Creating a Content Marketing Strategy in HubSpot

SmartBug.

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Introduction

When it comes to inbound marketing, we all know Google calls the shots. This can make creating content that meets Google's criteria du jour and attracts the right prospects feel like a moving target.

To improve your odds of hitting the Google algorithm sweet spot, you need a cohesive content marketing strategy that seamlessly applies tactics like SEO and link building to content such as blogs, e-books, and pillar pages that you can leverage via Google to attract new leads.

Using one of SmartBug's own content marketing successes to illustrate the process, we will walk you through how to create a content marketing strategy from ideation and goal setting to execution and results gathering. But first, a little backstory.

In 2013, SmartBug released The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas. To date, this e-book has been downloaded more than **11,400 times**. Based on the resource's popularity, SmartBug decided to springboard off of the e-book, turning the content into a pillar page with a PDF download.

You can view the original guide here:
https://www.smartbugmedia.com/inbound-marketing-personas.

We will use this pillar page throughout this guide to demonstrate techniques and best practices for implementing a content marketing strategy in HubSpot. However, it's important to note that pillar pages and other forms of content are just one part of the overall content strategy.

We opted to use a pillar page for our example because Google finds them attractive. Pillar pages provide broad coverage of a select topic on a single page. They also act as topic hubs, linking out to additional content covering a variety of related sub-topics. This arrangement lets Google know that your pillar page is a great place to send people to learn about the core topic, which increases organic traffic and your search ranking.

For example, because SmartBug had already published multiple blog articles about marketing personas, we were able to use existing content to create a topic cluster that supports the pillar page's core topic of "marketing personas."

More info about pillar pages and topic clusters is available here:
https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-a-pillar-page.

SmartBug created this content marketing guide incorporating HubSpot Academy's best practices and pro tips so that you can replicate the steps we took in your own marketing efforts. By following the steps in this guide, you will learn how all of the different tools tie together, and you will be able to conduct your research, set up everything in HubSpot, promote your content, follow up with leads, and evaluate the effectiveness of your own content strategy.

CHAPTER 1

Set the Stage

SMART Goals

As with any marketing project, you should set SMART goals at the beginning. SMART goals are:

S pecific
M easurable
A ttainable
R elevant
T imely

In marketing, SMART goals often equate to visits, contacts, and customers (although you can also make goals around social shares, email opens, and more granular aspects).

Because we're focusing on how to create a content marketing strategy, your SMART goals might look something like these:

- Publish four SEO-optimized blog posts per week to increase organic sessions by 25 percent over the next 12 months.
- Increase CTR by 10 percent this calendar year by redesigning and A/B testing all blog content offer CTAs.

When preparing your SMART goals, the metrics you measure will be specific to what you hope to achieve with the content you are creating and where you are in your journey. For example, if you are kicking off your first content marketing effort, instead of tracking leads, it makes more sense to set a goal to increase organic traffic to your site before shifting focus to leads.

Looking specifically at our pillar page example, start by reviewing past results if you have them and asking what you can realistically achieve beyond that. In general, visits, contacts, and customers are solid metrics to evaluate, but be sure to personalize your goals and metrics for each campaign.

Visits: Even if it's your first pillar page, you can still look at webpages that have performed particularly well and estimate the number of visitors based on those figures.

Contacts: Using the number of contacts for a goal is a bit more tricky with a pillar page. Because you are giving the content away for free, you can't accurately compare it to your most popular gated offer. However, if your promotional plan is robust enough, the amount of traffic to the page might make up for the difference in download rate.

Customers: Based on the number of contacts you expect to achieve, what is your typical new contact-to-customer rate?

> **Learn more about SMART goals in the HubSpot Master Class, "SMART Goals: The Power of Goal Setting," here:** https://offers.hubspot.com/charles-duhigg-master-class.

Buyer Personas

It doesn't make sense to create content if you don't know who you are creating it for.

Before writing content for clients, SmartBug creates buyer personas—fictional representations of your ideal buyers—so that all blog posts, e-books, and resources target, bring value to, and attract the right person.

For example, the primary persona for SmartBug's e-book The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas is Marketing Mary, displayed below.

> **You can learn much more about the value of buyer personas by downloading The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas here:** https://www.smartbugmedia.com/inbound-marketing-personas.

Marketing Mary

Goals

- Seeks to gain more responsibility and earn the reputation as a strong contributor
- Enjoy job security as a trusted lieutenant of the marketing management team
- Stay educated about digital and the tools she uses

Common Pain Points

- Budget constraints discomfort asking for more $$
- At the mercy of approval delays
- May not be empowered enough to make decisions she knows are correct

Your Solution

- Delivery strategy and tactics that help her meet her goals
- Reporting and reccomendations she can present to management

Pro Tip

Once you've learned how to create buyer personas for your company, add them to HubSpot's persona contact property to help you target the right groups.

> **Learn how to add personas in HubSpot here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/contacts-user-guide-v2/how-to-create-personas.

Buyer Personas

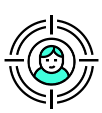
Keyword research is an essential step in building your content marketing strategy. Not only does it help you pinpoint the right keywords to target, but it also helps shape your content by identifying questions and pain points your ideal audience needs to address.

There are a few different ways to approach keyword research. At SmartBug, we use tools like Semrush or Moz Pro to find out which keywords our clients—and their competitors—are ranking for so we know where the gaps are.

Using this information, we create content on the same topics as the competition and try to outrank them, or we optimize the client's currently ranking pages to improve their rank.

In the latter case, we sort the results into two categories:

Low-hanging fruit: You have a webpage that is currently ranking between 11-30 for a good keyword, and you want to focus on getting it onto the first page of Google results.



Next-level targets: You have a webpage that is ranking 31-100 for a good keyword, and you want it to rank better.

> **Info on how to use Moz Pro is available here:**
> [https://moz.com/help/guides/getting-started.](https://moz.com/help/guides/getting-started)

Another approach is to start your keyword research by brainstorming a list of keywords you want to rank for. If you have a certain topic you want to stick to, keep your research focused on that area. Otherwise, feel free to get creative with your topics and see where it leads.

Once you're out of ideas, type each keyword into Google and scroll to the bottom of the first page, where you'll see other searches related to your key term. Add all relevant ones to your list.

For example, when searching Google for "marketing personas," these terms are at the bottom of the page:

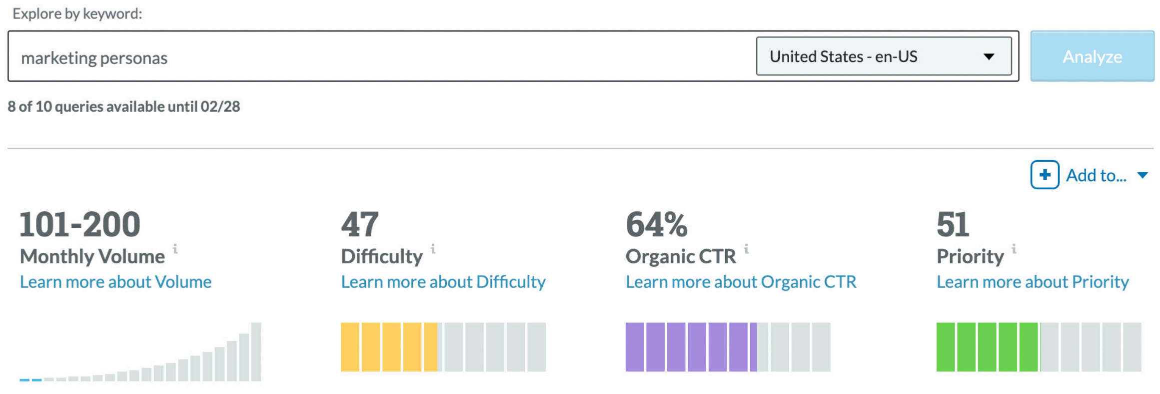
- marketing personas **examples**
- **persona in digital** marketing
- marketing personas **template**
- **company persona examples**
- **how to use** marketing personas
- **target audience persona example**
- **customer persona**

Using a tool like Moz's Keyword Explorer can help you find even more keywords and evaluate them for effectiveness and obtainability.

To get started, upload your brainstorm keywords into a new keyword list in Moz. (If you are researching multiple topics, you may need to create several lists.)

Then use Keyword Explorer to find more keywords related to your topic and add those to the list. You can even search by domain to see what keywords your competitors are ranking for and add those to your list, as well.

Keyword Explorer lets you view each keyword's monthly volume and how difficult it will be to rank for that keyword. For example, searching "marketing personas" brings up the following results:



From there, narrow down your list of keywords to the top candidates by picking keywords that have at least 100 monthly searches and a relatively low difficulty score.

> **Info on how to use Moz's Keyword Explorer is available here: https://moz.com/help/guides/keyword-explorer.**

You may decide to focus all your efforts on one low-hanging-fruit term or perhaps several keywords from your brainstorm with high priority scores. In either case, the above methodologies will assist you in identifying keywords for your pillar page and supporting blog posts.

Content Strategy

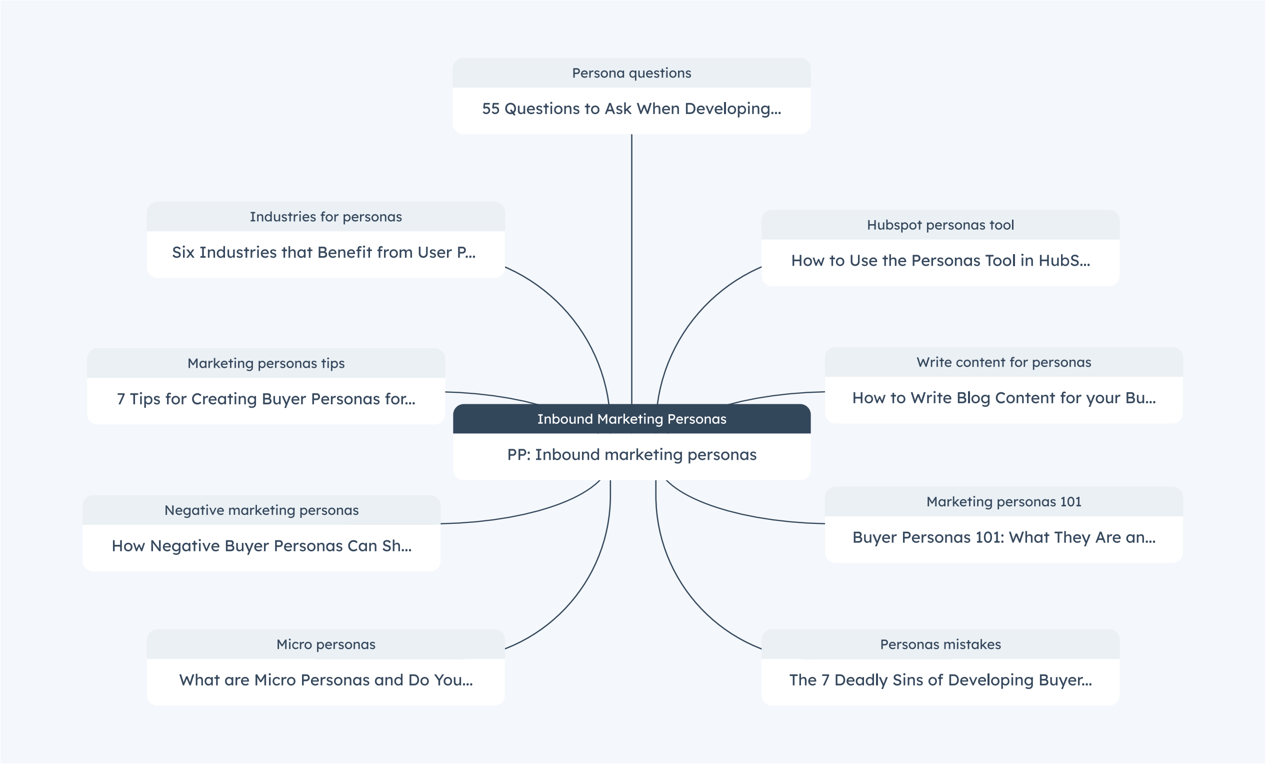
Once you've identified the keywords you want to go after with your pillar page and blog posts, it's time to scour the web to find out what questions people are asking when it comes to those keywords.

Semrush and AnswerThePublic are great places to search for your top keywords. You'll also want to check out industry forums and social media groups to gather information about the problems people are having and what they really want to know about the keywords.

These questions and pain points will help you create topics for your pillar page and supporting blog posts.

The SEO tool in HubSpot will also help you identify blog posts to support your pillar page content with a "topic cluster." Once you type in your core topic, the HubSpot AI (artificial intelligence) engine will suggest subtopics that people might be interested in.

For example, the SmartBug team created the following topic cluster for "Inbound Marketing Personas":



Using your web research as well as the SEO tool, you'll want to define two things:

- First, determine what content will be on your pillar page. An outline or chapter headings will be helpful in nailing this down.
- Second, choose your list of supporting blog post subtopics. (The HubSpot's SEO tool currently supports up to 22 blog posts, but you could use as many as you want.) These topics should be related to the main pillar content but not exactly replicated on the page.

> **Info on how to use the SEO tool in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/seo/view-seo-recommendations-in-hubspot

Pro Tip

Think of your pillar pages as living documents that need to be constantly iterated on. Once you create a pillar page, you need to review the stats and metrics regularly to see how they are performing and what you need to tweak.

To learn a step-by-step process on how to plan and create your topic cluster, go here: https://academy.hubspot.com/courses/content-marketing.

CHAPTER 2

Create the Content

For your content marketing strategy to succeed, all of your content must be written both to the keywords and to your target persona if you want to attract the right leads.

But we'll talk about implementing your content strategy in a minute. For now, let's take a break and focus on creating great content.

SmartBug has tons of resources to teach you how to write compelling copy and provide value to your audience, but here are a few you definitely don't want to miss:

- Know Your Audience: Writing for Different Buyer Personas
- 10 Different Blog Post Types and How to Use Them
- Beyond the Basics: Next-Level Tips for Writing Inbound Blog Articles
- Where Does Blogging Fit Into Your Content Marketing Strategy?
- Anatomy of an Inbound Marketing Blog Article: The Introduction
- Content Marketing Workbook (This workbook will allow you to apply learnings from HubSpot Academy's Content Marketing Certification.)

Side note:
You'll also need to consider the design of the PDF version of your offer. There are many templates out there, or you can hire a freelancer if you don't employ in-house graphic designers.

> **HubSpot offers free marketing resources, including e-book templates available here:** https://www.hubspot.com/resources/e-book.

CHAPTER 3

Implementation

Campaign Tool

The campaign tool in HubSpot is a way to organize all of your efforts. It's commonly used to tag all of the components of the launch of a piece of content, but it can also be used to group together other types of activities, such as digital efforts related to a tradeshow or promotional sale.

For our pillar page example, you'll want to use HubSpot campaign best practices to track and organize items for the initial 90-day launch. It's easiest to create the campaign first so you can attach components as you go.

> **Make sure to add any key dates as well as your SMART goals to the campaign. Info on how to create a campaign in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/campaigns-user-guide-v2.

Website Pillar Page

If your website is hosted on HubSpot, you will create the pillar page just like any other webpage.

Here are some elements you may want to include on your webpage:

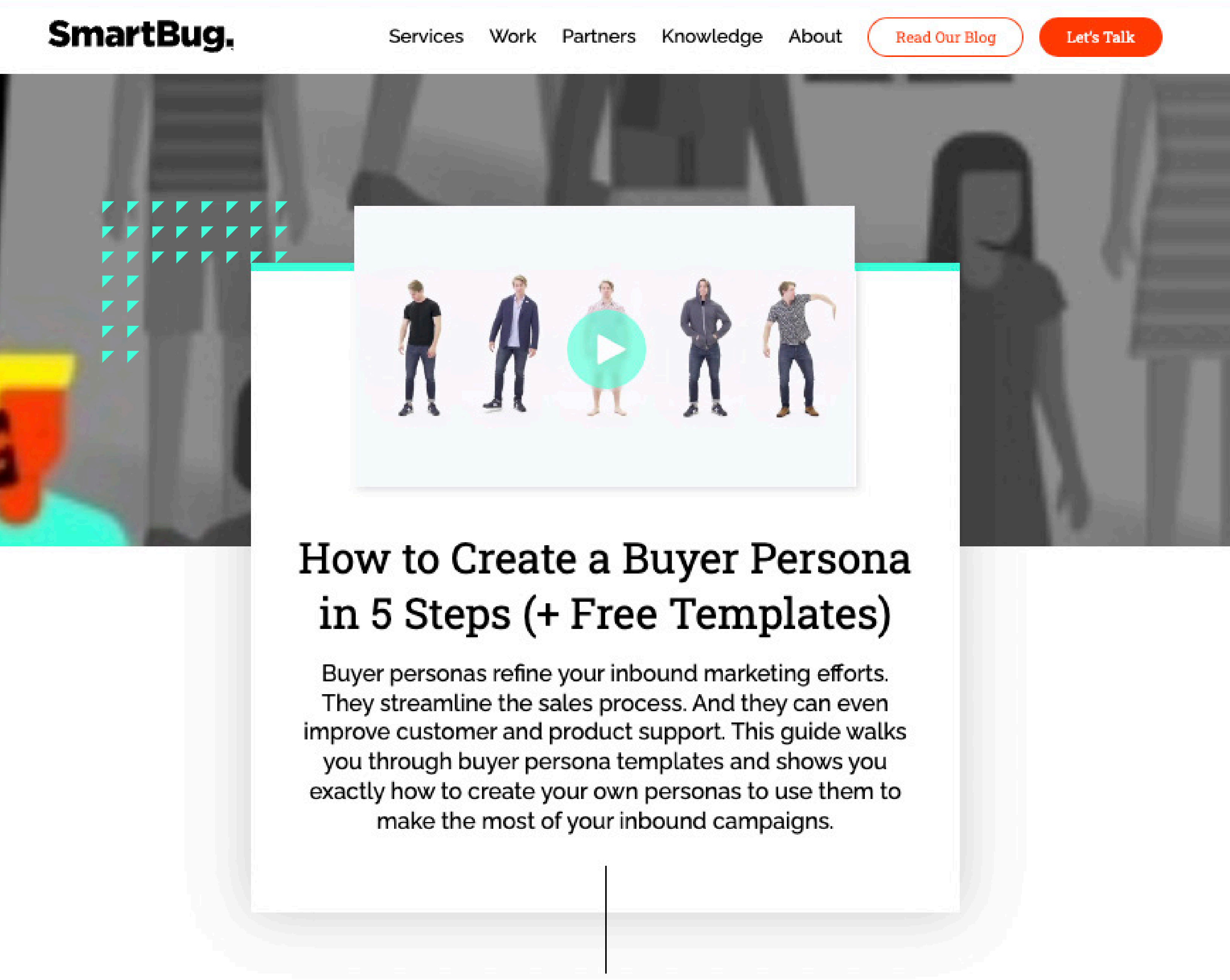
- A table of contents at the top or side with anchor links (learn more: https://knowledge.hubspot.com/articles/kcs_article/cos-pages-editor/ho w-can-i-add-an-anchor-link-in-my-email-or-page)
- Links back to the top after each chapter (using the above methodology)
- A definition box at the top of the page to optimize for snippet attractiveness
- Pictures, infographics, and in-line CTAs to break up the text

> **To get started with your pillar page, HubSpot offers free templates for fully hosted users on their CMS available here:** https://marketplace.hubspot.com/products?searchTerm=pillar+page

> **And more info on how to create a webpage in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/website-user-guide.

SmartBug's pillar page includes all of these elements: [PAGE 14]

Most of these elements can be inserted into a webpage without any hassle; however, some items require modification of the template. Non-developers can use the HubSpot design manager to create webpage templates using modules instead of code.



Pro Tip

Even if you aren't a developer, the HubSpot Design Certification course is helpful in understanding the design manager and how to use it for even small tweaks: https://certification.hubspot.com/hubspot-design-certification-course.

Because pillar pages can be long, user experience and readability are important. It helps to have real people review the page and tell you where they get stuck. If you can't recruit anyone to provide feedback, heat mapping tools—which we'll discuss below—can also provide valuable information.

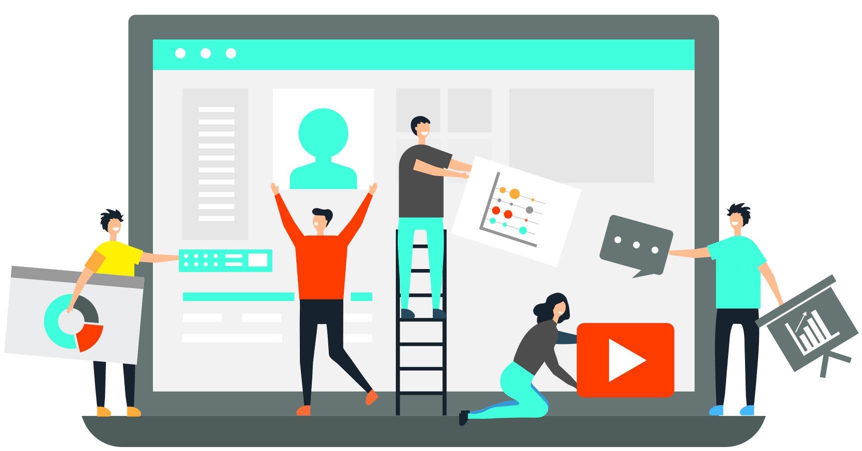
You now have a decision to make on the PDF offer download: Will the form to download the PDF be right on the pillar page?

Or do you want to direct people to a landing page?

Option 1: Form on the Page

File Manager

Uploading the PDF to your website is as easy as drag-and-drop with HubSpot's file manager. Info on how to upload an offer to your website in HubSpot is available here: https://knowledge.hubspot.com/design-manager-user-guide-v2/how-to-upload -your-site-assets-to-file-manager.



Pro Tip

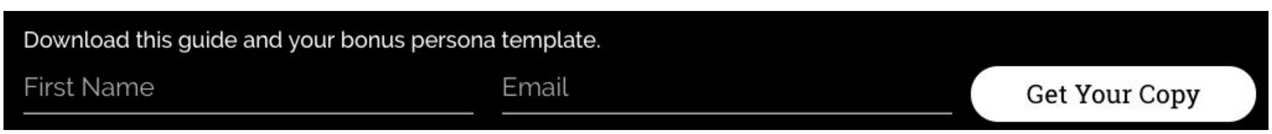
Organize your folders in HubSpot by type (images, premium content, infographics, and so on) and create guidelines for everyone who uses HubSpot to reference when adding files to your system. Also make a rule that all files you upload have to have a descriptive name (e.g., not StockImage1234). This will keep your file structure clean and your users happy over time.

Form

OK, now you need a form. We often recommend creating a form for each stage of the buyer's journey (awareness, consideration, and decision) and using those forms across all of your offers. This allows you to group similar offers together when reporting on funnel effectiveness.

Another option is to create a form for each type of offer: one form for e-books, one for webinars, one for consultation/demo requests, and so on. This strategy allows you to change the questions according to the type of resource, which is sometimes necessary.

The form on The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas is short and simple: [PAGE 16]



In either case, use smart fields to progressively ask questions that your sales team will use to qualify the person or that you as a marketer need to segment that lead by persona or buyer's journey stage.

> **Info on how to create a form and set up smart fields in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/forms-user-guide-v2.

Follow-Up Email

Leads should receive an email with a link to the offer they were interested in so they can reference it later. HubSpot makes this easy with its “simple follow-up” email type. Info on how to create a simple follow-up email in HubSpot is available here: [https://knowledge.hubspot.com/articles/kcs_article/workflows/how-can-i-send -an-email-response-after-a-form-submission](https://knowledge.hubspot.com/articles/kcs_article/workflows/how-can-i-send-an-email-response-after-a-form-submission)

Publish the follow-up email so that it’s available to use before the next step.

Pro Tip

You can't create your first follow-up email inside the email tool in HubSpot. It must be created from a landing page. If you've never created a follow-up email before, you can create a blank landing page and click on the form, and then you'll have the option to create a follow-up email from the drop-down.
[PAGE 17]

Once the first follow-up email has been created, you can simplify the process by going to the email tool directly, cloning an existing follow-up email, and editing it as needed to create a new one.

Thank You Page

You could link someone straight from the form to the PDF; however, it is best practice to direct the person to a thank you page that, in turn, has a link to the PDF. This allows you as the marketer to present a secondary offer further down the funnel.

In either case, use smart fields to progressively ask questions that your sales team will use to qualify the person or that you as a marketer need to segment that lead by persona or buyer's journey stage.

Pro Tip

Open the thank you page in a new tab so the visitor can continue reading the pillar page if they wish.

Form on the Pillar Page

Once all the items for your PDF offer are lined up, go back to your pillar page and add the form to the page. On the options for the form, you'll redirect to the thank you page you created and choose your follow-up email.

Note: You'll need a form module on the page, which is where the design manager comes into play. If you don't want to deal with the design manager, go with option two (below).

Option 2: Link to a Landing Page

If you want to link to a landing page instead of placing the form directly on the pillar page, you'll still need to upload the PDF, make a follow-up email, and create a thank you page as covered under option one.

Landing Page

Once you have completed those steps, it's time to create your landing page in HubSpot.

> **Info on how to create a landing page in HubSpot is available here: https://knowledge.hubspot.com/landing-page-user-guide-v2.**

> **For an even deeper dive, check out The Complete Guide to Landing Pages here: https://www.smartbugmedia.com/landing-page-best-practices**

Pro Tip

Every time you ask a lead to take an additional step, you will experience drop-off in the process. For that reason, SmartBug recommends putting the form directly on the pillar page if possible.

Link to the Landing Page on the Pillar Page

You can link from the pillar page to the landing page via a normal hyperlink; however, if you use the call-to-action tool in HubSpot, you can track the conversion rate for your pillar page, do some A/B testing on that CTA, and even see if a CTA at the top gets more clicks than one at the middle or bottom.

CTAs can be text or an image linking to the landing page. Try both to see which one performs best for your pillar page. You may even want to try a hovering CTA that stays with the reader as they scroll down the page.

> **Info on how to create and add CTAs in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/cta-user-guide-v2.

CTA Tool

Speaking of the CTA tool, you're going to need it to create at least one text CTA and an image CTA that links to your pillar page. These CTAs will be used on blog posts and key website pages to drive traffic to the pillar page. Promoting content across your website is a great way to educate visitors on everything you have to offer.

Blogs

Now that the pillar page is in HubSpot, you can start to build out the blog posts that link to it. You should include at least three, but you could use as many as you want.

Remember that all of your blog subscribers will be notified when you publish a new blog post—so don't publish 20 new blogs on the same day because your subscribers won't appreciate receiving 20 emails at once. Instead, space out posts using the blog schedule feature, or backdate them so notifications don't go out at all.

Every article in the topic cluster will need at least one normal text link to your pillar page. Try using an anchor text CTA because these can perform really well: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/blog-anchor-text-call-to-action-study

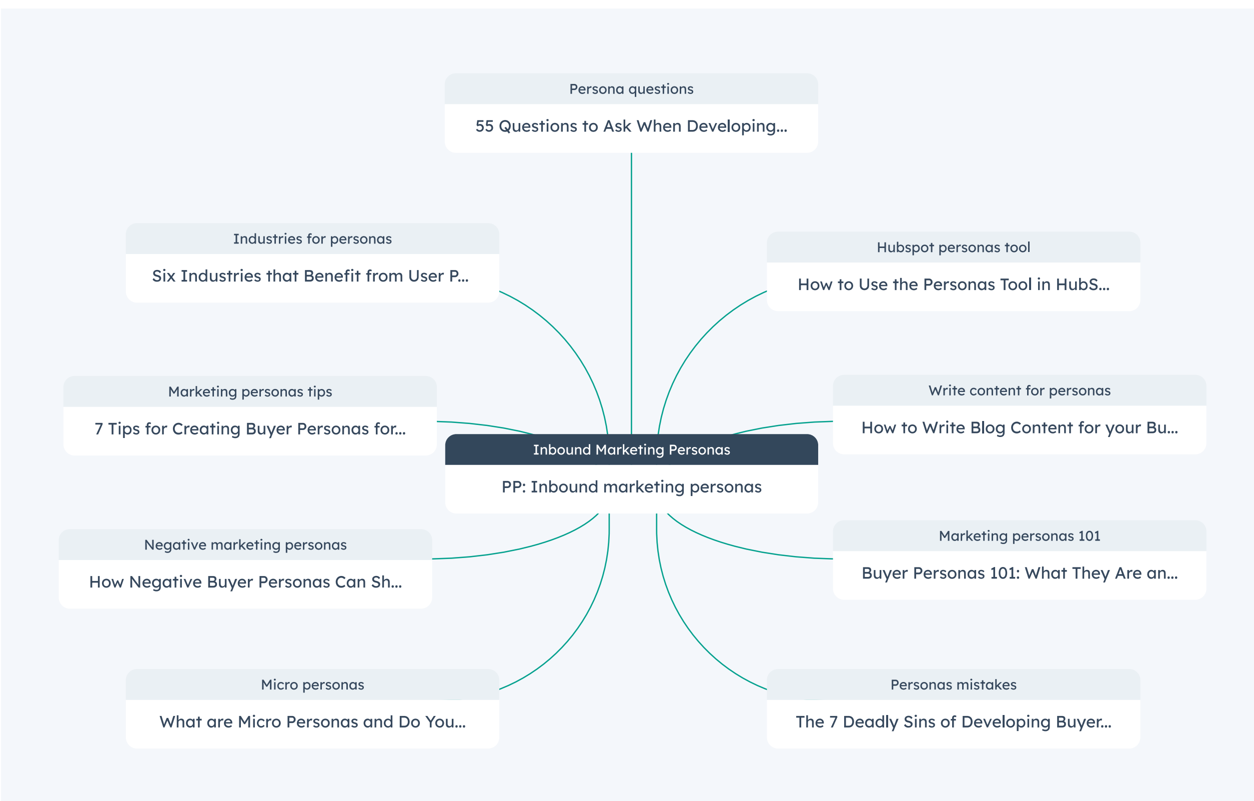
The CTA on the bottom of the blog post can be to your pillar page or to another relevant offer as long as it tightly aligns with the topic of the post.

For example, The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas uses a supporting blog post entitled "*How Negative Buyer Personas Can Shape Your Ideal Personas*."

> **Info on how to publish a blog post in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/blog-user-guide-v2.

Tie the Content Together in the SEO Tool

Now that you've created the pillar page and the supporting blog posts, you'll want to go back into the SEO tool and attach content to each bubble. The tool will then verify there's an internal link, and you'll be able to gather statistics about the topic cluster. [PAGE 22]



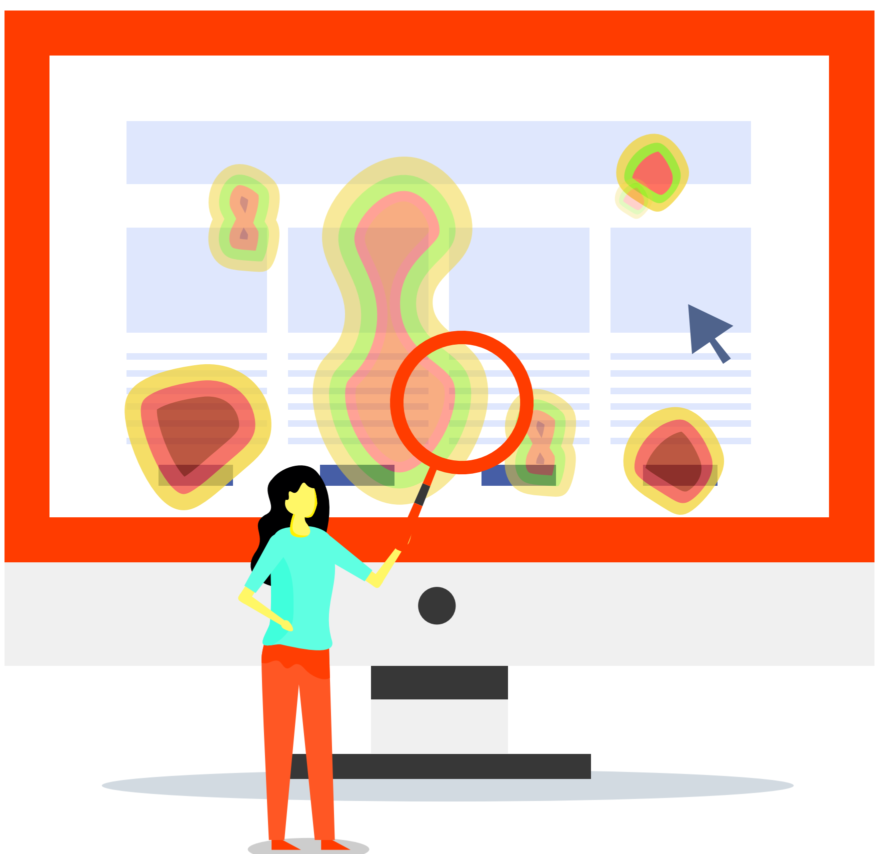
Pro Tip

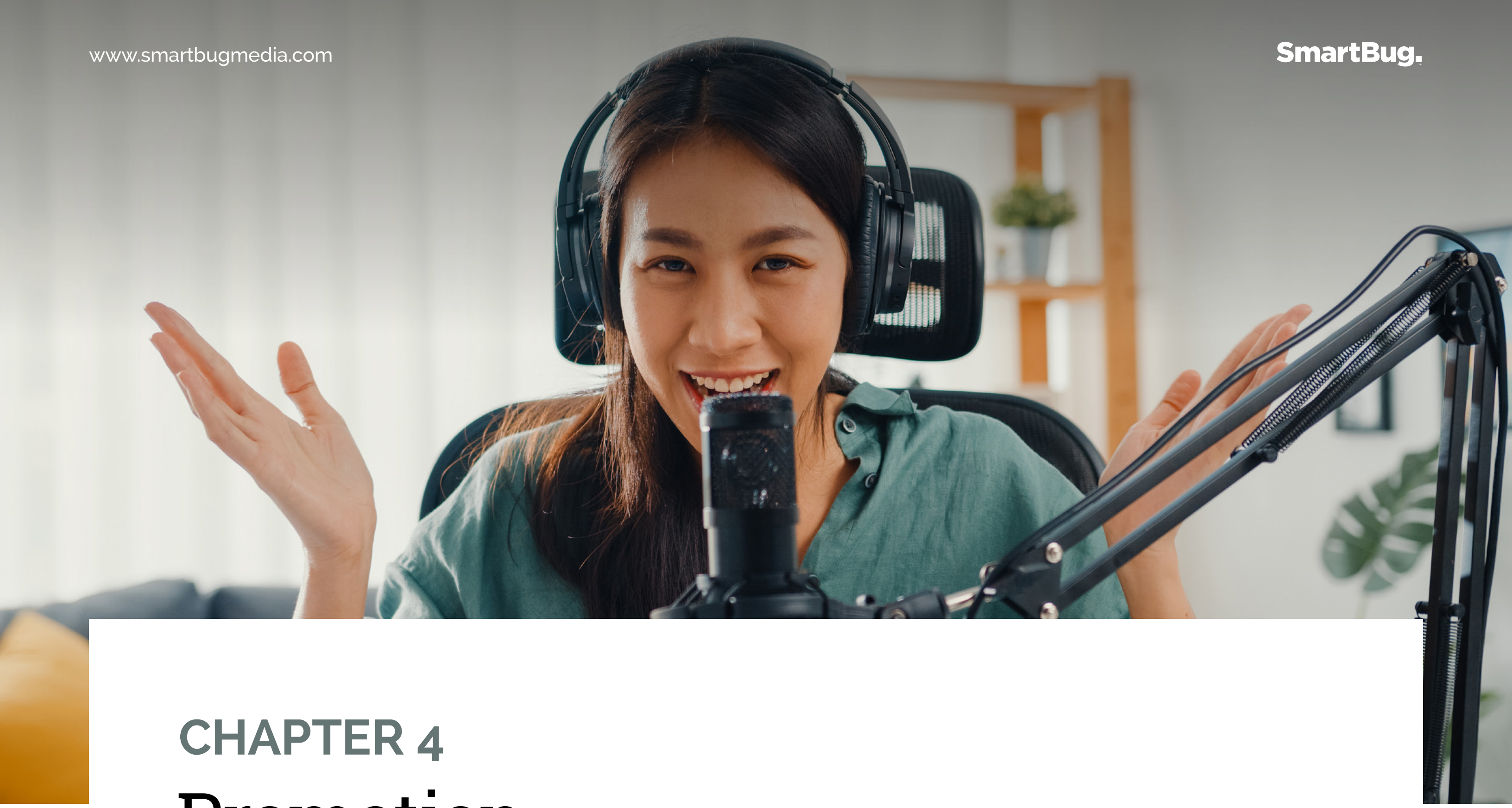
Currently, the SEO tool only recognizes text links as a successful connection—something to keep in mind as you insert links and CTAs in your blog posts.

Heatmap Software

Heatmap software, such as Lucky Orange or Hotjar, gives marketers the ability to see where and how visitors are engaging with content and how far down a webpage someone goes, which is especially important for these long pillar pages. Gathering and evaluating these metrics enables you to improve the pillar page over time.

Setup is usually as easy as installing a snippet of code in the header of your site, which can be done under Content Settings in HubSpot. [PAGE 22]





CHAPTER 4

Promotion

You've invested significant time and effort into putting together your pillar page and its supporting content. Now it's time to promote it!

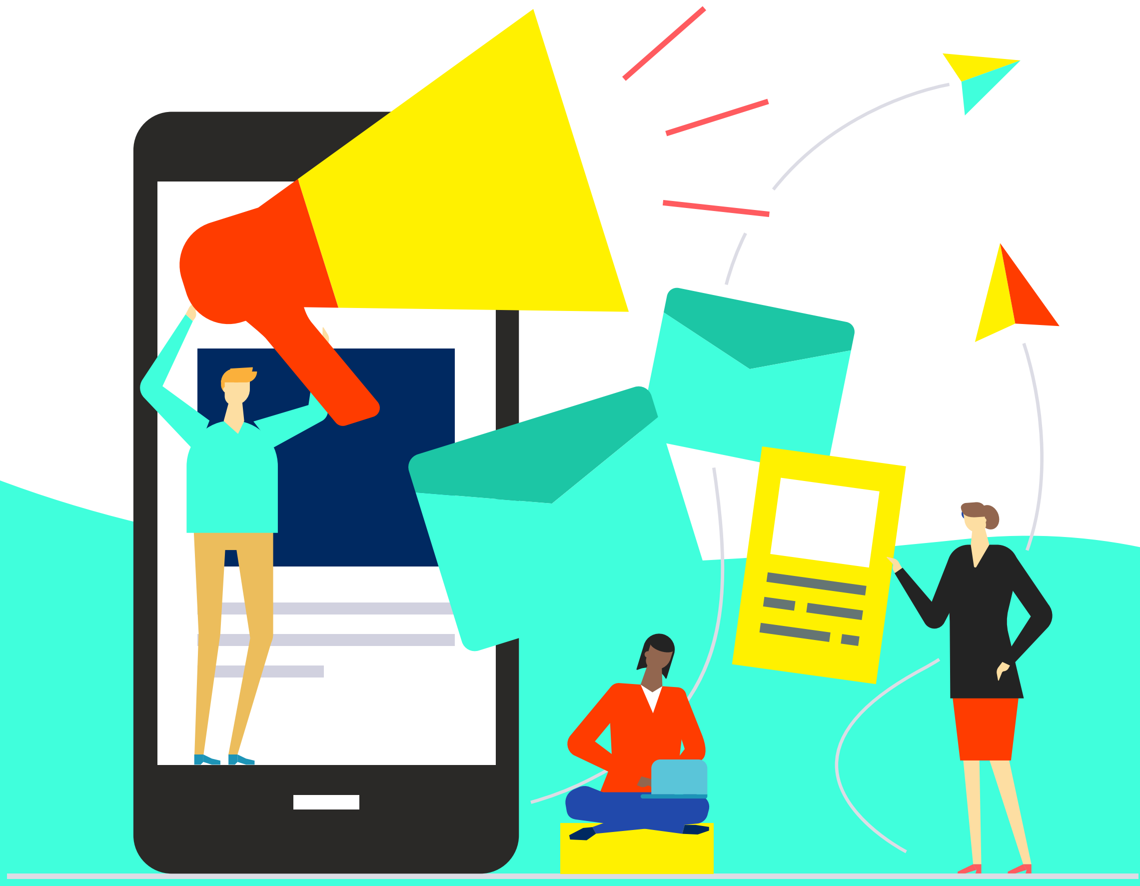
Email

Building an opt-in email database takes time and patience, but the results are worth it. You will see an increase in open and click rates, and you get the peace of mind that comes from knowing that you aren't spamming people.

A full email database of interested people is priceless. Given that your new pillar page is full of amazing insights and recommendations, your email subscribers are going to want to know about it.

An email can be as simple as text saying something like, "*We have this new resource*," or it can be a fancy HTML with CSS and pretty graphics. SmartBug often sees text emails perform better, so you should consider promoting the resource to your email list twice, once in each format, over a few weeks or a month.

Info on how to send emails in HubSpot is available here:
https://knowledge.hubspot.com/email-user-guide-v2.



Social Media

Social media is an integral part of content marketing. HubSpot makes it easy to post on your favorite channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. But, you do need to think strategically.

Referring back to our example, you could just promote the pillar page, but, ideally, you should promote the pillar page and the supporting blog posts over time. You never know what specific topic will interest someone at a specific time.

To keep your social media posts fresh, consider extracting snippets from your pillar page to serve as interesting social media posts (think: stats, quotes, and so on).

Don't rely on just the business account to post your content. Engage employees and other stakeholders to share new content across their networks to reach an audience that wouldn't necessarily see it on the company channels.

> **Info on how to post on social media in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/social/create-and-publish-social-posts

Pro Tip

SmartBug recommends the 60/30/10 rule when it comes to social media posting: 60 percent of your posts should be sharing other people's content, 30 percent should be sharing your own, and 10 percent can be conversion attempts (demo requests, product pitches, and so on).

Pinterest and TikTok might also be great places to post if your target audience hangs out there. However, HubSpot doesn't currently support these platforms, so you'll need to post old-school style.

Social Media Ads

If your social media blitz is going well, putting some advertising dollars behind it might be worthwhile. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn all have advertising options; however, Twitter and LinkedIn may be prohibitively expensive for a small test project.

To that end, try out a couple of Facebook ads and see how they do. Facebook gives you many great targeting options, and you can start with nearly any size budget.

> **Info on Facebook ads is available here:**
> https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads.

Pro Tip

If you notice a social media post performing well, consider boosting to get it out in front of more people.

Link Building/Guest Posting

Link building is part science and part art. You can spend hours working on it and only get one nibble that doesn't pan out. That being said, external links are super valuable and absolutely vital to your website. So, to stack the deck in your favor, try these tips:

1. **Ask your partners if they are willing to link to your pillar page or other content from their blog.**
2. **Include links to other people's content in your blog posts and ask them to link back to your content.**
3. **Reach out to newsletter or blog publishers in your industry and ask if you can contribute a guest post with a link back to your content.**

> **You'll find more tips for obtaining inbound links here:** https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/32479/32-white-hat-ways-to-b uild-inbound-links.aspx.

If someone links back to your content, make sure to use unique tracking URLs for the links so you can see where the traffic is coming from. [PAGE 26]

> **Info on creating tracking URLs in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/landing-page-user-guide-v2/how-to-create-a-t racking-url-for-a-landing-page.

News Release

A news release isn't necessarily a good fit for a pillar page, but for other types of content, a news release can be an easy win for links and traffic. SmartBug uses PR Newswire for news releases, but there are many other wire distribution services, including Business Wire, GlobeNewswire, and PRWeb.

In order to accurately attribute the traffic from the news source, make sure to create tracking URLs for every link in the release, including one to the content on your site and one to your homepage.

> **Learn more about writing a great press release here:** https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/press-release-template-ht.

CHAPTER 5

Follow-Up

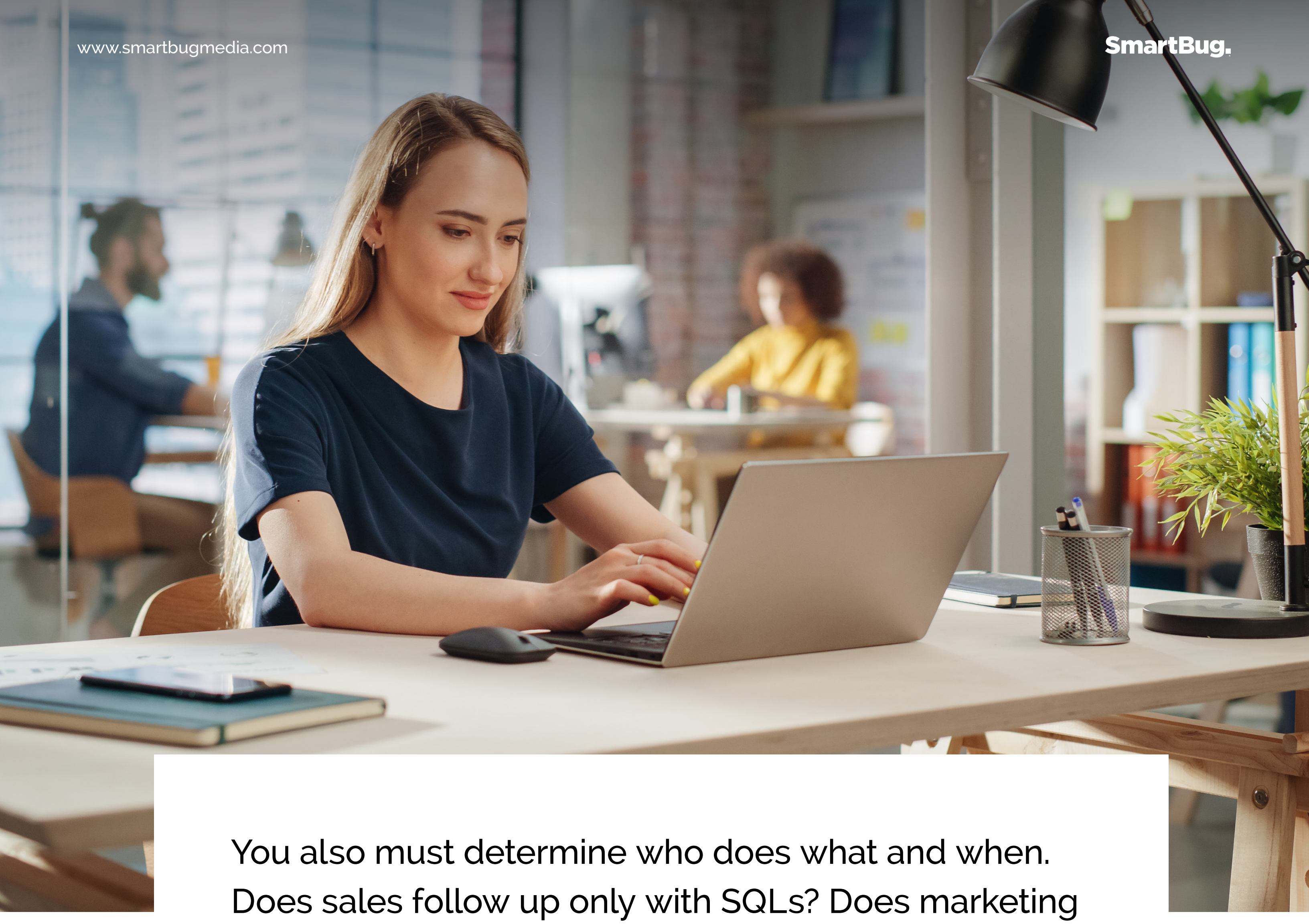
Lifecycle Stages (MQLs and SQLs)

To keep sales and marketing in alignment, lifecycle stages including marketing qualified leads (MQLs) and sales qualified leads (SQLs) need to be defined and agreed upon before you begin any marketing activities.

These definitions generally take the form of:

MQL: Name, email address, in the U.S. or Canada, and some criteria such as business has “x” number of employees or business is in “y” industry.

SQL: Demo or consultation request automatically indicates lead as an SQL. Lead scoring can also create SQLs—for example, when someone meets the ICP and has met the defined threshold for content views and completed actions.



You also must determine who does what and when. Does sales follow up only with SQLs? Does marketing nurture MQLs? These definitions and responsibilities will determine what to do with content download leads.

The HubSpot workflow tool allows you to mark each new contact in the appropriate lifecycle stage depending on the criteria your teams mutually agreed upon.

Info on how to set up workflows in HubSpot is available here: https://knowledge.hubspot.com/workflows-user-guide-v2.

Pro Tip

Though lifecycle stages should take priority, use lead scoring to identify SQLs based on their high level of engagement with content rather than a direct demo request form completion.

Tip #2: Companies that are just starting out can deprioritize lead scoring until they build enough organic traffic to get their lead flow up and running.

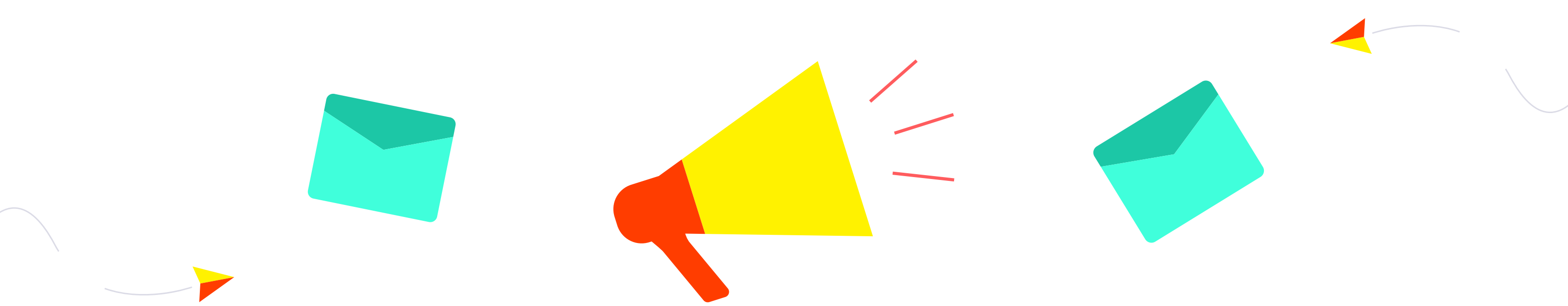
Internal Email Notification

Depending on your company, you may or may not need internal email notifications when someone downloads an offer. Some marketers love seeing submissions roll in. Other marketers know that they can check this info in HubSpot and want an email notification to go out to the sales team only when a lead becomes an SQL.

Form notification emails can be set on the form or landing page so that an internal email address will be notified every time someone fills out that form. All you need to do is add your email address in the indicated spot.

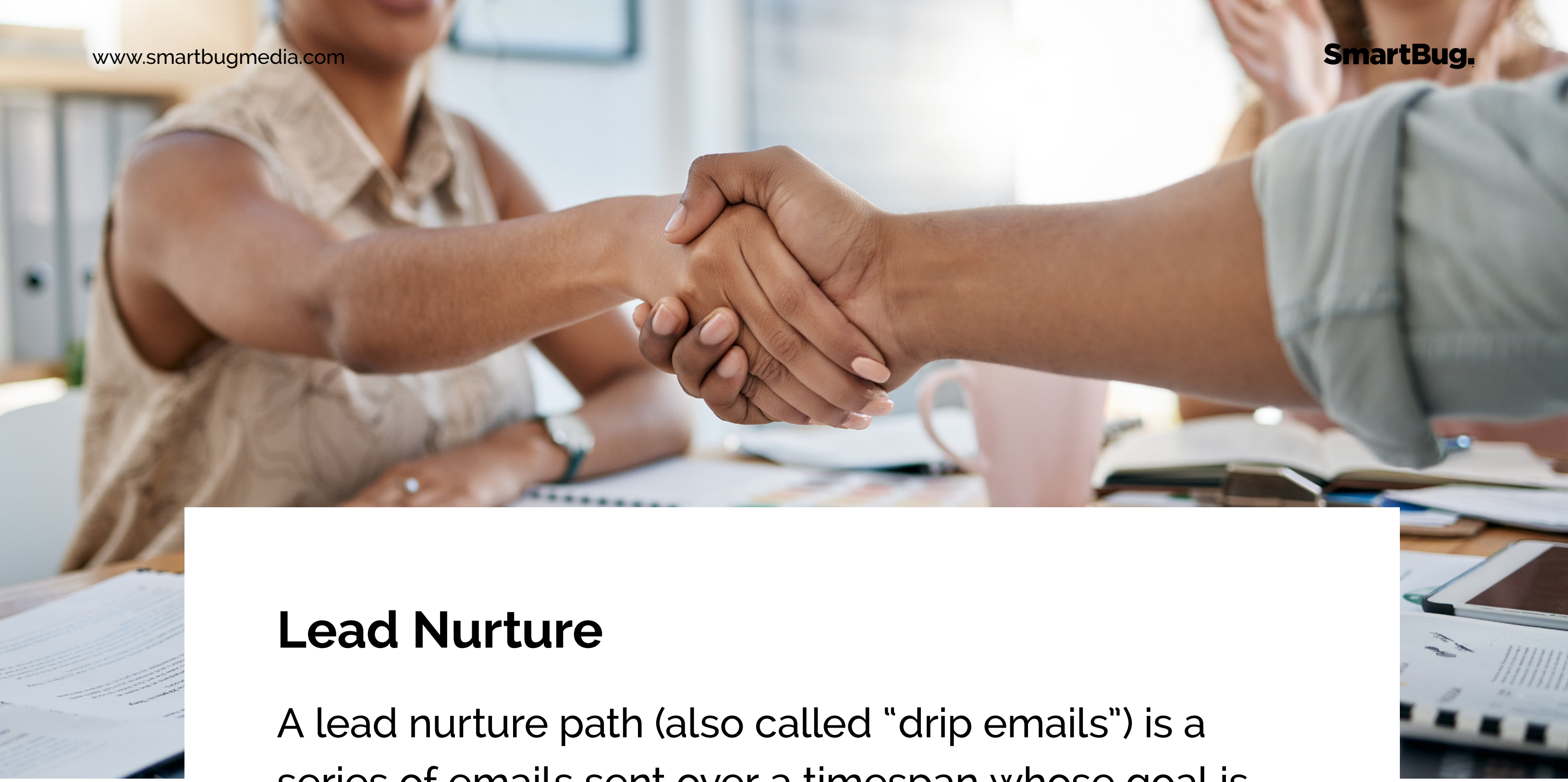
If you want to be notified only in certain instances—for example, when a lead is an SQL, when a lead is from a company with more than 10,000 employees, or when a lead reaches a predetermined score—workflows are your tool of choice
once again.

> **Info on setting up internal email notifications in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/articles/KCS_Article/Forms/How-do-I-send-int ernal-notification-emails.



Pro Tip

You can use the same workflow to set up a text notification and a follow-up task in HubSpot.



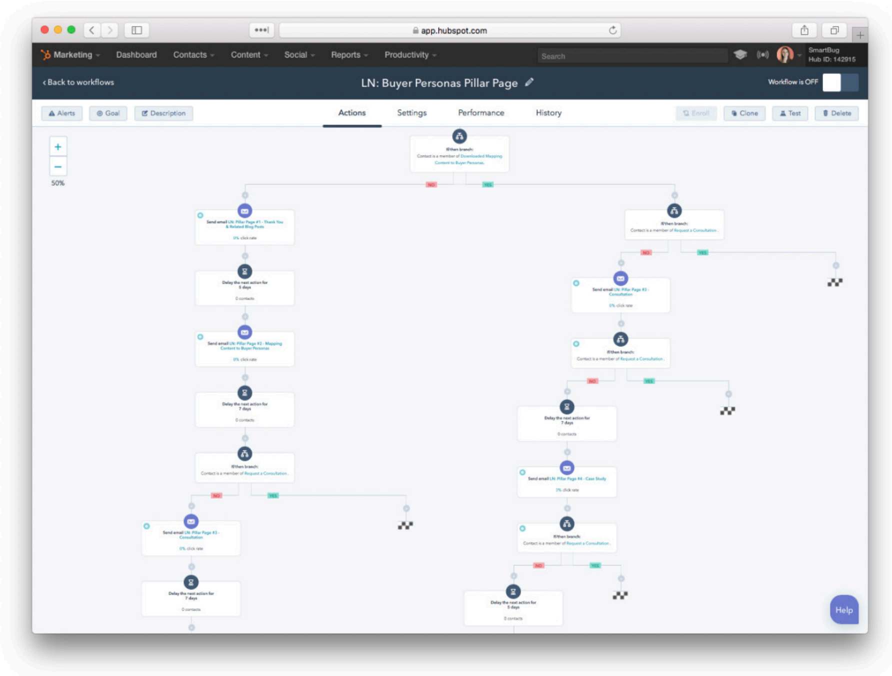
Lead Nurture

A lead nurture path (also called "drip emails") is a series of emails sent over a timespan whose goal is to continue to engage contacts with relevant and timely information.

Your sales cycle will dictate the length of a lead nurture path for your offers. In general, the longer the sales cycle, the more spread out you want your emails to be. Shorter sales cycles may need only days between emails.

Lead nurture campaigns provide a lot of depth and insight beyond simply whether a person completed an action that makes them relevant for the campaign. Each step in a lead nurturing campaign reassesses the fit of that lead by identifying whether they have spoken with a sales rep or unsubscribed from emails or taken any other action that indicates the congruency of the product or messaging.

SmartBug created the following lead nurture stream: [PAGE 29]



The goal of a lead nurture path is normally to lead a contact through the buyer's journey. So if your pillar page content is awareness, your first email will be awareness-level content. (Think blog posts and other e-books on the same 2high-level topic).

You would follow up that email with a consideration offer, such as a checklist or a comparison guide, and finish with a decision offer, such as a demo or consultation request.

Lead nurtures are accomplished with automated emails created in the email tool and workflows that kick off with an enrollment criteria of filled out "x" form on "y" page.

Pro Tip

Always set a goal for your workflow so you can assess its effectiveness. Often, the goal is to become an SQL or request a demo. Remember, if someone meets that goal before entering the workflow, they won't receive any of the emails.

Also make sure to suppress customers and opportunities that have already viewed the content offer or that the sales team is working on so those contacts don't get the emails in the lead nurture path.

> **Learn more on how to suppress contacts from a workflow here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/workflows/manually-unenroll-objects-from-workflows

CHAPTER 6

Measuring & Optimizing

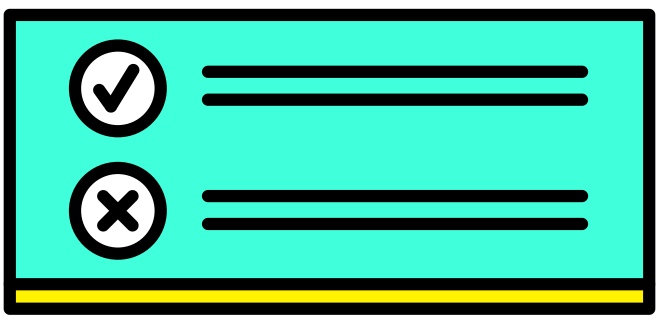
It’s critical to remember that all of your measurement and optimization efforts need to be tied back to your SMART goals. It’s too easy to start looking at all the metrics and lose sight of what you are really trying to measure.

Focus on the specific goals you are trying to achieve with a piece of content, then track a maximum of three metrics that directly relate to those goals using the evaluation tools and techniques that best meet your needs.

Campaign Analytics

The campaign analytics tool in HubSpot gives you a visual overview of how your project is performing, including sessions, new contacts, and influenced contacts.

> **Info on how to view campaign analytics in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/reports/how-to-use-the-campaign-analytics-tool



Lists

Depending on your organization's level of content marketing maturity, you are likely anxious to know how many leads, MQLs, and SQLs your campaign created.

The easiest way to report on this is by creating smart lists in HubSpot. A smart list will update dynamically as people meet the criteria you've defined. The other type of list is a static list, which runs only once to see who meets your criteria today. No one is ever added or removed from this type of list unless done by hand.

You could create one list based on form submission fills (which will include everyone who was already in your database, not just new contacts) and add a column to display lifecycle stage. Or, if you want it broken out further, you could create one list for each lifecycle stage.

Info on how to create lists in HubSpot is available here:
https://knowledge.hubspot.com/lists-user-guide

Pro Tip

If you use the criteria “filled out ‘x’ form” and “Lifecycle stage = MQL,” your list will include people who already were an MQL before filling out the form and new MQLs, but not people who have moved along to become an SQL. Depending on what you are looking for, you can use the “Became an MQL date” and a date range to view MQLs from the current campaign.

If you have the HubSpot reporting add-on, you can create a funnel and access other custom reporting features.

> **Info on how to use the reporting add-on is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/reports-user-guide-v2/how-to-use-the-reporting-add-on-in-hubspot.

Evaluate Each Component

To dig into the performance of each element of the campaign, our pillar page in this example, you'll need to go into each tool separately:

Webpage

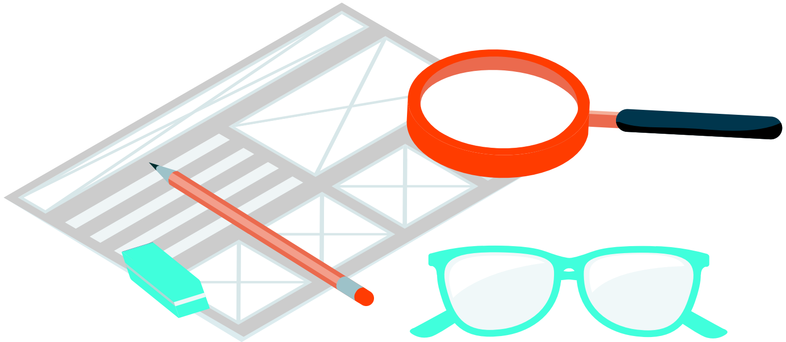
- How much traffic has the pillar page received? Is it increasing over time?
- If the form is directly on the pillar page, how many submissions has it received? What is the submission rate?
- If you used a landing page, check out the number of submissions and the submission rate on that page.
- Where is most of the traffic coming from?
- After the campaign runs for a while, examine the ranking keywords and the inbound links under Optimization in HubSpot.
- What links/resources are people clicking on? What's most interesting to visitors?

Email

- What was the open rate and click-through rate?
- Did the text email or HTML email perform better?

Blogs

- How much traffic are the campaign blogs generating?
- Where did most of the blog traffic come from?
- What is the CTA rate for each blog?
- Also look at keywords and inbound links on each blog.



CTA's

- Which of the CTAs is performing better in terms of clicks and submissions?

Social Media

- Which channel performed the best for this campaign (both clicks and interactions)?
- Which message performed the best?
- Is there a day and/or time that worked better than others?

Lead Nurture

- How many people met the goal of the lead nurture workflow?
- How many people clicked on each email?

Pro Tip

Evaluate your metrics monthly for the first three months to optimize and improve your efforts. Some of your promotional activities will take place over time, so although there's often a boost at the beginning, you should continue to see results through the first 90 days.

Attribution Reporting

If you have the Enterprise version of HubSpot, you can also create an attribution report. This will tell you what pages contributed to a person converting on your offer, including first-touch attribution, last-touch attribution, multi-touch attribution, and last interaction.

An attribution report allows you to see what content is getting the most "assists" so you can focus your efforts appropriately.

> **Info on how to create an attribution report in HubSpot is available here:** https://knowledge.hubspot.com/reports/create-attribution-reports

Final Thoughts

There you have it: how to create a complete, cohesive content marketing strategy from scratch in HubSpot.

A few final tips:

- Don't underestimate the amount of time it will take to complete the strategy front to back. This is a large endeavor and it most likely can't be done in a single weekend.
- To that end, many hands make light work. If you are able to enlist some help from internal employees or freelance writers, do it.
- If you are trying to choose between an offer with mass appeal and a targeted offer that will bring in less traffic but fits your buyer persona, go with the latter.
- The implementation steps in HubSpot may seem like a lot the first time you go through the entire process. It will get quicker over time, we promise.
- Get software such as Monday, Asana, Trello, or Teamwork to help you manage the project and stay on track.

Ready to get started on your content marketing journey?

Contact us and a SmartBug will be in touch to answer any questions and find out how we can support your content marketing efforts.

Contact Us

SmartBug.

www.smartbugmedia.com