper insight into the ideal customers' needs, preferences and opinions. Based on this insight, the company will be able to provide truly relevant and helpful content and interac-

tions. Developing the current buyer personas based on these interviews might be necessary.

This project was focused only on the first inbound marketing action. In order to fully benefit from the inbound marketing approach, implementing the following three actions was recommended to the company.

5.4 Analysis of Learning

This project has benefitted the author in many ways. At the beginning of the project, the author had only limited knowledge and understanding of inbound marketing. Deep research into inbound marketing and the first inbound marketing action, and a consequent application of the first inbound marketing action methodology into the commissioning company had enabled the author to greatly develop her marketing knowledge and skills, particularly the ones related to the utilization of the Internet by companies. This knowledge and skills will certainly benefit the author during a further academic and career development.

Moreover, the combination of the author's limited time for writing the thesis and the difficulties to find and combine the inbound marketing relevant sources had forced the author to work a lot on her time-management and planning skills. Although the certain progress has been achieved due to the pressure to finish this thesis, further work on these skills is necessary.

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Zhang, S. & Cabage, N. 2017. Search Engine Optimization. Comparison of Link Building and Social Sharing. *The Journal of Computer Information Systems*. 57, 2, pp. 148-159.

Appendix 1. Company interview

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Could you tell me about your company?

- company formation
- field of operations
- staff
- mission
- target markets
- customers
- etc.

MARKETING

What are your current online marketing practices?

Could you tell me more about the company's website and blog, social media presence and practices, SEO, paid/unpaid marketing strategies?

What are your marketing objectives?

What is your budget – overall, marketing?

PROJECT

What are your expectations from this project?

Are there any limitation or requirements that should be taken into consideration when designing the guideline to attract your ideal customers through inbound marketing? (i.e. low budget)

Appendix 2. Interview with intermediaries

QUESTIONS FOR BUYER PERSONAS DEVELOPMENT

What are KOULU Group's main groups/types of ideal customers in your country?

When taking the particular group/type of ideal customers into considerations, based on the extend of your knowledge and insight, how would you answer to the following questions:

The following questions for the buyer personas development are based on the questions designed by Kolowich (6 October 2015) for the HubSpot website.

Role

- What is their job role? Their title?
- How is their job measured?
- What does their typical day look like?
- What skills are required to do their job?
- Who do they report to? Who reports to them?

Company

- In what industry or industries do they work?
- What is the size of their company/institution? (revenue, employees, students)

Goals

- What are they responsible for?
- What does it mean to be successful in their role?

Challenges

- What are their biggest challenges?

Watering Holes

- How do they learn about new information for their job?
- What publications or blogs do they read?

Personal Background

- Describe their personal demographics (gender, age, living in urban/suburban area, married, children, etc.)
- Describe their educational background. What level of education did they complete, what schools did they attend, and what did they study?
- Describe their career path. How did they end up where they are today?

Shopping preferences

- How do they prefer to interact with vendors (i.e. email, phone, in person)?

- Do they use the Internet to research vendors or products? If yes, how do they search for information?

QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST INBOUND MARKETING ACTION AT KOULU GROUP

- What do you think about the company's website? Do you think that it does or does not provide inviting, relevant and organized content for the company's ideal customers? Why?
- Do you think that the company's website is or is not designed to appeal primarily to the company's ideal customers?
- Do you think that the way the company's website is designed (that it can be scrolled down through the whole content with the mouse) is or is not easy to use? Did you have any difficulties yourself using it?
- What do you think about the company's blog? Do you think that the content the company produces is or is not relevant and helpful for the company's ideal customers? Do you or you do not find the company's blog organized?
- The company plans to continue producing blog posts and considers starting publishing email newsletter, how-to videos, educational webinars, infographics, slideshow (the brochure) and interviews. What do you think about this content? Do you think this would be or would not be well accepted by the company's ideal customers in your country? Why yes/not? Do you have any ideas on what interesting topics and interviewers might be introduced? Is there any other content you would recommend KOULU Group to generate?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

Appendix 3. Guideline to Attract KOULU Group's Ideal Customers Through Inbound Marketing

KOWU

Education Group Ltd.

ATTRACTING IDEAL CUSTOMERS THROUGH INBOUND MARKETING

HELENA MATLOUTHI

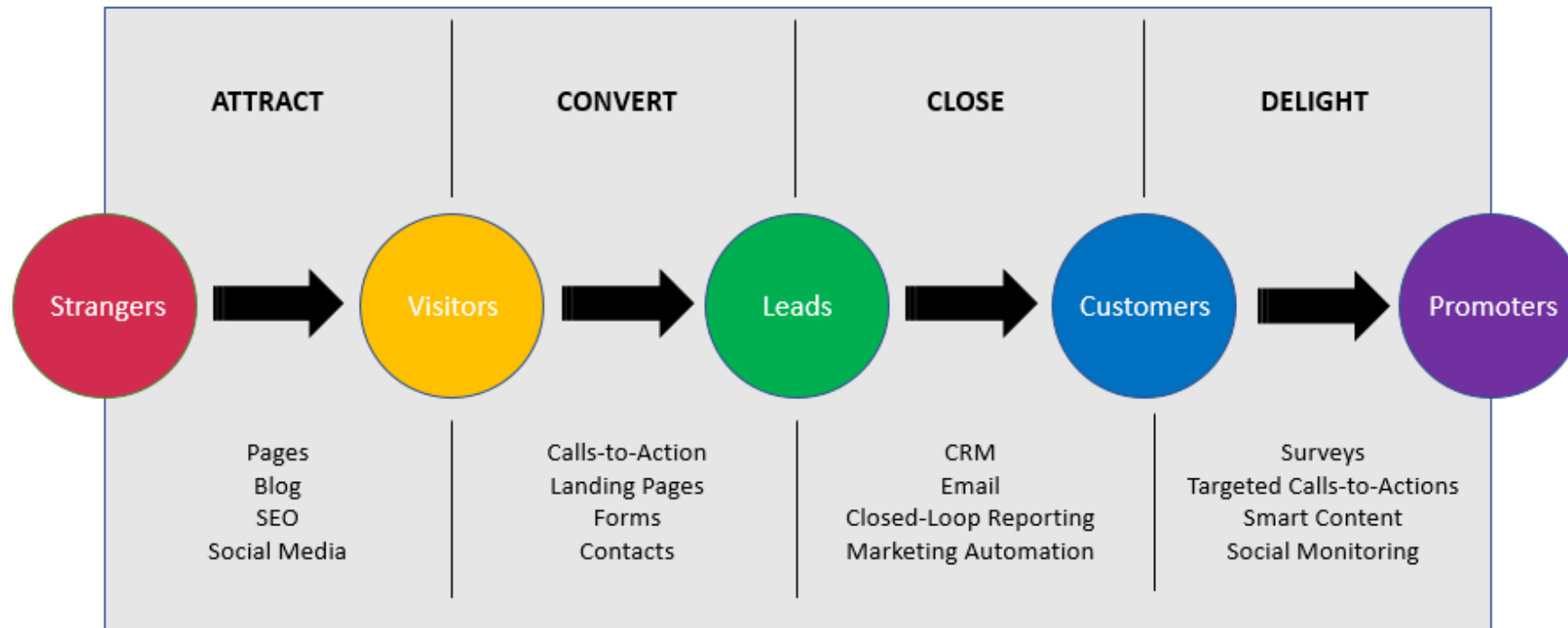
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1. INTRODUCTION INTO INBOUND MARKETING
2. ATTRACTING IDEAL CUSTOMERS THROUGH INBOUND MARKETING
3. ATTRACTING KOULU GROUP'S IDEAL CUSTOMERS THROUGH INBOUND MARKETING
 - PAGES
 - BLOG
 - SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION
 - SOCIAL MEDIA
 - CONTENT
4. FURTHER STEPS
 - ATTACHMENT: BUYER PERSONAS

1. INTRODUCTION INTO INBOUND MARKETING

Inbound marketing is a marketing method that focuses on attracting customers through content and interactions that are relevant and helpful, particularly to a company's ideal customers. With inbound marketing, companies can attract qualified prospects and build trust and credibility of their businesses. ¹

Inbound marketing consists of 4 consequent actions – attract, convert, close and delight. During each action, the action-relevant content is produced and various tools are utilized to support a successful transformation of ideal customers (i.e. from strangers into a company's website visitors). ¹

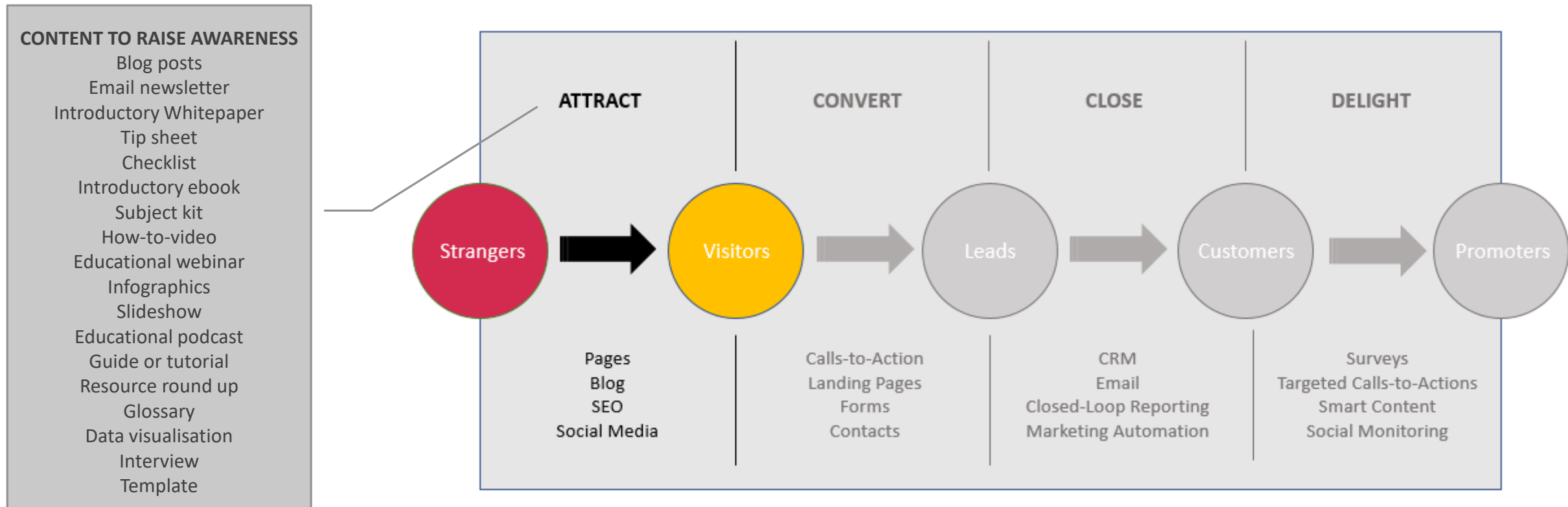


Inbound Marketing Actions (Reproduced from HubSpot 2017)

¹ HubSpot 2017. What is Inbound Marketing? URL: <https://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing>.

2. ATTRACTING IDEAL CUSTOMERS THROUGH INBOUND MARKETING

The ultimate goal of the first inbound marketing action is to get traffic to a company's website, attracting primarily ideal customers/buyer personas. In order to achieve this goal, the company has to produce high-quality content, that is suitable for the initial stage of the buying process and that is relevant and helpful for the ideal customers; and utilize the first inbound marketing action tools - pages (website), blog, SEO (search engine optimization) and social media.^{1,2}

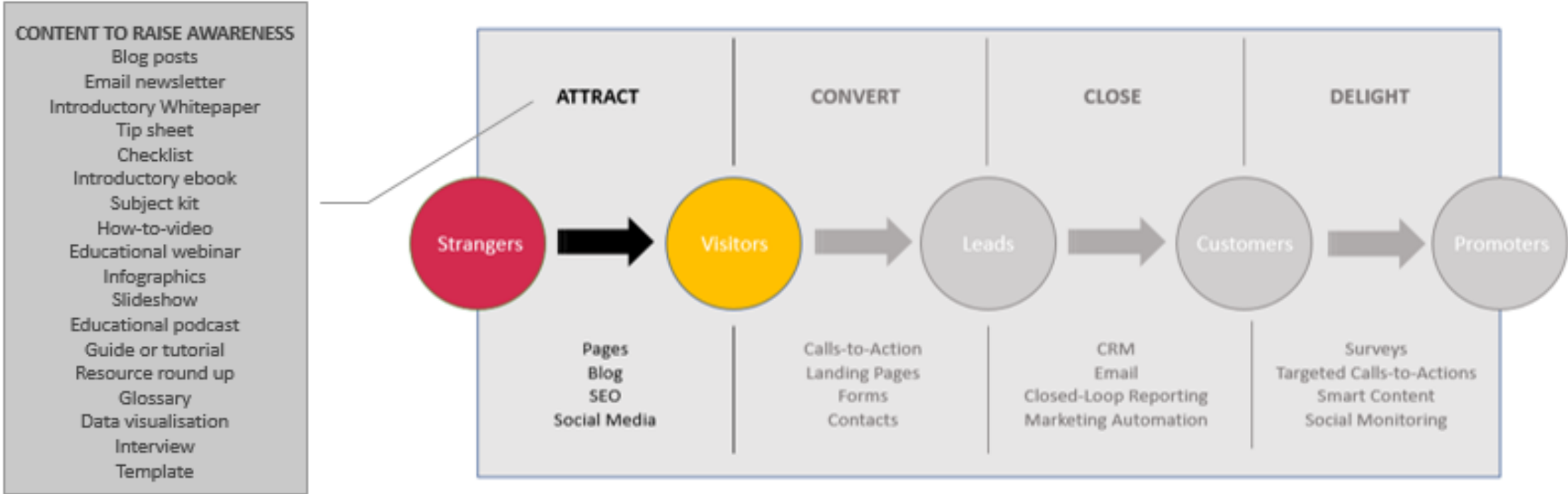


First Inbound Marketing Action Tools and Content (Reproduced from HubSpot 2017 and Stephenson 8 August 2013)

¹ HubSpot 2017. What is Inbound Marketing? URL: <https://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing>.

² Stephenson, B. 8 August 2013. Connecting Content Marketing to the Buying Process – 35 Offer Ideas. URL: <http://www.poweredbysearch.com/blog/connecting-content-marketing-to-buying-process/>.

In practice this means that the company will produce high quality content that is relevant and helpful for the ideal customers, in a form that is particularly suitable for raising the awareness – the initial stage of the buying process. The company’s website, that includes also the blog, will be a hub for the company’s ideal customers, providing all the necessary information and content, and being connected with other websites and social media platforms to increase a chance of being discovered. The company will optimize its website for search engines to be visible and easily searchable. The company will also provide its information and share its content on relevant social media sites, the place where the ideal customers frequently spend their time.^{1,2}



First Inbound Marketing Action Tools and Content (Reproduced from HubSpot 2017 and Stephenson 8 August 2013)

¹ HubSpot 2017. What is Inbound Marketing? URL: <https://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing>.
² Stephenson, B. 8 August 2013. Connecting Content Marketing to the Buying Process – 35 Offer Ideas. URL: <http://www.poweredbysearch.com/blog/connecting-content-marketing-to-buying-process/>.

3. ATTRACTING KOULU GROUP'S IDEAL CUSTOMERS THROUGH INBOUND MARKETING



WHO ARE WE?



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?



TALK TO US!



OUR SERVICES

PAGES

KEEP DOING

Keep providing inviting, relevant and organized content, further analysis with your ideal customers would be beneficial.

Keep designing your website mainly for your ideal customers, further analysis of your ideal customers' opinions and preferences would be beneficial.



START DOING

Consider using the same background image on your website as on your social media accounts (or vice versa) to support your branding.

Analyse the design of your website, the possibility to scroll through all the website, with your ideal customers. If the current design shows to be too confusing, as it was to some of your intermediaries, redesigning your website would be beneficial.

Enable your website users to subscribe to your content via RSS feed or email. It will notify them whenever new content (including the one on your blog) is published.

Collaborate more with your viewers, provide more of a two-way communication (i.e. chat box, open discussion below the blog posts, or testimonials).

CONTROL

- Monitor how many subscribers, RSS feed and email list, you have to your website

See other relevant recommendations in the SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION subchapter



BLOG



No School Until 10 A.M.?

Researchers at Oxford and Harvard recommend schools base their start times on the "biological wake-up times" of students.

Wake-Up Time	School Start Time
6:30 a.m.	8:30-9:00 a.m.
8:00 a.m.	10:00-10:30 a.m.
9:00 a.m.	11:00-11:30 a.m.



MAR 28 | 13:45

SCHOOL START TIME: SHOULD SCHOOL STARTS LATER OR SHOULD IT STAY THE SAME?



FEB 27 | 14:01

DECREASING SEDENTARY TIME IN SCHOOL DAYS IMPROVES LEARNING RESULTS



FEB 08 | 9:36

WHAT THE FUTURE SCHOOLS ARE GOING TO LOOK LIKE?

KEEP DOING

Keep your blog set as a part of your website to build authority for your company, not for an external platform provider.

Keep your blog organized and designed to appeal to your ideal customers. Further analysis with your ideal customers would be beneficial.

Keep producing industry relevant quality content on your blog.

Keep promoting your blog on your social media accounts.

Keep including social-plugins below your blog posts for easy sharing.

Keep placing your keywords within your blog posts to support your SEO.

Whenever relevant, include links/sources in the posts to add credibility to your content.

Keep including images in your blog posts to make the posts more catchy.

START DOING

Enable commenting on your blog to provide a very important two-way communication. It will enable you to receive a valuable feedback and answer your readers' questions.

Start publishing your posts more regularly, although blogging once a week is recommended, blogging twice a month could be a good start.

Ask questions at the end of each post to stimulate engagement.

Accompany your blog posts not only with images but also with other type of content (i.e. video or audio) to satisfy readers' different preferences.

START DOING

When being established, ask other, more popular bloggers to host your blog.

Subscribe to other relevant industry blogs and contribute to meaningful conversations in their comment section. It will help your company to get discovered and to be considered an expert in the industry.

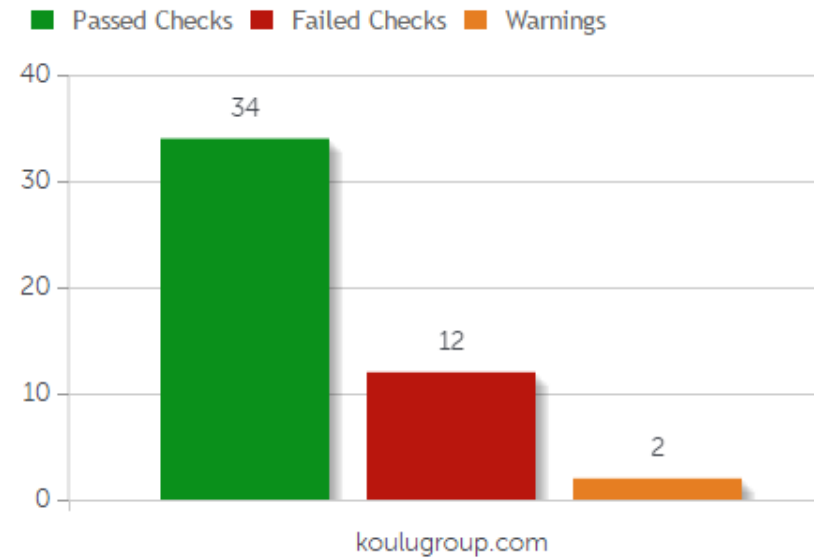
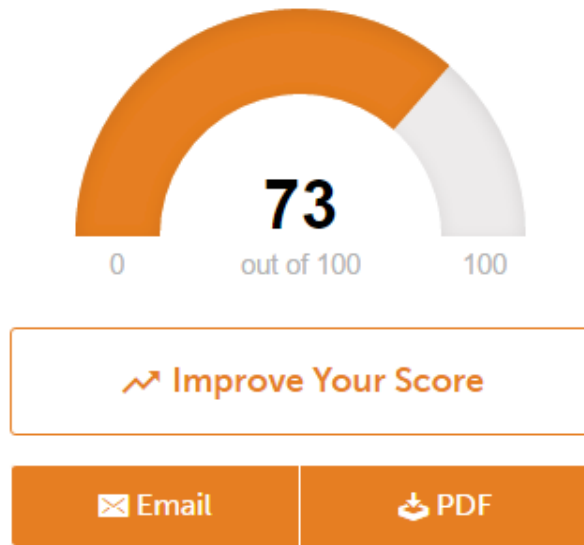
Following content ideas are recommended to be published by companies on their blog: how-to articles, analysis of particular industry trend or challenge, statement about upcoming event, feedback on article relevant to the industry, interview with clients or other person in the industry or content written on your blog by invited guests or guest bloggers (individuals who have something relevant to say).

CONTROL

- Analyse when your readers are the most active and publish your posts at that day and time
- Analyse what content was popular and produce more, similar, blog posts

SeoSiteCheckup Score:

http://koulugroup.com



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

KEEP DOING

Keep your website organized with menu navigation bar.

Keep providing relevant and up-to date content (see further advises on content in the CONTENT subchapter) in which keywords and its synonyms are placed naturally.

Keep your website compatible with mobiles to provide a positive experience to mobile users.

Keep your website optimized with sitemaps that provides an overview of your website's structure.

Keep enabling your visitors to share the website content on social media with social media share buttons.

Keep optimizing your pages so they don't contain any broken links – 404 error/Page Not Found.

Keep optimizing meta titles and meta descriptions with recommended length (50-60 and 160 characters, respectively) and with the right keywords.

Keep generating relevant and descriptive URLs and page names that, if possible, include keywords.

START DOING

Improve your site loading speed, for both desktop and mobile devices, to less than 5 seconds. The loading speed is important not only for search engine ranking but also for a positive user experience.

Optimize your website with major website browsers. Concretely SVG images on your website were problematic.

Optimize your website with alt attributes that will describe images on your website. The description should be succinct and descriptive, 4-6 words are recommended, and whenever possible including keywords.

Optimize your website with breadcrumb navigation to enable your visitors easily and quickly return to the previous sections of the website, and to provide a structure of your website for search engines. The suggestion of breadcrumb navigation can be seen in the image below.



START DOING

Connect your pages with anchor text. Anchor text should be descriptive and relevant, and including keywords whenever possible.

Extend the length of your content. Recommended length for general body of the text on your pages is at least 300 words, for articles/whitepapers/case studies at least 1000 words and for blogs between 1,500 to 2,500 words.

Clarify the structure of your pages with headings, include keywords whenever possible.

Make your URLs SEO friendly, do not use underscores (as can be seen in the image below) that can't be read by search engines. Use hyphens or dashes instead.

 koulugroup.com/news_koulu/

Get more backlinks to your website, especially from authoritative and popular domains.

Correct your spelling mistake in your title tag. See the image below.

 **KOULU Group - Experience the Education Excelece**

koulugroup.com/ ▼

Koulu school of educational excellence ... KOULU Diploma Programme in ECE started in Islamabad ..

KOULU Group starting teacher training in Pakistan.

CONTROL

- The volume of traffic coming into the site
- Where are users coming from (from which website)
- What are users doing on the site
- What keywords or content brings them in
- What pages are driving/expelling conversions

Based on the results it is important to adjust.

There are various free (or paid) tools that can be utilized to control the website's SEO performance such as SeoSiteCheckup, PowerMapper or Think with Google.

Search engine algorithm is changing constantly therefore it is important that you monitor and adjust to the current development.



facebook



SOCIAL MEDIA

KEEP DOING

Stay present on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn as is recommended. However, finding out from your ideal customers which social media platforms matter the most to them would be highly beneficial in order to determine the importance of further activities.

On your social media accounts, keep providing as many information about the company as possible, including the link to your website, contact information and keywords.

The screenshot shows the 'About' page of a LinkedIn profile for KOUULU Group. The page is divided into two main sections: 'CONTACT DETAILS' and 'STORY'. The 'CONTACT DETAILS' section includes a phone number (040 5088577), a Twitter handle (@koulugroup), an email address (info@koulugroup.com), and a website URL (http://www.koulugroup.com/). There is a 'Send Message' button next to the Twitter handle. The 'STORY' section is titled '1. Our Concept' and lists three bullet points: 'Based on the world-renowned Finnish schooling system', 'Adapted to the local conditions and requirements', and 'Our offering is always adapted based on the agreement with the local business partner'. The third bullet point is followed by 'The content of our education services always fully utilises all latest concept innovations that we develop in our Training and Development Services...' and a 'See more' link. At the bottom, there is a 'MORE INFO' section with an 'About' icon and a brief description of KOUULU Group as an expert organization providing top-of-the-line solutions for learning and development based on Finnish methods.

About [Suggest Edits](#)

CONTACT DETAILS

Call 040 5088577

@koulugroup [Send Message](#)

info@koulugroup.com

http://www.koulugroup.com/

MORE INFO

1. Our Concept

- Based on the world-renowned Finnish schooling system
- Adapted to the local conditions and requirements
- Our offering is always adapted based on the agreement with the local business partner
- The content of our education services always fully utilises all latest concept innovations that we develop in our Training and Development Services... [See more](#)

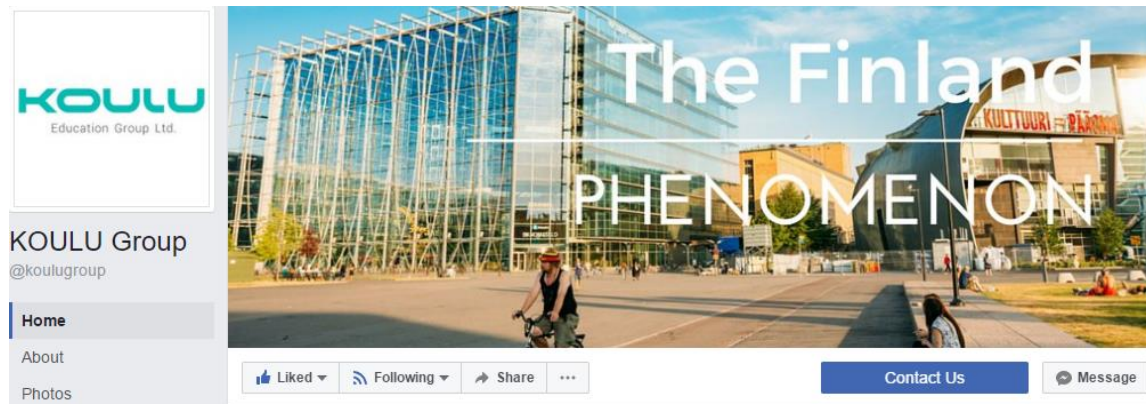
About

KOUULU Group is an expert organisation providing top-of-the-line solutions for learning and development based on Finnish

START DOING

Use the same profile image, your logo, throughout all of your social media accounts to support your branding.

Consider also using the same cover image throughout all of your social media accounts. The image that is relevant and representing what the company does is particularly recommended (i.e. children playing in a classroom instead of the picture of Sanomatalo as shown below).



Engage with your audience - be active, reply to questions and contribute to discussions.

CONTROL

- Social media return on investments
- Content consumption
- Content liking, sharing, commenting
- Other specific metrics based on the company's current goals or intentions

Remember, that a number of your followers is not as important as the followers' engagement.

There are various free (or paid) online analysing tools, like Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, LikeAlyzer, Twitter Analytics or YouTube Analytics, that can help you to monitor your results.

Adjust your social media practices based on your results (i.e. if some type of a content/topic proved to be popular, produce more of the similar content).

Facebook

KEEP DOING

Keep generating relevant, succinct and visual content, content that contains images or videos. This is the content that captures the ideal customers' attention the best. Facebook Live Videos is a content area that might be worth of testing.

Keep timing a posting of your content. 9am to 11am (GMT) is the time that proved to be the most successful at your company for getting the engagement.

START DOING

Increase frequency of your posting. For small companies, posting at least once a day is recommended.

Increase your Facebook engagement with posting more emotional content (i.e. your customer smiling) and with asking questions/opinions in your posts. Currently only about 2.6% of your followers are engaging, minimum of 7% is recommended.

Post your YouTube content on Facebook.

LinkedIn

KEEP DOING

In LinkedIn, quality is valued over quantity thus, keep sharing only high-quality content.

Keep sharing relevant user-generated content.

START DOING

If not doing yet, join relevant LinkedIn groups and participate in the discussions in a credible and engaging manner.

Whenever possible, ask questions in your posts to increase the engagement.

Twitter

KEEP DOING

Keep generating relevant and compelling content on your Twitter account.

Keep accompanying your tweets with images or videos, and with relevant keywords and hashtags.

Keep retweeting other great and relevant content.

START DOING

Try to tweet/retweet more frequently, 1-5 times a day is a general recommendation.

Ask frequently questions within your tweets to increase the engagement. Also, for the same reason, consider running polls (i.e. Which topics would you like to read more about: pre-primary education in Finland/primary education in Finland/secondary education in Finland/other).

If not doing yet, start monitoring at what time and day people engage the most and adjust tweeting accordingly.

It would be interesting to tweet some live coverage from KOULU Group's event (or other industry's important event that the company visits) that provides insight to the audience in real time.

YouTube

KEEP DOING

Keep providing description of your company on your channel, more information could be provided.

START DOING

Generate more videos, 1-2 videos per month would be a good start. Videos should be succinct and if possible, containing compilation of different content pieces rather than one long shot (to hold viewers attention).

Create an introductory trailer to your channel that will introduce what do you do and why should people subscribe.

Connect your YouTube channel with other social media accounts and the website, if possible, include relevant call-to-action as can be seen in the suggestion below.



Create topic specific playlists and sort your videos accordingly (i.e. vlogs, how-to, ..).

Create interesting thumbnails to your videos to grasp people's attention.

Each video should contain relevant tags and keywords, and call-to-action (subscribe, check our website, etc.).

Following video types are usually particularly successful: vlogs, interviews with other people in the industry, tutorials/how-to's videos, customer stories, videos about the company/staff/services (videos that make the company more real), viral videos. However, only some of these video types are relevant for the initial action – attracting ideal customers. Find further information in the following subchapter.



CONTENT

Create a high-quality content that is relevant and helpful particularly to your ideal customers/buyer personas. Based on the interviews with your intermediaries and consequent development of your buyer personas, it became clear that your customers are looking especially for the content that will help them to improve (or sustain) their current school ranking and reputation, or educate them on how to improve in their teaching. Thus, the main mission of the content that you will create is to educate your ideal customers – particularly in relevance to the Finnish education system that they value highly.

It will be important to provide an insight to your ideal customers on how the Finnish education system works, how is the teaching, management, organization done in Finland. There is no necessity to reveal all of the secrets of the education in Finland, more important is to give your ideal customers a taste of what can be received from the company later on.

Due to KOULU Group's limitations, as agreed, only specific content for raising the ideal customers' awareness was selected. The ideas for such content can be seen listed in the following table. This table is not definite, feel free to add or adjust ideas.

Blog posts:	about the Finnish education system, about the upcoming/past company's event, that analyse the trend in education that just emerged, that discuss particular challenge in education (from owner's, principal's or teacher's point of view), that help owners/principals/teachers to achieve their goals, that are based on interview (see Interviews)
Email newsletter:	that will be providing monthly (can be modified based on the ideal customers' preferences) news from the industry and the company itself
How-to-videos:	that will help owners/principals/teachers overcome their challenges and help them to achieve their goals (i.e. How to enhance students learning, How to receive best possible results from school staff, etc.)
Educational webinar:	that will educate ideal customers about the specific offer before the service is provided (especially important in Pakistan, other markets might not be interested)
Infographics:	that will list statistics and facts about education in Finland, that will be comparing different education systems/approaches (i.e. Finland vs. Turkey), that will simply show the process of achieving the ideal customers' goal or of overcoming their challenge
Slideshow:	that will be basically your brochure – introducing KOULU Group and its services in general, other slideshows might be focused on introducing your services and specific upcoming events in detail (in Pakistan, slideshow might be in the form of PowerPoint if easier accessible)
Interviews:	with important people in the education industry, with the company's staff, with your existing customers

In order to plan and produce the content on a regular basis, it is important that you design your content calendar that will indicate what content, when and where will be published. When planning the content, keep in mind the differences in your geographical target markets. Pakistani market demands more of a visual and personal (getting to know the company's staff better) content whereas the Turkish market the content that can be easily translated or that does not require high knowledge of English language.

There are several powerful headlines that are recommended to be used by companies in their content (see the list below). Creating some of them frequently will help you to capture your ideal customers' attention.

- how-to headlines: *i.e. How to increase kids creativity*
- headlines that contain numbers: *i.e. 7 tips on improving quality of education*
- headlines that mention ideal customer: *i.e. Refuse to be a boring teacher: 3 ways to make learning fun*
- headlines that talk about mistakes and errors: *i.e. 10 biggest mistakes that principals make and how to avoid them*
- headlines that contain questions: *i.e. What can be done to enhance school's reputation?*

There are final three recommendations for the content production and sharing at your company. First, let everyone in your company to participate in the content creation. Everyone from your company can easily generate content that would be relevant and interesting for the ideal customers, providing unique point of view. Secondly, it is important to ask question at the end of your content to prompt a discussion and encourage audience to engage. Third, you do not need to generate all of the content yourself. Sharing relevant and interesting content – for instance from education journals or a content from mainstream media that discuss education in general or education in Finland, will help you to become a go-to source for your ideal customers.

The last step, when the content is published, is to monitor, report and adjust. It is important to monitor which of your content was successful, what step did the ideal customer took after, how long did the ideal customer stayed on the website, how long did the ideal customer watched the video, etc. Many of the activities will depend on the place where the content was published, whether it was the website or social media. Based on the results, it is important that the company's content strategy is adjusted to generate the best possible results.

4. FURTHER STEPS

When your company has a more detailed plan for the first inbound marketing action implementation (when will the process start, how quickly the activities will be implemented), it will be important to set specific goals for this action. The goal should indicate what and when will be achieved, and against that, the results should be frequently monitored. Volume of visitors coming to your website will be certainly one of the most important metrics that will be monitored.

Further analysis of the company's ideal customers and consequent development of the buyer personas would be highly beneficial. In the best possible case, the interviews should be conducted with the potential or existing customers themselves as they are the ones that can provide the most insight into the ideal customers situation, problems and preferences.

Based on the ideal customers/buyer personas interests, needs and preferences, it might be beneficial to produce other content than just blog posts, email newsletters, how-to videos, educational webinars, infographics, slideshows and interviews.

Finally, implementing other inbound marketing actions – convert, close and delight; would be highly beneficial in order to fully benefit from inbound marketing.

ATTACHMENT: BUYER PERSONAS

ROLE

- Primary or secondary school owner, school for middle class families
- Job measured mainly by school reputation and ranking
- Has fixed working hours (7:00-16:00) with some extra hours whenever needed
- His job requires good management, communication and problem solving skills, and business model knowledge
- Reports to different school boards – i.e. state's board of education, central board of education
- Gets reported from school principal

ORGANIZATION

- Working in the education industry
- His school has between 800 and 2000 students and between 50 and 150 employees

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Between 40-60 years old
- Living in an urban area
- Is married and has 3 children
- Has a master's degree in educational leadership
- He was working in a school management position before

ARJUN India



GOALS

- Being a successful school owner - academic success of students, school run smoothly
- School having a very good reputation and ranking

CHALLENGES

- Finding ways on how to improve the school (education, management,...)
- Having a good reputation and ranking

SHOPPING PREFERENCES

- Prefers to be contacted by email first, then by call. If dealing with something really interesting, willing to meet in person
- Researching products and vendors online, usually through Google

OTHER

- Learns about new information through the Internet and other massmedia, and various associations
- Is part of various education associations
- Present in LinkedIn and Facebook

ROLE

- Primary or secondary school principal/rector/dean, school for middle class families
- Job measured mainly by the school reputation and ranking, and leadership success
- Has fixed working hours 7:00-16:00
- His job requires good management, communication and problem solving skills
- Reports to the school owner and different school boards – i.e. state's board of education, central board of education
- Gets reported from teachers and staff that is part of various school branches

ORGANIZATION

- Working in the education industry
- The school he works at has between 800 and 2000 students and between 50 and 150 employees

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Between 40 and 60 years old
- Living in an urban area
- Is married and has 3 children
- Has a master's degree in educational administration or education itself
- He was working as a teacher or in other, lower, school management position prior to this job

RAHUL
India



GOALS

- Being a successful school principal - academic success of students, school run smoothly
- School owner being satisfied with the performed work
- School having a good reputation

CHALLENGES

- Handling students and the school staff, fulfilling school owner's expectations (ranking, reputation,...)
- Prioritizing, time-management

SHOPPING PREFERENCES

- Prefers to be contacted by email first, then by call. If dealing with something really interesting, willing to meet in person
- Researching products and vendors online, usually through Google

OTHER

- Learns about new information through the Internet and other massmedia, and various associations
- Is part of various education associations
- Present in LinkedIn and Facebook

ROLE

- Primary or secondary school owner, school for middle class families
- Job measured mainly by school ranking and reputation
- Has fixed working hours (5:30-18:00) with some extra hours whenever needed
- His job requires good management, communication and problem solving skills, and business model knowledge
- Does not report almost to anyone; irregularly school boards (very flexible)
- Gets reported from school principal

ORGANIZATION

- Working in the education industry
- His school has some 800 students and about 60 employees

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Between 30 and 60 years old
- Living in an urban area
- Is married and has 2 children
- Has a bachelor's degree in educational field
- Became school owner soon after the graduation

BURAK
Turkey



GOALS

- Being the first school in the city (ranking)
- School having outstanding reputation (results of students, satisfaction of students and parents)

CHALLENGES

- Working efficiently; prioritizing
- Becoming the best school in the city (ranking)
- Having a good reputation

SHOPPING PREFERENCES

- Prefers to be contacted by phone first, then by email and in person (if interested)
- Researching products and vendors online, usually through Google

OTHER

- Learns about new information through the Internet and other massmedia, and various associations
- Is part of private school association
- Present in Facebook

ROLE

- School owner (from kindergarten up to high school level), school for high class families
- Job measured mainly by school reputation and ranking
- Has flexible working hours (more than 8 hours a day) – depending on the meetings
- Her job requires good leadership, PR, management, finance and social skills and knowledge of education
- Reports to different school boards
- Gets reported from school principal, directors, CEO, ...

ORGANIZATION

- Working in the education industry
- Her school has between 1 000 to 100 000 students and some 60 to 600 employees

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Between 35-60 years old
- Living in an urban area (Islamabad, Lahore or Karachi)
- Is married and has 3 kids
- Has a bachelor's degree in education
- Had been working as a teacher or in a school management position before

MARIYAM Pakistan



GOALS

- Running the school well
- School having a top ranking and reputation (dependent on students' national exam and academic results, applications and admissions to the school, satisfaction of students and parents, quality of education, involvement in international programs)

CHALLENGES

- Financial sustainability,
- Reaching/sustaining top ranking and reputation

SHOPPING PREFERENCES

- Prefers to be contacted by email first, then by call, then in person
- Researches products and vendors online, usually through Google

OTHER

- Learns about new information through the Internet and other massmedia, conferences, specialized books/articles
- Is part of woman leaders and education associations
- Present at Facebook and YouTube

ROLE

- Kindergarten or primary school teacher, school for high class families
- Job measured by children and parents satisfaction, and later students' success
- Has fixed working hours (8:30-15:00)
- Her job requires good listening, social, classroom management and public speaking skills and empathy
- Reports to early years or primary school coordinators
- Gets reported from assistant teachers

ORGANIZATION

- Working in the education industry
- The school she works at has between 1 000 to 100 000 students and between 60 and 600 employees

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

- Between 30-50 years old
- Living in an urban area (Islamabad, Lahore or Karachi)
- Is married and has 3 kids
- Has completed high school
- She has no prior work experience, she was on a maternity leave before she started teaching

SAANVI
Pakistan



GOALS

- Running well classes – students success and satisfaction
- Parents being satisfied and engaged in children development

CHALLENGES

- Classroom management (many discipline issues)
- Students, parents and school coordinators satisfied
- Not easy access to the information about the education development

SHOPPING PREFERENCES

- Prefers to be contacted by email first, then by call or in person; most of the times informed by a school management about offered development programmes
- Researching products and vendors online, usually through Google

OTHER

- Learns about new information through the Internet (Google) and other massmedia
- Present in Facebook and YouTube