

*The Definitive
Playbook for*

SENDING COLD EMAILS THAT WORK



To all the experts, gurus and growth hackers on Twitter who seem to think cold email is dead -- we beg to differ.

INTRODUCTION

Email is all we've been doing for the past ~6 years, and we have 100s of happy clients to show for it. Cold email isn't dead -- it's just HARD.

Consider this:

1. The average office worker gets 120+ emails a day.
2. Consumers say they open 57% of emails they get.
3. But marketers report open rates as low as 15%.

Which means you could theoretically get your emails seen by 3x more prospects if you know what you're doing.

The truth is you're probably already doing a lot of things right. But when your audience endlessly hears "Hey, let me tell you about our solution," even pretty good emails still get trashed.

That's why we're giving away some of the RevBoss secrets to cold outreach -- in the hopes that you can take your pretty good emails and turn them into great emails. The kind that generate "I never reply to these, but..." replies. We get that all. the. time.

STRATEGY IS EVERYTHING

Okay, a bit dramatic -- but it is extremely important. It's essentially the Who, What, and Why behind an email.

To spell it out, the Who is your market -- the industries you serve, the decision makers you talk to, etc. The What is your offer. And the Why is where Who and What overlap to form the value proposition you want to communicate, as per our handy venn diagram (sorry for the middle school flashbacks).



If you think of lead gen as an equation -- $(\text{Need} + \text{Offer}) \times \text{Trust} = \text{Lead}$ -- but what you're offering doesn't match the needs of the prospect, cold email will never work. Hence why strategy always has to come first.

Data plays a big part in informing your strategy. If you're seeing low open rates, your emails are either going to spam or your subject line / opener is falling flat -- so start there.

If open rates look solid but no one is replying, it could be that you're emailing tough cookies (HR titles, IT, big co) -- or just the wrong cookies.

If you're happy with open and reply rates but you're not seeing leads, take a step back. Are there any patterns in your replies?

If you're seeing a lot of responses along the lines of "not my decision," you should probably update the titles you're targeting. Some prospects may refer you to colleagues, so keep an eye on who they loop in and adjust your targeting accordingly.

Another common bucket of replies is "we already have this covered." In those cases, make sure your emails emphasize what's unique about your offering compared to other solutions. You may also hit your stride going after slightly smaller companies that are less likely to have resources in place.

Along those same lines, if what you're getting back is "we don't have the budget," think about targeting larger companies that may have more money to spend on solutions like yours.

If you feel stuck and you're not sure what to do next, it can be helpful to think about the last few customers you've won:

- Are they all in the same market?
- Were they already using a provider for the same service, or is this new to them?
- Similar titles?
- Similar problems being solved?

The answers to these questions often give a better sense of the market's needs and whether we're headed in the right direction.

Even when you have a strategy that works, never stop questioning it. Markets fluctuate, products evolve, people change, copy gets stale, and so on -- so it never hurts to try a pivot.



If you're happy with open and reply rates but you're not seeing leads, take a step back. Are there any patterns in your replies?

TARGETING TIPS

You can nail absolutely every aspect of a cold email, but if the targeting is off, it's going to flop (which is also why you shouldn't immediately assume your emails are the culprit if something's not working).

Whether you're using prospecting tools or doing your own research, make sure you're getting specific enough.

Your targeting parameters should be based on your ideal customer profile (ICP). If you're pulling a bunch of emails that don't match your ICP, people are going to question why they got your email and mark it as spam -- a hit to both your reputation and your future ability to reach the right prospects.

You may also want to focus on titles with buying power. Sure, you can tell office assistants how much simpler scheduling is with your calendar tool and hope they pass it up to their bosses -- but you're probably better off going straight to the bosses with how it ups their assistants' productivity.

As with general strategy, taking recent clients and working backward to find the characteristics that made them a good fit is a great place to start if you're trying to refine your targeting.

You can also consider expanding your targeting to include titles that are similar to those you already know are solid bets.

HOW NOT TO WRITE AN EMAIL

Before we can explain why our emails work, it'll help to look at one that doesn't. Pretend for a minute that you're us. You specialize in email-based lead generation for other B2B companies, and you know you want to get more PR firms on your client roster.

So you send them something like this.

Subject: lead gen

Hi [first name],

Do you constantly struggle with finding new leads to add to your pipeline?

A lot of companies in your space do, but that doesn't mean you have to rely solely on referrals. We make it easier to drive business.

Throughout our 3-week onboarding process, we get to know your company story, the types of clients you'd like to have conversations with (including their markets, size, common pain points, and more), and how you typically talk about your offerings. From there, we create custom email campaigns based on the information you've supplied and send them to a carefully curated list of prospects that match your ideal customer profile.

We'll filter all the responses your campaigns receive, so you only have to manage the ones that engage positively, and your dedicated account manager will constantly monitor key metrics like open rates, reply rates, and lead rates to hone in on the messaging and audiences that are bringing you the most success.

We're always making pivots and testing new strategies because, ultimately, your success is our success.

Set up a call with us today to learn how you can start winning more customers.

Herman

Apologies for how cringey that was (you can admit you would have hit delete) -- but let's lay out some of the major problems with it. Strap yourself in -- it's a long list.

- It's practically a book by email standards. At most, it should be half this length -- especially since there's a good chance your prospects are checking email on a phone.
- The subject line is straightforward but boring.
- It opens with a question, which can be intriguing -- but when it's a presumptuous question with a yes / no answer, you risk the prospect immediately answering no in their head and moving on.
- Nothing makes this particularly relevant to the prospect. "Companies in your space" and the generic pain point could apply to almost any company at all -- a dead giveaway that you're casting a wide net (and an easy excuse to cast your message aside).
- It doesn't get to the point quickly enough. Email isn't mentioned until paragraph three. If the prospect can't tell what you do from the outset, why keep reading?
- It gets a little too in the weeds. There's a fine line between highlighting what's great about your offer and throwing out too much information. When in doubt, save some of your points for your follow-up. (It's also entirely possible to go the other way and include too little information, in which case your offer won't stand out.)

- Too many sentences start with “we,” which means it fails to bring the prospect into the equation. Yes, you have to talk about your company, but it should be in relation to how you can help the person on the other end of the email.
- The writing feels stiff and formal -- despite what you may think, you don't have to choose between sounding professional and sounding authentic.
- It's missing credibility. Without doing some digging, how does the prospect know this company wasn't started yesterday?
- The call to action is salesy and won't tempt the prospect into replying. If your goal is engagement, stay away from anything that sounds like you'd hear it on an infomercial -- and try suggesting a specific time or including a calendar link to make the next step as easy as possible.

These are all surprisingly common faux pas, so if you're doing any of the above in your outbound messaging, don't sweat it -- it just means you may want to rethink your approach.



There's a fine line between highlighting what's great about your offer and throwing out too much information.

5 COMPONENTS OF A GREAT EMAIL

When it comes to email structure, we've found five common elements in all of our highest-performing campaigns. They're presented here as a checklist -- but do remember that they're just guidelines. There's always a little wiggle room.

- **Introduction** - Some people assume prospects don't give a hoot who they are, so they dive right in. We advocate for the opposite stance. By introducing the sender, you're building a connection between two people -- much easier than building a connection between one person and a faceless company.
- **Connector** - You can think of this as a purpose statement -- one line to let the prospect know why you picked them to email. Most commonly, it will acknowledge their role or their industry -- but it could be anything as long as it's specific.
- **Offer / Value** - Keep the offer clear, concise, and focused on how it benefits the prospect.
- **Credibility** - The prospect needs a reason to trust that you know your stuff. More often than not, that means calling out your previous experience, preferably with companies that are similar to the one you're reaching out to.
- **Call to Action** - Be explicit about what you want from the prospect (but also be reasonable -- you can't expect many people to book an hour-long demo after one email from a stranger).

With those elements in mind, we can easily fix up our earlier example to be shorter, sound more genuine, and revolve around the prospect. (The connector and the credibility are in bold.)

Subject: leads for [company name]

Hi [first name],

*I'm Herman with RevBoss. We create custom outbound email campaigns to drive business for companies that are struggling to find new leads. **Since a lot of our clients are PR firms like [company name]**, I wanted to reach out.*

All we need is your story and the types of clients you want to see come through the door -- from there, we spin up personalized messaging and get it in front of prospects that match your ICP, so you can stop relying so heavily on referrals.

With a dedicated account manager keeping an eye on your campaigns, you can easily double down on what's working -- without wasting time sifting through responses yourself.

PR firm BLASTmedia has generated over \$1M in revenue from deals we sourced.

If you're up for it, let's set aside 15 minutes to talk about how we can help [company name] with lead generation. Maybe Monday?

Herman

STEAL THESE EMAILS

Yep, you can cheat off of us. Your current outbound emails may be crushing it already -- in which case, congrats! You won't need this -- but kudos to you for reading this far!

If, on the other hand, your outreach has yet to pick up steam, here are some tried-and-true approaches we've used to bring in leads for our B2B clients. Edit them so they incorporate more of your brand voice, or, if they already sound about right, just swap out the highlighted fields with your info.

(And FYI, if you do opt to use any of our messaging templates for your outreach, we'd love to hear how they performed for you. There are more ideas where these came from.)

COMPANY STORY

If your company has a cool backstory that usually resonates with people -- use it! Stories are at the center of human connection, which is what we're going for when we send these emails.

That said, just make sure it's relevant to the prospect. If you worked at a local clinic for 12 years, saw it swallowed up by a bigger health system, and now run an agency to help smaller institutions stay competitive, that's amazing -- but it's not nearly as compelling when you start trying to branch into e-commerce.

Template

Hi [first name],

I'm [name], [role at company] -- a [type of company you are] that helps growing companies [end result]. Reaching out because [company name] looks an awful lot like some of the [target companies] we've helped in the past.

Add the company's origins here -- or your own background. Clue the prospect in on how you came to be in a position to help them.

For credibility, include in your origin story the year you started / # of years you've been doing this, how many companies you've helped, specific companies you've helped, etc.

If at all possible, I'd love to find 15 minutes in the next few days to hear more about [company name] -- see what we can do about [whatever problem you're fixing].

Are you free on [day]?

[name]

EXAMPLE

Hi [first name],

I'm Herman, mascot at RevBoss -- a B2B lead gen partner that helps growing companies start more conversations with prospective customers. Reaching out because [company name] looks an awful lot like some of the SaaS companies we've helped in the past.

After getting in on the ground floor at a few tech startups hungry for business, our founder saw firsthand the need for easier targeted sales prospecting -- plus humanized messaging that cuts through the noise.

Since 2014, we've used a mix of software automation, creative strategy, and top-notch client service to deliver more consistent leads to 100s of companies nationwide.

If at all possible, I'd love to find 15 minutes in the next few days to hear more about [company name] -- see what we can do about filling your sales funnel.

Are you free on Tuesday?

Herman

CASE STUDY

A concrete use case that you're proud of can speak volumes. It not only builds credibility but also gives prospects an idea of what they might be able to achieve by working with you.

Obviously, it's harder to go this route if you haven't done much work in the segment you're targeting, or if your case studies don't include measurable outcomes.

Template

Hi [first name],

[Name] here with [company] -- we've been seeing a lot of success helping [target] companies like [company name] [end result], so I thought it was worth an introduction.

We specialize in [a bit about what you do / how you achieve the end result].

To give you a better idea of what I mean -- [what you did + for whom + the results].

Would you be up for a quick call on [day] to talk through doing something similar for [company name]?

[name]

EXAMPLE

Hi [first name],

Herman here with RevBoss. We've been seeing a lot of success helping video marketing agencies like [company name] unlock new business opportunities -- so I thought it was worth an introduction.

We specialize in outbound email, getting you in front of the right prospects with messaging that captures your unique voice -- and the attention of your future clients.

To give you a better idea of what I mean -- when we started working with Storyboard Media, they were almost ready to throw in the towel.

By incorporating their big personalities in our outreach, we saw 10-16 new leads a month -- and once they started closing deals, they had more projects than they could handle.

Would you be up for a quick call on Monday to talk through doing something similar for [company name]?

Herman

PAIN POINT

If it's safe to assume that your targets all share a common headache, call it out. Solving a specific problem makes your value proposition a slam dunk -- and the fact that you can identify the prospect's problem in the first place helps position you as an expert.

Just be careful to use some subtlety with this approach -- overtly stating the obvious isn't particularly helpful.

Template

Hi [first name],

*I'm **name** with **company** -- just wanted to see how [company name] has been dealing with **the problem you know they're facing**.*

*Our approach to **what you do** has been a game-changer for other **target companies** looking to **what the opposite of the problem looks like**.*

*Specifically, we **an immediate step or two you take to resolve the pain point**.*

*If you're open to it, I'd love to hear more about [company name] and any **pain point** challenges you're dealing with.*

*Does **day** work for you?*

name

EXAMPLE

Hi [first name],

I'm Herman with RevBoss -- just wanted to see how [company name] has been dealing with the feast or famine biz dev cycle -- especially now that so many businesses are reluctant to invest in any kind of marketing.

Our approach to B2B lead generation has been a game-changer for other agencies looking to move away from referrals and proactively grow their pipelines.

Specifically, we craft hyper-targeted emails and deliver them to the prospects most likely to need your services -- opening up the door for more conversations on an ongoing basis.

If you're open to it, I'd love to hear more about [company name] and any lead gen challenges you're dealing with.

Does Monday work for you?

Herman

WEBINAR INVITE

If you're hosting a webinar or other event, that's a great way to make inroads with prospects. The call to action in this case will be a little different than the typical meeting ask.

Be mindful of timing with this one -- you'll want to give the prospects plenty of notice, and if you're automating follow-up, make sure they aren't being reminded to attend after the event's taken place.

Template

Hi [first name],

*I'm **name** with **company** -- we **your elevator pitch**.*

*We're actually hosting a **type of event** in **how far away it is**, and I thought you might want to check it out -- see if any ideas come up that you can take back to [company name].*

***The speakers** will be talking about **topics + anything else they can expect** -- so I'm sure it will be time well spent.*

*If you're interested, there's more information on our website, plus a spot for you to register: **insert website or embed the link**.*

*Hopefully we'll be seeing you on **date + time**, but let me know if you can't make it and still want to connect. I'm happy to set up a quick call.*

name

EXAMPLE

Hi [first name],

I'm Herman with RevBoss -- we help B2B companies generate more leads via outbound email.

We're actually hosting a lunch & learn in a few days, and I thought you might want to check it out -- see if any ideas come up that you can take back to [company name].

Senior leaders on our team will be talking about the importance of strategy when creating messaging campaigns. Participants will even get some strategizing practice in breakout groups -- so I'm sure it will be time well spent.

If you're interested, there's more information on our [website](#), plus a spot for you to register.

Hopefully we'll be seeing you on Friday, August 12 from 1-2 pm, but let me know if you can't make it and still want to connect. I'm happy to set up a quick call.

Herman

GEO-TARGETING

Targeting companies in the same city or state is an easy way to personalize your outreach and create an instant bond with the prospect.

Just be forewarned -- the “friendly local” approach can be an invitation for the prospect to engage even if the intent to buy isn’t there.

Template

Hi [first name],

I'm [name] with [company] -- just noticed that [company name] is also in [city / state], so I thought we should connect (we're [more specific location]). It's always good to make new friends in the area.

If you're not familiar, we're a [type of company you are] that helps [target companies] end result by [how you do it].

Drop your credibility here.

Would you be interested in setting up a quick call to chat and maybe talk a little shop? If you're open to meeting the prospect in person, suggest that + a spot here.

Herman

P.S. Some local flair -- a sports team reference, a recommendation, etc.

EXAMPLE

Hi [first name],

I'm Herman with RevBoss -- just noticed that [company name] is also in Durham, so I thought we should connect (we're on Durham-Chapel Hill Blvd.). It's always good to make new friends in the area.

If you're not familiar, we're a B2B lead generation company that helps consulting firms drive more business by perfecting their cold outreach.

We've been doing this since 2014 -- so we know how to craft messaging that will stand out to your ideal clients.

Would you be interested in setting up a quick call to chat and maybe talk a little shop? Or we could grab a coffee at Liturgy if you'd prefer to meet in person. Just let me know!

Herman

P.S. Go Bulls!

TROUBLESHOOTING

What do I do about the credibility piece of the email if I don't exactly have it yet?

Reference clients are the low-hanging fruit when it comes to establishing credibility, but sometimes they aren't an option (e.g., if you're branching into a new market or have agreements in place that don't let you name drop).

In those cases, you can always fall back on years in business, the sender's (or founder's) experience (especially if it pre-dates the company), roughly how many customers you've helped, positive reviews / testimonials, etc.

You won't have any of that if you're just starting out, but if you know where you're focusing your attention, you can use present tense ("we help e-commerce companies" instead of "we've helped e-commerce companies").

But also don't be afraid to be honest.

Saying things like "the problems we've been solving in the legal space also seem to be surfacing at finance companies like [company name]" or "we've just launched our platform and would love your feedback" are perfectly okay.

In fact, better than okay, since the last thing you want to do is mislead the prospect.

TROUBLESHOOTING

I'm having a hard time coming up with a connector.

Nine-and-a-half times out of 10, if you can't come up with the "why" behind your outreach, it's because you're thinking too broadly.

It's impossible to get specific if you're emailing CEOs, marketing titles, media titles, and then some at fintech, e-commerce, hospitality, and SaaS companies of all sizes.

Narrow your targeting to make sure at least one of those parameters is as specific as possible (e.g., CEOs only or SMBs only) -- and voila! You have your connector.

My emails always end up too long. How do I keep things concise while still pitching my services?

When we try to explain something we're deeply entrenched in, it can be hard to see what's extraneous information -- and even harder to keep it within the 100-150 word sweet spot.

Just remember that the prospect doesn't need to know everything about your process, your company values, and your professional resume to decide if they're interested in working with you -- especially not in the first email.

If it helps, take a page from Daniel Pink and ask yourself: What's the 1% of my pitch that makes the other 99% of what we do understandable? And once you've pared it down to the essential 1%, stick to that in your email.

(Also, use a tool like Grammarly if you're a naturally wordy person.)

TROUBLESHOOTING

How many touchpoints do you recommend?

Honestly, go with whatever cadence works for you and your sales / marketing teams.

RevBoss campaigns usually include three touches, and we generally see the most engagement and leads from the first two.

But there is research out there that says [it takes six touches](#) to get that coveted response from a cold lead.

Regardless of the schedule you choose to set, the secret to success lies in being persistent -- and demonstrating value with every message you send.

What's with the dashes? They're not very business-like.

They're part of how we keep our emails human. If you were to quickly type up a non-automated email to a colleague, you probably wouldn't bother with hard stops or capital letters -- that's exactly the impression we want to give the prospect.

In that same vein, try to stay away from flowery / formal language. Work in phrases you'd actually use when speaking to -- or writing to -- a friend. Depending on the prospect, you can even sprinkle in some humor.

Ultimately the goal is to follow the formula for the perfect cold email -- without sounding at all formulaic.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Can I send emails using an alias?

You can make up a persona specifically for initiating cold outreach, but we find we get the best results when emails come from the same person who will be meeting with prospects.

For one thing, it's jarring to correspond with someone -- real or not -- and then be passed off to someone else. For another, if the prospect is doing their due diligence (they probably are) and can't find your made-up representative on LinkedIn, they might question the legitimacy of the whole interaction.

Besides, sending as yourself (or at least an actual person) makes it much easier to spice up your messaging with genuine personality.

Any tips for subject lines?

Generally, we recommend you use the name of the prospect's company -- it consistently nets higher open rates.

That's not to say you'll never have success with subject lines that don't include personalization, but if you omit that, you need something really intriguing.

And by intriguing, I mean a little vague and confusing (NOT misleading) -- something that will make the recipient think "What is this?" / "Who is this?" / "Huh?" / "Maybe?"

Luckily, subject lines are an easy thing to A/B test, so try out a few! Think about subject lines you'd use with a friend.

CONCLUSION

There you have it, folks -- just about everything we know about getting hot leads from cold outreach.

With a well-thought-out strategy and a concise, humanized message, you'll be well on your way to turning outbound email into one of your biggest business drivers -- just ask our clients. :)



“Be genuine. Be remarkable. Be worth connecting with.” - Seth Godin

READY TO LEARN MORE?

Sending one great email is easy -- doing it over and over again, to thousands of prospects, is hard.
Let RevBoss help.

REQUEST A DEMO TODAY

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