

## » Inbound Marketing: User-based Communications

Bogota » 04 » 2017

The era of digital communications requires people, governments and companies to reinvent and adapt themselves, which is why “infoxication” and “empowerment” must be taken into consideration. Infoxication is a problem due to the many sources of information that exist on any given topic, preventing users from finding what they seek and making it difficult to process the amount of data they receive<sup>1</sup>. This has led, in turn, to empowerment, in which users consume and share information without any validation from outside sources or detailed arguments, leading to a vicious circle that increases this infoxication until consumers reach the point of infosaturation.

The solution to this challenge is to keep communications from becoming a part of the landscape in the digital ecosystem through something called “Inbound Marketing.” This strategy helps communications reach those it should, with useful and accurate information worthy of being shared. This form of marketing uses digital communication strategies based on technology, which can recognize and focus content on possible customers to best introduce a product or service<sup>2</sup>.

There are three basic requirements for applying this strategy:

1. User segmentation
2. Understanding of the demand and the Zero Moment of Truth
3. Useful content

Additionally, Inbound Marketing has three keys to capturing user attention: **Transparency**, **Personalization** and **Empowerment**. To start off, Capitec Bank exemplified **Transparency** with the launch of a website where customers could ask any question they wanted about the services provided by the bank at its branch offices. The bank found it highly successful, later saying, “Asking ‘Why?’ helped us build a simpler, more affordable bank that gives you the power<sup>3</sup>.”

A clear example of **Personalization** is Erica, a chat bot similar to iOS’s Siri, developed by Bank of America. Erica analyzes user information and recommends ways



\* Phrase coined in 2011 in the book *Winning the Zero Moment of Truth*, which explained how empowered consumers anticipate the messages driving them to make a purchase, causing them to further educate themselves based on their needs. This is inspired by a concept called First Moment of Truth which explains how users make the decision to purchase in the store. (Aichner, 2012)

<sup>1</sup> Cifuentes, N., & Vanegas, J. (2016). *La información como agente de cambio en su organización*. *Tecnología Investigación y Academia*, 117-128.

<sup>2</sup> Steenburgh, T., Avery, J., & Dahod, N. (2011). *HubSpot: Inbound Marketing and Web 2.0*. Harvard: Harvard Business School.

<sup>3</sup> Capitec Bank. (January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017). #AskWhy. Obtained from <https://www.capitecbank.co.za/campaign/askwhy>

<sup>4</sup> Noto, G. (October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Meet Erica, Bank of America’s Chatbot for Digital Banking [VIDEO]. Obtained from Bank Innovation: <http://bankinnovation.net/2016/10/video-meet-erica-bank-of-americas-chatbot-for-digital-banking/>

for them to save or invest their money. It is designed to respond to individual user concerns, provide recommendations and offer personalized service through the app<sup>4</sup>.

To explain the **Empowerment** aspect of Inbound Marketing, it is necessary to recognize that the examples above contain many of the improvements the digital ecosystem requires. But beyond empowering users with an app or initiative, there is a social aspect companies should recognize.

Take the example of FirstGem, a service offered by FirstBank to women entrepreneurs by providing different benefits and events to support and develop gender equality in Nigeria. According to the bank, “FirstGem for Women will provide opportunities to enable women to achieve their financial goals and aspirations<sup>5</sup>.”

Identifying users is one of the pillars of Inbound Marketing; Therefore, it must be based on the digital consumer lifecycle and its eight stages<sup>6</sup>:

But, how can a user-based communication strategy be designed?

Useful and intelligent content arising from a personalized Inbound Marketing strategy must be linked to a LEAD to segment and capture data. Here, we highlight a model proposed by Salvador and Ikeda:

Inbound Marketing, though logical in nature, requires the right digital team, one capable of interpreting user messages and needs, able to understand the importance of correctly using data and LEADS. In addition, this team must also understand results will never be rigid, as Inbound Marketing is geared towards accommodating users and making communications efficient. This only occurs to the extent that, upon recognizing opportunities for corporate improvement, the team can help the organization prepare for the moment users develop a new demand—also helping anticipate reputational crises. There is a possibility this demand has been formulated directly by a brand or company.

Figure 1. Digital Consumer Lifecycle.



Source: Ilias & Tsachtani, 2015

<sup>4</sup> Noto, G. (October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Meet Erica, Bank of America’s Chatbot for Digital Banking [VIDEO]. Obtained from Bank Innovation: <http://bankinnovation.net/2016/10/video-meet-erica-bank-of-americas-chatbot-for-digital-banking/>

<sup>5</sup> Business News. (October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Tribune Online. Obtained from <http://tribuneonlineng.com/firstbank-launches-firstgem-introduces-new-lifestyle-offering-women/>

<sup>6</sup> Ilias, S., & Tsachtani, E. (2015). Investigating the Impact of CRM Resources on CRM Processes: a Customer Life-Cycle Based Approach in the Case of a Greek Bank. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 19, 304-313.

Figure 2. Communication strategy based on users



Source: Prepared by the authors

Figure 3. Model proposed by Salvador and Ikeda



Source: Salvador, A., & Ikeda, A. 2014



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