



SYG

# What the Data Says: Email, Podcasts, and Lead Conversion



## OVERVIEW:

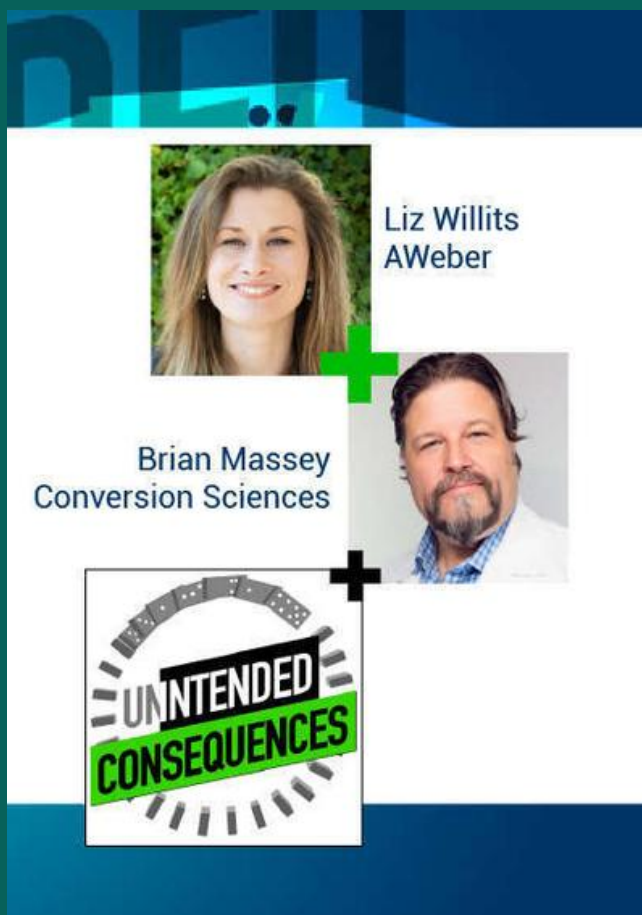
One of the main things that we want to do on the show is to make everyone comfortable with data, experimentation, and a little bit of science. To help you on the quest of blending art with science, we've taken three marketing strategies and distilled them so you can clearly focus efforts. Instead of giving you our opinions, Brian Massey had conversations with three experts sharing their insights supported by data. In this article, you'll uncover what the data says for email, podcasts, and marketing lead conversion.

# WHAT THE DATA SAYS ABOUT EMAIL:



There's nothing better than getting another shot at conversion. Getting someone to your site is an accomplishment in and of itself. The search engines are getting ever pickier at the kind of content they consider authoritative. Social media requires so much time to do right, and most of the activity stays in those channels. Every online advertising source has gotten steadily more expensive.

What do you have to show for all the time and effort you put into driving people to your site? Often a landing page bounce or a full shopping cart left abandoned.



After almost four decades, the best choice for driving the desired outcome is still email. When you're able to secure an email address, you're given an opportunity to start a conversation. While the conversations around the demise of email are prevalent the reality is the medium is still effective. So what's keeping our marketing efforts with an email from being more productive?

The answer may surprise you. We had Liz Willits Senior Content Marketing Specialist at AWeber. Liz doesn't think you're sending too much email, and she's got the data to prove it. If we're not sending too much email, then what's keeping our email from being more productive?

# THE BIGGEST EMAIL MISUNDERSTANDINGS



## SHORT IS BEST

A lot of experts say you need to write short emails because statistics claim our attention spans are that of a goldfish. Liz disagrees with this assumption. Based on her data, it's giving marketers an easy way out. Instead of ensuring the content created is great you just have to keep it short. Not so much.

After analyzing the data, the average length of emails is 434.48 words, which translates to just under a three and a half minute read. Although 434.48 words seems relatively short, it doesn't mean short emails are the secret to success. If you're a good writer, and you know your audience, then length doesn't matter. She also said 11.4 percent of emails have more than 900 words, which results in much longer read time.

How does that impact click-through rates? Based on the data, there's no simple answer. However, one point remains the same—value trumps everything. Ann Handley [[Total Annarchy](#)] offers a newsletter jam-packed with valuable content that takes roughly 14 minutes to read. However, her click-through rates and her engagement are insanely high even though she has this extremely long newsletter.

## TAKEAWAY



The takeaway If you're writing short emails because somebody told you to write short emails, then don't. Take the time to write an email your audience wants and have fun experimenting with different lengths and formats. There is no formula to copy. Rather, value drives email success.

## EMAIL IS DYING

Every year it seems we have to deal with the fear that email is fading away. Something new always comes up that makes you start wondering, "Is email really going to work for me". A couple of years ago, Google started shuffling promotional emails into a separate folder. Is that a problem? Liz doesn't think so.

### TAKEAWAY



The key to email marketing is to send emails your audience wants. If your audience actually wants your emails, it doesn't matter if your emails are in the promotions tab or the primary inbox, they will seek it out.

## CLEAN YOUR LIST

Even those of us that have done email marketing for a long time can get a knot in the pit of our stomachs whenever we know it's time to remove emails of those who have not engaged, clicked, or opened in the last 90 days. Liz shares the best ways to approach cleaning your email list. First, it's hard to grow an email list, so yes, it's painful to remove your hard-earned

subscribers. Yet, if you don't your emails are less likely to reach an inbox because unengaged subscribers hurt your email deliverability. Think about it like this, all the work you put into your email marketing strategy could result in your hard work not reaching an inbox. When you keep people on a list who aren't engaging, internet service providers (ISPs) like Gmail, Yahoo!, and Outlook will move your content to SPAM.

### TAKEAWAY



Be intentional and proactive about routinely cleaning your email lists based on the data. Otherwise, all your hard work will result in potentially getting your emails blacklisted.



## HTML EMAILS OVER PLAIN TEXT

There's a common misunderstanding that plain text emails are more likely to reach inboxes. According to Liz, that's simply a rumor. HTML emails are preferred because you create a more custom experience for your readers. Additionally, since plain text emails don't have HTML in them, you are unable to track opens and clicks.

### TAKEAWAY



Embrace an HTML formatted email as the benefits outweigh any potential risks or rumors.



# HIGH-PERFORMING EMAILS



## E-COMMERCE FOCUS

When thinking about high-performing emails, there are many factors to consider. Liz urges marketers to focus efforts based on the end goal. If you're really focused on making a sale or driving traffic to a specific website, having a million links in your email hurts you. If you're an e-commerce company with multiple products, a digest-style email with several different products may be more effective. Oddly enough, it's not always the clever, branded types of emails that perform the best. Rather, the data says promotional emails from e-commerce sites with specific product promotions inside can outperform any other type.

## TAKEAWAY



A perspective to embrace is that when you have an e-commerce focus, people usually sign up for your email list because of an interest in your products. When you reach out via email, sending them information on your products is exactly what they want.

## SUBJECT LINES

When crafting subject lines there are a few ways to approach creating ones that convert to an open. According to Liz, adding numbers is a great way to increase open rates. Any subject line that starts off with a number like, "Seven ways to do X" is effective based on the data. Another thing to consider is keeping them short. Subject lines that are short are considered rare and therefore more effective. Liz shares only 10.9 percent of email experts send emails with subject lines of 20 characters or less, which is considered short.

### TAKEAWAY



Take advantage of the data's insights by using short subject lines. It's a great way to stand out in someone's inbox. In addition, short subject lines are crucial for mobile devices which make up for 46 percent of where emails are opened. Most mobile devices will cut off your subject line somewhere between 30 and 40 characters, so longer subject lines will never be seen.

## WRITING AN EFFECTIVE EMAIL

The first name conundrum is something Liz experiences a lot. Marketers question whether they should use an email recipient's first name as the opening to the email. For example, "Hi, first name"? While this isn't necessarily a bad idea, what typically works better is using provocative or interesting headlines. It's fine to use the "Hi, First Name," but it's so common everyone just glances over it, so it ends up being wasted space.

### TAKEAWAY



If you're going to use someone's first name, it's more effective to put it in the subject line or at the end or middle of a sentence or the end of a paragraph. It's simply unexpected making it more impactful. It feels really personal to have a sentence that says, "Did you like this email, Brian?"



# WHAT METRICS MATTER

## CLICK-THROUGH RATES

To determine how successful (or not) your newsletter is, Liz recommends looking at your click rates. First, your cumulative click-through rate of all the links in your newsletter, then look at the click-through rates on each different link. If you have a certain article or piece of content getting a much higher click rate in your newsletter, and it's towards the middle or bottom of the newsletter, then you know that piece of content was of greater interest to your audience.

## TAKEAWAY



Understanding the click-through data allows you to choose future content based on what your audience finds most valuable.

## WHO'S CLICKING ON LINKS

Your email marketing platform should give you a breakdown of the individual subscribers who are clicking and what links they're clicking on. You can also pull segments of people who clicked on the link in your most recent email and send them another email that is really relevant to that prior link they clicked on. You can also get a breakdown of which link is getting the most clicks and build segments of your list from that data.

## TAKEAWAY



In short, segmenting allows you to improve the performance of your email marketing in general, while also engaging with your audience in a more personalized manner.

## OPEN RATES

The key to open rates is benchmarks. If your average open rate is 25 percent, you should be aiming to hit or exceed that number with every email campaign. Trying to increase your open rate is somewhat important—after all, if people don't open your email they're definitely not going to read your content—but open rates aren't the end-all metric.

The problem is the way open rates are tracked. There is a tiny, invisible image inside of the email where if seen, it's tracked as an open. Yet, if someone has their inbox preferences set so they don't load images, they may open that email, without being tracked as an open.

### TAKEAWAY



You could have a portion of your audience who open your emails every single time you send it, but it's not tracking as an open, so don't put too much emphasis on this metric.

## GOOGLE ANALYTICS

When using Google Analytics there are many metrics, yet for Liz there are only a few things she focuses on to gauge the effectiveness of email campaigns. The metrics to focus on should be centered on sales under a specific campaign or goal. One goal could be having someone subscribe to the newsletter, another goal is conversion.

### TAKEAWAY



Once it's set it up, Google can tell you which visitors are coming, whether they convert, and how much they spend. These analytics will start to give you an idea of how much value to assign to visitors.



# The Application:

Email used to be the place we turn to when we needed to take a break from creating that report, from polishing that design or for meeting with the team. Today, the inbox drives our daily to-do list. Instead of suggesting you review your autoresponder, I'd like to invite you to make your everyday emails more personal. As Liz shared the power of email is still prevalent today.

The opportunity is to use the channel in new creative ways. The big differentiator between you and every other email is that you can make it personal, and authentic to your brand. For example, when you acknowledge receipt of a report, instead of following the prompt, "Thank you" drop a meme into the business-like reply. Do something, anything that will make your recipients glad to get an email from you.

**From Brian Massey,  
Intended Consequences**

# WHAT THE DATA SAYS ABOUT PODCASTS:



What does your website say about your brand? A website is really little more than the brick and mortar store of the digital world. It's a place people can go if they find you. Then what? Is there a way to connect your digital brand with the humanity your website often struggles to portray? We set out to explore how to create connections between brands and people using a human voice.

This idea of humanizing your brand often flies in the face of our tightly controlled, highly produced, and frequently foiled image-building campaigns. Yet, we know it's true. When we peel back the layers to tying human voice to your brand one thing is clear: audio allows us to do this in the most obvious way. To put it more plainly, podcasting is a way to connect our actual voice with those we most want to connect with.

How does podcasting work in a digital marketing context? How do you measure it? What can you expect from this semi-digital medium? Rob Walch is VP of Podcaster Relations for Libsyn, the leading podcast host, and he shares his insights using the data he has exclusive access to.



# THE BIGGEST PODCAST MISUNDERSTANDINGS



## IT'S TOO LONG

It's not a question of whether podcasting is good for marketing, it's a question of why, which is often the misunderstanding. In short, it's an opportunity to go long-form with potential clients or your target audience, where you don't have to be in pitch mode all the time. You can be yourself. You can talk about real benefits and not be thinking in terms of 30-second soundbites.

## TAKEAWAY



For marketers, it's a great opportunity to tell a story, a long story and really get into it.

## CAN'T BE MEASURED

Rob shares one of the biggest benefits of podcasting from the viewpoint of the listeners. It's one of the few channels where people can have a semblance of privacy. You as a listener are anonymous and there is no behavior tracking or following.

## TAKEAWAY



While data-driven marketers seek knowing who is listening to their podcasts. Privacy provides a benefit to marketers causing them to be more intentional with the content they create. Privacy provides a kind of intimacy. In order to understand who is listening, you as the creator, have to give your audience something worth talking about.

## NO ONE HAS TIME

According to Rob, there's more time in the day to consume audio than any other medium. It's accessible when you're doing anything from driving your car to walking your dog. For him, audio can be seen as a tool for helping people through the monotony of the day-to-day, while as a brand you can provide something of value.

## TAKEAWAY



Consuming podcasts isn't just a distraction tactic, rather the data says, people consume audio while at work. For example, Amazon factory line workers and truck drivers are listening to podcasts while still maintaining their job responsibilities. The data supports this understanding as shows see its biggest uptick of downloads on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, during local work hours with a huge drop off on Saturdays and Sundays.

## OVERSATURATION

At the time of this conversation with Rob, there are roughly six hundred million blogs in the world and only about 250,000 active podcasts. An active podcast means one that has released new content in the last three months. While it may seem as if many people have a podcast the reality is it's still a relatively small market.

## TAKEAWAY



While the number of podcasts out there are vast, the data shows there are still less than a million podcasts. Compared to that of blogs which will have you competing with hundreds of millions.

# HIGH PERFORMING PODCASTS



## AVERAGE LENGTH

How long is the average podcast? More importantly, how long is the average successful podcast? This is one of the most common questions Rob gets. The short answer is there is no ideal length. However, when looking at the most popular podcasts in terms of downloads, shows receiving 100,000 downloads or more, 84% were 51 minutes or longer, with a large percentage of those top shows lasting two hours or more.

When you look at the top 200 episodes on Apple overall, the median length is around 65 minutes, and 75% were forty minutes or longer. In referencing this data, there's a misconception in the space stating that 22 minutes is the ideal length. Rob clearly says but those people don't know podcasting—they probably come from radio because that's a radio number. In podcasting, only six percent of the top shows were twenty-two minutes or less.



## TAKEAWAY



There's no right or wrong, just too boring. The data shouldn't dictate the length of your show. You can't take 15 minutes of content and try to spread it over two hours just because you think a longer show will make you popular. Focus on making the content and the length will follow.

## SUCCESSFUL PROMOTION

According to Rob, the podcasts that are basically brand infomercials don't do well. In fact, they just podfade, meaning they trickle out. If 95% percent of your content is promotion, people will stop listening. If you want to be of value to the listener, 95% of your content should be value-driving based on what they want to listen to.

The shows that perform well provide the best value for the listeners while creating a sense of interconnectedness among its listeners. The shows with the largest audiences have been built due to the listeners sharing the show for them. While there is no silver bullet for promoting and launching a podcast, or getting an audience, advertising or networking on other podcasts can help you get an initial audience.



## TAKEAWAY



Word of mouth is the key to promoting and growing a podcast audience. In his experience, Rob says to be patient, focus on being good at what you do, and a little bit of excitement combined with audience interest will carry the day.

## GROWTH EXPECTATIONS

Marketers often want to know how many downloads they should get to determine if their show is a success. Rob shares that while it depends on what your show is about, the median number of downloads across all shows in Libsyn is 138 downloads per episode within thirty days of release. The adjusted average is around 1500, when removing the top 0.5% and all episodes with 3 or fewer downloads.

## TAKEAWAY



If you are getting your podcast to 500 downloads per episode consistently, then you should chalk your show up as a major success. From Rob's perspective it means you've reached more than just your existing network.



# WHAT METRICS MATTER

## NETWORK SIZE

When it comes to podcasting, the size of a social media audience does not indicate how large your listener base will be. Rob mentioned one show that had 18.8 million YouTube subscribers and 60 million social media followers. Yet, the podcast received only 42,000 downloads per episode.

Another had six million Facebook followers and was getting 50,000 downloads per episode. While the marketing expectations were disappointed by those numbers, Rob pointed out that 50,000 downloads would put your show in the top one percent of all podcasts.

## TAKEAWAY



You can't assume people who follow you on social media will convert immediately to a member of your podcast audience. Podcasts listeners are the truest, most diehard fans, which takes us back to our notion of the importance of privacy. Rob frames it like this, anyone can click "subscribe" or "like" but that's a one-time deal. Listening to a show is an ongoing commitment and a truer indicator of impact.

## DOWNLOADS V. LISTENS

The truth according to the data is that most people who download an episode do actually listen. Another peek behind the curtain is that Apple Podcasts will stop downloading automatically if you go five episodes without listening. The point Rob makes is that while a download is not a listen the data indicates that more often than not a download also means a listen.

Remembering the stats related to this space: ***The median number for growth in podcasting is 138 downloads per episode within 30 days of release, with an adjusted number of 1500 downloads per episode if we omit the largest shows. Getting to 500 downloads per episode could be considered really successful.***

## TAKEAWAY



If you're getting to the point of reaching 500 people each episode, ask yourself this, when is the last time you got your message out to 500 people? Most people never get that opportunity and you could do it every week with a podcast.

## ACTUAL CONSUMPTION

According to the data, the majority of people start listening to podcasts at home while heading out for their daily community. Eighty-six percent of podcast consumption is on the smartphone. That smartphone goes everywhere with your listener, so people can consume podcasts when and where they want to consume it. The data shows that consumption happens anywhere yet you want to look at the point where listeners drop off or stop listening.

Apple Podcasts provide consumption numbers, but the metric isn't perfect because it only includes the data it has access to. While on Spotify, the only time it tracks consumption is if someone plays your episodes. Right there you now have two different data points related to episode consumption.

Rob provides insight on how to think about consumption noting the limitations to podcast analytics. If you have a show that has been running for a year or more, and you've not been featured anywhere in Apple Podcasts recently, then 85 to 90 percent of the downloads you see is played and can be counted towards the consumption rate.

The caveat to being featured is you will see a spike in downloads, but not necessarily an increase in consumption since the content of your show may not be relevant longterm.

## TAKEAWAY



If you've been releasing content for a year you can assume the majority of downloads are listens. Then you can go into analytics like Apple Podcasts to get a snapshot of your overall consumption. Rob suggests that you can assume at least 50% of your audience is consuming through Apple Podcasts to provide you with a base point for percentage of episode consumed or in other words, how much of an episode was listened to.

# The Application:

What is the voice of your brand or who could it be? Giving your brand a voice, a voice designed to communicate, to evoke emotion, is one of the most powerful ways to create meaningful connections between people you want to do business with. T

he first place to start is by understanding who your voice can serve best and then designing a show, a podcast, uniquely tailored to them.

Take a hard look at your website, does it communicate what you want people to hear? If not, take the time to identify who your audience is and who your audience is not. The exercise alone can help you start to find your own brand voice.

**From Brian Massey,  
Intended Consequences**





# WHAT THE DATA SAYS ABOUT LEAD CONVERSION:



When it comes to connecting marketing to sales there can be many challenges. In a world of online forms and abundance of content, how do you actually qualify leads? For our last expert in this article filling out an online form is the equivalent of sitting down at a restaurant with no waiters, no matter how hungry you are. The reality is you won't stick around forever.

What can marketers learn from this analogy to answer a common question: why won't my leads convert? Sammy James, founder of [Speak2Leads.com](http://Speak2Leads.com), shares his insights to help answer this very question.



# THE BIGGEST LEAD CONVERSION MISUNDERSTANDINGS



SALES LOVES MARKETING LEADS

Many of us assume salespeople—many of whom are paid heavily on commission—love getting leads from marketing. Yet, often that’s simply not the case. Sammy explains, if they’re accustomed to direct response leads where people dialed in, then they won’t like having to do outreach for those leads marketing sends.

Sammy created a solution turning a form fill into a phone call. When someone fills out the form, it creates a call to the sales team announcing, “you’ve got a new lead. Once he got the system together, he immediately saw an increase of 300 percent in responses.

**TAKEAWAY**



If you can remove the barrier from marketing to sales by directing immediate action from a filled out form, for instance, to the sales team enabling them to act quickly then you’ll experience better results.

## SALES LOVES COLD CALLING

People often assume incorrectly that salespeople enjoy making cold calls. While there are some who do, most actually, do not enjoy the cold outreach inherent to prospecting. In fact, according to Sammy, if you give any salesperson an option to never make a call again yet still secure new opportunities, that's the route they will take.

### TAKEAWAY



Almost nobody enjoys making sales calls, even salespeople, so embrace them the same way you would as anyone else trying to be successful in their roles. Even if that means creating solutions for reducing the amount of cold outreach.

## THE CREEPY FACTOR

Sammy is the first to admit that when we have data and immediately call a prospect there can be a "creepy factor." Think about it, if 60 seconds after filling out a form you get a phone call, you might feel like you're being spied on. Yet, Sammy has the data that shows out of hundreds of calls more people felt more heard and are grateful to be reached out to quickly.

### TAKEAWAY



If someone is interested in your offering, jumping quickly to call and follow-up is a good way to show your passion while securing a new opportunity.

# HIGH PERFORMING CONVERSION



## IMMEDIATE ACTION

Statistically 80% of people buy from the first company they speak to. This indicates a strong bias towards companies that connect with you first. Sammy breaks it down like this, if you're searching for a refinancing loan, and you fill out a form and get a call 60 seconds later from somebody at ABC financing company and they say, "Hey, tell me what's going on," you'll spend time with them. If you then get a call later that day from another person with the same information and offer, guess what you're going to say, "Thanks, but I'm good right now."

## TAKEAWAY



If you want to convert leads more quickly, then you have to be the one to get to the leads first and you'll close more deals.

## MAKE IT GOOD ENOUGH

If you said to a salesperson, "Hey, you've got a new job description, and a new set of responsibilities. You're no longer responsible for following up on leads. Just make sure you answer the phone and follow the prompts." Are they going to be happy? What if you told them their performance would no longer be measured based on the number of deals they made but from the percentage of the leads they speak to? From Sammy's perspective, he thinks they'd probably be grateful.

## TAKEAWAY



At the end of the day, in order to develop a great relationship between sales and marketing, the marketer's role is to make it as easy as possible for the salespeople to do their jobs, and you as the marketer will get more conversion.

## GET ATTENTION

If you send someone an envelope, a postcard, and a UPS box, which one are they going to open first? The box! Every time. This is human nature. It looks more interesting, it's more compelling.

Sammy says it like this, "It's just the way we're wired. We're wired to boxes." The primary reason something like Speak2Leads works is because job one is getting a salesperson's attention. The phone ringing does that. It's the box in this scenario. They pick up the phone because they can't resist it. And on the other end of that phone is a lead.

## TAKEAWAY



If you want your salespeople to take action on your leads, then you have to present them with a “box” and they’ll open it every time. It’s the marketers job to make the handoff seamless while grabbing the salesperson’s attention so no lead gets lost.



# WHAT METRICS MATTER

## LEAD DROP

The value of a lead drops dramatically by 400 percent in just 30 minutes. Which means the value of connectivity and convergence is all highly perishable. According to Sammy, if a new lead comes in and the person you assign it to is too busy then the opportunity is already lost.

The point? A fresh hot lead goes cold within ten minutes if action isn't taken. You can increase the productivity of your staff if you stop assigning leads, and just route them immediately to who can take action.

## TAKEAWAY



Don't underestimate the perishability of a lead by getting hasty in the handoff. Be sure to identify who is available to react appropriately otherwise you will potentially have lost an opportunity.



## VOICEMAIL CADENCE

Sammy suggests following up with a lead by phone immediately and then again, if no answer, in 20 minutes. If you don't connect on the second attempt, that's when he suggests leaving a voicemail.

The data suggest that leaving a voicemail after the first attempt actually prevents you from being able to leave one on the second.

For example, if you leave a voicemail, "This is Hayes from ABC. Thanks for your inquiry. Here's my number", and then you call again in 20 minutes it feels aggressive. You want to be available, like a server in a restaurant.

Don't make them look for you, rather come to the table at the right time to ask "how things are going," then leave them alone.

## TAKEAWAY



Don't leave a message on the first attempt. Instead, focus on quick follow-up then follow-up again with a way for them to get back to you. The focus is to show you are available to help but not pushy.

## AVERAGE SPEED TO LEAD

The most important question marketers can ask salespeople to find out what is limiting the number of leads turning into dollars is simply “what is your average speed to lead”. According to Sammy, they don’t know the answer and they’re not likely to tell you the truth, so how should the answer be measured?

It should be measured in minutes. You are tossing that lead away if you don't get to it in under a minute. As technology evolves and as people get better at this it's going to get shorter than that.

## TAKEAWAY



There is no such thing as getting to a lead too quickly. Setting up processes and procedures to handle leads quickly and efficiently will increase your conversions. You’ll never have a warmer lead than right after someone raises their hand and fills out your form.

# The Application:

A website's only job is to make it easier for your prospects to make a choice. Your website provides answers to questions your potential customers are asking primarily,

Is this something that will solve my problem? And should I spend more time investigating this solution?

Navigate your website and identify how much of your content is persuading your visitors to buy and how much of it is persuading them to just take one more step.

How much smaller would your website be if it was focused on selling the next step instead of closing the whole deal?

**From Brian Massey,  
Intended Consequences**



## TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

These three marketing strategies: email, podcasting, and lead conversion cover a wide spectrum of how marketers can understand data to focus their efforts.

While email marketing may be an afterthought or a podcast is a future to-do one thing is consistent: converting marketing leads to sales is a must. How that gets done is completely up to you.

The unifying message is that often best practices, no matter the channel, may not be the best practice for your brand. **It's our job as marketers to balance the art of our craft with the science to make good decisions based on the goals we have.**

**From Brian Massey,  
Intended Consequences**

### EDITOR'S NOTES

These episodes were previously recorded and produced. The transcriptions of each episode was edited to be more readable, you can listen to the full conversations on the [Intended Consequences](#) podcast.