

# The Trust Reader

CHARLES H. GREEN ARTICLE SERIES VOL. 9

FEATURING

## RECIPROCITY AND INBOUND MARKETING



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In this issue you will find the complete release of one article as well as announcements and links to two other new articles that are being released at the same time.

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*“Never have there been so many options for the would-be marketer. And never has it been so hard to evaluate the best solution.”*

TrustedAdvisor ASSOCIATES



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## RECIPROCITY AND INBOUND MARKETING

BY CHARLES H. GREEN

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How can you get your message out in an  
insanely message-cluttered world?

Major media are re-organizing and/or in  
free-fall; new social media are emerging  
weekly. Should you blog, buy ads, buy  
an email list, publish a book (and if  
so, self-publish or not?), do podcasts,  
hire a publicist, jazz up your website,  
buy Google ad-clicks, devote resources  
to PR, hire an SEO specialist, collect  
10,000 twitter followers?

It sounds clichéd, but it's probably true:  
never have there been so many options  
for the would-be marketer. And never  
has it been so hard to evaluate the best  
solution.

Into this world comes a new solution—  
inbound marketing—which turns out  
to be based on some tried-and-true  
principles. How did we forget them in  
the first place?

### THE CHALLENGE

There's this thing called spam. And we  
have developed spam filters to fight  
back. Some of those filters exist at the  
email client level, others at the site or  
host level.

The concept of filtering, however, is not  
unique to email. We also have do-not-  
call lists, government-mandated ways of  
opting out of unwanted telemarketers  
pursuing us during the dinner hour.  
Caller-ID is a popular telecom feature  
for precisely the same reason—it gives  
the phone-answerer power over the  
phone-caller.

In the television world, the VCR allowed  
time-shifting and rudimentary editing—  
both ways of avoiding the advertising  
that funded the US model of television  
programming delivery. TIVO was an  
evolved technology for doing the same

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*“Inbound marketing means being invited in to the consumer’s living room, rather than continuing to knock loudly at the door as a stranger.”*

thing, forcing cable TV to respond in kind, carrying with its signal the means to avoid watching the commercial uses of that same signal. Podcasts do much the same for audio content.

The common theme is that media users—aka ‘consumers’—have increasingly gained the means of shutting out marketers. Marketers have upped the ante—sophisticated email blasts, product placement, infomercials—but consumers have arguably gained the upper hand.

What’s a poor marketer to do?

## A NEW ANSWER: INBOUND MARKETING.

People are still buying—cars, iPads, restaurant meals, accounting services. The GDP may be slower-growth, but the decline in the power of media is not going to stop consumption itself. The question is: from where will people get their information and recommendations?

An increasingly common answer is Inbound Marketing. If that term is new to you, here is Wikipedia’s (as of March 2011) definition:

Inbound marketing is a [marketing](#) strategy that focuses on getting found by customers...related to

[relationship marketing](#) and [Seth Godin’s idea of permission marketing](#).

Or, to put it more prosaically—we increasingly get our information and advice from those we trust. Or at least, from those we allow into our Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, no-spam email addresses, YouTube and Feedly lists. All else need not apply.

Inbound marketing means being invited in to the consumer’s living room, rather than continuing to knock loudly at the door as a stranger.

Sounds good, of course, but it begs the \$64,000 question: How do you get them to invite you in?

## AN OLD PRINCIPLE- RECIPROCITY. WHY IT WORKS.

The concept of Inbound Marketing is still evolving; one of the better discussions is by [Hubspot Marketing](#), a highly successful practitioner of the approach. They tend to describe it in terms of recent technological innovation.

[Third Tribe Marketing](#) and [Chris Brogan](#) highlight something deeper: if you do things for other people, they tend to return the favor.

This is no random insight. Psychologist [Robert Cialdini](#) has for a couple of

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*“Reciprocity is simple: do good things for customers, and they’ll do good things for you.”*

decades now been talking about reciprocity as the number one driver of influence among human beings. The generic form of reciprocity is:

If you do X for me, I will do Y for you.

This generic formula covers a multitude of human behaviors, from illegal monopolistic tie-ins and Mafia agreements to the rules of social etiquette. And despite a few decades of fixating on human behavior as solely driven by the rational pursuit of economic self-interest, the reciprocity principle is alive and well in business.

Reciprocity is simple: do good things for customers, and they’ll do good things for you. Samples-selling is one approach to it. Giving away a great diagnostic tool is another, the approach HubSpot takes. Complimenting and publicizing others has done wonders for Chris Brogan.

Reciprocity in inbound marketing is old wine in new bottles. That’s not a knock; good wine gets better with age. And reciprocity has a great lineage.

Dale Carnegie [preached it](#); his number one to-do on the list of making people like you is—“become genuinely interested in them.” And the rest of the book is more of the same.

[Zig Ziglar](#), the King of Cornpone and a great philosopher of success (and the best speaker I ever saw), puts it this way:

If you go looking for a friend, you’re going to find they’re very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you’ll find them everywhere.

What Ziglar says precisely illustrates the paradoxical quality of trust: the best way to sell is to stop trying to sell; the best way to convince someone is to stop trying to convince them; the best way to make a profit is to let it be the byproduct of customer focus, rather than the ultimate objective.

These seeming paradoxes make perfect linear sense, if we think of them in terms of reciprocity. Do for others, and they’ll do for you. It won’t work every time; it shouldn’t—otherwise it’d just be a tool for manipulation and self-aggrandizement. What is given must be freely given. But it works on the whole, in the long run, in large part, for both parties.

Reciprocity is a major key to successful inbound marketing.

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*“Offer to do occasional free talks or speeches to industry or customer groups interested in what you do.”*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

How can you use reciprocity to implement inbound marketing? Here’s a baker’s dozen of things you can do:

1. Go comment on other people’s blog postings—without using them to advertise your own material;
2. Give away free sample analyses or diagnostics, based on whatever it is that you do;
3. Give away free samples of what you actually do or sell;
4. Write a blog about the subject matter of your business—share your best thinking;
5. Invite other writers in your subject area (sometimes known as competitors) to guest-post on your blog;
6. Review books or interview authors of interest to your customers;
7. Offer to do occasional free talks or speeches to industry or customer groups interested in what you do;
8. Set up an occasional phone-in for free consultation “office hours” event—give free advice;
9. Tweet about subject-matter and related experts of interest to your customer base—include links to their articles and blogposts in your tweets;
10. Follow the Annual Rule of tweets—12 tweets about other people’s material to one tweet about your own;
11. Recommend people on LinkedIn without being asked;
12. Do all the preceding 11 items with good intentions—to improve the lot of your customers and others, rather than solely to make money for your business;
13. If item 12 is a problem for you, go back and read Dale Carnegie and Zig Ziglar. There’s very little new under the sun.


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#### ABOUT CHARLES H. GREEN

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[Charles H. Green](#) is a speaker and executive educator on trust-based relationships and Trust-based Selling in complex businesses. He is author of [Trust-Based Selling](#) (McGraw-Hill, 2005), and co-author of [The Trusted Advisor](#) (with David Maister and Rob Galford, Free Press, October 2000). Charles has spoken before a variety of industry and functional groups. An engaging and content-rich speaker,

he has taught in executive education programs for the Kellogg Graduate School of Business at Northwestern, and for Columbia University Graduate School of Business, as well as through his own firm, [Trusted Advisor Associates](#). His work centers on improving trust-based relationship and business development skills for businesses with complex service offerings, business development, and on building profitable trust-based relationships.

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