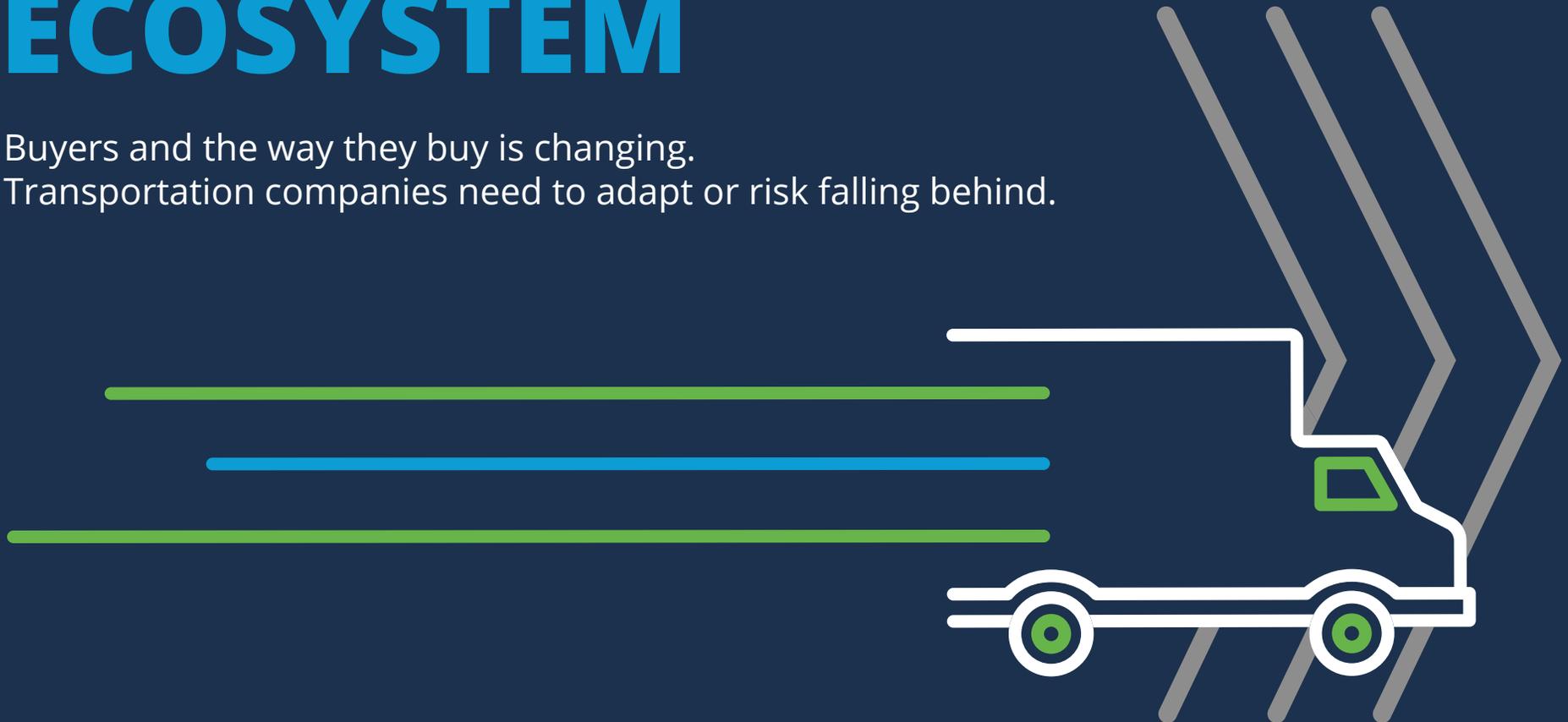




10 Steps Transportation Companies Must Take to

# CREATE AND FOSTER AN INBOUND MARKETING ECOSYSTEM

Buyers and the way they buy is changing.  
Transportation companies need to adapt or risk falling behind.



## Introduction

The transportation and logistics industry is in a current state of rapid change, thanks mostly to the evolution of technology. This change can also be attributed to how customers in this space are redefining the way they buy. They want to conduct their research both online and with industry peers. They identify their problem, find a solution and look for appropriate vendors—all without engaging directly with companies ([HubSpot reports](#) that purchasers don't even engage with a salesperson until they are 70% of the way through the evaluation process).

With this in mind, transportation and logistics companies everywhere are looking to evolve their organization, as well as their sales and marketing efforts, in order to meet these customers where they are in the buying cycle at any given point.

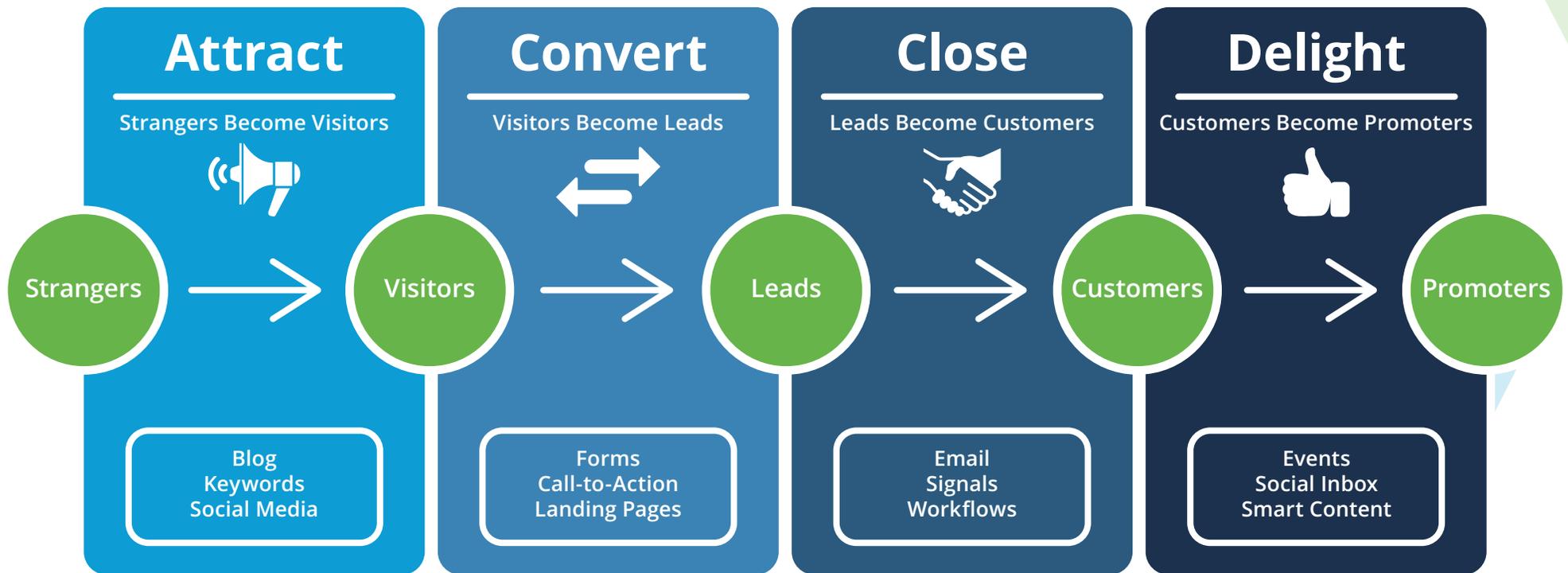
**How are they doing this you ask?  
The answer is Inbound. Read on to  
find out more.**

Before you begin formulating an inbound marketing strategy, you need to understand the logic behind each distinct inbound stage. Each stage centers around an action companies practicing the inbound methodology must consider and develop a strategic plan for, in order to create a harmonious ecosystem for marketing success.



### **Stage 1: Attract (Strangers Become Visitors)**

Start by driving traffic to your website using  
keywords (or relevant phrases and  
online)



## Now you know the basics.

You're ready for the 10 steps you need to make your marketing inbound marketing.



STEP

1

## Make an Investment

When it comes to creating and fostering a successful inbound marketing ecosystem, there is a certain level of investment that all companies need to be aware of and commit themselves to from the start. The investment is not just a financial one, but it's also an investment in the people and tools that will be supporting the ecosystem that's being created. From the President/CEO to the marketing intern who just onboarded last week, it's important that everyone makes a concerted investment of their time, support, know-how and effort to contribute to the ongoing success of any formulated inbound strategy.



STEP  
2

# Identify Value Proposition

Any successful inbound marketing strategy is built upon a strong foundation. Oftentimes, this foundation is centered around the perceived value that a brand believes it brings to the marketplace. As such, companies should make an effort to define their value proposition as early on in the process as possible. At its base level, a value proposition is a promise of value to be delivered. This proposition should be a clear statement that explains how your product solves customers' problems or improves their situation (relevancy), how it delivers specific benefits (quantified value), and also how it tells the ideal customer why they should buy from you and not from the competition (unique differentiation). So how do you develop a compelling value proposition?

The process consists of three stages:

1. Identifying customer benefits
2. Linking these benefits to mechanisms for delivering value
3. Mapping the basis for differentiation or market play

Most, if not all, businesses believe they deliver value via a combination of cost, technology and customer service. By identifying your company's specific mix of these differentiators and conveying that through an inbound marketing approach, you will find out rather quickly whether or not your perceived value proposition is actually your value proposition.



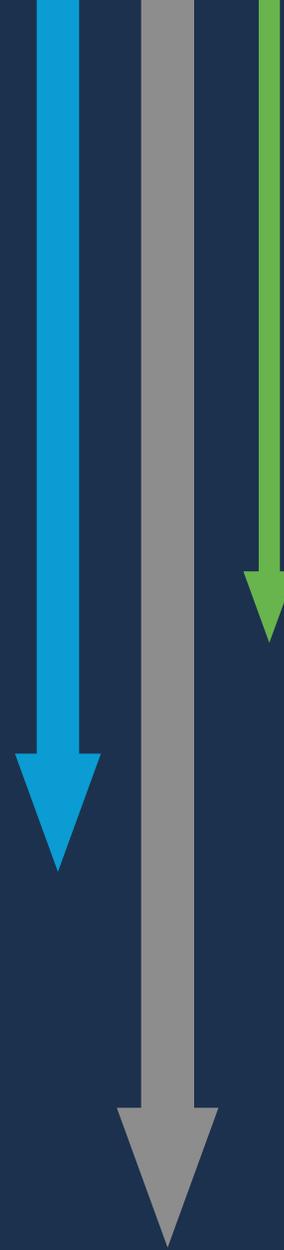
STEP  
3

## Identify Your Target Markets

Understanding who your company and inbound marketing efforts should be geared towards is a very important step in creating and fostering an inbound marketing ecosystem. Most likely, your company and/or internal marketing team has already defined what markets should be targeted. If you haven't identified your target markets, no need to panic—although we do recommend leaning on a digital marketing partner who specializes in inbound marketing to help you strategically arrive at them. A team of trained inbound marketing professionals will help you define your ideal customer in terms of:

- Company size
- Industry
- Type of product or service need

It's also helpful to prioritize these target markets based on your existing relationships, market penetration, revenue potential and fit for your product or service.



STEP

4

## Define Your Audiences/ Create Buyer Personas

Once your target markets have been decided upon, it's time to focus your attention on the customers who make up those markets. This is done through the process of creating buyer personas. Buyer personas are fictional representations of your ideal customer. Identify and define who these people are, their interests, where they look for information, the problems they have and how you can meet their needs. And because you want your inbound marketing efforts to be highly targeted, limit the number of buyer personas you create (ideally, create three to five maximum). Start by writing a short biography for each, listing key demographics and traits.



### Tip:

Use your top-performing customers to help influence the direction of your buyer personas. Hold a brainstorming session with key decision-makers to determine which current customers you can use to influence your go-forward personas.



Continue to build out your personas by listing important background information (such as education), personality identifiers, goals/objectives and common pain points. If you want to take it a step further, you could spell out any objections each persona may have and start to think about a short marketing elevator pitch that could effectively resonate with each.

It's important to make these buyer personas detailed and to always go back and update and refine them every so often, but avoid going overboard—you want detail, not over-complication.

To get things moving, you may want to start with fairly simple personas, which can be arrived at by asking the important questions like:

- What's his or her pain points?
- Where does this person consume information online?
- What sales and marketing events do they attend?
- What LinkedIn Groups are they a part of?
- What are their most common daily challenges?



STEP  
**5**

# Build a Content Strategy for Driving Traffic to Your Website, via Keyword/Keyphrase Research

With our buyer personas at the ready, we now have a clearer vision into the types of people who are likely searching for your services. The next step is to try and determine HOW they're searching. As is the case with any other online search, people who are searching the service or product you provide are typing phrases into search engines in hopes of finding helpful information. In order to find out what your ideal buyers are searching, [use a research tool](#) that identifies the different words and phrases people use when looking for a solution that applies to one of your products or services.

Companies often use their own vernacular or acronyms to define their products. Use this research to learn the language that your prospect uses when searching for solutions. These key phrases are an important part of making search engines work for your website.

ABC Company is going to use words and phrases that target people searching for a transportation company. It's important to note that people often look for companies that are physically located near their company. This is evidenced by the keyword "local trucking companies near me" in the example search (note that SEO "keywords" can also be detailed phrases; this type of highly specific keyword is called a "long-tail keyword").

Keyword	Search Volume
trucking companies in Michigan	880
local trucking companies near me	590
otr trucking companies	390
local freight companies	170
best trucking companies to drive for	720
flatbed services	320
ltl trucking companies	590
transport and logistics companies	140
ltl shipping rates	260



STEP

6

## Identify, Vet and Determine Technology, Platforms and Tools

No matter how defined your markets, personas and content are, you still need technical platforms and tools in order to convey your marketing message and support a holistic inbound ecosystem. The steps in completing these efforts are as follows:

1. Identify internal resources/subject matter experts
2. Identify platforms and tools
3. Research, report back and discuss
4. Determine final decision
5. Train, empower and support internal resources

By empowering internal subject matter experts (developers, content managers, sales team, etc.) to lead the charge on these efforts, not only does it open up the pathways of communications between departments (marketing and sales), but it also creates a sense of accountability in each department that will likely carry over into your marketing efforts.



STEP

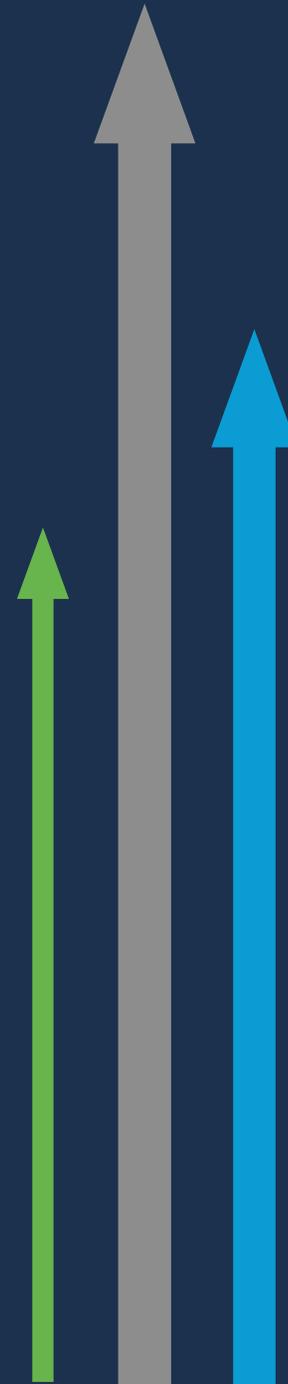
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# Develop Internal Processes for Content Creation and Distribution

Prioritize the findings from the keyword/phrase research to develop content for (or rewrite content already on) your website. The words you use on your website need to match the phrases that people are using when they search online so that your website pages are readily found during search engine searches. It's often helpful to work with someone who understands search engine optimization and a person with expertise in writing for the web. This activity is part art and part science.

A large part of creating content is determining the content creation, approval and publishing process internally, and training staff to follow this process for current and future content creation efforts. Common steps in a content creation process are as follows:

1. Identify content topic(s), writer(s) and subject matter expert(s)
2. Collaboration and research (writer and subject matter expert)
3. Initial draft produced
4. Internal review and feedback
5. Revisions
6. Install content on website
7. Final review and publishing



Now that you've created the content that will drive people to your site, you want to strategically post it in places where your personas go to find answers, which you already know thanks to your buyer personas. Common places include LinkedIn, YouTube, industry forums, etc.

Develop a distribution strategy based on your target markets and the personas within them. The goal is to publish this content where the personas will see it and have it link back to your website. This is how you drive better traffic to your site (i.e., traffic from people researching the solutions you offer). Another important aspect of publishing content where your personas are is to engage with them if they respond to the content you've posted. This back and forth can oftentimes be the final push a prospect needs to choose your company.



STEP

8

## Develop Content Offers on Your Website

Once you've driven people to your website, you need to continue to provide valuable content pieces that people can only access if they provide their contact information, such as their name and email address. These are called content offers.

Your content offers should be developed to address the specific needs of your ideal buyers. Keep in mind that many of these prospective buyers are still either defining their problem or are aware of their problem but still looking at all possible solutions. These buyers are still in the awareness stage of the buyer's journey, which is also referred to as being in the "top of the funnel." It's always a great idea to monitor whether top-of-the-funnel offers are producing leads—if they're not, change them up.

This is how a visitor could become a lead on your site:

- You write a blog post titled "Answers to Your Top 10 Questions About Hiring a Trucking Company" that a visitor reads.
- On the same web page, you put a call-to-action (CTA)—or, an on-site direction that informs the visitor to perform a specific action (in this case, download an offer).
- When that CTA is clicked, it leads the visitor to a landing page for a checklist titled "5 Ways Your Transportation Company Can Save You Time & Money."
- Your visitor fills out the online form on the landing page for this "gated," top-of-the-funnel checklist.



## That visitor just became a lead.

You also need content of ers that connect with buyers who are further along in the buyer’s journey and actively researching or considering your specific service or product. Using the same scenario above, you may have a visitor who reads the same blog post and goes from merely educating themselves to considering you as a potential solution-provider to their now clearly defined problem.

This visitor clicks on another CTA that leads to the ebook, “Ef ciencies Gained Through Hiring ABC Company.” This of er is targeted directly at someone looking specifically for a trucking solution, which means they now fall within the consideration stage of the buyer’s journey, also called the “middle of the funnel.”

Potentially most importantly, you need content of ers that speak to a person who is ready to make a decision to purchase—falling in line with the other naming conventions, this stage is also called the “bottom of the funnel,” and is also considered the decision stage in the buyer’s journey. Of ers in this stage could be anything from “Request a Consultation” to a download of specific product literature. Simply put, these prospects are ready to become customers and know exactly what they want.



### Tip:

Your blog posts should not be about your company and its products or services. Many, many, many companies fall into the trap of treating their blogs as places to tout their offerings. Readers of blogs typically aren’t ready for the hard sell—instead, they’re looking for information that helps them identify and name their exact problem.



STEP  
9



STEP

10

## Measure, Report, Adjust & Evolve

With any marketing related efforts, especially inbound, it's vital that these are tracked, reported on, and discussed by your sales, marketing and management teams on at least a monthly basis. Some inbound metrics worth paying attention to are as follows:

- Website sessions
- Leads
- Sessions to Lead Conversion Rate (S2LCR)
- Marketing Qualified Leads (MQL)
- Leads to Marketing Qualified Leads Conversion Rate (L2MQLCR)
- Sales Qualified Leads (SQL)
- Leads to Sales Qualified Leads Conversion Rate (L2SQLCR)

By tracking KPIs and reporting back on them, real-time adjustments to low-performing content can be made in order to better serve a prospect's needs. Additionally, what is working for existing prospects can be replicated over and over in an attempt to replicate success.



# Marketing Automation Software's Necessary Counterpart—CRM

In simplest terms, marketing automation software helps your marketing team nurture and build relationships with leads and CRM (customer relationship management) software helps your sales team manage relationships, typically after they have filled out a form for an on-site bottom-of-the-funnel offer (remember, these are the prospects who know what they want and are ready for your sales team).

CRMs, like marketing automation software, rely on data. Data is where the gold is.

After all, having strong sales data is critical in today's complex sales and buying environment. Do you know:

- All of the companies your reps are talking to?
- Whom they are talking to at these companies?
- What stage of the buying process they are in?
- The size of the deal?
- The size of your sales pipeline?
- If your pipeline is large enough to support your growth objectives?

If you're looking to improve your sales results, then you need answers to the questions above. You need those answers in real time, anytime, all the time. Best of all, a CRM doesn't have to be complex or cost prohibitive. In fact, CRM software, such as [HubSpot CRM](#), is completely free and so easy to use you can be up and running in hours.



## Conclusion

Inbound marketing for transportation companies is about providing the right information to the right people at the right time. Doing so demonstrates that your company is not only a viable solution, but the right solution.

Think of the inbound marketing solution as being a new inside marketing and sales team (not one that replaces the ones you already have, but one that adds to what you already do). Once inbound digital marketing efforts have generated interest and the prospect has identified themselves, your staff's sales process should seamlessly take over.

Today, marketers are investing more in video, social networks such as Instagram and messaging applications such as Facebook Messenger in an effort to reach customers and prospects where they prefer to be online.

This new marketing process engages with prospects once they're ready to have a conversation. It offers an efficient system that utilizes the best aspects of people and digital tools to speak to all generations.



## About SyncShow

SyncShow is an integrated digital marketing agency, located just outside of Cleveland, Ohio, which happens to be a geographical hotbed for the transportation and logistics industry. By focusing on growing small- to middle-market B2B companies within this space, SyncShow has been able to hone in on and solve many marketing challenges that face these companies.

Through their work and strategic partnerships, SyncShow has made a name for itself in the industry now and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Our strategies and solutions help companies grow and stay ahead.  
**See how we can help.**

