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Increasing sales with inbound marketing

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ABSTRACT

Subject: Information Systems	
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Abstract: <p>The consumerisation of business-to-business purchasing has caused a shift in business-to-business marketing. There are now more stakeholders involved in each purchasing decision than before, and they are more knowledgeable of the products they are buying than before. As a response to this development, companies in the business-to-business sector have developed new marketing methods, such as inbound marketing and content marketing.</p> <p>The purpose of this thesis is to study the adoption, implementation and execution of an inbound marketing strategy and inbound marketing methods at an international technology company with a freemium business model. The tooling used by the case company to execute the inbound marketing methods is also studied. The chosen research strategy is a single case study and the data has been collected through semi-structured interviews with four key persons from the companies' marketing and sales departments.</p> <p>The results of this study demonstrate the difficulty of successfully doing inbound marketing when offering multiple products and services. The results also indicate that it requires more work to adopt inbound marketing at an organisation with a freemium business model. The study also offers additional understanding of the challenges faced by an organisation when adopting inbound marketing methodologies in a real-world setting.</p>	
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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. INBOUND MARKETING.....	4
2.1 Introduction to inbound marketing	4
2.1.1 Content Marketing	6
2.1.2 Search Engine Optimisation	9
2.1.3 Social Media Marketing in the context of inbound marketing	10
2.1.4 Marketing automation	11
2.1.4 Measuring success of inbound marketing	11
2.2 Sales-marketing interface.....	12
3. METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 Research Strategy	17
3.2 Selection of the case company	17
3.3 Data collection.....	18
3.4 Data analysis	20
4. FINDINGS	21
4.1 Introduction to the case company.....	21
4.2 Inbound marketing at the case company.....	22
4.2.1 Background.....	22
4.2.2 Content marketing at the case company.....	23
4.2.2.1 <i>User personas</i>	25
4.2.2.2 <i>Content for the different funnel stages</i>	26
4.2.2.3 <i>Content network and click-to-actions</i>	28
4.2.2.4 <i>Sources of traffic</i>	30
4.2.3 Inbound marketing with a freemium business model	31
4.2.4 The buyer journey	32
4.2.5 How to improve their inbound marketing	34
4.2.6 Measuring the success of inbound marketing.....	36
4.2.7 Tools used to enable inbound marketing.....	37
4.3 Sales-marketing interface at the case company.....	40
4.3.1 Tools used by sales	43
5. DISCUSSION.....	45

5.1 Buyer journeys and content maps.....	45
5.2 Combined KPIs and collaboration between teams	46
5.3 Inbound marketing and business model.....	47
5.4 The marketing-sales funnel at the case company	48
6. ÖKA FÖRSÄLJNINGEN MED HJÄLP AV INBOUND MARKNADSFÖRING ..	49
REFERENCES	55
APPENDICES	58

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Sales funnel framework. (D’Haen & Van den Poel 2013).....	9
Figure 2. Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), the marketing-sales funnel of their case company	14
Table 1. Study interviewees	19

1 INTRODUCTION

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems support sales representatives in their work and bring them many benefits when using the systems correctly. The main benefits identified are storing of customer information, such as call logs, opportunity and contact information of stakeholders, company background and history (Saarinen, 2012). Since 2012, a shift has happened in the market, and the buyer behaviour even in business-to-business has changed greatly. Customers looking for solutions to their challenges do plenty of research on the internet before reaching out to any company and their sales team. Much of the purchasing decision has already been made by the customer before a single dialog has been had with a representative of the company.

With the buyer behaviour changing so radically, it has also required both sales and marketing teams to change their ways of working. As described by Holliman and Rowley (2014), the emergence of inbound marketing has changed the way, especially most technology companies do marketing, but also influenced the more traditional businesses significantly. The model is based on producing content to support the research which is made by the potential customer when they have a need for a solution. The other goal of inbound marketing is to try, with the help of the content produced, to create a need which does not yet exist of a solution the company might be offering. It is about teaching the customer or suspect about something larger than just the product or service the company is selling, but in the end, it ties down to the company's commercial offering.

This shift in the industry has meant that, since 2012, both sales organisations and companies offering Customer Relationship Management systems have needed to adapt greatly to stay on top of this new buying behaviour. Customer Relationship Management systems now provide more insights on lead behaviour than before, and while inbound marketing is focused on driving traffic to companies online presence, Customer Relationship Management systems are focused on converting that traffic to qualified leads for sales.

1.1 The shift in Business-to-Business marketing

Classically business-to-business marketing has been focused on organising for example customer events or producing and designing product catalogues and visiting industry events. With the rapid development of technology, business-to-business marketing has become more analytical and the results easier to measure. A major driving force behind the shift in business-to-business marketing is the change in buying behaviour. This change has taken place because of the growing influence of digital communication channels in the purchasing process. The business-to-business purchasing process is being consumerised, which means that the buyers rely more on their independent research of online resources as well as reviews, comments and info on social media platforms (Lingqvist, Plotkin, & Stanley, 2015). The decision making is also becoming more democratised and compared to previous one-to-one communications with decision makers, they have shifted to one-to-many communications, as the decision making is divided between larger groups of people. Schmidt et al. (2015) state that on average today 5.4 people have to sign off on each purchase in an organisation, regardless if the size of the organisation is in the tens or the thousands. These 5.4 stakeholders do not necessarily come from one department in the organisation, IT for example, but even if the decision is an IT decision, the other stakeholders might come from Marketing, Finance, Legal, Operations or Procurement.

Adamson et al. (2012) refer to a Corporate Executive Board study where they found out that on average 60 per cent of the purchasing decision is made before any communication is had with a sales representative. This includes analysing solutions, ranking options and benchmarking prices. This is very typical behaviour by consumers when they are making purchasing decisions. The same study also showed that even though decisions today are made by larger groups, business-to-business buyers find making decisions as a group to be demanding more often than making decisions alone. The reason for this was identified as finding consensus of which solutions would be best for them. When 60 per cent of the purchasing decision is made before ever contacting a sales representative, it means that suppliers are losing deals without even knowing about it. This is where marketing needs to step in, because they have the means to reach out to the potential buyers before sales is ever involved and use their market insights to provide potential buyers with information that can ease the consensus finding phase (Schmidt, Adamson & Bird, 2015).

In my thesis, I will review the literature regarding inbound marketing and analyse what the key factors to consider are with successful inbound marketing. In addition, I will review literature regarding the sales-marketing interface to understand the challenges that are involved with collaboration between the two departments, as their collaboration is an integral part of inbound marketing. I will use the literature review as a base when analysing the inbound marketing processes of a company using a single case study approach.

2 INBOUND MARKETING

2.1 Introduction to inbound marketing

Opreana and Vinerean (2015), as well as Holliman and Rowley (2014) explain that business-to-business firms are becoming aware that roughly 60 percent of the decisions are made before the first contact with the sales department. To answer this development, companies in the business-to-business space are changing their marketing tactics. Traditional marketing is not as efficient as before, because it focuses on pushing the message out. As people are targeted and interrupted by hundreds of marketing messages every day, they have become in a way immune to these marketing tactics. Instead, as potential customers, or suspects as they will be referred to in this thesis, are doing the research and comparisons of products and services on their own, the message needs to be out there for them to find when they need it. This has contributed to the development of a new marketing tactic called digital inbound marketing. According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), the web can be considered a pull marketing environment where companies are trying to grab the interest of the suspects who are already seeking information about different solutions.

The idea is to engage with the suspects and affect their purchasing decision via different channels and touchpoints. The aim is not to try to sell to the suspect yet, but to provide value and information, which steers the person towards the desired direction (Holliman & Rowley 2014). Providing the suspect with value-adding content that educates them in the solutions the company provides is a key part of digital inbound marketing. Digital inbound marketing is for many companies also replacing part of their outbound sales contacting. Instead of reaching out to companies just because their profile is interesting, sales representatives can now obtain better qualified leads from marketing as a result of their digital inbound marketing efforts. This is why the following definition of Digital Inbound Marketing (DIM) has been presented by Opreana & Vinerean (2015, p.2);

“Digital Inbound Marketing represents the process of reaching and converting qualified

consumers by creating and pursuing organic tactics in online settings.”

Hubspot (n.d.) opens up the process of reaching consumers, with the explanation that it is about giving the right people the right information, at the right time. This is not easy, and this is why a complete inbound marketing strategy must also include a clear segmentation of who the potential buyers are that a company wants to target, where they can be found and what they are interested in. This does not only mean that there would be one single group but, as mentioned earlier by Holliman & Rowley (2014), on average 5.4 people are involved in any purchasing decision made. This means that it is crucial to identify each of those 5.4 persons and what they are interested in, in order to provide the correct information to support their decision making.

The process of converting qualified consumers means that when the right people have been reached, at the right time and with the right information, there needs to be clear actions defined so that the identified target group can link the information that has been provided to them to the products the company is offering. By providing more information about themselves, the suspects show they are interested and become qualified leads (Hubspot, n.d.). For example, a blog post can be about a high-level trend in a specific industry and can end with a link to so-called *gated content* about how the company's own products are related to the trend explained in the blog post. The term gated content means that a suspect needs to provide their contact information to be able to download or read the content. By submitting this information, the reader becomes a qualified lead, and most likely at this stage, the contact information of this person is moved from the marketing department to the sales department for contacting.

In the above given definition by Opreana & Vinerean (2015), the term organic means that it is not aimed as an interruption for the target audience, like an advertisement on TV, but instead, the target audience will find the message and information when it is interesting for them. By creating and pursuing the organic tactics, they mean to create the right content and publish it in a place where it will be found.

There are subcategories of inbound marketing which all play a vital role in enabling a company to drive a successful inbound marketing strategy. Those are content marketing, search engine optimisation, social media marketing and marketing automation.

2.1.1 Content Marketing

Inbound marketing and content marketing have a unique relationship and, as Holliman & Rowley (2014) argue, they are seen as inextricably linked if not even interchangeable. As the relationship between the two has been the subject of an ongoing discussion, Hubspot (Chernov, 2017) did a survey where they asked their customers and partners, non-customers as well as North American adults who had shown an interest in digital marketing, about how they see the relationship between content marketing and inbound marketing. The options in the survey were: 1. They are synonyms, 2. Content marketing is a subset of inbound marketing, 3. Inbound marketing is a subset of content marketing, 4. The two are fundamentally different and 5. Don't know. The results were quite clear, in all of the segments number 2. Content marketing is a subset of inbound marketing, was voted as the most accurate option. In this thesis, content marketing is seen as a subset of inbound marketing, although it needs to be stated that without functioning content marketing, inbound marketing would be quite useless.

According to Wall & Spinuzzi (2018), Mansour & Barandas (2017) and Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), the aim of content marketing is to obtain the suspect's attention through interesting and interactive content which provides them with value and steers them towards purchasing a specific product or service. With the help of content marketing, companies also qualify contacts for their sales organisation. Content, in this case, can be for example white papers, blogs, videos, showcases, website content, infographics, social media conversations, podcasts or webinars. Good content never focuses on a product, but instead on providing assistance on an issue that suspects or customers might be struggling with, or providing additional information on something they might be uncertain about.

Wall & Spinuzzi (2018) suggests it is important that the content is such that customers and readers can provide comments and feedback and be able to interact with the content through different channels. These channels are planned in the content-marketing pipeline.

The content itself should be beneficial or compelling to the suspects, in order for them to voluntarily read it. By sharing this content on different platforms and via different channels, companies build brand awareness and integrity with both existing customers and suspects. By being a reliable source of information and by producing the value-adding content, a company increases its chances of existing customers and suspects purchasing its products and services.

Joe Pulizzi (2012), founder of Content Marketing Institute, defines content marketing as

“A strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience”.

Compared to the definition of inbound marketing, the definition of content marketing does not directly speak of reaching, converting or qualifying consumers, but focuses on what kind the content should be. This supports the assertion that content marketing is a subcategory of inbound marketing

Mansour and Barandas (2017) state that content marketing can be seen as a holistic, systemic design of a marketing plan, in a high-tech entrepreneurial context. Management of content and spreading it on different channels also works as a way of clarifying the company's own vision and message, while keeping all of their stakeholders in mind during the development of their technology. They not only mention the benefits of content marketing lying in acquiring new customers but emphasize the benefits of developing the company's business model by learning from the content produced and the feedback from the suspects and customers, as well as understanding the positive impact content marketing has on customer retention and lifetime value. According to Mansour and Barandas (2017), content marketing should be considered as long-term investment in the brand and creating value for the customers through the relevant content. However, Kho (2014) claims that even though companies are more actively engaging in content marketing, very few of the companies actually have a content marketing strategy in place.

According to Wall and Spinuzzi (2018), content created by a company that is selling a product in the market which they are writing about can, to some people seem biased.

Often the readers do not want to be sold to and due to this can be uninterested in consuming the content from a company they feel is trying to sell to them. This is why for example some of the content producers publish their content on a separate site or platform, which is not directly linked to the company site. The emphasis is on creating value for the reader and not promoting their own products. This content could be described as “company agnostic”. It has also become more common for sponsored content to be used on news sites, which might make it more difficult for consumers to distinguish between different types of content.

Wall and Spinuzzi (2018) also describe how the created content is available for the suspects in different channels and sites. According to them, the idea is to create a path for the content reader to follow and provide value and knowledge in a step-by-step fashion. Each piece of content moves the suspect forward on the path to the next value-adding content and towards the products that are sold by the company producing the content. The interconnected content creates a funnel or a journey for the buyer. Each piece of content steers the suspect towards the sale. Although it is most commonly described as a funnel, it can be entered from different stages, depending on which content is the first one the suspect engages with. In the content marketing strategy, a certain path has, however, been planned to make the funnel as effective as possible. These linked contents can be described as being a part of the same *genre ecology*. External content, such as product reviews done by a 3rd party, can also be included in such a genre ecology and the content can be highlighted by linking to this external content through the company’s own content.

The funnel aims to steer suspects towards the final sale, but depending on what product is being marketed, the sale might not be the final stage of the funnel. For example, in the business-to-consumer market, the price of the product is most often measured in hundreds of euros and the product is fairly simple. In those cases, the purchasing decision can be made on the spot. In business-to-business, however, the product or service being marketed can require an investment of tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands. In these cases, the buyer funnel most commonly does not end in a sale, but in a qualified lead for the sales organisation.



Fig. 1. Sales funnel framework.
(adapted from D'Haen & Van den Poel, 2013)

Fig.1. Sales funnel framework. (D'Haen & Van den Poel 2013)

Wall and Spinuzzi (2018) suggest that one reason that content marketing might be so convincing is the co-creation of value between the company and the consumer. In order for the content to be interesting for the readers, it needs to offer value for them. This is because the content is consumed when the readers are researching a solution, to solve a need they have. For the company to be able to provide this solution and the value the suspect is looking for, it needs to understand the need and communicate value through their content. The company producing the content can monitor through different metrics whether their content is interesting to the readers or not, and through this process, they become better at providing value to them, and thus they co-create the value.

2.1.2 Search Engine Optimisation

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a tactic and a marketing approach for improving the online findability of a website and the content on it (Ledford, 2015). This is a relevant part of inbound marketing because to make sure a company reaches the right people with their content, the suspects need to be able to find the content. According to Holliman and

Rowley (2014), the internet is considered a pull-market, which means companies need to be able to pull the consumers to their site. In practice, as Opreana and Vinerean (2015) describe it, it means that when a consumer types in a keyword in a search engine on the internet, which is relevant for the content and offering of a company, they should optimise their website so that they are among the top results of the search. To achieve this, it is important for companies to choose the right keywords and to write their content about relevant trends and issues so that the content will be found.

2.1.3 Social Media marketing in the context of inbound marketing

Opreana & Vinerean (2015), Wall & Spinuzzi (2018) as well as Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) see the role of social media as an integral part of content marketing. Social media are used for sharing the content which has been written on other media and for driving the traffic to the content. Companies can distribute the content on social media either through their own social media profiles, or their employees can share content on their own professional or personal social media accounts. Wall & Spinuzzi (2018), in their interviews with digital marketers, came across many examples of how the interview subjects write social media posts which link to the original content. In these posts, they might use some parts of the original content to indicate what kind of content the readers will find when clicking. This is important, as the content needs to match the title, in order for consumers to actually read the original content. Also Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) found out that the case company in their study shared on social media the links to the original content produced by them, but required the suspects to log in or leave contact information to access the content. Their information was then saved in the case company's system and started the suspect's journey through the sales and marketing funnel.

Ahmad et al. (2016) emphasise the importance of quality content on social media to attract users to visit their page regularly. The content needs to be educative and not only focus on the brand, as the interesting content will also drive brand awareness. Social media also provide good tools for measuring the quality of the contents, as the key metrics of visit counts, visit durations and clicks are easily available.

2.1.4 Marketing automation

Heimbach et al. (2015) describe the origins of marketing automation systems as taking the concepts from Customer Relationship Management systems, which are used by sales representatives to store information about their customers in order to tailor the messages and offerings for them and apply these concepts to a large numbers of users. In practice, it means using all the data collected from users, site visitors, and content downloaders and provide them with personalised messages and offers. It also means forming customer journeys and lead scoring mechanisms based on historical data. This way the most potential leads can be highlighted from the mass. This was not possible in the past before the internet, as there was no way of gathering such data, nor was it possible for anyone to manually analyse it. Marketing automation software also enables marketing departments to track the impact and efficiency of the marketing efforts in a very detailed way.

Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), in their case study of a company introducing marketing automation software, found that by using marketing automation software the case company was able to improve the efficiency of their sales and marketing organisations. They were able to automate much of their content delivery and were able to pre-qualify the leads with the help of marketing automation software. This allowed their sales department to spend more time on sales instead of lead qualification, while still increasing the number of leads delivered to their sales organisation.

2.1.5 Measuring success of inbound marketing

As Wall and Spinuzzi (2018) note, the digital marketing environment creates completely unique ways of measuring the success of any marketing actions. When, for example, specific content is released with links to other content or sites with product information, each action by the reader is measurable. Firstly, the number of users visiting the page of the content is measurable; so is also how many visitors perform the planned so-called *click-to-action (CTA)*. This means that they follow the buyer journey and enter the next planned stage. In traditional marketing, for example, when placing an advertisement in a magazine, it is not possible to measure each step in the funnel. A company can place an

ad in a newspaper and know how many papers are distributed and in the end, they can, with some accuracy, measure how much it affected sales. With digital inbound marketing, each step of the buyer journey is measurable, from the first entry on the site through a landing page, until the actual purchase.

Opreana & Vinerean (2015) point out that measurement is what makes marketing a science. They also emphasise how important measurement is for continuous improvement of the inbound marketing tactics a company is using. By analysing the success of different approaches with the help of the numbers gathered with web analytics tools, changes can be made in an agile fashion at any given moment, although some tactics have longer term goals and it takes time to see the results of those.

Opreana & Vinerean (2015) categorise the measurements in to five elements: *Website activity*, which refers to page views and number of visitors on the page. *Source of traffic*, which is used for understanding what search words are used, where the visitors are coming from and what social media platforms they are using. *Nature of website activity*, which is for understanding how long the visitors spend reading the content, what browsers they are using, as well as what devices and platforms they have. *Responses and outcomes*, which is used for understanding the lead generation performance, for example, how many contact forms are filled in, how many content downloads, are the users subscribing to the content or are they engaging with it on social media. The last element is referred to as *integrated marketing metrics*. The goal of the integrated marketing metrics is to provide the management with an understanding of the success, using more commercial key performance indicators (KPIs) such as cost of customer acquisition (COCA), customer lifetime value (CLV), lead-to-sale conversion rates and revenue growth.

The metrics listed above are a snapshot of the measurements used for measuring success of digital inbound marketing, and many measurements are very unique for each company, depending on their goals. When measuring the success of inbound marketing, it is important to understand that collecting data about everything that happens on the website is key for inbound marketing. Inbound marketing revolves around optimising the details to reach the best results, and for this, accurate data is needed.

2.2 Sales-marketing interface

The sales-marketing interface is essential when discussing inbound marketing because a well-functioning inbound marketing process at a company improves the collaboration between sales and marketing. According to Smith et al. (2006), one of the main reasons for the friction between the departments is because sales want marketing to generate more and better leads for them to contact, while marketing think sales is not following up the leads they are provided well enough. According to Kotler et al. (2006), there are two primary sources for the irritation; economic and cultural. The economic has its background in the distribution of budgets and funding within the company. The cultural clash is mainly regarding the different kind of profiles and goals the departments have. Marketing tends to be focused on the long-term gain, while sales are more commonly focused on the short-term results, which are driven by their compensation model.

Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) argue that close cooperation between marketing and sales is required to be able to integrate content marketing in business-to-business sales processes. The integration of software systems used by marketing and sales is important but equally important is that the teams are aligned functionally and undertake joint planning responsibility. A key collaboration point highlighted by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) is the lead qualification process, which caused fewer complaints regarding the quality of leads by sales representatives when the criteria for qualified leads were defined together by both departments.

Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) present a marketing-sales funnel as an alternative to the earlier commonly used sales funnel version, as also presented by D'Haen & Van den Poel (2013). Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) argue that with a combined marketing-sales funnel, the increased transparency of the lead acquisition process as well as the qualification of those leads enables better collaboration between the departments and eliminates the friction that might previously have been there. The marketing-sales funnel as depicted by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) based on the case company analysed in their study, is presented in Figure 2. The terminology defined in Figure 2 regarding the lead stages, will be used in this thesis.

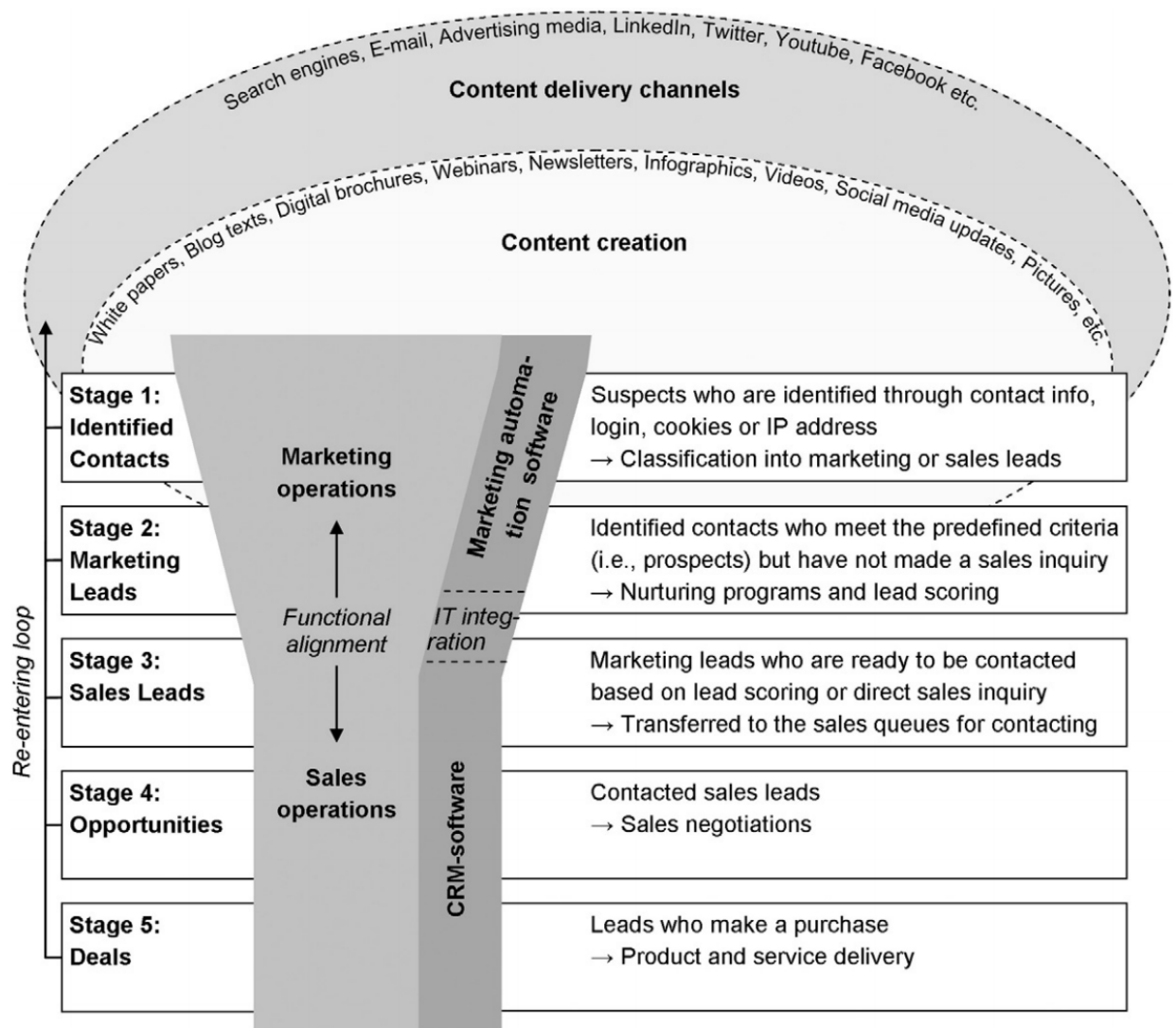


Fig 2. Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), the marketing-sales funnel of their case company.

The marketing and sales funnel, described by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), starts from stage 1 with identified contacts. In their case company, to enter stage 1, the suspects and new contacts need to be identified. The suspects are identified when they leave their contact information on the website or at a conference or are identified with the help of their marketing automation software, which can identify suspects with the help of IP addresses, cookies, or for example an email address. The marketing automation software will automatically compare the information with their database to check whether any information of the contact already exists and match those. It will also check if they already

have a purchasing history, and if they do, they can be directly moved to sales. If no history exists, they become a lead that will be nurtured by marketing. This means that they have behavioural data of the leads, but no signals yet of any intentions to purchase.

In stage two the marketing leads are nurtured, which means they are provided with personalised content to encourage them to make a purchase decision or show intent of purchasing. The goal for this stage is to move as many as possible from marketing lead stage to sales lead stage. In stage two the case company tries to learn as much as possible about the areas that a particular lead is interested in, in order to be able to provide as much personalised quality content and communication as possible. The personalised content can be based on the title of the lead, industry or country of origin. Marketing automation software is also used for scoring the marketing leads to decide which ones should be moved to the next stage and be contacted by sales. The lead scoring is based on the profile of the lead as well as their online behaviour. The criteria for the lead scoring is decided together with marketing and sales in each business segment. The leads in this stage can be both existing customers and new potential customers. The existing customers might be open for another solution provided by the company and are therefore also nurtured by marketing.

In stage three the leads are transferred from marketing to sales for contacting. In the case company, they are automatically moved to the Customer Relationship Management system and assigned to the correct sales team. The marketing automation system automatically sends email notifications to the sales team to ensure that no leads are missed and that they are contacted in a timely fashion. Some of the leads in this stage have become sales leads because of the automated lead scoring system, and they are now contacted by sales to verify their interest. If they are not interested, they are moved back to the nurturing stage; if they are interested, they are moved to the opportunity stage.

Stages four and five are entirely handled by the sales teams. In stage four the commercial potential and intent of buying are identified, and now it is up to the sales team to negotiate the deal. Some of the negotiations end up in won deals and some in lost deals. The negotiations have very varying lengths, which correspond most often to the size of the deals. Most of the customers do not linearly go through the funnel, but often go back and

forth between the stages until they end up in a deal. The optimal case would be that the entire movement of the lead from the beginning of the funnel until the deal stage could be mapped and understood by the case company; however, this is not that easy in most cases.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research strategy

The chosen research strategy in this thesis is a qualitative single case study methodology. As Bryman (2012) explains, a case study is a useful research strategy when intensively examining the setting in a single organisation. As the unit of analysis in this study is the company itself, not the individuals in the company, it can well be considered a case study also by the definition of Bryman (2012). The case in this study refers to how inbound marketing is done at the studied company and what tools they use for it. The study not only focuses on how the marketing professionals at the company do inbound marketing but also how the sales team works together with the marketing team to enable successful inbound marketing, which will contribute to increased sales. Based on the classification by Yin (2009) of the five types of cases, (the critical case, the extreme or unique case, the representative or typical case, the revelatory case and the longitudinal case), I would consider this study to be closest to the representative or typical case. This is because I believe the same challenges as those identified in this study are common to other companies in the same situation; however, it is unique to the business model that company has and can therefore not be too widely generalised.

I have not been able to find another case study that would holistically study the phenomena of inbound marketing from both marketing and sales perspective, as well as covering the software tooling used. The study by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) is the closest comparison, although they focus on the impact of using marketing automation for content marketing. The goal of this thesis is to understand the broader picture of inbound marketing and marketing-sales collaboration.

3.2 Selection of the case company

The sampling strategy followed when selecting the case company was typical case sampling, which is a type of purposive sampling as described by Bryman (2012). The unit

of analysis, in this study the case company, is chosen because it is in the middle of adopting an inbound marketing strategy and transforming their sales and marketing to best support this initiative. The company is a Finnish technology company with international offices. It offers both products and services to international customers and promotes its products nearly entirely online. Their website is their most important platform for creating awareness and educating their customers about their solutions, and they have no physical goods or physical stores. As their business is mainly digital, they are also an excellent candidate for implementing an inbound marketing strategy and for utilising software tools to enable inbound marketing. These characteristics are common for many technology companies who could benefit from adopting an inbound marketing strategy, which is why I believe many of the findings in this study are generalisable. The case company has a unique freemium business model, which means that some of the findings do not apply to companies with different business models.

The sampling approach applied could be thought of as a fixed sampling strategy, as explained by Bryman (2012), since the unit of analysis and the roles of the interviewees were fixed from the start. No criteria for specific maturity in implementing inbound marketing have been applied, instead, the focus has been on finding a case company in the digital space with digital products and to study their current state with inbound marketing.

3.3 Data collection

The data has been collected through semi-structured interviews with both marketing and sales professionals from the case company. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the data collection method because, as described by Bryman (2012), it allows the interviewees much freedom in how to reply, but still the focus can be kept on the relevant topics with the help of an *interview guide*. The interview guide can be a list of questions or topics to be covered. The interview guide used in this study contained a list of themes, which were related to inbound marketing and the sales-marketing interface. The themes were: (1) inbound marketing at your company, (2) tools used to enable inbound

marketing, (3) sales-marketing interface, (4) tools used by sales. The interview guide can be found in the appendix. The interviews were recorded and stored.

The reason for interviewing both sales and marketing professionals is to understand the differences in how they see inbound marketing, the marketing-sales interface and the challenges that they are facing. Out of the interviewees, three were from the marketing department and one from the sales department. The complete list of interviewees can be viewed below in table 1.

Table 1. Study interviewees.

Identifier	Title and role/responsibility	Department	Length of Interview
A	Head of Product Sales Leads a team of <i>Business Development Representatives</i> (BDRs), who work with identifying new sales opportunities, and <i>Account Managers</i> (AMs), who focus on product sales.	Sales	33 min
B	Head of LeadGen team In charge of the Lead Generation (name comes from Lead Generation) team which is a team inside the marketing department responsible for producing the commercial content and acquiring leads for sales	Marketing	48 min
C	Customer Lifecycle Manager Responsible for the analytics in the marketing team, which means that she is trying to analyse and understand the entire customer journey in a quantitative way.	Marketing	38mins

D	Lead Developer Advocate Responsible for the technical content created for the developer community as well as spreading the word through different developer events around the world	Marketing	22 mins
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3.4 Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews are analysed in the findings section of this study. The main themes from the interview guide are also followed in the analysis. The data was coded into relevant categories during the analysis. These categories formed the outline of the findings. Bryman (2012) describes categories in grounded theory as concepts that have been elaborated so that they can be regarded as representing a real-world phenomenon. In this study, the categories included content marketing, user persona, buyer journey, and content network.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to case company

The case company is a Finnish web technology vendor providing a component library for building web applications. The company's core technology is offered for free as open source, and the business model is to sell value-adding products and services to the users of the open source technology. The primary target market for the commercial products and services is the existing users of the open source technology, i.e. the open source community. The company has approximately 150 employees with offices in three countries. Main markets are North America and Europe, and approximately 80-90 per cent of the revenue comes from customers outside of Finland. The marketing department at the case company consists of roughly 15 people, four of whom work with providing content for the non-commercial offering, called the Developer Relations (DevRel) team, and three work with providing content for the company's commercial offering called the Lead Generation (LeadGen) team. It needs to be added, though, that the Developer Relations team also has product marketing responsibility, which means that they also produce content about the commercial tools, but mainly focus on the Open Source offering. However, as will be explained in the case study, the Open Source content is a necessary starting point for reaching the stage where commercial content can even be presented to the suspects.

In addition to this, the marketing department has a Marketing Communications team which is responsible for social media accounts as well as the company website. This split means that the Developer Relations team focuses on the developer relationship and tries to convince as many developers as possible to try out the technology and to succeed with their trials. The Lead Generation team works with generating leads from the community who use the technology in their work and projects. The rest of the marketing team work with different tasks, such as optimising online advertisements, event planning, social media marketing, website administration, video and picture production and the open source community.

The sales department at the case company has 19 employees with different roles. There are three Business Development Representatives (BDR), two Customer Success Managers (CSM), four Account Managers (AM), six Key Account Managers (KAM), three team leads and the Vice President (VP) of Sales. The team is structured so that the Business Development Representatives are the first point of contact, and they try to identify as many commercial opportunities as possible. After identifying an opportunity, it will either be handed over to an Account Manager, if it is a product opportunity or to a Key Account Manager if it is a services opportunity. The Account Managers work both with opportunities they receive from the Business Development Representatives and with finding their own customers who are interested in the product offering. The Key Account Managers work mainly with a set of dedicated accounts, which generate significant amounts of revenue for the company. Their focus is mainly on the services offering, and they spend only a small portion of their time on new customer acquisition. They also have a Customer Success team, which works with the subscription customers in helping them succeed with the subscription tools, with the ultimate goal of getting them to renew their subscription the following period. Keeping the churn as low as possible is essential for growing the recurring revenues.

4.2 Inbound marketing at case company

4.2.1 Background

The company has been doing inbound marketing since the autumn of 2017, when the idea that an inbound marketing approach could be a suitable marketing methodology for the company was presented. As person B puts it, from a commercial marketing point of view, the open source community is the market, and that is where the commercial marketing efforts should be directed. The vision with implementing inbound marketing was that the company could speed up the sales cycle and increase the number of leads contacting their sales department with the intent of buying.

When presented with the claim from the study by Hubspot (Chernov, 2017), that content marketing is a subset of inbound marketing, the opinions vary. Person A agrees with the

findings from the Hubspot study. Person B, in contrast, considers content marketing as a part of digital marketing, and inbound marketing as a kind of philosophical term which defines the procedure of how to do digital and content marketing.

Even though the company has different teams that focus on different parts of the funnel, the entire Marketing team is geared towards succeeding with inbound marketing. The Developer Relations team works mostly on the top part of the funnel, basically making sure the big volumes of technology users are there. The Lead Generation team, in contrast, works with the middle and the bottom of the funnel, by trying to identify the commercially most potential ones from the masses. These do overlap as well, and as Person D says, whenever the Developer Relations team has a suitable opportunity to mention any of the commercial products or services the company offers, they will. Person B goes on to say that the company is still struggling to make the inbound marketing mind-set a part of their daily life, but it is moving in the right direction. Everyone understands now that it is important to be able to profile the users early on, even though the top-of-the-funnel content has nothing to do with any commercial offering yet.

4.2.2 Content marketing at the case company

For understanding what kind of content they should be producing, the company has made a so-called *content map*. Person B explains that the first step of the content map is to create *user personas*, which means that they define what type of stakeholders are involved in the decision making of buying their product and what key characteristics define these stakeholders. They have then made a matrix where the rows contain the stage of the funnel (top, middle, or bottom) and the columns contain the defined user personas (student, developer, architect, manager). In each cell, they list the content they have for each persona and for each stage. This is used to make sure that they have enough elements for each persona and each stage to support the lead generation goals that they have. What the actual content is that is written for the personas and stages is actually decided quite randomly, and the only way to make sure some piece of content works is by posting it and testing how much traffic it drives.

The Developer Relations team is responsible for writing most of the technical content for the community, and most important for them is to attract as many users as possible to try out the Open Source technology offering. Person D, who is leading the Developer Advocate team, explains that it is important for them both to create content that increases the awareness of the Open Source products and to make sure the users know how to use the tools and get started on their own with them. In addition to this, they also do webinars and tutorials as well as actively answer forum posts. The shorter tutorial videos are mainly published on YouTube, which they link to in the content on their website.

Person B, in contrast, sees that the webinars should be more a responsibility of the Lead Generation team, not from a production point of view, but to use them for campaigns and for generating leads. Person B also mentions that the Developer Relations team is responsible for the conferences that the company attends, which are around 40-50 every year. The conferences play a major role in the company's marketing strategy and drive many new users to the community. The conferences are to some extent more traditional marketing, even though they are leveraging digital marketing and content marketing concepts as a part of the conference experience. For example, the company has a coding challenge at the conference where the visitors fill in their name and email, write a few lines of code, learn about the technology and are given a free t-shirt. The company receive the contact information of the visitors and follows up each visitor with a few emails with top-of-the-funnel content to help them in getting started with evaluating the technology.

Person D sees the presentations at the events and conferences as supporting content for the digital content. He also says that both the digital content and the content for a presentation held at an event are usually made in parallel. He usually records his presentations and writes a blog post based on them that can be published on the website. If the presentation topic is extra interesting, he might make permanent content about it, for example a separate dedicated site, landing page, demo application or tutorial. He says this is also about trying to be wise about how they use the resources and time in his team. This means that they try to accomplish multiple content pieces with the same efforts as doing one piece, for example a presentation for an event.

Person D also reveals that most commonly the topics that they write about are decided on company level, based on the long-term strategy and vision of the company. As an example he mentions Progressive Web Applications (PWAs), which refers to a mobile development concept which has a strategic importance for the company and, thus, they are producing more content around it. Within these so-called high-level topics, the Developer Advocates have more freedom to choose the content for the individual pieces they write. When choosing the topics for those specific pieces, they communicate with the community, talk to people in events and read the forums to find out what the things are that currently interest developers within that topic. He also says that they receive ideas and feedback through the comment section on their blog posts, as well as questions on twitter and forums (e.g. StackOverflow). In addition to this, they recently adopted Gitter, an instant messaging and chat room system, where anyone can join and ask questions regarding the company's technology. This is also a channel through which the Developer Relations team gains valuable feedback.

When asked Person C about whether they speak with other departments in the company, like Services or Product Development, to draw ideas about what to write, she answers, not really. The decisions about what content will be written is mainly taken in the marketing team. Person C states that her personal opinion is that it makes more sense to centralise the content production to the marketing team. She says that because there has not been a systematic way of producing the content until recently, it has led to an operating model where first the content is written, and after that they start thinking about what they could do next regarding this topic and how they could boost the amount of traffic they attract. Instead in an ideal world, she would like to centralise the decision making to marketing. They would first agree on the topics and trends, then they could collect feedback from the other departments about these. After this, they could start breaking up the high-level trends and topics to more detailed subjects and decide who will write about them so there would already be a plan on how every piece of content would fit together.

4.2.2.1 User personas

The separation mentioned earlier on how the top-of-the-funnel content is done by the Developer Relations team and the bottom-of-the-funnel by the Lead Generation team is not the only separation they have between the teams. The Developer Relations team also focus on different personas in the content they produce than the Lead Generation team does. For the Developer Relations team, the most essential persona is the developer, while for the Lead Generation team it is the architect and the manager. This is because usually, the first person from a company who is researching the product is a developer. The developer is interested in the technical details and in how the product is used. This means that the developer is interested mainly in the top- and middle-of-the-funnel content. The architect and the manager, whom the Lead Generation team focuses on, are instead usually in positions where they have more decision making power. Thus, they are more interested in the cost of the product, how the licensing works and what kind of support can their company get from the case company. That means that the middle- and bottom-of-the-funnel content is more aimed at those user personas. It is important to understand that the user personas are defined based on existing customer profiles. However, they are simplified and stereotypical. No customer is identical to a user persona, but they do share the most typical traits.

The Lead Generation team is still responsible for most of the commercial content for the developer persona as well. Person C also adds that although they have the content map now, they have only a few pieces of content for the bottom-of-the-funnel stage or generally content about the commercial offering. She claims that right now it can be counted on two hands.

4.2.2.2 Content for the different funnel stages

Person B describes the way they categorise the content for the different stages. The top-of-the-funnel content is what they call non-branded material. That means that no-one will read it because it has the company name in it, because at this stage the suspects are not yet familiar with the brand. Instead, the content is about something broader in the industry, as a new trend in web development. Person C says that although they were producing content before they started doing inbound marketing at the case company, there was no non-branded content back then. This means that there was no top-of-the-funnel

material at all and it meant most of the content was only interesting for the existing community members, for whom the technology and brand were already familiar. She mentions as an example a blog post made by one of the developer advocates many years ago when they had no system for writing content. The blog post in question was non-branded and is the most popular post ever on the company's website and is still driving new visitors to their site. It was written based on an idea that the writer had because he had gotten questions about the subject. She continues with adding that during the last six months they have become much more systematic in producing non-branded content, which includes content about industry trends and content directed towards decision makers, but they still need to improve this. She sees this as a critical part of making the company a so-called thought leader in their space, which in turn would give them more credibility as a content producer in their market. Person C also says that the content writers had much more freedom in the past to choose what they wanted to write about, so they discussed with many people in conferences and online, browsed forums and spent time understanding what the suspects could be interested in reading. Now they have a more systematic approach to writing content, which also means that the content writers do not have as much freedom as before to choose what to write. This could have both positive and negative implications.

Person D mentions the same in his interview and states that before the Developer Relations team was established, the Developer Advocates would write about what they felt would be compelling content for the community. He adds that they could still produce well-performing content, but success was hard to replicate as there was no system for deciding why this content would be interesting for the users and the content pieces were completely separate from each other. Now they are driven by broader trends and content maps which tie together the content so that there is a more natural flow between them. By focusing their efforts on producing a substantial amount of content about one specific topic, they have the possibility of becoming a leader in the industry regarding that specific topic.

The middle-of-the-funnel content is branded content, and the idea is for it to tie back to something that the case company does. An example of this could be how they solve a problem described in the top-of-the-funnel content or how the case company approaches

a trend described in the top-of-the-funnel content. Person D explains that the Developer Relations team also has responsibility for the product marketing content, although the product content would fall in the middle-of-the-funnel category. The users first get familiar with the Open Source tools, and once they start using them, they are presented with the value-adding tools that can speed up their development. In this stage, it is still mainly focused on tutorials and examples of how to use them. Person D also says that even though the product marketing responsibility is still at the Developer Relations team, there are ongoing discussions about whether there should be some dedicated person for taking care of the documentation and all product-related content.

“In my terminology bottom-of-the-funnel means that someone puts up their hand and says that they are now ready to speak about buying” (Person B, Head of LeadGen team)

Person B describes the bottom-of-the-funnel stage more as actions than content. An example of this would be to download a trial license of a product or to submit a contact form, which means that they want to be contacted by sales. The content provided in the bottom-of-the-funnel stage is the page where a person can download the trial license or where they can submit a contact form. Person B emphasises that even though the journey is depicted as a funnel and even though the company has the content map and the user personas defined, in the end, a contact bounces from stage to stage and from persona to persona. It is rarely a straight funnel, and a real person is never a user persona and does not behave exactly like a user persona. He also suggests that there is never such a thing as a “developer journey”. By this he means a journey which explains how an individual developer becomes a customer because it is never a person’s journey; it is the company’s journey. There can be a single developer who is the driver from the company’s side, but there are always other stakeholders at the company who are also involved in purchasing decisions and influence whether or not they become a customer. Person C in her interview also makes the same point as Person B, the leads rarely go through the funnel linearly, but instead, they can jump from top-of-the-funnel content to bottom-of-the-funnel content and middle-of-the-funnel content in a random order.

4.2.2.3 Content network and click-to-actions

Person B mentions that one of the critical things that they always need to remember when executing their inbound marketing strategy is that each piece of content must have the next step or click to action defined so that the lead can naturally move forward in the funnel and the network of content provided. He says that at the case company they have for too long been doing individual items and content pieces that are not linked to each other, or that do not have a natural continuation. In these cases, the responsibility of moving forward or finding the next piece of content is left on the reader. He does claim that if the content is outstanding and a suspect becomes interested or excited about it, he or she will probably continue exploring the site to find other resources about the subject, but of course, this is not the way to maximise the effect of the content. They are now working hard on improving their inbound marketing by making sure every piece always has a next step, but they are not finished with the work, although with the help of the content matrix they have built, they have taken the first steps. However, it still has a lot of holes and person B says it is the kind of work that never ends.

Both person D and C also stated that the company is often lacking the next steps from the content they produce. Person C explains that they have now implemented a process that whenever someone downloads a piece of content from their website, they are redirected to a *thank you* page with recommendations on more content that could be interesting for them. She explains how for example Hubspot does it very well, and that she often ends up reading many different pieces of content on Hubspot's site. She hopes that they could have as good a system in the future to provide the relevant and exciting next piece to visitors reading their content to get them to engage more, but they are not there yet. Person D discloses that even in the Developer Advocate team, they try to already in the top-of-the-funnel content think about what additional content could be written around this and what possibilities are there around commercial content or ways to identify potential customers using this content or subject.

Person B reveals that they do not have a planned path from content to content, which a lead should follow to end up in the-bottom-of-the funnel content and filling in the contact form.

“The behaviour is in a way anarchistic, so you cannot create a sort of pipe for the leads to follow, people do not behave like that. As I said, they bounce from stage to stage and can convert at any stage or identify themselves at any point in time. ” (Person B, Head of LeadGen team)

When it comes to knowing how many leads are in each of the funnel stages, top-, mid- and bottom-of-the-funnel, person A declares that they do not currently have a way of knowing that. He adds that he has been trying to emphasise the importance of getting these numbers, but so far the importance of this has not been seen. Person D also says that they have quite a little information about how many become customers from the ones whom they talk to at a conference or who first visits a piece of content written by the Developer Relations team. He explains that they have a marketing dashboard which has data about how many views a specific piece of content written by a specific developer advocate has and how many qualified leads have come from that. The dashboard also has data about how many opportunities the sales team has discovered out of those and even how many actual deals have been closed. However, Person D is highly sceptical about this data and does not think it is accurate at all.

4.2.2.4 Sources of traffic

According to Person C, they have four primary sources of traffic. The first one is organic, which is based on how good the keywords are that have been used and how well the search engines can find the content. The organic traffic source is the most important one, and it counts for 60-70 per cent of all traffic. The second one is the referrals, and this means that someone has found the content to be so good that they would like to share it on their website or it is shared for example on a forum like Stack Overflow. A referral will drive traffic from the user base of the site the content shared on. As the third one she mentions Social Media, where Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the most used ones for written content, and YouTube is used for sharing the video content. The last source is paid advertisements. These can be either AdWords, which means banners and advertisements on different sites, or paid Facebook advertisements where they can target a particular audience. Person C describes her role as understanding the numbers behind each of the traffic sources. Related to this, she explains that the company has recently had

a drop in organic visits when they have done some changes in how their forum works, which has led to worse Search Engine Optimisation results. She is now working on understanding the reasons for this so they can solve the issue.

Person A also says that occasionally the company collaborates with partners to write content for another technology community or have someone write content for them in order to drive traffic from the user and customer base of the partners. As person B explains it, content is mainly written about the open source part of the technology, and their focus is on how to use the technology for different projects or how to integrate with other technologies. The Developer Relations team is mostly responsible for these collaborations. Also, more generic high-level content is written regarding for example industry trends. Most of the content available at their website does not require sign in or leaving contact details. However, for example, posting on the forum and downloading trial licenses requires the visitors to be registered to their website. Most suspects who try out the technology will, therefore, register to the website to get access to all content.

4.2.3 Inbound marketing with a freemium business model

When asked whether person B thinks it would be easier to do inbound marketing at a company that would not have the open source offering and business model as the case company has, person B answers that in a way he thinks it would be easier. He explains this by analysing the purchasing patterns of different products. When a person hears about the case company's products for the first time, it will take months for them to purchase anything. This is because of the domain the company is in and how complex the product is. Usually, a person would after the first time hearing about the case company's product, start reading about the technology. Most likely making some comparisons with other open-source technologies, which can be used for building web applications. In this stage the top-of-the-funnel content is necessary. If this phase goes well, then the person will probably register to the website, become a suspect and start testing out the technology. Perhaps building some small proof of concept applications. Commonly a developer is not doing this full-time, but as a side project at work or in their spare time. So it takes months before the entire process is done.

If everything goes well and the suspect is happy with the technology, then they need to have a project where to use the technology. A project might not come up right away, and it can take months before something surfaces. Once the project starts, depending on the budget and needs, they might be ready to discuss the value-adding products and services. As a comparison, person B mentions Grammarly, an online proofreading tool. He explains that when he purchased a Grammarly license, it was a very straightforward process. He heard about it, then read about it and tried it out, and purchased a license. He said the cycle was about one day.

4.2.4 The buyer journey

According to person A, the company does not have a defined buyer or customer journey, which they expect each new suspect to follow. He says that they have analysed the behaviour of suspects who only use the open source offering and compared this to customers that have purchased products or services, but not been able to identify a pattern. They do not either have a so-called *genre ecosystem* for their content, which means that whenever they produce a piece of content, it has a definite place in the ecosystem and contributes in generating a network of content which builds on each other.

The Lead Generation team was established to formalise the buyer journey and understand what kind of content should be available in each of the stages, from suspect to customer, to ensure maximum conversion. The team has recently been implemented so this is not yet finalised. Person C declares that they sort of have a buyer journey, but it is not ready yet. They are trying to map the user flows, but as there are so many, it is challenging to map all of those. She says that they do not have to cover 100 per cent of the user paths, but at least the most common ones. She adds that they should be thinking about it using the 80/20 rule if they can map the most common flows, that will maybe cover 80 per cent of the flows, and the remaining 20 per cent is something they can then slowly work on to achieve full coverage. She does in the end comment that there is a lot to do and that they do not have a clear picture of the flows yet. She also says that there are a lot of different opinions involved in the work, which makes it harder to reach an agreement on how and which ones to map.

Person C explains that they are currently using the lifecycle stages which are offered by Hubspot. The first lifecycle stage is the subscriber, which is a person they only know the email address of, nothing more. The next stage is the lead stage, which means a person who has downloaded any content. Person C does not like this definition and mentions that they are planning to change the lead stage to mean a person who is using the free open source products. The next stages are *Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL)*, which is a person that has a high enough lead score to be qualified for sales and then *Sales Qualified Lead (SQL)*.

Person A describes that the terms they use when the leads are moved from marketing responsibility to sales responsibility are Marketing Qualified Lead and Sales Qualified Lead. These are separate from the lead stages they have in the marketing end of the funnel, and the marketing stages lead up to these. As person B expresses it, when a lead becomes a Marketing Qualified Lead, that is when the marketing responsibility ends, and the sales responsibility starts. Because most of the suspects register to the company's website, which means they can track their behaviour and see which kind of content they consume, they can use their marketing automation software's automated lead scoring for identifying the Marketing Qualified Leads. Person A adds that the criteria for the automated lead scoring have been decided together by the sales and the marketing departments. Person B says that the responsibility for polishing these criteria has been dropped in the lap of the Lead Generation team. Person B would like to take a different approach to this where the entire business that the company does would be taken into consideration and the process designed separately for each type of customers they have.

As person B describes it, the company has product customers, service customers, self-service customers and customers who need to be contacted by sales. All of these segments have very different behaviours, very different lead cycles and different sales volumes. Person B would like to map them into their own journeys so they would have a better holistic understanding of what the full situation is and when a lead would come through one of these journeys, it would be easier to understand the background of this lead.

Both person A and person B describes that once a contact becomes a Marketing Qualified Lead, it is transferred to sales which will do a background check on each Marketing

Qualified Lead. Based on the background analysis, the Business Development Representatives from the sales department can accept or reject the Marketing Qualified Leads. As person A puts it, they can, for example, choose to reject it because the Marketing Qualified Lead is using a disposable email and sales cannot verify their background. Person B also adds that this described rejection phase means that a *Sales Accepted* stage is also used for the leads, even though it is not documented in the process, but in practice, there is such a stage when the Business Development Representatives evaluate the Marketing Qualified Leads and choose to accept or reject them. Whenever a Marketing Qualified Lead is rejected, the reason is filled in to the Customer Relationship Management system, and marketing will obtain feedback on how to improve the quality of the Marketing Qualified Leads. If the Business Development Representatives accept the Marketing Qualified Lead, they contact them, and if there is at least a need for anything commercial, they become a Sales Qualified Lead.

Person B's opinion is also that it has been incredibly challenging to find common ground for the handover of the leads from sales to marketing and to achieve a starting point upon which everyone would agree. One example of a debated topic is the sales accepted stage that he mentioned when describing the process. He also states that the entire lifecycle stage mapping that the company has done is based on the assumption that each customer would require to have a discussion and want assistance by a salesperson for purchasing the product or service the company is offering. This is however not the case, because the company also offers products that can be purchased from their webshop as self-service products. Person B sees that this segment has been overlooked when the process has been designed.

4.2.5 How to improve their inbound marketing

When asked how the company should improve their inbound marketing, person A said that they lack the strategy behind each piece of content and they should make it more structural. Understanding where in the buyer journey one specific piece of content fits in and what the next steps for the readers are once this content has been read. He says that there should be better call to actions for the readers and that they should use more progressive profiling, which means that when they move from one content to another, the

website presents a pop-up window for the users in which more questions about them are asked. These questions can be about the role of the person in the company he or she works in, or for example about how many people they employ. He also refers to an article he has read where there has been a positive correlation between the amount of information a person gives and the likelihood of that person purchasing something.

Person C explains that although she is not directly doing inbound marketing, just measuring the effects of it, one of the most essential improvements they have done in her opinion, is that they are now writing more high-level content about the industry for the top-of-the-funnel. Even though they have improved a lot in this area, Person C says that the non-branded high-level industry content, still only accounts for less than 2 per cent of their total traffic, which means that there is still a lot to do in this space. As a second point, she mentions the work they have done for mapping the user flows, although the work is not finished yet, much progress has been made. She also says that she thinks that mapping the user flows will contribute a lot to the success of their inbound marketing efforts in the future. For example, in the future, she thinks they will be able to personalise and optimise their messaging much more when they understand the user flows better.

Person B believes that they are offering the suspects plenty of help with their content and he is convinced this is the right content to be offering them. However, he also adds that the volumes are just too small and he is not sure if they are going to grow that much. To put this in perspective, he says that according to other companies he has spoken with, roughly 10-20 per cent of the commercial opportunities their sales team handle come from the contacts that go through the inbound marketing funnel and can be considered a direct result of their inbound marketing efforts. Person B continues with revealing that no-one in their company has defined what the accepted amount of commercial opportunities in their case would be, so he does not know if 10-20 per cent would be an acceptable level for them or not. This means that they do not know what successful inbound marketing in their case means and where they should be aiming, as the *Key Performance Indicators* (KPI) are missing. Currently, the message is that they are not getting enough of opportunities from the inbound marketing efforts. There is still no interest in investing the time needed to define the KPIs they would need, in order to understand what the company expectations are.

He also says that they are not taking the time to understand the lead behaviour well enough. For example, they do not know how long it takes for a suspect who goes through their inbound marketing funnel, to convert to a customer, compared to a lead that comes from another source to convert to a customer.

One of the challenges the case company is facing according to Person C is the lack of centralised planning. By this, she means that there are opinions from many people, which is good, but there should be still someone making the final decisions instead of the process being too democratic. She also explains that this is the way the company works, which means that many people express their opinions and things are discussed a lot before decisions are made. Sometimes this makes decision making difficult and slow. She agrees that it is good for people being allowed to express their opinions, but she thinks that better decisions could be made if the decisions were made based on the existing data and analysis instead of debating about opinions and gut feelings. She suggests that parts of it might also be due to the roles and responsibilities in the process being unclear and not defined well enough.

In some cases the responsibilities of the people on the marketing team overlap, and therefore the work becomes unproductive and can also cause conflicts between the employees when they have very different opinions on how something should be done. She highlights that they have very talented and skilful people working for the company, but the diffuse responsibility areas and the lack of authority cause in some cases the quality of work to suffer. Person D thinks that so far the new model with teams who focus on either top- or bottom-of-the-funnel, has been working out fairly well. According to him, they did not have any structure at all in the past, but instead everyone was doing a little bit of content here and there. Compared to that, this is a significant improvement, he declares.

Person C also says that the go-to-market strategy of the company is first to target the developers and produce content for them. She agrees that it might be the right strategy for selling the licensed products, but for the services business, she is sceptical whether the approach works. That is why she believes it is so important to understand the buyer

personas and create content for also the decision maker roles with more business-related content.

4.2.6 Measuring the success of inbound marketing

When Person C is asked about how they measure the success of their inbound marketing, she answers that it depends on the content and for which stage it is meant. If it is awareness content or top-of-the-funnel content, the goal is to acquire as many new and relevant visitors as possible. The key metrics would be the number of visitors and the second one would be the user retention metric from Google Analytics. The user retention metric is for understanding how many of the visitors come back to visit the website during the period after their first visit. Person D also states that the primary metric that is interesting for the Developer Relations team is the number of views and visitors that come to the website because of their content. For the bottom-of-the-funnel content, the metrics are different. Generally for this type of content, they would have a different click to action, for example filling in a contact form to download some gated content or downloading a trial license. In these cases, the main metric is the conversion rate, which refers to the number of people who download the content out of the total number of visitors.

Person A says that the number of opportunities coming through the marketing-sales funnel is still too low. He adds that because they operate mainly within their open source community, by industry standards everything they do is considered inbound. Approximately 7-10 per cent of the commercial opportunities they find come through the marketing-sales funnel, the rest are captured from different channels. This does not imply that the company's inbound marketing would not have been helpful, but it means that they are not succeeding in capturing 90 per cent of the commercial opportunities with their inbound marketing, but have to rely on more manual work. A large quantity of commercial opportunities come through the online chat, where the chat agents talk to website visitors. They are of course driven there by something, and it is safe to argue that at least some of them are likely visiting the site because of the content published as a part of the company's inbound marketing efforts.

4.2.7 Tools used to enable inbound marketing

Person A explains that the marketing team at their company use Hubspot for marketing automation. Hubspot was introduced roughly a year ago at the company. It plays the biggest role in enabling the personification of messages and content, as well as automating lead scoring. Hubspot is also used for creating gated content and gather more information about the suspects both by tracking what content they read and by using progressive profiling during the visit on the website. Because Hubspot keeps track of the activity of the suspects, it also gives the marketing and sales department a possibility to review the activity and try to find the patterns which can help in identifying the most potential suspects. As explained earlier in the thesis, the automated lead scoring produces the Marketing Qualified Leads that are transferred to sales for review. Automated lead scoring is a key feature of a marketing automation system. It would not be feasible to manually analyse all the suspects and their activity to otherwise identify these. Hubspot also allows the marketing team to create workflows, which for example activates email sequences, which means personified messages from sales representatives at the case company. The email sequences aim is to send automated but personified emails based on triggers. For example, after a Sales Qualified Lead visits a particular page, a sequence is activated and an email which is personified, using for example company information and information from the page they visited, is sent to the lead.

Person B expresses that he has been positively surprised by how powerful Hubspot is and how well it has worked for them. He adds that like any system, it has some limitations. One aspect of the system that he has noticed is not optimal for them is the mapping of multiple journeys. The case company has multiple products, and they have very different journeys for each of them, it is therefore difficult to map them because the system is built more for SaaS companies with only one product. In terms of identifying, tracking and enriching the data from the suspects, he thinks it works very well and provides accurate enough data. He does reveal in the end that he is not able to comment on whether the collaboration with the sales team works better because of using Hubspot as both Customer Relationship Management system and marketing automation system because he thinks the departments are still too siloed for that.

Person A says that in addition to Hubspot, the company uses Google Analytics for analysing the website visits. Which means that the visits to each content presented on the website will be measured, and this is used for understanding what content has been successful and attracted a high degree of engagement and many visits. Person D also mentions that Google Analytics is the most important tool for the Developer Relations team for collecting data on the success of the content his team of Developer Advocates produces. Of course, the Google Analytics data is an anonymous mass that the company can use to draw general conclusions of the popularity of their website and the separate pages on the website, but any individual buyer paths cannot be viewed with the tool.

The case company's website is the most vital tool to enable their content marketing and inbound marketing. All interviewees agree that the company's online presence is very focused on its website. They also see this as a challenge from the top-of-the-funnel point of view, because their work is to attract entirely new visitors. Person B stresses the importance of excellent search engine optimisation and also adds that they do write content in collaboration with other companies and communities to attract new users via them. The case company built their website themselves using their technology to prove the maturity of the technology. This proved a more extensive project than expected and has caused some difficulties in for example search engine optimisation and also for the content management. Now however when the website has been in use for a while, the situation is better. Because the company's business revolves around their open source community, they have an unusually large amount of content available for their users on their website. They have for example a lot of developer resources available for their users so that they can quickly get started with the technology. These resources are in written format in their blog, on their documentation site and the forum they host on their website. The forum contains both contents generated by the community, as well as the employees of the company.

Person C explains that in addition to understanding the user personas and having the content map, they also use a tool called Ahrefs for understanding which keywords are popular and about what they should consider writing. For example, when they decide to write about a specific topic, person C will check using Ahrefs what other topics are associated with the topic they have chosen, and can recommend them to include specific

keywords or to write the next content piece on one of the topics she has discovered using the tool. The tool provides them with difficulty scores for different keywords and the related topics, which tells them how much content has been written about that specific area, and therefore it signals how difficult it is to get their content to stand out. The scale for the difficulty score is between 1 and 100, and Person C explains that topics above 60 are already quite difficult to enter if without having a foothold already, and in those cases it might make sense to look at other keywords that are related or close, but would be less competitive and still drive enough traffic. What they are trying to do is to find the balance between having a decent amount of traffic and not being too competitive. She also says that with the industry knowledge they have, they can also use the tool for trying to identify trends before they become big. Person C is very data-driven and explains that of course this does not provide any exact answers to what they should be writing about, but it does provide them more data about what people are interested in and that way they can make better decisions. Person C also explains that because of license fees, they only have two users for the tool. She is one of the users, and the other one is Person B who is responsible for the Lead Generation team. Person C provides the insights she receives from using the tool to the persons writing the content.

Both person A and B describe their use of social media, for example, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn as channels to drive traffic to the content on their website. Google Ads is used, and Search Engine Optimisation is done to make their content better discoverable. Person B explains that they have now in the Lead Generation team started to approach social media with a more data-driven approach. They have put out new content and new campaigns on social media and as paid online advertisements, to improve their understanding of what works and what does not. Person B at the same time emphasises that data-driven decision making is a critical aspect of inbound marketing. Person D says that because the Marketing Communications team is handling the Social Media channels at the case company, the developer advocates publish the content, whether it is their own or some other content they find interesting, using their own social media profiles. The company's official social media accounts will then promote their private ones when they share something that the company officially wants to highlight. Person D claims that this highlights the developer advocates as experts in their fields, but it has made the case company relatively faceless on social media. The case company's profile is now someone

who is sharing mostly business content and not things that are of value for the developer directly.

4.3 Sales-marketing interface at the case company

Regarding the sales and marketing interface, person C states that in her previous experience, sales and marketing do not always work well together. When she started at the case company, there was very little collaboration done between sales and marketing. Both departments were working on their things, quite separately from each other. With the implementation of the Lead Generation team, inbound marketing and Marketing Qualified Lead / Sales Qualified Lead process, she feels the collaboration has improved dramatically.

Person A says that they used to have regular weekly meetings between sales and marketing when they were implementing Hubspot and defining the criteria for lead scoring. These were before done together, but the responsibility of defining what is marketing qualified lead, has now been moved to marketing, and sales will then decide whether they approve them or not. As described earlier, if they do not approve the marketing qualified lead, they provide feedback through the Customer Relationship Management system, which is then reviewed by marketing. Today they have more informal or ad-hoc sessions whenever there is something they need to discuss regarding the lead qualification process. Regarding the responsibilities between the departments, person B answers that the responsibilities are quite clear. Some parts still are open for debate and could be considered grey areas, for example when a lead goes through the funnel and is rejected by sales, what happens next. The lead might still be active on the site but has been deemed not interesting from a commercial point of view, so then it becomes unclear who is responsible for the lead now. The same applies to contacts marked not interesting in the Customer Relationship Management system. They still exist there but are not contacted by sales nor nurtured by marketing.

Person A reports that the sales team does not provide marketing with continuous feedback on what content they should publish or about what customers are saying. They have an internal website where anyone can log customer or community feedback. However, this

is mainly feedback for product development, not marketing. Sales, marketing, products and the CEO of the company, have a monthly meeting where they discuss the content marketing focus areas for the next month. The meeting is mainly for the Lead Generation team who is responsible for driving the marketing qualified leads to sales. Person D says that the Developer Relations team does not have that much official communication with the sales team, of course, they do chat with them in the office and might talk about the questions customers have been asking, and sometimes draw some ideas from that regarding content they should write. The more official collaboration with sales comes when they help out the sales team with customer meetings doing sales support or do presentations for customers about the technology.

When asked person A on how they could improve the sales-marketing interface, the first thing that comes up is goal setting. He suggests that they should have more combined targets with sales and marketing. The teams should have the same key performance indicators and metrics, although some teams in marketing work more with things that have a long-term impact, while some work more on the short-term marketing impact. Person B also states the lack of common goals as the biggest challenge and issue they have in the collaboration between the sales and marketing teams. He adds that the company is managed a lot by numbers and when the metrics are different for the sales and marketing teams, they end up siloed. The heads of the sales and marketing departments receive different messages on what they should focus on, and when those initiatives are cascaded, they become their isolated efforts which do not align the teams with striving towards the common goals.

An example of this would be that instead of the focus being in optimising the complete funnel to increase the number of total opportunities and revenue it generates, the sales team might have a focus of increasing product sales for this month while marketing should focus on increasing website visitors. Of course, more website visitors are useful for increasing product sales in the long run, but the metrics are too different for the teams to be aligned with their efforts. Person C also agrees that the teams are not aligned and the goal setting is completely different for both teams, which makes the collaboration sometimes difficult because both departments are of course focused on optimising their performance based on their goals.

Person A also hopes that the collaboration would be more agile because when sales give feedback from customers regarding some content or if there is some issue on the website or in the content posted, the response from marketing is not as fast as he would hope. Some of this is due to the slow processes in the marketing team. Person B, on the other hand, thinks that although they obtain a lot of feedback from the sales team in the form of data, e.g. numbers of how many Marketing Qualified Leads are accepted and how many rejected, they lack qualitative data about what is behind the numbers. He suggests that they would need to understand better what is behind the numbers and that this is the kind of dialogue they lack, between sales and marketing, but they have already started improving on it.

When asked if the company has one person who is in charge of both sales and marketing, person A explains that the company had a Chief Revenue Officer role for some time who was responsible for both sales and marketing at the company, but they went back to have separate leaders. Person A does think that sales concerns got more attention on the marketing side during the period when the Chief Revenue Officer was working, but this was mainly due to the Chief Revenue Officer having a sales background. Other than that he did not see any benefits with it. Person C thinks that to improve the collaboration between sales and marketing and to improve the alignment, it would make sense to have one person who would be leading both departments. She did not, however, have any specific comments regarding the Chief Revenue Officer they had, but in theory, she thinks it would be good for the company.

4.3.1 Tools used by sales

The sales team at the case company also use Hubspot's Customer Relationship Management system. Using Hubspot in both sales and marketing departments gives them easier integration between the marketing automation system and the Customer Relationship Management system. Both sales and marketing teams have access to both the marketing and the sales side of Hubspot. Hubspot was taken into use as a Customer Relationship Management system at the company roughly six months after marketing took the marketing automation version of Hubspot into use. The previous Customer Relationship Management system used by the company was SugarCRM. Hubspot offers

the essential Customer Relationship Management functions, like adding accounts, contacts, opportunities, call and email logs and forecasting as well as reporting. In addition to this, Hubspot has different prospecting tools that sales representatives can use to do their prospecting efforts. It also has features like saving leads for a call list, saving email templates that sales can reuse and building email sequences, which means that the system will automatically send a series of emails if the suspect does not answer. It also has advanced automation, for example, it can pick up companies from the email domains of people a sales representative is emailing with, and automatically fill in the company information under the account page.

The sales team at the case company also use additional tools for prospecting, like ZenProspect or Vainu. LinkedIn is also used a lot by the sales representatives. These tools are also used for gathering additional information about the marketing qualified leads and the suspects found within the community.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Buyer journeys and content maps

One of the biggest challenges the case company is facing is to be able to map the buyer journeys and to provide the right content for each step of the journey. In theory, it does not sound too difficult to plan content that would fit in different stages of the journey, but in practice, it is incredibly difficult because the users do not behave as expected. The case company is also struggling with the fact that they have many products and services they offer customers; thus, they would need to map out separate journeys for each of them and provide specific content for each of them. In order to do this, they would need to map out buyer personas for each of the products and services and think about what content would be useful for each persona and each product or service. It would be a massive effort, especially from the services marketing point of view, as there are so many different reasons and backgrounds for customers purchasing services. As also mentioned in the study, Hubspot, their marketing automation and Customer Relationship Management system, does not support multiple buyer journeys very well.

It would also impact the sheer scale of the content network and the map they need to have to support individual buyer journeys for each product or service they are offering. As a comparison, while a company offering an invoicing software-as-a-service would be able to map out, for example, five buyer personas and five buyer journeys, it would theoretically only require five different content pieces for each stage. The case company has the open source offering, and on top of those subscription products which consist of over ten smaller products and, in addition to that, they offer five if not over ten different kinds of services to their customers, which adds up to hundreds of pieces of content that needs to be very thoroughly planned and executed. Perhaps the inbound marketing approach is more suitable for companies with only one or a few highly specialised products, for which they can more easily identify the buyer journeys and produce the content for these. Also, the complexity of the case company's main product, the open source technology, requires a lot of very detailed technical content which makes it very time consuming to produce the needed content.

5.2 Combined KPIs and collaboration between teams

What was mentioned by all of the interviewees from the case company was the fact that they should have their KPIs better aligned. Kotler et al. (2006) describe this as friction between the sales and marketing teams which is caused by the situation that marketing tends to be focused on the long-term gain, while sales are more commonly focused on the short-term results.

At the case company, they seem to be struggling with their focus when the departments, as well as the teams in them, are measured based on different things, which means that even within the marketing team, there are conflicting goals. It is understandable that when the goals and KPIs are different for each team, it is difficult to align them. Most often there is also a performance-based compensation tied to reaching the individual goals, which means it steers the behaviour even more. All of the interviewees in this study agreed on this, but there was no discussion about whether this concern had been shared with the department heads or the management of the company and what the response has been.

Perhaps the implementation and execution of an inbound marketing strategy would be more straightforward if both sales and marketing departments were striving towards common goals during the implementation phase. The goals could then shift from, e.g. a top-of-the-funnel focus to a bottom-of-the-funnel one as progress has been made. It is clear of course that the sales departments cannot stop sales to focus on top-of-the-funnel alone, but with having at least some shared KPIs regarding increasing the awareness, perhaps the sales department would be encouraged more to share topics and ideas that could benefit the top-of-the-funnel. In the end, everyone benefits from having a higher volume of leads. It would require additional interviews and more research to be able to draw any conclusions.

According to Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) there fewer complaints from sales when the criteria of qualified leads are defined together with marketing and sales. As both person

A and person B said in the interview, they have formed the criteria together. Defining the criteria for qualified leads together, seemed to have improved the collaboration between the teams, as no complaints from the sales department were raised regarding the quality of leads, only the quantity. Person B also raised the concern that they do not have enough qualified leads that they can pass to the sales department. Person A also described that when the Marketing Qualified Leads are transferred from marketing to sales, the Business Development Representatives will first do a background check on them to choose whether they will accept them as Sales Qualified Leads or not. This phase also gives sales more control over the quality of the leads, and it seems that with it they have been able to remove the friction caused by inferior quality leads. If this process did not exist, it would be possible for marketing to increase the number of leads by lowering the acceptance criteria. It is a continuous balancing act between quality and quantity.

5.3 Inbound marketing and business model

As was mentioned by Person B, inbound marketing is likely to be more difficult with the business model the case company has. Case company's open source or freemium business model makes the need for top-of-the-funnel content more critical and makes the buyer journey longer than with a different business model. The first step is to create awareness and a journey for the individual developer to start using the free offering, and after that, the second phase is to map the journey for the company to buy any of the commercial products or services. A large amount of work is therefore put into creating content and optimising the journey for a free, open source product. When the case company has acquired a company or a developer as a user of the technology, they are not yet making any money on them, but then need to convert them from a user to a paying customer. A company without a freemium model would spend the same time acquiring them as a customer and immediately start to generate revenue from them. As in the Grammarly example presented by Person B.

The top-of-the-funnel content regarding the open source technology also needs to be targeted for the developer personas, as they are most commonly the ones who initially adopt the technology and introduce it at their company. The developers, however, rarely

have a budget for buying products, and certainly not services, which also affects the length of the sales cycle as additional people need to be involved in the decision making.

5.4 The marketing-sales funnel at the case company

If we compare the marketing-sales funnel depicted by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016), we can find numerous similarities with the one at the case company, but also some differences. The content delivery channels and content creation are very much aligned with how the case company does it. The case company in this study has many more lead stages compared to the example by Järvinen & Taiminen (2016). The case company has the first stage as the subscriber, which is someone they only know the email address of. Their next stage is lead, which is someone who has downloaded any of their content. The next is Marketing Qualified Lead that, if accepted by sales, becomes a Sales Qualified Lead. They do have additional stages in use in the sales department, but the primary measurement of the inbound marketing efforts is how many Sales Qualified Leads they produce.

As software tools, they use Hubspot for both marketing automation and Customer Relationship Management. It means that all leads, not only Marketing Qualified Leads, and Sales Qualified Leads, are visible to the sales team. It also enables the sales team to be able to investigate the background of the Marketing Qualified Leads very thoroughly before approving them as Sales Qualified Leads and also to contact leads that have not yet reached Marketing Qualified Lead stage. Using Hubspot for both marketing and sales also removes the need for an integration layer between them and thus reducing a need to maintain any additional integration layers.

6 ÖKA FÖRSÄLJNINGEN MED HJÄLP AV INBOUND MARKNADSFÖRING

Introduktion

Köpbeteendet inom handel mellan företag har ändrat betydligt de senaste åren. Tidigare var det vanligt att när ett företag var i behov av en tjänst eller produkt av ett annat företag, skickade de en offertförfrågan till potentiella leverantörer för att kunna utvärdera om deras tjänster eller produkter kunde vara av nytta. Enligt Lingqvist, Plotkin & Stanley (2015) är det som har ändrat att köpprocessen har blivit liknande som när konsumenter köper varor. Konsumenter är vana med att söka information på internet, diskussionsforum och sociala medier om produkter de är intresserade av, före de gör ett köpbeslut. Samma har nu blivit en del av det vanliga köpbeteendet i företagsvärlden och köparna på företag förväntar sig hitta information om tjänster och varor på internet för att kunna forska dem i förväg. Adamson et al. (2012) hänvisar till en studie av Corporate Executive Board där de kom fram till att cirka 60 procent av köpbeslutet har gjorts före någon kontakt har tagits med försäljningsavdelningen hos möjliga leverantören.

Samtidigt har också beslutsfattande hos organisationer blivit mer demokratiskt, vilket betyder att flera personer är involverade i själva köpbeslutet. Enligt Schmidt et al. (2015) är det i medeltal 5,4 personer involverade i ett köpbeslut i en organisation vare sig det är ett litet eller ett stort företag. Eftersom 60 procent av beslutet är gjort före köpandet har företaget varit i kontakt med den säljande parten, betyder det att företag förlorar potentiella affärer utan att ens veta om det.

Inbound marknadsföring och innehållsmarknadsföring

För att bättre kunna erbjuda potentiella kunder den information de behöver för att göra ett köpbeslut, har företagen börjat erbjuda sina kunder mer digitalt innehåll om sina produkter och tjänster så att potentiella kunder kan bättre bekanta sig med produkterna och tjänsterna på förhand. Detta är en ny utveckling inom marknadsföring som kallas för *innehållsmarknadsföring*. Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) säger att syftet med

innehållsmarknadsföring är att väcka kundens intresse genom intressant och interaktivt innehåll som ger kunden värde och bidrar till ett köp av en produkt eller service. Innehållsmarknadsföring är en del av inbound marknadsföring. Opreana & Vinerean (2015) beskriver digital inbound marknadsföring som processen av att nå ut till och konvertera kvalificerade konsumenter genom att skapa och driva organiska marknadsföringstaktiker i en online miljö. Det betyder att man måste erbjuda de rätta personer den rätta informationen vid rätt tillfälle. Det är meningen att informationen erbjuds när personen är intresserad av ämnet, till exempel då de söker med vissa sökord på internet. Därefter måste man ha ett sätt att förankra den informationen de har läst till företagets produkter eller tjänster och att samla information om den personen eller de personer som har läst innehållet. Ett vanligt sätt är att ett företag erbjuder artiklar eller fallstudier på sin webbsida som kan laddas ner. De kan handla om någon av deras kund och hur de har fått nytta av att använda de produkter företaget erbjuder. Dessa artiklar och fallstudier är gratis för vem som helst att ladda ner, men man är tvungen att fylla i sina kontaktuppgifter för att kunna ladda ner dem. Då har marknadsföringen och försäljningen hos företaget som skrivit innehållet fått en värdefull kontakt, eftersom de vet inte bara vem personen är, utan vad den personen är intresserad av eftersom det vet vilken text personen har laddat ner. De kan då kontakta personen för att berätta mer om sina produkter och föra affären vidare.

För framgångsrik inbound marknadsföring behövs också *sökmotoroptimering*, social media marknadsföring och *marketing automation*. Ledford (2015) beskriver sökmotoroptimering som en marknadsföringsmetod för att förbättra upptäckbarheten på en webbsida och dess innehåll. Detta är viktigt för att när den potentiella kunden letar efter möjliga lösningar på internet, måste den hitta den mest relevanta information. Sociala medias roll ser Wall & Spinuzzi (2018) som väldigt väsentligt när det gäller att driva läsare till innehållet företagen publicerar på sin webbsida. Detta handlar oftast om att man skriver ett inlägg på en social media plattform där man använder en del av texten och sedan länkar till innehållet på webbsidan. Ahmad et al (2016) betonar att det är väldigt viktigt att dela innehåll av bra kvalitet på social media för att attrahera läsare att besöka webbsidan regelbundet. Med marketing automation syftar man till ett informationssystem som automatiserar delar av marknadsföringsarbetet och samlar information om företagets målgrupp. Heimbach et al (2015) beskriver ursprunget till marketing automation som att

ta konceptet från Customer Relationship Management system, där försäljarna samlar information om sina kunder för att bättre förstå dem, och applicera det till en stor massa av personer. I praktiken betyder det att marketing automation -system samlar information om besökarna på företagets webbsida, om vilka sidor de besökt och vilka texter de läst på webbsidan, för att sedan erbjuda dem personifierade meddelanden och erbjudanden. Detta har inte varit möjligt tidigare eftersom ingen har haft möjlighet att manuellt gå igenom och samla all denna information. Marketing automation -system ger också möjlighet till att på väldigt detaljerad nivå mäta hur bra en viss artikel presterat då det enkelt går att samla information om hur många har läst texten.

Eftersom syftet med inbound marketing är att till slut öka försäljningen och generera bättre kontakter till försäljningsavdelningen, är det viktigt att samspelet mellan marknadsföringen och försäljningen fungerar bra. Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) skriver att ett tätt samarbete mellan försäljningsavdelningen och marknadsföringen behövs för att integrera innehållsmarknadsföring i försäljningsprocessen. Ett av de nyckelområden de lyfter fram där samarbete är viktigt, är kvalificering av potentiella kunder. Med det menar de att marknadsföringen får betydligt färre klagomål av försäljningen gällande kvaliteten av kontakter då försäljningen har fått vara med om att definiera vilka kontakter kan betraktas som redo för att försäljarna ska kontakta dem.

Metodik

Forskningsmetoden i denna studie är en kvalitativ fallstudie där en organisation studeras. Bryman (2012) beskriver en fallstudie som en passande forskningsmetod då man intensivt studerar ett fenomen i en enda organisation. Fallet i denna studie är hur organisationen i fråga utför inbound marknadsföring, vilka verktyg de använder och hur samarbetet mellan deras marknadsföringsavdelning och försäljningsavdelning fungerar. Organisationen i fråga har valts för att de håller på att ta i bruk en inbound marknadsföringsstrategi och förvandla sin marknadsföringsavdelning och försäljningsavdelning för att bäst stöda detta initiativ. Företaget som studeras är ett Finskt teknologiföretag med kontor i Finland, Tyskland och USA. De säljer produkter och tjänster till både inhemska och internationella kunder. Deras webbsida är deras absolut viktigaste plattform för att dela innehåll och de

har inga fysiska produkter eller affärer. Detta betyder att inbound marknadsföring är en väldigt passande marknadsföringsstrategi för dem.

Datat har samlats genom semistrukturerade intervjuer med personer från både marknadsförings- och försäljningsavdelningen. Enligt Bryman (2012) är semistrukturerade intervjuer ett bra sätt att samla data eftersom att det ger intervjuobjektet mycket rum i hur de vill svara på frågorna, men samtidigt kan man hålla fokus på de relevanta frågorna med hjälp av en intervju guide. De utvalda temana för intervjuerna är: (1) inbound marknadsföring i er organisation, (2) verktyg ni använder för att möjliggöra inbound marknadsföring, (3) samarbetet mellan er försäljnings- och marknadsföringsavdelning, (4) verktygen som försäljningsavdelningen använder. Nedan en tabell med en lista av de intervjuade personerna.

Tabell 1. Intervjuobjekten

Identifierare	Titel och roll/ansvarsområde	Avdelning	Intervjulängd
A	Head of Product Sales Ansvarar för ett team av <i>Business Developmern Representatives</i> (BDR) som jobbar med anskaffning av nya kunder, och <i>Account Managers</i> (AM) som jobbar med produktförsäljning.	Försäljning	33 min
B	Head of LeadGen team Leder <i>Lead Generation</i> (LeadGen) gruppen som jobbar med att producera innehåll om kommersiella produkterna och generera kontakter till försäljningen.	Marknadsföring	48 min

C	Customer Lifecycle Manager Ansvarar för att göra sifferanalyser för marknadsföringsavdelningen gällande olika innehåll och kampanjer de gör.	Marknadsföring	38mins
D	Lead Developer Advocate Ansvarar för att producera det tekniska innehållet för utvecklare som använder sig av företagets teknologi.	Marknadsföring	22 mins

Resultat och diskussion

Det studerade företaget har en *freemium* affärsmodell. Det betyder att deras teknologi baserar sig på öppen källkod, vilket betyder att den är gratis att använda. Företaget säljer tjänster och produkter till utvecklare och företag som använder deras öppna teknologi. Deras affärsmodell är därmed lite annorlunda än vad som är vanligt när det gäller handel mellan företag. De började med att ta i bruk inbound marknadsföring hösten 2017. De har alltid skrivit mycket innehåll, bloggar och tekniska exempel, men inte haft ett system för hurdant innehåll de skriver eller för att samla in information om läsarna. De har nu börjat kartlägga alla olika personer som är involverade i köpet av deras produkter och tjänster och hurdant innehåll de behöver för att stöda deras beslutsfattande. De har olika personer i marknadsföringsavdelningen som är ansvariga för att skriva innehåll för de olika faserna i köpprocessen och de olika personligheterna. Marknadsföringen har helhetsansvaret på hurdant innehåll de skriver och planerar detta huvudsakligen inom deras avdelning, utan att fråga råd av de olika avdelningarna inom företaget. Deras huvudsakliga verktyg är Hubspot, som användas både för marketing automation av marknadsföringsavdelningen och som CRM-system av försäljningsavdelningen.

En av de största utmaningarna som det studerade företaget arbetar med är att kartlägga köpprocesserna för varje produkt och tjänst, och att erbjuda rätt innehåll för varje steg i

processen. En av orsakerna till att det är så svårt är för att användarna beter sig inte som förväntat, utan deras beteende är mer planlös, vilket gör det svårt att kunna kartlägga köpprocessen. Den andra orsaken som gör det så svårt är för att de har så många produkter och tjänster som de erbjuder sina kunder, vilket betyder att de borde kartlägga köpprocessen för varje enskild produkt och tjänst. Det är ett väldigt stort arbete för att det finns så många olika orsaker och bakgrunder till att köpa produkterna och tjänsterna. Från innehållsmarknadsföringen perspektiv så betyder det också att de borde ha en enorm mängd av innehåll till köpprocessen av varje enskild produkt eller tjänst.

Något som nämndes av alla som intervjuades var att deras mål borde överensstämma med varandra. Det har orsakat friktion och svårigheter att fokusera på de rätta saker då personerna involverade mäts på olika saker. Målen är inte bara olika för försäljnings- och marknadsföringsavdelningen utan också inom marknadsföringsavdelningen mäts personer på olika saker som gör det svårt att samarbeta. Kotler et al (2006) skriver att det är vanligt med friktion mellan försäljnings- och marknadsföringsavdelningen, eftersom marknadsföringen ofta fokuserar på långsiktiga nyttan medan försäljningen är mer fokuserad på att få kortsiktiga resultat. Detta kunde eventuellt förbättras med att ha gemensamma mål under en implementationsperiod där man fokuserar på att få en viss del att inbound marknadsföringen att fungera och sedan skifta allas fokus till nästa del efter en viss period.

Det kom också fram under intervjuerna att inbound marknadsföring antagligen är svårare med den affärsmodellen som det studerade företaget har. De är först tvungna att få kunden att använda deras gratisprodukt före det blir relevant för dem att marknadsföra deras kommersiella produkter och tjänster. Det betyder att företaget är tvunget att lägga en hel del arbete till att producera innehåll och kartlägga köpprocessen för en produkt som är gratis. När de fått en utvecklare eller ett företag att använda deras teknologi, tjänar de ännu inga pengar på det utan måste sedan konvertera dem till en betalande kund. Det betyder alltså också att resan från potentiell användare till betalande kund är väldigt lång i jämförelse med ett företag som har en vanligare affärsmodell där de inte har en gratisversion av sin produkt.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Interview guide

THEMES

- Inbound marketing at your company
- Tools used to enable inbound marketing
- Sales and marketing interface
- Tools used by sales

Inbound marketing at the company

- Tell me in your own words, how do you do inbound marketing?
- How do you decide what content to write?
 - o How do you define top-of-the-funnel, middle-of-the-funnel, bottom-of-the-funnel content?
 - Is pricing page bottom-of-the-funnel content?
 - o How do you drive traffic to your content?
 - o How do you measure the success of your inbound marketing?
- Have you defined a buyer / customer journey, i.e. how a lead becomes a customer or sales qualified lead?
 - o How does it look like?
 - o Do you know how many are in each stage?
 - o How do you define a marketing lead and a sales lead?
- How would you like to improve your inbound marketing?
 - o What are the benefits / drawbacks you see with your current process?

Tools used to enable inbound marketing

- What tools do you use in your marketing department to enable inbound marketing?
- How often do you review your tools and / or evaluate new tools?

Sales and marketing interface

- How does sales and marketing work together in your company in terms of inbound marketing? (e.g. responsibilities, processes)
- What are the main challenges you face with your sales marketing interface regarding inbound marketing?
- How would you improve the sales and marketing interface?

Tools used by sales

- What tools does your sales department use?
- Do you have shared tools with sales and marketing?
- How often do you review your tools and / or evaluate new tools?