SaaS Marketing Strategies:

Getting Quick Wins and Building for Long-Term Victory

SmartBug.

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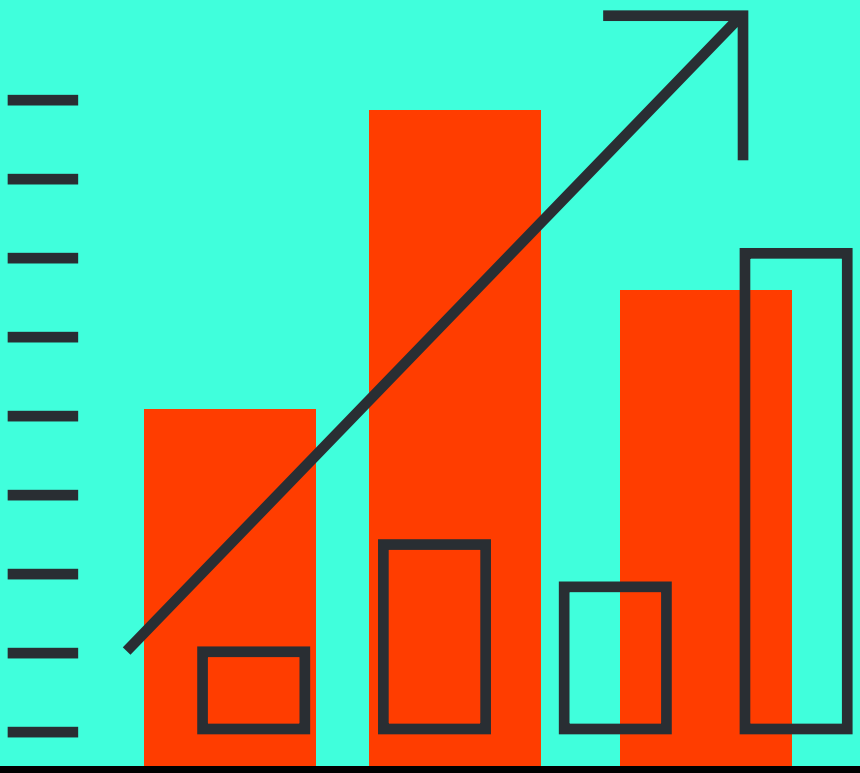


Introduction

The software-as-a-service (SaaS) industry is continuing to experience massive growth. Just look at the numbers: According to Gartner, Inc., the SaaS market is projected to grow 17.3 percent in 2019 to a total of $206.2 billion, up from $175.8 billion in 2018.

What does that mean for you, a marketer at a SaaS company? Competition. The marketplace is incredibly crowded. Now more than ever, SaaS vendors need to be smart about their marketing strategies in order to stand out and see results—and they need to do it all in efficient and cost-effective ways.

For SaaS companies, mastering marketing isn't an option—it could make or break the success of their business. Consider the following:

- You can find statistics that show anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of startups fail due to a variety of reasons. In an analysis of 101 startup postmortems, 14 percent of respondents said their failure was, in part, due to "poor marketing."
- According to the Bridge Group 2017 SaaS AE Metrics Report, "on average, 36 percent of an account executive group's pipeline is sourced by marketing. This includes inbound SDR support, but excludes outbound sales development efforts."

Now more than ever, SaaS vendors need to be smart about their marketing strategies in order to stand out and see results.

- According to the 2018 SaaS Industry Market Report: Key Global Trends & Growth Forecasts, "outdated product marketing strategies will very likely be replaced by new-age feature marketing ones, all in the service of efficient targeting and customer engagement."
- Drift analyzed the marketing and sales practices of 100 of the top SaaS companies in 2018 and found that an increasing number of businesses are using video and ungated content, and implementing conversational marketing to engage with prospects directly on their sites.

What can you do to set your SaaS up for long-term success and quick wins? This e-book will delve into metrics you should be measuring, as well as share quick wins and long-haul strategies that you can start implementing today.

QUICK WINS:

Short-term strategies that will deliver traffic and low-cost acquisition.

LONG-HAUL STRATEGIES:

Long-term strategies for lead nurturing and maximizing continued value.

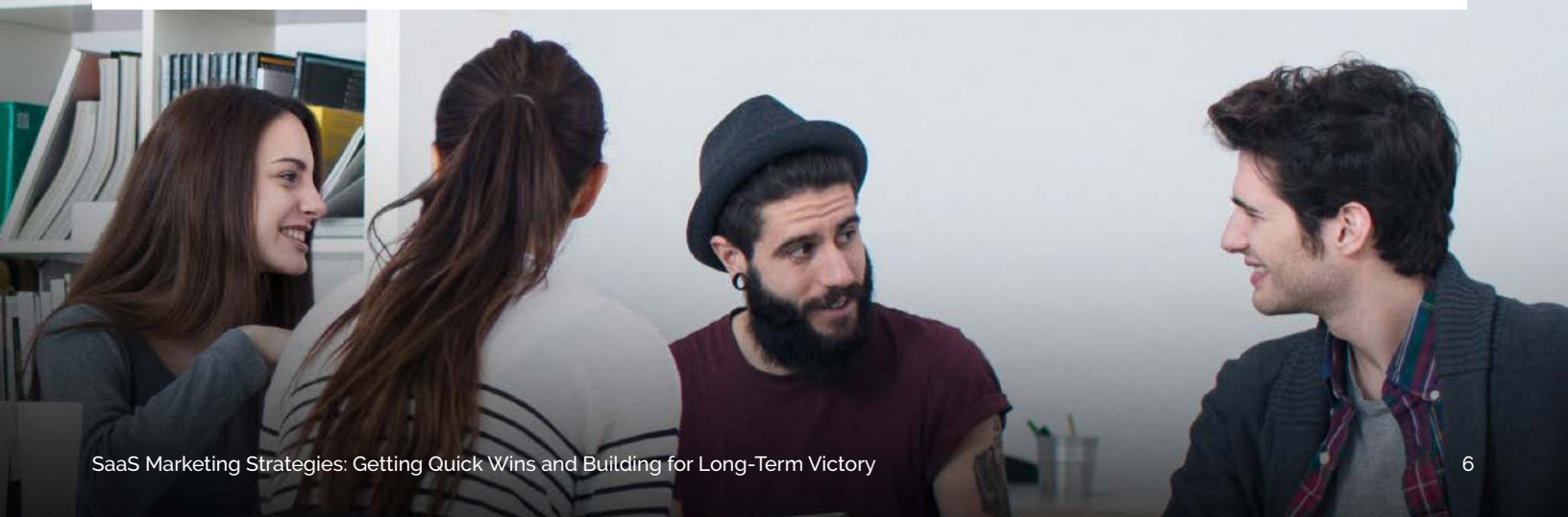
Let's get started!

Develop KPIs for Your SaaS Marketing Strategy

Before rolling out any sort of marketing strategy, whether it's short-term or for the long haul, you need to be very clear about how you are measuring success. Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones will help you track and communicate your marketing ROI.

Although most SaaS organizations are familiar with KPIs for their business (such as number of users, monthly recurring revenue, and churn), marketing KPIs are often overlooked. Marketing KPIs dig deeper in order to track the success of your marketing efforts.

Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones will help you track and communicate your marketing ROI.



It's important to note that it's easy to become numbers-obsessed, especially with access to all kinds of data. Before you know it, you could be reporting on 20 to 30 KPIs and losing sight of what's truly important.

PRO TIP: Develop a marketing dashboard that can help you easily track your company's most important KPIs. Common tools for KPI dashboards include Marketo, HubSpot, Salesforce, Databox, and Google Analytics.

Below are several essential marketing KPIs that you should be tracking:

Email Marketing KPIs

Open Rate

Your email open rate accounts for the ratio of emails opened to emails delivered. The average open rate for SaaS companies is 19.81 percent. Factors that affect open rate include email send time, subject line, and "from" name.

Click-Through Rate

Your email click-through rate (CTR) accounts for the ratio of contacts who click a link in your email to the number of emails opened. The average CTR for SaaS companies is 2.05 percent. Factors that affect CTR include the relevance of the email content to the specific user, the design of buttons or links to draw the contacts' attention, and the wording used in the link to invoke action.

Unsubscribe Rate

Your email unsubscribe rate accounts for the ratio of contacts who have opted out of receiving your emails and the total emails delivered. The average unsubscribe rate for SaaS companies is 0.35 percent. Factors that affect unsubscribe rate include the frequency of emails delivered and level of personalization you use in your emails to make them feel less like mass emails.

Website KPIs

Unique Visitors

Your website's unique visitors metric is the number of individuals visiting your website during a certain time period.

It is important to track unique visitors by traffic sources based on your marketing activities. Report on what activities are bringing in the most unique visitors so you can make more informed decisions about what channels are the most effective.

Dig deeper: While you are reviewing unique visitors, make sure you take note of how many of these visitors are first-time visitors and how much time they are spending on your website. This indicates how many people are getting a first impression of your company from your website and whether they are finding the information they are looking for. Learn more here about how you can attract the right visitors to your SaaS website.

It is important to track unique visitors by traffic sources based on your marketing activities.

Organic Traffic vs. Paid Traffic

Your website's organic traffic comes from visitors who are finding your website from your keyword optimization efforts. Paid traffic comes from visitors who clicked on your pay-per-click (PPC) ads, display ads, or other sponsored links. According to our partner Databox, organic search results are 8.5 times more likely to be clicked on than paid search results, because searchers consider organic results more trustworthy. BONUS: Once you've optimized your content to rank organically, your clicks from search engines are free!

Dig deeper: Find what keywords are driving the most traffic to your website. Knowing whether your branded keywords, such as your company name, or non-branded keywords, such as "software for health insurance brokers," are driving the most traffic will give you a better idea of how well-known your brand name is and where you should focus more of your marketing activities.

Bounce Rate

Your website's bounce rate is the percent of visitors who navigate away from your website after looking at just one page. A low bounce rate may indicate your website isn't easy to use, doesn't provide the information your visitors are looking for, or conversely, your website visitors found exactly what they were looking for and left satisfied.

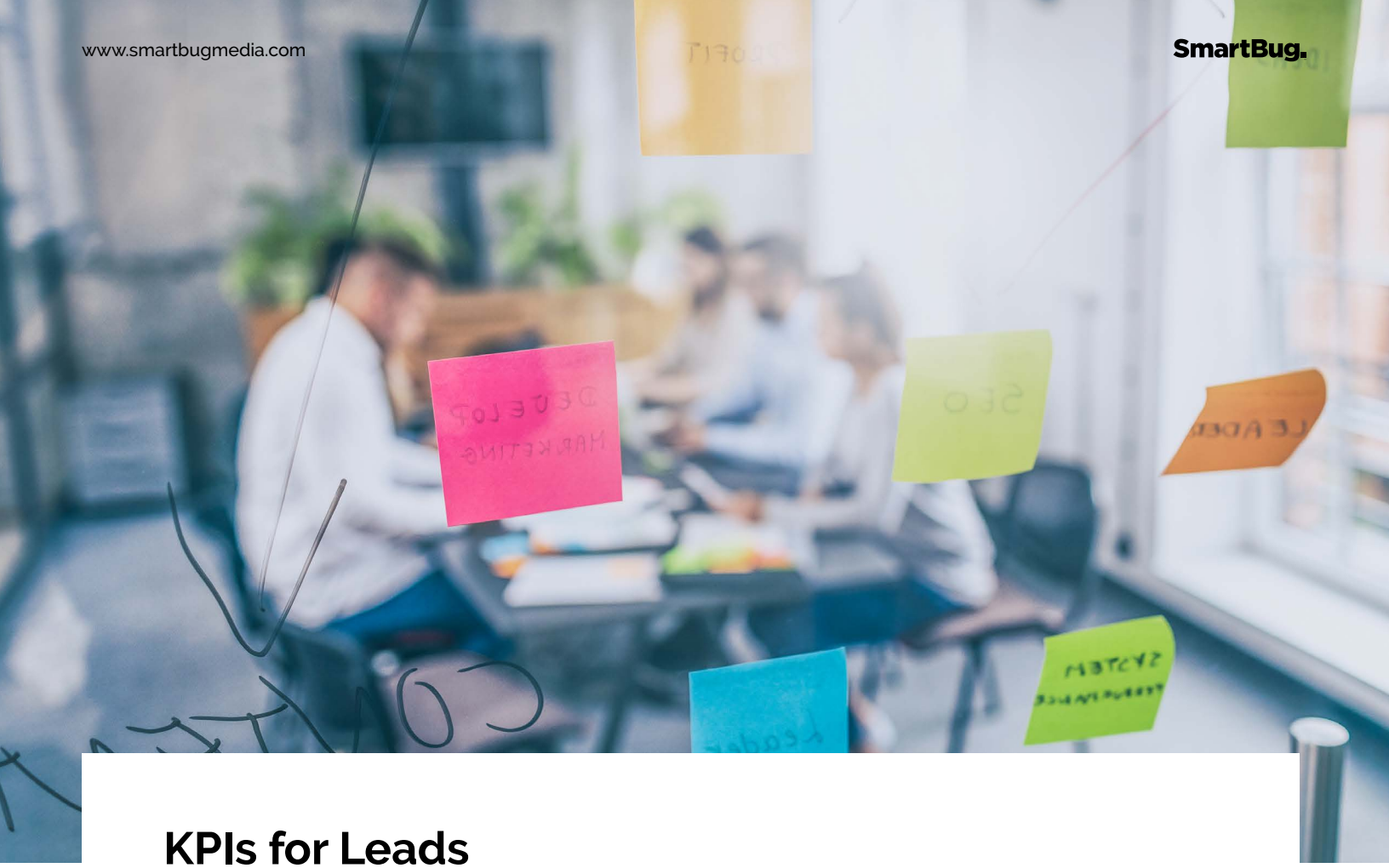
Dig deeper: Monitor the bounce rate of specific pages to gauge whether that page is providing the most relevant and helpful content to your website visitors.

Visitors-to-Leads (VTL)

Your website's VTL tracks the percent of website visitors who fill out a form on your website, whether that is to request a free trial, download a white paper, or request a demo. Monitoring your VTL is a great way to keep a finger on the pulse of your overall website performance. As a benchmark, B2B SaaS companies have reported conversion rates between 3 and 15 percent.

> **Dig deeper**: A below average conversion rate should lead you to find answers to the following questions: Are your website visitors finding content that is relevant to their needs and is it worthwhile to download? Is it easy to navigate to website pages with conversion opportunities? Providing a top-notch user experience is just as important on your website as it is in your software.

Let's take a deeper look at what leads look like for your company.



KPIs for Leads

Closed-loop marketing automation using Marketo, HubSpot, or Pardot is the best way to measure leads—especially when you'll be breaking them down into subcategories like leads, MQLs, and SQLs. Within your marketing automation tool, you can set criteria that automatically identify an individual as a lead, MQL, or SQL based on actions that he or she has taken on your website.

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Lead

Someone who is just starting to do his or her research at the very top of the funnel. This contact might have downloaded a white paper created for potential customers at the beginning of their Buyer's Journey.

Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL)

Based on this lead's behavior, marketing has deemed this lead as a qualified potential customer who, on paper, looks like an ideal prospect and should continue receiving marketing messages.

Make sure your marketing and sales teams are aligned and can work on this handoff together.

Sales Qualified Lead (SQL)

An SQL is deemed worthy of a direct sales follow-up. To become sales qualified, you should have more detailed profile information and/or user behavior on your website that indicates they are past the initial research stage and are likely evaluating vendors. For example, many SaaS organizations look for a demo request submitted, trial started, or consultation request as part of their evaluation criteria.

Lead-to-Customer Rate

Are the leads you've converted on your website becoming customers? This percentage shows how well your website is generating sales-ready leads. Track this metric over time to report on improvements and opportunities.

If you are just getting started with this process because you are a startup or because you haven't done digital marketing before, you may want to pass more leads from MQL to SQL to learn more about how you are qualifying leads. Don't overcomplicate this process starting out. Make sure your marketing and sales teams are aligned and can work on this handoff together. It's better to manually evaluate more contacts at first and add in criteria as you scale.

KPIs for Customers

It is also important to track specific KPIs for your customers so you can continue to improve your marketing efforts and marketing's alignment with sales. If your leads from your marketing efforts are not closing into customers or your sales department is unhappy with the quality of your leads, these metrics can help you identify what is working and what isn't.

Churn

Shows how much business you're losing within a certain time period.

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV)

The average amount of money that your customers pay during their engagement with your company.

Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC)

Shows how much it costs to acquire a customer.

CLV-to-CAC Ratio

In one, single metric, shows the lifetime value of your customers and the amount you spend to acquire them.

Learn more about these metrics here.

Build Your SaaS Brand

Whether your SaaS company is a startup or maturing toward product expansion or acquisition talks, building a name for your company and establishing your brand in the marketplace are essential missions. As HubSpot puts it: "A brand is one of the most valuable assets of a business, and it needs to be carefully crafted to ensure it properly and authentically represents the business."

While the term "branding" can stir up visions of large advertising agencies and even bigger product names, there are modern-day tactics that you can start implementing today whether you're a SaaS provider just starting out or a more established name.

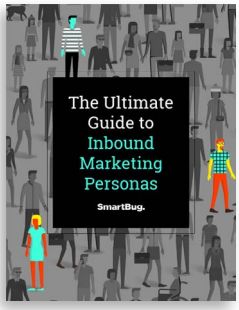
Building Your Foundation

Before you embark on building your brand, you need to understand your ideal customer, who makes the buying decisions for them, and what motivates them in the SaaS buying process.

> Building a name for your company and establishing your brand in the marketplace are essential missions.

How to Develop Personas for Your SaaS Company

Using the information linked above, you should develop your marketing personas. These personas are in-depth buyer profiles built from your research and will be used to inform all of your marketing efforts such as specific email campaigns, blogs, social posts, and more. It's important to point out that buyer personas (whom you'll be targeting in your marketing efforts) are different from user personas (who use your product on a day-to-day basis).



Download "The Ultimate Guide to Inbound Marketing Personas" for a framework on how to get started.

Download Now

Long-Term Goal

Once you've established your buyer personas, it's essential that your product addresses the pain points of your target customers. From there, you can begin creating and distributing content that establishes your brand as a trusted resource in the market.

There are several brands that you can look to for inspiration:

HubSpot: From educational blog posts on its website to guest posting on others to speaking engagements to an annual, education-focused inbound marketing conference, HubSpot has established its brand as the go-to resource for all things inbound marketing. An important thing to note, though, is that it is truly focused on creating content for the target personas. Its content doesn't just stop at inbound marketing. It educates its audience on a wide range of topics that affect them, the readers.

QuickBooks: From its homepage with great problem-solving messaging to its website's design and user experience that closely matches that of its software, QuickBooks has built a well-known and trusted brand online.

Vidyard: Vidyard practices what they preach about using video to augment your brand. Goal-oriented messaging is perfectly paired with engaging multimedia content throughout Vidyard's website giving visitors an idea of what it's like to work with Vidyard's platform.

Building a brand takes time and effort, but the dividends definitely pay off—you'll be able to attract talent, drive sales, and establish your company as a trusted leader in the market.

> Once you've established your buyer personas, it's essential that your product addresses the pain points of your target customers.

QUICK WIN

Aligning Your Team as Brand Ambassadors

Your sales and customer service teams should regularly affirm your company's brand. After all, they are the faces of your brand to all of your customers, from daily interactions via email to networking on LinkedIn. You should guide the influence your team has on your company's brand.

Did you know your employees send about 40 business emails per day?

When it comes to building your brand, your sales team's first touch with a prospect is just as important as a customer service rep handling questions or software bugs. As our friends at Sigstr so perfectly put it: "Each email sent represents an opportunity to drive awareness and engagement for your events, content marketing assets, and marketing campaigns to your most engaged audience: those that are interacting with your employees on a 1:1 basis—not through a mass marketing play."

At SmartBug, we partner with Sigstr for personalized branding in all of our employees' email signatures to align our email communications with our overall marketing goals.

It is also important to validate your company brand on your employees' LinkedIn profiles, especially when you are targeting B2B personas. Create a brand guideline and standard for your employees to make sure they are supporting your company efforts. Learn more about optimizing LinkedIn profiles and their benefits.

QUICK WIN

Social Media Strategy

You can accelerate your brand-building efforts through social media—both earned and paid. You'll want to first establish where your customers are spending their time online.

Here are some helpful resources to get your SaaS company started on social media:

How SEO and Social Media Intersect [Blog]

Which Social Media Platforms Do Your Buyer Personas Engage With? [Blog]

Tips to Repurpose Old Blog Posts into Winning Social Media Posts [Blog]

Once you've established where your target audience spends their time, engage in a conversation. Approach social media conversations like you would a networking happy hour. You wouldn't walk in and immediately try to sell your product, would you? Engage in conversation where it makes the most sense and build trust. Consistent social media engagement will build brand recognition and drive traffic back to your website.

Likewise, paid social media efforts can amplify your message and ensure that your target persona is seeing it. As with earned social media efforts, consistent engagement will build brand recognition and drive traffic back to your website.

QUICK WIN

Co-Brand Premium Content with Reputable Companies

There's no better way to establish yourself as a trusted brand than to partner with an already well-respected brand. Before you invest in the partnership, ensure that the brand you're partnering with has a similar target persona.

By releasing a co-branded premium piece, like a white paper or webinar, you're aligning yourself with a trusted company. Your target persona will assume that you're a reputable brand, because the established, trusted company wouldn't compromise its reputation to partner with you. You're also tapping into its audience. This presents PR opportunities, lead generation opportunities, and overall brand strengthening opportunities so you will be seen as a trusted resource by your personas.

For a great example of powerful co-branding, take a look at Death Wish Coffee's 2016 Super Bowl ad. The small business won a contest, sponsored by Intuit QuickBooks, and the prize was a 30-second Super Bowl ad. The result? Following the airing of the commercial, Death Wish was selling 20 times more than usual, and brand awareness had skyrocketed. It's also opened the door for further distribution opportunities.

Define Your Sales Process

Once your brand has been built, and you know whom you plan on selling your software to, you need to figure out how you can better understand those customers in order to actually make the sale. Let's take a look at how you can lay the foundation by empowering buyers, fulfilling the long-term goal of enabling your sales team, and getting a quick win by developing a sales and marketing SLA.

Laying the Foundation by Empowering Buyers

Content marketing evolved as a result of changes in buying behavior. At one point in time, salespeople had all the answers, and buyers needed sales reps to guide them throughout the Buyer's Journey. In today's digital age, the tide has changed. With a plethora of knowledge available at their fingertips, buyers now have the power.

Think about the process you take leading up to a purchase. First, you acknowledge a problem at hand and recognize the need to address it. Next, you research your options and try to come up with the best solution. When you've weighed all of the pros and cons, you make a final decision. The second step is what's changed the role of the traditional salesperson.

At one time, a salesperson was needed to find those options and alternatives. Now, we type our question into a search engine and all of the options appear within seconds—usually with reviews, comments, and additional questions. To be a successful salesperson in today's age, you need to be helpful and informative to modern buyers.

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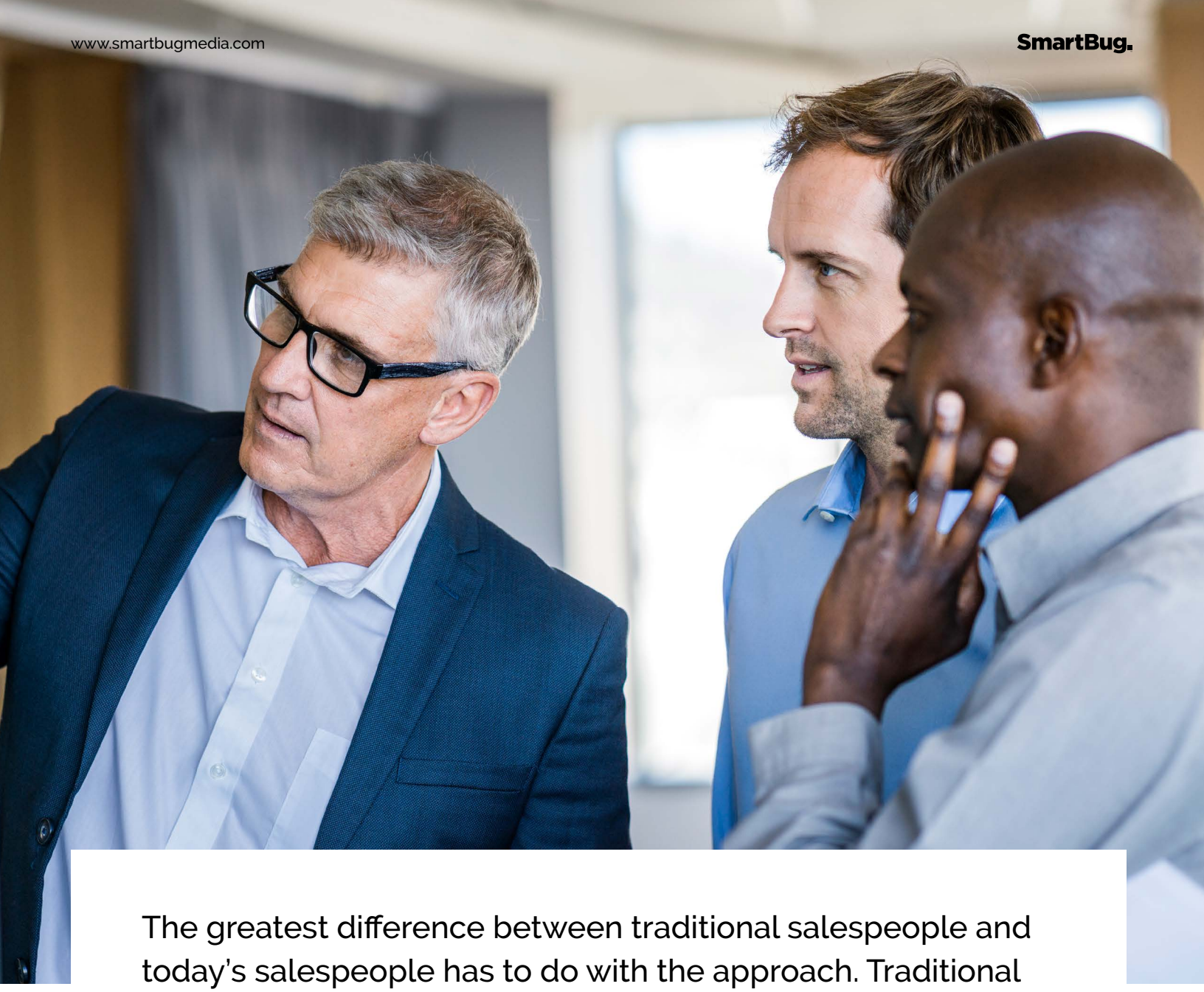


The greatest difference between traditional salespeople and today's salespeople has to do with the approach. Traditional sales teams tend to be sales-centric, focusing less on the specific needs of the buyer. In decades past, companies' sales teams tended to focus on the products and services they sold, insisting that their products or services were the best, end of story. Today's salespeople, on the other hand, want to be consultative—they strive to understand the buyer's problem, and recommend a solution that fits best, even if that solution isn't their product or service.

Your Long-Term Goal: Enabling Your Sales Team

Despite being critical to the success of your company, a sales process, in theory, is quite simple. The success of your sales process lies within how well you enable your sales team—that is, how well you provide them with the information they need to sell more effectively.

It might sound deceiving, but enabling your sales team is not so much about the sales team as it is the modern buyer. It's about understanding the buyer's wants, their needs, their desires, and their pain points so that your salespeople can help them find a solution. You can enable your sales team by providing content they can share with buyers seeking information and equipping them with internal resources and tools such as reporting dashboards, benchmark data, and best practice documents.

It's about understanding the buyer's wants, their needs, their desires, and their pain points so that your salespeople can help them find a solution.

Building a Strong Sales Enablement Framework

Now that we know the importance of sales enablement, it's time to build the framework. Laying this framework takes both time and effort, but there are many benefits that come with an effective sales enablement process, some of which include the following:

- A concrete understanding of the prospect's position in the Buyer's Journey
- Increased scalability
- Increased efficiency
- Improved forecasting

To start building the framework, here are a few key components to become familiar with:

1. **Management and Training:** Sales managers play an important role in motivating and coaching the sales team. Effective managers help salespeople manage time and make use of the resources available to them. Most importantly, managers should make ongoing training a priority for their team. A recent survey done by Gryphon Sales Intelligence found that "84 percent of all sales training is lost after 90 days." By continuing to invest in training and asking for feedback from the sales team, sales managers can reinforce positive strategies and work to improve tactics that may not be working.

2. **The Sales Process:** Your sales process should include every single, repeatable step that your sales team takes as it moves a prospect from his or her early stages of awareness until it converts that contact into a customer. Your sales process should be clear, goal-oriented, measurable, and most importantly, customer-centric.

By continuing to invest in training and asking for feedback from the sales team, sales managers can reinforce positive strategies and work to improve tactics that may not be working.

3. **Resource Development:** The resources and tools developed for the salespeople will stem from both the sales and marketing teams. Sales management should provide their team with best practice documents, reporting dashboards, and internal tools that help them sell more effectively. Marketing should prep the sales teams with content that can be used to help modern buyers progress through the Buyer's Journey. By ensuring that the sales team is aware of what resources and tools are available to them, they will be better equipped to make the sale.

When you enable your sales team, you lay the foundation for a simple yet effective sales process. And although you and your sales team can easily start to lay this framework together, expanding and optimizing it will be a long-term goal. As with many repeatable processes, it takes time to finesse and finalize it.

Visibly Put Your Sales Process into Action

Your sales process will never be complete. Rather, much like other strategic sections of your business, it should be a living, breathing plan that changes based on best practices or external market changes—this is where sales operations comes into play.

Sales operations has to do with the roles and processes in place that help sales teams perform more efficiently. Sales ops can provide insight into many areas of business to catalyze boosted sales performance. A few of these areas include performance metrics, sales training needs, and opportunities to optimize the sales process. The key is to understand exactly which processes best set your business's sales team up for making a sale and to reflect these specific, repeatable practices within your sales process.

Once these processes are more or less finalized, your company must be sure that these stages of your sales process are visible to not only your sales team but (at a minimum) your marketing and executive teams as well. This can be accomplished through implementing a customer relationship management (CRM) system.

Many people, when they think of CRM systems, think of Salesforce. The truth is that although Salesforce does offer an advanced set of capabilities to manage leads, very few companies actually need such a detailed system. Many CRMs, such as HubSpot and Zoho, are designed for companies with far less complex requirements. These CRMs allow you to keep track of all active (and inactive) leads and where they are within your sales process. Although tracking their communications and behaviors is certainly a nice ability to have, it's not always necessary. Be sure that you take inventory of options on the market and determine which one would best fit your company's needs.

QUICK WIN

Develop a Sales and Marketing SLA

Compared to the time required to develop and perfect your company's sales process, setting up a service-level agreement (SLA) can take you no time at all. Now, although you won't directly see the sales rolling in once you set this up, you will be able to visibly set both your marketing and sales departments up for success.

> Just like your sales process, which should work hand in hand with the efforts of your marketing team, your SLA needs to be repeatable.

The steps for creating your sales and marketing SLA are as follows:

1. **Define Your Personas:** Because your company has already developed its buyer personas, these formal definitions will help your marketing team understand exactly whom it should be trying to attract. As we already mentioned, be sure that both teams understand the difference between who is buying your software and who is using your software.

2. **Define Your Leads:** Once you understand whom you are trying to attract, you need to define the difference between a lead, qualified lead, MQL, and SQL. Keep in mind that an MQL is an attractive lead that is not yet ready for contact with sales, but an SQL is. Understanding the difference between these types of leads will allow both teams to understand who is responsible for each.

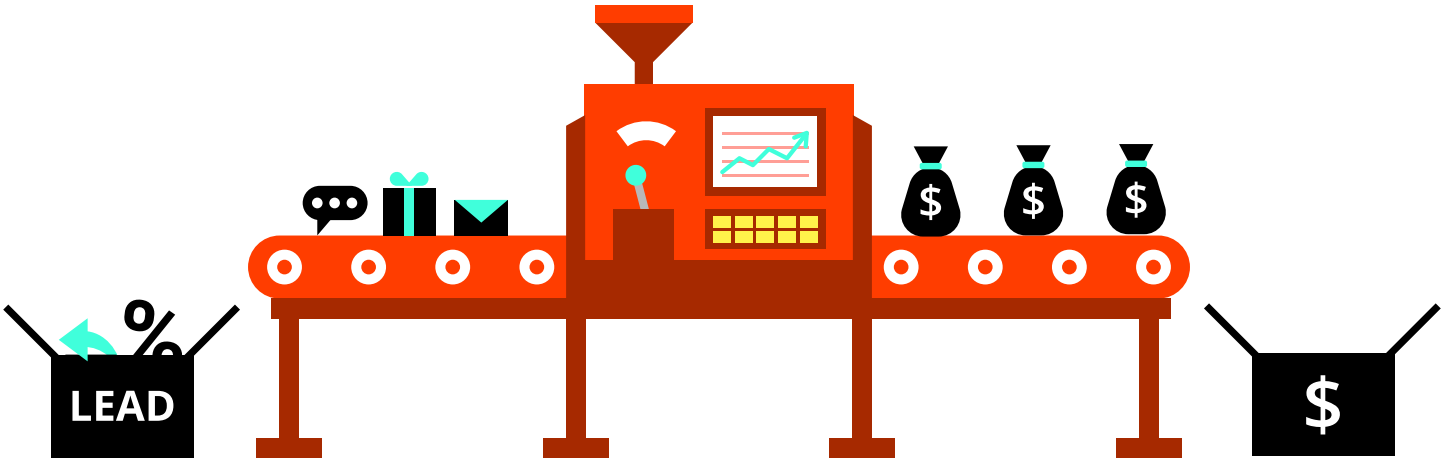
3. **Set SMART Goals:** Goals should be set in order to hold both teams accountable. Examples are the number of SQLs that a marketing team should deliver or the percentage of SQLs delivered that a sales team should make contact with. Keep in mind that all goals should be relevant, timely, and feasible.

4. **Define the Handoff:** From marketing to sales, and from sales to specific reps, you must define ahead of time which leads will be passed from one team to another and how lead routing will occur.

5 **Implement a Lead Management System:** Although this section may need to be updated more than other sections of the SLA, it is also one of the most critical. This section should establish what happens to leads once they're obtained. Will they be enrolled in a six-point workflow before being passed to sales? Should sales reach out to them once every three days for two weeks? When should leads be discarded? As leads move through the inner departments of your company, be sure that these changes are reflected within the CRM discussed previously in this chapter.

6 **Assess the SLA:** As this SLA creates the framework for how leads are carried throughout your company, you will easily be able to see where issues are, which sections work, and which might need a bit more work.

7 **Standardize the SLA:** Just like your sales process, which should work hand in hand with the efforts of your marketing team, your SLA needs to be repeatable.

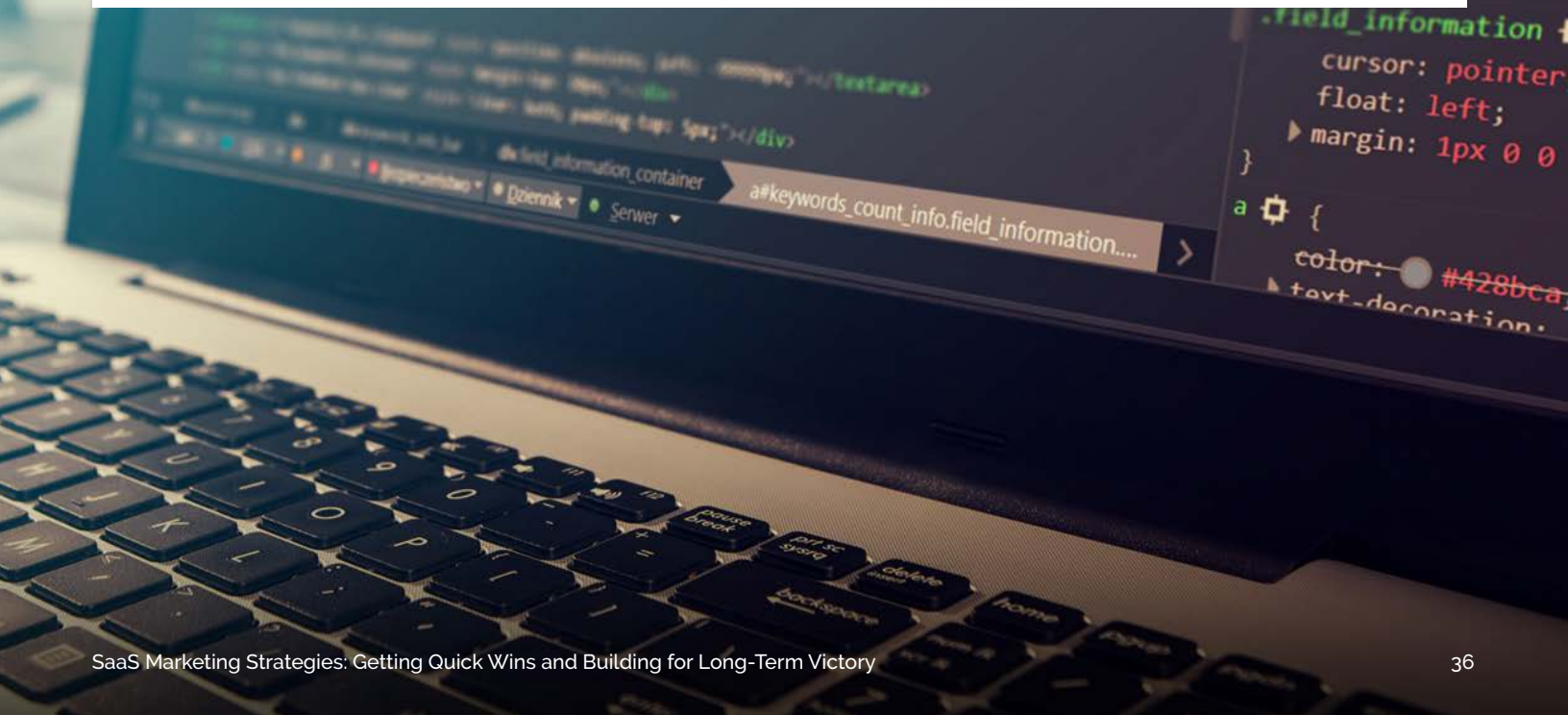


Develop and Optimize Your Website

After you've identified KPIs for your marketing strategy and set performance goals that are aligned with your sales staff, the next step is to optimize your website into a lead-generating machine—a key component in reaching the marketing and sales goals set in your organization.

Foundation

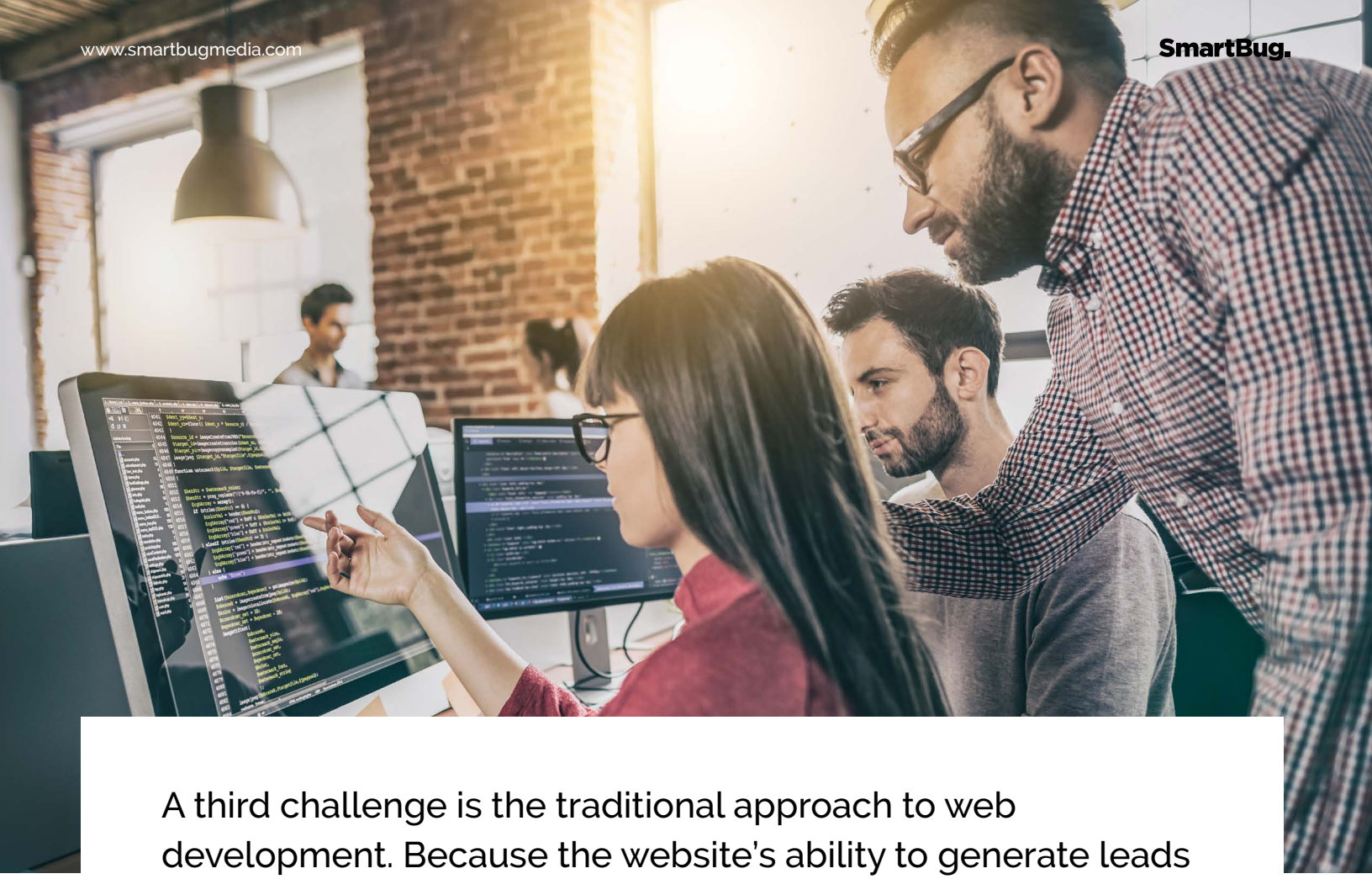
Your website is the biggest marketing asset you have. Why? Because the majority of consumers use the web to research new products and services. Whether you're pulling in traffic through engaging marketing content or being found organically in search engine results, your website is the hub that connects your target personas' problems to your products or solutions.



Although the goal of a SaaS company website is to drive traffic toward trial offers or demos of the product, a few challenges stand in the way.

First, not every prospect who visits your site will be ready for a trial offer. Some visitors will want to read more about your product before trying it out. Some visitors will want to see more in terms of features, pricing models, and product reviews. And if you're bringing in traffic through educational content, those visitors will likely want to read through that content before showing any interest in your product.

Another challenge is that once a visitor lands on your website, you have a limited window of time before he or she moves on to another site or something else completely. And because this window can be a matter of seconds, it's important to have a clear, intuitive path laid out for each of the previously mentioned scenarios that guides visitors toward the next logical step—whether that's toward additional content, product information, product videos, product demos, or the end goal that is a trial offer. Make sure the path you want the visitor to take is clear. When you have more than one "next step" available, you're not so much helping the visitor as you are distracting them—which is why there should be one call-to-action on each page. This CTA should be placed in a visible location, use direct language, and clearly explain what is being offered.



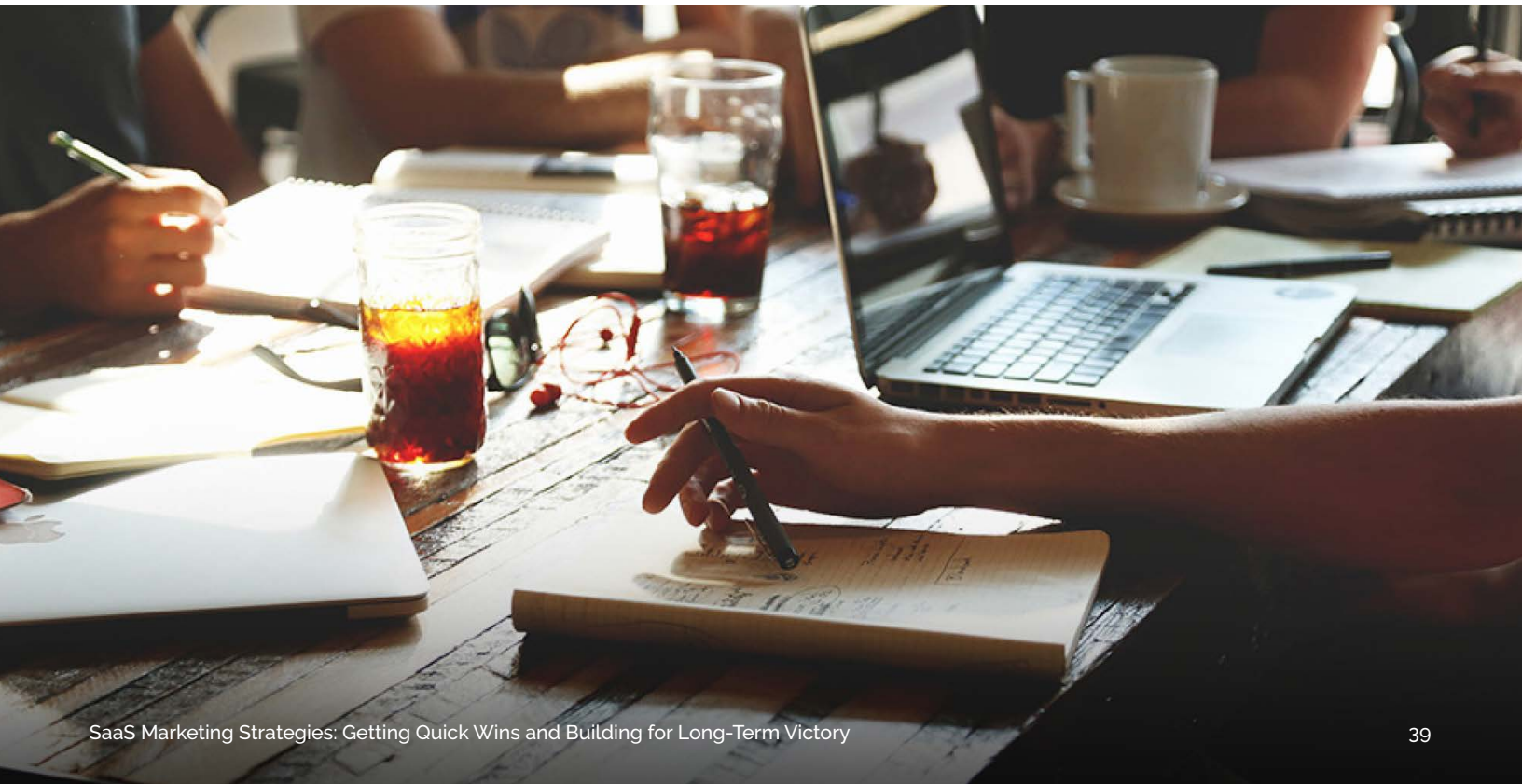
A third challenge is the traditional approach to web development. Because the website's ability to generate leads is key to helping your sales and marketing teams grow your business, it's important to put a good amount of thought into your user experience. More than just layout and development, your UX should be shaped by the journey you want your visitor to take through your website. In addition, the site needs to be attractive, highly usable, and engaging. And if that's not the case, you could be faced with a costly website rebuild project that requires a considerable upfront investment.

Because the website's ability to generate leads is key to helping your sales and marketing teams grow your business, it's important to put a good amount of thought into your user experience.

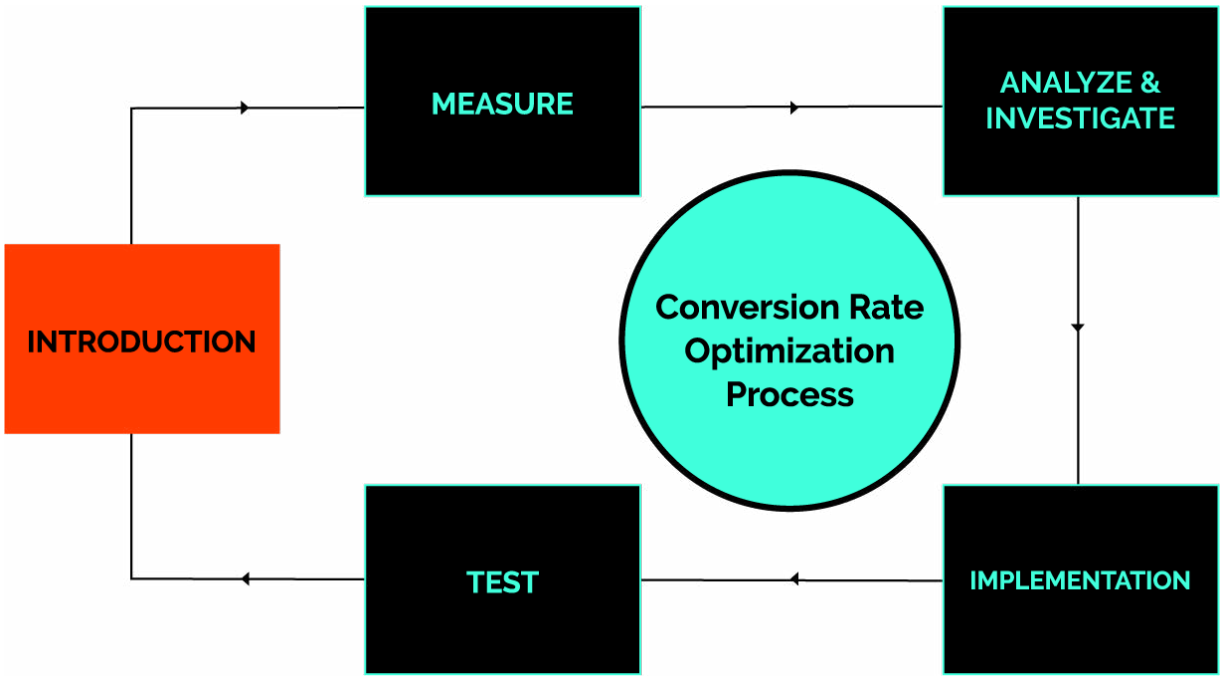
Conversion Rate Optimization

Moz defines conversion rate optimization as, “the systematic process of increasing the percentage of website visitors who take a desired action.” Desired actions could involve clicking on a link in an email, converting on a CTA from a blog post, or submitting a form on a landing page, among many other paths.

Think of a conversion as a goal. For instance, the goal is to turn website traffic into leads, leads into marketing qualified leads, marketing qualified leads into sales qualified leads, sales qualified leads into opportunities, opportunities into customers, and ultimately, customers into evangelists of your brand. Each step a person takes that brings them closer to becoming a customer is a conversion.



The process of conversion rate optimization is actually quite simple. Once you introduce the concept, start by measuring these nine critical metrics. Next, you'll analyze the metrics and come up with a plan for implementing new tests. The testing window should be long enough to retrieve accurate results, and you should be sure to only test one variation at a time. Post testing, loop back around to begin measuring again—and the process repeats.



QUICK WIN

Implement an Updated Landing Page

By adding on-brand imagery, additional information, and more persona-oriented messaging, this contact page saw an 88 percent lift in SQL generation. Simple attributes that enhance the aesthetics of your landing page can increase your conversion rates.

Long-Term Goal

In addition to having a high-performing website that generates new trials—and ultimately customers—the long-term goal for your website is to have a mechanism in place for capturing and nurturing leads who aren't ready to buy just yet. When the website is a finely tuned lead generation machine, your cost per lead and cost per acquisition are much lower.

Ensure that your website is well-designed—both aesthetically and functionally. Your website should be more than visually appealing. It should be optimized for conversions. That is, it should be structured in a way that gives visitors easy access to the information they're looking for—whether it's educational content, product information, or a demo request—and guides them toward taking the next step toward becoming a customer.

Ensure that your website is well-designed—both aesthetically and functionally. Your website should be more than visually appealing. It should be optimized for conversions.

QUICK WIN

Create Conversion Opportunities

Although it's recommended to have conversion opportunities for each stage of the Buyer's Journey, it's critical that you start with basic conversion opportunities such as subscribing to your blog, requesting a demo, and speaking to sales. These CTAs ensure that your visitors have a next step to take after visiting your site—whether they're a unique, first-time visitor or a lead who's still working his or her way through the marketing funnel.

QUICK WIN

Get the Tools You Need to Measure Performance

Whether you're rebuilding your website from the ground up or you simply want to optimize your website for better performance, there are several tools that will help you make data-based decisions on how to improve.

Here are a few recommended tools to get started:

- **Marketing Automation Platform:** A marketing automation platform like HubSpot, Marketo, or Pardot will help when it comes to analyzing the performance of landing pages, blog articles, CTAs, emails, and social media—it can also help you drive upsells.

- **Google Analytics:** This "freemium" web analytics service from Google allows you to analyze website visitor behavior, such as how to navigate throughout the site, how much time visitors spend on each page, and where visitors are coming from.

- **Lucky Orange:** Lucky Orange is a heat mapping tool that lets you see your website visitors' clicks, taps, and mouse movements so that you can quickly identify what's working and not working on a page.

QUICK WIN

Hypothesize, Test, and Adjust

Use the website performance data to identify opportunities for improvement and hypothesize about your audience. Where are visitors converting the most? Based on your marketing goals, where do you need people to convert more? Consider what adjustments you can make in order to continuously improve performance over time. In each test, look for things you can learn about your visitors.

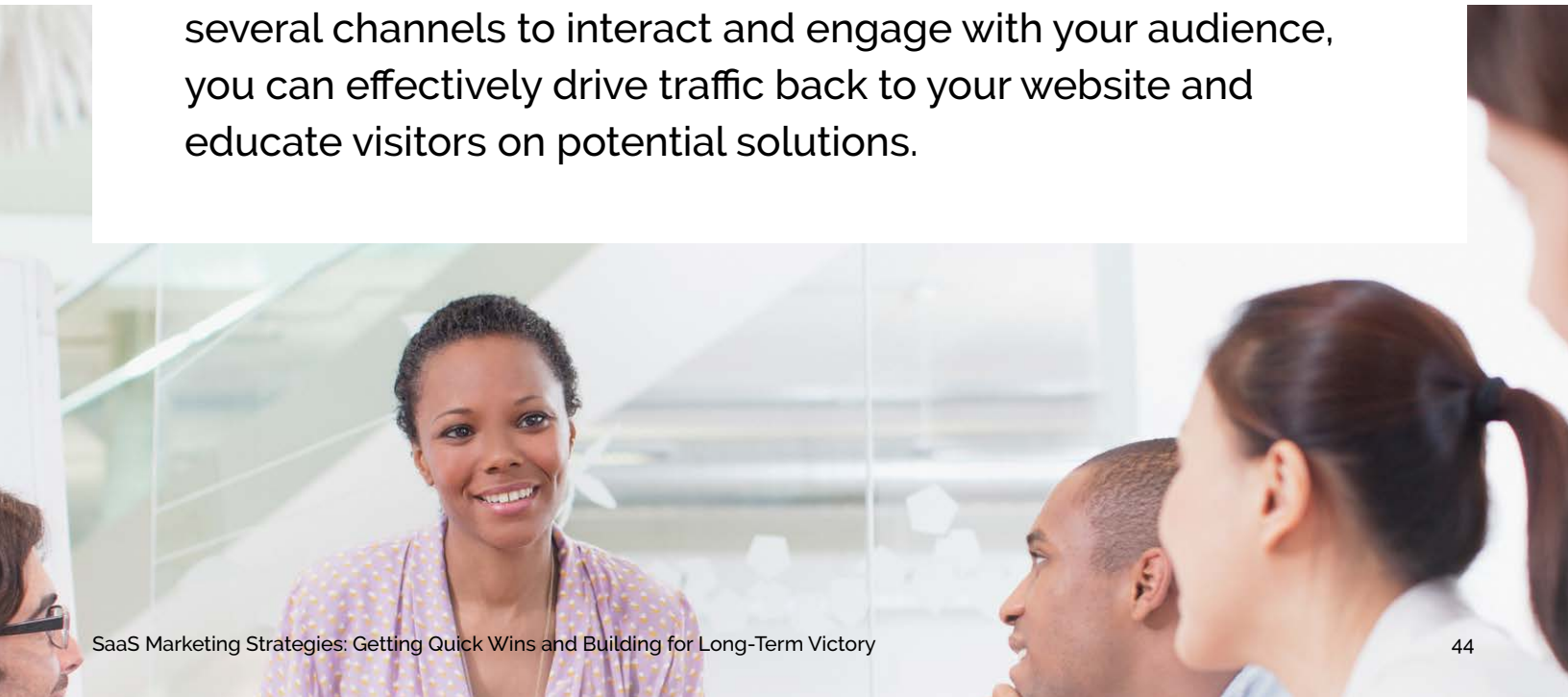
Drive Traffic to Your Website

If your website is a finely tuned lead generation machine, website traffic is the fuel. After all, your website can't convert prospects into leads if prospects aren't visiting the website in the first place. Let's look at a few considerations for generating website traffic.

Foundation

To build a long-term strategy around traffic, you'll first need to understand what that traffic looks like. Keep in mind your long-term goal, which is creating relevant and helpful content that establishes your brand as a trusted resource in the market. This is where your personas come into play, along with the content you share to address their pain points.

By fully understanding your persona's pain points, addressing the persona's problems with a solid message, and using several channels to interact and engage with your audience, you can effectively drive traffic back to your website and educate visitors on potential solutions.



Here are a few website traffic sources to consider:

- **Organic Traffic:** Website visitors who come from a search engine such as Google or Bing. This is the type of traffic that marketers love the most, because it's low-cost and continues to grow over time as you create and share more content. By writing your content around targeted keywords that your personas are searching, you can drive them back to your website from search engine results.

- **Referral Traffic:** Website visitors who come from other websites (except search engines). This includes social media sites, other blogs, and third-party review sites. When your content is insightful and interesting, people want to share it. And in many cases, when customers have had a good experience with your product, they like to share as well.

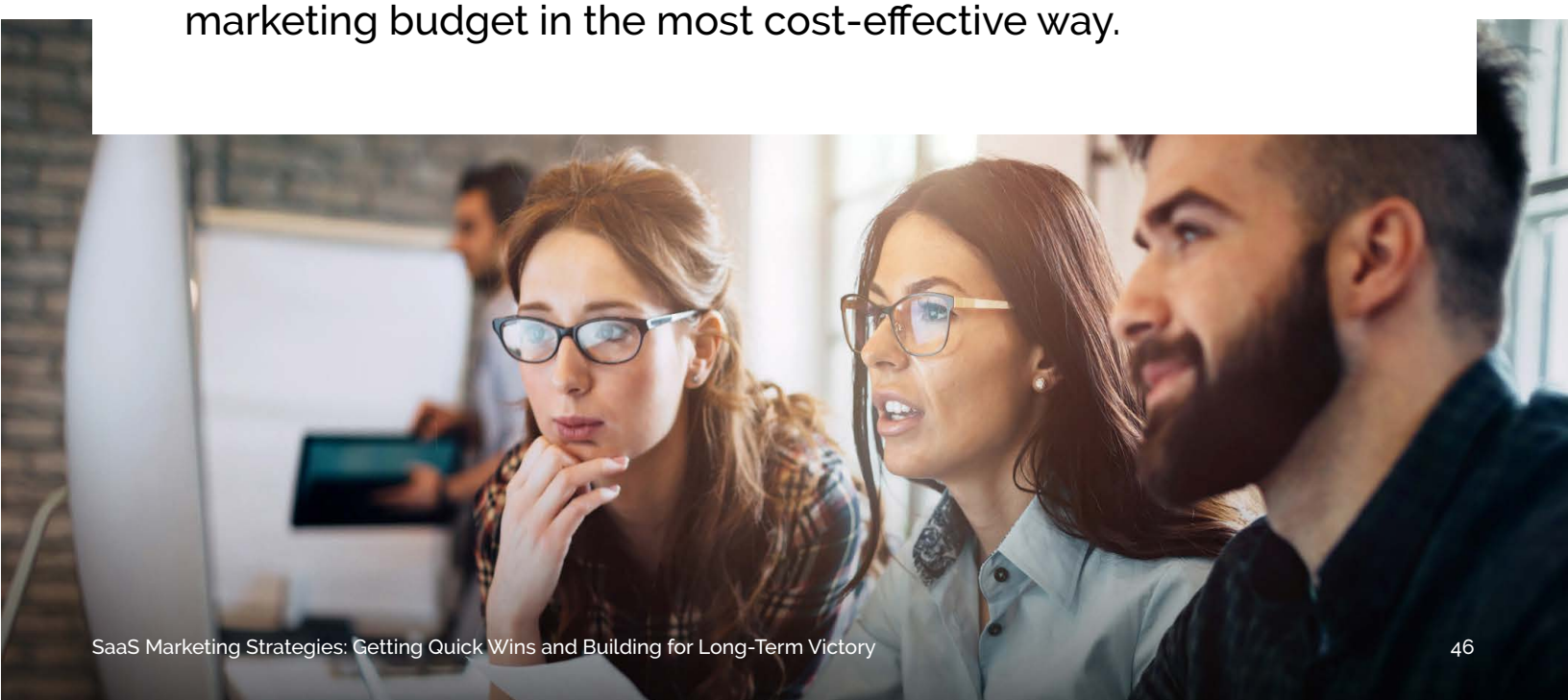
- **Email Traffic:** Website visitors who come from your email marketing efforts. When you can send the right message at the right time, email marketing helps you work leads through the marketing funnel. Marketing automation platforms can make this process easier by helping you segment leads based on where they are in the Buyer's Journey and ensure they receive the message that resonates the most with them.

- **Paid Traffic:** Website visitors who come from paid online advertising. Paid advertising can be an effective way to boost traffic when you're not getting it from the other channels.

- **Direct Traffic:** Website visitors who come directly to your site without coming from a referring website. One of the most common sources of visits to your website, direct traffic often comes from visitors who saw your URL and entered it directly into their browser. It can also include traffic where the referrer or source is unknown. Direct traffic is often the result of high brand awareness, tradeshows, and offline advertising.

Long-Term Goal

The long-term goal for driving traffic to your website should be to have an effective plan for content creation and a well-rounded, multi-channel strategy for promoting that content. Through continuous optimization and improvement over time, you'll identify the channels and messages that bring in and convert the most qualified traffic—helping you allocate your marketing budget in the most cost-effective way.



QUICK WIN

Identify Keyword Opportunities

Keyword research tools like Moz and Google Ads Keyword Planner can help you identify keyword opportunities that give you the best chance of driving organic traffic. Keywords can also be found in unexpected places such as industry publications, Google search results, and industry forums. Again, consider your personas and what pain points they might be seeking to alleviate when they turn to search engines. The topics they're searching for (that relate to your product or service) have the potential to be targeted keywords.

QUICK WIN

Plan Out Your Content

As mentioned earlier, it's ideal to have content for each persona in each stage of the Buyer's Journey. That's a lot of content! Start with high-impact offers that will resonate the most with your primary persona and build out a calendar of content that you can work through over time. If you already have content out there, identify what's performing well and consider similar topics.

Start with high-impact offers that will resonate the most with your primary persona and build out a calendar of content that you can work through over time.

QUICK WIN

Promote Content on Social Media

Think back to your social media strategy. By starting interesting and insightful conversations on social media around your site's content, you engage your audience and drive it back to your website—directly into your marketing funnel. Consider the content you already have. What questions can you ask your audience to get a conversation started around that topic? Identify the channels that your personas are using and start posting. Remember to make your posts thought-provoking and interesting.

QUICK WIN

Paid Search and Paid Social

With optimized keywords, you can target a general audience based on what it's searching for (which is great), but you can't zero in on your prospects. In other words, you're only targeting those who searched for that particular keyword—which, depending on the keyword, could be any number of people outside of your ideal audience. Paid search and social strategies can add granularity such as geographic, demographic, and other criteria that help you target a more specific audience and drive that traffic back to your site. The downside is that it costs money, but you don't have to spend millions of dollars to see a result. In fact, many paid search strategies are very affordable. Start with a small budget and use it to promote content that has already shown success via inbound marketing efforts to give it an extra boost with a more targeted audience.

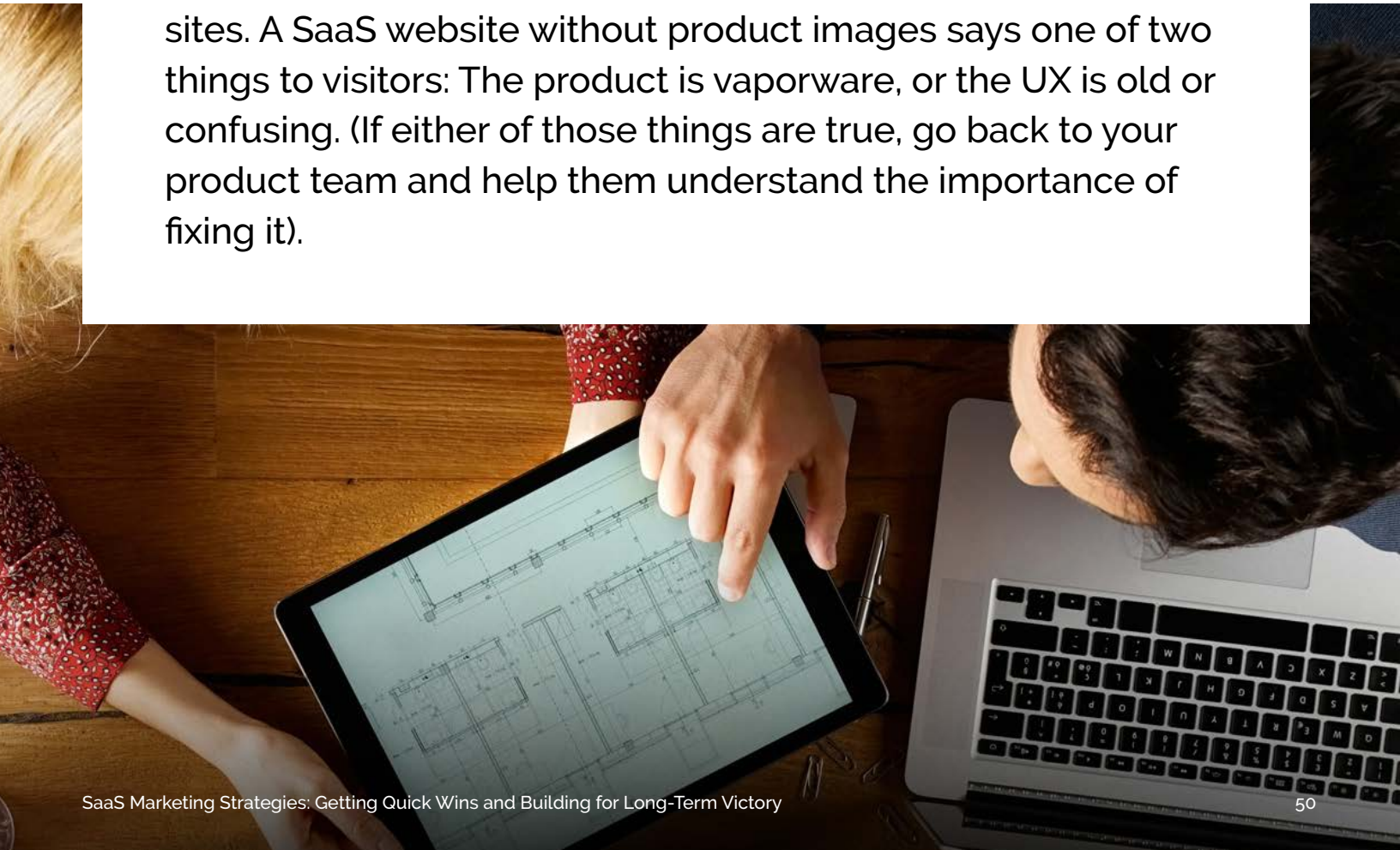
You don't have to spend millions of dollars to see a result. In fact, many paid search strategies are very affordable.

Showcase Your Products and Services

You've identified who's in your audience, gotten them to your website through promotion and educational content, and if your visitors came in at the top of the funnel, you've engaged with them in a drip campaign until they've become ready to compare solutions. Now it's time to let your product shine!

Foundation

One of the most important elements of a SaaS website is product images. Although you'd think this goes without saying, many companies don't have product images on their sites. A SaaS website without product images says one of two things to visitors: The product is vaporware, or the UX is old or confusing. (If either of those things are true, go back to your product team and help them understand the importance of fixing it).



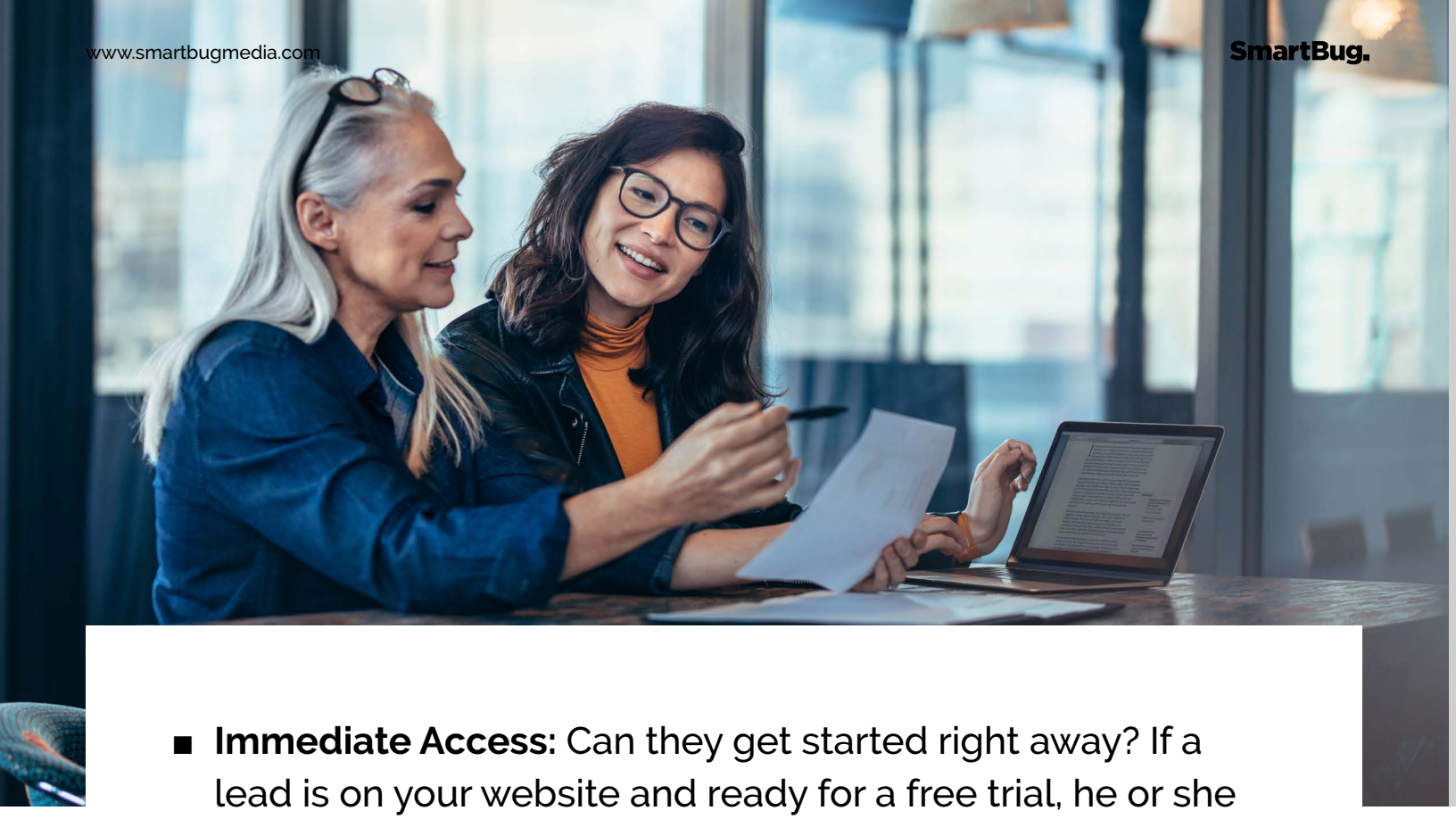
Once you have product images throughout your site, set up a trial offering for your visitors. A product trial is your opportunity to show the customer features and how he or she can get the most out of the tool.

As with your website and marketing strategies, trial offers should be optimized over time for optimal results. Consider factors that go into someone deciding whether or not to start a trial. How easy is it for them to get started? How long will the trial last? What enticing message will get them to sign up? Use the same testing methods for GDD (Growth-Driven Design) in order to make data-driven decisions on how to improve.

Here are a few considerations when creating a product trial offering:

- **Process:** Are the steps for creating, conducting, and completing a trial clear? If the process isn't easy to follow or has too many steps, leads might drop off simply because they don't know what to do next or the process is too onerous. Similarly, is there a clear call to action once the trial is completed?

- **Credit Card Requirements:** Do fewer people sign up for a trial when you require credit card information than when you don't require it? You may find that people are more likely to sign up if there's less of a commitment. Consider asking for credit card information midway through the trial.



- **Immediate Access:** Can they get started right away? If a lead is on your website and ready for a free trial, he or she expects access right away. If your process requires him or her to speak with sales first, you may be missing out on more opportunities.

- **Trial Length:** Would a 30-day trial get more leads to sign up than a 10-day trial? Some leads may not think your trial length is long enough for them to get a good look at your product—and, therefore, it isn't worth signing up for.

- **Ease of Learning:** Do you offer resources for learning about the product during the trial, such as quick videos or lessons that the user can follow along with? These materials make learning your product easier, which enables the user to get the most out of the trial and see the value of your product faster.

Long-Term Goal

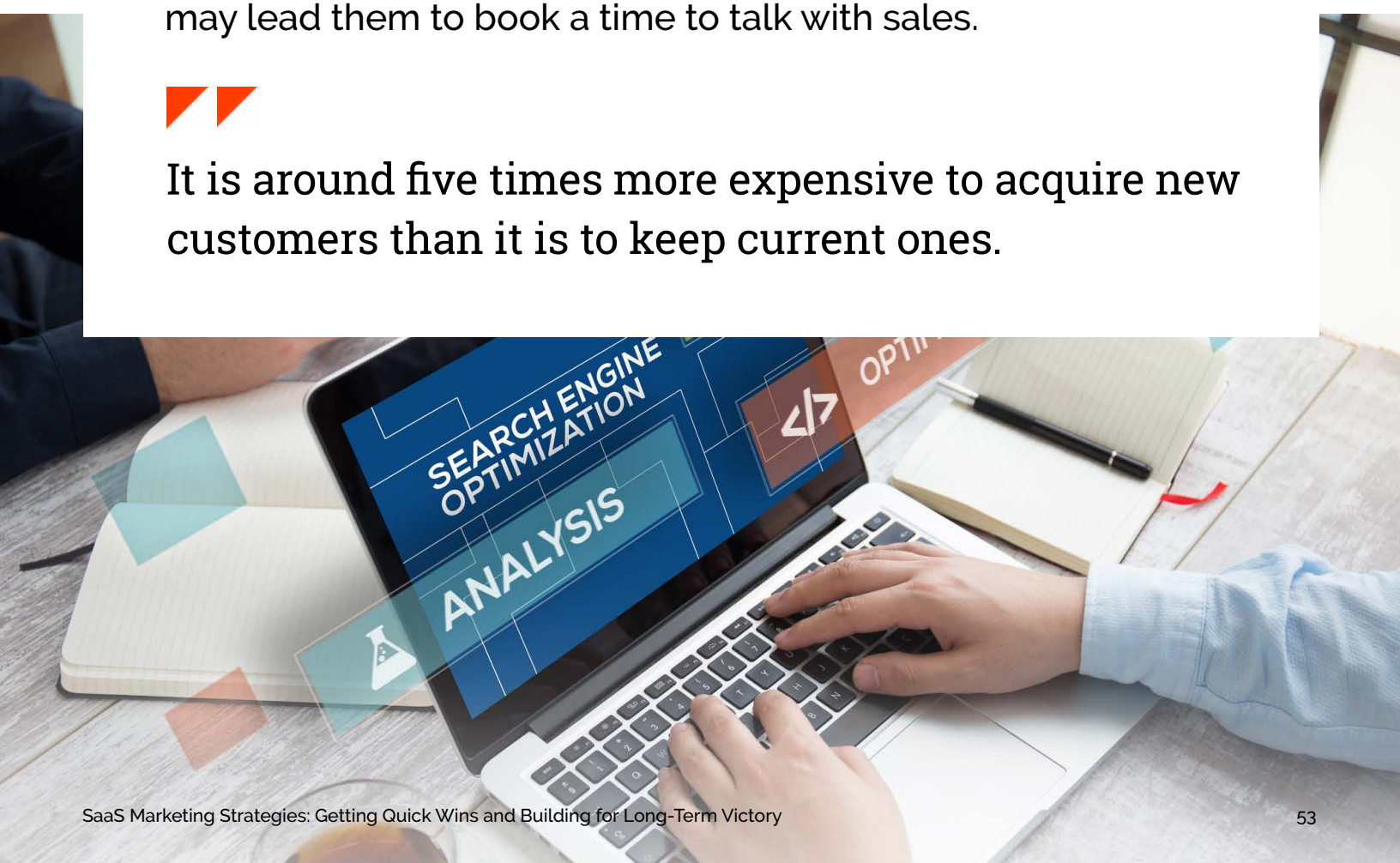
The long-term goal for showcasing your products is to make it as enticing and as intuitive as possible to start a free trial. When your audience can see the product in action and realize the benefits firsthand, they'll be more likely to speak with sales and feel better about a purchase decision.

QUICK WIN

Create a Short Demo Video

If you're still working on getting your product trial up and running, create a short (two to five minutes) demo video for visitors to see the product in action. By demonstrating the capabilities of your product, the video will enable your audience to envision how your product will help them and it may lead them to book a time to talk with sales.

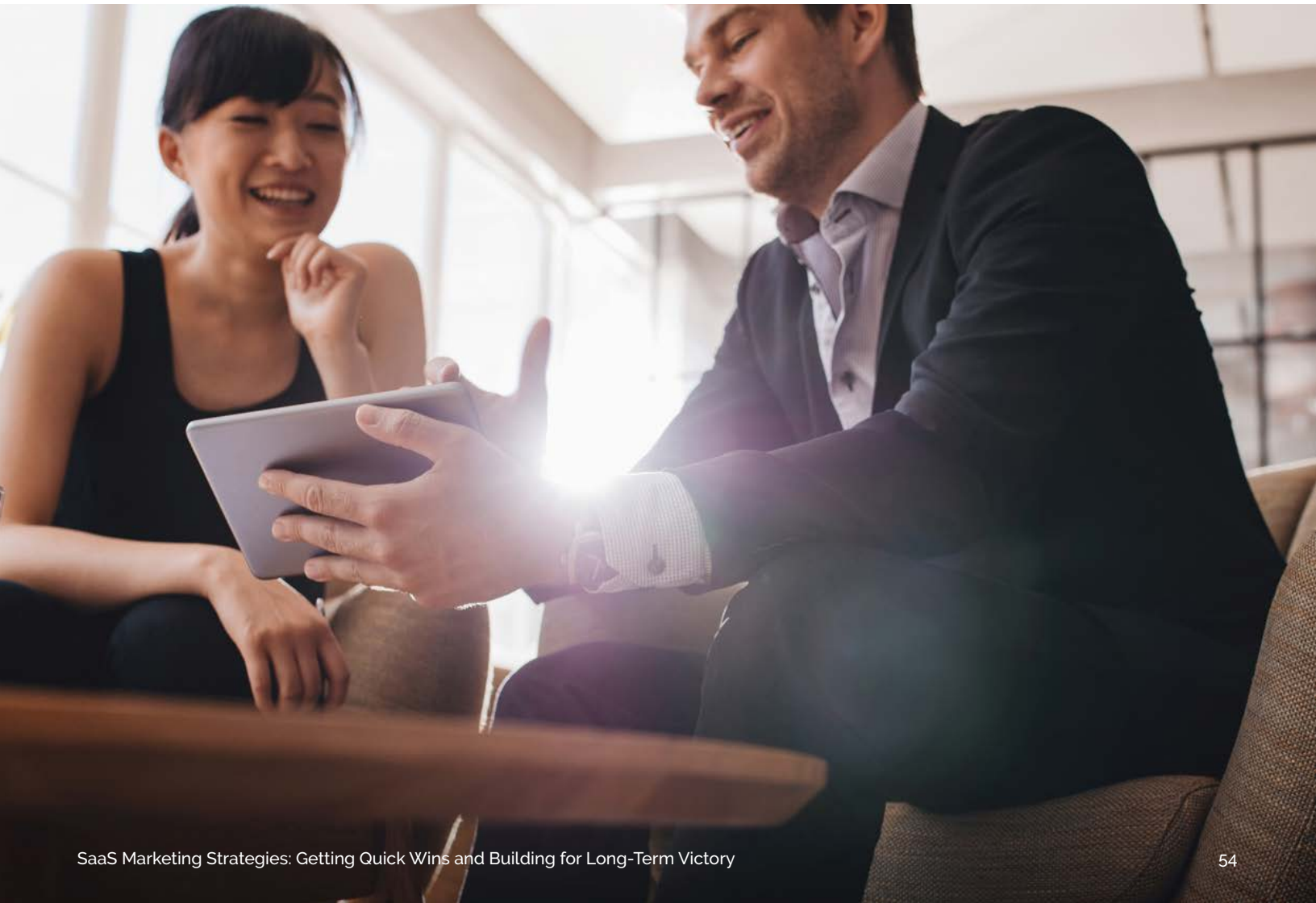
> It is around five times more expensive to acquire new customers than it is to keep current ones.



QUICK WIN

Leverage Reviews and Testimonials

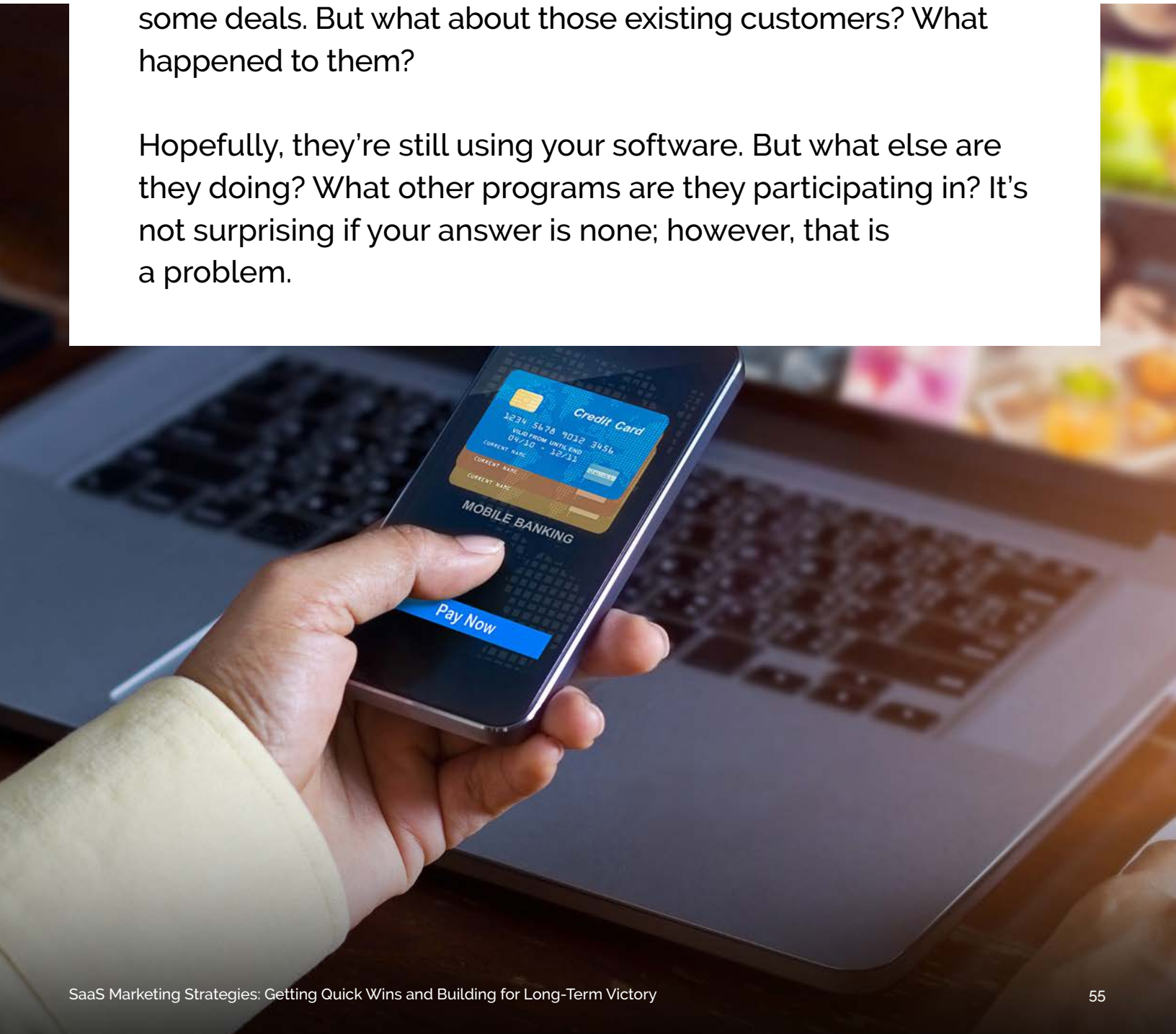
Customer testimonials and product reviews have a heavy impact on prospects when they're evaluating your products and services. There's no better way to showcase your product's effectiveness than to demonstrate how it has helped others. Add some testimonials throughout your website (especially on your product pages), include testimonials and case studies in bottom-of-the-funnel emails and offers when you're trying to convert leads into opportunities, and enlist the power of third-party review sites like G2 Crowd.



Don't Forget Your Existing Customers

You've done everything right so far. You've developed your personas and your target customers, you've built a website that showcases your customers, and you've even closed some deals. But what about those existing customers? What happened to them?

Hopefully, they're still using your software. But what else are they doing? What other programs are they participating in? It's not surprising if your answer is none; however, that is a problem.



Laying the Foundation: Your Customers Are Your Best Assets

Like we said, it's not surprising that very little happens once your contacts become customers. But because it is around five times more expensive to acquire new customers than it is to keep current ones, there's no reason to wonder whether they still merit your company's attention and efforts. However, despite this statistic, many organizations don't engage in any sort of customer delight, retention, or even engagement strategy. **Savvy marketers know that happy customers become promoters who introduce new potential buyers to your brand**.

Like we said, it's not surprising that very little happens once your contacts become customers.

Your Long-Term Goal: Implement a Customer Advocacy Program

It sounds daunting to build a customer advocacy program, but small steps are enough to encourage users to become advocates. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Before we move any further, we should look at exactly what becoming a customer advocate means.

What Is a Customer Advocacy Program?

Customer advocacy programs do different things for different companies, and they can vary greatly across both companies and industries. These programs can eliminate problems that your customers are having, enlightening many of your company's teams. They can provide suggestions on how to improve your software to be more user-friendly. And ultimately, and perhaps most important, they can satisfy your customers to the extent that they will refer their colleagues to your company and increase your revenue.

Be sure that your customer advocacy program focuses on these five pieces:

1. **Setting Aside Internal Support:** Although this program will encompass aspects of both your marketing and sales activities, this cannot be just another marketing or sales activity. Such a program requires its own dedicated resources, and those resources include a manager who can liaise between your customer advocates and your own company.

2. **Selecting Your Advocates:** Although your program should certainly be open to all of your customers, you might not want to put an equal level of effort in engaging each of your customers to enter this program. Think of this like another qualification process. Which of your customers are most ideal? Who represents the ideal brands? Who is the most well-known? Who has had the best experiences with your company and thus has the best stories to tell? Once you have a plan of attack, begin your recruitment efforts.

3. **Focusing on Your Relationships:** Customer advocacy starts with happy customers for a reason: Your existing customers have the power to bring in some of the most profitable prospects that your sales team could hope for. Provide them with experiences that delight them and resonate with them.

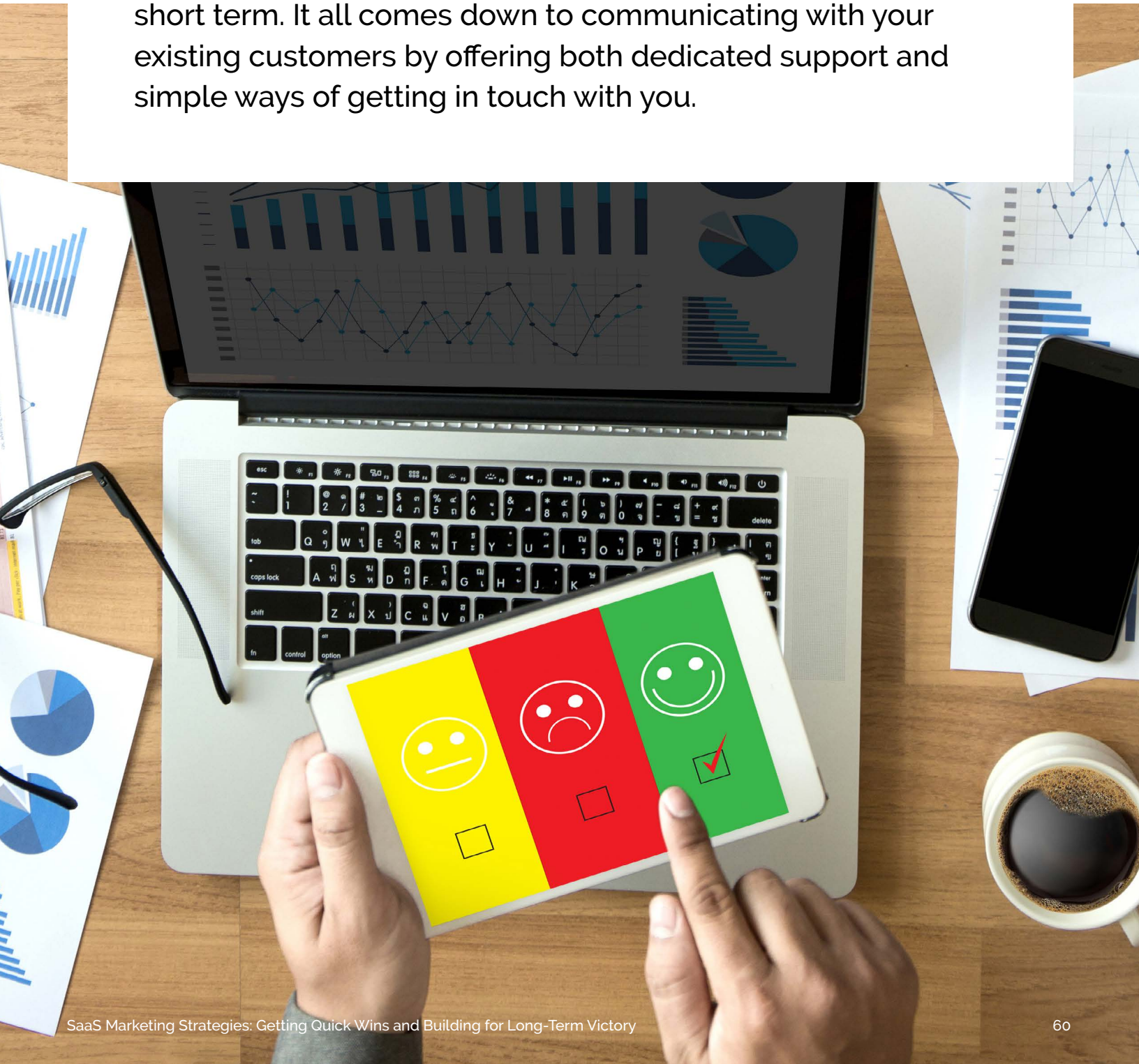
4. **Embrace a Feeling of Community:** This program should be something that all of your customers can identify with. Provide a platform for communication—not only among themselves but within your organization as well. You want them to feel that their voices are heard. Incentivize them. Create shared experiences. Above all, you want this advocacy program to be the final touch on your overall experience, something so positive that your customers are certain to refer you.

5. **Continue to Involve Them:** Be sure that this program allows for continuous involvement. As your sales team continues to bring in new customers, you want to continue to grow and expand your customer advocacy program.

Although your customer advocacy program will not solve the same problems that your software does, it should be seen as a soft benefit of doing business with you. The exclusivity of this program, along with the inclusivity that the community offers, will offer further ability to delight your customers, providing another opportunity for them to refer you to their colleagues and peers in the industry.

Long-Term Goal (But with Short-Term Possibilities): Keep Customers Happy

As mentioned, developing and launching a customer advocacy program is no small feat and cannot be accomplished overnight. However, that's not to say that there is no way to focus more on customer satisfaction within the short term. It all comes down to communicating with your existing customers by offering both dedicated support and simple ways of getting in touch with you.



Short-Term: Facilitate Communication Through World-Class Support

Unlike simple software, purchasing and using SaaS takes into account the entire user experience, meaning that closing a customer is not as simple as just selling licenses and letting your customers be. Your team should aim to be a resource for customers, using your expertise with the software to constantly offer suggestions, best practices, and resources that might allow customers to find more value in your software.

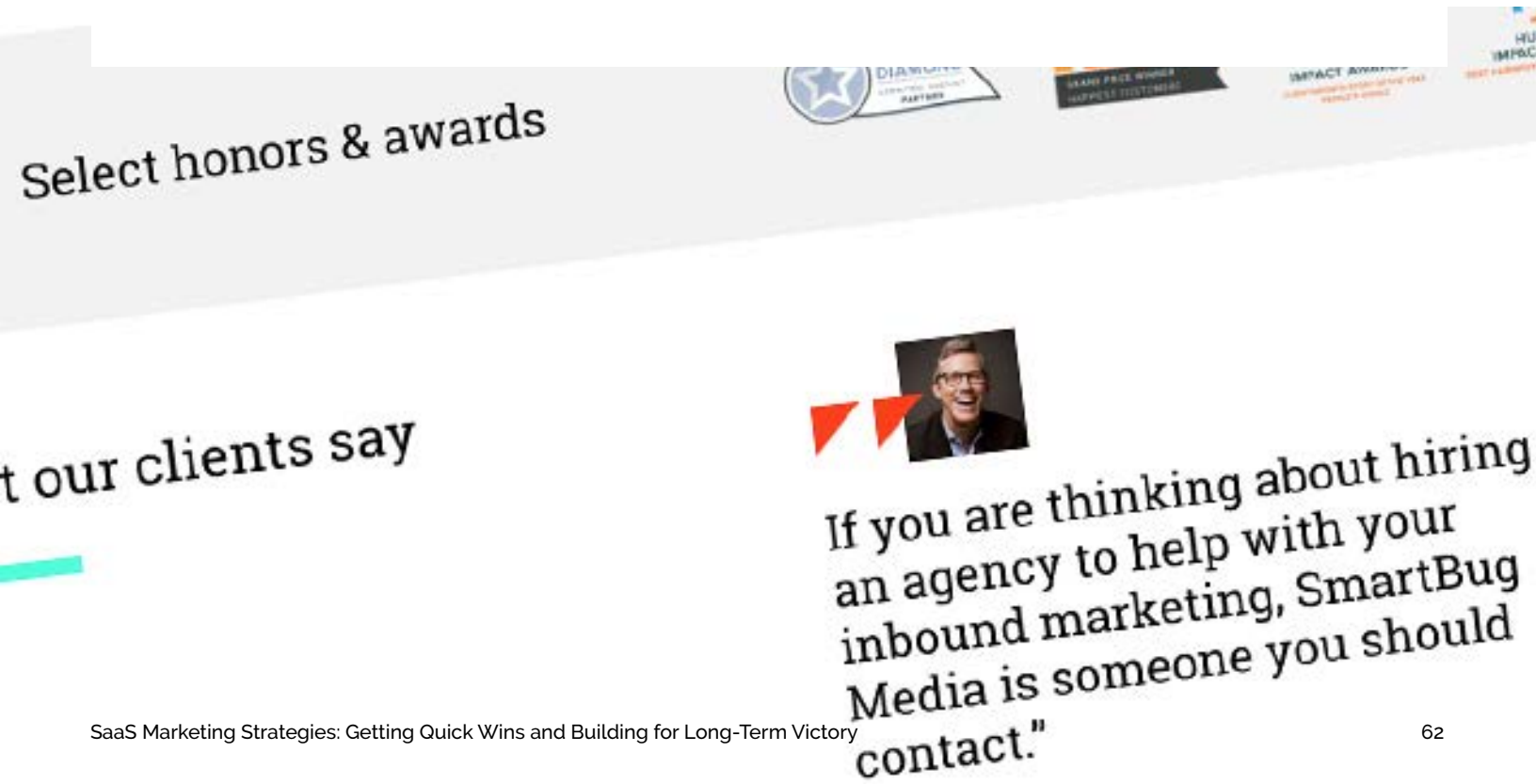
Luckily, there are quite a few ways that your team can communicate with your customers, primarily over email, the phone, or even the increasingly common live chat feature. Although email communications tend to be more one-sided, both phone calls and live chat features allow your customers to feel as though they have access to a dedicated support system at the touch of a button.

Whether the team is truly dedicated or not, the perception that you have a team invested in your customers' success and happiness will speak volumes about how much their business matters to you. And because happy, loyal customers increase your average customer lifetime value, investing in the happiness and satisfaction of your customers is a valuable expenditure.

Long-Term: Showcase Customer Happiness

We already know that customer opinions, be they positive or negative, carry a lot of weight and can greatly influence a prospect in the consideration or decision stages. However, if you have a lot of customers singing your praises, why make your prospects find that information for themselves?

There are two primary ways that you can leverage your customer loyalty and happiness: Add testimonials to your website and develop a brand ambassador program.



Adding Customer Testimonials to Your Website

Say you have 100 customers all saying wonderful things about your company. Do you paste all of their words all over your website? Not a chance. Follow these four steps to ensure your business gets the most ROI out of showcasing customer testimonials:

1. **Think Big:** If your website has 10 pages and you'd like one or two different testimonials to be on each page, how do you choose which customers you'd like to feature? Assuming all customers provided testimonials of equally positive weight, you want to showcase the customers whose brands are most recognizable. After all, reputation matters.

2. **Think Relevance:** While reputation matters, so does relevance. As you decide which testimonials you'd like to place where, think about which of your personas will be viewing certain pages. Can they identify with the company giving the testimonial? Are both organizations solving similar problems or facing similar challenges? Think about testimonial selection in the same way as other inbound marketing or selling practices—you want to present as personalized an experience as possible. Make your testimonials resonate.

3 **Focus on Variety:** The testimonials showcased on your website should follow website best practices. You want them to be dynamic. Sure, there is value to having written testimonials across all pages of your website, but there is also value to imagery and video content. The same is true with your testimonials. In order to keep them from appearing redundant, vary how they appear. Use videos or images where they make sense.

4 **Make Them Visible:** Again, although you want the testimonials that you showcase on your website to contribute to an overall relevant user experience, you want to be sure they aren't missed. You shouldn't spam your website visitors, but don't hesitate to showcase a customer testimonial on more than one page, so long as each page is relevant to the topic of the testimonial.

5 **Don't Forget Third Parties:** Sharing reviews and testimonials that customers give you personally is great, but don't forget the power of social proof and third-party validation. Sites like G2 Crowd, Capterra, and Software Advice are prime candidates for review campaigns. Start simple: create or claim your profile and make sure it's in the appropriate categories. Then, invite a few great customers to leave you a review. From there, some sites will allow you to sponsor campaigns to generate reviews from real users, to promote your listing, and to generate leads with a cost-per-click based program to make this even more of a quick win.

Develop a Brand Ambassador Program

Although there are different degrees of formalized brand ambassador programs, they all center on the core principle of leveraging the voices of your brand evangelists. Think about it. You create great content, and you promote it. But unless your team is joining a different LinkedIn group every day or constantly growing its network (a full-time job, in and of itself), you end up promoting your content in the same place, day after day.

That's where your brand ambassadors come in. Because your users most likely span networks different from those of your team, allow your users to promote your content for you. Heck, encourage them to do so. Chances are that your users know other prospective users, so not only will your content or brand end up in front of an increasingly expansive audience, but it will be placed there by customers who think the world of you.

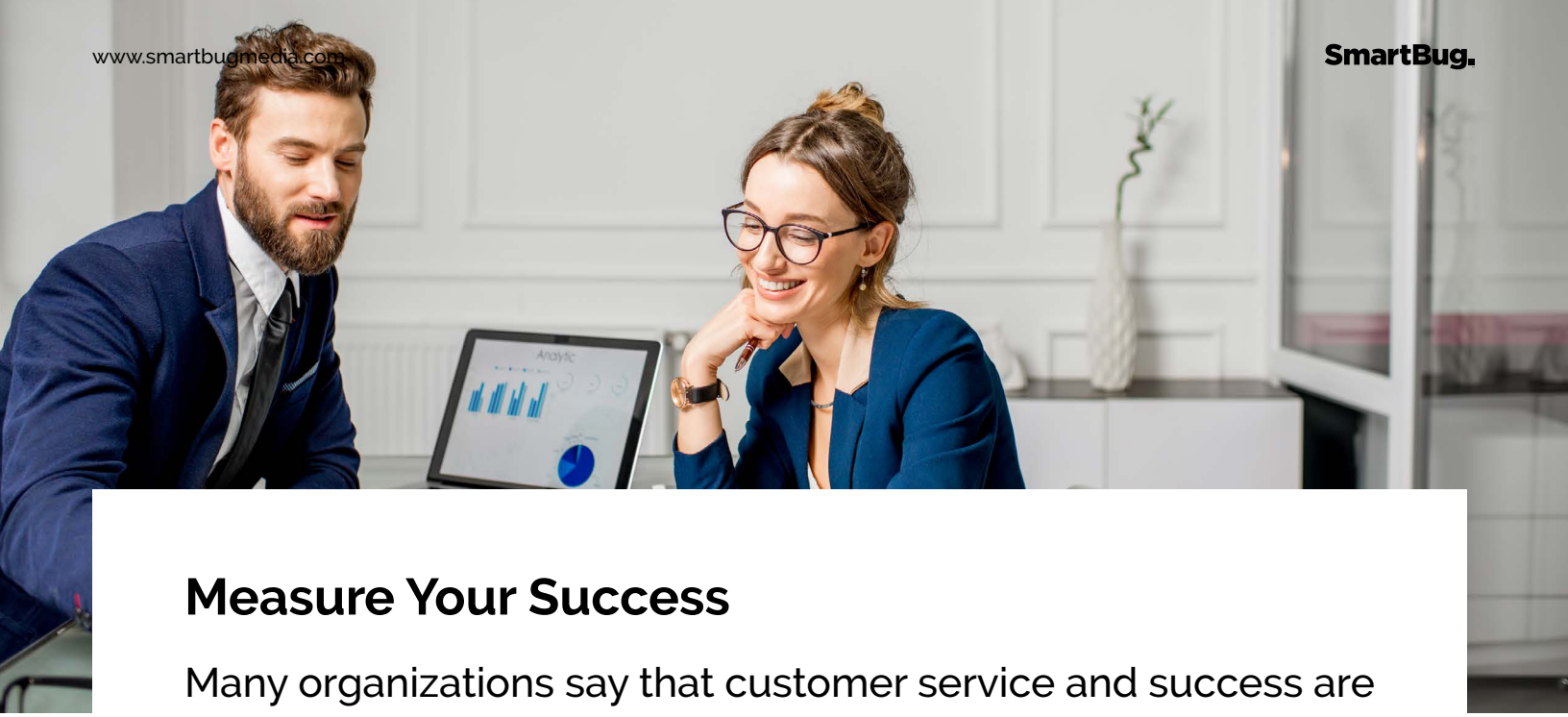
There are a few different ways that you can set this brand ambassador program into motion:

- **Ask Your Top Customers:** Like asking for referrals, you'd be surprised how often these opportunities are missed simply because they are not initiated. Some of your top customers might be more than willing to either distribute your content in person or share your content online. It never hurts to ask.

- **Create an Open Enrollment Platform:** Maybe someone isn't a top user, but he or she feels strongly about your brand. Consider creating a CTA and landing page allowing contacts to self-enroll into your brand ambassador program.

- **Utilize Social Monitoring:** Many social media tools allow you to monitor social media users who mention specific words or phrases. You never know who is talking about you or what they are saying. But through social monitoring, you can be aware of, and interact with, people talking about your brand or service. Leverage the good.

The value of customer testimonials and a brand ambassador program is twofold: They encourage you to monitor your customers' levels of satisfaction, and they allow you to leverage your customers' happiness. After all, in today's review-based marketplace, an organic, honest, and positive review carries quite a bit of merit.



Measure Your Success

Many organizations say that customer service and success are what set them apart, but not every organization is measuring that success. Although the programs above can give you some qualitative information about how you're doing, consider using quantitative measures as well. The most common metric to track is net promoter score (NPS). NPS is based on survey data and helps you divide your customers into three groups:

1. Promoters (rate you a 9 or 10)
2. Passives (rate you a 7 or 8)
3. Detractors (rate you 0 through 6)

To calculate your NPS, you subtract your percentage of detractors from your percentage of promoters. The scores range from -100 (exclusively detractors) to 100 (exclusively promoters).

As you embark on customer engagement marketing, start by conducting an NPS survey (there are many tools to do this) and set your SMART goals around improving your score by a certain amount in the next six to 12 months.

Conclusion

Developing, implementing, and executing long-term strategies cannot be done without first executing quick wins, and quick wins cannot be executed without first laying the foundation. Creating the required shift in mentality and attitude toward becoming a customer-centric company and providing value to your leads will help lay the proper foundation for your SaaS marketing strategy. If your organization cannot shift its typical marketing and sales activities to be in accordance with how people actually buy, these strategies—both short- and long-term—will be moot.

That's because these strategies align with the inbound Buyer's Journey, the prospective buyer's actions from contact with a brand or company until their purchase. Within the inbound marketing model, this journey often starts with a website visit, thus, the outlined quick-win focus on growing your company's traffic. Whether you are creating relevant content that your target customers are searching for, providing proof of your product through testimonials and reviews, or even understanding how to communicate with your website visitors through marketing and sales alignment, all of these quick wins serve to draw, grow, and satisfy your website visitors. The outlined long-term goals, however, all focus on nurturing these visitors and leads, helping your company convert them, ultimately, to customers.

The world of SaaS moves quickly. And although that rapid innovation does present companies such as yours with a great amount of opportunity and flexibility, it means your marketing strategies must be flexible as well. Ensure that your long-term marketing strategies align with your business's goals, and use short-term quick wins that will not only bring you results, but also allow you to react quickly to shifts in the market and the changing requirements of your prospects.

> Start by making sure that your company understands the premise of inbound marketing and how it aligns with how your customers select SaaS solutions.

You've reached the end of this e-book, and although you now have a ton of ideas, you might be wondering where to go from here. Let us help: Start by making sure that your company understands the premise of inbound marketing and how it aligns with how your customers select SaaS solutions. Once that's accomplished, develop your quick wins and then your long-term strategies—just be sure that these align with your company's own internal goals.

SmartBug Media™ understands that the development and execution of these strategies aren't as simple as written here. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions about aspects of this quick-win, long-term approach or if you're interested in support for its implementation.

About SmartBug

SmartBug Media™ is a globally recognized Intelligent Inbound™ marketing agency that assists businesses in growing revenue by generating leads, increasing brand awareness, and building customer loyalty through content marketing, sales enablement, web development, marketing automation, and PR.

As HubSpot's 2018 Global Partner of the Year, SmartBug™ is the highest-rated HubSpot partner in the world! We've not only been named twice to the Inc. 5000 list of fastest growing companies, but we've also won several Great Place to Work® awards. With more than 100 awards for client work in 2018 alone—and a team with a combined 550 marketing certifications—we are fully dedicated to delivering client success and an unparalleled agency experience.

Since 2007, SmartBug Media™ has been helping businesses increase qualified sales leads, close customers, and enhance brand reach. We're the extension of your marketing team that delivers.

To learn more visit www.smartbugmedia.com.

Curious how we can help grow your business?

Get the conversation started and let's talk about your organization, your goals, and how SmartBug can help you achieve them.

Let's Talk

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