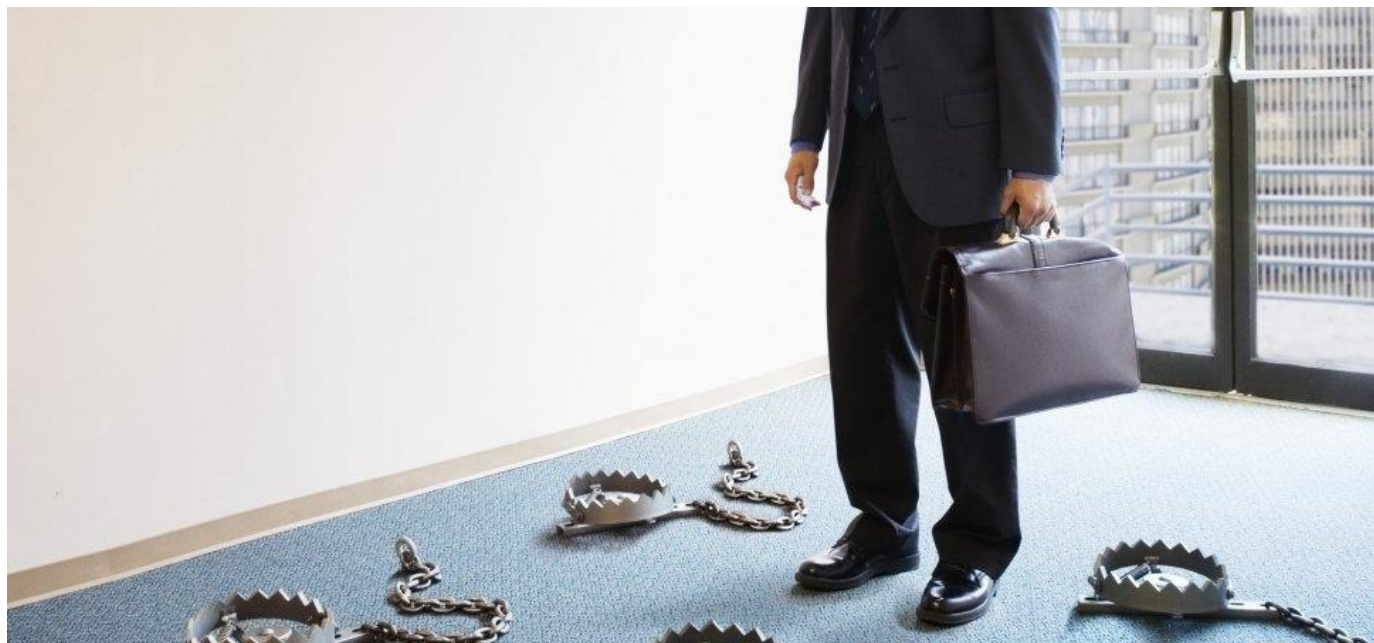


# 12 Ways to Sabotage Your Sales Emails



Outbound sales, also known as "inside sales" or "remote sales," is still one of the most effective ways a company can drive new revenue. It's often associated with the image of salespeople doggedly cold calling prospective customers, but cold email has already caught up as another essential outbound tool. Cold email prospecting is faster, cheaper, and more scalable than cold calling, but the very nature of email also makes it easy to move too fast and get burned.

Using the wrong platform for a campaign can hurt deliverability and even get your IP blacklisted. Sending error-riddled or stale templates can instantly damage your reputation with hundreds or thousands of potential customers at the click of a button. Emailing a list of unqualified leads can result in your first contact with a company being marked as 'spam', or worse, land you in time-consuming exchanges with all the wrong people.

Every week, I see hot startups and giant corporations making one or more of the following mistakes in their sales emails. You can

position yourself comfortably ahead of the curve by simply avoiding these mistakes:

## **1. Sending too many emails without testing first.**

Too many companies jump the gun by rapidly scaling their outbound sales email campaigns without really understanding what works and what doesn't. Cold email campaigns should be rolled out in incrementally larger batches, with variations of copy and messaging tested at each stage. That way, you don't risk burning an entire list of potential leads with emails that won't convert. Instead: Test on a sample; see what works; refine and revise; test again.

## **2. Ignoring the real customer because you only want the 'top dog'.**

A number of so-called sales gurus will tell you that you should always go straight to the top, and ask to be referred down to the decision maker. Not necessarily.

If you're selling enterprise sales software, you probably don't want to speak with every entry-level rep at the company, but asking every Fortune 500 CEO for an introduction to a sales decision maker doesn't make sense either. Instead, reach out directly to the most relevant decision makers (VP of Sales, for example), especially when selling into larger organizations.

## **3. Wasting time on the wrong people.**

Just because people are responding to you and taking meetings doesn't mean that you're making progress toward closing a deal. Talking to the wrong people--like gatekeepers or unqualified buyers who can't afford you--is a waste of everyone's time. Qualify your leads better to make sure you're speaking with a decision maker who's actually capable of doing business with you.

## **4. Trying to automate too soon.**

As with most things, it can be dangerous to run before you know how to crawl. There are many great sales tools out there, but they won't magically solve all your problems. In fact, an efficient tool will only make you fail faster, if your campaign's fundamentals are flawed (a poorly-targeted list, or a product-market mismatch, for example).

So before you try to automate everything or buy subscriptions to a bunch of expensive platforms, make sure you're actually selling something to people who want to buy it. A good email campaign should be built around real sales conversations, and reflect things you've learned from actually closing deals and making sales.

## **5. Sending emails one at a time.**

Your sales team should not be sending all their emails manually, one at a time. You can still write one-off emails for practice, and you can easily reverse-engineer highly personalized emails into winning email templates, but you should be using mail merge to send the bulk of your emails. (Note: This is not the same as marketing automation software!)

## **6. Sending generic and impersonal emails.**

Don't use lazy, canned email templates. While they may have worked once upon a time, they don't anymore because everyone has already seen them and developed immunity to their cheap tricks. If you want to get responses, you need to write for a specific buyer persona and personalize your cold emails with custom inserts.

## **7. Sending emails with errors that make you look dumb.**

Having errors in your sales emails makes you lose all credibility with your potential customers. Re-read your emails aloud before

you send them, to check for obvious spelling and grammar mistakes. Likewise, before you ever send a mail merge, you should always send a test email to yourself first.

## **8. Raising flags with unscreened list data.**

One of the biggest red flags to a potential customer is when a salesperson screws up their name. For example, companies often have registered corporate names that no one would ever use beyond a legal document or tax return. For example, writing to someone at Pepsi and referring to "PepsiCo, Inc." is a dead giveaway that you're using mail merge, and ruins the personalized impact of your carefully-worded email.

So check and clean the contact info on your mailing list before launching a campaign, especially if your list was purchased or built with software. You can hire someone from Upwork (*formerly known as Odesk*) to do data cleaning and entry for you for around three dollars an hour, and avoid this problem entirely.

## **9. Writing emails which rely on list data you don't actually have.**

I am obsessed with creating highly-personalized email templates, but if you're going to add extra personalization, you need to triple check that you actually have that information.

For example, if you write a mail merge template that includes reference to a {!Competitor}, but that information isn't complete in your list database, your email will be outed as a template. Not the worst thing in the world, perhaps, but it will definitely cause the reader to pause and consider your credibility, instead of getting absorbed in your persuasive copy.

Whenever you add customized fields you should also make sure you have a backup option in case that data is missing. For example, if I was merging with {Competitor}, I could write code that

would insert the words "your competitor" wherever I didn't have a competitor name in my list database.

## **10. Your follow-up emails are lame.**

Following up doesn't just mean sending a series of garbage emails that keep repeating the same thing over and over. That only annoys people and makes them mark you as spam. If you send any follow-up emails, you need to make sure you're adding new and unique value every time.

## **11. Giving up too soon.**

One email is almost never enough to generate a new lead, unless your prospective customer has already responded to you before. Even sending four emails is not enough. Statistically speaking, you need to send 8 emails before you quit, since it's likely that up to 33% of your responses will come from emails 5-8.

## **12. Not knowing when to quit.**

**Did I just say keep sending emails? Well, to a point...**

Salespeople need to be persistent, but that doesn't warrant you becoming an obnoxious e-stalker, either. If people ask you to not contact them again, or haven't responded after you've sent 8 emails, give up! (Or at least wait a long while before you contact them again.)