

Sales follow-ups

that get responses

Woodpecker

Sales Follow-ups

that get responses

The purpose of this guide is to help you get the most out of your campaign by creating an effective follow-up strategy. You will learn the best sales email follow-up practices based on our thorough research. Get ready to raise up your follow-up game!

© 2023 Woodpecker.co



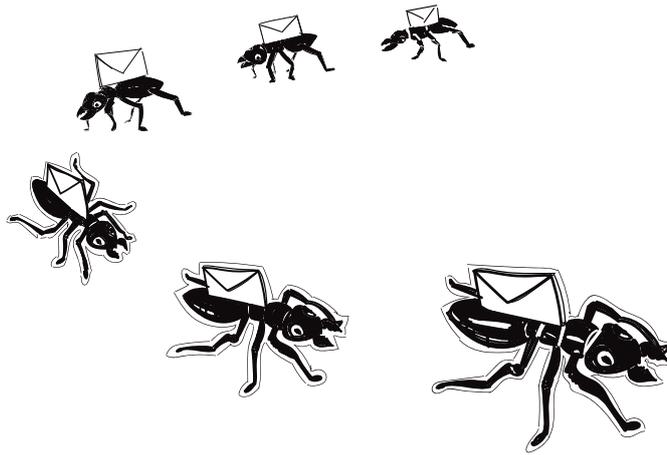
Author: Meg Kawałkowska

Illustrations: Kinga Tarczyńska

Cover: Justyna Bogusławska

Table of contents

1 What is a follow-up and why does it matter?	5
1.1 Why is it worth following up on your emails?	6
2 How to write a follow-up email to a prospect?	7
2.1 What to write in a sales follow-up email?	8
2.2 How to schedule your sales email follow-ups?	12
3 How to create a follow-up sequence in Woodpecker?	14
3.1 How to automate follow-ups?	14
4 Summary of the best practices	17



1| What is a follow-up and why does it matter?

When was the last time you checked your inbox? Do you read emails habitually or only at times when you expect to get a message? Well, the way we manage our emails depends on a person. Yet, there is one thing that stays the same. No matter what you've read on the Internet, email remains the king when it comes to 1-on-1 communication that is professional in nature.

Emails are effective for business communication mainly due to their personal and direct character. They allow you to keep 1-on-1 conversation with anyone, without encroaching on their time. And that's all because of their origin. Since emails descend from traditional mail, they are also considered to be a rather official means of communication, in contrast with social media messaging or a phone call. Therefore, emails seem like a natural choice for you to approach someone we want to build and maintain a business relationship with, be it a prospect, a lead or a customer. That should be the exact goal of your follow-up emails - to build rapport with the people you can have or you do have a business relationship.

A sales follow-up email should be an integral part of every cold outreach campaign. Prospects may not respond to your initial message for various reasons. A follow-up is your next chance to build rapport with them. Therefore, it shouldn't be just a mere reminder that they haven't responded to your message yet. Don't forget that when you follow up with a prospect your primary goal is to encourage them to start a conversation with you, not sell your product.

1.1 Why is it worth following up on your emails?

Since we're an email automation tool, we ran a study to find out what stands behind the highest converting cold email campaigns. We thoroughly analyzed a substantial number of our customers' campaigns. It actually turned out that the follow-ups have a large impact on the total reply rate of a campaign. According to [my research](#), a campaign with at least one follow-up achieves an average total reply rate of 27%, while the reply rate of a campaign without any follow-ups reaches up to 16%.

In other words: follow-ups are more effective than the opening message alone.

The stats show that the overall success of your cold email campaign largely depends on your follow-up strategy.

But why are follow-ups so effective in getting prospects to reply?

First of all, it's a matter of timing. Some prospects might have been too busy the first time you reached out to them. Or perhaps they simply missed your message among hundreds of other emails they receive every day. Sending a follow-up at a different time or day of the week, you give your prospects another opportunity to reply.

There's also a matter of trust. After all, your prospects have probably never heard of your company before. In such case, the opening email alone is not enough to spark their interest and gain their trust. They may not understand how their company can benefit from your solution yet. Therefore, the purpose of your follow-up emails should be to bring additional value and enhance your credibility in the eyes of prospects.

Another reason is that each follow-up email adds an extra level of context and relevance. It's your opportunity to show a prospect that your solution matches their business needs or solves the problems they may be facing. Provide them with case studies they can relate to or mention a few key industry leaders that you worked with.

Now that you know why to follow up, let's see how to do it the most effective way.



2| How to write a follow-up email to a prospect?

When writing a follow-up email, you ought to stick to the same rules as in the case of an opening email. A follow-up should be just as prospect-oriented and personalized. Make the prospect's business with all the challenges it entails a focal point of your message. Show them that you understand their business's pain points.

When writing a follow-up email to a prospect, structure your message in a way to highlight your value proposition. Don't repeat word for word the same value proposition you already wrote in the opening email, though. Think of an additional benefit your solution can give or focus on its unique functionality that makes it stand out from the competition.



Subject: Re: <Repeated from>

Hi {{first name}},

>>Value Proposition<<

>>Repeated CTA<<

<Signature>

Don't forget about the call-to-action at the end of your message to let your recipient know what you're asking them to do. It's best to repeat the same CTA as in the opening message so the request is clear to the addressee.

Make sure each follow-up email is spam-word-free. Avoid expressions that are known to alarm spam filters. Check your copy against a list of most common spam words, for example [this one](#). By looking at it, you can tell that avoiding spam words in the case of some industries, like [finance or real estate](#), may be especially challenging.

In such cases, coming up with a spam-word-free copy may require a bit more work. However, spam filters are now more advanced in analyzing not only the content but also the context of the email to determine whether it's spam or not.

Lastly, don't forget to check your follow-up for any spelling or grammatical errors. Sloppy grammar may ruin your first impression on the prospects and discourage them from further contact with you. An email full of mistakes doesn't make you look professional. Take your time and spell check the message with a text editor or an online tool of your choice, for example, Grammarly or Hemingway App.

Make the spell check one of the mandatory steps to follow before you run a new campaign.

Check out our guide on how to conduct a [campaign audit](#) to learn what other steps you should include on your campaign checklist.

2.1 What to write in a sales follow-up email?

A sales follow-up must be logically connected with the initial email. While the opening message covers your main point, the follow-up should add some extra value. Avoid the "just following up on my previous message" approach. It's been so overused over the years, that [it became one of the cold email clichés](#).

Instead, treat follow-ups not just as "friendly reminders", but as a means to build trust. Let me show you what I mean. Assume this is the opening email you sent out to your prospects:



Hi {{First_Name}},

Do you feel like your lead generation process could be more efficient? We know that a sales team like yours has great potential but quite often is limited by time and resources to get their lead generation process to the next level.

I'd love to chat with you about it. What does your schedule look like on Thursday?

<SIGNATURE>

Now take a look at the three alternative approaches to the “just checking in” type of follow-up emails presented below.

Try selling a solution, not a product

Show that your product or service can solve your prospect's pain points, like in the example below:



Hi again {{First_Name}},

In order to grow, your company needs to scale up its lead generation process, but due to time and resource restraints, it's easier said than done. You can't make a day longer, neither can you clone your team members. But you can use automation and make the process more efficient.

Thanks to our tool you can reach out to every prospect who visits your website. Our chatbot will start a human-like conversation with them and answer the most common questions. Pre-qualified prospects will be automatically added to your CRM awaiting to be contacted by one of your sales reps.

Let's discuss the idea in more details. Does Thursday suit you for a quick call?

<SIGNATURE>

Structure your pitch around how your solution helps in dealing with challenges your target customers may face on a daily basis. Present relevant use cases to illustrate how it works in practice. If you manage to meet or exceed your prospect's expectations, you have a big chance to win over your competition.

Mention a relevant case study

Social proof is important in building trust. It adds credibility. Present some impressive success stories of your best customers. Real-life examples are more convincing than numbers. Choose a case study that your prospects can relate to. It should feature a company within the same industry, in the same development stage or facing similar challenges. If your solution helped them, why wouldn't it help your prospect's business?



Hi again {{First_Name}},

Did you know that {{Competitor}} also struggled with the inefficiency of their lead generation process before automating it with our tool? They shared a full story of their rapid growth in an interview with us. You can read it [here](#).

Let me show you around the tool - does Thursday sound good to you?"

<SIGNATURE>

Have a look at the email above. Do you see the problem-solution-result pattern of the case study? When you describe one of your previous customer's success stories, start with defining the challenge they were facing. Outline how you helped them in solving the problem. Then, sum it up by highlighting how the customer benefited from your solution.

Link to a valuable knowledge source

I mentioned that enhancing credibility plays a key role in convincing those prospects who are still in two minds about your solution. Subject matter expertise is an important trust building factor. Give your prospects something they find valuable and position yourself as a specialist in the field at the same time.

You can include a link to a free knowledge source, such as an ebook, company blog or a whitepaper covering topics the target group could find interesting. Just like in the example below:



Hi again {{First_Name}},

Did you know that your company may lose up to 20% of leads each month due to a long conversion process on your website? We researched your industry and gathered some interesting insights. You can access the report [here](#).

However, you can avoid losing leads by automating the pre-qualification stage. Let me know if Thursday works for you to discuss the idea further.

<SIGNATURE>

Now that you know what you should focus on in the follow-up email copy, let's have a look at how to schedule a follow-up sequence for the optimal frequency.

2.2 How to schedule your sales email follow-ups?

It's time to plan and schedule the follow-up sequence. Let's see how many follow-up emails is enough to convert the majority of prospects and when they are most likely to respond.

How to choose the optimal number of follow-ups?

Sending even just one follow-up email pays off. Our research showed that the first follow-up in the sequence brings a 40% higher reply rate comparing to the opening email. Following this line of thinking, every next follow-up should increase the conversion even more.

However, according to the data we gathered, from the 5th follow-up on, the increase in the reply rate is merely noticeable. Hence, It may not be worth it to invest your time and effort in creating more follow-up emails than that.

The optimal number of follow-up emails seems to be 2-3. Quality wins over quantity in this case. Instead of following up 6 or 7 times, I'd advise you to invest your time in polishing up the content of your emails.

How often to follow up on your cold email?

Too much of a good thing can make you sick. Therefore, don't overdo with your follow-up frequency. It's important not to cross the thin line between being persistent and turning annoying. Flooding your prospects' inboxes with emails will only make you look like a spammer. Annoyed prospects may report your messages as unwelcome and [your domain or IP will get blacklisted](#).

Schedule the first follow-up 2-3 days after the opening email. Give your prospects some time to consider. Wait a bit longer with the next follow-up. Sending emails too often will make you look pushy and intrusive - just the opposite of what you intend.

What is the best time to send follow-ups?

It's difficult to give a straight answer to this question. Much depends on the characteristics of your target group. It's crucial for you to know your prospects inside out. Learn about their workflow and daily work habits. Find out what time they start their workday, when they usually check and respond to emails, or what days of the week are the busiest for them.

The right timing plays an important role in cold emailing. Provided you target the right people and your message clearly states the benefits of your solution, a low response rate most likely means that your prospects did not have a chance to reply the first time.

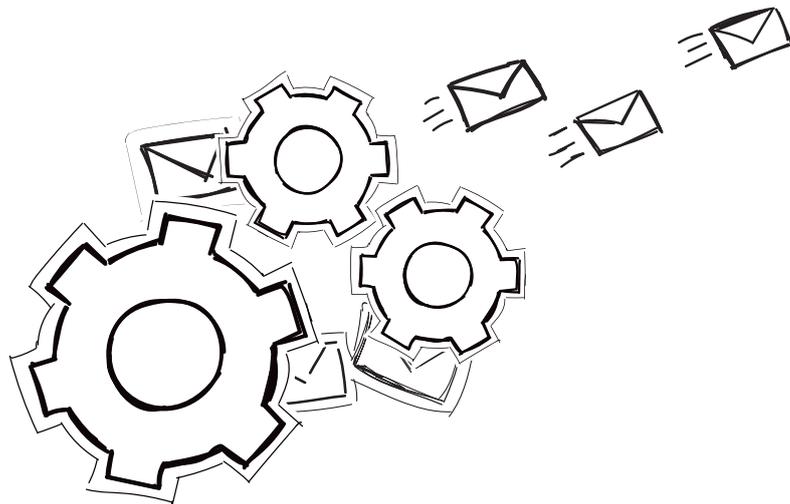
Perhaps they were browsing through their emails while participating in a morning meeting. Or they received your initial message just before heading out of office. A follow-up is another chance for your prospects to answer your message at a more convenient time.

How can I find out what is the right time in my case?

Knowing the daily schedule of your prospects, you will be able to plan the follow-up time accordingly. You can figure out the perfect time window either by doing online or offline research on your prospects or simply by [conducting an A/B test](#).

The idea of A/B testing is to prepare at least two identical campaigns targeted at two similar groups of prospects and make them differ in one element -- in this case the follow-up sending time. Schedule the follow-ups in one campaign on different days or set up a different sending timeframe. Observe which campaign performs better in terms of open rate and reply rate and figure out the optimal pattern for your target group.

Although there's no recipe for the best time to send follow-ups, according to our research, statistically there's a slight increase in the reply rate on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays. However, the difference is not meaningful enough to make a rule out of it. Rather treat it as a starting point for further tests.



3| How to automate follow-ups?

Creating and sending a follow-up sequence manually on a larger scale gets tricky. It's easy to lose control over who and when to follow up with. Imagine you sent 30 messages on Tuesday. The next day half of the recipients responded, so you had to reply back. In the meantime, you also had to follow-up with the other half. On Thursday you sent a new campaign to another 25 addressees. At the same time, you received more replies to the first email and the follow-ups you sent the other day... Things start to get really messy.

Here's where the follow-up automation comes to the rescue.

3.1 How to create a follow-up sequence in Woodpecker?

Woodpecker allows you to schedule a condition-based follow-up sequence. It means that you can prepare two versions of a follow-up and define a trigger action that will make Woodpecker send a respective message. That trigger action is a condition. One follow-up will be sent if the condition is met, or in other words when a prospect takes a specific action, and the other one in the opposite case.

There are 2 conditions you can choose from:

- your email has been opened x times,
- your email hasn't been opened yet.

Thanks to the condition-based sending you can adjust the content of your follow-up to the action your prospect takes, so your emails will strike the right chord. Let's move on to setting up your follow-up campaign. Here's how to do it.

STEPS TO CREATE A FOLLOW-UP SEQUENCE

STEP 1 **Keep your campaigns organized in folders**



To make your campaign management easier, you can arrange your campaigns in folders according to the criteria of your choice. You may want to create separate folders for past and current campaigns. You may also order them by month or a target prospect group. You know best what organization system matches your workflow.

STEP 2 **Prepare your follow-up sequence**



In Woodpecker you can schedule up to 7 follow-ups, which, as you already know, is more than enough to get the most out of your campaign. All the messages are being sent in the same thread, so the prospects can see the previous messages for reference and don't get confused.

STEP 3 **Schedule the sending time**



Once you're done with the content of your follow-up messages, you can move on to set up the sending time frame. Choose a number of days following the trigger action after which you want a follow-up to be sent. Next, set up the time you want your follow-ups to go out.

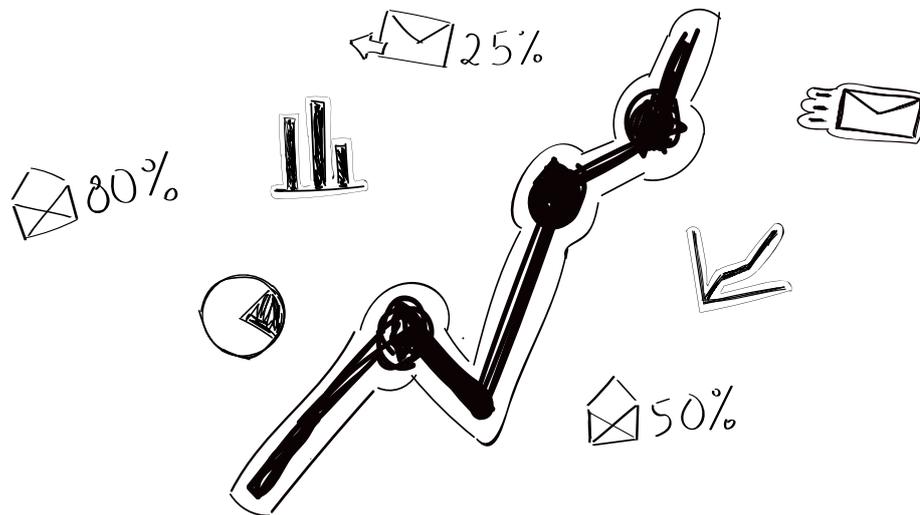
Mind you, Woodpecker randomizes the sending time of the emails. It means that they are sent one by one with an irregular frequency. Just like a real human would send emails. This way all your automated emails can get delivered to your prospects' main inbox.

STEP 4 **Optimize the campaign**



Don't forget about deliverability. Any unusual sending spikes look suspicious to the email server filters. To avoid any hiccups during the sending process, make the sending windows wide enough for all your emails to be sent out smoothly. Depending on your sending volume, it can take even up to a few hours. Otherwise your sending will be delayed. Keep in mind that your daily sending quota is limited by your email provider and your [sending tool's settings](#).

Explore [Deliverability 101 ebook to learn more >>](#)



4| Summary of the best practices

There is no ready-made recipe for a follow-up strategy. Much depends on your target group and the specifics of their businesses as well as your own niche. However, below is a set of guides worth following to make the most out of your efforts.

1. Be nice even if the response is negative

Never ever lose your temper. Respect that somebody is not interested in your solution and doesn't want to receive any more messages. It's their choice. In the case of prospects from the EU, it's also their right under GDPR.

[Read more >>](#)

2. Don't take it personally if some prospects don't respond at all

Instead of giving up with your cold emailing efforts for good, rework your strategy. Try identifying what could be improved in the future. Perhaps the email content didn't win your prospects' interest or the target group was not well fit for your solution.

[Read more >>](#)

3. Don't be too pushy

Don't follow up twice a day. Or endlessly. Know when enough is enough. Bombarding prospects with emails for weeks won't do any good. Quite the opposite - your domain or IP address may end up on a blacklist and the recovery process is quite laborious and time-consuming.

[Read more >>](#)

4. Avoid wordiness

Your busy prospects receive a lot of emails a day. Therefore they rarely read all of them from beginning to end. Your message should be concise and to-the-point in order to win their interest. Focus on them instead of yourself. Don't brag about your achievements, but show how your knowledge and experience in the industry can help them reach their goals or solve problems.

5. Add value

Following up does not mean that you should resend the original message again or keep nudging an individual with annoying reminder emails. The purpose is to add some extra value. Some prospects may need more time and arguments to trust you. Each follow-up should give them more reasons for that.

6. Preview your follow-ups before sending

Once you're done with creating and scheduling the campaign, preview and double-check the final result. This step may save you possible embarrassment once you spot a mistake and it'll be too late to correct it.

7. Mind the context

There's no one-size-fits-all type of a follow-up email. Always ask yourself what is the goal of your follow-up and adjust the content accordingly.

Level up your follow-up strategy

It's your turn now. Work through the tips I shared with you in this guide to get the most out of your follow-ups. Make sure that each follow-up message brings additional value to your prospects. Focus on gaining their trust instead of closing the deal as quickly as possible. Then work out the most optimal timing and frequency of the follow-ups. Keep in mind that enough is as good as a feast and choose quality over quantity.

However, don't treat the advice I shared with you as ground rules. They are just guide-posts to point your follow-up strategy in the right direction. You should check what works best in your business context and resonates well with your target group.

Good luck with taking your follow-ups to the next level!