



SALES EFFECTIVENESS:

The B2B Sales Leader's Guide.



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Introduction

When economic headwinds pick up, sales leaders are the first to sound the alarm – and chart a new course. Longer sales cycles, larger buying committees, increased price pressure, and smaller teams can quickly combine to reduce your margin for error and increase the urgency to find a solution.

To thrive in a challenging environment, sales teams need a rock-solid grasp of the fundamentals and the biggest force-multipliers they can get their hands on. Here's the good news: The market intelligence, data assets, and technology tools available today were unimaginable to someone who first hit the sales floor 10 years ago.

It's time to make the most of those built-in advantages and show that unprecedented markets can forge uncommon leaders. Hone your focus and process now, and you'll vault past the competition when the wind is at your back.

At ZoomInfo, we're obsessed with helping businesses grow in ways they never thought possible. This guide is designed to help today's B2B sales leaders ramp up their effectiveness in any economic environment. You'll learn:

- Proven methods for warming up cold calls
- Coaching points for responding to price pressure early and often
- Front-line examples of how to win the battle for customer retention

Let's get to work.



Turning Cold Calls into Warm Leads

Even in today's data-driven sales landscape, cold calling remains a fact of life for many sales professionals. Fortunately, today's sales leaders have a crucial advantage over their predecessors: market intelligence and outreach platforms that can warm up virtually any introduction.

You might not have spoken to a prospect before, but that doesn't mean you can't be prepared to forge a meaningful connection with them and help solve their problems.

While cold calls may be harder to work than pre-qualified leads that were carefully vetted by your marketing team, cold calling can still be a rich source of pipeline for sales professionals who know how to think on their feet.

These three proven cold-calling tips will help you:



Cold-call more productively



Overcome objections effectively



Maintain momentum during difficult conversations

COLD CALLING TIP #1:

Use a Sales Engagement Platform

Whether your sales team is one person or 100 people, there are limits to how efficient you can get without using modern software solutions.

When you consider the average sales professional spends less than 40% of their work week actually selling, the pressure on individual sales reps becomes that much more demanding.

Sales engagement platforms allow your reps to sell more effectively by reducing the guesswork inherent to human-centric sales processes.



When a company realizes they've reached the limits of human efficiency, their only choice is to turn to technology and automation."

Michael Maimone

VP at ZoomInfo

While specific functionality varies, most sales engagement platforms offer similar features. They typically include:



Auto dialing



Follow-up reminders



Intelligent call and calendar scheduling



CRM integration

Some sales automation solutions go beyond the basic feature set and offer greater insights into your sales team's data. This includes conversational analytics technologies, such as [Chorus](#), that use natural language processing to analyze and evaluate areas of opportunity during sales calls.

Tools such as [ZoomInfo Engage](#) also offer deep insights into prospects, combining technographic profiles, original research, and intent data to further contextualize your reps' calls and maximize the likelihood of a closed deal.



COLD CALLING TIP #2:

Warm Up Cold Calls with Deep Prospect Research

The more you know about a prospect before picking up the phone, the more likely you are to establish a meaningful connection. Using world-class B2B data for preliminary prospect research is the most effective way to make every cold call count – the better you understand your prospects’ pain points, the more effectively you’ll be able to sell your solution.

When presenting your product or service, focus on the prospect’s core areas of value that you identified during your preliminary research. Supplement this with any relevant marketing documents or customer profiles your organization may use. Be attentive and listen carefully to what your prospect tells you, but try to center the conversation around the core value-adds your solution offers.

Emphasize results. Specific product functions may be exciting, but you’ll get farther by focusing on how individual features will make their life easier. You don’t have much time to establish a connection with your prospects, so respect them by getting to the point quickly and demonstrating how you can help them.

Don’t overlook technographic data

Technology and software systems are mission-critical to every company, which is why up-to-date technographic data is every sales team’s secret weapon. Technographic data doesn’t just tell you what your prospects are using, it creates unique, actionable opportunities for you to discuss specifics, such as:



The capabilities and limitations of current tools



Budgetary considerations and constraints



Quarterly and annual planning priorities

COLD CALLING TIP #3:

Maintain Your Momentum with Alternative Touchpoints

You did your homework. You connected with your prospect, demonstrated real value, and left the cold call feeling positive about its potential. *Then weeks go by with nothing but silence.*

There are many factors that can derail even red-hot prospective deals, such as legal headaches, complex procurement protocols, and personnel moves. It's important to mitigate this risk by pursuing alternative touchpoints at the conclusion of a cold call.

LinkedIn Connections

Rather than lose momentum by waiting weeks to send a bland follow-up email, your sellers can send a LinkedIn connection request to prospects. This creates an opportunity to not only expand their network, but also paves the way for a gentle social nudge if things go quiet.

And don't forget: your sellers should be real people when they're building their networks. There's nothing less memorable than a robotic inbox – and that means you can easily stand apart by crafting a simple, personal touchpoint when you reach out. Remind sellers to approach social touchpoints as if they were building their own network – not simply checking a box on the sales playlist.

Engaging a Level Up

Reaching out to the prospect's manager is another way to reignite a stalled conversation, as is attempting to connect with someone else on their team.

If you choose to adopt this approach, frame the communication around how you can help their company. Reiterate why the original prospect found your offer compelling, and try to keep the focus of the conversation around their core values that were identified during initial research.

Use a friendly, approachable tone, and give your prospects' colleagues an out by reminding them you can always revisit the conversation at a later date if the timing isn't right today.

While mixing things up can be effective, be aware that this technique isn't without risks. Contacting your prospect's manager could be seen as an end-run around your original point of contact, which could sour the relationship and jeopardize the deal. It could also be perceived as pushy or aggressive, which can also harm the likelihood of closing the sale.

Pave the way for level-up outreach by asking the prospect if they face internal roadblocks. If sellers can offer to be an advocate, they're building trust and a team approach – and it shows they truly believe in the solution they're selling.



Discussing Price:

Handling the Conversation, Early and Often

You're finally on the phone with a qualified lead. Things are going great. They're laughing at your jokes, they're nodding at your sales pitch. Then "Alright, how much is this going to cost?" suddenly enters the chat. Talk about a screeching halt – you haven't even shown them the best part of the demo yet.

It's not surprising that salespeople and prospects diverge when it comes to the best time to discuss pricing in a deal. The result is a push-pull dance between buyers who don't want to waste their time on a solution that's out of their budget, and sales reps who are confident that their product is well worth the investment.

“

You have to use your judgment as a salesperson and it takes practice to know when and where in the conversation to go for it. Never stumble into pricing conversations.”

Matthew Kusch

Enterprise Account Executive Team Lead at ZoomInfo

Want to nail this part of the conversation with your prospects? Here's our sales leaders' best advice for when, how, and how not to discuss price.



The Dos and Don'ts of Discussing Price in Early Sales Calls

DO

Understand the cost of your prospect's problem. Which problem are they trying to solve and what impact does it have on their business? With this understanding, you can show your solution's return on investment in terms of time, money, or another important dimension.

“ Without pain and a problem to solve, you can't drive the solution and deliver pricing. You're just a number on a piece of paper.”

Sean Bartlett
Sales Director at ZoomInfo

DON'T

Deliver pricing before you've earned the "right" to do it. Bartlett recommends capturing a "wow" moment in your sales presentation – where the prospect seems genuinely excited about an offering or feature.

“ Your job is to get people on the island. Don't deliver a price until you've delivered value.”

Sean Bartlett
Sales Director at ZoomInfo

The Dos and Don'ts of Discussing Price in Early Sales Calls

DO

Get an idea of the approval and decision process for purchasing your type of solution, and identify who needs to be involved in pricing discussions. During your discovery call, ask about the prospect's procurement process. How do they purchase products or services like yours? Is there a legal process for vetting vendors and contracts?

Identifying all the key players (by using the org chart feature within ZoomInfo, for example) allows you to accurately forecast your deals because you're not leaving key decision makers off your sales calls.

DON'T

Deliver pricing to anyone that doesn't have the power or authority to make a buying decision. **At ZoomInfo, for example, we win 40% of opportunities when decision makers are involved, but only 8% when they are not.**

“ Without power, we're just throwing numbers out there. If we don't have everyone in the room that can decide, we simply won't be able to get a deal.”

Sean Bartlett
Sales Director at ZoomInfo

What should you do if the conversation turns to pricing without those stakeholders present? Bartlett and Kusch recommend acknowledging your prospect's enthusiasm for your product. Let them know that you're as excited as they are and can't wait to get the rest of their team involved.



The Dos and Don'ts of Discussing Price in Early Sales Calls

DO

Come prepared to give a price range to someone who is insistent but can't make the final decision. Let them know that you're in the same boat, that you don't know all the factors that could go into closing a deal, so giving them an exact cost right now is difficult.

“ Don't make an enemy out of a champion. If they ask two or three times and it's becoming a sticking point, give them a range, let them know there are many factors that go into the deal, and that we would love to get someone else on the call to discuss further.”

Matthew Kusch
Enterprise Account Executive Team Lead at ZoomInfo

DON'T

Get backed into a corner to discuss price. Reorient the conversation back to value, what excites your prospect about the product, and how to get decision makers in the room.

Not sure how to do this without putting potential deals at risk? Try taking calls with bad fits – prospects who land in your queue who don't quite fit your ideal customer profile. For Kusch, this is one of the best ways to learn how to handle different scenarios around pricing and other common objections, because of the low risk.

“ You can go through the motions, practice your demo skills, and get put to the test answering questions with less pressure to close a deal. Once you hear the same objection or question a few times, it's hard to get stumped later on.”

Matthew Kusch
Enterprise Account Executive Team Lead at ZoomInfo



The Dos and Don'ts of Discussing Price in Early Sales Calls

DO

Keep things simple. If your solution involves multiple products or product lines, it can be tempting to go over every single feature and benefit in every package. But this is overwhelming to your prospect.

“

Don't overcomplicate the deal. Focus on the handful of things that are the most important to your prospect and then stop talking.”

Matthew Kusch

Enterprise Account Executive Team Lead at ZoomInfo

Success Story:

How Deal Intelligence Solves Top Prospecting Challenges

Finding out that one of your accounts is already deep in conversation with a competitor ranks high on the list of bad-news scenarios for an account or revenue team leader. That's exactly what happened to ZoomInfo account manager Katelyn Boutelle.

Part of Boutelle's account management workflow involves actively scouring Scoops – a deal intelligence feature within ZoomInfo's SalesOS software platform that offers bite-sized actionable insights about accounts, culled from ZoomInfo's proprietary research.

That's how Boutelle learned that one of her clients – a growing software company – was in the market for a competing website chat product. Here's what she did next, and why her story is a perfect lesson for account execs who find themselves in the same position.

Key Takeaways:



Lean on a business intelligence partner to deliver data and deal intelligence so you can focus your time on making a human connection.



Don't be discouraged by being the last to pitch. The hard part is over – your client already knows they want a solution. Show them that yours is the best.



Explore lateral needs by opening up the conversation to a wider view of the client's business. What else can you solve for them?

CHALLENGE #1

Reaching clients and prospects at the right time

In an account manager's dream world, their clients would simply reach out and offer to spend more money. But as companies scale and become more siloed, the buying committee you've worked so hard to build a relationship with could be completely distinct from the team looking for an additional service.

Even worse, your customers might not even know you offer what they're looking for.

Beyond that, as your company grows its account base or total addressable market, it becomes more difficult to stay on top of everything that's happening with your accounts. Without becoming full-time snoops, today's salespeople can get left behind when they miss small but salient bits of information – like the fact that a client is shopping for a competing service.

SOLUTION

Stay close to your top accounts' news and activity

This is where Scoops gives busy account executives a tremendous edge.

"Using Scoops is part of my day-to-day workflow. I set up alerts for accounts that are assigned to me, and I can narrow them down to what I care about, like new project initiatives, surging priorities, pain points – information that isn't public knowledge, that only we have because of our research team," Boutelle says.

Instead of waiting for her client to call her about adding ZoomInfo's chat solution, the Scoops alert prompted Boutelle to call them. Good thing, too, because her client wasn't just in the market – they were in final negotiations with a competitor.



CHALLENGE #2

Client is ready to buy – from someone else

Already having a call on the books, Boutelle jumped on the opportunity to dive right into an upsell conversation. “I wasn’t shy about mentioning that I saw they were looking for a chat feature through ZoomInfo’s Scoops. I think it’s a huge value-add that we have this information and if anything, it builds our case. I use intent data all the time,” Boutelle says.

When the client informed Boutelle that they were in the final stages of signing with a competitor, she leveraged the health of the relationship to get a last-minute pitch for ZoomInfo’s chat offering.

“Even though they were close to signing, we had a significant existing relationship, so I asked who I could talk to anyway – and they gave us a chance,” Boutelle says.

SOLUTION

Intercept and support customers before they churn

Instead of giving up on a deal that looked lost, Boutelle was able to swoop in at a time when the client had already involved internal stakeholders and allocated a budget to acquire a chat solution.

“Initially, it looked like a bad time, like we might have missed our chance,” she says.

“But it turned out to be the perfect time, because we didn’t have to convince them they needed a chat feature or to find a budget for one, they were already there.”



CHALLENGE #3

You're the last one at the bake-off

Is it better to be the first sales pitch to a potential customer or the last? While most salespeople will allude to an advantage of being first through the door, there is potential upside to coming in right at the end – especially if you've done the work to establish and maintain good relationships.

SOLUTION

Leverage a customer's own research to your advantage.

"I thought it was going to be a challenge because we were coming in so late in their process. But it meant that the client's team knew exactly what they wanted and the questions to ask about whether our solution could fit their needs. We were able to have very efficient demo calls and hit on every point they were looking for," Boutelle says.

Boutelle and her team of demo specialists didn't have to help her client figure out what their problems were and how ZoomInfo could solve them. Instead, they had tightly focused meetings with stakeholders who had a clear vision of what they wanted and were ready to buy.



CHALLENGE #4

Using a conversation to uncover other business needs

Timing is everything. Boutelle was able to get her foot in the door about the chat solution. But if there's an opportunity to cross-sell, why stop there?

"As we're talking about chat, our teams started talking about the client's website and what they're trying to accomplish from a demand-generation perspective. Being curious about their business opened up the conversation about how ZoomInfo's MarketingOS platform could help them increase conversions from the web," Boutelle says.

In another plot twist – because why would it be easy? – the client was also about to sign with a competing demand-generation platform when ZoomInfo got a chance to present MarketingOS.

SOLUTION

Integrated tech that serves up insights when and where you need them

Boutelle and a cross-functional team of account executives emphasized the benefit of ZoomInfo's single platform that offers a seamless, centralized solution and integrates with the client's other business tools, including Salesforce.

"From an end-user perspective, having everything in one place and our easy integration is a huge benefit, but there's a major upside for decision makers, too. One platform that can solve for multiple business needs means fewer vendors to manage and it's more cost-effective," she says.

