Calendly GONG Sendoso

The Art of Cold Outreach

Proven prospecting strategies:
Cut through the noise, engage prospects, and fill your pipeline

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INTRODUCTION

Ding. Better check my email, it's probably my boss.

Ping. Shut the front door: An influencer just tagged me!

Ring. Someone's actually calling my cell? It must be an emergency.

As a sales rep, your cold email, call, or LinkedIn message may seem like a whisper in a hurricane.

Cutting through the noise of everyday life takes innovation and care. Earning someone's attention requires personalization and relevancy. Landing a meeting demands grit and perseverance.

Cold outreach is a tough challenge.

In times of economic uncertainty, it's even tougher. Especially for sales reps who've only experienced boom times.

How can you land a sales meeting when companies are tightening budgets and headcount, and your ideal prospects have no time to spare?

Today reps aren't just fighting for attention in prospects' inboxes; they're battling for priceless real estate on prospects' calendars.

Cold outreach is still necessary, and success is still possible.

"If you have the ability to help someone, you owe it to them to reach out to them," says Mark Hunter (aka The Sales Hunter). "Sales is about helping others see and achieve what they didn't think was possible. How are they going to know you can help them unless you call them?"

Growth Week 2023 survey findings

Make every revenue opportunity count

Balancing the peaks and valleys of inbound and outbound

64% Have seen **a dip in inbound leads** (fewer) this year

74% Have been **doing more outbound** (cold or warm calling/emailing) in the past two years than previous years

The challenge of driving action

69% Said that **getting leads to actually schedule a meeting** is the hardest part of inbound marketing/sales

51% Agreed that the toughest part of outbound is **seeing results and getting meetings booked from outreach**

Read more about Calendly's Growth Week study.

The best sales reps tackle the challenge with a fearless mindset. They've honed innovative strategies and tactics. They've learned how to be heard above the roar. How are these successful sales reps getting replies, landing meetings, and generating revenue?

In this e-book, we'll:

- Reveal proven prospecting strategies for uncertain times
- Share cold-outreach insights from successful sales pros at companies like Gong, Sendoso, and Calendly
- Help you grab attention in a saturated digital environment
- Break down proven, cold-outreach frameworks and cadences for an omnichannel approach
- Embrace sales technology for better outcomes, including using AI wisely

We'll give you the tools to snag the attention of the right people at the right time. Even better, our pro tips will help you keep prospects' attention long enough to land the sale.

Cold outreach doesn't have to be 100% cold

Now that the cold outreach space is so crowded, you've got to separate yourself from everybody else who's vying for prospects' attention. So do your homework. Collaborate with marketing, customer success, and the entire sales team, using every tool in your tech stack to make smart targeting decisions. But like most things in life, cold outreach starts with attitude.

Build resilient teams through mindset and processes

To succeed in cold outreach requires a team-wide mindset shift. Remind yourself as often as necessary: This is a conversation, not a pitch.

That's the only way to make sure your message is relevant to what prospects care about.

> **"Rejection is tough to shrug off. However, that's the beauty of outbound prospecting: These strangers don't know you. That context point alone reduces pressure dramatically, allowing you to have a conversation, be bolder, and build confidence with each outreach."**

Morgan J. Ingram
Founder and CEO, AMP

Hearing "no" day after day can chip away at morale and motivation, so that's another mental shift your team may need to make. To create a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability, leaders shouldn't punish or shame sales reps for cold outreach gone wrong. A company that learns quickly from mistakes requires a culture where teammates feel safe to share and analyze missteps, and look at them through a lens of curiosity and growth.

Lead with a prospect-centric approach

It's not your prospect's responsibility to know the products and services you offer, or that your type of product even exists.

It's your responsibility to learn the depth of prospects' challenges, and then map solutions to your products and services.

"Really understand your audience, who they are and what they care about," says Carli Cottle, Gong's Director of Business Development. "Research is critical as you start to target accounts, industries, and job roles. Your prospect wants to know that the product you're offering can solve what they're focused on."

First step? Make sure you're starting relationships with the right organizations, departments, and job titles. The prospects who come to you through your website or ads (inbound leads) may not be the same type of prospects you should target for cold outreach. So it's key to build your ideal customer profile (ICP) specifically for outbound outreach.

Techniques for finding your ideal cold outreach customer

According to a Gong Labs 2023 study, a whopping **97% of surveyed sellers weren't happy with their email reply rate**. When asked for the most effective way to increase their reply rate, sellers had one main answer: better personalization.

The Gong Labs team then worked to determine the types of personalization sellers used in each email, and these four came up:

- **Individual:** This involves personalizing an email based on a single contact, which might include addressing their experience, personal life, hobbies, etc.
- **Company:** These emails reference the contact's organization by mentioning company news updates, new product releases, milestones, earnings reports, etc.

- **Activity:** Such emails use intent or marketing data to reference web activity, content consumption, event attendance, conversations with other stakeholders, etc. (These leads are often already warm.)
- **Industry:** These emails reference how you've helped similar companies. They might include social proof, customer case studies, etc.

Personalized interactions with prospects are no longer just a nice-to-have. With Google and Yahoo making changes to **limit bulk email sends** to personal addresses, the writing is on the wall; business emails could very well be next. While those limitations aren't here yet, buyers already have a preference for thoughtful, customized sales engagement.

The same Gong Labs study found if you're trying to secure a foothold in an account at the individual contributor or manager level, personalize your email based on the individual to increase your chance of success.

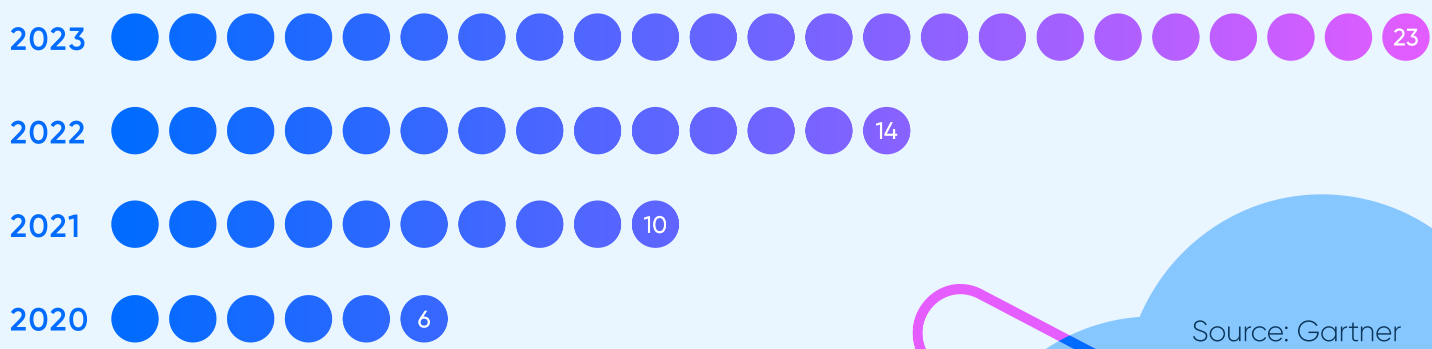
PRO TIP

One-to-one personalization (i.e. addressing a recent promotion, specific interest, life event, etc.) more than doubles the reply rate for non-managerial buyer personas.

Company-based personalization, however, boosts replies from people who are higher up the org chart. The study found that prospecting email reply rates tripled when engaging executive buyers (directors and above) using a company-specific topic.

But personalization needs to still operate at scale. These days, **enterprise B2B buying groups, which were about 6 to 10 people a few years ago, now include 14 to 23 people**, according to Gartner.

Average size of buying committees



Source: Gartner

Teams should tap into AI-based engagement technology if they want to create tailored yet efficient communication. By using AI to analyze communication patterns, reps can learn from previous customer interactions to know when — and how — to reach out next. Every email sent or call made is that much more intentional as a result.

If you're not seeing cold outreach results, start asking:

- Is our ICP off? What job roles are we targeting? Are we going too high up or too far down the chain?
- How personalized is our outreach messaging? Are we speaking their industry's language? Are we clearly articulating how we solve their problems and provide value?
- Are we using the right communication channels? Are we using enough channels? Are we too call heavy on one or too light on another?
- What are your top reps doing to be successful? Can we scale those techniques across the entire sales department?
- What we're doing in our U.S. market isn't working as well in our U.K. market — are there some cultural differences we're missing here?

Use everything in your tech stack — listen to customer calls, read help center and community feedback, monitor social mentions — to identify where things went off the rails.

This is the only way you can turn cold outreach misses into future successes. Through this type of analysis, your team can refine your cold outreach ICPs, identify new opportunities, and start a list of dos and don'ts that can be applied across the sales team.

When is AI a-okay?

> **"When customers demand quick response times, AI and automation tools can help sales teams close more deals and close them faster."**

Jessica Gilmartin
Chief Revenue Officer, Calendly

Your automation strategy should strike a balance between efficiency and human touch. Done right, automation creates a better customer experience by freeing up time for quality customer interactions — not replacing them.

For example, [sales demos] are a crucial step in the sales process. The work reps do to create a personalized, engaging prospect experience can't be automated, but you know what can? Pre- and post-meeting automations to send email or text reminders, send thank-you notes, request follow-up meetings, and more.

It gets a bad rap, but it still works if you work it

Reaching out to someone who has zero connection to your business can seem intimidating. Expect to be ignored and get hung up on. Persist. Be resilient. Going in cold does open doors and lead to conversions. When approached strategically, cold outreach reaches a larger, more targeted audience than just waiting for leads to fall from the inbound marketing sky.

Jason Bay, Founder and CEO of Outbound Squad, told Calendly there's a misconception about top-performing sales reps.

"I think people are always expecting like, oh, they make the most amount of calls or they send the most amount of emails," Bay says. "The thing that I've found over my years of being in business development, the most successful sales reps are the ones who do research and outreach most consistently.

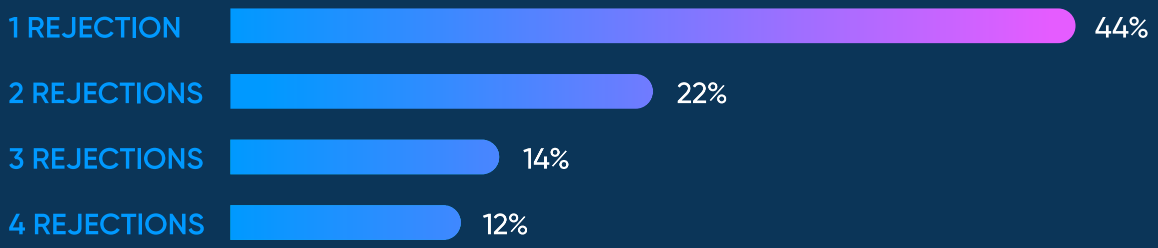
"They don't have these huge spikes in mass outreach, because they've always got enough conversations going to get some meetings booked."

"When I first started cold outreach, I was awful. People were hanging up on me. Emails were bouncing. It was a terrible experience," says Morgan J. Ingram, Founder and CEO of AMP. "However, once I began to commit to my craft, it led to small wins. Those small wins began to snowball, leading to me doing a cold video to an opportunity that led to my biggest deal.

"We all start bad when we start something new, but we can accomplish a ton if we focus on improving."

Percentage of sales personnel who give up after a number of rejections

Almost half (48%) of salespeople don’t make a follow up call, yet according to Velocify, 93% of converted leads are often reached only by the sixth cold call attempt.



Source: Velocify

Common Mistakes in Cold Outreach

> **“We don’t close a sale. We open a relationship.”**

Mark Hunter
The Sales Hunter and The Sales Logic podcasts
Author, consultant, and podcast host

Avoid pitches

A tiny fraction of any market is actively looking to change providers at any one time. That means for every 100 people you call, only a small handful want to hear your pitch.

And yet, sales reps **love** to pitch.

As soon as a prospect answers your call, admit it: You’re tempted to launch into a seller-centric sales pitch, listing out features, functions, awards, and accolades.

The reality: Buyers don’t care about your pitch. What matters to them are **their** challenges, **their** goals, and **their** company.

"Today's prospects expect more," Cottle says. "You have to make sure that your value pitch — or the way that you're engaging prospects — is relevant to them and not just relevant to the product that you're trying to sell."

Early on, ask prospects questions like:

- What challenges are you facing?
- What are your productivity pain points?
- Do you have any big initiatives this year?
- Are you pursuing any new strategic objectives or industries?

In practice that might sound like:

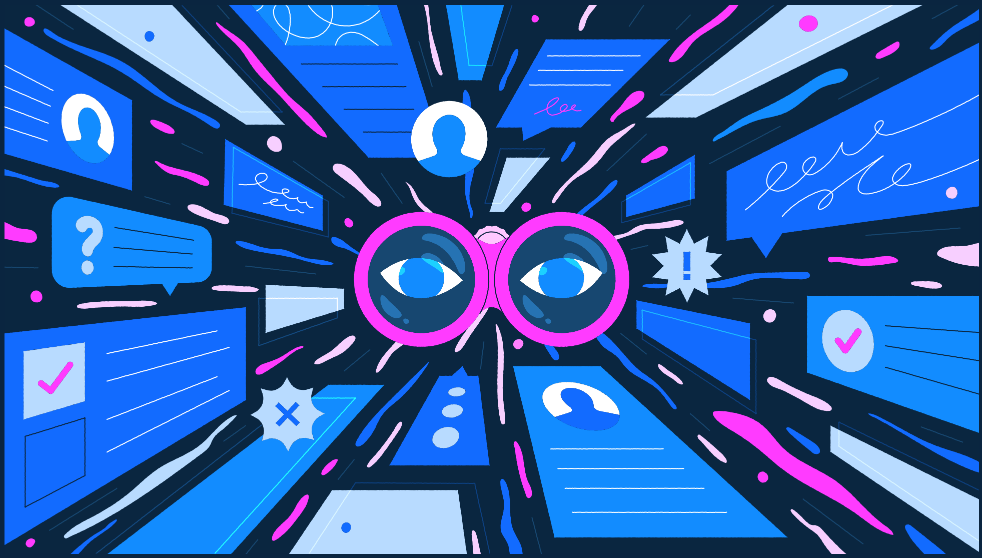
> "In working with our [insert industry] clients, we're hearing a lot about how difficult it is to adapt to [insert industry challenge] right now. Is that something you're struggling with, too? If so, here's how we're helping a few other companies like yours improve outcomes. [insert ROI examples and/or case studies] Are you interested in chatting further?"

Be so well versed, you don't sound scripted

Technology plays a significant role in modern sales. Using tools like CRMs, automation, and AI to streamline processes, gather insights, and personalize communication is necessary. But it should never overshadow the human element, says Sendoso's Katie Penner, Head of Sender Relations. Balance efficiency with authentic, human connections to create a seamless and memorable experience for your prospects, clients, and customers.

"I hear from buyers every day that they are experiencing buyer fatigue — and in fact, I've felt it myself," Penner says. "Buyers are constantly bombarded with hundreds of emails, tons of calls, countless DMs, all while being in back-to-back meetings daily. As a buyer, I can tell you that a lot of these messages are automated and today, we are dealing with ChatGPT generated messages that feel very generic and unauthentic."

When creating new messaging, Ingram at AMP recommends running it past the internal experts at your own company. Targeting a recruiting ICP? Ask a recruiter at your company to review your ideas and give you feedback. Most likely, their objections are the same ones you'll encounter with prospects.



Prepare for objections

Objections are not the end of the conversation.

In fact, almost any objection is an opportunity to deepen the conversation and learn more about your prospect. But objection handling is tricky to do on the fly.

PRO TIP

The best-performing reps plan, prep, and rehearse for the most common roadblocks. Sellers who learn how to successfully defend their product and overcome objections can have close rates as high as 64%.

Although objections come in many different flavors, they boil down to four common archetypes:

#1 Existing solution

If someone is already paying your competitor, that's a great sign. They've already bought into your value prop and have the budget to invest in a tool.

Ask what they love about their current solution, and any features or customer support areas that are missing. Have your battlecard ready to go and bring up the competitive advantages of your product. Get their gears turning: Maybe it's time for them to consider a new tool? If your company offers a free trial, encourage them to compare product features and ease-of-use.

#2 Bad timing

If a prospect tells you it's not the right time, there's an implication that there is a right time in the future. Overcome bad timing objections by leaning on urgency.

Are there short-term and long-term effects or business impacts you could reference? Do you know anything about the company's trajectory? Have their competitors recently raised capital or launched a new product? Does their industry have new regulations or protocols they need to follow?

Do whatever you can to make *now* the best time.

If someone says to reach back out in 3 or 6 months, Ingram recommends asking "What is going to change between now and then that is preventing you from taking this meeting now?"

Then, after they tell you the reason, ask this as a follow up: "Are you looking to evaluate and implement in 6 months?"

#3 Wrong person

If your prospect tells you they aren't the right person, there are a few different ways to handle the objection.

If your prospect passes you to someone more junior, elevate your pitch. Get above the line by replacing features and functionality with hard ROI stats, percentages, and dollars.

If your prospect passes you up the chain, that's great. However, stay in touch with your current contact. They may become an important internal champion for your product when it's time to face the buying committee.

And finally, if the prospect redirects you to a new department, go back and revise your messaging — it's clearly not landing for your target persona.

#4 No budget

Buyers always say they don't have budget — but that doesn't stop deals from getting signed. When you're hitting financial objections, there are a couple routes you can take.

The first is to ignore pricing and align on pain. Show you understand their challenges, empathize with their struggles, and offer to take it from there.

If the pain point is large enough, chances are they can find budget somewhere.

The second strategy is to have prospects anchor on a price point. Ask them how much they would pay. Once you have a figure, you can work them upward by demonstrating value and impact, including sharing case studies with similar pain points and/or in similar industries.

Don’t see ‘no’ as a total rejection

Even the best sales reps at the best companies get hung up on more often than they have successful conversations.

But what makes you a great sales rep is how you use that rejection.

“Typically when people tell me no that means there are other competing priorities and they have already made an investment into something else,” Ingram says. “So think, what’s the best way to stay top of mind without being annoying?”

In the next few chapters, we’ll talk specifically about strategies and tactics for cold email, phone, and social media outreach. But don’t be afraid to get creative and draw outside of those lines!

[Zendesk](), one of Sendoso’s customers, leveraged gifting to accelerate deals that got stuck. They sent hundreds of prospects movie kits with a branded blanket and saw a 15X ROI, as well as a 2,000% quarter-over-quarter increase in new business pipeline generation attributed to direct mail.

Still the best way to get hung up on. Still an impactful channel.

Cold calling is easy to get wrong.

When you call a prospect and immediately tell them how great you are, they're going to hang up. What you need is a framework that puts your prospect and their challenges at the heart of the conversation.

We have just the thing.

Proven frameworks for cold calling

During Belal Batrawy's career, he's made thousands of cold calls for unicorn startups. He developed a sixth sense for what differentiates a great call from one that falls flat. So he condensed a decade of sales success into a proven framework called the Mic Drop Method.

PERMISSION	Acknowledge the interruption and ask for permission to continue.
PROBLEM	Demonstrate understanding of the prospect's challenges.
PROVOKE	Relate the problem to your prospect and encourage discovery questions.
PROMISE	Secure the follow-up meeting.

It's simple — but don't let that fool you. Batrawy has relied on his Mic Drop Method to generate millions of dollars in pipeline at high-growth companies like FullStory and Clearbit.

Here's how it works in practice.

Permission

**"Hey David, you're not expecting my call.
Do you have a moment? I promise to be brief."**

From here, there are two routes a call can take:

Refusal to continue

The former isn't a rejection of the sales process. When a prospect tells you that now isn't the right time, **pivot the conversation to alternative times** and use your calendar link to book a meeting in the near future.

Permission to continue

Your prospects might also consent to the conversation. When they do, you **launch straight into step two** of the Mic Drop Method.

Problem

"For most small businesses like yours, I know that the second largest cost after payroll is health benefits, which have been increasing 9% to 15% year over year."

Your goal is to show your prospect you're informed and understand their pain point.

Provoke

The third step ties your problem statement to the prospect in the form of a provocative question.

"I recently talked to another CFO who told me they switched brokers three times in the last four years in an attempt to slow growing costs. Does that sound familiar to you?"

Option 1
DISSOCIATE

Your prospect might dissociate from the question. They might say, "No, we've kept costs at 6%." When you experience pushback, treat them as a resource. Tell them they're unusual. Ask how they managed to keep costs so low. Find out how they beat the curve.

Option 2
EMBRACE

More often, prospects will embrace the provocative question. They will be struggling with your problem statement. Now's the time to ask questions:

- What have you tried previously?
- What happens if you do nothing?
- Why aren't you happy with your current broker?

Your prospect's answers will reveal whether or not there's a good sales opportunity. If there is, it's time to ask for the meeting.

Promise

"Listen, David. I promised, at the beginning of the call, that I'd be brief. Would it make sense to set up 15 to 30 minutes next week to talk about this further?"

When you have all the information necessary to qualify the prospect and set up a meeting, don't draw out your conversation. Just use your scheduling tool while you've still got your prospect on the line to set up the next meeting.

Say something like: "I have my Calendly pulled up. Tell me some times that work for you this week. Tuesday, I can do X, Y, and Z times, do any of those work for you?"

And that's it. In four steps, you've taken a prospect from an ice-cold contact to a warm lead.

If this framework isn't your style, there are dozens more to explore. Selling Made Simple recommends The Bulletproof Cold Calling framework. Salesforce offers 10 Steps for the Perfect Cold Call. You'll also find great methodology from sales trainers such as John Barrows, 30 Minutes to President Club, and Sarah Brazier.

> **"Make it easy and convenient. When you call and leave a voicemail, instead of asking for a call back, say, 'Hey, this is Jason with Outbound Squad. No need to call me back. I sent you an email and the subject line is [insert subject line]. Go ahead and check that out, and I'll follow up later.'"**

Jason Bay
Founder and CEO, Outbound Squad

Experts agree on one thing: A single channel isn't enough. Experts recommend an omnichannel approach. So read on for cold outreach best practices via email, social media, and more.

The backbone of the best cold outreach campaigns

The flip-side of a cold call (where you're asking prospects to react in the moment, answer questions, and talk to you), is the cold email — where instead you're giving them a chance to read, digest, and click to dig deeper. Calls and email go hand-in-hand for an omnichannel approach by appealing to the ICP who wants more info before talking.

Automated sales platforms have driven an explosion in the number of emails sent and received. Global email traffic is up to 333 billion emails sent and received per day — and **is forecast to keep growing at about 4% per year through 2026.**

Even though our inboxes are getting busier, B2B buyers still prefer email over other channels for all phases of the buying journey. **About 77% of B2B buyers prefer to be contacted over email — more than double compared to any other channel.**

Ryan Freeman, Senior Sales Manager at Calendly, shares that cold emails can be a revenue generator. While some cold emails are ignored, or worse, the prospect unsubscribes, they can also lead to new customers. By testing messaging you can determine what resonates best and leads to booked meetings. "Our approach is to not sell Calendly in our messaging but sell the benefit of an initial meeting with us. Ideally, we uncover individual or company priorities in our research and convey benefits to them. A simple (well written, researched, and message-tested) cold email can absolutely result in a big win."

Regardless of buyer preferences, getting your email read is tough. The explosion in global email traffic has turned inboxes into battlegrounds.

Today's reps must make it past their prospect's spam filter, which is no easy task. Then those emails have to duke it out with hundreds of competing messages. Even when a prospect clicks into an email, there's no guarantee they'll read or respond to it.

Despite the immense challenge, reps are cutting through.

Here's what it takes to be heard.

A cold-email template that delivers

A good cold email earns the prospect's attention and gets the conversation started.

Perhaps the prospect tells you they're not interested, but includes an explanation why. Or maybe they'll say what you're selling isn't a priority right now. If you're lucky, they'll bite and kickstart a sales-focused conversation.

Those are all positive outcomes. They can all lead to productive sales conversations. When you shift the purpose of a cold email to starting a conversation, rather than securing a meeting, you can redesign your template to be simpler, more open, and less salesy.

Fundamentally, all cold emails rely on four elements:

1. **Subject line:** Earn attention and generate enough interest for your prospect to open the email.

01 — **Subject line:** A round of applause for **[prospect]** 👏

[first name],

02 — Milestones are meant to be celebrated! As of this week, your team has **[insert personalized remark]**.

03 — We love seeing your team do what you do best! One thing we often hear teams like yours want to focus on next is improving **[relevant remark]**.

04 — Does that align with your goals? We put together this resource [CTA] if you want to learn more.

Congrats again,
[your name]
[Calendly Link]

2. **Personalization:** Pique their interest with something that only applies to your prospect.
3. **Relevance:** Demonstrate subject matter expertise and empathy with your prospect's challenges.
4. **Call-to-action (CTA):** Prompt your prospect to engage in the conversation.

PRO TIP

Often, your first email with someone is a conversation, not a request for a meeting. However, always include your meeting link in your email signature so it's easy to find. There may be some prospects who are ready to engage right out of the gate.

This email framework is flexible. You can adapt it for different sales plays — referral introductions, event follow ups, even inbound.

But we're talking about cold outreach. You've never spoken to this prospect. You have no connection to them.

Busy decision-makers receive hundreds of emails a day. Your first job is to entice them to open your email. Speak to their limbic system — the emotional part of the brain. Use an emotional hook to bypass rational thought and engage them with something personal, urgent, or important.

So how do you warm them up? Use these questions to inspire your subject line:

- Do you have a mutual connection or referral? Namedrop.
- Did they recently get promoted or did the company share a big piece of news? Celebrate it!
- Is there a new standard or regulation released for the industry? Mention you have expertise in that area.
- Do you want to show that you understand their needs? Prove how you can make an impact or highlight the pain point.
- Is humor effective for your audience and your brand? Craft something funny (while still remaining professional).

Personalization

Here's the truth: Personalization isn't going to win you deals. But what it will do is earn your prospect's attention and build a relationship.

PRO TIP

Make it about them. Pronoun-heavy emails read as more personal. Even when they're automated. **Top reps use "you," "your," and "your team" 29% more often than their average and underperforming peers.**

Jed Mahrle categorizes his prospects into niche buckets: new jobs, hobbies, geographies, technology stack, and more. By using standardized snippets, Mahrle can deliver a personalized feel without spending hours hunting for the perfect snippet.

Just as with cold calls, this is where you'll make your money. Your relevancy element must prove you know your stuff — challenges, pain points, and goals.

> **"Personalization is everything. The people I reach out to receive hundreds of emails and calls per day so it's important to stand out. If they mention anything personal on their LinkedIn such as hobbies and interests, it helps me better personalize my outreach. One thing I've seen success in is creating hand-drawn cartoons for prospects. I'll find their LinkedIn profile, draw a caricature of them, and tie it back to Gong or what I think they may care about."**

Mike Perlman
Account Executive, Gong

When your prospect reads your email, they should be thinking, "This rep really gets me."

Don't aim for a meeting in your first email. Instead, use your CTA to learn more. Your goal is to get your prospect talking about their challenges. When they open up and start talking, that's when you go for the meeting.

But eliciting any response usually takes more than one email.

So let's talk about sequences.

Multi-email sequences

Considering the wide variety of factors mentioned above, **let's assume the average cold email response rate is 1%.**

With such low engagement, it can feel like you're writing emails no one will ever read.

But so what?

If no one responds to your first email, what about your second or third?

When you build a three-email sequence, the average response rate jumps to 9%. When you expand it to seven emails, response rate spikes to 27%.

The message is clear: perseverance is king.

But for the most impact, you have to tweak your approach.

"If people aren't going to respond to your first email, what if you used your first email just to set up your second email?" Batrawy says. "What if you used your emails like a string of short stories? Instead of me giving you the entire play in the first email, I'm just going to give you the first act."

Gong analyzed more than 300,000 cold emails to create [7 Irresistible Cold Email Templates] so you can update your sales cadence now. Here's email template No. 1:

Day 1

Subject: **Losing winnable deals?**

Hi [FIRST NAME],

Is [PAIN POINT FOR PERSONA] preventing your team from reaching your goals?

Imagine being able to [TOP USE CASE FOR PERSONA] to improve [POSITIVE OUTCOME].

As I research [BUYER COMPANY], I see one big way where [BUYER COMPANY] can boost your team's performance:

[WORKFLOW] so you can [BENEFIT] (I noticed you recently [COMPANY NEWS])

Does it make sense to discuss [POSITIVE OUTCOME] for your team?

- [YOUR NAME]

Why Gong's emails work

Specific Benefit:

Choose one **ultra-specific** message. It will make your ourbound efforts more productive. Instead of asking your prospects to do the work and find their area of interest in your email, you can give more context and multiply the impact of your prospecting emails.

Use these words that sell

Words like "you," "your," and "imagine" boost your win rates. Get the full list & data.

Interest CTA

Asking for interest is 2X more effective than asking for time in cold outbounding. Here's the data:

And here's where you can [download the other six email templates] in Gong's sequence.

The first email tees up the problem.

The second email takes a proper swing at it.

With this multi-email storytelling strategy, you just keep going. Your third email builds on your second. Your fourth builds on your third. And so on.

Calls-to-action

When you're running multi-touch sequences, prospect engagement is not equal across all emails. In reality, response rate follows a bell curve.

Your first one or two emails rarely provoke a response. Likewise, your final touches are unlikely to succeed where earlier emails failed.

Great sales conversations live in the middle.

If you know you're most likely to generate a response in your middle touches, that's where you put your most direct CTAs.

> "The peak of your message should happen mid-sequence. All messaging before should start off light and be a lead into a stronger ask, while all messaging after should be wrapping up communication, as they may not be ready to buy yet."

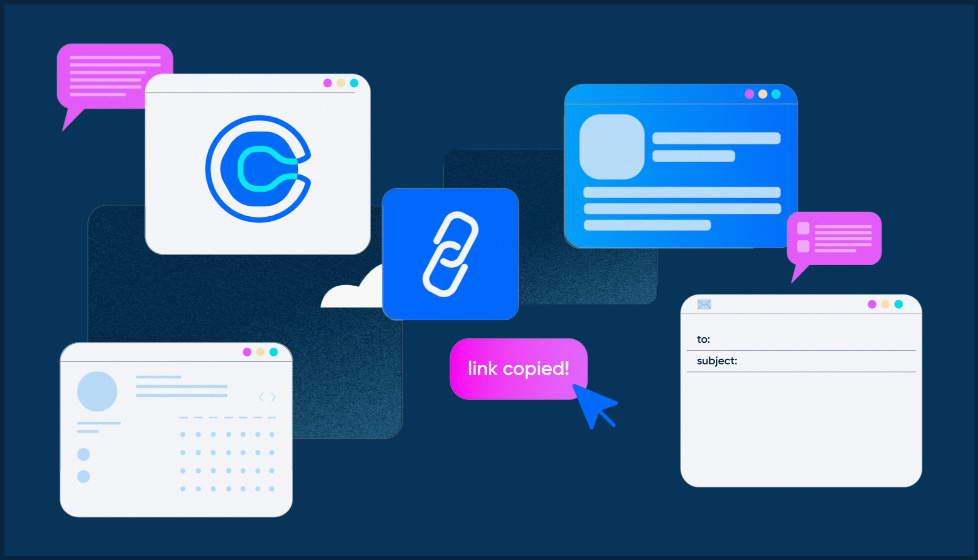
Katie Penner
Head of Sender Relations, Sendoso

Here's an example of a five-touch sequence peaking on the third email:

- **Email #1 CTA:** Does that sound familiar to you?
- **Email #2 CTA:** Would you be interested in seeing a lesser-known way to handle that?
- **Email #3 CTA:** Would it make sense to set up 15 to 30 minutes next week to talk about this further?
- **Email #4 CTA:** Is this something you handle, or is there someone else on your team I should message about this?
- **Email #5 CTA:** Is it fair to assume this isn't the right time? Should I follow up in six months?

Notice these are soft asks. Even the third CTA only asks if it would make sense to book time for a meeting.

Once you have their consent, make it as easy as possible for your prospect to schedule time with you. Send your Calendly link, and ask if they prefer to send you some available times. Create soft language around the link. [Make it clear that you're sending your Calendly link for their benefit, not yours.]

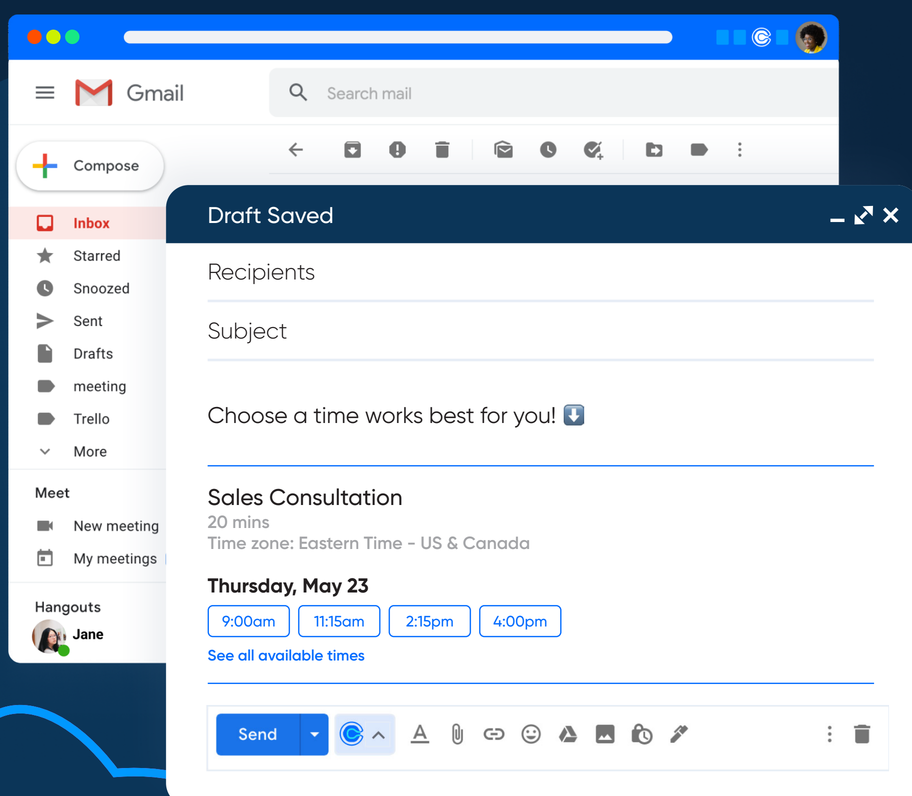


In Calendly's emails to prospects, that typically reads something like:

- Book time with me using the scheduling link here, or feel free to send me some times that work for you.
- I know you're busy. To avoid email ping pong, here's my Calendly. Or, if you have a calendar link, please send it my way.

Busy stakeholders really do appreciate the ease of simplified booking. When you can, include some options for meeting dates and times in the actual body of the email to make their lives even simpler.

When your prospect gives you an idea of their availability — even something vague like "later in the week" — a tactic from Jed Mahrle is to proactively book time. Set up the event and drop a disclaimer like "Hold." So long as you tell them how to reschedule, it comes across as proactive. "You're not going back and forth trying to find a time," says Mahrle. "Get it on the calendar. Half the time, it works for them. The other half, they click the reschedule."



Hyper-personalization

As we mentioned before, personalization isn't a substitute for relevancy. But it's still a fantastic tool for cold outreach. It can win a prospect's attention and kickstart the rapport-building process.

"Personalization is what's booked me meeting after meeting," says Emma Carr, who has done sales and competitive enablement for Klue. "My prospect knows I've spent the time to write an email tying together their specific roles, potential needs, and pain points."

During her career, Carr built an informal process for personalization research.

She uses three tiers of personalization: individual, company, and industry. Individual-specific personalization is the most impactful, industry-level snippets are the least, and company personalization sits somewhere in between.

There are different research strategies for each:

- **Individual snippet:** Social media, personal relationship, CRM contact record
- **Company snippet:** Sales intelligence, financial reports, news
- **Industry snippet:** News, reports, competitors

With all three types of personalization, Carr recommends being unpredictable and inventive. She often references recommendations and endorsements from Linkedin, especially if she knows the other person.

Another suggestion: Make the personalization relevant so it's not a standalone section.

Reps go wrong by having a sentence on a prospect's love of tennis and not tying it back into the rest of the email," Carr says. "If you can find a creative way to tie tennis to a pain point or create an analogy around the sport, it's a completely different story."

Emma Carr
Customer Success Manager, Competitive Enablement, Klue

Sendoso scores!

After finding out a prospect loved the San Francisco 49ers, Clari SDR Vivianna Vu sent along a biography of famous football player Joe Montana through Sendoso's Amazon integration. She followed up with a clever email, making her gift relevant, educational, and ultimately a success.

The prospect engaged right away and booked a meeting!

This is why Linkedin exists

Work history, education, job role… LinkedIn is perfect for outreach because it hands you everything you need to identify prospects, personalize communication, build connections, and eventually establish trust.

At Calendly, Ryan Freeman uses LinkedIn to map out his network and relationships to look for warm introductions, including checking to see if his teammates are connected to his prospects. He finds shared experiences another great source of warm introductions, spaces like alumni networks, industry groups, and common social interests.

“Show your prospects that you’ve done your homework,” Freeman says. “Tailor your outreach around priorities or challenges facing that prospect’s company or industry. Establish trust by demonstrating your ability to understand and precisely navigate to key influencers and decision makers.”

Don’t see a warm introduction opportunity? You can comment on prospects’ posts and interact with the communities around your target industries. That way, when you do send a direct message, your name and company are familiar, and you’ve established some credibility.

About 78% of social sellers outsell peers who don’t use social media. What’s more, a strong social presence can increase InMail acceptance rates by up to 87%. The message is clear: Social selling works.

What’s more, A-players know how impactful social media can be. AJ Trapani is one of those A-players. He’s one of Gong’s brightest stars, rising quickly from inbound account development to Senior Mid-Market AE.

His secret?

“I heavily lean on LinkedIn,” says Trapani. “It’s my superpower.”

But LinkedIn isn’t just another cold outreach channel. You can’t treat it like an email or phone call.

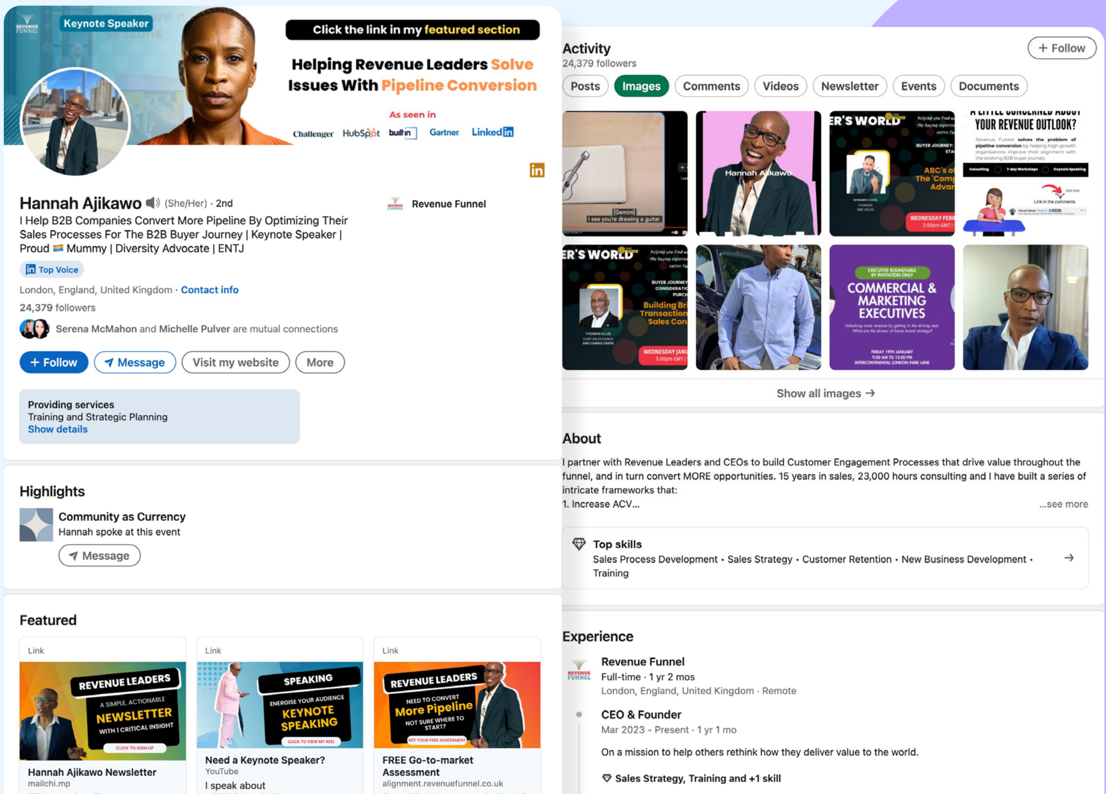
It’s a social network. Relationships must come first.

Optimize your profile

Creating a strong LinkedIn profile that showcases all the critical information about your company will help you gain your target audience's trust. [About 50% of buyers avoid sales professionals with incomplete sales profiles](). Some other important ways to make your LinkedIn profile stand out include:

- Add a current profile picture. Profiles that include a picture are 14x more likely to be viewed than those without.
- Go beyond just your job title in your headline and call out what you do and how you do it.
- Bring your skills to life in your summary. Reiterate your brand's mission, provide social proof, and include a brief call to action to help buyers reach out.
- Set up your [Calendly integration with LinkedIn Messaging]() so you can strike while the iron's hot.
- Request recommendations. These personal testimonials can further establish your credibility.

B2B sales expert Hannah Ajikawo built an impactful and thorough LinkedIn profile to make the perfect first impression.



Preparatory touches

When he was still an account development rep, all of Trapani's cold outreach started with a preparatory touch on LinkedIn. He worked through his prospects and sent a connection request to each one.

He personalized his connection requests wherever possible, avoiding all mentions of sales, products, and pitches. Instead, he'd look for a shared interest or common connection. His connection notes were short and simple:

> "Hey, I like that you like Simon Sineck. Open to networking?"
> "Hey, I see we were both at Pi Kappa Alpha. Open to networking?"
> "Hey, you worked with my rockstar colleague Udi Ledergor. Open to networking?"

Adding even more personalized snippets increases your average connection rate. His goal was simple: chat with his prospect and get the conversation going. He leveraged recent posts by his prospects, media appearances by their coworkers, and relevant news about their company to kickstart the conversation.

> "I love this quote you shared!"
> "You went to California Polytechnic, right? Me too!"
> "I heard your CEO talking on this podcast."

It's not the end of the world if you can't find a connection or personalized snippet. Spend 30 seconds on someone's profile searching for the first acceptable snippet. If you don't find anything, send a more generic connection request and move on. That could look like:

> "I like what you're doing at [company name]. Open to connecting?"

Social selling relies on your ability to build personal connections with prospects, Trapani explains. Because if they like you, they'll trust you. And if they trust you, they'll buy from you.

But going from a personal conversation to a sales pitch is easier said than done.

Make the shift

One of the most common concerns with social selling is kickback. Reps worry prospects will react badly the moment the conversation turns to sales. But Trapani says their worries are misplaced.

"I've never once had anyone get mad at me," he says. "But it's still awkward to make the adjustment."

Instead of trying to naturally guide the conversation to the prospect's pain point, his strategy is to be upfront.

One of his recent messages read:

> "Not to 180° you, but it's clear from your quote about coaching reps that you're passionate about rep success. You might like what we're doing over here at Gong."

From there, social selling bleeds into a more traditional cold outreach motion. You uncover pain points, develop rapport, and set up meetings.

As with cold email, use soft ask CTAs to secure a prospect's engagement. When they've agreed to a follow-up, then send across your Calendly link to streamline the meeting booking process.

Social selling best practices

Social media operates differently from channels like email and phone, so it requires its own best practices and additional tactics:

Send a personalized video or Loom

LinkedIn doesn't suffer from the same deliverability risks as email. You can add photos, gifs, videos, and screen recordings without worrying about your message getting caught in a spam filter. In fact, videos included in the second and third touch have a higher response rate than in the first. Just keep them a tight 30-60 seconds long.

Post consistently

Stay on top of your prospects' minds and earn their trust in the process by sharing content on LinkedIn a few times a week. Aim to follow the 80/20 rule, where 80% of your content is knowledge sharing about your industry, trends you're noticing, or helpful tips and tricks. The other 20% can be about your product and company. And here's a **great example** that blends the two from Gong AE Brian LaManna.

Delay your pitch

Immediately launching into a pitch is a mistake on any channel — but especially so on LinkedIn. There's less anonymity and less privacy. It's a social network, not a pitching event. Build a relationship first. Give your personalized messages a little time to work some magic. When it's the right time, you can use Calendly's extension to **schedule directly from LinkedIn Messenging**, as a smooth follow-up to the personalized messages you've been sending.

You're not shouting into the void: Buyers out there need you

Writing one fantastic cold email is unlikely to land you a meeting. Motivation will get you started but it's habit, grit, and persistence that secure meetings.

To make your cold prospecting repeatable, sustainable, and scalable, you need something to tie calls, emails, and social together — a sequence, campaign, or blueprint. Many different standardized processes detail how and when to reach out to prospects. For inspiration, check out the [Agoge Sequence] by Sam Nelson. The 15-step multi-channel sequence is a great starting point for fledgling sales reps.

Experts agree an omnichannel approach (aka multi-thread approach, multi-channel approach) is the right way to go in this economy.

> **"Just one method of prospecting isn't enough anymore. You've got to get creative with your outreach while still tying that to the value, whether that's social selling, texting, gift giving, or video prospecting. There are so many ways to engage a prospect now than the traditional ways we used in the past."**

Carli Cottle
Director of Business Development, Gong

In A/B tests, mix it up and test cadence, CTAs, and channels until you find the right formula for your product and your ideal cold outreach prospects.

Remember:

1. Cold outreach isn't 100% cold if you identify prospects thoughtfully.
2. In uncertain economic times, with the right approach sales reps can overcome tighter budgets and a larger pool of decision makers.
3. Start conversations, not pitches.
4. Place the prospect at the center of those conversations through research, learning about their pain points, job, and company. Get to know them as individuals on LinkedIn.
5. Use an omnichannel approach including email, phone, social (and maybe even some gifting)! Just make sure you're being heard and your messaging and cadence are on point.

Above all, don't stop. About 44% of your peers give up after the first message results in silence or a "no." So if you can mentally push past that, you're already way ahead of the pack.

The ROI of choosing the right sales solutions

Using Calendly, 89% of sales teams close more deals

A whopping 93% of sales teams achieve faster sales cycles with Calendly

88% of sales customers report no-shows decreased with Calendly's Workflows feature

How Guru 5x their response rate increase from their target accounts with Sendoso

LiveRamp increased meeting booked rates 33% using gifting to break through the noise.

Sendoso's AI-enhanced gifting automation platform backed by over 10 million gifts can help you break into accounts and create real relationships at scale.

With Gong's Call Spotlight, reviews are 10X faster than listening back to the call. Over 80% of Gong users already save time with the feature.

Gong Forecast predicts deal outcomes with 20% greater precision than models based solely on CRM and activity data.

Gong helped new hires at Iron Mountain hit their ramp targets, generating a 148% improvement in metric attainment and three-month reduction in ramp time for the company.

Additional Resources

Calendly

- Calendly webinar: How to Fill Pipeline During Economic Uncertainty
- Calendly webinar series: Sales Growth Week On-Demand
- Calendly report: The State of Scheduling

GONG

- Gong templates: 8 Essential Email Templates
- Gong cheat sheet: 7 Habits of Master Rapport Builders
- Gong guide: Email Optimization Guide for Bulk Senders

Sendoso

- Sendoso guide: Cut Through the Noise with a Hyper-Personalized ABM Strategy in 2023
- Sendoso guide: Winning Over Key Decision Makers
- Sendoso webinar: How to Maximize ROI with Intent Data and Strategic Gifting