

How to Start A Conversation With Even The Busiest Leaders

Learn how to leverage cold email to start a conversation with anyone.



What would you do if you could get a meeting with the CEO of the fastest growing company in America, or that popular celebrity who's launching a new clothing brand?

Would you close that big deal, form a lucrative and powerful partnership, or just build an invaluable relationship with someone you highly respect?

Anything is possible if you can catch someone's attention long enough to start a conversation and build rapport with them.

I'm going to share the tactics and strategies behind the cold email approach that has allowed me to build my entire network from scratch, so that you too can learn how to build rapport with anyone, even the busiest leaders.

Cold Email Tip #1: Know Your Audience

Who are you trying to start a conversation with? The President of GM, the author of your favorite business book, or a startup CEO in Silicon Valley?

Before you even write a single word of your email, take the time to research your audience.

Analyze their background and take notes.

Learn about their habits, interests, what kind of content they like to read and share, and anything else you can find out about them.

You can do this by parsing their LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social profiles for keywords, topics, and tone. If they have a blog or website, read that too.

Like Zig Ziglar once said, "*You can get everything in life you want if you help enough other people get what they want.*"

So, the more you know how they think, what they like and desire, and what keeps them up at night, the better.

Cold Email Tip #2: Solve Their Problems

Everyone has a problem or something they fear; you just have to learn how to look for it.

Oftentimes someone's greatest strength or talent is close to their biggest point of weakness.

For example, the CEO of the fastest growing company is probably stressed out about keeping their growth rate high. The VP of Sales at that tech company whose team keeps crushing their sales quota is afraid they won't be able to keep exceeding expectations over time, and will be looking for any advantage they can to keep their sales team ahead of the curve.

If you can figure out what they fear most and pose a potential solution to their problems, and they'll almost certainly want to talk to you.

Cold Email Tip #3: Use Social Proof to Build Credibility

Once you've done all your background research, you've probably learned so much about this person that you even know how they take their coffee and what kind of yoga they practice.

But no matter how much you think you know about the executive you're reaching out to, don't forget that you're still a stranger to them. You still have to disarm their skepticism and make them begin to trust you if you want to get a response.

The best cold emails quickly establish some form of credibility by leveraging social proof. The more concrete and specific your social proof is, the better.

Just saying, "*We have the best Ethiopian food in the Northern California,*" is generic and not very credible.

Instead, you can leverage your existing notable customers, and say something like, "*Our Ethiopian restaurant is regularly visited by African dignitaries when they visit California, and Mark Zuckerberg eats here at least once a month.*"

Assuming the facts in the latter sentence are true, see how much stronger and more believable the second one is than the first?

Social proof varies depending on your own background, your recipient, and the context of your email, but the best social proof will often come from your customers. And the more the recipient knows the person or company that you're referring to, the stronger it will resonate with them.

Cold Email Tip #4: Keep Things Short and Sweet

Long-winded and rambling cold emails suck.

No one has time to read a novel-sized email from a stranger.

Most of the cold emails I send are only about three to five sentences long; maximum seven sentences.

You might ask yourself how you can fit everything you need to say in five sentences, but the answer is to keep your email focused on one core idea or benefit. That will also help keep the reader's attention more focused, which makes them much more likely to respond.

If you have multiple ideas or value propositions you want to leverage, save them. You can always use them for your "follow up emails."

According to Inside Sales and MIT, along with my own research based on split testing more than 100,000 different emails, you need to send a series of **8 cold emails** if you want to maximize your chance of getting a response.

That doesn't mean that you will send everyone 8 emails, but that you will keep emailing them up to 8 times if you want to get a response.

Cold Email Tip #5: Incentivize Them to Respond

So why should this busy executive take time out of their day to respond to your email?

What's in it for them to answer you and start a conversation?

Your email needs to end with a clear "Call to Action" that makes it obvious to the reader what step they should take next, and why they should talk to you.

Here's an example of a weak Call to Action that won't get many responses:

"Let's talk sometime."

Instead you should say something more clear and compelling like, *"When can we have a quick 20 minute call so we can discuss a few ways you can fix your sales bottleneck at {!Company}?"*

The incentive in that sentence is to *"discuss a few ways to fix your sales bottleneck."*

Assuming that a sales bottleneck is a pain point for the recipient, this Call to Action would work well after you've offered a teaser of how you would potentially solve their problem, combined with some social proof earlier in the email.