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Inbound Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This study looks into inbound marketing practice through the process of secondary research. This insight on best practices and market examples have been employed in order to identify the benefits of Inbound Marketing for the School of Professional Studies at Clark University. Through the research, this team has consolidated a number of recommendations for the SPS marketing strategies moving forward. A focus has been placed on identifying solutions, which were effective and financially feasible. The primary solutions are internally sourced; with a future long term recommendation of seeking advice from a third party firm to automate the process.

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Section 1

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

With more than 4,726 degree granting universities in the United States, it has become increasingly difficult for higher education institutions to differentiate themselves *("Fast Facts", NCES)*. This level of market saturation has resulted in more universities seeking new marketing techniques to frame themselves ahead of their competitors. This project was aimed at developing an understanding of inbound marketing best practices, in order to increase interest and applicants for the School of Professional Studies (SPS) at Clark University. Vast amounts of research have been consolidated through this report in order to develop a number of recommendations, which will aid the client, Tara Probeck, in establishing future marketing strategies. These recommendations will include supportive data in the form of case studies to exemplify which tools will result in the optimal user engagements for SPS. Information will also be extrapolated into a platform selection matrix that may be beneficial for future implementation plans.

1.2 Background of the Study

SPS instils the knowledge and required skills for recent graduates and working professionals to excel in their careers and communities. The SPS student body hails from various nations, cultures, and experiential backgrounds -- resulting in the learning experience stretching well beyond the classroom. SPS currently offers three graduate programs and two certificates:

- M.S. in Information Technology (MSIT)
- M.S. in Professional Communication (MSPC)
- Master of Public Administration (MPA)
- Certificate in Public Administration

- Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study

The graduate programs allow for a level of flexibility that enables students to traverse subjects beyond their own academic focus.

Currently, the focus of marketing SPS lies within paid campaigns through Google Adsense, Carnegie Communications, and on Peterson with profile pages and advertisements for the three graduate SPS programs. The department also has a Facebook and Instagram presence, used primarily to inform students of various sponsored events and to depict life as an SPS student. These pages are currently being managed internally by the graduate assistants of the department.

The team examined information on the SPS website about the programs mission and vision statements which became important in re-examining our approach to the project. Finally, the project team conducted three weeks of research into inbound marketing that ranged from basic definitions to best practices as demonstrated by specific companies and schools.

1.3 Statement of Problems

The project team found that Clark University's SPS department could be applying inbound marketing strategies to supplement their current marketing strategy in both affordable and sustainable ways. The school is looking for ways to recruit more students to the SPS program, and this project attempts to make recommendations that seek to achieve that goal. The main problems to be addressed through these recommendations are:

- Increasing the number of recruitments for SPS.

- Increasing the marketing exposure for graduate programs at Clark University, particularly SPS.

- Establishing methods to enable and measure engagement with target audiences to create more traffic for the SPS website and social media platforms.

- Providing useful tools to identify the best methods of implementing inbound marketing practices.

- Identifying sustainable methods of content generation and curation.

- Identifying cost and labor effective practices to incorporate into current and future marketing strategies.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- Provide insight into Inbound marketing and the current best practices in the marketing sphere.

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the SPS department in order to optimize the marketability of the department.

- Select case studies of other higher education institutions and companies to exemplify effective marketing strategies.

- Rate platforms and inbound marketing workflow solutions with regard to SPS.

- Provide recommendations based on research for Tara Probeck to utilize in the future marketing plans of SPS.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Work Area	In Scope	Out of Scope
Concept	Inbound Marketing	Outbound Marketing
Target Department	SPS	Other Clark Graduate Programs
Analysis	Inbound Platform Criteria and basic costs determined using a rough order of estimate	A final selection of the optimal inbound marketing platform. In depth financial analysis based on the Clark marketing budget. Identifying the number of staff members required to apply the suggestions
Research	Secondary Research: target market, use of social media, inbound case studies/trends, use of library, online resources	Other primary research such as interviews, visits to competitors' locations etc.
Recommendations	Inbound marketing techniques, recommendations, sample content	Specific marketing plan to be executed with a schedule for implementation
Communication	Direct communication with Tara, Richard, and other team members	Direct communication with the Board or upper management at Clark

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is that it will provide insight into some effective uses and best practices of inbound marketing. This information through proper implementation can

enable SPS to achieve its goal of increasing its recruitment. Given the lack of higher education institutions fully embracing inbound marketing, this study can provide an opportunity for Clark University to become a leader in the field. The recommendations for implementing inbound marketing into SPS include steps, which will be beneficial to future networking of the department.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

With the research conducted, there are three immediate limitations: the first is the vast amount of information available regarding inbound marketing. The magnitude of the literature made it impossible for this team to cover a comprehensive amount of information within the given period. Secondly, as many higher education institutions are yet to embrace inbound marketing, there is an information gap. This study was unable to provide specific information about targeting content to specific target audiences. This was largely due to the time restrictions of the semester not supporting a complete survey of current and potential students.

This study is limited in its feasibility testing of the recommendations due to asymmetric information of the available budget. For this reason, the team explored solutions, which required different levels of effort, labor, and capital.

1.8 Methodology of the Study

The research design for this study relied heavily on secondary research that was conducted using online portals such as the Goddard Library research portal and Google Scholar. Each team member would conduct research regarding the different aspects covered in this study. The individual work was then complied in order to ensure that the final project was reflective of the different perspectives of this diverse group.

Informal interviews were conducted with different students and faculty in the department, in order to get a better understanding of the varying factors that affected this study. The team looked into an array of market leaders regarding workflow automation for inbound marketing. Through this process, the team gained valuable insight into the automation systems involving companies such as HubSpot.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 What is Inbound Marketing?

The term *inbound marketing* was first used by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, of HubSpot; however, the concept has been around for much longer. The term is used interchangeably with earned marketing or permission marketing which is defined as "the privilege (not the right of) delivering anticipated, personal, and relevant messages to people who actually want to get them" *("What is Inbound Marketing", 2018)*.

Inbound marketing is an umbrella term for a strategy, which incorporates a number of marketing channels. The strategy focuses on creating meaningful content to attract prospective customers, potential leads, through sales and marketing campaigns by using different approaches and methods such as digital or non-digital content. Recently, the term has been used by marketers who focus on organic channels -- such as social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing -- to describe their roles and responsibilities. Inbound marketing attracts customers through relevant and helpful content. It focuses on earning traffic through methods that do not directly cost money. This is achieved through creating quality content that pulls potential customers in.

Inbound marketing enables companies to continue the conversation with the customer beyond the initial interaction. This is achieved through the exchange of contact information for content. This allows companies to target specific information to these potential consumers, thus increasing the probability of swaying them into becoming clients. This is the basis behind email subscription provision.

One of the main strengths of inbound marketing is the tools and platform used within this strategy provide the opportunity to track and monitor engagement. Thus, it is easier to measure

the return on investment and identify the success of different types of content. This is a defining strength of this marketing approach as it allows marketers to respond quickly to changes in the market.

2.1.1 Literature Review

Effects of Inbound Marketing communications on HEI's brand equity: the mediating role of the student's decision making process

In a German study, Royo-Vela and Hünermund discuss the effects of inbound marketing on brand equity of higher education institutions. This article addresses the issue of highly competitive markets in higher education, and how schools can utilize inbound marketing to build connections with prospective students, increasing the chances they will apply and enroll. Through their work they conducted interviews and a quantitative survey with prospective and current students to discover how schools can be successful in their recruitment. Their findings indicate that interactive marketing tools are an effective way to recruit and help students in the decision making process. The authors also found that the perception of the university is impacted by the marketing tools utilized. The authors, Royo-Vela (2016) and Hünermund state, "A market- and marketing-oriented university focuses on current and potential students – its customers – and tries to meet the needs or wants of the target audience by coherent marketing activities" (p. 143). They go on to say how there needs to be a deeper understanding of the target market and current consumers by universities so that they can create content that is relevant. The authors are attempting to address the gap in knowledge about how students make decisions about their education, and how schools can build brand equity. They define brand equity as, "intangible assets such as organization name, symbols and slogans, as well as associations, perceived quality

- sustainable competitive advantage - value of brand formed by effect on customers (Royo-Vela, Hünermund, 2016, p. 146). The importance is placed on the perception of the students and prospective students. The authors review the various types and channels that schools can utilize for inbound marketing, and what the benefits of this increasingly interactive media is. Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) state, "However, it is important to market the brand in the right channel with the right tonality and content; thus, irrelevant information could be counterproductive in consumer decision-making" (p. 147). That is an important clarification that not all inbound strategies will work, it reinforces the focus on the desires and needs of the target market. The results of their surveys and interviews have a number of implications, including that students' are digital natives and thus are participating in information gathering on social media sites. Students reported that they visited the school's website and social networking sites to gather information and make a decision. General searches on Google, were also counted as a frequent way to find out whether a school was right for them. Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) state in Table 1, "They are typing specific keywords inside, for instance a specific course and a city, language or degree as well as explicit course contents or alternatively particular types of sessions or professors" (p. 153). These search criteria are also important in decision making criteria for the students as they consider coursework and geographical location. Students also found blogs and microblogs published by the schools to be useful in making their decisions. Ultimately, their research confirmed that inbound marketing strategies are an attractive way for schools to increase engagement with prospective students and increase their brand equity through creation of positive perspectives of their institution.

Co-Creation of Value in Higher Education: Using Social Network Marketing in the Recruitment of Students

In a Norwegian study, Authors, Fagerstorm and Ghinea argue that social network marketing is an effective strategy to engage consumers in participation. Their research considers interaction in Facebook groups created by a Norwegian university designed to engage prospective students within their niche academic interests. The authors attempt to change traditional views of marketing for higher education institutions. Fagerstorm and Ghinea (2013) refer to traditional marketing when they write, "From this viewpoint, customers are often seen as passive responders to various marketing activities rather than active participations in the value creation-process" (p. 46). They advocate this shift in marketing ideology and putting it into practice with more engaging inbound strategies. The researchers note that college students and consumers in general tend to gravitate towards personal rather than formal information. Individuals want to engage with organizations and their peers, and social media is an ideal platform in which those exchanges can take place. The article then discusses the specific social media recruitment campaign deployed by the Norwegian School of Information Technology (NITH). The university was seeking to increase their conversion rates, and sought out opportunities on social media to engage consumers. They decided to target prospective students based on their interest in one of their six bachelor programs, and a Facebook group was created for each program. The marketing department recruited a contact person for each group, and allowed conversation and interaction to develop naturally. The authors, Fagerstrom and Ghinea (2013) discuss the success of the groups when they write, "The dialogue in each Facebook group was totally transparent. All members of the group could take part in the other's experience" (p. 48). That success translated to their conversion rates, and members of the Facebook groups were much more likely to be

applicants to the university. The study goes on to emphasize dialogue as co-creation when they write, "Dialogue thus includes, the conversations between consumers, and the institution of higher education to jointly define and solve the consumer's problems, while the institution at the same time acquires knowledge about the consumer" (Fagerstrom and Ghinea, 2013, p. 50). From this quote one sees that the benefit from this dialogue is mutual to the students and university, and allows schools to better serve their prospective students. The implications for inbound marketing are that not only should schools be putting out relevant content, and utilizing those same channels to communicate and co-create with current and prospective students.

2.2 How Inbound Marketing Differs from Outbound Marketing

Fig. 1: Inbound vs. Outbound

Outbound marketing refers to traditional advertising methods such as broadcast commercials, printed advertisements, direct mail, outdoor advertising etc. The form of marketing depends on mass media tools to push products and messaging onto target audiences. This form of

push marketing is interruptive in nature, which was a defining feature of its success in the mass media age. With the advances in modern communication technology, audiences are able to fast-forward or ignore many forms of outbound marketing. This reason, along with the market saturation of advertisements, have limited the efficacy of outbound marketing. Consumers have become more critical of content that is being pushed onto them.

With the role of the Internet growing in the lives of consumers worldwide, the appeal of inbound marketing is also increasing. The average consumer will resort to conducting some form of research on the Internet prior to any purchasing decision. Inbound marketing enables companies to create content designed specifically to address the problems and needs of their ideal customer. As a form of pull marketing strategy, inbound marketing allows organizations to build a rapport with potential consumer. The objective is to create content, which addresses all the stages of the buying process to capture these interested prospects. Excluding reach, the biggest benefit of inbound marketing is its ROI. Many of the platforms utilized through inbound marketing are free or offer affordable subscriptions rates, making this marketing format more cost effective than alternate traditional forms.

2.3 Inbound Marketing Channels and Platforms

Inbound marketing includes, but is not limited to :

- Social Media
  - Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter etc.
- SEO
- E-newsletters
- E-books
- Videos

- Podcasts

- Blogs

- Whitepapers

It is important to note that within the section social media, there is a vast number of different options that appeal to different demographics. More insight to this can be found in the Social Media Platform Matrix (Appendix 7.2).

Many companies use options from the aforementioned list to varying degrees; however, they lack they framework required for inbound marketing success with regard to content. According to Du Plessis (2015), there are six proposed essential elements that encompass content marketing:

- Medium element: Type of channel and evaluating the proper channel and volume of content for the target audience.

- Strategic element: Utilizing the brand positioning and strategy to approach content creation and sharing.

- Formation element: Keeping in mind the brand's purported values and promises to the consumer when creating and sharing content. This includes determining what stories are 'evergreen content.'

- Intrinsic element: The idea that content produced by the brand should be so relevant to consumers that it becomes a part of their daily life. At this point the brand is building a relationship with the consumer.

- Communication element: This involves how the brand is sharing content so that it needs consumer needs for information, interests, or entertainment.

- Corollary element: The element that works to have consumers become brand

ambassadors that co-create content and share their stories.

2.4 How Inbound Marketing will help SPS

The application of inbound marketing for SPS can be influential in the high-level objective of increasing recruitment. This can be achieved through the following:

- Build brand awareness and allow SPS to emphasis the quality of their programs, professors, and university reputation

- Build a more focused target audience and enable relationships with potential students

- Apply student-generated content to engage current students through coursework.

- Leverage social media to influence the call-to-action compliance rate and generate more traffic for the department.

- Increased overall online presence of SPS will optimize SPS's search engine list-ability from various academic and educational keywords.

- Allow the department to measure its engagement and overall success of its marketing strategies.

Section 2

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Analysis and Methodology

This section is focused on analyzing some key companies and institutions that are effectively utilizing inbound marketing strategies. This analysis will include content these institutions use for inbound marking, as well as an assessment of the costs and risks of using inbound marketing. There is an increasing movement of industries that have come to rely on

inbound marketing to appeal to their target consumers. Higher education institutions have become particularly interested in utilizing these strategies to appeal to student populations. That means producing content that is useful for students who are attempting to navigate their future regarding their academics and career-paths. Inbound marketing emphasizes an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the target market, in order to successfully create content that is genuinely useful and engaging for that segment of the population. There is also the benefit of
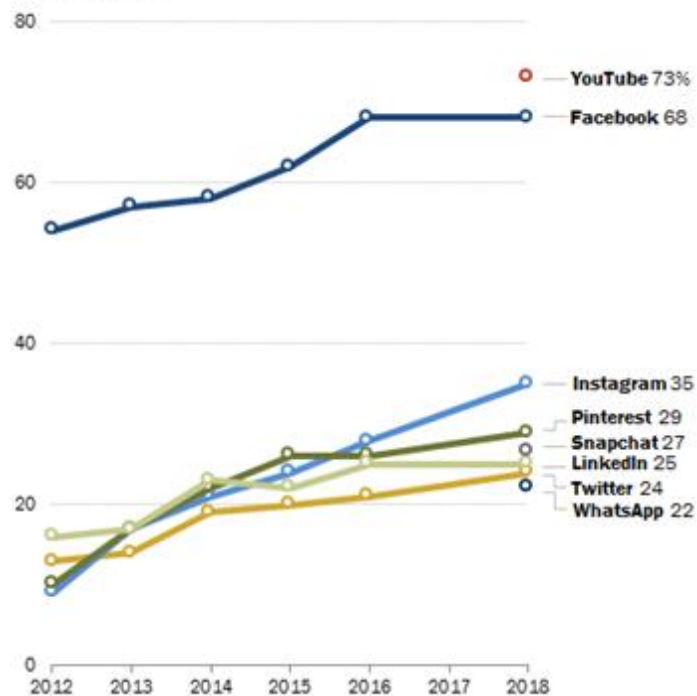
Figure2: Statistics of U.S. Social Media Usage

accessibility of the digital nature of inbound marketing, as more and more individuals have access to social networking sites via their phones, computers, and tablets.

In noting the best practices of inbound marketing, it is important to state the increasing usage of social media among individuals and companies. The role of social media in marketing is undeniable, as it has in many ways displaced traditional advertising. Facebook has consistently been the most utilized social media platform and active users 70% log on daily, including 43% who do so several times a day *(Pew Research Center, 2015)*. Facebook is also utilized for its diversity of content, 76% of people use their Facebook feed to find interesting content *(HubSpot, 2016)*. Other platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Twitter are also heavily trafficked by consumers. While, LinkedIn is the only major social media platform for which usage rates are higher among 30- to 49-year-olds than among 18- to 29-year-olds *(Pew Research Center, 2018)*. 32% of employed adults are LinkedIn users, compared with 14% of online adults who are not employed *(Pew Research Center, 2018)*. With so many users on social networking sites, it is essential that higher education institutions know how to best utilize these channels and other inbound strategies to engage key audience segments.

3.1 Inbound Marketing Best Practices in Use

Companies that utilize inbound marketing practices aim to create content in a cost-effective way and have the ability to measure the impact of that content. Successful content is able to secure high-quality leads and allow the company to funnel these leads towards a purchase through building a relationship of trust and engagement. There is also a huge long-term cost differential for companies who choose to employ inbound marketing techniques. In terms of lead generation, according to Bob Ruffolo, the average cost per lead drops 80% after 5 months of consistent Inbound Marketing. Inbound Marketing yields 3 times more leads per dollar than traditional methods. And the leads cost 61% less on average than outbound leads. Properly executed Inbound Marketing tactics are 10 times more effective for lead conversion compared to

outbound methods. Businesses that mainly rely on Inbound Marketing save more than $14 for every newly acquired customer *(Ruffolo, 2015)*. Although the benefits of inbound marketing are clear, it is essential to understand exactly how some key companies and institutions are creating effective content.

Effective content is shared via the channels of social media. Companies and higher education institutions must choose to utilize the social media channels that work best for their brand. The following chart demonstrates how different schools utilize a variety of platforms, with Facebook and LinkedIn being the most utilized overall. The choice of which platforms to utilize is heavily influenced by the target audience that a company is aiming to engage. As previously mentioned different social media sites can be understood according to age breakdown, as well as other segmenting factors. Schools must consider this carefully when they select the sites that they will use. It is important to select only a few platforms and maximize their use by integrating and repurposing content across each platform.

Sr. No	Name of the Colleges & Universities	FaceBook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn	SEO	Google AD words
1	The College of Saint Rose	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2	University of New Hampshire	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
3	Southern New Hampshire University	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
4	UMass Amherst	✓	✓		✓		
5	Stevens Institute of Technology				✓		
6	Monstserrat College of Art	✓				✓	✓
7	California Society of Certified Public Accountants				✓		
8	Columbia College Chicago	✓					
9	Ivy Bridge College	✓					
10	MBA Center					✓	

Fig 3: School Social Media Presence

Many higher education institutions have turned to inbound marketing automation to streamline the marketing strategies and processes, and to ensure that appropriate content is

scheduled and posted at necessary intervals. Some of these schools include Bentley University, Tufts University, Florida Institute of Technology, Maryville College, and George Washington University. Some of these schools have also implemented effective content across their platforms. Liberal arts school, Maryville College in Tennessee effectively streamlined their digital materials for prospective students with HubSpot's help in developing My College Path. My College Path was an online portal with useful information for high school students to prepare for and make decisions related to college. The site included a blog, which supported SEO efforts, and has gained a huge increase in site visits from organic searches. Maryville recognized the value of moving to platforms where potential students spend most of their time, which is online.

By providing solutions that matched the consumer needs, Maryville has been able to increase their enrollment to 2.5 times that of the national average. Aviles cites Cyndi Sweet, Director of Admissions, "With HubSpot, not only are we reaching our potential students where they spend the most time, but we are able to build a relationship with them in a way we couldn't previously, and that's invaluable" *(HubSpot)*. The ability to connect with prospective students in a positive and useful way builds a positive brand image and community.

St. Edward's University is a 125-year-old private Catholic liberal arts institution in Austin, Texas. They were able to incorporate inbound digital marketing strategies with the help of Digital Marketing agency, Elliance. After the school had made some institutional changes they wanted to make themselves a nationally and globally recognized brand among undergraduate students, graduate students, and adult learners. By rooting in their history of experience as an educational institution, Elliance was able to help situate the university as more accessible to prospective students. Their website features a grid style layout with colorful images of staff, faculty, and students each with a headline about that individuals contributions to the

school and society at large. It humanizes the school and builds the brand via this blog and storytelling format. These stories are shared seamlessly across their social media accounts with visual images and video that spark interest from prospective consumers, while providing them with fun and useful information about the school and community.

Companies who run effective inbound marketing campaigns include: Insight, Microsoft, and Airbnb. With the promising rewards of using inbound marketing as seen in the previous section, companies are bound to strategize their inbound marketing plans according to various targeted demographics using smart contents. The first example of a company with effective inbound strategy is Insight, a global provider of hardware, software and IT service solutions. "Unlike many larger companies with over 25 years of experience behind them, Insight isn't relying exclusively on past successes and 'the way we've always done it' to carry the company into the future or support future growth. Instead, the company has undertaken a huge inbound marketing effort, the key feature of which is their online magazine" *(Lambert, 2017)*. The mantra from the online magazine is:

1. Create content that speaks to our audience.
2. Create content where challenges and passion points are addressed.
3. If it's boring for us to read; we won't expect you to read it.
4. No selling or marketing fluff.

And as a result, "the vast storehouse of content available on magazine is categorized by topic, but also by persona, allowing the audience to choose what role they play in their organization and then dynamically refreshing the content selection to offer up the most relevant content for that individual" *(Lambert, 2017)*. Their array of digital content provides genuinely useful information to their consumers and potential consumers.

Microsoft has also incorporated an inbound approach to their marketing strategies. Microsoft is an established company selling computers, software, and other electronics. They have built brand awareness via their 'Microsoft stories' which feature a different individual and their experiences using Microsoft. Du Plessis (2015) writes about the brand stating, "This site's focus is to showcase its employees and company culture using long form interactive content which is excellently written illustrated by captivating visuals. At the same time the engaging brand stories reflect the Microsoft brand's values" (p. 5). The human element of Microsoft users or employees being conveyed as a part of the brand activates consumer trust and builds a community around their goods and services. The stories are often linked to the brand's hashtag #DoMore, which helps link user generated content with corporately crafted content. These stories are shared on their website but integrated with visuals and videos into their social media platforms as well, all linking back to the site. Du Plessis writes, "Microsoft is in the process of becoming a single brand to be recognized by function and not by product and consequently has been adopting a leadership practice that aligns all actions and messages with its core beliefs and communicates stories to create deep, long-lasting relationships with its audiences. This creates more value to the brand content to engage the consumers" (2015, p. 7). The article goes on to mention how Microsoft utilizes a consistent visual style and a familiar brand voice to integrate across platforms and become familiar to the consumers. Their successful integration of inbound marketing into their digital presence boosts brand power and perception among consumers.

Brand voice and perception was also integrated into Airbnb's seamless inbound strategies. Their recent work has allowed both hosts and consumers get involved in creating content for their social media, and blog. It's been important for them to spread a more positive message about their brand and services as there has been some negative press. Consumer

generated content via positive reviews, experiences, and photos are heavily shared across their digital platforms. They have a campaign with videos from hosts sharing the best spots in their cities so that tourists can get a local experience which they promote with the slogan, 'Don't go there. Live there.' The positive content generated from users is incredibly important in building their brand identity and customer trust, "Airbnb strongly believes in storytelling. They regularly post interesting stories of travelers and hosts along with photos and videos" *(Rastogi, 2016)*. This is true of their efforts to showcase the best hosts and most beautiful homes on their additional website, A Plus. This website is designed to highlight the best experiences of Airbnb with primarily visual content of photos and videos of hosts and their homes. Through this they recognize that their hosts and members are what truly makes these experiences unique and what makes these beautiful houses feel like home. Their latest campaigns humanize their brand, with well-designed and effective visual content across their platforms.

3.2 Content Type and Frequency Used in Inbound Marketing

There are a number of factors that go into choosing the best channels to utilize for a specific company or institution. This chart displays the current popular choices for content distribution channels.
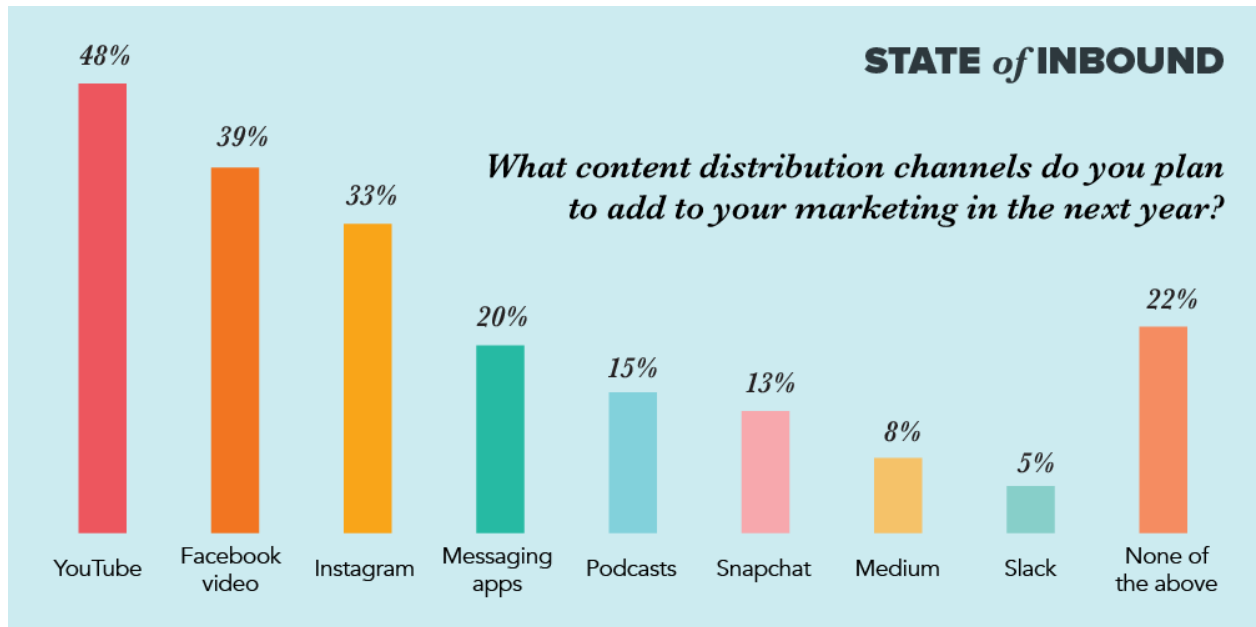
Figure 4: HubSpot Popular Channels *(Source: https://www.HubSpot.com/marketing-statistics)*

The data shows that the YouTube and Facebook are the two most popular platforms for inbound marketing strategy. It is important not only to consider what is most popular among target consumers and rivals, but also to weigh additional factors, such as what kind of content the company intends to share to best represent their brand story. The following sections are broken down by type of inbound content, and the platforms and channels best for sharing.

Blogs: Blogging is an essential way to share stories, news, and updates about a company in an engaging way to current and potential consumers. Blogs can help you increase your search presence and provide content for other inbound marketing channels. In terms of content

marketing, 53% of marketers say blog content creation is their top inbound marketing priority *(HubSpot, 2017)*. B2C companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got about 4.5X more leads than companies that published 0-4 monthly posts *(HubSpot, 2015)*. Blog posting is considered a monthly/weekly activity depending on the institution that is important for targeting niche audiences with useful information. For example, international students may check a school's blog posts to better understand how they will experience life on this campus from the perspective of current international students. It could also be useful for adult learners who are looking to make a connection with current students or alumni about their time at Clark. It not only shares individual experiences but allows the culture of the institution to shine through. Effective blog posts are relevant and include multimedia displays, such as images, gifs, or social media links.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): It is essential that companies utilize SEO in order to boost traffic to their website. It is a good way to target your audience and receive attention in general searches conducted by prospective students. According to HubSpot's 2017 inbound report, growing SEO and organic presence is a top priority for many companies across the globe. The Higher Ed Marketing Journal stresses the importance of boosting on-page SEO with title tags, appropriate keyword usage, Meta descriptions, header tags, alt tags on photos, and internal and external linking *(Cooper, 2017)*.
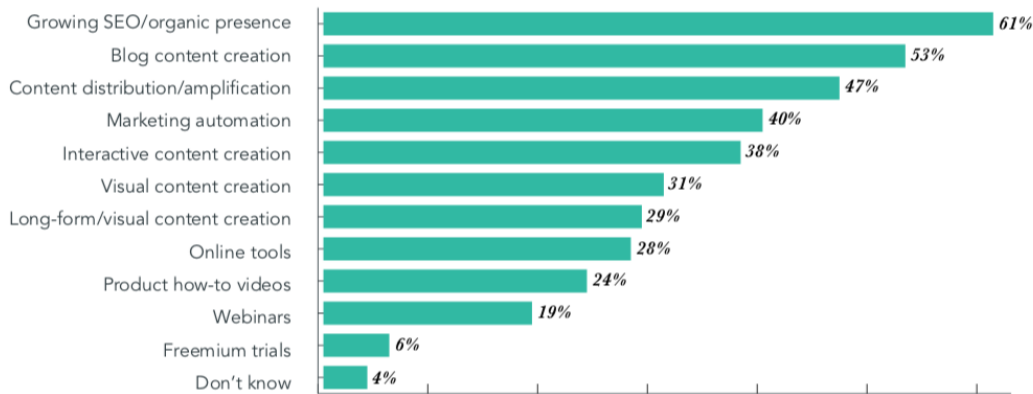
Figure 5: HubSpot Inbound Top Priorities

Videos: In general, many consumers would prefer to watch a video than read about a product or company *(Animoto, 2015)*. However, it is important to note that auto playing video advertisements are often viewed as an annoyance for customers. HubSpot claims that 51% of people have a lower opinion of brands that use auto playing video ads (2016). That being said, Visual content is 40X more likely to get shared on social media than other types of content *(Buffer, 2014)*. By 2017, video marketing will dominate nearly 70% of consumer website traffic *(Cisco, 2017)*. 51.9% of marketing professionals worldwide name video as the type of content with the best ROI *(Adobe, 2015)*. There are some limitations to video content, in that customers often have a short attention span. Therefore, videos need to be concise, engaging, and convey important information in creative ways.

Social Media: As mentioned content is often shared via social media, and it is important to know which content would work best on which channel. Social media allows schools to share visuals about what students are up to on their campus and generate content from students and student organizations. It creates community by helping potential students connect with current students and alumni. Prospective students are able to get a taste of what being a member of the

campus is like and are able to see photos and videos from events on campus. As mentioned before, Facebook is still a dominant social media platform. However, other social media platforms are also key, especially when targeting more specific demographics. 64% of marketers are using social media for six hours or more and 41% for 11 or more hours weekly *(Social Media Examiner, 2015)*.

Infographics: As previously mentioned, visual forms of content are more frequently viewed and appreciated by potential consumers. Infographics are liked and shared on social media 3X more than any other type of content *(Mass Planner, 2015)*. This mode of communication with the client is best for conveying numerical information and fast facts about the company. In higher education these infographics are best shared on the website and blogs, but distribution of the visual through social media channels could also be effective.

Storytelling: Many of these mediums, are designed for story telling whether it be blogs, visuals, or social media. Not only is the brand telling a story about what Clark University SPS is about, but how individuals within the programs live out those values and visions in their work and lives. Storytelling is an optimal way to deliver brand messaging and values to consumers. It humanizes digital experiences by showcasing real experiences of current students, professors, and alumni. Allowing prospective students to connect to the schools on this deeper social and emotional level helps develop relationships with relevant leads and convert them to applicants.

User-generated Content: This mode can be utilized across channels from blogging to social media, that allows students on campus or alumni to get involved with create stories and articles that will help convey key messaging to target audiences. Creating a pipeline for students and alumni to submit content is a good way to build an accurate reflection of experiences on campus, and allows everyone to feel involved in creating a culture and brand image. In general

user-generated content is an effective way to demonstrate the realities of campus life and experiences to prospective students. Slater writes, "ComScore reports that brand engagement rises by 28% when consumers are exposed to both professional and user-generated content" (2017). There are a number of ways to go about structuring, collecting, and incentivizing user-generated content. Hashtags are a way to have individuals on campus contribute their content to the company and allows companies access to track and manage that content. By creating and utilizing a hashtag for the school and for the program, students and prospective students would have a nice array of information available to them.

Frequency: One of the biggest challenges in inbound marketing is deciding how often to be create and publish content. You don't want to inundate your readers, and at the same time you don't want to lose touch with them. Social publishing frequency can have almost the same impact on your inbound metrics as content quality. Getting the right frequency at the right time with the right content is challenging. It is important to consider analyzing a company and their competitor's current content usage and data. These numbers can help guide future decisions about type and frequency of content. However, additional factors to determine what is right for your company are:

- Your audience personas: Knowing your target audience psychographics and demographics can go a long way in helping to decide what and how many would be too much and annoying to them.

- Budget: The budget, which includes both hard and implicit costs, decides how much time and resources a company is going to invest in such social publishing tasks.

- Size: The size of the company determines whether to do more or do less, at least according to HubSpot's findings *(Kolowich, 2015).*

3.3 Cost Analysis of Using Inbound Marketing

The financial implications of inbound marketing appear to be minimal because of the free nature of many social networking sites. However, there are a number of considerations which would indicate that in fact there is cost associated with creating content, and some costs associated with sharing that content to target audiences. It is important to consider the labor that may need to be hired to develop, edit, and analyze content. There will also be the cost of any software utilized to analyze or schedule content. From our estimates, a strong inbound marketing campaign takes up at least a quarter of the existing marketing budget.

The labor costs of implementing an inbound marketing platform depend on whether additional individuals would be hired to create social media, blog, and SEO content. The costs of hiring specialists for each of these tasks varies depending on their experience and time invested in the process. Blog posts can cost as low as $15 per post from non-native speaking freelance writers on sites like Upwork (a freelance writing platform) to upwards of $150 to $250 per post from well-known copywriters. While, an SEO specialist, could require an average annual salary of $43, 594 *(PayScale, 2018)*. Additionally, outside marketing strategy consultants and freelancers on Upwork have rates that range from $50 - $125 per hour. The costs associated with hiring individuals to perform niche functions of the inbound process can add up, however there are many automated solutions that may be more budget friendly.

Utilizing inbound platforms and software to develop, post, and analyze content could be a potential solution for implementing inbound practices. Various inbound providers allow a certain amount of access to advice and trainings for free. HubSpot offers varying levels of support for inbound practices that range from $50/month - $2,400/month. It would be imperative to choose a level that works best for Clark. We would recommend one of the less intensive packages, just to

serve as a boost to Clark's current campaigns rather than a complete dependence on their services.   Another platform to consider is ActiveCampaign, a rival of HubSpot that is more affordable while still providing similar services. ActiveCampaign offers services ranging from $17/month - $229/month. Wishpond is a third option for platform offering tools to support social media, landing pages, templates, and automation features. Wishpond features package pricing that ranges from $49/month - $199/month. It is important to remember that these are just a few companies that work to build strategies and offer tools to help sustainably implement inbound marketing. While considering the bottom-line, HubSpot and other platforms emphasize that when inbound marketing is viewed as an ongoing process and investment, it allows companies to consider the impact in the long-term return on investment and lead generation. Although it is hard to predict, the costs of investing in inbound marketing may pay for themselves over the long-term.

3.4 Risk analysis of Using Inbound Marketing

There are always risks that need to be accounted for in any marketing strategy or decision. The consequences for an uninformed decision could have serious repercussions for a brand's reputation and budget. MatchCraft writes, "Campaigns require a constant time investment to produce content that is of sufficient quality to be useful. The efficacy of an inbound marketing campaign only becomes evident three months after the campaign is established, and results may be more difficult to measure." They also discuss the wide range of skill sets needed to implement a successful inbound strategy. The skills required would include web design, writing, SEO, web analytics and social media to name a few. This may be a challenge for a small marketing team that may not have the ability to hire an expert in each of these areas of expertise. It is entirely possible that one individual would have this full set of

skills, but inbound can be time and labor intensive, and challenging for one individual to implement across the board. This is where it may be helpful to employ an automation program to help schedule, and track content. Another risk to consider with inbound marketing lies in the nature of the strategy itself. Bobowski (2017) writes, "The biggest risk in focusing solely on an inbound marketing strategy is that you put yourself more in a position to be chosen, and less in a position to choose. This sets you up to acquire a lot of customers who don't fit your ideal customer profile." This underlines the importance to diversify marketing strategies, and the safety of using inbound as a supplement to a larger marketing plan. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the target audience and developing content that draws in and speaks to the 'right' potential students.

In creating the following risk assessment matrix for SPS to implement an inbound marketing strategy the project team considered any technical risks, or risks related the difficulty of the work, technology issues, or unrealistic goals. It was also important to consider the management of the project, and the client's ability to find and utilize cost effective resources and planning. It is also important moving forward to consider risks associated with Clark and SPS, such as lack of funding and time, as well as risks external to the organization such as competition, and a changing market.

SPS Inbound Marketing Risk Matrix			
Risk (+/-)/Category	Probability of Occurrence	Impact of Risk	Risk Score = P*I
- Lack of time to create and distribute content	.25 (Possible)	.5 (Ineffective campaign)	.125
- Costs are too great to create a successful inbound campaign	.25 (Possible)	.5 (Ineffective campaign)	.125
- Unable to maintain a consistent strategy across platforms	.05 (Unlikely)	.3 (Detracts from messaging)	.015
- Lack of skill sets available to create and maintain the inbound campaign	.25 (Possible)	.7 (Unable to produce necessary content)	.175
- Poor feedback and participation from current or prospective students	.05 (Unlikely)	.5 (Reduced impact of campaign)	.025
- Return on investment may take a while to be tangible	.50 (Even Chance)	.5 (May not have budget moving forward)	.25

+ Campaign engages prospective students as leads	.75 (Likely)	.7 (Lead generation)	.525
+ The client gets a stronger picture of target market	.95 (Very High)	.7 (Able to produce more relevant content)	.665
+ Client finds affordable strategies/platforms	.50 (Even Chance)	.5 (Project feasibility increased)	.25

3.5 How to Control the Cost and Mitigate the Risks

An important way to mitigate the risks associated with deploying a new marketing strategy is to have a solid understanding of the target audience the campaign is aiming to engage. Through this deep understanding, higher education institutions are able to make informed decisions that will ensure a return on investment in regard to recruitment of prospective students. By understanding the customers' needs and interests, a higher education institution can more effectively develop content that is truly useful and engaging. Once the target consumer is defined, it is important that companies determine and set a consistent inbound marketing strategy across channels. This involves developing a streamlined process for creating, distributing, and analyzing content. Although this process is relatively fixed, it is important to be able to adapt this process to respond to rapidly changing markets. It is also essential to adapt this process across departments in the case of Clark. Once best practices and a marketing strategy have been prepared, it is essential to train all staff who will be working on implementation in these best

practices and set strategies. Automation can also help avoid some of the human error that is possible in developing and posting content.

Mitigating the costs and the risks involved with implementing inbound strategies requires reflection on the best way to develop and implement inbound solutions for the SPS department. It is important to consider the correct platforms, content, and frequency of posts to appeal to the target audience and align with brand identity. These choices should also be manageable in terms of time and budgeting. As mentioned before it also important to narrow down which channels best suit the institution and the audience, because it is too challenging to utilize each platform to its maximum potential. Some platforms may not be relevant to SPS and the type of content shared. Ultimately, it is essential to acknowledge the amount of time it takes to properly implement and see investment on inbound strategies.

Section 3

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 SPS Current Marketing Structure:

The current structure includes a number of outbound methods and paid advertising on social media and google. The department maintains a social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, which is managed separately by the SPS Graduate Assistants (GA). According to informal interviews conducted with the GA there has been limited or lacking engagement from students. It is important to note that in order to optimize the efficacy it is necessary for the social media platforms to function under the overall marketing strategy of SPS.

Inbound marketing could expand on SPS's current outreach and operations, by creating more appealing and integrated content shared via social media and linked to the website. Consistency is key when building a brand image as a trusted and valued resource among prospective students.

The current team is restricted in resources; the client, Tara Probeck is presently responsible for most of the work. This means that the solutions recommended by this team must be applicable to a small team with a limited budget.

4.1.1 Current Goals

1. Increase inquiries, applications, and enrollment

- Focus on domestic, non-traditional (early stage to mid-level) students who have been in the workforce and are looking for a different career path to advance
- ROI - high quality programs at a competitive cost
- Continue to enroll quality, International Students (90% of full-time students are international)

2. Build brand awareness focusing on quality of program and professors, university reputation, and flexibility (online courses)

- Shorter path for degree completion

- Career advancement

- Certificate programs available (IT job ready)

3. Leverage workforce training and certificate programs

4. Recruit stronger academic student profile

5. Connect with local companies as a pipeline for employees to participate

4.1.2 Competitors

Brandeis University, Assumption College, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute are main competitors in Massachusetts. The specific competitors to the SPS degree programs are listed below:

- MS Information Technology: Fordham and Bentley
  New York University, University of Rochester, and Washington State University.

- MS Professional Communication: NYU, Syracuse, Fordham, George Washington U., American University, Univ. of Florida. University of Washington (Evans), George Washington University (Trachtenberg), and Northern Illinois University can be the competitors.

- MS Public Administration: Univ. of Miami, SUNY Stonybrook, Univ. of Pittsburgh, Fordham, George Washington U., Stevens Institute of Technology.

Aspirational competitive schools are George Washington U. and Arizona State U., UMass Lowell, NYU

4.1.3 Unique Differentiator

The unique differentiators of the SPS program include the career development opportunities that students can access via internships and hands on classes. Clark has an excellent reputation among employers via a network of Clark students in the greater Boston area, and across the globe. An emphasis will be placed on the opportunity for students to work and take classes at night. This fosters a flexible and innovative work environment, where students are free have a work-life balance. It is also important to note that SPS works to keep programs up to date and relevant to the skills employers expect in the workplace. Finally, SPS works to combine practical knowledge about workplace practices, communication, and social responsibility with hands on opportunities to practice through leadership and research opportunities. These unique differentiators can be carried through and showcased with an effective inbound marketing campaign.

4.2 Proposed New Structure

This inbound structure will follow a HubSpot inbound methodology, where SPS will "attract" strangers into prospects, "convert" these prospects into accepted students, and eventually "close" and "delight" these accepted students until they become enrolled students.
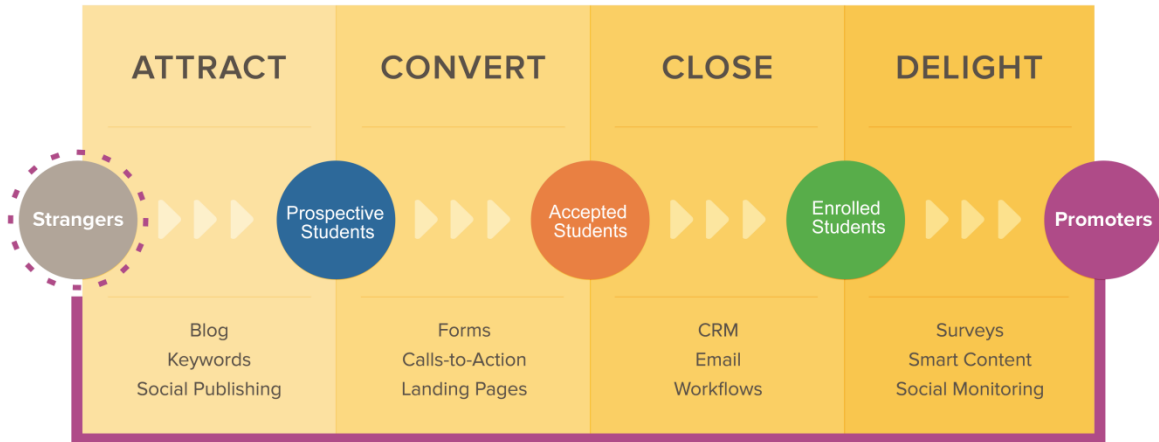
Fig. 6: SPS New Inbound Methodology

With this structure, it will have SPS's social media accounts all integrated, monitored and working hand-in-hand with the rest of other inbound marketing strategies, given that HubSpot enables the use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Linkedin, etc. in its inbound platform.

4.3 Action Steps

1. Collect more detailed information about the about the target audience segments

    a. Build out detailed profiles of target audiences in order to understand their worldview and what they would find compelling and useful.

2. Decide which strategies and platforms to implement

3. Set goals

    a. Ex. Increased number of applicants

4. Assessing the fiscal implications and labor requirements to accomplish those goals

5. Establish leadership over the inbound project and appoint a project team

6. Engage a third party to set up software solutions to schedule and track inbound content

7. Build out the content in advance and decide the frequency and timing of posts, emails, etc.

8. Unroll the content and make changes as necessary

4.4 Inbound Marketing Supplement

The first move in this direction would be to get a better understanding of the target

market. This could be accomplished with a survey of prospective and current students. Further

breaking down the segments of adult learner and international students to gear a campaign

towards niche age groups and nationalities. Finding out the interests and concerns of these

populations will be essential to craft content that addresses these needs and pain points.

Questions that might help identify these individuals and interests could be:

1. Age:

   a. 18-25 b. 25-35 c. 35-45 d. 45-55 e. 55 or above

2. Undergrad degree and year of completion?

3. Current industry or industry interested in?

4. Location:

5. Rate interest in Clark's SPS programs or current experience of SPS programs

   a. 1-10

   b. What program are you in if you rated your current experience?

      i. MPSC, MPA, MSIT

6. Desired outcomes from a grad program: (open ended)

7. Concerns about grad programs: (open ended)

8. What information do you need to make a decision that isn't available to you?

   (open ended)

Knowing the audience is a key step in implementing an inbound marketing strategy.

However, it also important to utilize this information to develop content that speaks to these

individuals and their interests and concerns. An important way to engage potential students

across target markets is to create a community via blogging, images, and video. Utilizing these

popular mediums enhances visibility, and these mediums are ideal for humanizing the

organization. This content would highlight work and experiences of SPS students, alumni, and

faculty with user generated content. Incorporating increased levels of storytelling via user

generated content and distributing this content across social media sites, would help build

trusting relationships with potential consumers. It helps consumers identify with a brand and the

values associated with that brand. HubSpot emphasizes the importance of utilizing social media

channels for real human interaction stating, "Social media was always meant to be a personal

channel" *(Kilens et al.)*. The stories told through content and shared on social media channels

help facilitate the human experiences and interactions that built brand recognition and approval.

Each story will hit on multiple touchpoints for consumers and facilitate the process of converting

leads. Kilens et al. write, "Storytelling isn't an inbound best practice. Storytelling is inbound at

its best." This demonstrates the impact of building a brand story and sharing content that

establishes those values with the target market.

Another way of imagining this shift in developing inbound content would be to follow

the outline from Du Plessis's (2015) analysis of the key elements of content marketing. Setting a

marketing strategy considering the following concepts could be useful in reflecting on the types

of content and channels that would be best for SPS. The first element that Du Plessis considers is

the medium element, or the channel and frequency best suited to the message and brand. Du

Plessis writes, "Before content is created and shared, content marketers should decide on

opportunities for interactivity, collaboration and co-creation" (p. 4). The strategic element

addresses the approach from the brand in creating and sharing content. This element is essential

in the planning process and establishes definite ways to emphasize key brand elements and values while aligning with the target market. The formation element indicates the actual creation process, where blogs, videos, and images are developed to match the strategy and planning. Du Plessis writes, "This could advance co-creation by consumers to share their brand experiences to enhance brand awareness. It is important to humanize the brand in order for the target audience to better relate to and understand the brand's values" (p. 4). The next component, is the intrinsic element, where brand content blends to become a natural part of consumer's daily media intake. This can only be accomplished with quality content that is relevant and consistent for the target consumers. The communication element is also important, refers to the way in which content is conveyed to consumers. This angle is important to consider with the amount of distraction on digital platforms, the communication style is key to attracting consumer attention. Finally, the corollary element is an ideal result of an inbound campaign in which consumers become advocates for the brand, which refers back to the idea of co-creation of content. This cyclical process of implementing these key content elements with inbound marketing is essential when considering how SPS could supplement their current marketing strategies.

4.5 Appealing to the SPS Audience

SPS needs to capitalize on its unique differentiators by showcasing how each component of the department. These windows into program excellence in faculty, professional development, and hands-on experiences could be featured in a number of ways with video, photo, and blog content. This would tie into the brand and individual's story component of the campaign. This would tie into the brand and individual's story component of the campaign.

Channels could be utilized to reach out to leads through email campaigns regarding SPS News and campus events. Incentives could be provided to motivate current and former students to produce content.

The department could utilize the website hosted by Clark as a portal for all content and information related to SPS as a directory. Incoming students could be guided through the orientation process to utilize the website as a resource. Events specific to SPS or related to the department could be shared on social media through live event posting.

4.6 Tracking and Analysis

There are a number of solutions in order to track and analyze this content on top of the currently utilized google analytics technology. It will be key that the SPS marketing department consider the cost, ability to schedule posts, user-friendly interface, and analytics when selecting a software or service. The benefits of tracking and data analysis are immense, as it allows for the marketing team to make adjustments to the campaign in order to maximize on the content and budget.

Based on the several discussions and the inputs from the program Sponsor, it is understood that there are several challenges to build a successful Inbound Marketing Program. Automating the Inbound Marketing could be one of the strategic methods to resolve some of the concerns of inbound marketing reachability and consistency.

There are several Inbound Marketing tools in the market, some of them are listed below: -

Sr.No	Names of Marketing tools
1	HubSpot
2	ActiveCampaign
3	Hatchbuck

4	Infusionsoft
5	Act-On
6	Wishpond
7	Ontraport
8	Marketo
9	Pardot

For the purpose of this discussion, HubSpot as it has been a market leader in inbound marketing. This study will use HubSpot as an example to understand the nature of the services offered through these work-flow automation companies. However, it is important to note that this team is not endorsing HubSpot above any other firm within the market. Technology tools will be used to evaluate some of the high-level concerns to resolve Clark's Inbound Marketing workflow or process related concerns.

About HubSpot

HubSpot is a developer and marketer of software products based out of Boston, Massachusetts for inbound marketing and sales. HubSpot was founded by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah in 2006. It's tools and services provide solutions for social media marketing, content management, web analytics and search engine optimization.

Technical Requirements

- HubSpot Cloud Hosting provides it as Software-As a Service with Annual subscription
- HubSpot can integrate with your current website with additional efforts and cost

Timelines and efforts estimation for implementation of the tool

- HubSpot experience says it takes 6 to 8 months for operationalization of the solutions

- Post Implementation engagement efforts would require 8 to 12 hours per week to manage the solutions

Pricing of the Solution

HubSpot Professional Subscription	Pricing
One-time cost for setting up the workflow rules and engines (HubSpot specialist available onsite for 90 days	$3,000
Annual Subscription $800 per month x 12 months	$9,600
Total cost for the first year	$12,600

Fig 9: HubSpot Pricing

Operational and Security Risk Analysis of the HubSpot solution

| Sr.No	HubSpot Operational & Security Risk analysis	Risk Type
1	HubSpot solution is a cloud based solution. HubSpot has complete control over the environment and may access all the information or data. Leading to security and privacy concerns	Security and Privacy
2	Lack of customization and design tools could limit the objectives	Operational & or Financial Risk
3	Lack of skillsets to manage the tool	Operational & or Financial Risk
4	HubSpot solution implementation takes more then 8 months since there may be engines and rulesets which could change over the time.	Operational & or Financial Risk
5	No version updates of the software, additional cost of upgrades	Operational & or Financial Risk
6	Lack of secure access and security management of the hosted Cloud Infrastruture	Security and Privacy
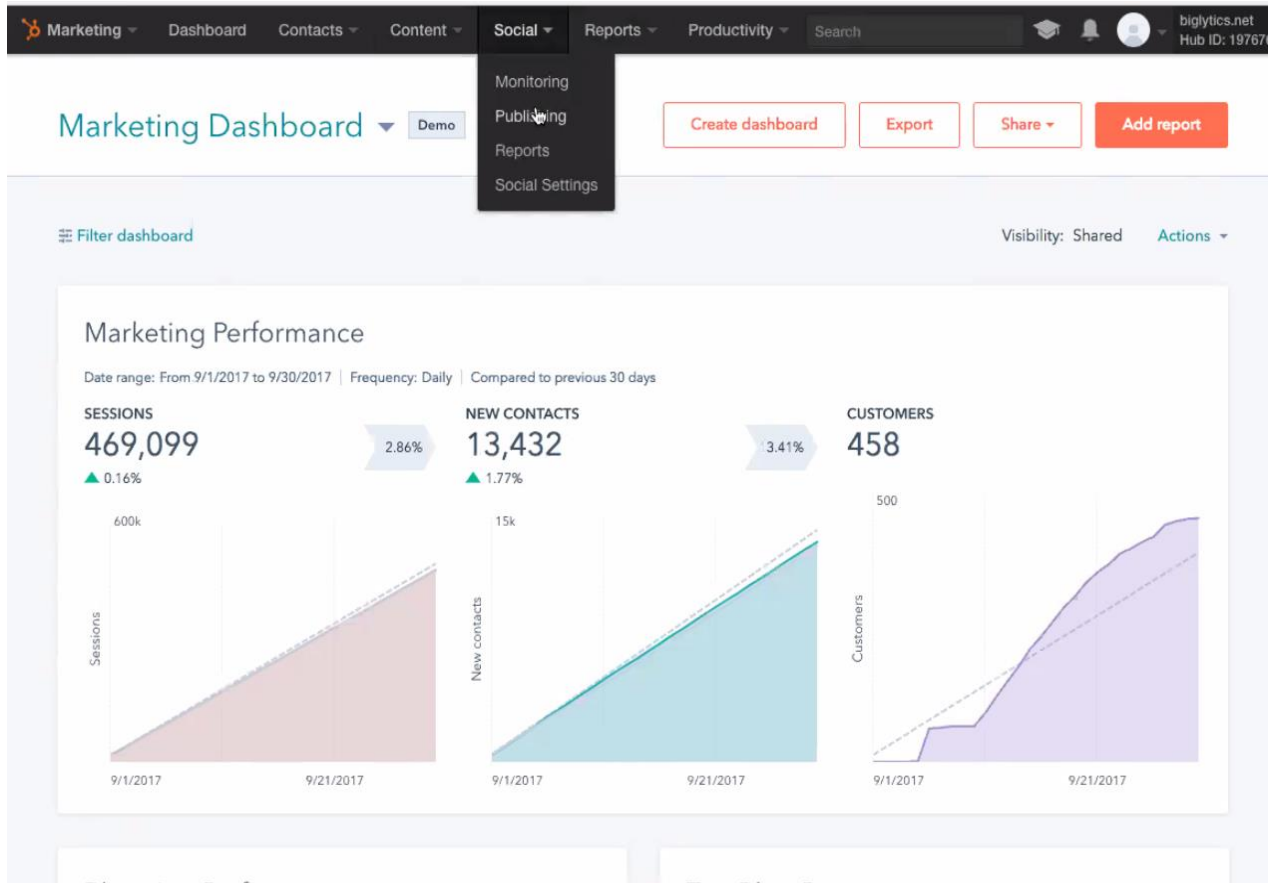
Fig 10: HubSpot Analytics

HubSpot's analytics is a great tool for achieving this purpose – which is tracking the success of inbound marketing tactics and moves. Complete customer lifecycle can be tracked from anonymous visitor to closed customer. The quantity and quality of traffic received by the website can be measured as a whole or on a page-by-page basis. It allows the user to analyze the performance of each page in terms of views, keywords, and inbound links. It can further identify which traffic sources bring in the most visits, contacts, and customers over time.

HubSpot analytics produces detailed reports for the user's marketing assets, from website and landing pages, to emails, blog posts, social media accounts, calls-to-action, and more. A competitor's report can be obtained, which will help users compare themselves to other companies within the same industry.

CHAPTER FIVE

Case Studies

5.1 Blogging: St. Edward's University

Blogging is a key part of inbound marketing. It is an ideal way to create content that matches the brand identity, while appealing to the needs and interests of the target audience. Blogging also allows companies to maximize on SEO, through utilization of searchable keywords and phrases. A prime example of a higher education institution that capitalizes on the power of blogging as an inbound strategy is St. Edward's University. This School was founded in 1877 as a catholic liberal arts institution. In more recent years as they expanded their graduate programs they sought to gain brand recognition on a national and global scale. They enlisted the help of a digital advertising agency, Elliance, to build out their website and social media presence.

The process to re-brand and grow to promote the school at its graduate and undergraduate levels included an overhaul of their website. The new website heavily features blogs, many of which have been contributed to by current students and faculty. These blogs are designed to incorporate voices on and off campus that build their brand story and invite the interest and consideration of prospective students. Letting current students contribute to this content helps build their pride and community within the university and allows them to tell their stories. The school shares the blogs on their social media accounts for wider reach to specific segments of the target audience. The articles that received the most engagement on their social media channels were focused on student and faculty accomplishments, with the format tending towards digestible list articles.

Some blog types that stood out as being particularly informative and interesting for prospective students included quotes from students and faculty. For example, the article, '12 Things Only Hilltoppers Know' which categorizes a few key perks about campus life, and quotes from campus tour guides. Getting these campus ambassadors perspective makes the article engaging and unique. One student highlighted the global aspects of campus and wrote, "I hear at least five different languages every day, sometimes in a single walk across campus." This style of blog quoting multiple students is effective, but so is going into more depth with one student's story and experience. An example of this style article is one entitled, 'A Day at St. Edward's' which features high quality photos and writing walking through the day of one student, Jovahana Avila. The article begins by providing some background about the student and her academic and extracurricular work at St. Edwards. It takes the reader from starting her day at work at a local coffeehouse, attending class, and hosting a dorm event. The article highlights her past internships, and her current internship with the League of Women Voters of Texas. Overall, the blog showcases the range of academic, extracurricular, and outside professional experience that is accessible to students at the school. Their articles cover not only a day in the life, but carefully detail the work that students are doing post-graduation in their professional fields. This demonstration of alumni success, encourages potential students to look into what their opportunities would be post-graduation. Each article engages the reader into a story that represents the brand at large and highlights their unique differentiators.

These blog types could be incorporated into the SPS department with a little bit of effort to set up a platform where there is opportunity for students and faculty to contribute. The point in one of the blogs about hearing different languages on campus relates to the global diversity that Clark has to offer within the SPS program. International students sharing their stories and

outcomes from Clark could be a helpful way to recruit more students from abroad. Clark SPS has students that are equally as involved as Jovahana, and it would be wonderful to showcase their experiences, which would serve to promote them as brand ambassadors in a way. There are so many stories from SPS that could be shared, it is just a matter of what the best way to collect and distribute these stories. Each story should be connected to key brand elements and unique differentiators and could be collected through outreach to current students. It would be important to create one location on the website or another landing page where students, faculty, and alumni could submit their stories and photos. WordPress or Dropbox could be a good alternative to have students submit and publish work. Generating student and faculty content could also be encouraged with hands on projects in the classroom. Professors could assign students to either write about themselves, someone in the program, or interview a number of people to uncover these stories of involvement, professional experience, and activism. High quality photos and videos would also be a nice way to complement and add a visual component to these blogs.

5.2 Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Carleton University

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an essential component of any inbound campaign. Visibility of the university online is imperative so that students have the ability to find information about the school in the first place. Ultimately it is a simple issue of access, but there are many ways to approach SEO strategies. It has been demonstrated that students often utilize search engines when gathering information about prospective schools. Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) address this when they write, "Students use search engines to look for further information regarding a specific object of interest and follow displayed links on the search results page" (p. 149). When relevant information about a prospective is not readily accessible in a keyword google search the likelihood that students follow links to find out more is

significantly decreased. SEO is an effective way to get a school's information out there and accessible for prospective students.

Carleton College, a small liberal arts college in Minnesota that has effectively utilized SEO strategies to increase their visibility on Google. Ingeniux reported that Carleton is an industry leader in optimization of their website. Their key to success is their use of on-page optimization via inclusion of keywords from their title to the HTML copy. According to Ingeniux (2009) they have been the number one result for the following searches: Private Liberal Arts, Private Liberal Arts College, and Liberal Arts Minnesota (p. 7). This kind of visibility is quite impressive for a small university. However, with their powerful optimization, they have been able to maintain high search rankings over a sustained period of time. Their keywords include college, liberal arts, and Minnesota which are planted repeatedly in their HTML text.

Clark's School of Professional Studies can utilize these SEO strategies to develop better optimization of the text and HTML on the general SPS site. This would augment any paid search programs, such as Google AdWords, that are currently in use. Ingeniux (2009) writes, "Search Engine Optimization is a cornerstone of any good web marketing strategy. Good SEO skills are also good web management skills as they result in standards-based website implementation, well organization information architecture, and well written, on-topic content" (p. 11) This rings true for Clark's future use of inbound marketing strategies. When there is set standards and best practices for the implementation of inbound, SEO will become a part of the architecture of developing content.

5. 3 Social Media: University of Florida

Social media has become a primary means of communication between higher education institutions and their stakeholders. These are great channels to share interactive content with
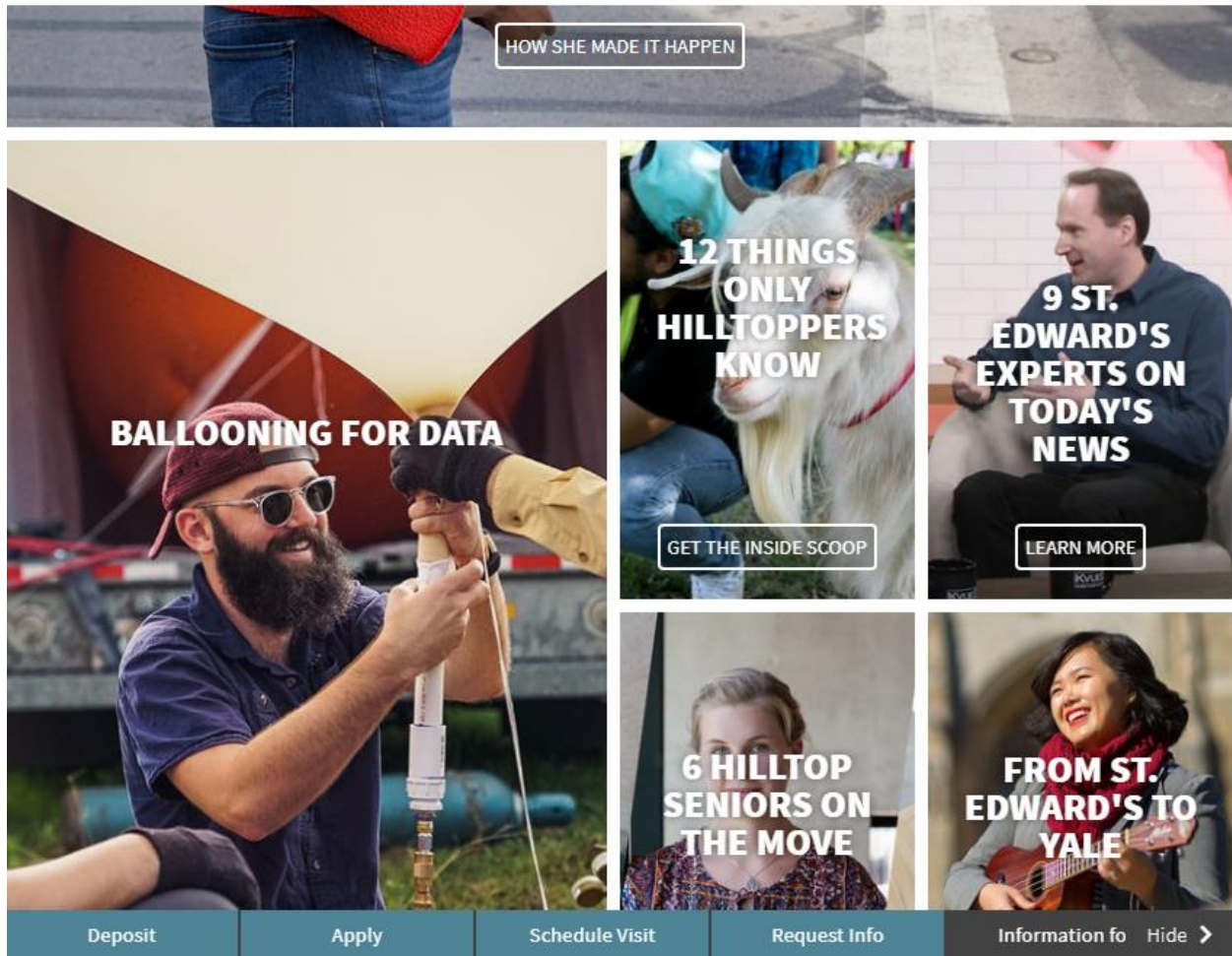
prospective students, because students are more likely to engage in those spaces. Social media can serve to build community and exemplify that community to individuals who are considering joining it. Not only is social media a community builder, but it is a key component of any inbound marketing strategy. University of Florida is incredibly strategic in their social media usage across university accounts. This is due in part to their team of three people that work to create content and oversee the various accounts.

Their main accounts include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. However, for the purpose of this case the team focused on uses and engagement of Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. University of Florida writes about the aim of their accounts in their Social Media Guidebook, "The University of Florida uses social media to engage in conversations with all members of the Gator community. Whether it's staff, students, employees, fans or alumni; UF uses social media to find out what's important to the entire Gator Nation and to share that information with each other and the world" (2018). Although this refers only to what is relevant to current 'Gator Nation,' prospective members of that community would find the kind of information that they share to be useful in their decision-making process. The use of a Social Media Guidebook is essential to the integrated and successful use of social media channels from UF. The Guidebook outlines the purpose of their accounts, the requirements to create an affiliated account, and clearly defines best practices and style guidelines. This reinforces a unity of tone and brand voice that reflects positively on the university and helps facilitate usage of social media channels.

Despite cohesion across platforms, each account has slightly different content to match the best practices for that channel. The types of content that UF posts on Instagram are often pictures of campus life, athletics, and videos. These posts receive the most engagement via likes

and views. While, their Facebook page posts primarily videos and photos that depict student research and innovation, events on campus, and even memes. This content receives a wide level of engagement from likes to comments from students, faculty, and fans. Their linked content is integrated with their Facebook and Instagram platforms, sharing similar photos and videos of campus, events, and research. Each account also links to relevant sources outside of university produced content, and back to the main website.

Though the resources for their social media presence are much greater than Clark's SPS department, it is still useful to examine the strategies University of Florida utilizes to make their accounts stand out. Clark's SPS department could increase their integration across platforms, and link back to primary Clark accounts to get better recognition and interaction with current and prospective students. A great way to implement these changes is to do as UF has in defining the style, tone, and best practices for each platform. This SPS Social Media Guidebook would be in alignment with Clark's current overall social media policies, which are pretty open ended. The Guidebook would be a living document that would evolve over time and with different leadership. Leadership was also key, in that there should be a point person responsible for each account, whether that be the head of marketing, or a graduate assistant. The cohesion with individuals running the accounts is essential to maintain common tone and messaging.

Figure 13: St. Edwards Website

Figure 14: St. Edwards Logo
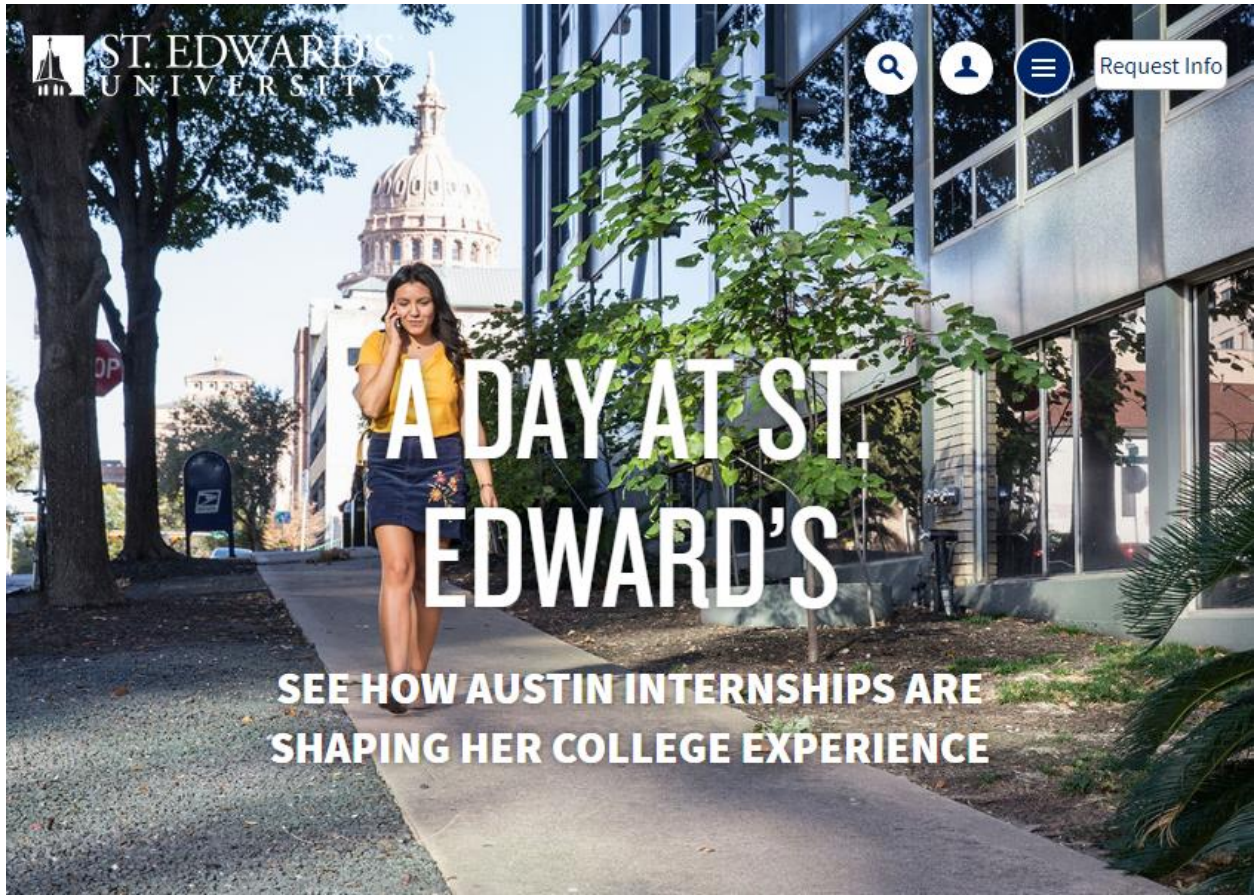
Figure 15: Example Blog

Figure 16: Carleton Main Webpage

Figure 17: Carleton Google Search Ranking

Figure 18: University of Florida Official Instagram

Figure 19: UF Social Media Guidebook

CHAPTER SIX

Through this study, the team has consolidated several recommendations that will be beneficial for the marketing of SPS moving forward. These recommendations are divided as short term and long term, based on this team's informed judgement. This section will be ordered in terms of an action plan to help the department identify the optimal application of these solutions.

6.1 Short-term recommendations

1) Understanding the audience

   In order to create content, it is important to identify what is important or relevant to the department's current and potential target base. This will help ensure that users will engage with the information posted and thus increasing the pull of these marketing strategies. It is also relevant when choosing which platforms to maintain a high departmental presence. It is important be aware of this, as the appeal of platforms are volatile. Referring to the current structure of SPS *(Section 4)* it can be seen that 46.5% of current students fall under the category of attending graduate school directly after their bachelor's degree. Students in the middle of their careers (ages 24-39) make up 42% of the current student population. The remaining 11% comprising of students making career changes, in other words student in the age category of 40 and above. Thus, it would be advantageous for SPS to have a strong presence on Instagram as the platform appeals to young adults. The strength of Facebook is that it is becoming increasingly popular with older generations, whilst remaining relevant with young adults. Facebook enables a level of fluidity for content due the platform's ability to host a variety of media. The current demographic breakdown of the SPS department includes a large number of students hailing from China. Additionally, the department has strong ties to local institutions in

China as well. For these reasons, it is important that SPS creates a presence on social media platforms which are accessible in China such as WeChat or Weibo.

2) Being consistent/ creating a brand persona

Successful application of social media platforms is contingent on the brand persona portrayed. The current Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts are hosted by the Graduate Assistants of the department. Thus, the current brand persona is highly correlated to the GA's themselves. This will result in irregularities upon the appointment of a new GA. It is important for the department to identify its character, as it will aid in the process of connecting with more users. Strong brand personification is crucial to gaining more followers. Based on anecdotes from informal interviews conducted in this study, and the diverse perspectives of this team, several key characteristics have been identified:

i. The department is a professional community with a friendly atmosphere.

ii. SPS is approachable due to its quirky nature, which fosters strong student-faculty relationships

iii. SPS is diverse with strong links to several global institutions

Different platforms may allow the department to showcase various aspects of its persona. For example, LinkedIn would emphasis the professional achievements and connections of SPS, whilst Instagram highlights student life. It is important to establish high level objectives for the overall social media and internet present of SPS, in order to create a cohesive brand image.

3) Content

One of the biggest challenges in implementing a successful inbound marketing strategy is content. This can be broken down further into (i) the subject matter of content and (ii) the production of content.

i. Based on anecdotal information and the diverse perspectives of this team, several target content areas have been identified:

    a. Campus and SPS news

    b. Information of local events and attractions

        i. The International Students and Scholars Office (Office) produces a monthly newsletter, which includes information regarding events in Massachusetts.

    c. Significant achievements or research of students

    d. Course Previews: allowing students to identify what electives will be offered in upcoming semesters. Also provides the opportunity for professors to give students an impression of the class, beyond the course description.

    e. Faculty focus

        i. Highlighting the experience and research of faculty members

        ii. Video content of faculty sharing anecdotes of their experiences looking for jobs

        iii. Share valuable opinions on contemporary issues within their area of expertise

ii. Once target areas are identified, it is important to establish consistent channels for content creation.

a. One of the department's greatest assets is its current students as they provide a representative sample of the target audience of SPS. Specifically, within the Communication program, there are a number of courses that teach students skills and knowledge on effective marketing communication. Thus, it would be possible to integrate an assignment or project into the syllabus of these classes. As the work was already being graded by professors, there would be limited processing required from the marketing department. Students will be incentivised to work harder on the assignments as they would have an opportunity to get their name out. For the department, the benefit is two-fold. First, it would provide a sustainable source of content for marketing purposes. Second, it will allow the application of the department's vision of increasing outlets for experiential learning. Several courses from the current academic catalogue for MSPC had been identified based on the course descriptions. Further evaluation may be required to confirm the prospects of this strategy. The extent of how much content could be generated through these classes will be highly dependent on the approach of the professor teach the course.

Course Code	Name of Class
MSPC 3030	Free-lance Writing and Strategy
MSPC 3050	Social Media and Marketing Communication

MSPC 3100	Introduction to New Media Technologies
MSPC 3750	Advertising Theory and Practice
MSPC 3100	Marketing Communication
MSPC 3780	Theory and Practice of Persuasion
MSPC 3010	Visual Communication Design

      b. Incentives could be provided for student takeovers of social media platforms. This could range from students focusing on what life as a graduate student is or highlight a specific event organized by the department. Simple incentives such as providing a coffee voucher may be effective.

4) Create a social media and resource directory

      a. The efficacy of great resources and content is largely diminished if the target audience is unable to find the material easily. Currently, the SPS website does not include any of the social media links on the site. Due to ineffective key word management, the social media websites of the department do not appear upon searching "Clark University School of Professional Studies" on Google. The Facebook page is the first to appear on the third page of results.

         i. Using the website as a portal to access all things related to SPS will help the ease of navigation.

ii. Newly admitted students should be directed towards the website to access materials related to orientation or questions regarding the program. This will help establish the role of the online resources amongst the student body.

5) Change the impression of SPS

a. Due to the large variety amongst the student body, it has been difficult to foster a strong sense of community throughout the entire population. This has proven to be detrimental to the success of the various events and seminars hosted by the department.

i. A potential way to increase student presence at events would be to establish brand ambassadors. This would be achieved by selecting a few students from different segments of the population to be responsible for sharing the event amongst their circles. These ambassadors will be employing the strategies of influencer marketing to use their pull to spread the product. This could be done through simple word of mouth, or by employing social media tactics such as sharing the build up to an event.

ii. Increasing the variety of events could help improve the level of community within the student population. Organizing a large number of events can be a huge financial burden for the department.

1. A potential solution would be to partner with other departments on campus to co-sponsor events.

2. Create several smaller events which utilises the resources within the department. Example: create a coffee evening in which faculty

and adult learners share their experiences of finding jobs post-

graduation with young adults of the department.

6) Maintaining strong links with Alumni

    a. Data on what past students have accomplished since graduation can be a critical

      deciding factor for a potential student. It is important for the department to

      monitor their students, which can be accomplished by creating on exit form that

      students fill out upon graduation. An annual email can be sent in which students,

      can share any of their accomplishments or new positions. This information could

      also be obtained through the past students' LinkedIn pages. This will also be

      beneficial for the GA's when organising the annual alumni panel.

7) Adapt

    a. The most successful inbound marketing strategies are the ones, which are

      constantly changing. It is

6.2 Long-term recommendations

The SPS department could benefit from a consultation regarding workflow automation. This

team recommends that once content building strategies are implemented, the department goes on

to have a discussion regarding work flow automation solution. As previously mentioned, there

are an array of inbound marketing tools in the market, that can aid the department in tracking the

success of their marketing efforts and help generate leads. A common misconception is that

choosing companies like HubSpot, will provide an ultimate solution to all things inbound

marketing. Through these companies, users purchase software that can be integrated into their

normal routine.

Through HubSpot, as with other companies, the user is purchasing a methodology. This will mean that the process will add more hours to the current workload of the user. HubSpot emphasizes on providing an education about inbound marketing and a complete customer training to ensure success. This process will include a library of webinars to help understand the process of webinars. In particular, HubSpot has been highly reviewed for their ease of use with a large amount of resources available. The company provides an all in one tool for blogging, SEO, social media, and has the ability to host the client website on their platform. There is also an option to enable HubSpot tools to within the existing website.

6.2.1 The Verdict

Once the SPS department has incorporated the short-term recommendations of this report, it will be beneficial to look into an automation consult like HubSpot. The training will be invaluable for the marketing team and it will aid SPS to identify actionable-data. The department will be able to set more strategic goals, due to HubSpot's emphasis on measurable objectives. They provide a lot of support to ensure that the client receives all the necessary technical care. However, as they provide a methodology and not a solution, the success of using HubSpot is dependent on how much work the client is willing to put in. Thus, it important for SPS to implement forms of inbound marketing prior to any consultation. The extent of the return on investment with the use of HubSpot has been a controversial issue. It is clear that the company has helped their clients excel within inbound marketing, as in the case of Maryville. Yet is important to consider the pricing of these tools, as some of workflow tools are not available in the basic package.

6.3 Conclusion

Given the impact of the internet on decision marking, it is clear that SPS will have to engage in inbound marketing in order to reach their goal of increasing their student population. The shift in marketing is starting to put more emphasis on inbound marketing in comparison to traditional methods. Although many organizations are starting to embrace elements of inbound marketing, few have boasted an overall effective strategy. Many higher education institutions are only beginning to venture into inbound marketing. This gives Clark University, specifically the School of Professional Studies, the unique opportunity to have a first mover advantage in comparison to its competitors.

Content is the main determining factor of successful inbound marketing; it is important to ensure consistent, relevant, and high-quality content. Understanding the audience is crucial to adhere the content to the demand of the target audience. Through the development of high-level marketing strategies, it will allow SPS to create a cohesive brand personification through its social media. Finally work-flow automation can maximize the efficacy of inbound marketing but the decision to move in this direction must be re-evaluated once the short-term recommendations have been implemented

6.4 Reflection

In reflecting on our own experiences as members of Clark's SPS department we were able to provide a unique perspective on the issue of whether the SPS department could or should implement inbound marketing strategies. Each team member brought a unique insight to the table, since we are from various nationalities participating in each SPS program. This offered our project team a competitive edge in our multi-pronged approach to the project problem, research, recommendations, and solutions. We feel strongly, that without this diversity of thought, our

project would not be as complete or holistic in its review of inbound marketing and its application to Clark's SPS department. Our recommendations are a direct reflection our our own experiences at Clark, and our understandings of the operations of the SPS department.

Over the course of the semester, the inbound marketing capstone team was able to develop project management, leadership, teamwork, and marketing knowledge and skills. This has contributed to the team's professional development and growth in a myriad of ways. First, it was very important to our team to incorporate everyone's research and opinions into the final deliverables. We ensured equal participation with mandatory weekly research deadlines, followed by deadlines for each chapter of the final paper uploaded to the google drive. Each chapter was then compiled to reflect each of our work throughout the semester. Developing that project structure and utilizing each team member to their best capacity reflects the innovative and leadership that we encouraged in one another throughout the semester. Over the course of the semester our project team was able to develop as a cohesive unit. Although we did encounter a few points of disagreement and misunderstanding on the project structure and expectations throughout the semester, we always worked to resolve those issue to our best abilities. Finally, this project was unique in its ability to raise our awareness about inbound marketing. Each team member has left this project with a better understanding of what inbound marketing is, how its best utilized (or its best practices), and how Clark's SPS department can work to implement inbound strategies in the short and long term.

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APPENDIX

7.1 Lessons Learned

Capstone Lessons Learned

Developed for Inbound Marketing Capstone   Date: April 24, 2018

By the following team members:

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Client: Tara Probeck

Advisor: Rich Aroian

Master Program: School of Professional Studies

What did we do well?

These are things that we did well, or went well on the inbound marketing capstone

project

- Dividing work so that everyone's input was included in final deliverables
- Communicating with our client and our faculty advisor to schedule meetings and share updates

What can we do better?

These are things that in retrospective we could have done better.

- Prepare deliverables more communally and further in advance
- More contact with the client about her current work and needs
- Intergroup communication about deliverable expectations
- Setting deadlines and breaking up work into weekly deadlines for research and final deliverables sooner
- More practice with the final presentation

What still puzzles us?

These are things that we still do not understand. There was uncertainty and ambiguity concerning certain aspects of our capstone project

- How/Will automation play a role in solutions for Clark's SPS department for inbound marketing?

- This project was so focused on the SPS department's marketing needs, but ultimately a good marketing system is highly integrated across Clark's graduate and undergraduate programs

- How our recommendations will or will not be implemented by Tara and the SPS department

What would we do again?

There are activities and tasks that we considered essential for our Capstone. On this type of capstone project, or a similar one we would want to repeat these activities.

- Communication through WhatsApp and our weekly meetings to stay in touch and lay out work requirements and deadlines
- Meeting minutes for those who couldn't make it to stay in the loop
- Google drive to instantly share and co-create documents together
- Setting deadlines for sections of research and final paper sections

What would we not do again?

These are activities and tasks that we considered detrimental. We want to make certain that these are things that we do not repeat, so we can avoid replicating the project mistakes.

- Leave weekly assignments unclear or without proper deadlines

- Not check for clarity of assignments among team members

What would we do differently?

These are activities and tasks that did not quite work out as you expected. To make them succeed, what would we have changed?

- Less leniency with due dates for weekly research and deliverables

- Holding each other more accountable to come to as many meetings as possible

- Better prepare for group meetings so that we could maximize productivity with our time together in person

- Set a better schedule and system for work deadlines from the beginning of the project

What have we learned?

What lessons have been learned that can be applied to future projects to support successful delivery of the goal and project objectives? These may be changes that need to be made, or an emphasis on the success factors that this project illustrates.

- Inbound marketing best practices and application

- The importance of setting solid plans and scheduling at the beginning and then adjusting

- Working with different work and leadership styles

- Adaptability as our project focuses shifted week to week

7.2 Social Media Platform Matrix

Social Media Platforms	Strengths	Weaknesses	Application
Facebook	- Highly utilized platform - Relevant age range - Flexibility of usage	- Not accessible globally	- Ideal for sharing visual content (photos & videos) - Blogs
Instagram	- Younger target age -Supports visual media -Highly compatible with other social media	- Younger target age -Does not support other forms of media -Users have a short attention span	- Photos & videos of students, events, campus, faculty, etc. - Student takeovers
LinkedIn	- Professional audience -Beneficial for maintaining a strong	-Difficult to host different types of content -Excludes a younger	Keeping tabs on alumni Sharing professional articles

	alumni network -Can share articles and posts from other channels	audience	
Twitter	-Platform enables discussion/conversati on	- Primarily text based	- Can still share images
YouTube			- Base for video content
Pinterest	- Primarily female audience	- Not necessarily a typical platform for higher education	- Images - Pinning other content, not always creating content - More of a vision board
Snapchat	- Instantly share videos - Can be more casual and fun	- Very young target age - Not professional	- Could be used for student takeovers
Google+	- Links with google AdWords	- Somewhat irrelevant platform	