

# Cost-effective marketing for ambitious B2B companies

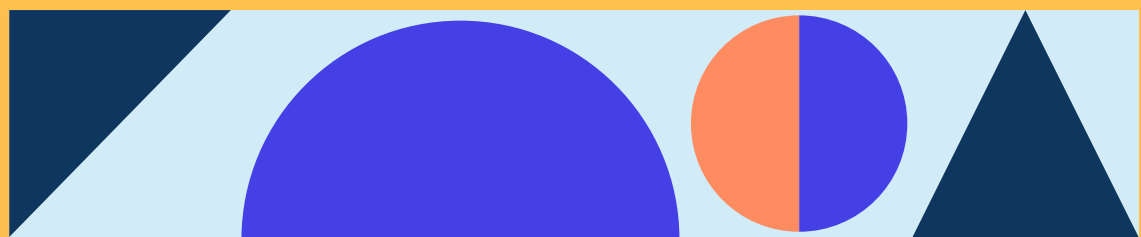
Find out how inbound content marketing can accelerate your sales, even on a lean budget.





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# There's light at the end of the funnel

*'You can't sell anything if you can't tell anything.'*

- Beth Comstock

What is true of the company as a whole is also true of marketing. Next to product development, marketing is likely to be the biggest cost, the biggest risk and the biggest opportunity for B2B businesses. It pays to learn fast.

Most B2B businesses are experts in their chosen market or product sector. Fewer have expertise in marketing specifically. This increases the risks they face in this area when going it alone. It help to have some insider knowledge, and we've got that by the bucket-load at Articulate Marketing.

This guide is intended as a roadmap for cost-effective content marketing. It outlines techniques that map onto the 'lean' methodology and provides a checklist of the resources, tools and tactics you need.

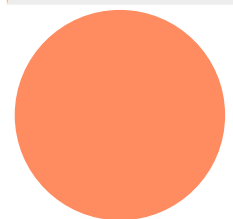
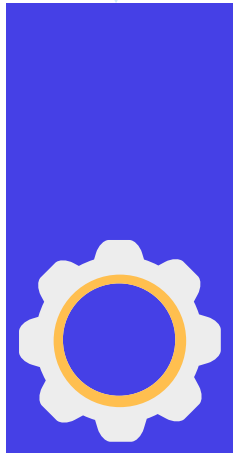
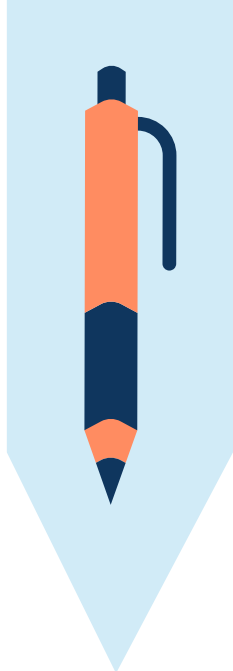


# Know your customers

## Your ideal customers seem like the hardest to reach.

They may not have heard of your business yet, and they are blind to conventional advertising. But, great content marketing cuts through the noise.

- Fundamentally, content marketing means that you:
- Go to where people are – social media, search engines etc.
- Talk about things that matter to them.
- Use their language, not yours.
- Become a trusted advisor.
- Introduce your products and services in this favourable context.



# Engagement not intrusion

'Lean thinking defines value as providing benefit to the customer; anything else is waste,' says Eric Ries. This is especially true of marketing.

Conventional approaches, such as advertising or outbound marketing, provide no benefit to the customer. It's like a conversation where the other person constantly interrupts you to talk loudly about how great they are. You're spending a lot of money just to annoy potential leads.



As an approach to marketing, this type of intrusion fails spectacularly. For example, the majority of TV viewers ([86 percent](#)) skip adverts if they can, and nearly half of all direct mail marketing material goes straight in the bin, though [recent innovations](#) have seen this slowly change.

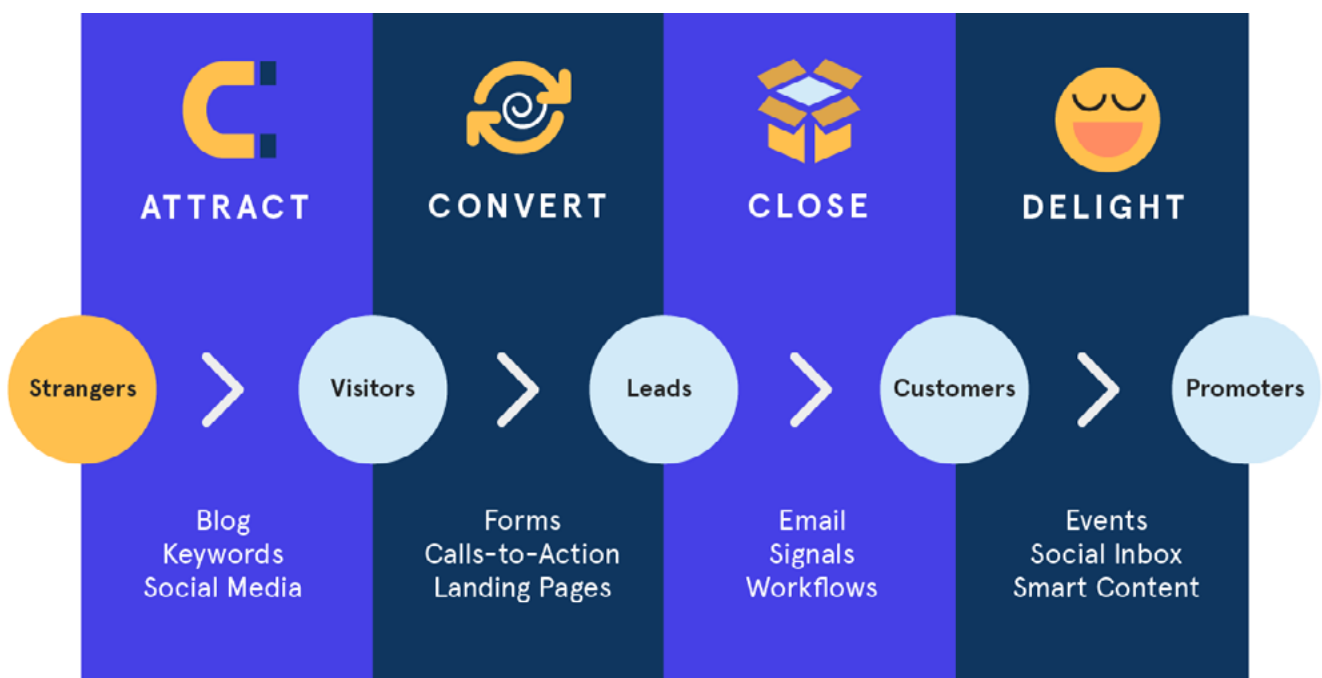
Social media is on the up, but it's a fast-moving, crowded field. If you don't have something to contribute to the conversation, you're just breaking eggs without making an omelette.

If you use online advertising, you already know the pain of keyword competition, rising costs and falling conversion rates. Worse, you need a PhD in Google AdWords to run a campaign. And you pay per click, not per advert. It's the gift that doesn't keep giving and isn't great value for money IF you don't know what you're doing. If you do, or [hire someone that does](#), however, it can make a positive impact.



# Introduction to inbound content marketing

With content marketing, the traditional [AIDA model](#) of the sales funnel gives way to the Attract-Convert-Close-Delight model. Critically for small businesses, this approach lends itself to data-driven decision-making and A/B testing at every stage. This will ensure strategies are working and puts a stopper in any tactics that aren't getting the ROI you need.





<b>ATTRACT</b>	<p>At this stage you use customer-focused content such as white papers, ebooks and blog posts to attract visitors to your website. You promote the content on social media, on your blog and through keyword search engine optimisation. Even in the early stages, this process gives you insight into customer pain-points and buying signals.</p>
<b>CONVERT</b>	<p>During the convert stage, you're looking to capture a visitor's details, such as name and email address, as a lead. Calls-to-action on your emails, blog and website bring people to your landing pages, where a visitor must register their details on a form to get access to your most attractive, relevant content.</p>
<b>CLOSE</b>	<p>Using targeted, personalised emails you provide a stream of interesting content that keeps a customer coming back. As they provide more information each time, you can create workflows to score and qualify leads and to send them increasingly relevant material. Eventually, qualified leads move to your CRM system or sign up for your service.</p>
<b>DELIGHT</b>	<p>Once a customer has signed up, content marketing can turn them into advocates. Material that turns a beginner into a power user or events that bring your most enthusiastic customers together can build advocacy. Case studies and social media engagement turn customer success into a marketing asset.</p>



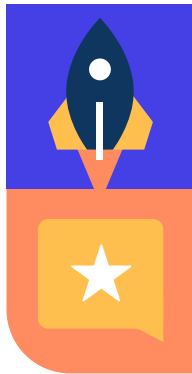
# Content-driven inbound marketing is more effective

Research shows that inbound content marketing helps at every stage of the sales cycle.



**Attract.** 75 percent of inbound marketers would describe their marketing strategy as effective for attracting visitors and converting them into leads. Calls-to-action promoting ebooks get almost twice the click-through rate as emails promoting webinars. Blogs are also an essential element. **B2B companies that blog generate 67 percent more leads** and B2C companies generate 88 percent more leads.





**Convert.** Landing pages with persona-targeted copy are a smart way to convert leads into customers. The more, the better. Businesses with 31 to 40 landing pages got seven times more leads than those with only one to five landing pages. Pay to set them up once, and they'll keep delivering without incurring further costs.



**Close.** Lead-nurturing emails and a drip feed of relevant content helps to convince leads to buy. In fact, nurtured leads make 47 percent larger purchases than non-nurtured leads. Relevant, personalised emails drive 18 times more revenue than broadcast emails.



# Requirements analysis

## Your marketing should be as agile as your development

Like content-driven inbound marketing, any strategy used in a B2B business needs to meet these six essential requirements.



### **Time-efficient**

Time is in short supply for any business, as you race to add customers and turn a profit.

**Marketing strategies need to show a return on the time invested in them** as well as the money.

In addition, it needs to be easily outsourced so that businesses can do more marketing without spending more time on it. Measure the time you spend on marketing as well as direct costs.





## Cost-effective

**No business can afford to waste money.**

Any marketing activity needs to be cost effective. [HubSpot](#) reckons that inbound marketing costs 61 percent less per lead than traditional techniques. But unlike advertising or PR, it leaves you with marketing assets, such as collateral and customer contact details, even once a specific campaign is complete.



## Measurable

**You need to be able to measure the cost per lead and the cost per customer** from any marketing activity so you can compare tactics and optimise your approach. This means that you need to be able to track leads from their first visit through a lead nurturing process into your CRM system or sign-up process. Use the lifetime value of the customer and the total cost of marketing to calculate an ROI for campaigns.





## Integrated

You should be able to see a visitor become a lead and then drop into your CRM software or an app trial program before becoming a customer – **the whole process should be joined-up** so that you get a single view of each customer’s entire journey. Similarly, you should get automated reports about the effectiveness of campaigns and marketing activity.



## Testable

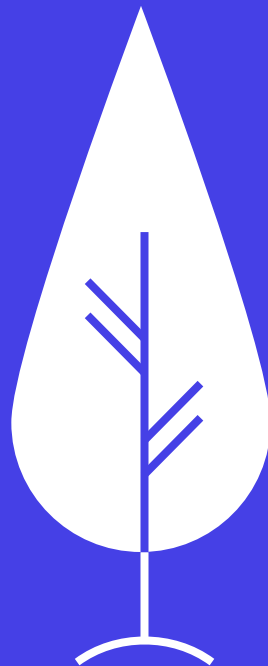
You need to be able to break out different activities into campaigns and track costs and results on a campaign-by-campaign basis so you can see which ones work. On a more tactical level, you should be **testing different** types of content, advertising approaches, calls-to-action and landing pages on a constant basis.





## Responsive

**Any marketing activity needs to respond to changes in the business:** strategic pivots, changes in emphasis between traffic generation, lead nurturing or conversion, new markets or potential customers. A responsive marketing strategy means more than the ability to choose different keywords for Google AdWords. You need an approach that you can fine-tune to meet the needs of the business. It must also be repeatable and scalable.



# Marketing checklist

‘Plans are irrelevant,’ said General Eisenhower, ‘but planning is essential.’

We use [checklists](#) extensively at Articulate, and this checklist breaks down the various stages of a content marketing plan. It itemises the actions required for each stage, detailing the technology we use to support them.

It’s not necessary to do everything before you start – don’t let perfect be the enemy of good enough – but you can iterate through this checklist repeatedly, expanding and deepening your marketing strategy in the light of results and your overall business strategy.





STAGE	ACTIONS	MEASURABLE
<b>PLAN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align content strategy with business strategy</li> <li>Set SMART goals – specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused and time-bound</li> <li>Create buyer personas, tone of voice and style guidelines, and document templates</li> <li>Do a market review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management and collaboration</li> <li>Reporting dashboard</li> </ul>
<b>ATTRACT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create editorial calendar</li> <li>Create regular blog posts</li> <li>Create engaging content, such as ebooks and white papers</li> <li>Share and engage on social media platforms</li> <li>Conduct keyword analysis</li> <li>Use keywords to improve SEO on web pages and blog</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blog</li> <li>Social media monitoring</li> <li>Social media publishing</li> </ul>
<b>ENGAGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create calls-to-action</li> <li>Create landing pages, thank you pages and follow-up emails</li> <li>Create resource pages for top content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A/B testing</li> <li>Site metrics</li> <li>Landing page</li> </ul>
<b>CONVERT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create workflows for different personas</li> <li>Create multi-stage email campaigns</li> <li>Link lead nurturing to CRM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emailer</li> <li>CRM software</li> </ul>
<b>DELIGHT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create content that empowers customers</li> <li>Create FAQ and support desk content</li> <li>Create newsletters</li> <li>Engage users on social media</li> <li>Create customer case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blog</li> <li>Social media monitoring</li> <li>Social media publishing</li> <li>Support desk tools</li> </ul>



# Managing marketing for the ambitious B2B company

It's a lot of work to maintain a successful content marketing strategy, but if it's done right, the returns are well worth the effort – HubSpot has found that [96 percent of B2B buyers](#) are looking for content from industry thought leaders. Dedicate yourself to a thought-through marketing strategy with genuinely valuable content, and you'll become one of those thought leaders, attracting the B2B buyers looking for input from experts.



It's crucial to know when your in-house marketing team – if you have one – [needs help](#). The financial outlay may seem unattractive at first, but drafting in the experts at a marketing agency can be a boon for your web traffic and lead generation. It will help you maintain a quality content marketing strategy. If your team is overwhelmed, you run the risk of sending bad writing out in to the world, as well. This could end up [costing you more than it earns](#).

If you don't already have a marketing team, consider the fact that **hiring an agency is also likely to be [cheaper](#) than hiring in-house marketers**. Reaching out to an agency with a team of experts in SEO, content, web development, design and social media means that you have an entire group of professionals for the price of a retainer, without having to hire and manage each individual yourself. Hiring is an [expensive process](#), often running into thousands of pounds per new employee on top of salaries, pensions, training et al.



# How HubSpot helps more than 60,000 companies use HubSpot software to grow.

[HubSpot](#) is an integrated marketing automation tool that takes care of almost all the technology elements required to implement content-driven inbound marketing.

It frees up your time to focus on creating great content and building a great business. It is a cloud-based SaaS platform that includes:

- [Blogging](#)
- [SEO](#)
- [Social media](#)
- [Site builder](#) (it also works well with WordPress websites)
- [Lead management](#)
- [Landing pages](#)
- [Calls-to-action](#)
- [Lead nurturing and marketing automation](#)
- [Email](#)
- [Analytics](#)
- [Integration with Salesforce](#) and other CRM tools





# Agile marketing processes for techy people

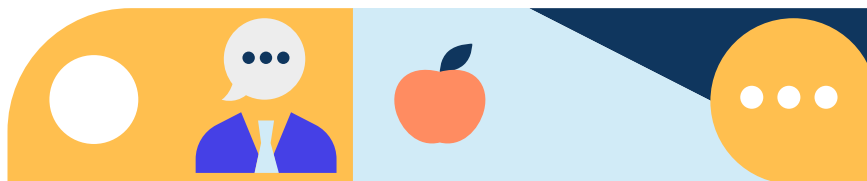
## Articulate is a cost-efficient B2B business, too.

We are enthusiastic technophiles, we work remotely and we build our own apps (including [Turbine](#), an HR app and [HubToolkit](#), a technical SEO app). We work for technology companies including Microsoft, Symantec, LinkedIn and HP and we come from a software development background (our [CEO](#) ran a [computer games company](#) for ten years).



So you'd expect us to have more of an engineering approach to marketing, even if most of us are 'creatives'. And, in fact, the agile methodology inspires many of our working practices.

We're sharing them here to show that marketing and tech innovators can speak the same language. We believe that you can run marketing as a lean, cost-effective activity AND borrow agile best practices from software engineering to make it work efficiently. Here's how we see it.



## 1. Peer editing

Programmers using the agile method often work in pairs, either coding together or flipping code back and forth between the two of them for peer review. It's the opposite of the usual image of the heroic programmer burning the midnight oil, but it works. It improves code quality and productivity.



At Articulate, we assign a team to each writing task. Usually, one person will write and a second person will edit. They may go back and forth a few times. Often, we rotate roles on the same campaign for different pieces of copy.



## 2. Test-driven marketing

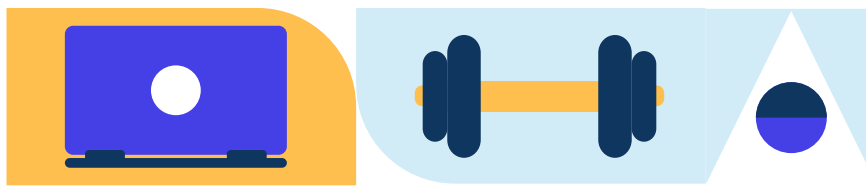
With agile development, every change you make to the code is matched by an update to the automated testing software to make sure that changes don't break what already works.

In marketing, especially online marketing, almost everything is (and should be) testable. Does this page get more conversions than that one? Is this CTA better? And so on. It gives us a clear picture of what's best for maximising ROI.

But the idea of regression testing also means that what works today needs to be continuously tested to make sure it still works tomorrow.



For example, we've updated this white paper several times over the years, ensuring it is completely up-to-date, because we've noticed as its relevancy goes down over time, so to do all our precious clicks!



### 3. No crunches, no burnout

Agile-minded developers don't do crunches. There are no caffeine and pizza-fuelled all-nighters. Instead, they plan their work around a manageable but focused 40-hour working week.

Marketers should do the same, even if that means saying 'no' to client rush jobs. As they say in Texas, 'lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.' After all, rushed work is often sloppy work.

Better to gather data and iteratively revise your plans in the light of what you learn. (See Bernino Lind's presentation on [Anti-delusional product management](#) for more on this approach.)







## 4. User stories, not specifications

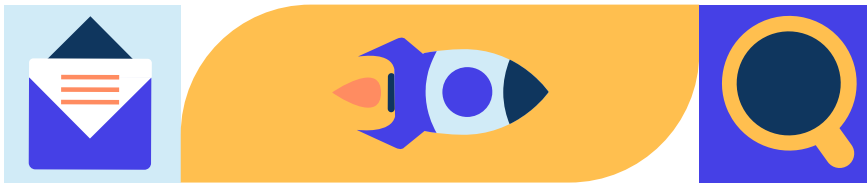
Agile development doesn't deal in formal methods, detailed specifications, or any of the other ways project managers try to insulate themselves from client caprice. (See [The Devil's Marketing Dictionary](#) for more.)

Instead, it asks the customer and the developer to collaborate in describing the desired outcome. The format is simple, short user stories – for example: 'users can create a new account' or 'As an X, I want Y because of benefit Z'. The more specific these stories are, the better.

Marketers can take a similar approach, specifying outputs, such as the style or topic of an article, rather than inputs such as number of hours it will take to write it. (This is what we do. No [time sheets](#) here at Articulate!) Collaboration with our clients is something we [really value](#) – it results in better, more valuable output.



Also, our [project briefing checklist](#) focuses on business goals and audiences (our word for ‘users’) rather than detailed specifications.



## 5. Quantify the difficulty, don't estimate the duration

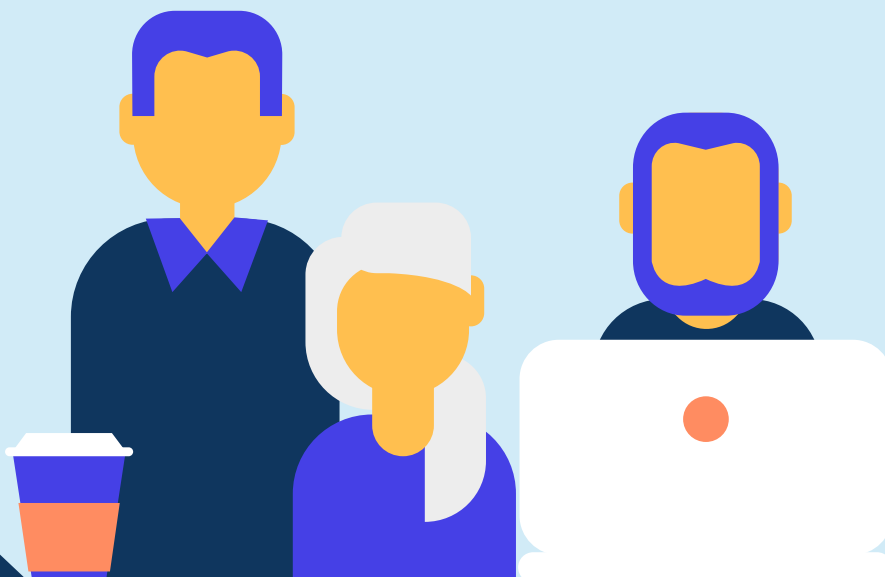
You probably use Jira or Pivotal Tracker for project management. These project management tools eschew the usual Gantt charts and time sheets.

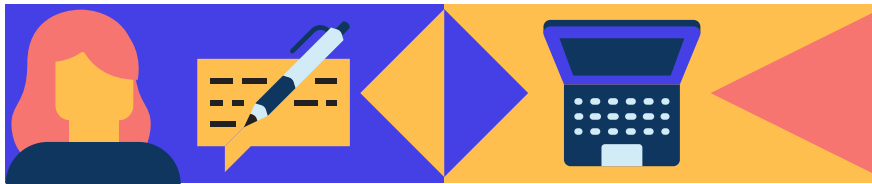
Instead of asking developers to specify how long a story will take, agile project management tools ask how complex it is and how important it is relative to other tasks. Over time, they track how long you take to complete different types of tasks, and after a short while they can predict when you will finish different upcoming tasks.



At Articulate, we tend to use word length as a proxy for complexity, but we work on a similar principle to do our traffic management. We use [Basecamp](#) for project management but we use it a lot like the story-based project management tools.

Our [points pricing system](#) reflects this approach, feeding into agile project management in its simplicity and flexibility. We don't use timesheets, we charge based on actual, delivered work. Points pricing makes it easy for us to shift tasks around depending on what's needed at the time, and gives us and our clients a set of units to allocate appropriately. It's far less fiddly and confusing than timesheets, and allows for easily-managed, predictable budgeting.





## 6. 'Stand up' meetings

Instead of interminable status meetings and conference calls, agile developers have 'stand up' meetings at the beginning of the week to share information. We do the same (virtually, we [work remotely](#)). And, as the name suggests, if people stand up, they tend not to talk so much!



## 7. Expect change, don't fight or manage it

Most software projects involve detailed specifications that are set in stone once the development begins. The problem with such an approach is that circumstances change, and, often, the customer doesn't know what works for them until they see it in code.



Agile development encourages client involvement and assumes that the project will change over time. By breaking it down into short sprints (see next point) and small, well-defined bullets, an agile project is more flexible.

Generally, we take this approach at Articulate, allowing and **expecting clients to give feedback** even through multiple revisions. Feedback and rewriting can be frustrating for writers. But expecting them, even embracing them, helps us to do a better job for our clients. Within reason.





## 8. Sprints, not marathons

Agile development aims for a ‘minimum viable product’ early on, and small incremental improvements over time. It avoids the epic projects and death marches that plagued previous generations of software development.

Marketing projects should be the same: [your website](#) is never really finished but it shouldn’t take months to build. Similarly, your [social media](#) outreach is an ongoing project – not a one-off task for an intern.

Content marketing companies, like every other business, can’t afford to be complacent, but innovation is hard.

Learning from other fields and translating those lessons to your own business is a **smart and cost-effective strategy**.



# Introducing Articulate

## Not the usual yada yada

Articulate helps our customers grow by attracting and converting more customers online. We specialise in the technology sector.

We write persuasive copy and create remarkable content for some of the world's best-known companies, including:



We can help you implement inbound marketing and integrate it with your existing website and CRM systems. We also accelerate the sales cycle by helping you attract, convert, close and delight your customers at every stage of the process.

[Visit our website](#) to find out more about how we can help you do the best work, for the [best price](#), and accelerate your marketing.

Or follow us:    

