

When to Follow Up with Prospects in Sales: The Basics

November 2, 2023



In an ideal world, every prospect you reached out to as a salesperson would automatically see the value in your product and agree to make a purchase straight away.

Unfortunately, in the real world, this rarely happens. The reality is most consumers need a number of nudges, or interactions with a salesperson before they're ready to act. In fact, a study found that 80% of sales require an [average of 5 follow ups](#) to close a deal.

That's why a good sales follow-up process is crucial. The more you connect with your prospect, the more likely you are to get a win. The trouble is, finding the right 'follow-up strategy' can be difficult. It can be difficult to see the line between not following up enough, and being over-bearing.

So, how do you know when to follow up?

Timing the Follow-Up Message: The Golden Rule

The unfortunate truth is there's no one-size-fits-all strategy to nailing your follow up timing. Everything from the type of customer you serve, to your product or service, and even your communication strategy (phone, email, or SMS) can influence the right cadence.

The golden rule of an effective follow up process, however, is that you should usually be following up more often, and faster than you'd think. The average person is bombarded with [around 121 emails](#) a day, and countless calls or texts. This means even after a single day; your ideal customer could forget all about your

solution if you don't follow up.

Ultimately, the best time to follow up with a customer after an initial conversation is within the first 24 hours. Here, you can highlight the key points of your discussion, and start paving the way for your next conversation. However, it's not enough to simply follow up once.

Instead, you need to develop a schedule for consistently reaching out to your customers at the perfect moment, reminding them of your value, and pushing them through the sales funnel.

Determining When to Follow Up with Prospects (Cold or Warm)

As mentioned above, there are a few different factors that can influence when you follow up with prospects (and how often). The first is whether you're dealing with a cold, or warm lead. If you're doing cold outreach, it's generally a good idea to follow up immediately on day one, then send up to 6 additional follow-up messages, spread out like so:

- Day 1: Send an initial follow-up message [mentioning the prospect's pain points](#)
- Day 2: Send a new follow-up message with similar details from the first message.
- Day 4: Send a follow-up message with a distinct call-to action (ask your customer to take part in a demo, a meeting, or a consultation).
- Day 8: Send a message sending relevant content, such as a whitepaper or case study, to pique the prospect's interest.
- Day 12: Send another follow up message, informing the customer that you're going to stop contacting them (at least for now).

If you're following up with a warm lead, your strategy should change. You still need to reach out straight away following an initial meeting, but you can essentially throw out the timeline and continue following up until you get a solid 'yes' or 'no' response.

It's still important to leave breathing room between messages, to ensure you're not overwhelming your prospect's inbox, but you can continue connecting for as long as you need to.

Adjusting Timing and Cadence to the Communication Method

Alongside the type of prospect you're dealing with, the communication method you use for following up also influences how often you should reach out. With all methods, it's usually important to follow up straight away, but there are some variations. For instance:

- **Follow-up emails:** With follow-up emails, you'll generally use the method mentioned above for cold leads, following up straight away, then leaving a day or two between additional messages. You can follow up quite frequently, because emails are often less invasive than text messages or phone calls.

- **Phone call follow-ups:** If you're following up with a customer via phone, it's usually a good idea to wait a little longer between interactions. Consumers can quickly become frustrated if you're constantly calling them on a daily basis. Prepare voicemail scripts to make sure you have a message to leave if you don't get through.
- **Texting and messaging:** When following up via text or an instant message [on social media](#), you can follow a similar cadence to email. The key to success here is ensuring your messages are brief. Keep your content short and sweet, and make sure you let your contact know how to reach you for a more in-depth conversation.
- **In person visits:** If you tend to connect with prospects in person, you can't expect them to be ready to have a follow-up visit with you the day after you meet. Instead, you'll need to give your prospects a little extra time to mull things over and prepare for your next meeting.

Techniques for Effective Follow-Up Strategies

Knowing when to follow up with prospects is just one part of making sure you can [convert as many consumers as possible](#) as a salesperson. You also need to ensure you're making the most of your follow-up strategy. Here are some quick tips for success.

1. Use a Range of Follow-Up Methods

As mentioned above, there are various communication methods salespeople can use to follow up with prospects. You don't have to stick to one specific strategy. If emailing your prospect isn't leading to results, consider reaching out over social media or text.

If you're still struggling, try [picking up the phone](#) and speaking to the prospect directly. The more communication methods you use, the harder you are to ignore. Additionally, tailoring your strategy to the communication preferences of your consumer means they're more likely to respond.

1. Personalize Your Outreach

Automation tools can make it a lot easier to follow up with a number of prospects quickly. However, they shouldn't stop you from personalizing your outreach. Every message you send or email you write should be specific to the prospect you want to convert.

Research your contacts, find out what their pain points and goals are, and reference them in your messaging. Look for trigger events you can mention in your emails, such as a company winning an award, or an employee leaving a business. Remember, personalized emails can improve your revenue [by up to 76%](#) - don't underestimate the impact of a little customization.

1. Provide Constant Value

One of the biggest reasons salespeople struggle to follow up as quickly or frequently as they should, is that they don't want to come across as 'annoying' or pushy. While you do need to be a little pushy to improve your chances of getting a sale, you can reduce how disruptive your messages are.

The easiest way to do this is to ensure every outreach message includes something of value. Begin your message by referencing your customer's pain points, then offer insights into how they can overcome them, using your solutions. Include links to relevant posts, videos, or articles in your email to educate your prospect, and keep them up-to-date on special offers.

1. Master your Email Subject Lines

If you're following up with [prospects via email](#), your subject line can make or break your chances of success. Remember, many professionals receive hundreds of emails a day. That means you need to find a way to grab their attention from the inbox.

One of the best ways to do this is to personalize your subject line, referencing a topic you discussed, using the customer's name, or addressing a pain point. You can also improve your chances of clicks by creating a sense of urgency (offering a limited discount, or referencing a time), or asking a direct question. Simply showing your customer the email contains valuable information can be helpful to (for instance, 'just thought this article could help')

Remember to ensure you're taking steps to avoid the spam folder too. Send relevant messages, get rid of images where possible, and avoid spammy language.

1. Encourage Action with Each Follow Up

When following up with prospects, it's important to remember the aim isn't just to keep the conversation going. You also want to improve your chances of moving your consumer through the sales funnel. Every message or text you send should define 'next steps'.

For instance, when you send your third follow-up email, showcasing a piece of relevant content, ask your customer to arrange a meeting time with you to discuss it. When you follow up immediately after a discussion, ask them when they'll be available to talk to you again. Be specific when offering meeting times, such as 'How's 9:30am on Wednesday for you'?

1. Use Automation Carefully

Technology can be a powerful tool for salespeople. [Solutions like ChatGPT](#) can help you craft email subject lines, messages, and personalized content. Automation tools can ensure you send messages at the right cadence for your target audience, without having to remember to write various emails a day.

However, it's important to use these tools correctly. Don't just copy and paste the same message into an email template and send it to dozens of customers. Additionally, make sure you know when to time your messages, based on your customer's time zone.

1. Know When to Stop

Finally, while success as a salesperson requires tenacity and endurance, it's important to remember you can't just keep following up forever. At a certain point, you have to accept that if a customer isn't responding to you, they probably just aren't interested.

Keep a close eye on the number of messages you send, and make sure you stop emailing or connecting with someone after a while. This will ensure you don't waste time on outreach messages that just end up in spam. You can focus your attention elsewhere, on prospects that might convert.

When you do decide to stop contacting a prospect, send a final 'break-up' email. Let them know you're giving up on reaching out to them, but give them one final chance to change their mind. This will spur someone into action if they're interested in your solution, but haven't had time to get back to you yet.

Know When (and How) to Follow Up

Following up effectively with prospects can be one of the most challenging parts of sales, but it's also one of the most important. Ultimately, most of your consumers aren't going to convert the first time you talk with them. You need to be willing to put in the ground work and keep following up.

However, it's crucial to ensure you're following up at the right time, and at the right frequency. If you can nail your cadence, then you can boost your chances of closing deals, without earning the reputation of an annoying and pushy sales person.

Learn more about prospecting, following up, and building rapport with your customers today, by connecting with the experts at the [Hard Skill Exchange](#)??