



DAHLSTROM

DAHLSTROM ROLL FORM

CASE STUDY

Who?

A 116-year-old metal manufacturer in the Rust Belt.

Why?

Dissatisfied with relying solely on outbound and cold-calling tactics, the manufacturer needed a proven way to turn website visitors into leads and customers. The manufacturer specifically wanted to develop the architectural half of its business, which was just starting to re-emerge. The leadership and sales team had the desire, but lacked the time to take on these responsibilities alone.

How?

protocol 80, Inc. developed an agile strategy of inbound marketing that focused on turning the website into a lead magnet. Upon request, we've consistently added sales support, trade show, and other services as needed.

What Happened?

The manufacturer's brand and content are now some of the most visible in its entire industry.

- *326% increase in the number of people who visited its website via a search engine (24-month period)*
- *111,000+ views for a single blog post*
- *91% increase in the number of visitors who became leads (24-month period)*
- *10x growth to the architectural side of its product line*

Modern Digital Marketing vs. Outdated Outbound

Sometimes it takes a few failed experiments before you find the winning formula for reaching the modern customer.

Dahlstrom Roll Form can relate. This little manufacturer in Jamestown, N.Y., was once famous in the early 1900s for inventing the fire-rated steel door. A century later, it **wanted its name to be known among designers and engineers worldwide once again.**

The following is a story of how protocol 80, Inc.'s inbound marketing tactics helped reinforce Dahlstrom's name for the modern, digital buying landscape.

"The entire team at protocol 80 has been a tremendous addition to the marketing efforts of our company," says Dahlstrom owner and President Robert White. "The p80 folks are an energetic group of independent, creative thinkers who've been instrumental in leading to substantial increases in our prospect activity."

Those successes didn't happen on the first try. Dahlstrom first had to learn an all-too-familiar lesson that many B2Bs and manufacturers face -- that simply relying on outbound and cold-calling strategies **wasn't cutting it.**

The Problem

Since 1904, Dahlstrom Roll Form has manufactured metal -- not only components for OEMs, but also moldings for architects and designers. Like many B2B and manufacturing companies in the early 2010s -- and today, for that matter -- Dahlstrom was not all-in on its digital marketing efforts, seeing **limited success in visibility and sales.** Unlike many B2Bs and manufacturers, though, Dahlstrom's leaders were forward-thinking and open-minded enough to make a change.

An overhaul was sorely needed. From the time White first took over the company in 2007 until p80 came aboard, Dahlstrom did more than its fair share of cold calling, and little of anything else. White would occasionally supplement that by mapping out a path, jumping in his car, and making a circuit of several manufacturers. The only tangible marketing tool he had were flyers created by Dahlstrom's previous owner.

When Dahlstrom first decided to prioritize digital marketing in the 2010s, its solution still didn't meet [the true definition of "inbound."](#)

The Cold-Calling Agency

White's team spent 3 years outsourcing marketing work to a more narrowly focused, outbound lead-generation service. Like Dahlstrom, the service used cold calling to make first contact with prospects. The external agency had moderate success with a contact list Dahlstrom created, but there was **no avenue for collecting new contacts**.

"It didn't produce anything (new). There was no creativity in it," White explains. "It was just calling a bunch of people to say, 'Hey, we sell roll forms. Do you want to buy roll forms from us?' It just didn't work."

Internally, the outsourcing agency measured success by how many calls it made and how many flyers it mailed, according to White, favoring **quantity over quality**.

"They had a ton of metrics, but not strategy," explains Rob Loll, Inside Sales Marketing Manager at Dahlstrom. "It was a ton of work for them, and it was just no strategy from a roll forming (specific) perspective."

Around the same time, Dahlstrom had its website professionally redesigned and started using AdWords (now Google Ads), an online pay-to-display advertising platform. The website was gathering a few thousand visits per month -- impressive, but to what end?

"The website was doing well back then too, but there was no structure to who was coming in or why, or tracking any of those, or getting them to convert (to leads and customers)," Loll says.

White started to look for a more all-encompassing solution.

Switching Gears

Like many other B2B leaders, White got into inbound marketing because he saw a peer succeed with it.

White meets monthly with an association of fellow CEOs, and it was the head of a pool maintenance company that inspired him to build his brand with the elements of inbound. The pool company owner shared his experiences in building a content base of 300+ pages on his website.

"He ended up being one of the biggest pool maintenance firms in the Northeast, even though he was a mom-and-pop shop," White says. "He was able to expand into manufacturing pools also after that."

"Once I heard that presentation, I was like, *'Man, we are missing the boat. We've got to find someone to start an inbound content campaign.'*"

In 2013, a fellow protocol 80 customer, Curt Anderson, introduced Dahlstrom to p80 through the Small Business Development Center in Jamestown. As is usually the case with those new to [the inbound methodology](#), Dahlstrom's leadership had **reservations before signing on the dotted line.**

"Originally, we understood the strategy ... it was more, how much time does anyone in our building have to spend creating the content?" Loll explains. "Who was going to write it and distribute it?"

"That was a concern then, because we were even smaller back then. I think a lot of people, when they start learning about inbound as a small business, [think], "How do I set aside the time? And am I doing it enough? Am I writing it the way it needs to be written?"

Fortunately, Anderson had recommended a solution that addressed not just producing the content, but also:

- *Turning leads into customers*
- *Managing, organizing, and streamlining customer relationships*
- *Search engine optimization*
- *Trade show marketing*
- *Modern Outbound Marketing Strategies*
- *Other promotional efforts*

The Solution

That year, protocol 80 and Dahlstrom began building the "content house" that's foundational to all successful inbound marketing. As Dahlstrom's needs evolved and p80 learned more about the business, we customized the formula from quarter to quarter -- sometimes even adding services that fell outside of traditional inbound services.

Here's what Dahlstrom's solution entailed, inbound and out-of-bounds:



READ ON

Strategy

One of the biggest pain points of Dahlstrom's previous efforts was a lack of cohesive strategy. Through inbound marketing, you can construct that the right way -- by documenting [buyer personas](#) and the [buyers' journey](#).

We interviewed Dahlstrom sales and executive employees to understand their own challenges and their buyers' challenges. Questions included, but were not limited to:

- *What industries would you like to target?*
- *What services/products do you provide that your competitors don't?*
- *What are buyers' biggest concerns about potentially working with you?*

Then we turned around and did the same with 5-10 of Dahlstrom's "ideal" current customers -- the ones they'd love to build 1,000 of in a lab. Questions included:

- *Including specific search queries, how did you research your needs online?*
- *What information would have been helpful for you to have known during the buying process?*
- *Is there anything Dahlstrom's website doesn't offer that you wish it did?*

These workshops influenced Dahlstrom's website development but were **especially crucial to mapping its content strategy**. With the company's and customers' responses in mind, p80 crafted a quarterly content strategy and got down to the real work.

Blogging

While this wasn't the first order of business when actual content production began -- p80 didn't start blogging for Dahlstrom until 2015 -- it was the most important.

Consistent, optimized content production always starts with blogging. The protocol 80 team started blogging for Dahlstrom once per week, no exceptions.

To ease Dahlstrom's concerns about each side having the time and expertise necessary to write good, consistent content, we made a trade. Dahlstrom's sales reps and engineers provided the insider info we needed, and we devoted the time to taking that information and creating educational blog posts.

Unlike the cold-calling method, these posts revolved around an understanding that **B2B and manufacturing sales cycles are very long**. Instead of going straight for the marriage proposal, Dahlstrom began a more natural courtship -- by creating articles that were genuinely helpful while also boosting the company's visibility online.

To keep the courtship going, Dahlstrom started adding [calls-to-action](#) within these posts...

Conversion Rate Optimization

Providing next steps on a page was where Dahlstrom was most lacking -- customers were reaching dead ends. The p80 team immediately began to add calls-to-action to blog posts and webpages, such as the opportunity to:

- *Download an educational e-book*
- *Contact the company*
- *Sign up for a monthly newsletter*

Of course, that meant p80 had to create those e-books, newsletters, and the like. Production of a new “premium offer” took place on a quarterly basis. The e-books became the primary lead generation opportunity on Dahlstrom’s site -- not the RFQ button, or “Contact Us,” or anything else overtly “me”-focused.

Website

The more pages your website has, the more keywords it can rank for. As long as the pages are helpful and relevant, the sky’s the limit.

The p80 team has added several new pages to Dahlstrom’s website, rewritten existing ones, and improved layout and user experience to all of them.

Rather than simply bragging about the company, these improvements -- from information-collecting forms, to call-to-action buttons, and everything in between -- have a sole purpose. That purpose is to **drive conversions by “nurturing” the lead by providing the right information at the right time.**

This is why the p80 team continually refurbishes old pages:

- *Improving aesthetics*
- *Updating calls-to-action*
- *Adding video*
- *Improving user experience of RFQ forms*

We will continue to revamp website copy for SEO-friendliness, add new graphics, and make other quality-of-life improvements based on new things we learn about the client. Website work never ends -- but that’s a good thing!

SEO

Dahlstrom's SEO efforts are an ongoing project, as with any SEO. As we update the site, we make sure all pages are optimized, including page titles, meta descriptions, and general keyword use. We exhaustively research new keyword opportunities to ensure each blog post and website page **attracts the exact type of person with whom Dahlstrom wants to do business.**

We also dedicate time quarterly to revisiting the technical SEO of the website and resolving issues relating to linking, redirects, code, and assets.

PPC

Over the course of 2019, p80 implemented a new strategy for pay-per click (PPC) advertising with a greater focus on OEM services, rather than trying to catch both OEM and architectural customers with one net.

Additionally, we incorporated Google's "Dynamic"-type ads. This form of search ad is based on an algorithm developed from consumer search queries. Doing this provides insight into **exactly what users are searching for on Google.** We can take data we gather from these ads and apply it to other, non-dynamic ads.

To keep Dahlstrom informed of its progress, we send month-over-month reports to track and measure progress and obtain feedback on the quality of leads that come in. Dahlstrom and p80 can then collaborate on our recommended next steps for the following quarter.

Email & Social Media

The addition of a newsletter subscription CTA on various website pages and blog posts allowed Dahlstrom to grow its contact base and start offering a monthly newsletter for each side of the business. The p80 folks also sent one-off emails to promote trade shows and other events.

Most months, Dahlstrom only sends one email to its contact list. One! While that may result in fewer total opened emails, it makes that monthly email **much more impactful.** Best of all, the newsletter is mutually beneficial. Readers get entertaining and helpful content; Dahlstrom shows off its authority while gaining valuable data on what topics and issues their readers care about most.

To supplement the monthly blast, the p80 team created automated follow-up emails for those who download e-books and other "premium" offers. These series of three or so emails take on a slightly more direct, personal tone and provide additional resources and support to the prospect, keeping Dahlstrom's name in their minds.

Like the other strategies we've discussed above, email marketing can target all stages of the [buyer's journey](#). There are even opportunities to **engage current customers** with email. Your monthly email blast may spark an idea or renew a dormant relationship. Loyal customers on average are worth 10x their initial purchase, [according to one marketing blog](#) (and a million other places we've heard this awesome stat).

The p80 team also shared Dahlstrom's educational blog content and informative third-party articles on multiple social platforms, including LinkedIn.

Video

Dahlstrom's website and email marketing were largely functional, but lacked some of the modern features today's buyers expect. Dahlstrom and p80 fixed that by **producing fun and informative videos that filled a variety of gaps:**

- *Comparison of the strength of certain materials -- beating, scraping, and even setting them on fire!*
- *A look back at the company's history for its 115th anniversary*
- *A how-to for installing the company's metal mouldings*

Trade Show Marketing

In 2018, Dahlstrom decided to return to the annual AIA Conference on Architecture as a vendor. Displaying at the world's biggest architectural expo meant Dahlstrom needed a long-term plan as soon as possible.

Despite not officially offering trade show marketing services at the time, protocol 80 jumped in head-first by creating a variety of materials. We created pre- and post-show emails, wrote a blog post previewing the event, **and even helped design the booth!**

The campaign was a significant shift from Dahlstrom's old trade show tactics. [You can learn more about modern trade show ideas for B2Bs here.](#)

CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) became exponentially easier with a more formal system in place. The Dahlstrom team was successfully transitioned from WordPress to HubSpot to help better track and organize leads and customers.

Since p80 also offers inbound sales and sales enablement services (basically the twin sister of inbound marketing), Dahlstrom was able to smoothly transition to more modern marketing and sales pipeline strategies

Account-Based Marketing

As part of that push to streamline the sales process, Dahlstrom added yet another p80 service.

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a strategy of creating personalized buying experiences for high-value accounts identified collaboratively by the sales and marketing departments. It was another slight deviation from the classic inbound marketing strategy, but one that p80 felt would meet Dahlstrom's needs. Dahlstrom's website and email marketing were largely functional, but lacked some of the modern features today's buyers expect. Dahlstrom and p80 fixed that by **producing fun and informative videos that filled a variety of gaps:**

Other Services

Agility is key to inbound marketing -- marketing in general, really. On multiple occasions, Dahlstrom tapped p80 to take on a one-off project. These included:

- *Promoting the company's 115th anniversary with media coverage*
- *Announcing the purchase of a fellow roll forming company in 2020*

The Result

Dahlstrom's leadership possessed the patience and foresight to understand that inbound marketing isn't a magic potion. It's actually a marathon measured in months and years. And inbound marketing rewarded them -- after the 1-year mark, Dahlstrom started seeing spikes in website traffic and RFQs for both the architectural and OEM sides of its business.

The business now attributes 15% of its sales to architectural products, an ever-increasing number that was once minuscule. Dahlstrom attributes this explosion to the spotlight that inbound marketing has placed on Dahlstrom mouldings.

"The architectural activity is 5-10x what it was 7 years ago," Loll says. "Back then, we didn't have the tracking that we do now (with Hubspot). Every quarterly report (shows business has) been on an incline ever since we started."

Growing the OEM branch was a little more of a grind for Dahlstrom in the early going because the subject matter for content was dense and highly technical.

"When you bring someone on ... you have to infuse a bunch of early information on," White says. "It takes (a while) before the team really starts to get traction, where you don't have to watch over every word because you have to make sure it's correct. Anyone that starts from scratch has to know you have to put some time in."

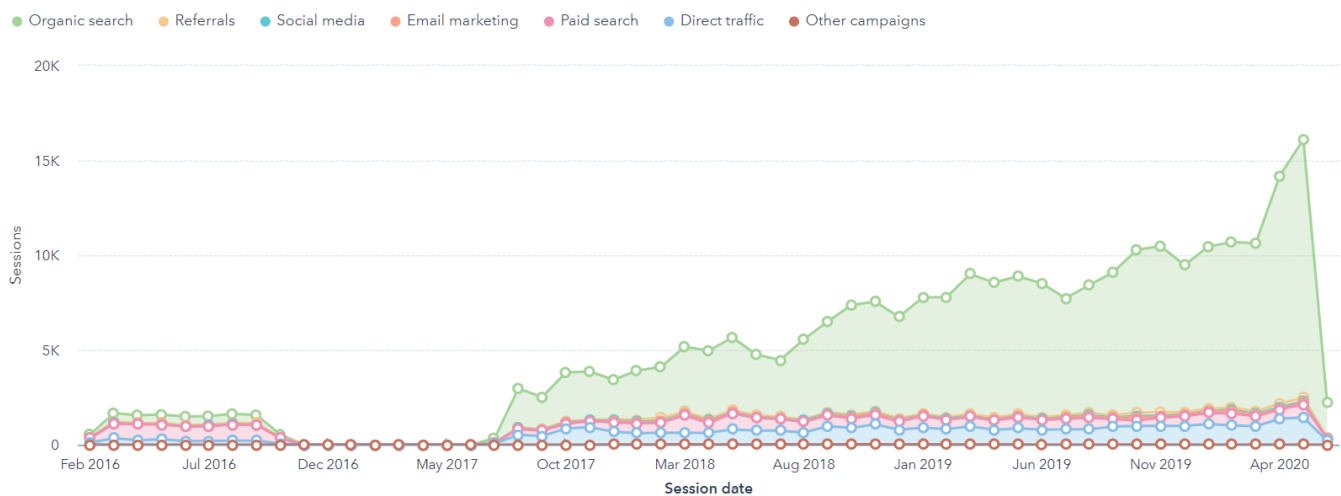
Because p80 and Dahlstrom put the time in -- and let time do its thing -- virtually every element of their long-term strategy brewed success

Website/Conversion Rate Optimization

The evidence became even clearer 24 months into the inbound partnership:

- Website visitor to lead conversion growth rate: **91%**
- Total website visitor growth rate: **92%**
- Website visitors from organic (Google, etc.) search growth rate: **326%**

Inbound marketing tends to snowball (in a good way) by this point in the effort. Check out traffic numbers for the 3 most recent years:



The “next steps” that p80 created in the form of calls-to-action also kept Dahlstrom’s name top of mind and kept visitors on the site for longer.

Simply put, Dahlstrom’s website improved in every way imaginable, but especially in traffic and new leads. But, like with most inbound campaigns, **the majority of the traffic and conversions came from blogging.**

Blogging

Remember when we said that when Dahlstrom started with a few thousand visits per month to its entire website?



In 2020, one of its blog posts consistently got 5,000 views per month on its own. In total, that post has over 111,000 views as of June 2020!

BLOG POST	VIEWS	TIME PER PAGEVIEW	BOUNCE RATE	PUBLISH DATE	VIEW TO SUBMISSION RATE	TOTAL SUBMISSIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Best Metals for Exterior Architecture Corrosion-Resistant...	111,405	6 minutes	92.9%	4/15/2019	0.28%	313
<input type="checkbox"/> Does Copper Rust?	14,723	5 minutes	94.22%	7/17/2018	0.07%	11
<input type="checkbox"/> Does Brass Rust?	11,136	5 minutes	95.4%	6/25/2018	0.02%	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Is Steel Sustainable? Eco-Friendly Interior Design Mater...	7,310	6 minutes	90.92%	6/19/2019	0.16%	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Salty About Coastal Construction? Use the Right Archite...	6,718	6 minutes	88.99%	12/21/2018	0.8%	54
<input type="checkbox"/> Welding Copper is Possible... & It Makes Great Interior F...	5,476	5 minutes	94.76%	8/8/2018	0.05%	3
<input type="checkbox"/> The Very Most Corrosion-Resistant Metals	5,010	5 minutes	91.93%	11/30/2018	0.34%	17
<input type="checkbox"/> Which Metals Turn Green? Discovering the Patina Effect	4,433	4 minutes	94.6%	11/13/2019	0%	0
<input type="checkbox"/> Galvannealed vs Galvanized Steel for Architectural Design	3,760	5 minutes	94.33%	3/22/2017	0.11%	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Door Frame Casing: Avoiding Ugliness & 3 Other ...	2,391	3 minutes	87.68%	2/25/2019	0.13%	3
Total	218,727	4 minutes	91.66%		0.29%	633

Email & Social Media

Both the manufacturing (OEM) and architectural recurring newsletters proved to be a popular source of education and entertainment.

Here you can see what typical success rates look like in various industries.

  INDUSTRY AVERAGES					
	OPEN RATE	CLICK-THROUGH RATE	CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE	UNSUB RATE	BOUNCE RATE
Advertising and Marketing Agencies	19.30%	2.60%	13.30%	0.20%	1.10%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	20.50%	3.50%	17.10%	0.20%	0.50%
Automotive and Aerospace	12.60%	1.20%	9.80%	0.20%	0.80%
Construction, Contracting, and Manufacturing	22.40%	3.20%	14.00%	0.30%	2.20%
Consumer Packaged Goods	14.50%	1.60%	10.90%	0.10%	0.40%
Education	23.40%	3.00%	12.70%	0.20%	1.10%
Engineering, Architecture and Design	20.40%	3.00%	14.80%	0.20%	1.10%
Financial Services	20.20%	2.50%	12.40%	0.20%	1.20%
Food and Beverage	13.00%	1.20%	8.90%	0.10%	0.30%
Government	30.50%	4.10%	13.40%	0.20%	1.30%
Healthcare Services	19.70%	2.70%	13.70%	0.20%	1.00%
IT / Tech / Software Services	17.60%	2.50%	14.30%	0.20%	0.90%
Logistics and Wholesale	18.90%	2.20%	11.70%	0.30%	1.20%
Media, Entertainment, and Publishing	18.10%	3.10%	16.90%	0.10%	0.40%
Nonprofit	25.20%	2.60%	10.30%	0.20%	1.00%
Other	19.10%	2.40%	12.40%	0.20%	1.10%
Professional Services	18.00%	1.80%	9.90%	0.20%	0.80%
Real Estate, Design and Construction Activities	19.90%	3.60%	17.70%	0.20%	1.40%
Retail	13.90%	2.10%	15.20%	0.10%	0.40%
Travel, Hospitality, and Leisure	15.70%	1.60%	10.20%	0.10%	0.50%
Unknown	17.50%	2.70%	15.00%	0.20%	1.10%
Average	17.80%	2.60%	14.30%	0.10%	0.70%

2020 Global Email Benchmarks data

Most of Dahlstrom's manufacturing emails over the last 2 years have exceeded a 29% open rate, often with a click rate exceeding 4%. (Click rate is the percentage of people clicking one or more links in the email.)

Newsletters for the architectural side, an industry with lower average open and click rates than manufacturing, have bucked the trends even more:

EMAIL ▾	SENT ▾	OPEN RATE ▾	CLICK RATE ▾
Arch RSS 1-16-20 (Famous Buildings You Didn't Kno...	1,056	36.18%	6.46%
Arch RSS 2-2020 (business acquisition)	1,595	30.04%	4.84%
Arch RSS 3-19-20 (Part II: Famous Buildings)	1,143	36.22%	7.16%
Arch RSS 4-16-20 (Salty about coastal construction? ...	1,152	33.91%	4.01%
Arch RSS 5-28-20 (Surefire Decorative Metal Trim Bu...	1,179	30.68%	5.73%

One-offs such as an email promoting White's participation in a BOND Event (think of it as speed dating for architects and vendors) also resulted in high engagement and informative follow-up conversations with architectural designers.

As a complement to email marketing, Dahlstrom's social media posts and paid advertising continue to draw eyes to its products and services. Feel-good video posts about Dahlstrom's history and amusing-but-educational posts comparing material durability have performed particularly well, raising both community and industry brand awareness.

SEO/PPC

The traffic spikes from Dahlstrom's blogging, as well as its PPC campaigns, caused its SEO authority to skyrocket. **It became far easier for qualified leads to find Dahlstrom through a simple Google search.**

The company attributes several major closed OEM sales to better organic ranking and a more SEO-friendly website design. The new and reoptimized forms, calls-to-action, and keyword strategies also continue to be factors.

"We've had customers that left another roll former to come to us. There must have been something that helped their buying decision," White says.

Splitting up PPC messaging for architectural customers vs. OEM customers helped segment Dahlstrom's ideal audience further and attracted a higher rate of good leads.

Trade Show Marketing

Not only did White meet several great leads at the AIA 2018 show, he also received valuable feedback on what architectural customers wanted to see product-wise in the future. This **informed Dahlstrom's strategic planning for 2020 and beyond** to better meet their prospects in the middle.

CRM

"The Robs" took p80's educational HubSpot workshops to heart. By buying into the value of HubSpot's CRM, they improved sales pipeline management and had more visibility into how marketing efforts were working.

"Hubspot really tied that whole thing together," White says. "(Rob Loll) is getting really getting good at it and figuring out ways to use it. ... Everything is easy to find."

Account-Based Marketing

For a small time, Dahlstrom contracted p80 and an outbound lead-generation service at the same time. Then p80 introduced its account-based marketing services. "After a while, we figured out we didn't need (the outbound agency)," White said.

Dahlstrom dumped the cold-calling agency and started its first ABM campaign with p80, targeting trailers and trucks. The team liked the strategy so much, they quickly moved onto additional sectors Dahlstrom wanted to target:

- *Power Distribution*
- *Shipbuilding*
- *More to come!*

Other Services

The p80 team's work to circulate Dahlstrom press releases and other announcements resulted in them being picked up by industry publications and regional news sources. This gave Dahlstrom higher community and industry visibility. One area newspaper even ran a feature story on Dahlstrom's 115th anniversary!

Dahlstrom counts on protocol 80 to stay agile and think outside the box as new goals and opportunities arise.

"I thoroughly enjoy our engaging discussions about planning and executing a strategy that's both current and innovative in today's marketplace," White says.

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Success That Multiplies

Because Dahlstrom jumped on the trend of inbound marketing relatively early, the company is **watching its metrics increase exponentially** in the 2020s. A successful inbound campaign compounds over time, meaning your strongest blog posts will actually gain *more* traffic as they age. (If only our bodies aged this well!)

HubSpot even notes that [38% of all blog traffic is generated by "compounding" posts.](#)

Maybe most important of all, inbound has made the jobs of the Dahlstrom sales and marketing team that much easier.

"Before, when we made first contact, people didn't really know about us -- you've got to introduce yourself and get them educated," White says. "But with content marketing, normally **they already understand you pretty well.**

"That's a huge advantage for maximizing your time and being productive in the sales process. You eliminate the whole introductory part."

None of this digital success would be possible without a partnership that combines SEO- and conversion-focused web design, a full inbound marketing campaign, and a la carte services when needed.

"I don't know how we'd function without p80," Loll says. "I think everything would just start to deteriorate."

Adds White: "After a successful 5 years; we look forward to an ongoing relationship with p80 that is definitely a win-win."

About p80

protocol 80 is a B2B Inbound Marketing & Sales agency. We'll help you reach today's modern buyer and **generate quality leads that close**. To us, success is catapulting our clients' growth by turning their web presence into their single largest channel of new sales opportunities.

Let's turn your website into a **24/7 funnel-filling machine**, while turning your company into an industry thought leader **atop the Google search results!**



We'd love to chat with you about your growth goals, and how inbound marketing can help you achieve them!

Visit protocol80.com to schedule a **free consultation** today!