CASE STUDY
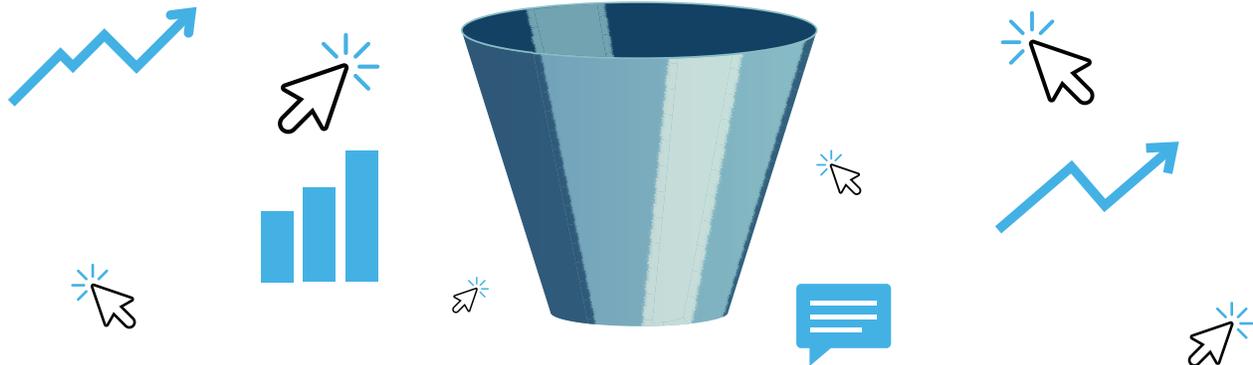
How Inbound Advocates Helped One Mainframe Security ISV Dramatically Boost Online Contacts, Eventually Leading to Acquisition

Mainframe ISV Client

Inbound Advocates [a DBA of Perri Marketing Inc.] began working with our first client, an independent software vendor in mainframe security, in 2011. This client was looking to sell its leading-edge InfoSec software and services to the Fortune 1000 in banking, finance, government, and healthcare to compete with software giants like IBM, Compuware, HP, MicroFocus, and others. When we were hired, the company operated essentially as a four-man shop, all working remotely out of their respective homes. They'd recently developed a sales team and corporate strategy but had no marketing personnel within the company. They hired Inbound Advocates in 2011, to help them "punch above their weight." Or, in other words, appear as a larger vendor than they were to attract higher profile prospects and compete with the software giants, while flying under the radar as an ISV. Because this client is an InfoSec vendor, we are choosing to keep them anonymous.

Client Needs

A marketing ally. The client had boots on the ground, but virtually no marketing strategy or collateral to help drive leads through the sales pipeline. Our first step was to listen to the sales team's needs and form a marketing strategy around those needs. We discovered that once the sales contact was made, the salespeople needed other resources for prospects to consult [a modern website, an up-to-date blog, thought-leading whitepapers, case studies] to investigate them as potential software provider, and engage with the sales team.

CRM & Marketing Automation. This client was wasting valuable time manually sorting through prospects in silos to develop sales qualified leads, essentially operating through a rolodex, Microsoft Outlook, spreadsheets, and partner referrals. By continuing to use this dated approach to sales prospecting, they were never going to be able to reach the market effectively and compete with the larger vendors in their space. Without the benefits of CRM and marketing automation they could not score leads and prioritize them by hot, medium, or "not ready, needs further nurturing." After researching many vendors across the pricing spectrum from free/relatively inexpensive, to very expensive, we chose a new vendor making a splash in the marketplace — HubSpot. As early adopters of HubSpot, we affectively became early adopters of marketing automation for this ISV. This best-practice approach to prospecting let the sales team focus on middle-to-bottom of the funnel activities while we used the content we created for them to automate the top of the funnel.

Thought leading content. For this client, and many of the other ISVs we work with, the sale cycle is long and arduous. Most of our client's customers are in the Global 1000, or organizations in the public sector, and their software purchases often take longer than a year and multiple executive-level decision makers to come to a purchasing agreement. To move to the next stage in the sales cycle with these customers, our client needed to bring new and noteworthy information and content to each interaction. This is where Inbound Advocates has made the biggest impact with this — and all — clients.

Many vendors in this mainframe space continue to write promotional copy about how great their software is. Our goal was to establish our client as a thought leader in the industry, and this required more than company and product descriptions in marketing communications and advertisements. It required understanding the prospects' pain points and researching the writing about relevant solutions to these problems. We helped the client tell stories about their successes, taking the tech speak out content and turning it into business language that decision makers would understand and would make the case for a software purchase to their CxOs and boards of directors. And perhaps more importantly, we crafted content with the prospect's buying process in mind. After working with sales leaders for over 20 years, we understand what they need to inform their prospects buying processes, and market to them with that in mind.

Our Method

For this ISV, we started by integrating their CRM and added HubSpot. By doing this, we automated the top of their sales funnel with lead scoring. We started nurturing campaigns with their contacts to funnel their prospects into Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs) and sent out targeted emails to various contact lists. To make these email campaigns successful, we needed to create a diverse content library. So, we began by writing case studies and whitepapers.

We also leveraged the information in this long-form content to develop smaller, short-form pieces of content like press releases and blogs. Repurposing the content helped generate more interest for our client by giving researching prospects smaller bits of information to consume, and in doing so, we gave the client a greater return on larger writing projects with minimal added effort.

We firmly believe that on-target content is one of the most important assets we can deliver to our clients, and today we are still producing whitepapers for the company that acquired them. Establishing this client as a thought leader in their industry is one of the most valuable tools we used to grow leads through inbound marketing. We leveraged CRM and marketing automation technology, and captured web visitor information via HubSpot, tracking every call to action. Since our content was informative and helpful to people searching for more information about mainframe security, we captured high converting leads through organic search. All of this helped improve SEO rankings organically, as well as capture the influx of website visitors' information who came as a result of our inbound efforts.

In addition to our content creation, we helped generate new leads by finding, coordinating, and attending tradeshows, and creating all the visual promotional materials and sales collateral for the booths. We also began advertising campaigns to supplement conferences and other campaigns in IBM Systems Magazine, the largest publication targeting the mainframe industry.

All these efforts helped churn the top of the sales funnel, prioritizing suspects to qualified leads for follow-up. The prospects not quite ready to engage were further nurtured in HubSpot, and it created a healthy top of funnel.
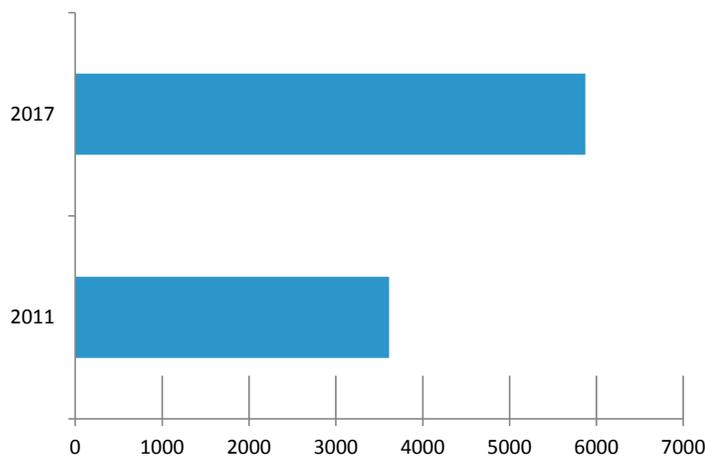
The Results

"To succeed in a specialized tech market like ours, you simply can't settle for an average marketing firm or PR agency. You need experts who know this software space and how our prospects purchase software, and we get that from Inbound Advocates."
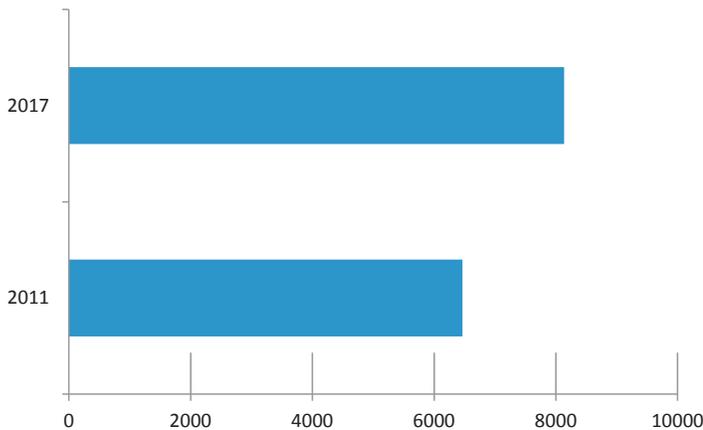
– CEO of Mainframe Security Software Vendor
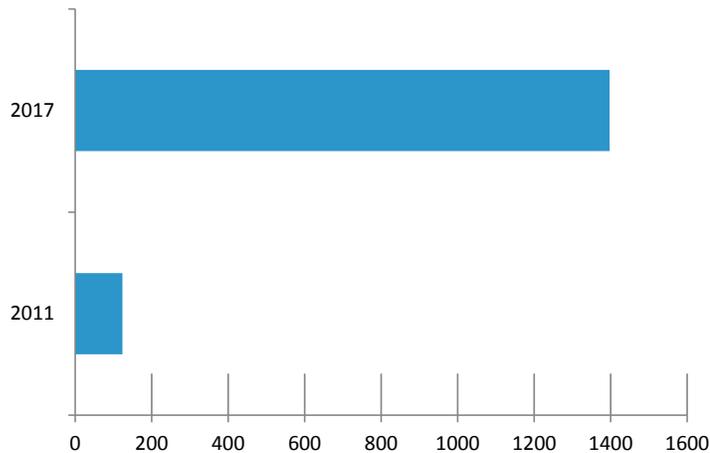
Email Web Referrals

Email web referrals increased 1036%

Organic Search

Organic Search increased 63% from 3,600 sessions in Q4 of 2011 to nearly 6,000 sessions in Q4 of 2017 without the use of Google AdWords or any other CPC advertising.

Aggregate Traffic

Web traffic increased 26% from Q4 of 2011 to in Q4 of 2017.

Inbound Advocates and this client have grown together since our partnership began in 2011, and to date we've helped them grow from <$100k in sales to acquisition by one of the largest software vendors in the world. We were able to take marketing off their plate, providing it as a service which let them focus more on what they are good at — selling software — while we handled the top of their sales funnel. We helped this mainframe client achieve their exit strategy, and they accomplished this goal with an entirely bootstrapped effort assisted by Inbound Advocates.

More About Inbound Advocates

Inbound Advocates is an end-to-end marketing agency and marketing technology software vendor for enterprise software vendors that endure long sales cycles in InfoSec, CRM, ERP/Logistics, Network Management, and Service Management. We can provide both the MarTech you need to grow your contact database, as well as the content to fuel the marketing automation and CRM engines.

Inbound Advocates has been providing lead gen, marketing technology, marketing operations, research & copywriting, PR, and/or metrics and reporting for clients since 2011. And we do this for Independent Software Vendors across both Win/UNIX/Open Source and IBM z/OS systems alike. Let's talk! Maybe we can help you grow your business too.

Contact Inbound Advocates for a free 30-minute consultation where we can assess your business goals and begin turning content around for you in a matter of days! For more information, visit inboundadvocates.com, contact us via phone at (423) 212-3127, or email at moreinfo@inboundadvocates.com.