

Create a Compelling Content Plan & Editorial Calendar

Workbook

**LANDSCAPE
LEADERSHIP**

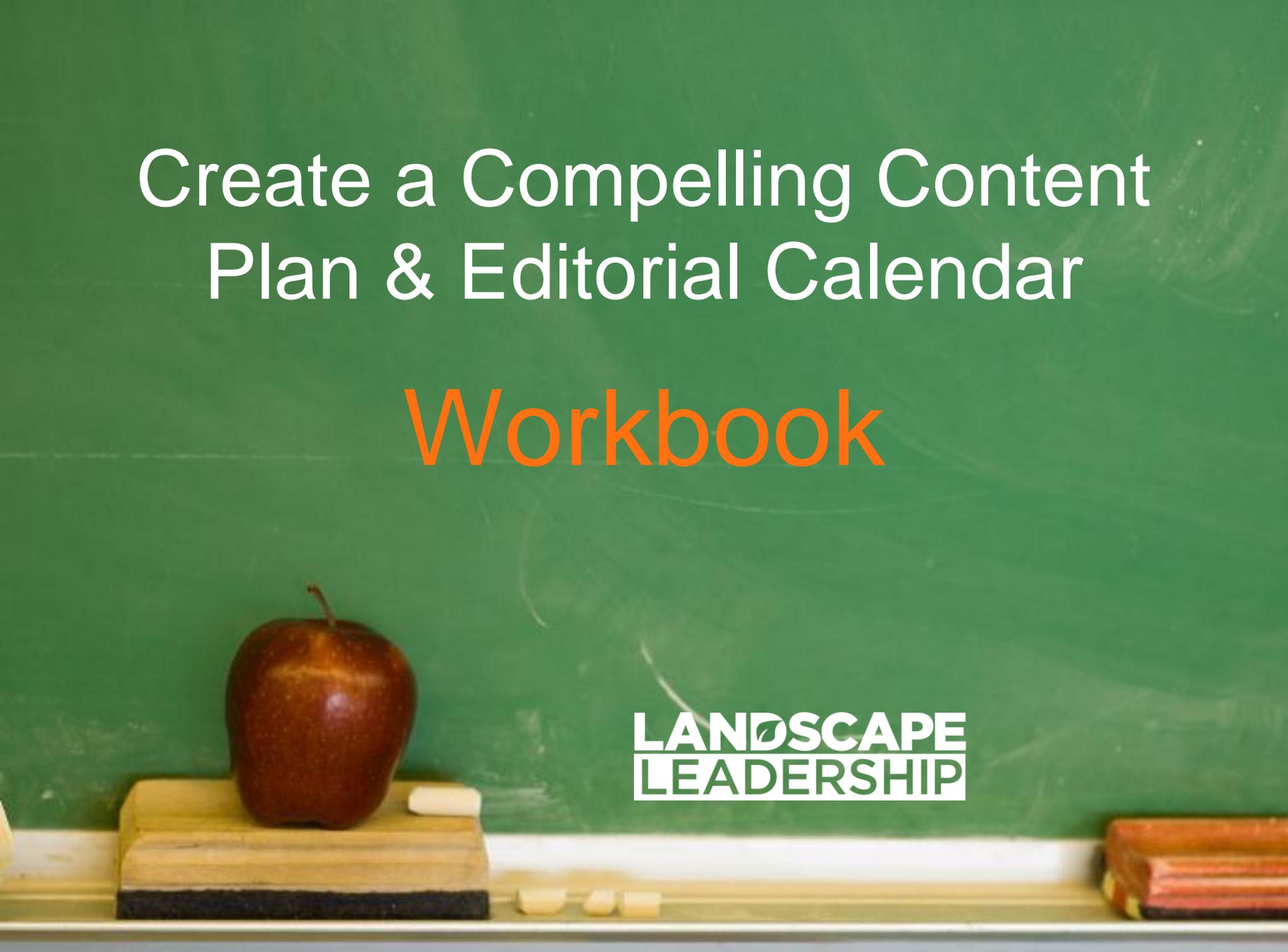


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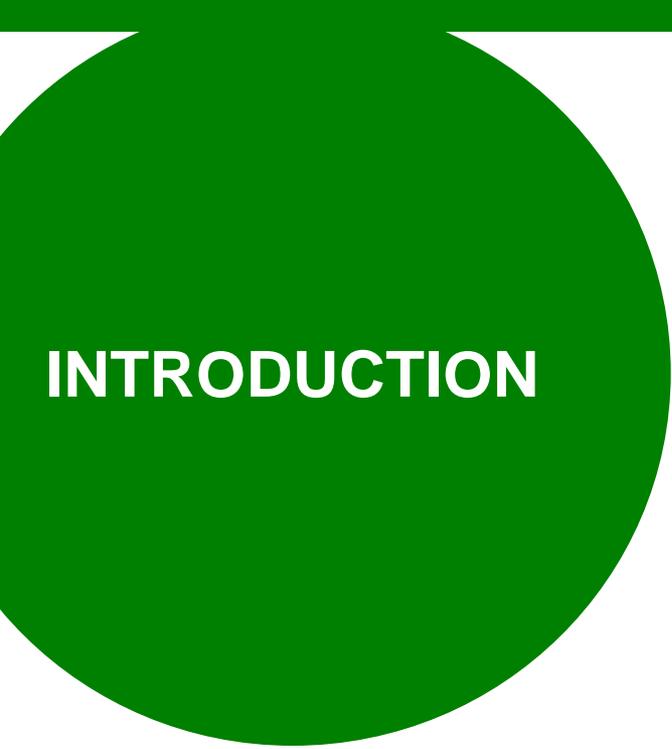
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INTRODUCTION

(Meaningful) Content is King

Creating meaningful content that resonates with your audience of customers and prospects is at the heart of every successful inbound marketing program.

People find your business through the content you create and publish. Original content is what generates more traffic to your company website and, ultimately, generates qualified leads and new customers.

You need to think like a publisher

Your business is fighting for the attention of your customers and prospects. You are also going head to head with your competitors fighting for the attention of the search engines like Google and Bing.

Creating original and compelling content is how you win this battle for attention.



Creating meaningful content is a challenge

Creating original content is time-consuming. Many companies also struggle with what to write about and how to “package” their expertise into content that will resonate with their audiences.

Staying organized is another challenge. It can be difficult to track your ideas for content and manage a cohesive content marketing plan.

This workbook will help you overcome these common challenges.

Your business can reap the rewards of content marketing

What if you could create original and compelling content each and every week?

Studies have shown that blogging results in a 55% increase in website visitors (source: HubSpot 2010 study). Companies that blog also have 97% more inbound links than those that don't (source: HubSpot, State of Inbound Marketing Lead Generation Report, 2010)

1

Increase traffic to your website

2

Increase the number of inbound links to your website

3

Increase the number of leads generated from your website

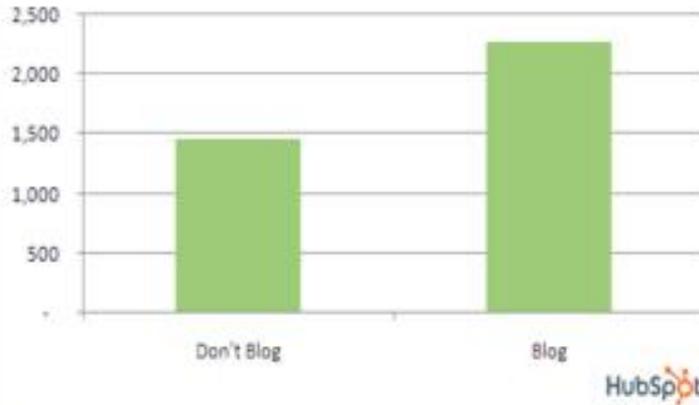
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Increase your search engine rankings

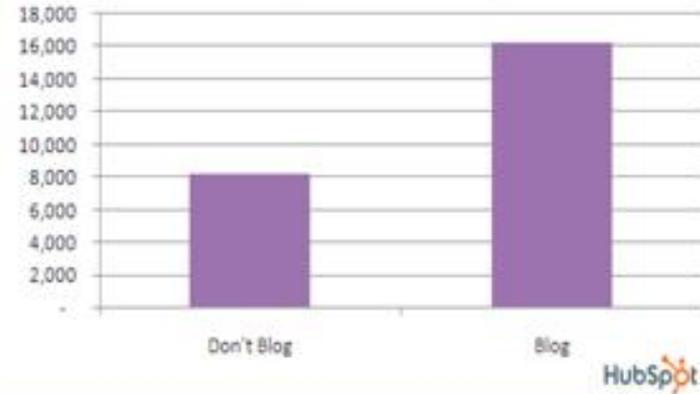
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Increase your number of followers on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks

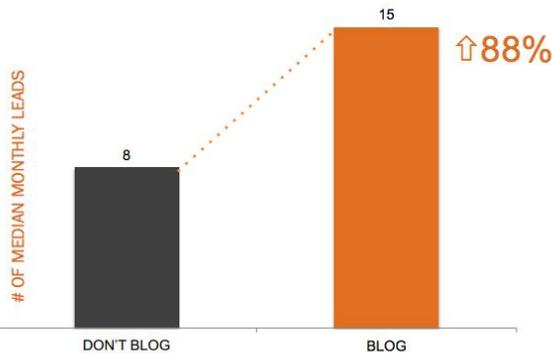
55% More Website Visitors for Companies That Blog



97% More Inbound Links for Companies That Blog

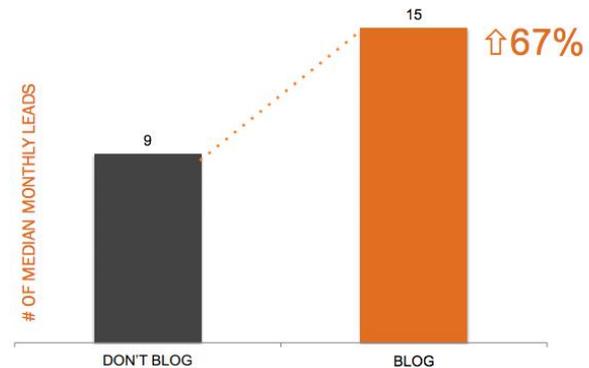


B2C companies that blog generate **88% more leads** per month than those who do not.



SOURCE: HUBSPOT, STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING LEAD GENERATION REPORT, 2010

B2B companies that blog generate **67% more leads** per month than those who do not.



SOURCE: HUBSPOT, STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING LEAD GENERATION REPORT, 2010

Get serious...and get organized!

Hopefully you are already convinced that your business needs to get serious about content marketing.

The next step is to get organized. This workbook will show you how. You will learn:

- Why people go online and what this means to your content creation process
- About the different types of content and which are ideal for your business
- How content can differentiate you from your competitors
- How to come up with ideas for fresh content
- How to get others to create content for your business
- How to create an editorial calendar that will guide your content marketing strategy





CREATING A CONTENT PLAN

Why people go online

Key Point:

Notice what is *not* on this list: Advertising, marketing and self promotion. People don't go online to be marketed to. They are looking for helpful, useful and interesting information.

Keep this basic principle in mind when you're considering what type of content to create and publish.

Tip:

People absolutely love what we do as green industry companies! How else do you explain the popularity of HGTV and the plethora of gardening and landscape magazines? Most of what we do is so visual--so we need to show people! As a green industry business, you have so much to share. You should never run out of ideas for compelling content.

When you understand why people go online, then you can craft a content marketing strategy around this. People go online primarily for three reasons:

1. To find a specific piece of information (a chili recipe, how to plant tulip bulbs)
2. To find information related to a favorite subject (gardening, politics, sports)
3. Entertainment (music & video, gaming, social interaction like Skype & Facebook)



HGTV shoot with landscape designer Scott Cohen

Meaningful content trumps marketing

Your goal should be to use your content to build your reputation and thought-leadership.

If done properly ([using inbound marketing strategies](#)) your content will generate qualified leads, move these prospects through a well-defined sales funnel and give your sales team an opportunity to close a sale *when your prospect is ready to buy.*

Becoming a thought-leader requires consistent creation of meaningful content. What do we consider meaningful content?

- It is helpful and useful to your followers
- It is relevant, timely and in demand
- It is engaging--able to spark conversation and deep dialogue
- It is inspiring
- It is entertaining

Key point:

Studies consistently show that the the majority of people get online to be entertained. Your content should match this behavior. One way to do this is by showing the lighter-side of your business. These behind-the-scenes glimpses resonate with people. Especially impactful is sharing stories and images of your employees.

Promoting your company's products and services should most definitely be part of your overall inbound marketing strategy. You just don't want it to be the focus.



This photo-shopped image featuring Neave Group turf care specialist, Mario Colantuano, garnered 10x more interaction than any other status update on [Neave Group's Facebook Page](#).

What is Inbound Marketing...and what is “content” exactly?

Examples of inbound marketing content:

- Email newsletters
- Blog posts
- Website copy
- News releases
- E-books and whitepapers
- Infographics
- Status updates on Facebook & Twitter
- Video
- Photos
- Podcasts
- Webinars

Key point:

The content that drives the engine of an effective inbound marketing program is focused on building thought-leadership, being relevant and useful, and generating qualified leads for a business. This is in stark contrast to cold-calling, direct mail, radio advertisements, sales fliers and other forms of traditional advertising.

Tip:

Don't abandon traditional marketing strategies if they have proven successful for your business. This isn't an “either-or” situation. Inbound marketing strategies can complement the traditional marketing you are already doing.

Consider “traditional” marketing for a moment. Much of these traditional marketing tactics were content-driven, such as:

- Public Relations (PR)
- Writing articles for magazines and newspapers
- Press releases
- Direct mail and other forms of print advertising
- Radio and television advertisements

This is “outbound” marketing, or interruption-based marketing, where companies push their marketing messages to the masses hoping to catch a small bit of attention.

Inbound marketing is based on the concept of *earning the attention* of prospects and making your company more easily found online *by producing content your customers value*.

Social media, public relations, search marketing and content marketing each play a key role in a cohesive inbound marketing strategy.

Inbound marketing is especially effective for small businesses that deal with high-dollar values, long research and buying cycles, and knowledge-based products. In these areas prospects are more likely to hire companies who demonstrate superior expertise in their industry. Because of this, inbound marketing is an ideal strategy for green industry companies.

Why content marketing is so important for your business

Original content allows you to stay top-of-mind with your customers and prospects on a regular basis. When they are in a referral position or able to make a buying decision, they are thinking about you, not your competition.

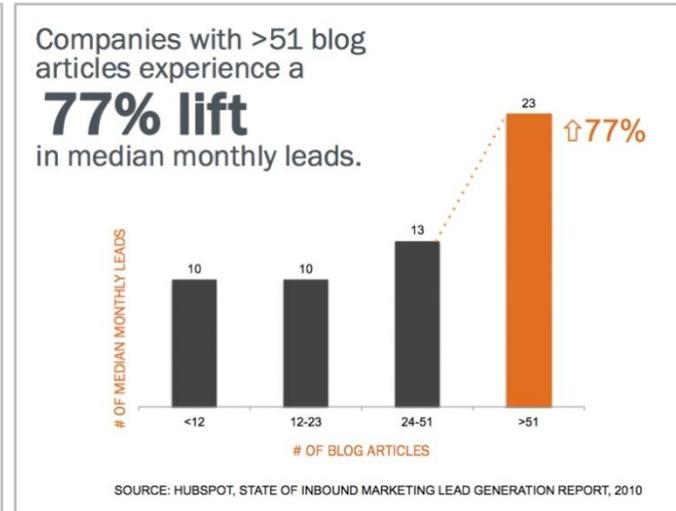
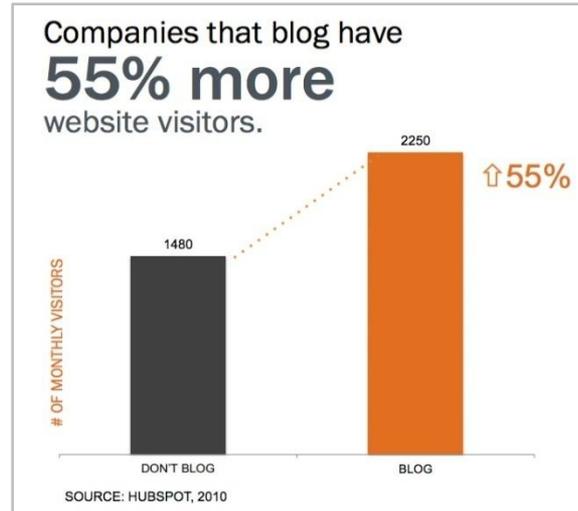
Your content contributes to your reputation as an expert. It gives you credibility. What if someone wanted to learn more about your company and you had nowhere to point them, like a website? What if you sent them to a blog or Facebook Page that hadn't been updated in three months? You would lose credibility.

Key point:

Fresh content, optimized for search engines like Google, drives more traffic to your website where you are able to generate leads. The more content you have on your site the more opportunities you have to rank in search results.

Tip:

You can also use your content to show customers and prospects “behind the curtain” of your business. You can humanize your brand. People want to do business with people they like, so create content that shines the light on the parts of your business the public doesn't often see.



Let's get to it! Ideas for creating meaningful content

Key point:

Everyone consumes information differently online. Some prefer to browse images and watch video but can't stand reading online. Others love to read blog posts but won't watch videos. Others prefer to listen to podcasts. **Your content strategy needs a mix of each type of media in order to connect with the greatest number of consumers.**

Tip:

Short-form, highly visual content like photos, infographics, charts and even short videos should play a major role in your content strategy. Recent studies show that online users prefer short-form content like this. And remember, you are in a very visual industry, so this is a perfect opportunity to show off what you do. Consider the following social networks and apps: Pinterest, Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram and Viddly.

What you can do right now:

- ✓ List the types and pieces of content you have produced in the past. Can you repurpose this into fresh content? For example, if you have written an article for a local lifestyle magazine can you turn this into a blog post?
- ✓ Identify the types of content you are currently creating and determine if this can be repurposed into other forms of content. Can you turn recent blog posts into a monthly email-newsletter, for instance?
- ✓ Sharing other people's content (OPC) should be a major part of your strategy. List blogs, magazines and other content sources that you think would be relevant to your followers.
- ✓ How can you best *visually* show people what your company does?
- ✓ Identify the ten most frequently asked questions you get from customers. Turn each of these into a blog post answering the question.
- ✓ "How to" blog posts and videos are powerful forms of content. Brainstorm ideas for "how to" posts that would be relevant to your audience. For example, "How to prune a Hydrangea", or "How to winterize your concrete fountain".

You don't have to go it alone. Get some help!

Key point:

Your customers want to do business with real people, not brands. **Let them see and hear from the unique personalities within your organization.** Let your customers and prospects see behind the curtain.

Empower your employees by letting them share their candid opinions and insights. If a billion dollar company like Zappos.com can do it so can a small business like yours. Potential employees are attracted to companies who give their people a platform to share their insight. You offer your followers greater value because you are including different points of view as well as multiple disciplines of expertise.

Tip:

When putting together an in-house inbound marketing team, set your organizational chart on fire. Position and experience within the company should not matter. Put together a team of volunteers. You want people on your team who are truly interested in helping with your inbound marketing and content marketing efforts, whether that is the CEO, mechanic or laborer.

Many companies in the green industry are beginning to embrace the idea of utilizing what is commonly referred to as an "online community manager". This could be an in-house employee or an outside specialized consultant or agency, like [Landscape Leadership](#).

Responsibilities can range from website development and search engine optimization (SEO) to content creation and social media marketing.

As time goes on this role is going to become more and more critical within your organization. It will also become more difficult to manage as technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Even more importantly, the need for real-time participation will be an absolute requirement of you. The big brands of the world have learned this already. Green industry businesses will eventually have to come to grips with the idea that business is 24/7, and not 9 to 5.

Because of this, **we advocate a team approach to managing your online presence**, especially as it relates to creating original content. One person cannot and should not be solely responsible for your inbound marketing program.

What you can do right now:

- ✓ List the various departments within your organization. Or, identify the products and services your company sells. You will want at least one team member representing each department, product or service.
- ✓ Consider all of the people within your organization at every level. Don't overlook potential contributors. Think about how you can recruit them and make them an integral part of your content creation process.
- ✓ Think about how you can get your employees involved. Can some blog on behalf of the company? Can some take pictures on a regular basis? Or shoot short videos?
- ✓ Read this article about *Building a Social Team Within Your Organization*. ([link](#))

When to post. It's time to make an editorial calendar!

Key point:

A frequently asked question is, “How much content should we create?”, and, “How often should we post an update?” If your business publishes an email-newsletter then publishing it once each month is ideal. Blogging once a week is a good start but blogging two or three times per week is even better and more effective at driving traffic to your site. If you have a Facebook Page for your business you should be updating your page with content 5 to 10 times per week. If that sounds like too often, remember, not all of your fans see each of your posts. On Twitter it is quite acceptable to post 5 to 10 times per day.

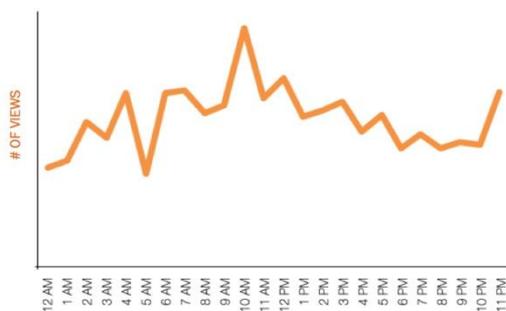
Tip:

You can use a web and mobile app like Hootsuite to post updates to multiple social networks at once. Hootsuite also allows you to schedule updates. As of June 2012, Facebook now allows you to schedule updates directly from your Facebook Page. This can be a big time-saver.

Inbound marketing and content marketing takes a serious commitment. And organizing it all takes serious commitment.

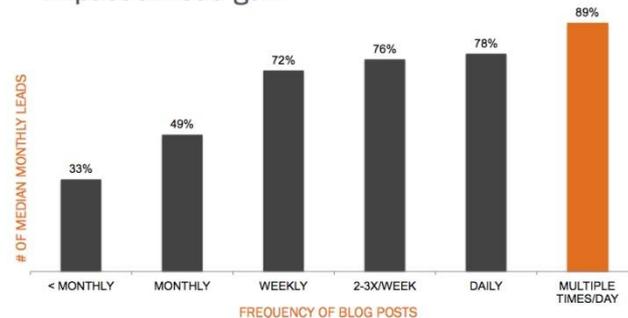
The absolute best thing you can do to set your business up for success is to develop a Content Plan and Editorial Calendar. This gives you an organized framework to work within which makes your content marketing efforts a little less daunting, especially when you have multiple employees involved. Working your plan will give you consistency in your content creation which is absolutely critical. And it will ensure that your content is timely and relevant.

Blog reading peaks around 10AM.



SOURCE: HUBSPOT, THE SCIENCE OF BLOGGING 2010

Blogging frequency has a direct & significant impact on lead-gen.



SOURCE: HUBSPOT, STATE OF INBOUND MARKETING LEAD GENERATION REPORT, 2010

When to post. It's time to make an editorial calendar!

What you can do right now:

- ✓ Create an "Editorial Calendar" in Google Calendar (or similar software) to schedule and keep track of all of your content like e-newsletters, blog posts and Facebook Page updates.
- ✓ To your Editorial Calendar, add dates of important holidays that are relevant to your business. Also add the different promotions and campaigns your business runs each year. Does your garden center run a spring special each year? Put these dates on your editorial calendar so you can create content around these promotions and holidays.
- ✓ Create a spreadsheet to organize your content (see image as an example) and to assign responsibilities. You can also use this spreadsheet to keep track of your ideas for content.

Facebook Page Content Plan	
DAILY	ASSIGN TO:
ASK FANS A QUESTION...	Carol H.
- idea: What is your favorite plant this time of year?	
- idea: What is your least favorite "landscaping" activity?	
OR, UPLOAD A PHOTO	Carol H.
- idea: Photo of Jacobsen's new container plantings	
WEEKLY	ASSIGN TO:
TUESDAY: LINK TO WEEKLY BLOG POST	John C.
- idea: How to maintain a lawn at the right height	
WEDNESDAY: UPLOAD A SET OF PHOTOS	Carol H.
- idea: Pictures from recent garden tour	
- idea: Pictures from Sullivan Residence	
THURSDAY: SHARE OTHER PEOPLE'S CONTENT (OPC)	John C.
- idea: share blog post from Garden Design magazine about vertical plants	
- idea: share Gen's YouTube video about "How to cut back ornamental grasses"	
FRIDAY: POST ABOUT WEEKEND LOCAL EVENTS	Barbara L.
- idea: share details about annual garden tour in September	
MONTHLY	ASSIGN TO:
1ST MONDAY: UPLOAD VIDEO	Carol H.
- idea: before and after video of Fitzpatrick residence	
- idea: "How to prune a Hydrangea" video	
2ND MONDAY: LINK TO NEW PINTEREST BOARD	Carol H.
- idea: "Venice Beach Garden Tour" board	
3RD WEEK: CONTEST OR SPECIAL OFFER	Carol H.
- idea: "FREE fall cleanup giveaway"	
- idea: 50% off bedding plants	

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NEXT STEPS

How Does Your Content Stack Up Against Your Competition?

Let us show you!

Apply for a complimentary *Inbound Marketing Assessment* from

**LANDSCAPE
LEADERSHIP**

**FREE INBOUND
MARKETING
ASSESSMENT**

Apply Now

<http://www.landscapeleadership.com/assessment>



Do you know where your business should be hanging out online?



Let us show you!

Download our free infographic, *"The 11 Most Important Social Networks & Apps For Green Industry Companies"*

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